



## **Annual Report**

### **Expert Group for Co-operation on Children at Risk (EGCC) & Children's Unit** **July 2010 – June 2011**

#### **Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk (EGCC) & the Children's Unit**

<b>Chair</b>	<b>Poland</b> <b>Representative from the Polish Ministry of National Education, Major Specialist Małgorzata Skorka</b>
<b>Vice Chair</b>	<b>Germany</b> <b>Representative from the German Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Ms Julia Schermann</b>

#### **Composition of the group**

The Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk, EGCC, consists of eleven members; all member countries to the CBSS have appointed senior officials to the group. The Russian Ministry of Education has during the year not participated in any of the meetings of the expert group nor in any of the group's activities, meetings or conferences. The EGCC consists of representatives from the line ministries dealing with children's issues, mainly ministries of social affairs, ministries of education and designated child ministries. The group consists of six women and four men. This is not counting the Russian representative since it has not been communicated to the group who this representative is. The European Commission has not assigned a member to the EGCC. The period the EGCC is chaired by each country is rotated among the members to the group and does not follow the CBSS presidency.

#### ***Meetings of the EGCC***

The EGCC has had two meetings, one in Riga on October 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> 2010 at the invitation of the Latvian Ministry of Welfare and one in Prague on April 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. The Prague meeting was held back to back with the conference Quality in Alternative Care. Reports from the meetings of the EGCC are published on the Childcentre website.

The chair of the EGCC and the Head of the Children's unit presented the work of the group to the CSO in January 2011.

The EGCC priority document guiding the work for the period 2009 – 2011<sup>1</sup> focuses on

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<sup>1</sup> For the full priority document, please refer to <http://www.childcentre.info/priority-paper-for-the-work-of-the-egcc-until-2011/>

- **The protection of children from all forms of sexual exploitation** including -  
Unaccompanied and trafficked children  
Children abused by being offered money or other forms of remuneration in exchange for sex  
Children and online sexual exploitation
- **The protection of children from all forms of sexual abuse and sexual violence**
- **The rights of children in institutions and in other forms of out of home care.**

At the EGCC meeting in April 2011 a priority document for the period 2011 – 2013 was elaborated planned to be adopted in September 2011.

### **Major activities arranged by the EGCC.**

Many of the activities have been made possible through the close cooperation with governmental agencies, NGOs and IOs. The EGCC often takes on the role of coordinator, initiating project applications and contacting parts of the established regional network of public agencies, international organisations and NGOs in order to form a suitable group for the specific task. EGCC also functions as a hub for professionals and policy makers facilitating contacts across the region. In all its work, the EGCC aims at supporting professionals in the region, improving their capacity to prevent violence, abuse and exploitation of children by promoting in the region new tools and the most recent knowledge available.

### *Protecting Children from all Forms of Sexual Exploitation*

#### **Preventing the trafficking of children and protecting unaccompanied migrant children**

#### **Project: Baltic Sea Region Information Management to Prevent Trafficking – BSR IMPT<sup>2</sup>**

The EGCC has through the grant awarded by the EU via the Daphne III programme implemented this one year project. The 12 month project has been managed and coordinated by the EGCC via the Children's Unit and conducted in partnerships with three NGOs in the region: Save the Children Denmark, Caritas Lithuania and Tartu Child Support Centre in Estonia.

**Expert seminars:** In September 2010 links between trafficking of children and children in criminality and in begging were explored at the expert seminar in Tallinn<sup>3</sup>. In the project a total of three such seminars were conducted and a consultant made 60 interviews with stakeholders across the region. The final report with recommendations was published and launched at events in Tallinn, Stockholm and Vilnius in December 2010. The report is available in hard copies and online<sup>4</sup>. The project was reported to the Commission in February 2011.

**Time frame:** December 2009 – December 2010

**Financing:** EUR 100 000. European Commission 80%, EGCC and project partners 20%

**Outcome:** Reports from the expert seminars. Final report published in December 2010.

<sup>2</sup> For a full description of the project, please go to <http://www.childcentre.info/expert-group-for-cooperation-on-children-at-risk-new-project-fighting-child-trafficking/>

<sup>3</sup> For the report from the seminar, please go to <http://www.childcentre.info/expert-seminar-on-links-between-child-trafficking-and-children-committing-crimes-are-involved-in-begging-or-in-street-work/>

<sup>4</sup> The report is available at <http://www.childcentre.info/information-management-prevent/>

### **Main findings from the report:**

- All work to prevent trafficking must be based on children's right to protection from all forms of violence.
- Young people up to the age of 18 are children.
- A national co-ordination function is vital in order to manage information on children at risk of trafficking.
- It is important to disseminate numbers on children and young people who are
  - identified as victims of trafficking,
  - suspected to be victims of trafficking,
  - considered to be in abusive or exploitative situations or
  - in contexts that may lead to them becoming victims of trafficking.

Transparency on what the figures are based on is crucial in order to manage the complexities involved.

- Regional/local information collation is essential and there should be open lines of communication with the national level.
- When collecting and managing regional/local information, use should be made of existing professional networks organising professionals working with children.
- NGOs should be involved in information collection at the local/regional and national levels.
- The voluntary sector, faith-based organisations, labour organisations and commercial enterprises should be involved at the local level.
- Information collected should be carefully scrutinised to see if it can be validated through e.g. triangulation.
- National co-ordination should be in contact with research institutions and universities in order to encourage as broad an evidence base as possible.

### **Conference: Child trafficking – A criminal act calling for a child protection response, Oslo 20 – 21 June 2011.**

At the invitation of the Norwegian Minister of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion the EGCC organised a conference that gathered some 100 experts from the region and beyond. The specific focus was on the cooperation between law enforcement and child protection in cases where children are exploited in begging and in criminality as part of the trafficking crime. The situation for asylum seeking children and the exploitation of their vulnerability was also presented and discussed.

**Outcome:** Points of action to secure the rights of children trafficked for the purpose of exploitation in criminality and in begging. Input to a project developing training material for professionals meeting with asylum seeking children.

**Financing:** The Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion and the EGCC.

**Time frame:** 20 – 21 June 2011.

### **6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the National Contact Points on Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children:**

Back to back with the conference on child trafficking, the National contact Points met in Oslo. At the meeting all issues regarding cases in the region handled by the network were discussed.

**Outcome:** Input to the EGCC future work on the topic. Clarifications on tasks for the NCPs.

**Financing:** The Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion.

**Time frame:** 21 June 2011

**National Contact Points on Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children** are appointed in all CBSS member states except Germany and Russia. Ukraine and Belarus take part in the implementation of the programme and have also appointed National Contact Points, NCP.

**Expert input:** The EGCC through its secretariat has continued to give expert input to actions in the Swedish government's plan against prostitution and human trafficking which ended in December 2010. One of the actions is supporting the group of Swedish experts that were trained in the 2-year training organised previously by the EGCC. Through targeted seminars the Swedish experts disseminate their knowledge to colleagues in the child protection services, migration centres and youth institutions. Swedish UNICEF has as another part of the Swedish governmental plan organised the final seminar on children and trafficking in Stockholm and the EGCC was there one of the presenters.

**Financing:** Swedish government.

**Time frame:** November 2008 – December 2010

**Expert input:** The EGCC is a member of the advisory group to the ongoing UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre's research on trafficking of children in the Nordic Countries. An advisory group meeting has been held in Florence to which the EGCC contributed with the findings of the previously mentioned BSR IMPT project. The EGCC is also consulted with the draft report. The full report is due in August of this year.

**Financing:** UNICEF

**Time frame:** February 2010 – August 2011

### **Children and online sexual exploitation**

**Project:** ROBERT – Risktaking Online Behaviour – Empowerment through Research and Training. ROBERT project is coordinated by the EGCC through the Children's Unit at the Secretariat. Project partners met in Stockholm for the kick-off meeting in June 2010. Research on online vulnerabilities and harms have been collected across the region and the rest of Europe and this has been set up in a publications database available at [www.childcentre.info/robert](http://www.childcentre.info/robert). The research findings have been compiled into a report. Interviews with children and young people that have been sexually abused in the context of the Internet has started and the partners have developed interview guide for focus group interviews with young people that belong to groups considered to possibly be more at risk of coming to harm using Information and communication technologies<sup>5</sup>.

**Financing:** EUR 400 000. The European Commission Safer Internet Programme, 100%

**Time frame:** June 2010 – June 2012

**Partners:** EGCC coordinates in partnership with Save the Children Denmark, Linköping University, Sweden, Tartu University, Estonia NGO Stellilt International, The Netherlands and Russia, Innocence in Danger, Germany, Save the Children, Italy, Edinburgh University and Kingston University, the UK:

**Outcome:** **1.** Report from research collection (September 2011). **2.** Report from interviews with young people that have come to harm (Early 2012). **3.** Report from the focus group interviews (March 2012) **4.** Report from the interviews with offenders of online crimes against children (April 2012). **5.** Final conference (May 2012).

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<sup>5</sup> For a full description of the project and partners, please go to [www.childcentre.info/robert](http://www.childcentre.info/robert)

**Expert input:** The secretariat is part of the advisory board on the UNICEF Innocenti Centre's research on child protection in the converged online and offline world. The EGCC was represented by the Head of Unit at the Advisory group meeting and has also contributed significantly to the text.

**Financing:** Innocenti Research Centre

**Time frame:** February 2010 – June 2011

**Outcome:** EGCC input to the research report

### *The Rights of Children in Institutions and in Other Forms of out of Home Care*

**Project:** Systemic Auditing of Child Care Institutions – AudTrain. In this project, coordinated by the EGCC through the Children's Unit training materials for professionals conducting audits and supervision of child residential care units are developed, translated, adapted and tested on groups of professionals across the region. The material builds on Norwegian expertise and the training is the first in its kind.

**Financing:** EUR 250 000, EU Leonardo da Vinci Programme 75%, EGCC and partners 25%.

**Partners:** Fylkesmannen in Hordaland, Norway, Linneaus University, Sweden, Estonian Social Work Association, Estonia, the State Inspectorate for the Protection of Children's Rights, Latvia, the Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland.

**Time frame:** December 2010 – December 2012

**Outcome:** Training materials in Norwegian, Swedish, Estonian, Latvian, English and possibly Russian. Trainings conducted in Sweden, Estonia and Latvia.

### **Expert input:**

The EGCC was part of the advisory board connected to the conference "Quality in Alternative Care" held April 4 – 6 in Prague. The conference is organised by SOS Children's Villages.

### *Children's Unit*

The Secretariat function of the EGCC is carried by the Children's Unit staffed by the Head of Unit 100% and a Project Officer working with the coordination of the ROBERT project 50%.

The Children's Unit operates on a separate budget built on member states' voluntary contributions. All Member States except Russia contributed to the Children's Unit

### *Financing*

The EGCC has been successful in securing funds for specific actions. As can be read in this annual report, most actions have been funded from external sources, especially different programmes within the EU. The co-funding most of the time necessary have then been managed by adding time the Children's Unit gives to the project. Successful project applications build on securing the participation of a vast and diverse network that can add to the project from different perspectives. Most programmes welcome the inclusion of actors from the public sector as well as from the non-governmental sector in applications for funding. The EGCC is well placed to coordinate projects, and to mobilise organisations into formulating projects targeting issues that have been identified as gaps in the region. This is made possible as the EGCC over its existence has established itself as a hub in the region to which different organisations working to protect children from violence and harm turn.

To maintain the network the Children's Unit travel to meetings and conferences in order to present and to share with colleagues in the region its experiences. Most travel to advisory group meetings and to conferences has been paid by the organisers and when the EGCC

contributes with presentations within its areas of expertise, oftentimes the organisers contribute with financing to the EGCC budget.

*The Childcentre web site*

The website [www.childcentre.info](http://www.childcentre.info) has been continuously updated and used for presenting material coming out of the cooperation and other reports and studies of interest for professionals in the region. The Secretariat and the National Coordinators in the different countries are responsible for updating and adding information to the site.

As far as possible, the EGCC sees it as part of its remit to contribute with its expertise by participating in advisory groups and by presenting at conferences and meetings. The group can in this way respond favourably to invitations to make presentations and to contribute with knowledge and experiences to projects and actions organised in the region on topics within the EGCC expertise.