

Conclusions from the meeting of ministers responsible for children's issues in the region of the Baltic Sea states.

Adopted on 10th of May 2005
Oslo on the 9th to 10th of May 2005

The ministers present at the meeting

1. Recognise the importance of continuing and strengthening the regional co-operation on children at risk and the work of the Working Group for Co-operation on Children at Risk. The cooperation will continue to be a priority for all governments in the region aiming towards a joint responsibility for all children at risk in the region of the Baltic Sea States.
2. Recognise the importance of continuously developing the Childcentre web resource, both as a means of disseminating information in all areas pertaining to children at risk in the region and as an interactive resource for professionals working to improve the situation for children at risk.
3. Recognise the importance of maintaining a small and efficient secretariat function in performing all duties connected with the cooperation. All member states are encouraged to look at periodical strengthening of the capacity of the Children's Unit in order for the cooperation to meet present and future challenges.

Regarding the Baltic Sea Regional Study on Adolescent Sexuality the ministers

4. Encourage the WGCC to take note of the results of the Baltic Sea Regional Study on Adolescent Sexuality and to stimulate the countries to use this knowledge when formulating preventive programmes directed towards young persons in the region in order to reduce the incidence of abuse and exploitation of children and young people.

On the rights of children in institutions, the ministers

5. Welcome the recommendations of the Council of Europe Rec 2005:5 and encourage the WGCC and the Children's Unit to support and stimulate countries in their work of adhering to these recommendations.
6. Encourage all countries in the cooperation to support the child's family to care for the child and to place children in institutional care only when it is in the best interest of the child. When the child is less than three years of age countries should look for alternative placements when placement is deemed necessary.
7. Recognise the importance to work on improving the quality of care in institutions through supporting competence building among the staff in institutions.
8. Mandate the WGCC and the Children's Unit to develop a proposal on how the situation for boys and girls in institutions in the region could be monitored using the Convention of the Rights of the Child and the recommendations from the Council of Europe as a foundation for the monitoring work. The proposal should
 - a. Take special note of the situation for girls and boys with physical and mental disabilities in institutions.
 - b. Take special note of the differences in circumstances facing girls and those facing boys that are institutionalised.
9. Highlight the need for a post-placement plan for boys and girls when they leave the institution in order for them to be better prepared for a life in society.

On Trafficking of children in the region, the ministers:

10. Support the ongoing implementation of the WGCC Plan of Action on Unaccompanied and trafficked children in the Baltic Sea Region and decide the plan to be prolonged until the 30th of June 2007.
11. Recognise the need for child specific protection and assistance to girls and boys victims of trafficking and the importance of recognising the child specific aspects in all actions fighting trafficking in human beings.
12. Recommend that the National Contact Point, coordinating support and protection of children victims of trafficking should be placed within the ministry responsible for children's issues.
13. Acknowledge the support given to the work of the WGCC and the Children's Unit in the area of trafficking of children by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs in sending a Senior Advisor for two years.

On Regional cooperation between child protection services, the ministers:

14. Encourage the WGCC and the Children's Unit to include in the co-operation on children at risk social workers and other professionals so they can benefit from the established cross border links and cross border co-operation on children at risk.
15. Encourage the WGCC and the Children's Unit to convene a meeting of groups involved in social work and child protection issues in order to exchange experiences and if possible develop common practical solutions suitable for this group of children.

On streamlining the work of the cooperation and on avoiding all forms of duplication, the ministers

16. Recognise the importance of continued co-operation with, the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the Northern Dimension Partnership on Health and Social Wellbeing, the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Nordic Baltic Task Force Against Trafficking in Human Beings and other regional, European and international initiatives where the situation for children at risk is on the agenda as well as continuing the inclusion of NGOs into the realisation of the goals of the cooperation.
17. Welcome the invitation to the WGCC to function as an expert group on children at risk within the Northern Dimension Partnership on Health and Social Wellbeing and look forward to synergy effects of the cooperation between the ND Partnership and the CBSS work.

In conclusion the ministers

18. Thank Ms Laila Dāvöy Norwegian Minister for Children and Family Affairs for convening this important meeting of ministers responsible for children's issues and decide to meet again in the spring of 2008 to further evaluate and give political guidance to the regional process.