

Plan of Action on Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children in the region of the Baltic Sea States, May 2004 - December 2005

Adopted by the Working Group on Cooperation on Children at Risk (WGCC) on 17 May 2004. Prolonged until July 2007 at the meeting of Ministers responsible for children's issues in Oslo, 9th to 10th of May 2005.

Background:

At the meeting of Heads of Governments in the Baltic Sea Region, the situation for Unaccompanied Children in the region was highlighted as an area of concern to the countries. As a response to this, the Working Group for Co-operation on Children at Risk, (WGCC), in co-operation with the Swedish Foreign Ministry organised a meeting of Senior Officials on the issue of Unaccompanied Children in the Region of the Baltic Sea States. The neighbouring countries Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova were also invited to the meeting as they are important stakeholders.

The meeting of Senior Officials ended with a number of conclusions and recommendations from the Chair. One of these conclusions was to encourage the WGCC to decide upon a plan of action for the region on Unaccompanied and Trafficked children. The present Plan of Action is an effort from the WGCC to make the recommendations from the meeting operational.

The co-operation on Unaccompanied and trafficked children takes as its starting point the internationally adopted conventions:

- ◆ The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- ◆ The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography
- ◆ The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (The Palermo Protocol)
- ◆ ILO Convention no 182 on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

The Council of Europe Recommendation (2001), 16, concerning sexual exploitation, pornography and prostitution of, and trafficking in children and young adults and the Resolution 1307 (2002) on sexual exploitation of children: zero tolerance together with the EU Council Framework Decisions a) of 19 July 2002 on combating trafficking in human beings and b) of 22 December 2003 on combating the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography are also important instruments to use as a basis for continued co-operation and exchange of practices in the region.

The co-operation on unaccompanied and trafficked children in the region of the Baltic Sea states aims at assisting:

- a) Unaccompanied/separated asylum seeking children and young persons
- b) Children and young persons trafficked from one country to another
- c) Exploited children and young persons as well as children and young persons at risk of exploitation in a country other than their own with valid documents.
- d) Children residing in the host country without legal documentation.

(Points of Action from the meeting of senior officials marked with italics).

*I) “The representatives at the meeting have made a **commitment to co-operate** a. **bilaterally** to solve individual cases of unaccompanied children and b. **multilaterally** in promoting competence building on the issue in the region”.*

Activities:

- 1) The WGCC will adopt the issue of Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children as one of its prioritised areas of work.
- 2) The WGCC, through the Children’s Unit at the Secretariat of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, will coordinate and co-operate with other actors in the region and with linked international initiatives in order to achieve the highest possible coherence of effort. This includes i.a. contacts with the Task Force on Organised Crime under the CBSS, the Nordic Baltic 8 initiative and the Barents Euro Arctic initiative. It also includes attending meetings and approaching organisers with the aim to address child related issues and links between trafficking in children and unaccompanied and trafficked children.
- 3) If considered beneficial by the national administrations, the Children’s Unit of the WGCC may be invited to attend meetings with relevant ministries to coordinate closely with these in adjusting their national interministerial co-operation to enable them to respond to requests from other countries in the region on issues relating to unaccompanied and trafficked children. These meetings may also focus on the need for regional co-operation.

***II Establishment of national contact points.** “The national contact point should assume responsibility to co-ordinate national resources in relation to all aspects of assessment and reintegration of children: Identification, Care, Safe Return, and Rehabilitation including medical, social and psychological support. National working groups may also be called for. The contact point would be a natural point of reference for bilateral co-operation regarding individual children The national contact point should co-ordinate with the Children’s Unit at the CBSS. The list of national contact points could be carried on the web site and thus easily be kept updated”.*

For details on tasks, responsibilities and activities of the NCPs, please refer to attached “Description of Tasks and Responsibilities of National Contact Points”.

Activities:

- 1) As needed support governments in finding the suitable position for the national contact point.
- 2) Develop and communicate the tasks for the contact point.
- 3) Add contact details of the appointed National Contact Points to the Childcentre website to make them accessible to the different actors in the region.

- 4) Support appointed National Contact Points (NCP) in establishing and maintaining operational contacts with the other NCPs in the region of the Baltic Sea States.
- 5) Support appointed NCPs in establishing and maintaining contacts with national and international programmes and initiatives implemented both by governmental structures and by NGOs.
- 6) The WGCC will support the establishment of national working groups of representatives from different governmental structures, NGOs and IOs to solve country specific issues in relation to unaccompanied and trafficked children.

*III “The action plan would include a section on the tasks and responsibilities for a **regional focal point**. These would include responsibilities to initiate and monitor activities agreed and organising follow-up meetings or seminars within the three key areas: Assessment, Care and Reintegration. The Children’s Unit within the Council of the Baltic Sea States with proper secondment provides a natural resource to co-ordinate contacts and implement meetings and conferences”.*

Activities:

- 1) The secondment to the Children’s Unit will act as Regional Focal Point of the cooperation on unaccompanied and trafficked children.

The Regional Focal Point (RFP) will:

- 2) Initiate meetings, as described under I:3) above, with relevant ministries in order to discuss details of the co-operation.
- 3) Be available for technical advice and input to the process on a national level and, if invited, assist national administrations in appointing a National Contact Point.
- 4) Organise regional meetings with the National Contact Points to exchange experience and expertise on relevant programmes and actors, different national structures dealing with cases of unaccompanied and trafficked children and to further the operational cross border cooperation regarding individual cases.
- 5) Address the lack of available data regarding the number of children that are unaccompanied or have been trafficked within the region through outlining a project proposal in which, if funding is available, the scope of the issue may be better assessed.
- 6) Give support to the network of National Contact Points, maintain and update the contact information and when needed introduce new NCPs to the activities.
- 7) Co-ordinate with relevant regional programmes in Europe and outside of Europe.
- 8) Co-ordinate with NGO activities in the region both on a national and on an international level.
- 9) Seek funding for the activities from national, regional and international sources, both public bodies and private funds.
- 10) On a regular basis report to the Head of Children’s Unit and present a written report to the WGCC at the meetings of the Working Group on the progress of the co-operation. Furthermore, present a draft report on the achievements,

identified gaps and suggestions on how to move forward to the WGCC in due time for the Summit in June 2004.

11) Present regional activities at events and seminars organised by other actors.

IV “Competence and capacity building in all areas pertaining to the assessment, care and reintegration of Unaccompanied Children should be an important part of the action plan. This should include training for law enforcement and migration authorities on how to work with unaccompanied children. The plan should outline how seminars on these issues with practitioners from the countries in the region could be organised. NGOs are well placed to organise some of these seminars with support from governments and the WGCC through the Children’s Unit”.

Activities:

The RFP in co-operation with the NCP network will:

- 1) Organise training seminars for migration- and law enforcement authorities mainly on a regional level on how to interview children, how to interpret information received and how to co-ordinate cross border activities. The seminars will be cross sectoral and gather experts from police, migration and social authorities. Two meetings will be organised in 2004 and at least one in the beginning of 2005.
- 2) Organise seminars to discuss strategies to overcome gaps in care for children returning to their country of origin. These training events need to build on existing knowledge on how best to assist children and young persons with an antisocial and criminal lifestyle, children with drug and alcohol addictions and children who have spent a long time surviving on the streets. The development of care and assessment facilities for trafficked children and children with experiences of forced labour or forced criminality calls for regional capacity and competence building.
- 3) Encourage existing institutions caring for children to develop competence and increase their capacity to include the children pointed out in para 2.
- 4) Encourage preventive activities in cooperation with national as well as regional and international initiatives and actors such as OSCE, EU, IOM and others.

VI “The Plan of Action will take note of the fact that activities in the area must include actors from the NGO sector, the private sector, governmental agencies and governments. All these actors should be specifically encouraged to consider their ability to contribute financially to these activities”.

Activities:

In order to fulfil these commitments the WGCC through the Children’s Unit will:

- 1) Assist in organising a meeting with NGOs in the region actively working on the topic of unaccompanied and trafficked children.
- 2) Invite representatives of the existing regional NGO initiatives to meetings with the NCP network.

- 3) Keep contact with local and national NGOs and invite them to meetings and conferences where their expertise will contribute to the co-operation.
- 4) Encourage co-operation between NGOs and governments by enabling contacts when appropriate between public authorities, governments and NGOs.
- 5) Exchange information with other agencies and regional initiatives on governmental and intergovernmental levels to enable a transparent flow of information in order for different programmes and activities to complement, not compete, with each other.
- 6) Take part in meetings and seminars organised by other initiatives in order to exchange experience on how the ongoing co-operation is progressing.
- 7) Co-operate with private sector initiatives, especially those that provide training opportunities and career advice for young persons at risk of becoming trafficked or at risk of leaving their home country with no clear view of how to survive in the host country.

*VII “The Plan of Action is a part of the **follow up process**. In addition to this the Plan of Action should include how the NGO-sector and the governmental sector may continue to co-operate. If in due time found appropriate, this meeting could be followed by another senior officials meeting”.*

Activities:

- 1) At its meetings the WGCC will monitor and follow up how the co-operation fulfils the goals set up in this action plan.
- 2) The WGCC through the Children’s Unit will safeguard that good practices on how the NGO sector and the governments on a national level may co-operate will be used and spread through the network of NCPs.
- 3) The WGCC through the Children’s Unit will safeguard that the NGOs are informed of the process of the co-operation in order to encourage the cross border co-operation between NGOs in different countries.
- 4) At the end of 2004 the WGCC will evaluate the need for another senior officials meeting on the issue of unaccompanied and trafficked children.