

# Barnahus: a European journey

Findings of a mapping study on multidisciplinary and interagency child-friendly justice models responding to violence against children



## PROGRAMME

**PUBLIC EVENT**  
**Strasbourg and online**  
**28 September 2023**  
**Room G03, Agora**

Organised jointly by the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) and the Lanzarote Committee

[\*Click here for livestreaming\*](#)



Building a Europe  
for and with children  
Construire une Europe  
pour et avec les enfants



## Background information

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■ Barnahus (Children’s House) is the leading European response model for child sexual abuse. Its unique interagency approach brings together all relevant services under one roof to prevent secondary victimisation of the child and provide every child with a coordinated and effective response. The core purpose of Barnahus is to co-ordinate parallel criminal and child welfare investigations and support protection, recovery and justice for child victims and witnesses of violence in a child-friendly and safe environment. The Barnahus model was first launched in Europe in Iceland in 1998 and sought inspiration from the Child Advocacy Center model in the United States. The Icelandic Barnahus model is considered as a promising practice by the Committee of the Parties to the Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse ([Lanzarote Committee](#)). It has without any doubt provided a clear direction and interest by member States of the Council of Europe to explore the model in their own countries and has today inspired many countries to take their first steps in establishing a Barnahus.

■ The Children’s Rights Division, under the Project “Protecting children from human rights violations of all forms and in all settings”, and thanks to a voluntary contribution by the Icelandic Government, has undertaken a **mapping study on the implementation and development of the Barnahus model** across Council of Europe member States, framed under **Priority 4** of the Council of Europe [Strategy for the Rights of the Child](#) (2022-2027): “**Child-friendly justice for all children**”.

■ This activity is part of the Council of Europe’s broader efforts to promote, including through co-operation projects upon the request of member States, the Barnahus model, to ensure that the best interests of the child are upheld in investigations and criminal proceedings, and to provide support for child victims and witnesses of sexual and other forms of violence in a child-friendly and safe environment, thus making child-friendly justice a true reality.

■ By undertaking this study, the Council of Europe aims at promoting the Barnahus model by **strengthening and developing further action** at pan-European level and, more specifically:

- Consolidating the **knowledge base** on the use of the Barnahus model across Europe, to gain an overview of the **availability** of such structures across member States and understand their **functioning, success factors, and obstacles** met in their implementation;
- Analysing the **implementation of relevant Council of Europe standards**, including the Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention), the Guidelines on Child-friendly Justice, the Guidelines on Integrated National Strategies for the protection of children from violence, the Recommendation on children’s rights and social services friendly to children and families, the Guidelines on child-friendly health care, and the Recommendation on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18;
- Contributing to the **definition and promotion of the highest standards** regarding this promising practice of child-friendly justice;
- Facilitating **relevant international exchanges** among Council of Europe member States, as well as other relevant organisations and experts;
- Creating a resource as well as a **tool for Council of Europe member States who may wish to implement the model** or other “Barnahus-type services” or to improve any structures or models already in place; and,
- Illustrating the future potential of the Barnahus model as a **replicable model in other areas** (i.e. for child returnees from conflict zones, in civil or family law proceedings, in the context of migration, children affected by war etc.).

A [promotional video on Barnahus](#) has also been produced in parallel.

## Draft Programme

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**Thursday, 28 September 2023 – 9:30 – 12:30 (CEST)**

- 9:30 am **Welcoming remarks**
- **Zaruhi Gasparyan**, Head of Co-operation Projects Unit a.i., Children’s Rights Division, Council of Europe
  - **Ólöf Ásta Farestveit**, General Director, The National Agency for Children and Families of Iceland
- 9:45 am **What is Barnahus really about?**  
Screening of the promotional video on Barnahus
- 9:50 am **Panel 1 – The potential of Barnahus in Europe: state of play and future perspectives**
- Mapping study on multidisciplinary and interagency response models to violence against children: findings and recommendations**
- **Susanna Greijer** and **Daja Wenke**, International consultants and drafters of the study
- Q&A Session / Discussion**
- 10:40 am **Panel 2 – Lanzarote Committee and Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF): initiatives on Barnahus**
- Presentation of the work of the Lanzarote Committee by:**
- **Maria José Castello-Branco**, Legal Adviser, Civil Justice Unit, International Affairs Department, Directorate General for Justice Policy, Ministry of Justice of Portugal, Chairperson of the Lanzarote Committee
- Presentation of the work of the CDENF by:**
- **Rosário Farmhouse**, President of the National Commission for the Promotion of the Rights and the Protection of Children and Young People of Portugal, Chairperson of the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF)
- 10:55 am **Coffee break**
- 11:15 am **Panel 3 – National experiences: multidisciplinary and interagency structures in practice**
- Presentation of country-specific examples by:**
- **Oleksandr Baranov**, Director of the Coordination Center of Free legal Aid, **Ukraine**
  - **Taina Laajasalo**, Chief Researcher at National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), Forensic Psychologist, **Finland**
  - **Ninel Jasmine Sadjadi**, Management Centre for Victim Assistance, **Austria**
  - **Daniela Simboteanu**, Head of NCCAP, **Republic of Moldova**
  - **Laura Korhonen**, Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Head, National Competence Centre Barnafrid, Linköping University, **Sweden**
- Q&A Session / Discussion**
- 12:15 pm **Concluding remarks on the Council of Europe and Barnahus**
- **Regína Jensdóttir**, Head of the Children’s Rights Division and Council of Europe Coordinator for the Rights of the Child