



**CHILD CENTRE**

Expert Group for Cooperation on  
Children at Risk, EGCC



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## EGCC Annual Report 2011 - 2012

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**Expert Group for Co-operation on Children at Risk (EGCC) & Children's Unit  
July 2011 – June 2012**

**Executive summary:**

- During the German presidency of the CBSS and the German chairing of the EGCC, an expert group that will celebrate its tenth anniversary in the autumn of 2012, the main new direction for the EGCC has been the focus on Early Intervention, particularly intervention methods targeting families with infant children considered to be at risk. The year started with a conference on this topic organised jointly by the German Kinderschutz-Zentren, the German Federal Ministry of Families, Senior Citizens Women and Youth and the EGCC held in Berlin in September 2011. The conference will be followed by an expert meeting in the year to come to further the exchange of evidence based methods in the member states.

- The **ROBERT** project (Risk-Taking Online Behaviour – Empowerment through Research and Training) is on its last stretch and is publishing results from its ground-breaking research. The two year project funded by the EU's Safer Internet Programme is coordinated by the EGCC through the Children's Unit and includes among its eight partners a number of universities and NGOs from the region and from observer states. The report "*Online behaviour related to child sexual abuse – Literature report*" was published in October 2011 and the reports "*Online behaviour related to child sexual abuse – Interviews with affected young people*" and "*Online behaviour related to child sexual abuse – Focus groups' findings*" were both published in August 2012. In October 2012 the report "*Online behaviour related to child sexual abuse – Interviews with perpetrators*" the last in the series will be published.

In May 2012 the final conference of the **ROBERT** project was organised. "*Risk-Taking Online Behaviour – Young People, Harm and Resilience*" presented and discussed the results of the ROBERT project and related programmes and projects with 120 experts from all over Europe. The conference was held in Berlin and was opened by Ambassador Gerhard Almer representing the German presidency of the CBSS. Partners in the ROBERT project are presently negotiating a continuation of the work, looking into how children may be more at risk from the diverse online platforms used, using ROBERT as a basis for continued knowledge enhancement in this field.

- Children trafficked for the purpose of exploitation in begging and in criminality was the topic of the conference organised by the EGCC in cooperation with the Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion that ended the Norwegian presidency in the summer of 2011. The EGCC timely followed up on this issue and has secured funding for an ambitious project where prosecutors, police, child protection workers and NGO experts investigate how four countries in the region, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Sweden meet the challenges of this form of exploitation of children. The project, coordinated by the EGCC through the Children's Unit has already organised country visits to Lithuania and Norway in the spring of 2012. The country visit to Poland happened in August and the final visit to Sweden will take place in November. The final conference outlining best practices and how the regional cooperation and the EGCC can contribute to the protection of child victims of this form of trafficking is planned for late November.

- Systematic auditing of residential care for children includes assisting alternative care settings in respecting children's rights while in care. This unique one-of-its-kind method of auditing is taken from Norway and is through the project **AudTrain** coordinated by the EGCC through the Children's Unit and funded by the EU Lifelong Learning Programme, adapted for international use. The material is translated and this and the training as such have been tested in pilots in three countries:

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Estonia, Latvia and Sweden in the spring of 2012. Autumn 2012 will see the publication of the training materials in several regional languages and English. The final conference, launching the material is also a part of the EGCC's 10 year anniversary celebrations. The training and the material have been met with tremendous interest from a number of countries; member states, observer states and countries outside of the CBSS region. The EGCC foresees the further dissemination of the materials and the training model long after the specific **AudTrain** project ends in December 2012.

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

### **Chair Germany**

Representative from the German Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, Ms Almut Hornschild.

### **Vice Chair Iceland**

Representative from the Government Agency for Child Protection, Mr Bragi Gudbrandsson

### **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 representation to the group moved during the year from Ministry of Education and Science to the office of the Presidential ombudsman on the rights of the child. A representative from the ombudsman's office participated in the March meeting of the EGCC. 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 as of March 2012 consists of nine women and two men. The European Commission has not assigned a member to the EGCC.

### **Meetings of the EGCC**

The EGCC has had two meetings in Berlin during the year: The first meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of September, back to back with the conference on early prevention, and the second on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of March. Part of the second meeting was a joint meeting with the Task Force Against Trafficking in Human Beings, TF THB. 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 March 2012.

The new priority document/mandate for the EGCC was adopted for the years 2011 – 2013 in November 2011. The EGCC priority document guiding the work for the period 2011 – 2013<sup>1</sup> focuses on

### **Priorities and mandate:**

- a. The protection of children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse
- b. Ensuring the rights of children in migration and the protection of children that are trafficked
- c. Early intervention and prevention as a means to ensuring children's rights to protection from all forms of abuse, violence and neglect

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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-2011-2013/>

d. The rights of children in residential care and in other forms of out of home care

Many of the activities have been made possible through the close cooperation with governmental agencies, NGOs and IOs. The EGCC through the Children's Unit 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. The Children's Unit 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.

### ***Strategic national consultations***

During the year the Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour organised a strategic discussion on the role of the regional cooperation on children at risk with national stakeholders including NGOs and state agencies in its Child Welfare Council. The Head of Children's Unit was invited to this discussion. The Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights in Russia similarly organised two stakeholder events discussing the regional cooperation and how this can best be made use of in Russia. The Head of Children's Unit was invited to these meetings.

## **Actions according to the priority areas**

a. *The protection of children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse*

### **Actions implemented by the EGCC.**

**Project: ROBERT** – Risk-Taking Online Behaviour – Empowerment through Research and Training. ROBERT project is coordinated by the EGCC through the Children's Unit at the Secretariat. 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 published in October 2011: "*Online behaviour related to child sexual abuse – Literature report*". In-depth interviews with 27 children and young people that have been sexually abused in the context of the Internet has been completed and analysed. The report including a Grounded Theory Analysis of the interviews "*Online behaviour related to child sexual abuse – Interviews with affected young people*" was published in August 2012. A preliminary version was made available to the public in May 2012. The report describing the focus group interviews conducted "*Online behaviour related to child sexual abuse – Focus groups' findings*" was also ready in its final version in August 2012 but had been made available in a preliminary version in May. In May 2012 the final conference of the ROBERT project was held in Berlin. 120 experts discussed the

ROBERT results and presented other projects and reports on the topic of children and young people coming to harm online.<sup>2</sup>

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

**Time frame:** June 2010 – September 2012. (The project was granted a 3½ month prolongation).

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

**Meetings organised:** Partner meeting in Stockholm, December 2011.

**Conference:** "Risk-Taking Online Behaviour – Young People, Harm and Resilience", Berlin, 23 – 24 May.

**Outcomes:** **1.** "Online behaviour related to child sexual abuse – Literature report" (October 2011). **2.** "Online behaviour related to child sexual abuse – Interviews with affected young people" (Preliminary version in May 2012 and final version in August 2012) **3.** "Online behaviour related to child sexual abuse – Focus groups' findings" (Preliminary version in May 2012 and final version in August 2012) **4.** Report from the interviews with offenders of online crimes against children (Planned for October 2012). **5.** Final conference (May 2012).

**Workshop:** "Exposed online -a workshop looking at the emergence of 'sexting' and challenges for parents and young people" as a part of the Safer Internet Forum in October in Luxembourg. The workshop was organised by the EGCC through the Children's Unit in cooperation with NSPCC from the UK and the Austrian Safer Internet Centre.

### **Meetings and actions within the priority to which EGCC contributed**

**Roundtable meeting:** The International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children invited European experts to a meeting discussing a proposed model legislation on Exploitation of Children. The Head of Children's Unit was invited.

**Roundtable meeting:** Organised by the University of Bedfordshire in cooperation with the Council of Europe on children and young people's participation in programmes and projects fighting sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. The Head of Children's Unit was invited.

**Conference:** The 12th ISPCAN European Regional Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect.

**Conference:** Council of Europe high level conference: "Building a child-friendly Europe: Turning a vision into reality"

**Conference:** The Head of Children's Unit presented preliminary ROBERT results at the final conference of the EU Kids Online II Programme held at the London School of Economics.

**Training event:** The Head of Children's Unit presented ROBERT project results at INSAFE training meeting for European helplines.

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<sup>2</sup> For a full description of the project and partners, please go to [www.childcentre.info/robert](http://www.childcentre.info/robert)

**Expert participation:** The Head of Children's Unit is participating with expert input to the POLIS cooperation within OSCE where a web based platform offers materials suitable for police and law enforcement working to protect children from online sexual abuse.

*b. Ensuring the rights of children in migration and the protection of children that are trafficked*

**Actions implemented by the EGCC**

**Project: Children trafficked for exploitation in begging and in criminality.** Teams consisting of one prosecutor, one police officer, one child protection worker and one NGO expert from Poland, Norway, Lithuania and Sweden make site visits discussing and exploring how children trafficked for exploitation in begging and in criminality are cared for and how the traffickers are prosecuted in the different countries.

**Financing:** EUR 50 000. Swedish Institute – Baltic Sea Unit EUR 38 000. Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, EUR 12 000.

**Time frame:** April – November 2012

**Outcome:** Reports from the site visits. Q & A report describing good practices on how to protect children trafficked while prosecuting the traffickers.

**Roundtable meeting:** In late November a roundtable meeting will be organised to share the outcomes and to elaborate on possible further work in the area.

**Meetings and actions within the priority to which EGCC contributed**

**Roundtable meeting:** Launch of the UNICEF report: Trafficking of children in the Scandinavian countries to which the Head of Children's Unit has been on the advisory board.

**EU Group of Experts on Human Trafficking:** The Head of Children's Unit is a member of the group since December 2011 and participates in the four yearly meetings.

*c. Early intervention and prevention as a means to ensuring children's rights to protection from all forms of abuse, violence and neglect*

**Actions implemented by the EGCC**

**Conference:** “*Early Childhood Intervention – Getting in touch, Establishing Relationships, Developing Structures*”. A conference organised in partnership by the German Kinderschutz-Zentren<sup>3</sup>, the German Ministry of Women, Senior Citizens, Families and Youth and the EGCC. The conference was organised in Berlin in September 2011.<sup>4</sup>

**Conference:** “*Children at Risk in the Context of Child Welfare*”. A conference organised by the Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour in cooperation with the EGCC in May 2012.

*d. The rights of children in residential care and in other forms of out of home care*

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.kinderschutz-zentren.org/>

<sup>4</sup> For more information on the German National Centre for early intervention: <http://www.fruehehilfen.de/>

### **Actions implemented by the EGCC**

**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, Linnaeus 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 Swedish, Estonian, Latvian, English and Russian. Trainings and follow up trainings conducted in Sweden, Estonia and Latvia. Final conference launching the materials.

### **Meetings and actions within the priority to which EGCC contributed**

**Conference:** The Head of Children’s Unit made a plenary presentation at the conference: “*International Summit on the actual problems of family placement of orphans and abandoned children*” organised by the Victoria Foundation in Moscow in November 2011.

## **General Administrative Matters of the EGCC:**

### ***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% and with general matters of the unit 25%.

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 during the year 2011. For 2012 all member states have contributed except Russia who has pledged to do so before the end of the year.

### ***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 through the Children's Unit 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 Head and the project officer of the Children's Unit travel to meetings and conferences in order to present and to share with colleagues in the region its experiences. Most travels to advisory group meetings and to conferences have 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. The unit has not been able to fully explore the potential of the website. A twitter account @Childatrisk is used for quick messages to its subscribers.

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.