

Towards Barnahus in All European States; Ensuring the Rights of Every Child



PROGRAMME

Strasbourg, 16 November 2022
Palais de l'Europe, Room 1

**High-level event organised on
the occasion of the European Day
on the Protection of Children
against Sexual Exploitation
and Sexual Abuse**

Organised by the Council of Europe
and the Council of the Baltic Sea States
under the Icelandic Presidency of
the Committee of Ministers of
the Council of Europe

Background

The [European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#) (18 November), supports and promotes the organisation of international, regional, national and local initiatives aimed to raise awareness and generate discussions on the broad topic of sexual violence against children. The theme of the 2022 edition of the European Day is “Getting it right: ensuring child-friendly justice through Barnahus structures in Europe”. The Council of Europe partners every year with a wide audience to celebrate the European Day, including member states and civil society organisations.

Barnahus (Children’s House) is the leading European response model for child sexual abuse. Its unique inter-agency approach brings together all relevant services under one roof to avoid re-victimisation of the child and provide every child with a coordinated and effective response. The core purpose of Barnahus is to coordinate 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 Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) is also at the core of the efforts to support European States to establish, sustain, and reach excellence in their Barnahus practice, through the PROMISE Barnahus Network.¹

Under the Icelandic Presidency, Mr Ásmundur Einar Daðason, Minister for Education and Children of Iceland, will present Iceland’s political priority for Barnahus type services to be set up across Europe on the occasion of the European Day. Ms Marija Pejčinović Burić, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, will refer to the efficiency of the model from the perspective of the Council of Europe standards. Mr Grzegorz M Poznański, Director General of the Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat will then address the audience presenting CBSS priorities.

Thanks to concerted interest and efforts of international and European intergovernmental organisations and civil society, the Barnahus model has been and is being adapted in other European countries. Together, these actors play an important role in providing sustainable action to generate political will to explore and adapt the Barnahus model and to support harmonised practice according to European law, guidance and standards. Bringing together key international actors, this high-level meeting is an opportunity to explore the Barnahus concept, including what works, opportunities for improvement, and potential adjustments to national legal frameworks.

¹ [PROMISE Barnahus Network](#)

The Council of Europe and the Council of the Baltic Sea States are committed to ensuring that when a Barnahus is set up, it meets the recognised legal and quality standards, as harmonised across Europe, and that sustainability is ensured. Lessons should be shared with a critical eye to further improving the response offered by the Barnahus model. This aims to generate a momentum for a new era of Barnahus where organisations efforts are coordinated to ensure access to Barnahus that excel in practice to promote protection, recovery and justice.

Participants will be invited to address the following questions:

- **What is your organisation’s strategy in supporting the development of Barnahus in Europe?**
- **What are the short- and medium-term plans of your organisation in setting up Barnahus in Council of Europe member States, or possibly beyond Europe?**
- **In this work, how can you ensure that Barnahus is set up bearing in mind international and European legal standards and guidelines ensuring the quality of the structure?**
- **Are there systematic obstacles within states that challenge the setting up of Barnahus?**
- **To what extent can Barnahus be further developed to address new challenges, including sexual abuse in the digital environment?**
- **Are there new innovative working methods that are being developed that could be shared with other Barnahus structures?**

The success factors of Barnahus will be presented and countries with whom the Council of Europe and the CBSS have worked with, will showcase their achievements in this regard (Iceland, Slovenia, Spain, Cyprus).

In connection with the above discussions, The Icelandic Presidency will host a reception for the participants of the High-level coordination meeting, as well as members and observers of the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) to celebrate the success of the model and call for action to ensure a coordinated quality based European approach for Barnahus.

On the same day Mr Ásmundur Einar Daðason, Minister for Education and Children of Iceland, will chair a meeting of the Committee of Ministers to endorse a statement/declaration supporting the implementation of Barnahus in Europe.

Wednesday 16 November 2022	
14:00	<p>Welcoming remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr Ásmundur Einar Daðason, Minister of Education and Children of Iceland - Ms Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe - Mr Grzegorz M Poznański, Director General, Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat (video message)
14:30	<p>Keynote speech</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms Najat Maalla M'jid, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children (video message)
14:35-17:30	<p>Thematic Session: Towards a coordinated agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moderator: Ms Irena Guidikova, Head of the Children's Rights and Sport Values Department, Council of Europe
14:40	<p>Council of Europe approach, setting the scene for Barnahus type models</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms Regína Jensdóttir, Head of Children's Rights Division and Council of Europe Coordinator for the Rights of the Child
14:55	<p>Barnahus Quality Standards and the PROMISE Barnahus Network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms Olivia Lind Haldorsson, Senior Adviser & Head of the Children at Risk Unit, Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)
15:10	<p>Q&A sessions</p>
15:25	<p>Coffee break</p>
15:40	<p>EU integrated child protection system – EU Strategy on the rights of the child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms Marie-Cécile Rouillon, European Commission's Coordinator for the rights of the child (DG JUST) - Mr Sébastien Renaud, Deputy Head of Unit for Governance and Public Administration for the European Commission (DG REFORM)
16:00	<p>UNICEF interventions in Europe to set up Barnahus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms Ina Verzivolli, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECARO)

16:15	Lessons learnt from the Barnahus model in Iceland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms Ólöf Ásta Farestveit, Director General of the National Agency for Children and Families, Iceland
16:30	Country specific achievements in setting up Barnahus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr Andrej Del Fabro, Head of the Child-friendly Criminal Justice Department, Ministry of Justice, Slovenia - Ms Anastasia Papadopoulou, President of the Council “FONI”, Cyprus - Ms Liisa Järvillehto, International Affairs Coordinator at Barnahus, Finland
17:00	The role of civil society in setting up and running of Barnahus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms Emilie Rivas, Head of childhood policies in Catalonia, Save the Children-Spain
17:15	<i>Q&A sessions</i>
17:30	Closing remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms Marja Ruotanen, Director General of Democracy and Human Dignity Directorate, Council of Europe
17:45	<i>End of the high-level event</i>