



CBSS Expert Group on
Children at Risk

**On the occasion of the 20th Anniversary
Celebration of the CBSS Children at Risk
Cooperation, each member state describes
the value of the work:**

Sweden: The regional work within CBSS and the Expert Group on Children at Risk increases the possibility to identify common challenges and sharing experiences. This collaboration promotes activities based on the best available knowledge. Together we can find relevant activities and priorities that give a greater impact on the protection of the rights of the child. We are looking forward to the upcoming years of work within the CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk with the aim to find joint actions that contribute to better support and protection of all children in the region.

Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Latvia: Dear CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk! Thank you for the good co-operation for children's best during 2016-2018! It was good to observe Baltic and Nordic professionals and civil servants from municipal and governmental institutions and non-governmental organisations engaged in lively professional discussions. Many of them acknowledged that the networking seminars enriched them professionally.

Congratulations on your 20th anniversary! All the best for the coming 20 years and more!

Denmark: Participation in the Expert Group Children at Risk has been and continues to be very useful for Denmark. Its value lies in part as a forum for sharing the different approaches and the knowledge the countries accumulate in relation to one of the most vulnerable groups in our societies – the children at risk. And in part as creating a network across the countries in the region which can be useful in other contexts as well.

Estonia: As a result of expert support from the CBSS, Estonia has experienced considerable improvements with noticing and providing child-friendly services to sexually abused children. Today we have integrated Barnahus in Estonia and the service is available statewide.

Finland: Sharing the experiences, development and visions for the future is valuable. We can learn from each other and promote knowledge-based development. Together we can be stronger than countries alone.

Germany: The CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk has provided important impulses for our work in the area of child protection. In addition, the group has become a vital part of our international network which proved to be very helpful not only in the context of the Baltic Sea Region. It is impressive to see what the group has accomplished over the last two decades and what a difference committed people can make.

Iceland: Regarding the value of the expert group such regional work is extremely important for a small nation like Iceland, as the venue gathers and exchanges information on best practices, changes in policies and legal frameworks in the region. That information helps the other countries to evolve and better their systems and services for children all around the region.

For Iceland, the work of the Expert Group on Children at Risk has been vital to the spread of the Barnahus concept internationally, not only to the region but to Europe as a whole. The Agency feels that the Expert Group has been instrumental in introducing the Barnahus model and has been an integral part of the spread of Barnahus internationally.

Latvia: Latvia highly appreciates the opportunity to be part of the international cooperation the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the Expert Group on Children at Risk has facilitated so well. The endeavours of the Expert Group are remarkable. The work of the Expert Group has resulted in many fruitful multilateral collaborations reaching over the Baltic Sea Region. The fruitful work of the Expert Group has promoted impetus to innovative approaches enhancing the wellbeing and safety of children in the region. Special gratitude must be addressed to the creative and very committed team of the Council of the Baltic Sea States Child at Risk Unit for ensuring effective coordination of the Expert Group's work.

Lithuania: The CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk is a great value for the local and regional cooperation and sharing good practice of children's rights. The Expert Group's activities, aims and tasks are a picture of the most important child rights issues of the countries. Raising child rights issues at the international level such as violence, corporal punishment against children, alternative care, human trafficking and family and children support creates opportunities to improve the national child rights protection system. Important to note, that the group's work through cooperation, project implementation, experts meeting, seminars and etc. has affected child rights policymaking in the Baltic Sea Region. During 20 years, the group's activities have involved different professionals and experts, which are a value of the group.

Congratulations on the Expert Group 20th anniversary! Best wishes for the coming 20 years and more!

Norway: The cooperation on children at risk within the CBSS has been of great value. Sharing information and learning about the countries' different policies, perhaps even adopting some elements at home is one thing, but networking and the understanding of each other's positions, should not be underestimated. This has proven to be especially valuable in regard to transnational child protection cases.

Poland: Projects carried out by the CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk, being of a more local and regional nature, can better identify problems occurring in its member states, and then indicate possible paths of their solution, also adapted to the specificity of our countries. Non-governmental organisations and other institutions, whose statutory tasks include the issues of children's rights, are also involved in the implementation of projects. What is more, the opportunity to not only learn the social policy systems of other countries but, above all, the chance to get to know new solutions and ways of dealing with social problems similar in essence and challenges of the modern world is extremely valuable. This aspect of the exchange of good practices is an exceptional added value of participation in the Group. Inspirations which I draw from meetings and exchanges of views on children's rights result in the possibility of proposing interesting solutions also at the national level.

Undoubtedly, an added value is also the activity of the CBSS Secretariat, with Ms Turid Heiberg as the Head of the Children at Risk Unit, which is operating very efficiently, enabling smooth communication between individual participants of the Group.

Russian Federation: One of the CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk unique values is that it brings all countries of the Baltic Sea Region together on an equal footing. It allows for an exchange of the best practices and expert opinions in the field of children protection – the field that we all prioritise in our countries, just as it provides a reliable platform for strengthening broader international cooperation and mutual understanding between the CBSS member states.