



CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk (EG CAR)
Regional Strategy
July 2025 – June 2030

Foreword

Vision and Mission Statement

The vision of CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk (hereinafter “the Expert Group”) for the Baltic Sea Region is to provide equal opportunities for all children, especially those at risk of harm, to grow, develop and thrive free from all forms of violence, as defined in UNCRC article 19.

Achieving this vision requires concerted efforts to build inclusive, resilient, and efficient national systems dedicated to the protection and support of children at risk. We envision a Baltic Sea Region where every child is given opportunities for participation and active engagement in creating a sustainable, safe, and secure society.

Our mission is to facilitate knowledge exchange to strengthen the protection and rights of children across the Baltic Sea Region. By deepening cross-border cooperation, building trust and driving joint initiatives, we work to provide children in the Baltic Sea Region with equal opportunities to grow, develop and thrive free from all forms of violence.

Strategy 2025-2030¹

The Expert Group on Children at Risk (EG CAR) consists of representatives from 10 CBSS Member States. In 2024, the EG CAR members engaged in exchange, a survey and consultations to inform its strategy in the period of 1 July 2025 through 30 June 2030.

The EG CAR unanimously agreed that the new strategy should be ambitious, but realistic in relation to the funds available. The strategy should be firmly connected to the mandate, added value and role of the EG CAR to engage in Baltic Sea regional dialogue and practical collaboration.

To this end, the strategy should include one core strategic action, involving exchange on topics concerning children at risk of harm. Key topics of interest identified in the survey include prevention and early intervention, child participation, child protection systems, alternative care and cross-border collaboration in child protection.

Alongside the core priority, the strategy should prescribe an open and flexible approach to practical collaboration in ongoing, emerging and developing areas of concern that put children at risk.

Drawing on these results, this strategy establishes one core priority area (Member State engagement and regional exchange on children at risk of harm), and four focus areas to guide a flexible approach to practical collaboration and action (Promoting multidisciplinary and

¹ In case of changing circumstances, the CBSS may introduce modifications to the validity period of the EG CAR strategy and mandate, in consultation with the Expert group on children at risk.

interagency services for child victims and witnesses of violence; Non-violent Childhoods; Sexual Violence and Inclusion and equity).

The strategy is grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, specifically article 19.

In implementing the strategy, the EG CAR considers relevant global and regional legal frameworks, standards, agendas, goals and strategiesⁱ, to ensure strategic direction, positive synergies, complementarity and added value in achieving global and regional commitments to children. The Expert Group works closely with representatives from national authorities, civil society, international and regional organisations and networks, professionals, academia and engages in close cooperation with other units at the CBSS Secretariat.

In line with the CBSS Child Safeguarding Policy, the Expert Group and the CAR Unit at the CBSS Secretariat are fully committed to the mission of keeping children protected and safeguarded from actions that place them at risk of violence, abuse, exploitation, injury and any other harm.

Regional exchange on children at risk of harm in the Baltic Sea Region

The core strategic priority of the Expert Group on children at risk is to promote and facilitate Member State exchange of information, practice and initiatives to prevent and address risks of harm² to children in the Baltic Sea Region.

The EG CAR will engage in structured exchange to share knowledge and practice to prevent and address risks of harm to children in the Baltic Sea Region, with the aim of creating a deeper understanding of common national and cross-border challenges, to build trust and collaboration, and to develop joint initiatives and practical collaboration.

The topics for regional exchange will be determined considering:

- The EG CAR mandate, including the vision, mission, role and added value of the EG CAR.
- Presidency Priorities: Active collaboration between the Presidency Trio to ensure continuity and coherence through long-term planning, follow up and alignment of Presidency priorities.
- Common key priority areas to the EG CAR:
 - Building trust in child protection systems
 - Prevention and early intervention
 - Child Participation
 - Inclusive and resilient child protection systems
 - Alternative care
 - Cross-border collaboration in child protection cases
 - Multidisciplinary interventions, including Barnahus

Core activities³

- EG CAR Meetings: Regular exchange facilitated by structured information-sharing frameworks, expert interventions and dialogue
- Documenting and disseminating practice: Noteworthy practice from the region will be documented and disseminated through the web-based *Registry of Baltic Sea Region Child Protection Practice*, <https://childrenatrisk.cbss.org/practices/>

Other activities (depending on resources and interest)

- Themed Conferences: Theme-specific conferences, including Presidency conferences.
- Joint Capacity-Building Initiatives: Workshops, webinars, and other training sessions focused on specific areas of interest to the EG CAR members.
- Research and Report Sharing: Presentation of research or reports pertinent to the group's focus. The EG CAR can also commission research, mapping, analysis or reports depending on resources and interest.

² UNCRC Article 19

³ As referred to in the EG CAR Mandate under "Role of the Expert Group".

- Bilateral exchange programs: Prioritising targeted exchange between two or more members on current and pressing issues.

Resources

This priority is mainly resourced by the EG CAR core budget and Presidency funds. Projects targeting a specific topic may be explored.

Practical collaboration on ongoing, developing and emerging priority areas in the Baltic Sea Region

This strategy recognises the importance of building on ongoing work, while maintaining flexibility to respond to developing and emerging risks of harm to children in the Baltic Sea region. As such, the CAR Expert Group adopts an open and flexible approach to defining additional strategic priorities and practical collaboration.

The Expert Group will monitor ongoing, developing and emerging challenges for children in the Baltic Sea Region and explore initiatives that maximise the added value and potential impact of the EG CAR in four priority areas:

Promoting multidisciplinary and interagency services for child victims and witnesses of violence

To promote the rights of child victims and witnesses of violence to justice, protection, healing and to be heard, receive information, assistance and support through effective, professional and child friendly and multidisciplinary interventions.

Initiatives can include, but are not limited to, e.g. promoting multidisciplinary interventions and child friendly justice, including Barnahus as an observer to the Barnahus Network.

Non-violent Childhoods

To promote the rights of children, as defined in the UNCRC article 19, to be protected from all forms of violence through prevention, early response and effective interventions.

Initiatives can focus on, but are not limited to, e.g. domestic violence, physical and humiliating punishment, psychological violence, neglect, gender-based violence, honour related crimes, child/youth criminality.

Sexual Violence

To promote the rights of children to be protected from all forms of sexual violence, including sexual violence facilitated by technology and AI, through prevention and effective interventions.

Initiatives can focus on, but are not limited to, e.g. sexual abuse and exploitation, incest, harmful sexual behaviour, online sexual abuse and exploitation, child abuse images, trafficking for sexual purposes.

Inclusion and equity

To promote inclusion and the rights of children to non-discrimination, equity and equal opportunities.

Initiatives can focus on, but are not limited to, e.g. child participation, marginalised children, children in institutional care and/or foster care, adoption, separated and/or missing children, children with disabilities/special needs, rural populations, minorities, LGBTQIA+.

Priorities and initiatives will be developed considering:

- Common ongoing, emerging, and developing concerns that place children in the Baltic Sea Region at risk of harm (UNCRC article 19), where the EG CAR has a clear added value and potential impact.
- Long-standing and ongoing commitments and priorities, falling under the four key focus areas identified in this strategy.
- Continuity and coherence between Presidency priorities, through active collaboration between outgoing, current and incoming Presidencies (Trio) to ensure long-term planning.
- The EG CAR mandate, including the vision, mission and role of the EG CAR.
- The availability of resources and funding opportunities.

Priorities and initiatives can be initiated by:

- Member proposals: Member states may propose priorities and initiatives, based on national developments or transnational concerns, during the expert group meetings.
- Spin-off from projects, events or other activity: Flexible priorities can be a spin-off from an ongoing initiative or activity that highlights an issue of common interest to the Expert Group.
- Partner proposals: EG CAR will consider proposals from external partners to join initiatives, including projects, provided they align with the strategy of EG CAR and the long-term priorities of the CBSS.
- Funding-Dependent Initiatives: Flexible priorities will also be influenced by the availability of funding and resources, ensuring that the group can respond effectively to donor priorities and opportunities for external support.

Resources

The flexible priorities are resourced by projects or voluntary contributions from member states.

Implementation and reporting

Annual workplans

This strategy is guided by the development of annual Presidency workplans to support implementation and promote progress in the respective priority areas.

The annual workplans includes clear objectives, activities, expected outcome and deliverables/outputs for each priority area. The annual workplans are developed and adopted by the Presidency, in dialogue with the Trio to ensure consistency and sustainability of initiatives across the five-year strategy.

Monitoring and reporting

The implementation of the strategy will be monitored by the CAR Unit against the activities and deliverables established in the Presidency annual workplans.

The CAR Unit at the Secretariat will report to the Expert Group on the implementation of the annual workplans at least two times per year.

Evaluation

The strategy will be evaluated, with the support of the CAR Unit, mid-term and towards the end-term to establish relevance, sustainability and added value. The results of the evaluation will inform potential review of the ongoing strategy, and the development of a new strategy.

ⁱ For example the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals; the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region; the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child; the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child, the Nordic Council of Ministers cross-sectoral strategy on children and young people and; relevant Council of Europe documents adopted by all CBSS Member States.