

CBSS Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk (EGCC)

The CBSS EGCC implements the programme Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children in the Baltic Sea Region since 2003. To date, EGCC has established National Contact Points in all CBSS countries, each of them serving as a first point of cross-border contact able to assist directly or to forward the case of (potential) child trafficking to authorities with the required capacity. Moreover, a series of 5 consequent seminars for 50 professionals working with child victims of trafficking as well as expert seminars on emerging trends has been held. Information management has been addressed through a project focused specifically on identifying sources and credibility of information, holders of information and its distribution. For information about the work, please visit childcentre.info

Contact

For more information about the project contact the Children's Unit at the Secretariat of the Council of the Baltic Sea States.



CHILD CENTRE

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Follow the development of the project on twitter [@childatrisk](https://twitter.com/childatrisk) and on the childcentre.info website.



The Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk EGCC Introduces the project

**Children trafficked for exploitation in begging
and in criminality.**

A challenge for law enforcement and child protection.

A project by the Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at risk,
EGCC, within the Council of the Baltic Sea States.
Funded by SIDA Baltic Sea Unit and Norway.



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Background and justification

In most European countries children, young people and adults are regularly found begging; Street begging is a commonplace and visible phenomenon. It is however rarely connected to or investigated in the context of human trafficking. Young people involved in criminality are another topic that all countries struggle with. Some of the young people involved are found in a country not their own or are in a city or region they have no previous ties with. Even so, the link between criminality in young people and trafficking is seldom investigated especially when they are suspected of being involved in heavy and serious criminality such as drug smuggling or the trafficking of and dealing in heavy drugs.

Young people in criminality and young people in street begging may however be victims of exploitation where the acts they perform or are forced to perform are instigated as a part of organised criminality or a part of organised begging. In situations where the proceeds of the criminal actions or of the begging is largely confiscated or given to the organisers, and where the child's participation is arranged by others, the situation may fall under the criminal act of trafficking. Across Europe we see few police investigations where these chains of events have been scrutinised from the perspective of human trafficking and in the cases where investigations have looked at the recruitment, the facilitation, transportation, harbouring and exploitation of begging or criminal acts, the police and prosecution have run into major difficulties. Children suspected of being exploited do not cooperate with law enforcement and when investigations start, they are regularly removed from the location or leave the country all together, making any continued investigation and interviewing extremely costly and cumbersome for the investigating police force. For child protection services, care and protection of children pose huge problems to the social worker and to competent authorities. Children referred to child protection services by the police are known to disappear before child protection has been able to assess how best to protect and care for the child. When cases are handled with immediacy and speed, the immediate care placement of a child or a young person is often disrupted since the child will take the first opportunity to leave and go missing. Few children suspected of being in situations of exploitation through begging or criminality develops trust in an adult in order start moving away from exploitative contexts.

Project aim and outputs

The Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk is well placed to implement this project in the region using its vast network of competent authorities, non-governmental organisations and experts as a useful basis for joint learning and increased cooperation between professionals and agencies involved. At the conference organised by the Expert Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk, the

EGCC and the Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion in June 2011, these issues were discussed.¹ Prosecutors and police from countries in the region and also from other European countries, discussed difficulties they had run into when investigating these cases and child protection and welfare contributed with the frustration they felt when the child's situation could not be satisfactorily assessed or solved. It became evident during the discussions that more knowledge on how colleagues have managed to find solutions to issues faced was helpful.

This project will increase the cooperation between four countries in the region: Sweden, Norway, Poland and Lithuania. Participating experts are placed in law enforcement, prosecution, child protection and in national Child Rights NGOs. In each participating country a team is formed consisting of an investigating police officer, a prosecutor, a child protection professional and a representative of a child right's NGO. The national team meets early on in the project to discuss and formulate pertinent and burning topics that they face when investigating a case of suspected child trafficking connected to criminality and to begging and topics they face when assessing the child victim's protection and support. In each country a meeting will then be organised where the four national teams meet at each other's workplaces. Prior to each meeting, the host team will formulate and present the issues they struggle with when dealing with cases of suspected trafficking of children exploited in begging and/or in criminality, and the solutions they have so far found. All of this will be subject for joint discussions and input from all the national teams. The teams will also visit national facilities and places of specific relevance for the investigations such as crime scenes or places where it is known that children are hidden, interview facilities for children and possible care facilities used. This in order for the country teams to be well acquainted with each other's work situation and concrete hands-on experiences made. Each visit will result in a number of discussions around how to solve specific issues. These discussions will be recorded and compiled as a Q and A report to be used by colleagues around the region and beyond.

Participating experts

In the four countries teams are formed matching the national competencies. Each national team formulate the specific challenges they face in their country and share these with their colleagues in the other countries. Programmes for the four meetings will be shared including interesting site visits. The report author participates in each visit.

¹ <http://www.childcentre.info/report-from-the-conference>