



Barnahus (Children's House):
a leading model in Europe for child-friendly,
multidisciplinary and interagency response
towards child sexual abuse

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What is Barnahus?

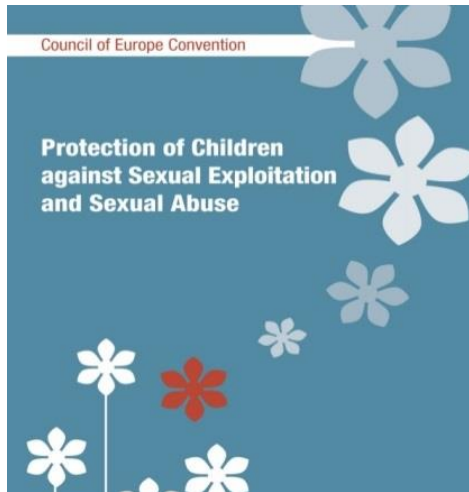


- Coordinates **parallel criminal and child welfare investigations** of cases on violence against children, including OCSEA, and provides support services for child victims and their families
- Unique **interagency model** that brings together all relevant criminal, health care and child protection actors in one child-friendly premise.



Child-friendly justice approach

- Council of Europe Lanzarote Convention
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- EU Directives on Victims' Rights and Child Sexual Abuse
- Council of Europe guidelines on child-friendly justice
- Barnahus Quality Standards (CBSS)
- Sustainable Development Goals: 16.2





Leading response model in Europe

- Developed in Iceland in 1998
- Identified by the **Lanzarote Committee in 2015** as an example of a **promising practice**
- Being replicated /adapted in more than 20 countries

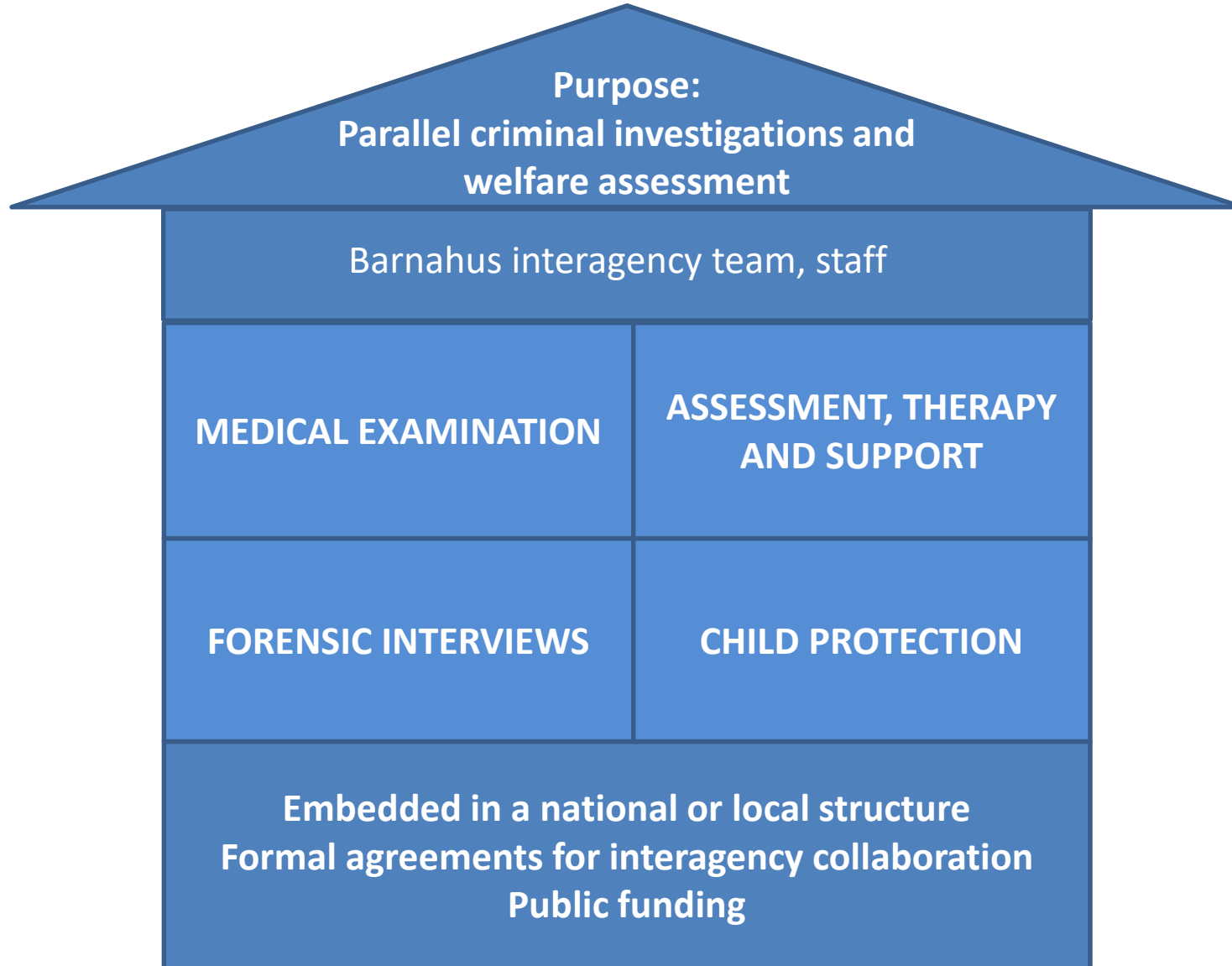




Child at the centre of proceedings



- To avoid repeated interviews with the child by many agencies and professionals in different locations
 - ✓ Reduces risks for secondary victimization of child victims
 - ✓ Ensures evidentiary validity of the child's disclosure
 - ✓ Ensures due process – also for the defendant







STEP 1

- Report of suspected case

STEP 2

- Joint action by social services and police

STEP 3

- Referral to Barnahus

STEP 4

- Forensic interview

STEP 5

- Medical examination

STEP 6

- Interagency case planning

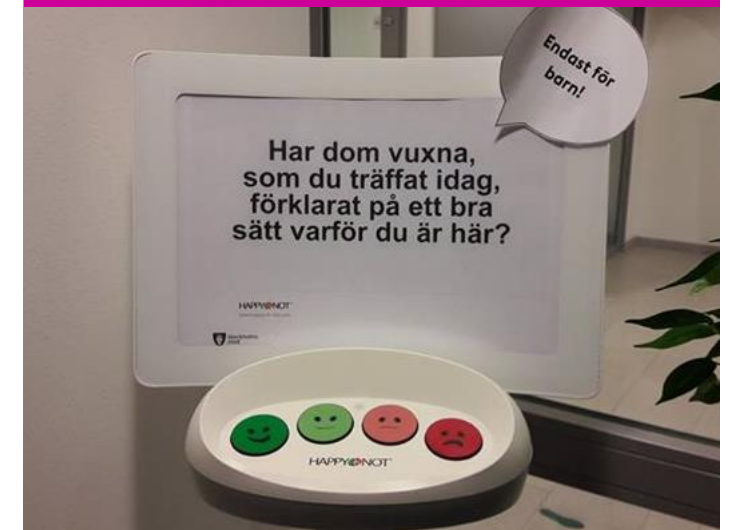
STEP 7

- Trauma assessment and therapy

STEP 8

- Follow-up by Barnahus

Barnahus procedure





Barnahus and online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA)



- All Barnahus deal with cases of OCSEA
 - ✓ Children forced to take/send pictures of sexual nature
 - ✓ Photographs/videos of sexual nature shown to or taken of the child
 - ✓ Sexual abuse through internet
 - ✓ Meeting of perpetrator through internet
- A rising trend: increase in sexting, cyber-grooming and cyberbullying
- Non-contact violence still underestimated in courts



Evolving model: Barnahus response to OCSEA

- “Online” vs. “offline” child sexual abuse
 - ✓ Anonymity - 24/7 potentially lifelong exposure – high number of victims per perpetrator(s)
 - ✓ Longer investigation times by law enforcement (local, national, international)
 - ✓ Different methods to detect OCSEA
- Emerging promising practices
 - ✓ Specific treatment focus of OCSEA cases on safety (physical, emotional, virtual)
 - ✓ Education on internet safety
 - ✓ Relationship within family/caretakers: trust vs. surveillance



Why Barnahus?

- **Compelling results:**
 - ✓ **twice** as many cases of suspected child sexual abuse investigated
 - ✓ **three times** as many cases prosecuted
 - ✓ number of convictions **doubled**
 - ✓ increased **visibility** and higher number of reported cases
- **Centralised expertise** on child sexual abuse strengthens:
 - ✓ Research, data collection
 - ✓ Staff training and specialization
- Does not require an important financial investment, but change in working methods and mindsets
- Both offline and online child sexual abuse



What does the Council of Europe offer?

Step-by-step approach and support throughout the process:

- Feasibility assessment
- Defining implementation modalities and the organizational and operational set up:
Purpose and scope of Barnahus, roles and responsibilities for each partner
 - ✓ Barnahus law; local interagency agreement/procedures
- Training and tools for staff and professionals
 - ✓ EndOCSEA@Europe: OCSEA training for judges, prosecutors, lawyers and criminal investigators



THANK YOU!



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WEBSITES

www.coe.int/children

www.coe.int/en/web/children/barnahus-project-in-slovenia

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/endocsea-europe>