



Minutes from the First meeting of National Contact Points on Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children in the Baltic Sea Region

Stockholm, 2nd –3rd of December 2003

1. Opening of the meeting

Ambassador Hannu Halinen, Director of the Secretariat of the CBSS welcomed the participants and stressed the common responsibility to address the issue of unaccompanied and trafficked children in the Baltic Sea Region.

2. Presentations

Presentations were given

- by Lars Lööf (Head of CBSS Children's Unit) and Eva Ekmehag (CBSS Senior Advisor) on the purpose and aim of this regional initiative. Four groups of children crossing borders within our region are dealt with in this network: (i) unaccompanied, asylum-seeking children; (ii) unaccompanied children on (expired) tourist visa; (iii) children without any legal documentation; and (iv) children being trafficked.
- by Ingrid Åkerman (Secretary of the Committee on Gaining Knowledge of Sexual Exploitation of Children in Sweden) introducing the work of the committee.
- by Morten Hjorth Jahnsen (Save the Children Denmark) on the process and results of their research about trafficking of children to Denmark.
- by Ann-Sofie Holm (Asylum Officer at the Swedish Migration Board) on the procedures and the problems encountered in her work with unaccompanied, asylum-seeking children.
- by Carolina Wennerholm (Kvinnoforum) on the conclusions and recommendations from the Conference on Separated and Trafficked Children in the Baltic Sea Region in Vilnius, 14-16 September 2003 and the pilot project on strengthened co-operation between migration authorities, the police and social welfare authorities in the Stockholm region.
- by Thomas Gittrich (KJSW Jugendhilfe) on the procedure dealing with unaccompanied, asylum-seeking children in Germany and the Separated Children in Europe Programme.

3. Input by participating countries

The participating countries, listed in appendix 1, informed about

- available national statistics on unaccompanied and trafficked children: The statistics available are mainly focusing on unaccompanied, asylum-seeking minors. Some criminal statistics are in place on the number of victims of trafficking.
- the relevant national structures: A number of different national ministries and authorities are involved in dealing with unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

- On the regional level there are initiatives addressing the issue of trafficking mainly working on trafficking in adult women. NGOs also have programmes in place fighting trafficking via preventive initiatives, research initiatives and a few programmes address the care of trafficked women. A number of countries in the region have national plans in place to combat trafficking in human beings. National structures draw distinctions in their approach towards the ‘visible’ issue of asylum-seeking children and children who are involved in clandestine, illegal activities.

4. The Plan of Action

The clear delineation of the role and responsibilities of the NCP was discussed. It was agreed that NCPs should have good knowledge of the national structure dealing with unaccompanied asylum seeking children and trafficked children. As far as possible, the NCP should also be aware of national structures dealing with unaccompanied children that do not seek asylum and that are in a country without documentation. They should also follow developments at national and regional levels regarding these issues.

Two models were suggested: (1) The NCP gets heavily involved in individual cases. (2) The NCP acts both as a highway/gate-opener making information on national structures and valuable persons to contact available in the regional context and on the national level as a facilitator regarding issues that need to be communicated both between different structures in the country and across the border. Here the NCP mainly plays a co-ordinating role.

It was agreed that the issue on where to place the NCP function will be further discussed within the national governments, based on the delineation expressed in the CBSS document ‘Background: The CBSS initiative on Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children crossing borders in the Baltic Sea Region.’ /appendix nr 2/

Already existing contacts should be used. NCPs should only be used if no other contacts exist in the respective country to keep the NCPs’ workload at a manageable size.

It was agreed that the list of NCPs and their contact details will be placed on the CBSS child centre web page at <http://childcentre.baltinfo.org>. Complementary relevant contact points from the national structures can be added. NGOs may link to these lists. It was suggested that the intranet within national authorities should also be used. All lists need to be updated regularly.

The network should use already existing networks of cooperation in specific areas, such as border guards and police, e.g. the Task Force on Organised Crime, in order to add value.

The network is in favour of cooperation with the NGO sector.

Follow-up cooperation will include the exchange of experiences in closed and current cases. Thus gaps in national structures can be identified.

The idea of sub-regional follow-up was welcomed. Two to three sub-regional groups should be formed on a non-geographical basis.

Each sub-regional group should have a lead country that in close co-operation with the regional focal point and the Children’s Unit at the CBSS Secretariat should take on to continue the process, e.g. organising the next meeting.

The lead countries are countries that already have started the national discussion on how to comprehensively and holistically deal with unaccompanied and trafficked children. Finland and Norway agreed to take the issue of being lead countries and organise the next meeting in the sub-regional context, back to their respective government for final decision. Both the NGO sector and other relevant networks should be included in the follow-up sub-regional process.

The start of the regional cooperation should be made visible to the public. It might be a good idea to conduct a joint activity in the 14 countries.

5. Meeting Closed

Lars Lööf and Eva Ekmehag thanked the participants for a fruitful meeting. The closing words were on our common responsibility to give all the children in the Baltic Sea Region a reasonable future.