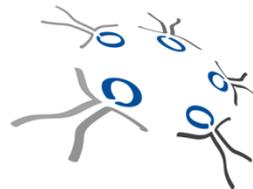


PROTECT children on the move (2013-2015)

By Turid Heiberg

Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS) Secretariat



CHILD CENTRE

Expert Group for Cooperation on
Children at Risk, EGCC

The Project

- In 2014 and 2015, the Council of Baltic Sea States Children's Unit coordinates the implementation of the project 'Child exploitation: Cross-national child protection in practice'
- Renamed to: "PROTECT children on the move"
- 5 expert meetings funded by CBSS and European Return Fund
- Cooperation between CBSS, the Central Board of the State Border Guards in Latvia, the State Child Rights Protection and Adoption Service in Lithuania, and the Stockholm Social Emergency Authority in Sweden
- The project involves representatives from member states, institutions, UN agencies and organisations in Europe and beyond
- The aim is to identify child rights standards and key agencies responsible for protecting children exposed to exploitation and trafficking in cross-border situations and children at risk
- Outcome: guidelines, report and online tool outlining relevant laws, policies, procedures and contacts

5 expert meetings

- 1. Case assessment and best interest determination: Special considerations and procedures in transnational cases of children exposed to exploitation, trafficking and children at risk. January 2014, Stockholm
- 2. Returns and Transfers: International and European standards, procedures and safeguards for children exposed to exploitation, trafficking and children at risk. May, Riga
- 3. Returns and Transfers in Practice: Case examples of children exposed to exploitation and trafficking and children at risk. September, Vilnius
- 4. Transnational Child Protection: The role of judges, social services and central authorities. November, Riga
- 5. Reflections from the Expert Meeting series and discussion of the way forward. March, Stockholm

Learning

- Developed an understanding that it is necessary to focus on the practice of return of minors
- Return has to be considered as part of the migration cycle
- Return has to be considered in relation to children at risk and those who have been exploited and trafficked
- Return has to be considered in relation to best interest, care plans and durable solutions including family situation
- Return has to be considered in relation to the wider context of country of origin
- Return has to be considered in relation to costs, flexibility and smart solutions beneficial for the child and sending and receiving countries
- Return has to be considered in relation to safety and opportunities

Progress in working against child exploitation and trafficking

- Governments in the Baltic Sea Region are attending to “children on the move” and issues of exploitation and child trafficking
- More knowledge and information – prevention and protection measures
- Legal and policy reforms and targeted institutions and referral mechanisms
- EU and Council of Europe developed standards. HAAG system, OSCE etc
- UN standards and systems of Representatives and Rapporteurs
- Increased cooperation across borders and a rights based approach
- A substantial number of professionals and trainers have been trained, they are motivated and have gained substantial experience
- Involvement of civil society in research and lobbying

Challenges: ensuring safety for children on the move

- Case management and care planning for children on the move requires effective transnational cooperation
- This applies to each step in the process, from the identification of a child and verification of his or her identity through to determining a durable solution.
- Children are returned - not defined as victims of trafficking (or qualify for asylum). Sometimes they are returned after 18
- Returned without a care plan. Guardianship not transferred
- Education, friendships and other caring arrangements – all has to start afresh
- Job opportunities for the children and families may be weak
- Many children move on – are re-trafficked or voluntarily seek opportunities abroad

Good practices in return

- Swedish authorities return children on a voluntary basis to their families
- Conducts assessment of best interest, of family situation and follow up
- In Albania the social services take some responsibility for family reintegration
- In Kosovo there are institutional support - in Morocco a NGO provide services
- The HIT foundation developed a monitoring tool on the basis of the CRC
- It assess the well-being of the child, situation of parents and long-term development
- The model is used in Netherlands by judges who want to know more about the child

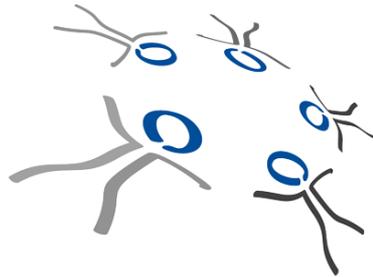
Added value of a national and transnational perspective

- Multi-agency information gathering, sharing and training
- Protocols and MOUs to defining roles/responsibilities of actors
- Involvement of all groups of child protection actors
- Collaboration between country of arrival and origin
- Connecting national child protection systems across borders
- Central authorities within national child protection systems with broad mandate
- Continuum of services for prevention, protection and empowerment
- CRC as basis for child rights/protection, law enforcement and migration management
- It is about promoting opportunities and resources – not only administering a problem

Turid Heiberg

Turid.heiberg@cbss.org

www.childcentre.info



CHILD CENTRE

Expert Group for Cooperation on
Children at Risk, EGCC

