



# CBSS EXPERT GROUP ON CHILDREN AT RISK

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ESTONIAN PRESIDENCY 2024–2025.



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The **CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk** consist of senior officials appointed by the ministries or agencies responsible for children’s issues in the member countries to the Council of the Baltic Sea States: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, and Sweden.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND FOREWORD

During the Estonian Presidency, the Expert Group on Children at Risk (EG CAR) prioritized the active involvement of children in shaping the policies and practices that affect them. To support this priority, a guide for meaningful child participation was developed under the Estonian Presidency. The guide includes practical tools and examples from CBSS Member States, gathered with the help of EG CAR members, and is intended to help countries involve children meaningfully in both individual case management and policy development. In addition to advancing child participation, the Estonian Presidency emphasized strengthening multidisciplinary and interagency cooperation to protect and support child victims of violence. A significant milestone was the hosting of a two-day Barnahus Forum in Tallinn in June 2025, which facilitated knowledge exchange and reinforced regional cooperation.

Partnerships remained central to the group's work. On 28 November 2024, EG CAR held a joint meeting with the CBSS Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings (TF THB) in Tallinn. The meeting focused on child sexual exploitation and trafficking, with discussions covering victim support, child helplines and law enforcement responses.

Finally, the Expert Group dedicated significant attention to future directions. The group finalized and adopted a renewed mandate and for 2025-2030. This framework ensures continuity of priorities and reinforces EG CAR's commitment to advancing child protection in the Baltic Sea Region.

Kadi Lauri  
Chair of the CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk

Participants of the Children at Risk Expert Group during a joint meeting with the CBSS Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings, held in Tallinn, Estonia, on 28 November 2024.



# ESTONIAN PRESIDENCY & CHILDREN AT RISK EXPERT GROUP AT A GLANCE

## Estonian Chair of the CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk

- Ms Kadi Lauri, Head of Unit at the Child Protection Department, Estonian Social Insurance Board

## CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk Trio

- Ms Kadi Lauri, Head of Unit the Child Protection Department, Estonian Social Insurance Board
- Katarzyna Napiórkowska, Head of Unit, Family Policy Department, Ministry of Family and Social Policy
- Ms Marjo Malja, Ministerial Counsellor, Department for Health and Safety, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

## The CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk

The CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk (CAR) consists of 10 Member States: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Lithuania, Poland, Sweden, and Norway. Russia was suspended in February 2022 and subsequently resigned in May 2022.

Authorities in the CBSS member states dealing with children's issues, including Ministries and State Agencies designated to children, have appointed representatives to the Expert Group. The European Commission Coordinator for the Rights of the Child has an open invitation to take part in the meetings and in other expert meetings organised by the Expert Group.

The website of the Expert Group on Children at Risk is: [childrenatrisk.cbss.org/](http://childrenatrisk.cbss.org/)

## The Children at Risk Unit at the CBSS Secretariat

The implementation of the strategy and annual activity plans, approved by the CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk, are implemented with the support of the Children at Risk Unit in the Permanent International Secretariat of the Council of the Baltic Sea States. The Children at Risk Unit provides secretarial and

professional support to the Expert Group, interfaces with strategic partners, drafts relevant documents and reports, and develops and executes projects.

- Senior Advisor and Head of Unit – Olivia Lind Haldorsson
- Advisor and Promise Network Coordinator – Shawna von Blixen (tenure ended in November 2024)
- Programme Coordinator- Laura Daoud (tenure ended in June 2025)
- Policy and Research Assistant- Sven Wilson (tenure ended in June 2025)
- Communication Assistant – Natascha Beck Hansen (tenure ended in June 2025)
- Children at Risk Intern – Adrien Couto (tenure ended in June 2025)

The work is actively supported by CBSS staff specially assigned to support the Children at Risk Unit:

- Team Leader & Advisor for Communications – Dominik Littfass
- Media and Communication Officer - Ewa Strozniak
- Financial Controller - Mia Skytén

## Finance

The Children at Risk Unit operates on a budget which is financed by the member states' contributions. In 2024-25, all Member States contributed to the Children at Risk Unit, and the Children at Risk Unit operating budget was in balance. During the Finnish Presidency, the Children at Risk Unit has been successful in securing funds for specific actions through the European Commission and the EEA Norway Grants. Co-financing, a regular feature of external funding for projects, was covered by the employment costs of the Children at Risk Unit staff.

## Mandate and Regional Strategy

The Estonian Presidency took the leadership in implementing the Children at Risk Expert group mandate and strategy, which run until end June 2025. The mandate sets out the Expert Group's vision, mission, organisational structure, finance, and evaluation mechanisms.

To monitor progress, the expert group adopted an annual activity plan, which formed the basis for bi-annual progress reports.

The Estonian Presidency facilitated the development and discussions concerning the mandate and strategy for 2025-30, which were finalised early 2025. The new strategy and mandate were approved by the Expert Group on Children at Risk in March 2025, and by the CBSS Committee of Senior Officials in June.

# ESTONIAN PRESIDENCY JULY 2024-JUNE 2025

The role of the CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk embraces the two fundamental pillars of CBSS – dialogue between States and practical cooperation based on tangible projects. This provides the Member States opportunities to move forward positions in our three priority areas: Strengthening child protection systems, Justice and Recovery for child victims and witnesses of violence and, building partnerships for children’s rights, child protection and non-violent childhoods.

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## **PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION: STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS**

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The core strategic area and priority of the CAR Expert Group is to promote and facilitate regional exchange on key issues of concern to the CAR Expert Group Members with the purpose of identifying and promoting actions to strengthen national child protection systems, in particular measures for prevention and early interventions to protect children at risk.

To implement our role, we act as convenors, facilitating dialogue and exchange with the aim of identifying promising and good practice, building mutual trust and promoting a regional approach and culture on children’s rights and child protection.

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### **Priority 1. Regional exchange on children at risk through structured information-sharing frameworks and facilitated expert interventions to identify good/promising practice on prevention and early intervention constitutes the core priority of the CAR Expert Group**

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The Estonian Presidency hosted four expert group meetings during its presidency, with a specific focus on child participation. During the Estonian Presidency, the expert group had a joint Expert workshop with the CBSS Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings (TF-THB) and Child Participation Guidelines were launched by the Chair in May 2025.

Beyond adopting the annual activity plans, reports from the Secretariat, including financial reports, and the budget for 2025, the experts engaged in dialogue and exchange of good practice, including collection of

information from the respective Member States about their country situation and measures to address challenges concerning the protection of children from violence.

At the **18-19 September 2024** meeting, the Expert Group met in Tallinn and online for the first meeting under the Estonian Presidency. During this meeting the Expert Group engaged in discussions regarding the development of the new strategy and mandate for the Expert Group on Children at Risk 2025-2030.

At the **28-29 November 2024** meeting, the Expert Group met in Tallinn for the second time under the Estonian Presidency. At the meeting, the Expert Group followed up on earlier discussions about the new Mandate and Strategy, reading through the drafts, making amendments and clarifications where it was needed.

Additionally, the Presidency held a joint expert group workshop with the CBSS Task Force Against Trafficking in Human Beings, which focused on child sexual exploitation and related support systems in Estonia. The morning session highlighted support systems and services for children, and presentations covered the role of the Child Helpline, police responses to exploitation cases, and the work of Barnahus Estonia. The afternoon sessions centred on addressing offending behaviour and featured presentations on the treatment of sexual offenders and recent research on sexual exploitation. The meeting facilitated cross-sector dialogue and strengthened regional cooperation on child protection and anti-trafficking efforts.

At the **13 February 2025** meeting, the Expert Group met online for the third time under the Estonian Presidency. At the meeting, the Expert Group agreed to finalise the new Mandate and Strategy for the Expert Group on Children at Risk 2025-2030. The Expert Group further agreed to postpone the adoption of the Mandate and Strategy to await the results of the Wise Person’s report and subsequent discussions and decisions.

At the **15 May 2025** meeting, the Expert Group met in Tallinn and online for the final meeting under the Estonian Presidency. At the meeting, the Expert Group reflected on the previous day’s seminar which launched the Child participation guidelines, the seminar was very well received by the Expert Group. The meeting also welcomed CBSS Director General, Gustav Lindström, who presented the current state of play of the organisation ahead of the upcoming public declaration on the Wise Person’s report. Discussions centred around the Wise Person’s report and what subsequent declaration will mean for the future of the Expert Group and its work.

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### **Priority 2. Mapping of national child protection systems and practice for prevention and early intervention in the Baltic Sea Region**

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**The Baltic Sea Child Protection Registry<sup>1</sup>**, launched on the Children at Risk website during the German Presidency, currently includes over 25 examples of child protection practices from the Baltic Sea Region. The registry is a showcase for how the CBSS members are working individually and together to fulfil the vision of its Expert Group on Children at Risk: a region where children enjoy the full range of human rights as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The registry aims to contribute to a collective understanding of how child protection works in this region of Europe and supports mutual trust among these systems.

The current practices in the registry cover themes such as: child participation, harmful sexual behaviour, corporal punishment, care/policy/legal reforms, child participation and more. The examples are mainly collected through questionnaires at the Expert Group meetings, but also through roundtable discussions in the Expert Group meetings and project discussions. The practice examples are uploaded to the registry after explicit approval from the concerned Member State EG CAR expert.

The Children at Risk Newsletter was distributed for the second time before the Expert Group meeting in February. The newsletter included information about upcoming events, newly added practices and one interview with an expert exploring a practice from the registry in greater detail. The final newsletter during the Estonian presidency was distributed at the end of June, containing two interviews with an expert exploring practices from the registry in greater detail, as well as reflections from the Barnahus Forum 2025.

Building on the results of a mapping of national child protection systems in the Baltic Sea Region<sup>2</sup> conducted in 2022, and the CBSS EG CAR **Second Addendum to the Guidelines on Promoting the Human Rights and the Best Interests of the Child in Transnational Child Protection Cases<sup>3</sup>**, a new **Guidance on Exploring Transnational Child Protection Cases in Europe<sup>4</sup>** and an accompanying tool to implement the guidance were published.

The guidance aims to support child protection and justice systems—including policymakers, professionals, NGOs, lawyers, and guardians—in ensuring children’s rights are upheld in transnational cases. It outlines key actors and identifies essential procedural steps to follow in administrative and judicial contexts. The

Guidance focuses on EU-relevant cases such as children in migration or asylum processes. It also addresses special considerations under EU frameworks, including anti-trafficking. The Guidance further provides practical examples and additional resources to aid in effectively protecting children’s rights in these complex situations.

Both the guidance and the accompanying tool were developed in collaboration with the Expert Group on Children at Risk through a written consultation process and three focus group discussions.

This work was carried out in the context of the project **Promise Soteria**, which aims to promote inclusive and resilient child protection systems, including in times of crisis. The project specifically contributes to strengthening national practice of well-functioning, accessible and resilient child protection systems and their ability to work on transnational cases. The project also aims at enhancing the contribution of Barnahus as one important component of the broader child protection systems.

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## **PROTECTION, SUPPORT AND JUSTICE: PROMOTING MULTIDISCIPLINARY AND INTERAGENCY SERVICES FOR CHILD VICTIMS AND WITNESSES OF VIOLENCE (BARNAHUS)**

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### **Priority 1. Promoting multidisciplinary and interagency services for child victims and witnesses of violence through path-finding initiatives, coordination of broad partnerships**

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Since 2019, Children at Risk has played a fundamental role in leading and overseeing development of the Promise Barnahus Network, which promotes the Barnahus model. The CBSS has hosted the network and acted as chair of the network steering group, providing opportunities to promote the Baltic Sea Region approach to multidisciplinary and interagency (MDIA) models for child victims and witnesses of violence in the region and beyond. In doing so, Children at Risk has promoted a regional good practice model and benefits from broader regional exchange that informs national practice.

During the Estonian Presidency, the EG CAR continued to host the Barnahus Network, which became

1 <https://childrenatrisk.cbss.org/practices/>

2 “Building Trust and Resilience: Child Protection Systems in the Baltic Sea Region”, 9 May 2023, <https://childrenatrisk.cbss.org/publications/building-trust-and-resilience-child-protection-systems-in-the-baltic-sea-region/>

3 “Second Addendum to the Guidelines on Promoting the Human Rights and the Best Interests of the Child in Transnational Child Protection Cases”, 8 May 2023, <https://childrenatrisk.cbss.org/publications/second-addendum-to-the-cbss-guidelines-on-promoting-the-human-rights-and-the-best-interests-of-the-child-in-transnational-child-protection-cases/>

4 “Guidance on Exploring Transnational Child Protection Cases in Europe”, 2 June 2025, Child Circle and the Council of the Baltic Sea States, <https://childrenatrisk.cbss.org/publications/guidance-on-exploring-transnational-child-protection-cases-in-europe/>

an independent non-profit association with a public purpose/benefit. The Estonian Presidency hosted the Barnahus Forum on 12 and 13 June 2025 in the context of the project Promise Soteria. The Barnahus Forum, organised in collaboration with the Barnahus Network and PROMISE Soteria partners, Child Circle and Marie Cederschiöld University, gathered over 140 professionals from 27 countries, alongside additional online attendees. The event brought together a diverse group of Barnahus practitioners, policymakers, psychologists, prosecutors, and researchers, fostering a collaborative environment to advance child-centred, multidisciplinary responses to child abuse. Key speakers included Signe Riisalo, Member of the Estonian Parliament; Ólöf Ásta Farestveit, Director General of Iceland's National Agency for Children and Families; Markus Helavuori, Deputy Director General at the Council of the Baltic Sea States and Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Head of the Children at Risk unit at the Council of the Baltic Sea States. The forum featured four thematic breakout tracks:

- **Advancing Care:** Focused on enhancing child protection standards, integrating Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy, and promoting holistic, child-centred support
- **Inclusive Target Groups:** Addressed the inclusion of children with disabilities and those displaying harmful sexual behaviour, emphasizing accessibility, participation, and tailored interventions.
- **Evaluation, Quality, and Impact:** Explored methods for building evidence of Barnahus impact, including the development of evaluation frameworks and quality standards.
- **Advancing Investigation:** Concentrated on improving forensic interview protocols and adapting practices to meet the needs of children affected by online sexual violence.

Children at Risk participated in Council of Europe Lanzarote Committee/CDENF meetings on multidisciplinary collaboration and contributed to the EC Victim Support platform. The Unit further continued to contribute to a UNICEF study on multidisciplinary interventions in low- and middle-income countries.

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## **Priority 2. Implementation of flagship projects (Promise) to promote sustainable exchange, competence building training, peer support, networking, practical tools, and interventions.**

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Promise is a CBSS and EU co-funded Flagship Project, that has promoted the Barnahus model since 2015. The Barnahus model has its origins in the Baltic Sea Region, and has spread across Europe, with the support of the Promise projects.

Building on the success of the EU funded PROMISE project (2015-2017), PROMISE II (2017-2019), the

PROMISE 3 (2020-2023) which ended during the German presidency, several projects were developed to cover specific aspects of practice in Barnahus:

**Promise Journeys (EU co-funded):** The project ended in December 2024. It aimed to improve access to child-friendly justice, protection and recovery for child victims of violence and their families through the provision of a safe, informed, and participatory pathway through Barnahus from initial report to long-term recovery. In the frame of this project, an app and a child log were developed. The Journeys app assists children in their journey through Barnahus. The Childlog provides information to the children about their Barnahus journey after they have visited Barnahus. The app and the Childlog are also targeted to caregivers and professionals as they can supervise the journey of the child and engage in dialogue with the child.

**Promise Elpis (EU co-funded):** The project aims at adapting Barnahus processes for online sexual violence cases and promoting multidisciplinary and interagency service models for child victims and witnesses of online sexual violence, ensuring their right to child-friendly justice, protection from violence and exploitation, and a safe path to recovery.

**Promise TRM (EU co-funded):** The project ended in September 2024. The purpose of the projects was to address the specific needs of child victims of trafficking and exploitation by developing standards and guiding principles for national and transnational referral mechanisms incorporating a specific focus on child victims, and a child-centred multidisciplinary response. A guidance on "Creating a cycle of protection" was published in September 2024. This Guidance aims to encourage States to develop and strengthen comprehensive, child-centred cooperation between anti-trafficking and child protection systems. It focuses on the Member States' obligations to identify, support, and assist trafficked children during criminal and child protection proceedings, as well as to prevent child trafficking.

The Bulgaria and Lithuania Barnahus Projects (EEA Norway Grants) ended in April 2025. The EEA Norway Grants project in Bulgaria aimed to promote the Barnahus model to ensure the rights of child victims of violence to justice, protection and recovery in Bulgaria, by supporting multidisciplinary and interagency services. The objectives include to support the Barnahus in EEA Norway target countries, and to achieve excellence in practice, through training and international exchange and study visits.

The EEA Norway Grants project in Lithuania aimed to develop and implement the Barnahus model adapted to the Lithuanian legal, procedural and socio-economic context, including ensuring progress towards high quality services, implemented in line with the Barnahus Quality Standards. The aim of the project was further to raise awareness and buy-in of the judicial system, and other relevant sectors, such as the health sector. In the framework of the EEA Norway grants, several initiatives to promote Barnahus were supported in Lithuania and Bulgaria.

Activities in these two projects included training on child forensic interviewing, therapeutic interventions and multidisciplinary teamwork, facilitating dialogue and exchange between professionals and on how to address harmful sexual behaviours in children and adolescents. The CBSS held 5 online webinars introducing the Barnahus and the Barnahus Quality Standards, targeting Bulgarian professionals. The CBSS further organised study visits and exchange to Barnahus Tallinn, Barnahus Linköping, several Barnahus in Norway and Barnahus Ljubljana.

The project “Impact of the Barnahus model on protecting the rights of children victims of sexual abuse in the criminal justice system” funded by the Oak Foundation ended in October 2024. It aimed to develop an evidence-based tool to evaluate the impact of the Barnahus model in supporting the rights and the needs of child victims of sexual abuse in the criminal justice system. The new methodology provides with indicators to lead effective changes in law and in practice aimed at preventing child re-victimization (gaps, skills, proceedings).

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## **PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHILDREN’S RIGHTS AND CHILD PROTECTION: PROMOTING LAW, POLICY AND JOINT STRATEGIES**

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This priority area focusses on promoting international legal and policy instruments and guidance adopted by all CBSS Member States for children’s rights and child protection, through broad international and regional partnerships and alliances.

During the Estonian Presidency, the Expert Group enjoyed strong global partnerships and acted as an ally, observer, and adviser in several regional and international fora. We shared experiences, recommendations, and practical tools from the Baltic Sea Region to a broader audience and engaged in an exchange information on emerging, developing and ongoing initiatives.

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### **Priority 1. Contributing to regional and global strategic events, consultations, workshops and training opportunities to disseminate practical tools and share learning from the BSR region.**

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The Expert Group is a member or observer in several international and regional fora, including the Global Partnership to End Violence against children, and the EU Victim Rights Platform. The Expert Group furthermore has an observer status to the Lanzarote Committee, which monitors the implementation of the Council of Europe Lanzarote Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, and the Council of Europe Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDEF).

Children at Risk were members to regional and international exchange of good practice, including:

- Council of Europe: Lanzarote Committee, CDEF and consultation group at the Council of Europe on Children of Ukraine meetings.
- EU: Children’s Rights Network and the EU Victim Rights Platform meetings.
- International: End Corporal Punishment Reference Group (closed in late March 2025).

Other contributions include interventions in webinars and organising training sessions for a wide range of stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region and broader Europe. For more information, please see the list of events at the end of this report.

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### **Priority 2. Developing and nurturing relations and joint initiatives with allies and partners in a broad range of areas to explore emerging, developing and ongoing trends and risks to children.**

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Children at Risk engaged in a series of activities, research, and collaboration to address ongoing and developing trends that put children at risk, with the aim of developing and promoting common, practical solutions to protect and empower children in the Baltic Sea Region and beyond. A selection of the activities are introduced below.

#### ***Trafficking & Exploitation***

Children at Risk collaborated with the CBSS Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings to address the specific needs of child victims of trafficking and exploitation, was one of the core Presidency priorities. The Presidency’s initiatives included a joint expert group workshop with the CBSS Task Force Against Trafficking in Human Beings, which focused on child sexual exploitation and related support systems in Estonia. The morning session highlighted support systems and services for children, and presentations covered the role of the Child Helpline, police responses to exploitation cases, and the work of Barnahus Estonia. The afternoon sessions centred on addressing offending behaviour and featured presentations on the treatment of sexual offenders and recent research on sexual exploitation. The meeting facilitated cross-sector dialogue and strengthened regional cooperation on child protection and anti-trafficking efforts.

Collaboration on this topic also finalised in the context of the PROMISE TRM project, which aimed to significantly strengthen the opportunities and means for coordination between (i) authorities and actors specifically involved in responding to trafficking cases and (ii) authorities and actors involved in responding

to violence against children and ensuring child centred justice processes more generally. During the Estonian Presidency, one publication was launched in the context of the Promise TRM project: **Creating a Cycle of Protection - Guiding Principles and Key Considerations for Developing Comprehensive, Child-centred Cooperation to Identify, Support and Assist Trafficked Children**<sup>5</sup>.

This Guidance aims to encourage States to develop and strengthen comprehensive, child-centred cooperation between anti-trafficking and child protection systems. It focuses on the Member States' obligations to identify, support, and assist trafficked children during criminal and child protection proceedings, as well as to prevent child trafficking. It builds on the report *In Need of Targeted Support*, commissioned by CBSS from Child Circle, which focused on whether Barnahus or similar services, could play a role both in enhancing the identification, support and assistance provided to trafficked children and in supporting criminal investigations. The Guidance serves as a support to States in fulfilling their obligations to trafficked children, highlighting relevant international laws, regional resources, and noteworthy practices to inspire further action and cooperation.

The Children at Risk Unit further hosted one webinar in this project on "Creating a Cycle of Protection for Child Victims of Trafficking". This webinar presented the guidance from Promise TRM to support States in developing and strengthening the means for cooperation between anti-trafficking and child protection services. The Guidance encourages States to develop national action plans and to prioritise key pillars of action. The webinar included an introduction to the TRM website, which should support transnational cooperation as regards child victims of trafficking.

### **Safe and Secure Region**

Children at Risk is a flagship for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). The Children at Risk continued its close collaboration with CBSS Secretariat's Civil Security team to explore and strengthen the role of children and youth in promoting a common societal security culture in the BSR and as contributors to building resilient societies.

Both teams collaborated under the scope of the project *Secure Kids*, which aimed to contribute to sustainable and inclusive mechanisms for child participation in planning, implementation and follow up of national and local measures for building resilient societies.

Drawing on the mapping exercise done during the Finnish Presidency and existing practices, work on the child participation mechanism and adaptation tool was finalised. The mechanism consists of strategic

framework and concrete actions with the aim of facilitating the involvement of children and young people in building secure and resilient societies. The adaptation tool aims to guide professionals to easily implement and adapt the mechanism to the specific types of crises, cultures, societies of the Baltic Sea Region. Together, the mechanism and the adaptation tool aim to provide a comprehensive guide for involving children in disaster risk reduction-related activities.

In addition, a strategic guidance for inclusive crisis communication was developed. The guidance serves as a practical, easy to adapt tool to make existing crisis communication strategies more inclusive, child friendly and effective in communication with children.

On January 28 and 29 2025, the *Secure Kids* final conference on strengthening resilience was held in Riga. It gathered over 80 participants, experts, policy-makers, practitioners and children, from the Baltic Sea region (in person and online) to explore child participation in disaster risk reduction. The event focused on why children's voices matter, how to involve them effectively, and best practices for building resilient communities. Through discussions, group workshops, and national and local examples, we discussed how children's involvement can strengthen resilience and help create safer, more prepared communities. The second day of the conference emphasized inclusive crisis communication and strategies to ensure children are actively heard and involved in preparedness efforts.

### **Online Safety**

The CBSS was a partner in Project 2KNOW; developed together with Protect Children and University of Eastern Finland; which aimed at improving national and international data collection on violence against children by developing a sustainable and replicable data collection model suited to gathering information about online violence against children.

The project gathered data directly from anonymous offenders searching for child sexual abuse material on the dark web and the surface web, to understand more about the patterns, characteristics, and trends of online crimes of sexual violence against children today. During the Estonian Presidency, 4 reports were published giving insights on offenders and parents and caregivers of child victims of sexual violence.

2KNOW has also produced a model for parental peer-support groups, to provide practical and psycho-educational support for parents, carers and families – in turn providing essential support to child victims to protect them from further abuse. During the Finnish Presidency, the Children at Risk Unit has supported the

5 R. O'Donnell, "Creating a Cycle of Protection: Guiding Principles and Key Considerations for Developing Comprehensive, Child-centred Cooperation to Identify, Support and Assist Trafficked Children", Council of the Baltic Sea States, 16 September 2024, <https://childrenatrisk.cbss.org/publications/creating-a-cycle-of-protection/>

setting up of two pilots for the parental peer support groups in Sweden (Barnahus Linköping) and Ireland (Barnahus West).

The Children at Risk Unit has further organised four webinars and two trainings within the scope of the project aiming at disseminating findings from the project. The first two webinars were held during the Finnish Presidency, discussing research on offenders of online sexual violence against children and the data collection model used to gather information from offenders. The final two webinars were held in October 2024 and February 2025, on the You are Enough™ parental peer support groups for parents of child victims of online sexual violence and the final insights from research on active offenders of online crimes of sexual violence against children. The two trainings, on understanding online child sexual abuse offenders and on the use of trauma-informed approach when working with parents and caregivers of children who have fallen victims to online sexual violence, were held online in October and November 2025. The 2KNOW Final Conference, held at the European Parliament on 4 February 2025, showcased key findings from the 2KNOW Project to advance global efforts against online sexual violence toward children. With over 350 participants from 36 countries (in person and online), the event featured insights from EU officials, experts, and the Protect Children team, highlighting research on offender behaviour, prevention, and legislative strategies.

The Elpis project promotes multidisciplinary and interagency models for child victims and witnesses of sexual violence, with a specific focus on specialised interventions and excellence in practice in cases where there is a presumed online element of the sexual violence. The overall objective is to ensure early identification, adequate assistance, protection and access to child-friendly justice, with specific emphasis on cases where online technology is an integral element to the abuse, by: (A) Contributing to a competent and committed multidisciplinary teams, equipped to provide a holistic and balanced intervention, including investigation and assistance (B) Supporting specialised professional interventions and operational capacity, adapted to the specific requirements and needs that may arise in the context of cases involving some form of online child sexual violence, and (C) Contributing key experience and learning from the project to regional policy development and exchange, in particular in light of ongoing EU Strategies relevant to the field, and proposed revision of EU instruments.

A key focus of the project is to develop and evaluate protocols and procedures, to contribute to a committed and competent workforce, and to promote holistic interventions that benefit from effective interagency case management to ensure that victims in the context of online child sexual violence receive appropriate and holistic support. To this end, several trainings were organised by the Children at Risk Unit:

- A basic training on child abuse, with a focus on the features, prevalence, and impact of online child sexual violence.
- A Crisis Support for Cases of Online Sexual Violence Against Children, which explored the growing prevalence and complexity of online sexual violence, as well as crisis support strategies tailored for children and caregivers.
- A two-part training programme focused on Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (TF-CBT), with a special emphasis on supporting children affected by online sexual violence.

A training was also held on how to use the toolkit on interagency case management, which was published in March 2025. The toolkit offers a comprehensive guide for Barnahus seeking to implement interagency case management effectively. Readers gain insights into establishing formal procedures, conducting child-centred case planning, and maintaining continuous case reviews — all while ensuring the child’s voice remains central throughout the process. Practical tools, case examples, and clear frameworks provide actionable guidance for improving interagency collaboration, reducing (re)traumatisation, and promoting more effective support for child victims.

The Children at Risk Unit also took the lead in organising a networking event in Brussels in May 2025, in the context of the Promise Elpis project. The Networking Event on Strengthening Multidisciplinary and Interagency Collaboration in Cases of Online Child Sexual Violence brought together 39 project partners, EU representatives, and experts. The event shared insights, tools, and innovations from the PROMISE Elpis Project and others. Discussions covered child and caregiver perspectives, forensic interview techniques, and collaborative responses, with an emphasis on future cooperation and practical solutions to combat online child sexual violence.

### **Corporal Punishment**

The CBSS continues to support the promotion of the full implementation of a ban on corporal punishment of children. The Children at Risk Unit participated in the reference group on corporal punishment, which has a new hosting arrangement with the WHO.

On 17 October 2025, the Children at Risk Unit organised a webinar on effective campaigns to end corporal punishment. This webinar, hosted by End Corporal Punishment and CBSS Children at Risk, brought the opportunity to hear from impactful campaigners from around the world, learning how they use effective strategies to achieve law reform and changing norms and behaviour when it comes to corporal punishment of children.

# SELECTION OF EVENTS AND MEETINGS UNDER THE ESTONIAN PRESIDENCY

## September 2024

**4 September, online:** ‘BaseCan- Basic knowledge-Children and Sexual abuse’ training for the EU-funded project Promise Elpis (Children at Risk Adviser Shawwna von Blixen)

**5 September, online:** Webinar for the EU-funded project Promise TRM (Children at Risk Head of Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Adviser Shawwna von Blixen, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud, Children at Risk Research and Policy Assistant Sven Wilson, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen)

**5 September, online:** First ISO international workshop on „Barnahus model, a child friendly multidisciplinary and interagency (MDIA) response model for the investigation and treatment of child abuse - requirements“ (Children at Risk Head of Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Adviser Shawwna von Blixen)

**12 September, online:** EG CAR Consultation meeting on the review of the CBSS Guidelines on promoting the human rights and best interests of the child in transnational child protection and the Practical Guide for caseworkers and case officers in transnational child protection cases (Children at Risk Head of Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Adviser Shawwna von Blixen, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud, Children at Risk Research and Policy Assistant Sven Wilson, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen)

**17-19 September, Liepaja:** Secure Kids Workshop Development of scenario-based training (Children at Risk Research and Policy Assistant Sven Wilson)

**18 September, online:** BaseCan - Sexual exploitation and online sexual abuse - Prevalence and Characteristics training for the EU-funded project Promise Elpis (Children at Risk Adviser Shawwna von Blixen)

**18-19 September, Tallinn:** CAR Expert Group meeting cases (Children at Risk Head of Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud)

## October 2024

**2 October, online:** ‘BaseCan- Professional responses on OSA’ training for the EU-funded project Promise Elpis (Children at Risk Adviser Shawwna von Blixen)

**9 October, online:** Barnahus Network General Assembly (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Adviser Shawwna von Blixen)

**14-17 October, Linköping:** Training in child protection and study visit with Bulgarian delegation to Barnahus Linköping for the EEA-funded project on Promoting multidisciplinary and interagency justice and response for child and witnesses of violence in Bulgaria (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Adviser Shawwna von Blixen, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud)

**17 October, online:** ‘You are Enough’ webinar for the EU-funded project 2Know (Children at Risk Research and Policy Assistant Sven Wilson, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen)

**18 October, Gothenburg:** Swedish national conference against human trafficking (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson)

**23 October, online:** ‘New research on offenders of online sexual violence against children: Implications for prevention’ training for the EU-funded project 2Know (Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud, Children at Risk Research and Policy Assistant Sven Wilson, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen)

**23-24 October, Reykjavik:** Second ISO international workshop on „Barnahus model, a child friendly multidisciplinary and interagency (MDIA) response model for the investigation and treatment of child abuse - requirements“ (Children at Risk Head of Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Adviser Shawwna von Blixen)

## November 2024

**6 November, online:** ‘BaseCan - Support and Treatment for Child Victims of OSA and Evaluation for observers’ training for the EU-funded project Promise Elpis (Children at Risk Adviser Shawwna von Blixen)

**12 November, online:** ‘Child participation tools at Barnahus’ webinar for the EU-funded project Journeys (Children at Risk Head of Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Adviser Shawwna von Blixen, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen)

**14 November, online:** ‘You are enough’ parental peer-support model training for the EU-funded project 2Know (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen)

**18 November, online:** ‘BaseCan - Examination and

Evaluation' training for the EU-funded project Promise Elpis (Children at Risk Adviser Shawwna von Blixen)

**18-19 November, Brussels:** Fifth Meeting of the EU Network for Children's Rights (Children at Risk Adviser Shawwna von Blixen)

**20 November, Linköping:** Promise Journeys project final conference (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud, Children at Risk Research and Policy Assistant Sven Wilson, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen)

**21 November, Linköping:** Swedish Barnahus Network meeting (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson)

**28 November, Tallinn:** Joint Children at Risk Expert Group and TF-THB Expert Group workshop (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Adviser Shawwna von Blixen, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud, Children at Risk Research and Policy Assistant Sven Wilson, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen)

**29 November, Tallinn:** Children at Risk Expert Group meeting (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Adviser Shawwna von Blixen, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud, Children at Risk Research and Policy Assistant Sven Wilson, Children at Risk Intern Natascha Beck Hansen)

## December 2024

**2-4 December, Sofia/online:** Training in Barnahus support to marginalised children for the EEA-funded project on Promoting multidisciplinary and interagency justice and response for child and witnesses of violence in Bulgaria (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson)

**10 December, online:** Third ISO international workshop on „Barnahus model, a child friendly multidisciplinary and interagency (MDIA) response model for the investigation and treatment of child abuse - requirements“ (Children at Risk Head of Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Adviser Shawwna von Blixen)

**10-11 December, Ljubljana:** Study visit to Barnahus Slovenia organised under the EEA-funded project Barnahus Lithuania (Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen)

## January 2025

**23 January, Malmö:** Secure Kids Scenario-based Interactive Workshop at Fryshuset (Children at Risk Research and Policy Assistant Sven Wilson)

**28-29 January, Riga:** Secure Kids project final conference (Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud,

Children at Risk Research and Policy Assistant Sven Wilson, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen)

## February 2025

**4 February, Brussels:** 2Know project final conference (Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud)

**5 February, Brussels:** 2know project final consortium meeting (Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud)

**13 February, online:** Children at Risk Expert Group meeting (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud, Children Policy Assistant Sven Wilson, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen, Children at Risk Intern Adrien Couto)

**17-18 February, Stockholm/online:** Secure Kids final partner meeting (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud, Children at Risk Research and Policy Assistant Sven Wilson, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen, Children at Risk Intern Adrien Couto)

**20 February, online:** 'New research on offenders of online sexual violence against children: Implications for prevention' webinar for the EU-funded project 2Know (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen)

**27 February, Vilnius:** First national roundtable organized under the scope of the EEA-funded project on Promoting multidisciplinary and interagency justice and response for child and witnesses of violence in Lithuania (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson)

## March 2025

**17-20 March, Huntsville:** NCAC's 41st International Symposium on Child Abuse (Children at Risk Research and Policy Assistant Sven Wilson)

## April 2025

**1-2 April, online:** Training on child protection in Barnahus organised for the EU-funded project Promise Soteria (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud, Children at Risk Research and Policy Assistant Sven Wilson, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen)

**9 April, Vilnius:** Second national roundtable organized under the scope of the EEA-funded project on

Promoting multidisciplinary and interagency justice and response for child and witnesses of violence in Lithuania (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson)

**9-10 April, Sofia/online:** Training in treatment of children with harmful sexual behavior for the EEA-funded project on Promoting multidisciplinary and interagency justice and response for child and witnesses of violence in Bulgaria (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson)

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## May 2025

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**14-15 May, Tallinn:** Children at Risk Expert Group meeting and Estonian presidency conference on child participation (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud, Children at Risk Research and Policy Assistant Sven Wilson, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen, Children at Risk Unit Intern Adrien Couto)

**19 May, Brussels/online:** Promise Elpis project final conference (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud, Children at Risk Research and Policy Assistant Sven Wilson, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen, Children at Risk Unit Intern Adrien Couto)

**20 May, Brussels/online:** Promise Elpis project final consortium meeting (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud, Children at Risk Research and Policy Assistant Sven Wilson, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen, Children at Risk Unit Intern Adrien Couto)

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## June 2025

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**12-13 June, Tallinn:** Promise Soteria project final conference and Barnahus Forum (Head of Children at Risk Unit Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Children at Risk Programme Coordinator Laura Daoud, Children at Risk Research and Policy Assistant Sven Wilson, Children at Risk Communication Assistant Natascha Beck Hansen, Children at Risk Unit Intern Adrien Couto)