

**P R O M I S E**  
PROJECT SERIES

# **Enabling Child-Sensitive Justice**

**The Success Story of the Barnahus Model  
and its Expansion in Europe**

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# Contents

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<b>Enabling access to justice for child victims of violence: A documentation of processes of change ..</b>	<b>2</b>
PROMISE: Promoting quality standards and guidance for Barnahus and comparable services in Europe .....	3
International and European standards: The case for child-sensitive justice .....	3
The history of Barnahus in Europe .....	5
Barnahus – Child Advocacy Centres – Child-friendly Centres: A diversity of models .....	5
Study methodology .....	6
<b>It starts with pioneers: Leading officials and advocates champion the Barnahus model in Europe ..</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Promoting the Barnahus model: Advocacy for change.....</b>	<b>11</b>
The first steps: From sensitisation to recognition of the need to act.....	11
Conceiving opportunities for change: The convincing nature of the Barnahus model .....	17
Strategic partnership and concerted advocacy for establishing the Barnahus .....	20
Inspiration from abroad: How international advocates and regional cooperation have enabled change.....	23
<b>Establishing the Barnahus model: Grasping opportunities and confronting challenges .....</b>	<b>30</b>
A multi-step process towards the establishment of Barnahus.....	30
Considerations for the establishment: Grasping opportunities and confronting challenges .....	42
Funding for the establishment: Securing a diversity of budget sources to enable permanency and flexibility ..	48
Forms of establishment: Project base or institution – pilot or permanent .....	53
<b>Enabling sustainability and continued development: Evidence, standard setting and cross-border exchange .....</b>	<b>59</b>
Fostering confidence and trust within and towards the Barnahus team .....	59
Increasing caseloads and expansion of the target group .....	61
Technical advice, support and mentoring .....	64
An enabling environment for learning, teaching and development .....	65
Connections between Barnahus management and policy makers .....	71
Barnahus as a centre of excellence and an advocate for children’s rights.....	72
Fostering cross-border learning and exchange: Toward a European network of Barnahus .....	73
<b>References.....</b>	<b>75</b>

# Enabling access to justice for child victims of violence: A documentation of processes of change

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After the first Barnahus ('Children's House') had become operational in Iceland in 1998, it activated an important process of change in Europe. The model gradually convinced public officials, child rights advocates and practitioners first in the Nordic countries, then in the broader European region and beyond. Today, the Barnahus model is widely recognised as an outstanding good practice and has been recommended by the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the European Union and other leading actors.<sup>1</sup> Several countries in Europe have set up Barnahus or similar child-friendly centres and structures while others have embarked on a process toward their establishment. The history of the Barnahus in Europe has thus evolved as a success story that holds inspiration and encouragement for change makers in policy and practice.

As a specialised institution, Barnahus offers professional expertise from various disciplines and a comprehensive set of services in response to cases of violence against children. In a child-friendly environment, the professionals at the Barnahus collect evidence through forensic interviews and medical examinations and offer case assessment and treatment. All processes are documented in order to secure evidence from the child's disclosure, which is admissible in court and holds a high probative value if legal action is pursued. This integrated approach helps to prevent repeated interviews and to reduce stress and anxiety for the child. It ensures that the child is referred to all services he or she needs in a timely manner and this in turn supports the child's recovery and contributes to preventing and alleviating long-term negative consequences for the child's mental and physical health and development. By coordinating these multi-disciplinary and interagency services under the same roof, Barnahus promotes the right of boys and girls who are victims of violence to access child-sensitive justice.

This report provides an overview of how the Barnahus model has emerged and gradually expanded in Europe. It documents how government officials, practitioners, advocates and entrepreneurs have promoted the model, unyielding even when confronted with doubts, obstacles and adversities. The report identifies the factors and dynamics that have enabled the establishment of the Barnahus model and lessons learned. The accounts from Barnahus pioneers and leading agents of change offer reflections and observations that can guide the establishment of the Barnahus model in other countries. Learning from these experiences is valuable for processes of change in other areas as well as it holds important lessons for promoting innovation within public administrations and the way they implement child rights standards in practice.

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance: United Nations General Assembly, Joint report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children, Human Rights Council, Sixteenth session, [A/HRC/16/56](#), 7 March 2011, par. 68. United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 44 of the Convention, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva, [Iceland's Third Periodic Report](#), Government of Iceland, Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs, June 2008, par. 195. The Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority, [Child Victims in the Union – Rights and Empowerment](#), A report of the CURE project 2009-2010, Umeå, 2010, p. 7. Lanzarote Committee, Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (T-ES), *1<sup>st</sup> Implementation Report, Protection of Children against Sexual Abuse in the Circle of Trust, The framework*, Adopted by the Lanzarote Committee on 4 December 2015, T-ES(2015)05\_en final, 8 January 2016. UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, [Child Trafficking in the Nordic Countries: Rethinking Strategies and National Responses, Technical Report, Innocenti Insight](#), 2012.

## PROMISE: Promoting quality standards and guidance for Barnahus and comparable services in Europe

This study was developed in the framework of the PROMISE Project, a multi-country partnership rolled out between 2015 and 2017.<sup>2</sup> The project partners are based in national institutions, Barnahus and comparable services in Croatia, Iceland, the Netherlands and Sweden. In addition, PROMISE engages pilot countries that have expressed an interest to transform their current services for child victims and witnesses of violence into a multi-disciplinary and interagency cooperation model. The pilot countries are Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania and the UK (England and Scotland). The partners in the pilot countries engage and consult with existing Barnahus and comparable models and support the national processes toward the establishment or continued development of the service.<sup>3</sup>

PROMISE promotes child-friendly multi-disciplinary and interagency services for child victims and witnesses of violence. It aims to provide high quality standards and practical guidance for these services, supported by assessment tools, analysis and advocacy. The project promotes a one-stop approach limiting the number of interviews of child victims and reducing risks of secondary victimisation in the course of investigations and proceedings. This approach ensures comprehensive care, treatment and support of child victims while it enhances the probative value of children's testimonies, respecting fundamental principles of due process and fair trial.

The PROMISE initiative will continue beyond 2017 with the central objective to encourage the application of the quality standards, tools and guidance resulting from this project in and with a wider group of European countries.

## International and European standards: The case for child-sensitive justice

The development of the PROMISE initiative, including this study, were guided by international and European standards concerning children's access to justice.<sup>4</sup> Legal standards, recommendations and guidance from the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union are increasingly demanding child-friendly approaches as well as multi-disciplinary and interagency cooperation in enabling children's access to justice.<sup>5</sup> A comprehensive overview and analysis of these standards is available from the PROMISE Compendium of Law and Guidance.<sup>6</sup>

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2 See the PROMISE project website at <http://www.childcentre.info/promise/> and the PROMISE Vision: *The PROMISE project: The Barnahus model supporting children's right to justice and care in Europe*, 2017.

3 PROMISE Vision: *The PROMISE project: The Barnahus model supporting children's right to justice and care in Europe*, 2017.

4 International and European standards include legally binding international law as well as recommendations and guidance that have been developed on the basis of international law by the United Nations, UN Agencies and Treaty Bodies, and the Council of Europe, and are considered authoritative even if they are not legally binding.

5 See: United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 13 (2011), The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, CRC/C/GC/13, 18 April 2011, par. 54(c). United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 12 (2009), The right of the child to be heard, CRC/C/GC/12, 1 July 2009, par. 62-64. United Nations Human Rights Council, Rights of the Child: Access to justice for children, Twenty-fifth Session, Agenda Item 3, A/HRC/25/L.10, 25 March 2014, see specifically pp. 3-4 and par. 7, 8 and 13. United Nations Economic and Social Council, *Guidelines on Justice in Matters Involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime*, Economic and Social Council Resolution 2005/20, 22 July 2005, Annex XI. Council of Europe, *Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Child-friendly Justice*, Building a Europe For and With Children, Monograph 5, 2011, see especially pp. 23, 30-31, 34. Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, *Recommendation on children's rights and social services friendly to children and families*, CM/Rec(2011)12, 2011, pp. 10, 12. Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2007), see especially Articles 10, 11, 30, 31, 35. Council of Europe, *Explanatory Report to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*, Lanzarote, 25. October 2007, p. 12. Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards of the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA, Articles 1, 20, 23, 24, Recital 14 and 53.

<sup>6</sup> O'Donnell, Rebecca, *PROMISE Compendium of Law and Guidance, European and international instruments concerning child victims and witnesses of violence*, Child Circle, PROMISE Project Series, 2017.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibits all forms of violence and exploitation of children. It provides for measures to ensure the care, rehabilitation and recovery of children who have been exposed to acts of violence, including access to justice.<sup>7</sup> Addressing violence against boys and girls continues to be among the priorities of the United Nations as demonstrated by the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, which was adopted in 2016. The Agenda includes the goal to end all forms of violence against children.<sup>8</sup>

In Europe, the Council of Europe has set important standards concerning the access to justice of child victims of violence and to ensure child-friendly services are offered by multi-disciplinary and interagency cooperation models. The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (also referred to as the 'Lanzarote Convention'), the Guidelines on child-friendly justice and the Recommendations for social services that are friendly to children and families are key points of reference.<sup>9</sup> The Council of Europe Strategy on the Rights of the Child (2016-2021) sustains the regional commitment to the implementation of the Guidelines on child-friendly justice. The partnership with regional bodies in this context, such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States, is an integral part of the Strategy.<sup>10</sup> Since 2014, the two organisations have collaborated closely to promote the implementation of the Council of Europe Guidelines on child-friendly justice in the Baltic Sea Region. The research, documentation and analysis as well as consultations and conferences undertaken within the framework of this collaboration were important sources of information for this study. In 2015, a regional conference focused specifically on the gathering, taking and testing of evidence from children in criminal, civil and administrative proceedings.<sup>11</sup>

At the level of the European Union, the 2012 EU Victims' Rights Directive and the 2011 Directive on combating sexual abuse and exploitation reaffirm many of the standards afforded under UN and Council of Europe law specifically for the EU context. The initiative to promote integrated child protection services in the European Union aims to promote specialist support services for child victims of violence and to ensure access to justice for children who have been exposed to violence.<sup>12</sup>

child-centred and child rights approaches to specialist support services for child victims

European countries are therefore committed and obliged at multiple levels to promote specialised services for children who have been exposed to violence and to guarantee access to child-sensitive justice.

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7 United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 13 (2011), The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, CRC/C/GC/13, 18 April 2011. United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 12 (2009), The right of the child to be heard, CRC/C/GC/12, 1 July 2009. United Nations Human Rights Council, Rights of the Child: Access to justice for children, Twenty-fifth Session, Agenda Item 3, A/HRC/25/L.10, 25 March 2014. United Nations Economic and Social Council, *Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime*, Economic and Social Council Resolution 2005/20, 22 July 2005.

8 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform*, [Sustainable Development Goals 16](#), undated.

9 Council of Europe, *Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Child-friendly Justice*, Building a Europe For and With Children, Monograph 5, 2011. Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, *Recommendation on children's rights and social services friendly to children and families*, CM/Rec(2011)12, 2011. Council of Europe, *Explanatory Report to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*, Lanzarote, 25. October 2007.

10 Council of Europe, *Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021)*, 2016, p. 18.

11 Council of Europe, Council of the Baltic Sea States, *Regional Activity in the Baltic Sea Region "Child Evidence"*, 2014. Council of Europe, European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ), [Child-friendly Justice](#), 2014. Council of the Baltic Sea States, CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk, *Child-friendly justice: Handling child evidence*, 18 February 2015.

12 See: European Commission Directorate-General Justice and Consumers, *9<sup>th</sup> European Forum on the Rights of the Child, Coordination and cooperation in integrated child protection systems, Reflection Paper*, 30 April 2015, [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/2015\\_forum\\_roc\\_background\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/files/2015_forum_roc_background_en.pdf).

## The history of Barnahus in Europe

Iceland developed and established the Barnahus model as a pioneer in 1998. The development of the model was inspired by the Child Advocacy Centres, which have been operating in the United States of America since 1985. The Icelandic Barnahus became an important source of inspiration and a key point of reference for the establishment of the Barnahus model in the Nordic countries and keeps inspiring the development of comparable services throughout Europe and worldwide. Sweden established the first Barnahus in 2005, Norway in 2007 and Denmark in 2013. While Iceland keeps operating a single Barnahus, other Nordic countries established several services in capitals, major cities and the regions. Today, there are more than 50 Barnahus in the Nordic countries, including 33 in Sweden, 11 in Norway, 5 in Denmark as well as in the Faroe Islands and Greenland, and in Åland (Finland). Lithuania opened a Barnahus in June 2016.

Many more countries have established Barnahus and comparable models in all parts of Europe, or are in the process. Croatia, Finland, the Netherlands and Poland have established child-friendly centres and are committed to expand these services. Cyprus, England (London), Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia and Malta have advanced to varying degrees in the process to establish a Barnahus or comparable model. In Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Scotland and Spain, there are significant processes underway to gather support for establishing a Barnahus or comparable model. In the future, even more countries are expected to join this movement towards a European Barnahus network.

## Barnahus – Child Advocacy Centres – Child-friendly Centres: A diversity of models<sup>13</sup>

European countries have taken different steps to enable the cooperation across the different sectors involved in preventing and responding to violence against children. Cooperation and coordination mechanisms are in place for instance as high-level and inter-ministerial groups, referral mechanisms, operational models at the local level or case-specific assessment and planning groups. These forms of cooperation and coordination are organised ad hoc, informally or are institutionalised by law, policy or agreements. In some cases, cooperation models are limited to actors involved in service provision such as social services, the health care sector, victim assistance and counselling services. In others, they are oriented by the needs and rules of law enforcement, prosecution and the judiciary.<sup>14</sup>

The Barnahus is a unique model as it embraces all relevant services required to assess, document, investigate and prosecute cases of violence against children and to assist and support the child victim and his or her (non-offending) family members in the immediate and longer term.

While the first Barnahus established in Iceland has inspired many countries, the development of Barnahus and other multi-disciplinary and interagency services has led to a diversity of models. Each country has undergone a process of assessing their national needs, studying the Barnahus and other existing models, unpacking their elements and features and composing a service model adapted to their own national or local environment.

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<sup>13</sup> The typology of Barnahus and comparable models described in this section was developed by Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland.

<sup>14</sup> For further information, see the periodic reporting of European governments to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, available from the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Treaty Body Database, [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en).

In the Nordic tradition, *Barnahus* is an integral part of the public child welfare and judicial systems. It is a public institution or body where the relevant services such as child protection, mental health and social welfare services, law enforcement and the judiciary and the medical sector collaborate under one roof. *Barnahus* is conceived as a model that elicits the child's testimony and gathers evidence from child victims in a child-friendly environment. Child victims are interviewed by specially trained staff in order to define the needs for social and child protection services, treatment and legal action. If legal action is pursued, the evidence gathered and documented at *Barnahus* is admissible in court as the procedures involve the relevant sectors and respect fundamental principles of due process and fair trial.

*Child Advocacy Centres* pursue overall the same goal as *Barnahus*, that is to prevent the secondary victimization of the child in responses to child abuse and to ensure the recovery and the long-term safety and well-being of the child. *Child Advocacy Centres* are usually set up as public-private cooperation models where different services cooperate to prepare the investigations and response in cases of sexual violence against children. Law enforcement and prosecution services participate in the multi-disciplinary cooperation in the *Child Advocacy Centres*. The forensic interviews with child victims are conducted at the centres in order to inform the relevant investigations and proceedings. The centres are, however, not formally linked with the court system. In consequence, if a case is taken to court, the child has to appear in court in order to make his or her statement.<sup>15</sup>

*Child-friendly centres* or services aim primarily to prevent the secondary victimisation of child victims of violence and to ensure the recovery and the long-term safety and well-being of the child. They include a variety of models, some of which cooperate with the police and prosecution services although the degree of cooperation varies and has not been institutionalised or regulated through formal agreements. These centres may offer a diversity of services such as extensive advocacy, different forms of short- and longer-term follow-up services for children and parents, treatment of perpetrators, training of professionals as well as research and documentation.

## Study methodology

The objective of this study is to explore how some countries have succeeded to establish *Barnahus* or comparable models and to identify the factors and dynamics that enabled the establishment. By documenting these important processes of change, the study aspires to gather lessons learned that may be of interest for advocates promoting the *Barnahus* model and countries that are confronting obstacles in establishing it. The study was guided by the following questions:

- What are the main factors and dynamics that have enabled the establishment of *Barnahus* or comparable models?
- Have there been challenges or obstacles in the process for the establishment of *Barnahus* and if so, how have they been overcome?
- Which were the factors and dynamics that enabled scaling up the model, its maintenance and expansion?
- In which principle ways can the institutional set-up help to enable effective procedures and operations in the *Barnahus* or comparable model?

The analysis focused on the experience in the Nordic countries, Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, which were the *Barnahus* pioneers in Europe, as well as Croatia, Cyprus, Germany, Latvia and the Netherlands, which have either established *Barnahus* or comparable models or have

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15 For further information, see: National Children's Advocacy Centre, *Local Service, Global Leadership*, 2016, <http://www.nationalcac.org/>.

advanced in the process of setting them up.<sup>16</sup> For the purpose of this report, the terms ‘Barnahus’ or ‘Barnahus and comparable models’ are used throughout to refer to different variations of the model.<sup>17</sup>

Data and information for this study have been gathered through a literature review and key informant interviews. A central resource was the documentation available from the joint initiative of the Council of the Baltic Sea States and the Council of Europe to strengthen child-friendly justice in the Baltic Sea Region.<sup>18</sup>

Key informant interviews were conducted with responsible staff in the relevant ministries or public authorities that hold the political leadership or oversight of the Barnahus or comparable service. Interviews were also conducted with staff members of Barnahus or similar services, mainly the Directors or other staff members in leading and coordinating roles. In addition, experts were interviewed who have been involved in setting up Barnahus or comparable models or are actively promoting the establishment in their countries. Many of the key informants participated as experts in the PROMISE initiative. The interviews constituted the most important source of information for this report.

The preliminary results and findings from this study were presented and discussed at the PROMISE Regional Conference held in Linköping, Sweden, on 28 November 2016. In addition, the key informants, project partners and additional experts were invited to participate in a peer-review of the draft report and their feedback was taken into account for the finalisation of the study.

This report explores the drivers of change from the national level of the public administration as well as processes of change initiated locally within municipalities or regions. It does not aim to draw a complete picture of the complex processes for setting up Barnahus and comparable models nor is the analysis exhaustive. The objective is to identify critical factors and dynamics that have driven the processes of change within public administrations and civil societies.

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<sup>16</sup> Lind Haldorsson, Olivia, *European Barnahus Quality Standards, Guidance for multidisciplinary and interagency response to child victims and witnesses of violence*, Child Circle, PROMISE Project Series, 2017.

<sup>17</sup> “Comparable models” refers to models that are similar in structure and organisation to the Barnahus model but do not comply with all the elements that characterise the Barnahus as an integral part of the child welfare and justice systems, which has been designed in the Nordic countries. See the description of the Barnahus and other models in the previous section.

<sup>18</sup> See: Council of Europe, European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ), *Child-friendly Justice*, 2014. Council of the Baltic Sea States, CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk, *Child-friendly justice: Handling child evidence*, 18 February 2015.

## It starts with pioneers: Leading officials and advocates champion the Barnahus model in Europe

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All across Europe, the processes towards the establishment of the Barnahus model have been initiated by pioneers. The Director of the Government Agency for Child Protection in Iceland, Bragi Guðbrandsson, who conceptualised the Barnahus model and founded the first Barnahus in 1998, has been the leading pioneer of the model, first in Iceland and then throughout the broad European region.

Inspired by the Icelandic experience, Barnahus pioneers have been at the forefront of promoting the model throughout Europe. They are public officials, practitioners and child rights advocates, academics and researchers, politicians and policy makers who have demonstrated a bold commitment to change. Since 2015, the PROMISE Project has provided a forum for these pioneers to engage, exchange lessons learned, strategise and reflect, and refine quality standards and tools. The combined pioneer spirit in PROMISE gave rise to a nascent Barnahus movement in Europe.

The pioneers of the Barnahus model have one thing in common: entrepreneurship and change makers' qualities.<sup>19</sup> They combine innovative mindsets, resourcefulness and the motivation to transform existing structures and practice. They have demonstrated a sense of responsibility to advocate for change with a longer-term investment perspective. This perspective enabled and encouraged them to not shy away from the efforts and costs connected to their propositions for change. They understood that these investments carry benefits and opportunities for the society and the state and reduce social and human costs in the longer-term.

The experience from the countries reveals that leading change makers and social entrepreneurs succeeded to communicate this understanding. They brought others on board to advocate for Barnahus and support the process for its establishment. Some pioneers had themselves decision-making powers while others succeeded to mobilise allies and influence decision makers who had the necessary authority to initiate processes of change.

Barnahus pioneers operated in different positions and at different levels, which demonstrates that the entrepreneurship and change making qualities combined with outstanding professional competence matter more than the position or professional affiliation of the person. Some are based within public administrations at the central, regional or local levels, others are professionals working with and for child victims of violence in public institutions, service providers or NGOs. Yet others were called in from abroad, and had a significant influence on promoting change in a number of countries.

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<sup>19</sup> The Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at Oxford University defines social entrepreneurs as the society's change agents and pioneers of innovations that benefit humanity. "Social entrepreneurship refers to the practice of combining innovation, resourcefulness and opportunity to address critical social and environmental challenges. Social entrepreneurs focus on transforming systems and practices that are the root causes of poverty, marginalization, environmental deterioration and accompanying loss of human dignity. In so doing, ... their primary objective is to create sustainable systems change. Social entrepreneurs are drivers of change. Together with institutions, networks, and communities, social entrepreneurs create solutions that are efficient, sustainable, transparent, and have measurable impact. Social entrepreneurs are united by their ability to: Adopt a mission to create and sustain social value (not just commercial value); Recognise and relentlessly pursue new opportunities to serve that mission; Engage in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning; Act boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand; and exhibit a heightened sense of accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created." Dees, Greg, *The Meaning of Social Entrepreneurship*, 1998. Cited in: Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, What is Social Entrepreneurship, Oxford University, 2017, [Social Enterprise? Entrepreneurship? Innovation? | EnSpire Oxford](#)

In Iceland, the process for setting up the first Barnahus was primarily possible due to the vision, drive for change and commitment of a single entrepreneur, the Director of the Government Agency for Child Protection. The entrepreneurship quality in the process was a concert of different inter-related elements and is exemplary for the subsequent role of social entrepreneurs in other countries as well. In the 1990s, the lead pioneer in Iceland analysed the national child protection system and how it operates at all levels, the central level of policy planning within national ministries as well as the local implementation and service delivery within the municipalities. The results of this analysis generated the understanding that sexual violence against children could only be addressed effectively through a coordinated multi-disciplinary and interagency approach. The leading Barnahus pioneer noted the importance of addressing sexual violence against children not only through an approach focused on rescue and protection. Considering all the human rights of the child victim as closely interrelated and safeguarding these rights in practice required also measures to invest in the dignity of child victims by enabling them to access justice in a child-sensitive way. In addition, there was an understanding that meaningful results could only be achieved if the response is institutionalised and integrated into existing child welfare and justice systems. The institutionalisation was to ensure also that the human rights of the child victim in criminal investigations and proceedings are fully safeguarded in a way that guarantees fundamental principles of due process and fair trial.

After Barnahus had been established in Iceland, the Director of the Government Agency for Child Protection in Iceland, became the main driver of a European process of change. His support was sought to promote the model first in the Nordic countries and then in the broader European region and beyond. The experience from Iceland has informed the processes for establishing the Barnahus model in Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Latvia, Norway and Sweden and many other countries.<sup>20</sup>

The leading Barnahus pioneer from Iceland promoted the Barnahus model also in regional processes of law and policy reform. In his capacity as a member of the drafting group of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (also known as the 'Lanzarote Convention'), he succeeded to enshrine the main principles of the Barnahus model into the Convention. Subsequently, these principles were reflected also in Council of Europe guidelines and recommendations. The Lanzarote Committee, which is the monitoring body for the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention, has subsequently promoted Barnahus as a good practice model in States parties to the Convention. Due to the entrepreneurial spirit of the leading Barnahus pioneer and the many other pioneers and advocates of the Barnahus model, the good practice examples from Iceland and other countries have thus informed substantial law and policy reform in Europe.<sup>21</sup>

This broad scale reform process is a unique example of how the entrepreneurship qualities of a single pioneer created a dynamic process of change where elements of evaluated good practice were translated into legally binding standards. Advocates all over Europe grasped the opportunities presented by these dynamics to promote the establishment and development of the Barnahus

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20 Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016. Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016. Key informant interview with Andrea Möhringer, Executive Director, World Childhood Foundation, Germany, 16 December 2016 and 24 March 2017. Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017. Key informant interview with Lauris Neikens, Senior Expert of Children and Family Policy Department, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia, 27 June 2016 and 2 May 2017. Key informant interview with Laura Cejmale, Establishment "Center Dardedze", Latvia, 14 September 2016. Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016. Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016.

21 Key informant interview with Laura Cejmale, Establishment "Center Dardedze", Latvia, 14 September 2016.

model in their countries. This is the success story of the Barnahus and the public officials, practitioners and advocates who became pioneers and championed the model in Europe.

## Promoting the Barnahus model: Advocacy for change

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### The first steps: From sensitisation to recognition of the need to act

Each of the countries considered for this study has undergone a process of growing sensitisation to the prevalence of violence against children, although in different ways and at their individual pace. The experience from the countries reveals that sensitisation was an important first step towards change. It was a crucial precondition for the recognition of the need to address violence against children more effectively. Recognising the need requires the capability to identify a problem, to understand its causes and contributing factors and to understand also, why it must not remain unaddressed.

The drafting process of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the wave of ratifications by European states in the early 1990s and the 1996 World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children constituted important milestones on the international level. The related processes have contributed significantly to a sensitisation toward violence against children and recognition of the need to address it. In Europe, the Council of Europe and the European Commission have maintained the momentum within their respective regional frameworks. They continued to develop the normative framework to address sexual violence against children, protect child victims and promote child-sensitive justice. These developments have contributed to an evolving understanding of childhood and the human right to grow up free from violence. They have also fuelled advocacy for a stronger political commitment to safeguarding children.

Many key informants noted that there had been a widespread attitude among policy makers, practitioners and the public that violence against children happened elsewhere but not within their own societies. Limited awareness, knowledge and understanding of the scope and impact of violence against children had been a main obstacle to addressing the issue. The key informants noted that sensitisation was successful when informed by evidence of the scope and prevalence of violence against children. The sensitisation became more powerful when supported by public awareness raising campaigns and communication strategies that targeted a broad audience, including political decision makers, responsible authorities and professionals at all levels as well as the public.

Against this background, research, media reporting and campaigns were instrumental to raise awareness, to inform and sensitise state authorities and civil society. Research generated evidence of the prevalence and scope of violence against children. It evidenced the harmful impact of violence against children on the boys and girls concerned, their families and the society. Research revealed also the causes and contributing factors of violence against children and the necessity to address them. Campaigns and the media communicated research findings and raised awareness that violence against children was an issue of concern in the specific country and required a targeted response. The key informants observed that the growing awareness sensitised public officials and practitioners not only to the prevalence of violence against children; it also helped them to engage in a critical reflection on their own roles in preventing and responding to violence more effectively, individually and collectively. Where measures for sensitisation led policy makers, officials and professionals to recognise the need to act, the foundation for meaningful change was prepared.

In several countries, individual cases of violence against children ignited an intense public debate. These cases were often particularly severe, both with regard to the level of violence as well as the failures on the side of the authorities and service providers to protect a child and to save his or her life.

The public debates became particularly powerful when the media, experts and child rights advocates joined hands to hold responsible authorities and politicians publicly accountable and to exert social and political pressure on them to act. The key informants noted, however, that a recognition of the need for change did not necessarily lead to appropriate follow-up. For this to succeed, it required change makers who had the capability to identify viable solutions and who recognised the Barnahus model as an opportunity for change.

In some countries, individual experts recognised the opportunities presented by Barnahus many years before it was actually established. They were, however, struggling to make themselves heard by decision makers. In order to initiate a process of change, the Barnahus pioneers therefore had to recognise the need, conceive opportunities for change and either have themselves decision-making powers or succeed to influence others with the necessary authority to initiate processes of change. As will be discussed in the next sections, strategic partnership was also important to achieve change. Where these enabling factors are missing, many experts, front-line staff and local leaders might continue to struggle with the challenges they are confronted with. They well understand the need to address them but lack the political power or support to achieve this change.

Sensitisation and recognition of the need for change are dynamic processes that evolve over time. Once change has been achieved through political decisions or structural reform, there remains usually a need for continued learning, sensitisation and an ongoing process of improvement. This has been the case with regard to the establishment of the Barnahus or comparable models and their continued evolution and refinement, as will be argued further below.

### National accounts and examples

**Sweden** was a pioneer in promoting the right of children to grow up free from violence. The Government of Sweden prohibited corporal punishment of children by law as early as 1979 and hosted the first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in 1996. In the early 2000s, sexual violence against children was still high on the political agenda. The Minister of Justice demonstrated a personal interest in addressing the issue and was aware that it required targeted responses in national policy and practice. The political and public debates on sexual violence against children led to a broad-based consensus in Sweden that “something needed to be done” although doubts remained as to what approach to choose in order to achieve tangible results. The media reported intensively about cases of sexual violence against children and the faults and gaps in the national response, including by the police, health care services, social services and child protection. Due to the political commitment at the high ministerial level and the public attention to the issue, fuelled by intense media coverage, the need to improve the state’s response remained an issue of public and political debate. It was against this background, that the need to develop more effective responses was increasingly recognised at different levels and sectors of the public administration and in civil society.<sup>22</sup>

In **Iceland**, the need to re-organise child protection services, which were provided at the municipality level, became ever more evident during the early 1990s. The high level of decentralisation and the high number of municipalities, many with a very small population, caused acute fragmentation. This led to challenges of ensuring consistency in service provision and quality. Against this background, the revision of the Child Protection Act in the mid-1990s led to the establishment of the Government Agency for Child Protection, a centralised agency mandated to steer, oversee and monitor child protection service provision throughout the country.<sup>23</sup>

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22 Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

23 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

Soon after it had become operational, the Government Agency for Child Protection initiated a reform of the national child protection system. The reform involved research and a review of existing working methods and procedures and the development of quality standards for service provision and training. In 1996, the Government Agency conducted a first study on the prevalence of sexual abuse of children, as part of the national review. The study reflected the enhanced awareness of the topic after the first World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children had taken place in Stockholm earlier that year. In the same period, there was intense media attention to sexual violence against children caused by high profile cases that had been uncovered in Belgium.<sup>24</sup> The intense media coverage of these cases generated a lot of public and political interest in Iceland and in other European countries. In this context, the World Congress garnered an international movement against sexual violence and exploitation of children and created an important momentum for politicians to become more interested and active in addressing these matters.<sup>25</sup>

In follow-up to the World Congress, the Government Agency assigned one of its staff members to conduct an in-depth study of the interventions against child abuse cases in Iceland and their prevalence. The study was the first of its kind. It revealed not only a much higher prevalence than expected but also many weaknesses and challenges on the side of the institutions to respond adequately and to protect child victims. The findings of the study prompted the Government Agency to review the official response to reports of sexual violence against children and the procedures in specific cases. The Agency found that there was a lack of knowledge among professionals and officials on how to respond to such cases and a lack of specialised services for child victims. It soon became clear that responding to sexual violence against children required specialised services that could not be provided at the local level simply due to a lack of capacity. Against this background, the idea was born to set up a competence centre to conduct forensic interviews with child victims and offer therapeutic services. It became evident that such a competence centre would need to be multi-disciplinary in nature. The understanding that the state had to do more in order to live up to its responsibility to address sexual violence against children and the recognition of the need for a specialised centre for child victims was, at the time, still concentrated mostly within the Government Agency for Child Protection.<sup>26</sup>

These developments in Iceland represent a typical process, which evolved in similar ways also in other countries. In many countries, children's rights were not high on the political agenda. The prevalent social and political perception was that sexual violence against children happens elsewhere and is not a concern for the own country and society. This understanding was reported not only from **Iceland**<sup>27</sup>, but also from **Croatia** and **Cyprus**. The limited information, awareness and recognition of violence against children was impeding any change. Tackling this obstacle required evidence and clear analysis, tangible conclusions and effective communication. Research and analysis into the prevalence and scope of violence against children within the own country were key to overcome this obstacle and to open minds and doors for new approaches and measures to address the issue.<sup>28</sup>

In **Norway**, the Minister of Justice had a strong role in recognising the need for more effective responses to violence against children. He was familiar with the Barnahus in Iceland, which had gained a lot of political attention in the Nordic countries soon after its establishment. The Minister was convinced that it was an excellent practice that could also benefit children, society and the public services in Norway and took leadership in promoting the model in Norway. The Minister had already previously demonstrated a strong personal commitment to the cause and had published himself a book about domestic violence.<sup>29</sup>

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24 The Marc Dutroux case.

25 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

26 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

27 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

28 Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016. Key informant interview with Gordana Buljan Flander, Professor and Director of the Centre for Child and Youth Protection of Zagreb, Croatia, 29 June 2016.

29 Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016.

In **Denmark**, the Barnahus model was already known from the other Nordic countries. The media had started to report intensely about cases of sexual abuse, violence and neglect of children and the failures of municipal authorities to prevent these cases and to respond adequately. In the climate of growing media attention and public interest in the matter, the Minister of Social Affairs and Integration at the time was exposed to a growing public and political pressure to act. The Minister commissioned a thorough investigation of several cases in order to analyse how the efforts could be strengthened in order to prevent such cases and to avoid serious failures by the municipal services.<sup>30</sup>

In this context, the need for extensive changes in the Danish legislation and a wide range of central initiatives to support the implementation of the legislation gained stronger political recognition. The Barnahus model was proposed and concrete action followed soon to plan its establishment in Denmark.<sup>31</sup>

In the **Netherlands**, national prevalence studies of maltreatment of children showed in 2007 and 2011 that a fairly high percentage of Dutch children (30 out of 1,000 children) experienced maltreatment, including physical and sexual violence, neglect and witnessing violence between the parents. The studies evidenced also that the majority of those cases (approximately 63%) were not reported and/or remained unaddressed. The findings of these studies gained a lot of public attention not only due to the estimated high prevalence but also because the survey concluded that child protection services failed to respond to these cases effectively and to prevent them. The media reported intensely and contributed significantly to stimulating a public and political debate on the matter. In this context, a report by the Dutch Safety Board on the physical safety of young children in the Netherlands gained a lot of attention. The report addressed cases of child abuse that lead to child deaths or near fatal situations.<sup>32</sup> It revealed that in all the fatal or nearly fatal cases of child maltreatment, which were analysed by the Dutch Safety Board's study, each of the families had been in contact with child protection services and had received some sort of help. The study found that many different organisations had been involved in working with these families, and that the organisations did not work and/or communicate effectively with each other. Against this background, there was a growing recognition among professionals and officials at different levels that more effective cooperation models would be required.<sup>33</sup>

In **Croatia**, the public and political awareness of children's rights and violence against children started to rise in the 1990s after the war had come to an end. Similar to the process in Iceland, the first steps from sensitisation to recognition of the need for specialised services were driven significantly by a pioneer who today acts as the Director of the Child and Youth Protection Centre. Her participation in a multi-year regional training programme had a decisive impact. The training enabled the exchange and joint learning among professionals from several European countries, who were struggling in different ways to address violence against children. The learning brought back from this large-scale training programme set off a process of analysis and review of the child protection practice in Croatia and helped to identify weaknesses and gaps as well as opportunities for change.<sup>34</sup>

In Croatia, the growing understanding of sexual violence against children, and the challenges of addressing it, led to the recognition of some inter-related facts. Professionals were not sensitised enough to the patterns and prevalence of sexual violence against children. Children hardly reported incidents themselves as the reporting mechanisms were not accessible for them, were not child-sensitive or remained ineffective in providing any follow-up support. In addition, the weakness or absence of mechanisms to respond to sexual violence against children left professionals unsupported when looking for ways of working with the cases that came to their attention. The challenges were noted particularly with regard to

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30 Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017.

31 Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017.

32 Onderzoeksraad voor Veiligheid [Research Council on Safety], About the Physical Safety of the Young Child. Thematic study: cases of child abuse with a fatal or near fatal end, 2011.

33 Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016. c

34 Key informant interview with Gordana Buljan Flander, Professor and Director of the Centre for Child and Youth Protection of Zagreb, Croatia, 29 June 2016.

the identification and treatment of child victims as well as interventions to prevent re-offending and re-victimisation, for instance by separating the child and the offending parent and enabling access to justice. There was also a general weakness with regard to institutional mandates, responsibilities and accountability. Mechanisms for referral and cooperation were weak or absent although they would have been essential to prevent that reported cases were simply pushed from one institution to the other.<sup>35</sup> Against this background, it became increasingly evident that structural reforms were required to enable and equip professionals and officials to intervene more effectively in cases of sexual violence against children.

In **Cyprus**, the Council of Europe 'One in Five' Campaign contributed to an increased awareness of violence against children and sexual abuse.<sup>36</sup> The Campaign communicated the message that one in five children in Europe is considered to have experienced sexual violence. It aimed to promote the ratification by the Government of Cyprus of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. It also aimed to raise awareness and encourage children, families and the society to report incidents of sexual violence, to strengthen prevention and response measures. The Campaign financed a study into the scope and prevalence of sexual violence against children in Cyprus, which was ground-breaking as it revealed for the first time national data about these cases within the country.<sup>37</sup>

There was a growing recognition that the procedures in cases of sexual violence against children in Cyprus were not effective in providing services for the child and in handling the cases in a child-sensitive and child-centred way. Instead, the child had to adjust to the existing procedures. In consequence, children who had experienced sexual violence were often re-victimised and rendered more vulnerable by the services that were intended to help and support them.<sup>38</sup> Several studies that analysed the situation in Cyprus concluded with a clear recommendation to establish the Barnahus model in Cyprus. The model was recommended as an adequate response to address structural challenges in handling the cases, to enable more effective investigations and proceedings and to enhance the protection of child victims. Initially, these recommendations remained however unaddressed.<sup>39</sup>

The Council of Europe 'One in Five' Campaign played a particular role in stimulating a Parliamentary debate on sexual violence against children. The Parliament discussed the Council of Europe Convention and the need to ratify it as well as the gaps and weaknesses in the existing responses to cases of sexual violence against children. The Campaign was timely as it was rolled out in a context already conscious about the need for change, eager to get inspiration and to find solutions and motivated to initiate a process of change.<sup>40</sup> An area that was characterised by particular weakness was the coordination of services and the need to make them child- and family-sensitive. The fact that child victims and their families had to approach each service separately had been identified as a main shortcoming that needed to be redressed.<sup>41</sup> The Campaign, including the national study conducted as part of it and the related political debate, thereby created a momentum where the previous and newly generated knowledge complemented each other. The political and professional debates resulted in a growing recognition of the need to change the existing approaches in response to sexual violence against children.

In **Latvia**, the Foundation Centre Dardedze in Riga has been a leading actor that invested in enhancing the knowledge and understanding of violence against children in all settings and contexts. The Foundation has been operating a crisis centre for children who needed placement in alternative care due to incidents of

35 Key informant interview with Gordana Buljan Flander, Professor and Director of the Centre for Child and Youth Protection of Zagreb, Croatia, 29 June 2016.

36 See: Council of Europe, One in Five, The Council of Europe Campaign to stop sexual violence against children, 2014, [http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/1in5/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/1in5/default_en.asp).

37 Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016.

38 Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016.

39 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016

40 Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016.

41 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016.

violence, abuse or neglect at home. Over the years, the experience revealed that the placement of the children in the crisis centre did by itself not suffice to protect children and stabilise the situation of the family. Many of the children who were placed at the crisis centre stayed for a few weeks and were then returned to their families. At that time, there was still a limited knowledge on how to address violence against children in a sustainable way, how to hold perpetrators accountable and protect children from recurring violence.<sup>42</sup>

Against this background, the Foundation Centre Dardedze recognised the need to gain a better understanding of how to address and prevent violence against children more appropriately and effectively. The Foundation established therefore a resource centre to analyse cases and to contribute to the development of a knowledge base for better practice. The critical analysis of cases conducted by the resource centre generated a growing awareness of the need for more effective responses. While the crisis centre operated by the Foundation in Riga had established good collaboration with the police for interviewing child victims of violence, the way that these cases were handled throughout the country differed from place to place. A systemic and consistent approach was still missing.<sup>43</sup>

The national law provides that child victims shall be interviewed in a child-friendly manner, although interviews can be conducted in two different ways depending on the nature of the criminal offence. The interview could be conducted directly by the police investigator or by a trained psychologist. In the latter case, the psychologist conducts the interview on behalf of the police investigator who sits in another room and communicates with the psychologist through telecommunication. An analysis of cases revealed that only a few child victims benefited from the child-friendly interview conducted by a psychologist. In training courses for police officers, prosecutors and judges that the Foundation offered, the discussion with the participants reaffirmed that many police investigators were in fact unaware of the possibility to conduct the interview with the support of a psychologist. It was against this background that the Foundation realised the need for more systemic and consistent approaches in interviewing child victims of crime in Latvia. It decided to dedicate its advocacy work to sensitising relevant stakeholders to the need of developing better practice.<sup>44</sup>

In 2012-2013, the Foundation conducted a study into the handling of cases of sexual violence against children by national courts. Based on the documentation of approximately 70 cases tried by Latvian courts, the analysis revealed gaps and challenges in the interviews with child victims. In many cases, the children had been interviewed only 3-4 months after the criminal investigations had been initiated. More recently, the Ombudsman's Office of Latvia, and specifically its Department for Children, has investigated the use of child-friendly interviewing rooms for child victims of crime. The findings from this assessment corroborated the conclusions previously drawn by the Foundation and contributed to sensitising the responsible authorities to the need for a more reliable and consistent use of child-friendly interviewing rooms and techniques for taking the testimonies of child victims of crime.<sup>45</sup>

Some cases of sexual violence against children in Latvia and the criminal proceedings against the perpetrators caught the attention of the media and the public. The public debate related to these cases helped to sensitise the society to the prevalence of sexual violence against children in Latvia and the need for a more effective state response to protect victims and prevent re-offending. In addition, the annual police statistics showed that sexual crimes were the main type of crimes committed against children in Latvia. This generated additional sensitivity to the need for a more effective response. The Foundation Centre Dardedze used this momentum of public interest and media attention to conduct awareness raising campaigns and sensitisation through the media, in particularly targeted at parents and the public.<sup>46</sup>

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42 Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment "Center Dardedze", Latvia, 14 September 2016.

43 Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment "Center Dardedze", Latvia, 14 September 2016.

44 Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment "Center Dardedze", Latvia, 14 September 2016.

45 Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment "Center Dardedze", Latvia, 14 September 2016.

46 Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment "Center Dardedze", Latvia, 14 September 2016.

## Conceiving opportunities for change: The convincing nature of the Barnahus model

The first Barnahus founded in Iceland in 1998 was not immediately recognised widely as a useful institution. After its establishment, there followed a process of further advocacy and development to obtain recognition on a broad scale. Within a few years, Barnahus gained however significantly in strength and its convincing nature was recognised first in Iceland, then in the Nordic countries and beyond.<sup>47</sup> The Barnahus model was increasingly recommended as an outstanding good practice example that convinced child rights advocates, politicians, professionals and officials at the local, national and international levels.<sup>48</sup>

The convincing nature of the Barnahus model is rooted in different interrelated facts: The model works with the assumption of competence of child victims of violence. It applies evidence-based methods, which have demonstrated that boys and girls at all ages and with different levels of capacities and skills are able to disclose, make statements and provide testimonies, if they are given the appropriate conditions, environment and support to do so. The methods have been proven to enhance the safety and child-friendliness of the procedures as well as the probative value of the child's testimony in court. They succeeded to overcome doubts about the capacity and trustworthiness of child victims acting as witnesses in judicial or administrative procedures. Experience from European countries shows that overcoming these doubts has been essential, as they constitute an obstacle in prosecuting cases of violence against children and holding perpetrators accountable. Many cases of sexual violence against children, especially cases of sexual violence within the family, rely strongly on the child's testimony and there may be very little additional evidence available for the prosecution services to build the case.<sup>49</sup>

Another important advantage of the Barnahus model is that the video-recorded forensic interview with the child is admissible as evidence in court. This is a specific feature of the Nordic Barnahus model, which is an integral part of the child welfare and justice systems. This way of proceeding makes it possible for the child to access therapy immediately after the forensic interview. In countries that do not have Barnahus or comparable models, children often have to appear in court in order to testify in the criminal proceedings. In these cases, the beginning of the therapy could be deferred to after the child has given his or her statement in court, which might last months or years. If therapy was provided prior to the child's statement in court, the defence lawyers would usually claim that the therapy had altered the child's memory and that the child's testimony was therefore not considered reliable.<sup>50</sup>

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47 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

48 See for instance: United Nations General Assembly, Joint report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children, Human Rights Council, Sixteenth session, [A/HRC/16/56](#), 7 March 2011, par. 68. United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties under Article 44 of the Convention, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Geneva, [Iceland's Third Periodic Report](#), Government of Iceland, Ministry of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs, June 2008, par. 195. The Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority, [Child Victims in the Union – Rights and Empowerment, A report of the CURE project 2009-2010](#), Umeå, 2010, p. 7. Lanzarote Committee, Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (T-ES), *1<sup>st</sup> Implementation Report, Protection of Children against Sexual Abuse in the Circle of Trust, The framework*, Adopted by the Lanzarote Committee on 4 December 2015, T-ES(2015)05\_en final, 8 January 2016. UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, [Child Trafficking in the Nordic Countries: Rethinking Strategies and National Responses, Technical Report, Innocenti Insight, 2012](#).

49 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

50 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

The convincing nature of the model is substantiated by compelling evidence. As noted by the informants and contributors to this study, the availability of positive evaluations and other empirical data has yielded important support for the establishment of the model in many countries. Evidence demonstrates that the model enhances the outcomes for child victims of violence and safeguards their rights in the context of investigations and proceedings and in accessing treatment and support for their recovery and rehabilitation. Children and their (non-offending) parents are more satisfied with the services they receive if they are referred to a Barnahus.<sup>51</sup> The model is not only evidence-based, it has also continuously evolved further informed by the consolidated knowledge of the Barnahus staff, the relevant public authorities, pioneers and other professionals associated with the Barnahus movement.

Studies demonstrate also the cost-effectiveness of a coordinated multi-disciplinary and interagency approach. Analysis from the Child Advocacy Centres in the USA have evidenced that investigations are more cost-effective if they are coordinated in the centres. The model reduces the burden on authorities and service providers in terms of human and financial resources, and enables more successful investigations and prosecutions of perpetrators. In the longer-term, investing in Barnahus and comparable models is therefore expected to reduce the impact and cost of violence not only for the child and her or his family but also for the human, social and economic development of societies and states. In addition, the successful prosecution of perpetrators of violence as well as the provision of services for treatment and recovery help prevent re-offending.<sup>52</sup>

While this evidence derives from analyses of the Child Advocacy Centres in the USA, it would be important to conduct similar cost-effectiveness studies of the Barnahus model in Europe. In the Nordic countries, where a large proportion of children have access to the services of Barnahus, conducting this type of analysis becomes increasingly challenging. The pilot countries, on the other side, could offer a more conducive context for conducting cost-effectiveness studies. In particularly countries that pilot Barnahus in individual cities or regions could offer access to sample groups of children who are referred to Barnahus as well as control groups of children who do not benefit from Barnahus services. It would therefore be important to grasp the opportunity for conducting cost-effectiveness studies in countries that provide an appropriate context.<sup>53</sup>

The convincing nature of the model enabled effective and successful advocacy and helped in mobilising high-level advocates and social entrepreneurs in almost all countries. It eased consensus building across different ministries, political parties and professional societies not only because of the sensitive issues at stake, that is addressing violence against children more effectively, but also

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51 See for instance: Sweden: University of Lund, "It Is Probably Better for the Children" Final report from the assessment of experimental work with Children's Houses, 2006-2007, 2008. Kalda, Anna and Carl Göran Svedin, Children's Houses – Barnahus, Today and in the Future, Stockholm Studies in Child Law and Children's Rights, 2015. Landberg, Åsa and Carl Göran Svedin, Inuti Ett Barnahus, A Quality Review of 23 Swedish Barnahus, Save the Children Sweden, 2013. Norway: Stefansen, Kari, Tonje Gundersen and Elisiv Bakketeig, *Barnehusevalueringen 2012 – Delrapport 2. En undersøkelse blant barn og pårørende, jurister og politifolk, samt ledere og ansatte* [Barnahus Evaluation 2012, A survey of children and relatives, lawyers and police officers, as well as managers and employee], NOVA Report 9/12, 2012, <http://www.hioa.no/Om-HIOA/Senter-for-velferds-og-arbeidslivsforskning/NOVA/Publikasjoner/Rapporter/2012/Barnehusevalueringen-2012-Delrapport-2>. NOVA, Comparative Study on Barnahus (forthcoming). NOVA, Nordic Network for Barnahus Research, *Nordic network for Barnahus research - Voldsprogrammet (oslomet.no)*. Iceland: Newton, K., Hjaltadóttir, E. and Jonsdóttir, H., H., The Children's House: Children's experience of forensic interviews, court testimonies and therapy in Iceland, 2007-2009, Centre for Children and Family Research, 2011.

52 See for instance: Formby, J., Shadoin, A. L., Shao, L., Magnuson, S. N., & Overman, L. B., *Cost-benefit analysis of community responses to child maltreatment: A comparison of communities with and without child advocacy centers*, Research Report No. 06-3, Huntsville, AL: National Children's Advocacy Center, 2006. Cited in: Svedin, Carl Göran, *What Can We Learn From the Barnahus Model?*, Presentation Childhood Foundation, Leipzig, 8 October 2016.

53 Interview with Carl Göran Svedin, Professor Emeritus and Research Leader, National Competence Centre Barnafrid, University of Linköping, Sweden, 16 March 2017.

because the model holds measurable and notable benefits for the child welfare and the justice systems.

The Barnahus model is rooted in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and contributes to its implementation in practice, in particular by promoting the best interests of child victims of violence and enabling their access to justice. The key principles and features of the Barnahus model are reflected in the 2007 Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (the ‘Lanzarote Convention’), the Council of Europe Guidelines on child-friendly justice (2010) and the Recommendation on children’s rights and social services friendly to children and families (2011). Introducing the Barnahus model constitutes therefore a concrete step towards the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Council of Europe Convention, guidelines and recommendations.<sup>54</sup>

Upon ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, States commit to introduce the standards afforded under the Convention into national law and to ensure their effective application in practice. The national preparations for the ratification of the Convention generated therefore important opportunities for national advocacy for the Barnahus model and its continued development.<sup>55</sup> The ratification has revived the discussion on children’s access to justice for instance in Cyprus and Germany.<sup>56</sup> Similar dynamics were noted with the transposition into national law of the 2011 EU Directive on combating sexual abuse and exploitation.<sup>57</sup>

Barnahus provides also a model for multi-disciplinary and interagency cooperation for child victims of violence that has been tested and evaluated positively. Multi-disciplinary and interagency cooperation is increasingly demanded under international and European standards and continues to constitute a challenge in many European countries.<sup>58</sup>

The Barnahus model therefore offers an expedient solution to implement important international and European standards relevant to the rights and needs of child victims of violence. It enables the implementation of children’s rights to access justice, to child-sensitive procedures, care and recovery and not to be re-traumatised in investigations and proceedings.

Within this overarching framework, the Barnahus model allows for a high degree of flexibility for countries or municipalities wishing to introduce it. It can be implemented in different social and economic, political and cultural environments and traditions. The experience from the countries that

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54 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

55 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

56 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B’, Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016. Key informant interview with Andrea Möhringer, Executive Director, World Childhood Foundation, Germany, 16 December 2016 and 24 March 2017.

57 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B’, Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016.

58 See: United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 13 (2011), The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, CRC/C/GC/13, 18 April 2011, par. 54(c). United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 12 (2009), The right of the child to be heard, CRC/C/GC/12, 1 July 2009, par. 62-64. United Nations Human Rights Council, Rights of the Child: Access to justice for children, Twenty-fifth Session, Agenda Item 3, A/HRC/25/L.10, 25 March 2014, see specifically pp. 3-4 and par. 7, 8 and 13. United Nations Economic and Social Council, *Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime*, Economic and Social Council Resolution 2005/20, 22 July 2005, Annex XI. Council of Europe, *Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Child-friendly Justice*, Building a Europe For and With Children, Monograph 5, 2011, see especially pp. 23, 30-31, 34. Council of Europe Committee of Ministers, *Recommendation on children’s rights and social services friendly to children and families*, CM/Rec(2011)12, 2011, pp. 10, 12. Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2007), see especially Articles 10, 11, 30, 31, 35. Council of Europe, *Explanatory Report to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*, Lanzarote, 25. October 2007, p. 12. Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards of the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA, Articles 1, 20, 23, 24, Recital 14 and 53.

are part of this study shows that the model has indeed been established in very different forms – at the local, regional or national level of a state, institutionalised or as a project, as a stand-alone institution or hosted by one of the participating services. The most important requirement for establishing the Barnahus or comparable models is for the state, or the municipality, to have functioning child protection and justice systems as well as mental health systems for children and adults in place and that there are at least basic structures to guarantee the rule of law.<sup>59</sup>

### **Strategic partnership and concerted advocacy for establishing the Barnahus**

While Barnahus pioneers have been leading the processes of change in all countries, none of them worked alone; they all engaged in strategic partnership to achieve the establishment of the Barnahus or comparable model. Professionals and officials who have promoted the Barnahus model in Europe emphasised the importance of building partnership in advocacy in order to create the momentum for change. To varying degrees, they involved the civil society, including children, high-level advocates, academia, child rights organisations, professionals and officials at different levels and from different sectors, Ombudsoffices or Commissioners for children, politicians, Parliamentarians, policy makers and other institutional actors as well as the media. Each of these actors contributed to the process in line with their specific areas of expertise. Their contributions included analysis and documentation, public information and advocacy, consultations with children and their ability to convene different actors around the same table. In some countries, the media reported about the Barnahus model in other countries and engaged different actors in a public discussion of the benefits that the model could hold for their own country. In some cases, advocates sought and formed the partnership purposefully. In others, it evolved loosely and without any steering or clear intentions. Irrespectively of that, the informants and contributors to this study noted that partnerships were instrumental to create a community of advocates, experts and supporters of the Barnahus model.

The key informants involved in this study reported that professionals and officials from different sectors and disciplines formed networks, alliances or coalitions in order to advocate for the establishment of Barnahus or comparable models. Together, they concerted the advocacy towards this shared objective. They noted that concerted advocacy functioned as a leverage and bestowed more power to their advocacy messages. Concerted advocacy required a strategic approach to advocacy, consensus on the advocacy messages as well as clear targets and objectives.<sup>60</sup>

The experience from the countries shows that advocacy was successful when decision makers heard the same messages repeatedly from different advocates. Selecting the right spokesperson for a target audience can be a sensitive issue. The nature of the Barnahus model is that the target groups for advocacy extend across many different sectors and disciplines. A diversity of spokespersons and advocates are therefore needed to address each of them.

Key informants noted that it worked out well to address different professional audiences separately through advocates from within their own sectors, for instance police officers advocating within the law enforcement services and judges or jurists within the judiciary. Experience has shown that lawyers, police officers, prosecutors, judges, social workers, psychologists or doctors tend to trust and embrace messages from advocates who share their own professional background. Advocates from the academia and research institutes, Ombudspersons and Commissioners for Children

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59 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

60 For more information on strategic advocacy work, see for instance: United Nations Children's Fund, [Advocacy Toolkit, A guide to influencing decisions that improve children's lives](#), 2010.

contributed also to the advocacy within their specific mandates and areas of expertise. In addition, the Barnahus pioneers from the Nordic countries, high-level advocates such as the Queen of Sweden or national ministers and social entrepreneurs have the authority to address a mixed audience.<sup>61</sup>

In most countries that have set up Barnahus, entrepreneurs, high-level advocates and experts were invited from abroad to address multi-disciplinary and interagency audiences, including at the high levels of the public administrations. Events that could count on the attendance of the Queen of Sweden or Barnahus pioneers from the Nordic countries had a particularly strong convening power. In many countries, these high-level advocates lent vital support to the national processes for the establishment of the Barnahus and generated a remarkable momentum for change.<sup>62</sup>

When engaging the media for advocacy purposes, the experience from some countries was that journalists and media institutions needed to be sensitised to ethical standards in reporting about cases of violence against children, especially for cases of sexual violence. Sensationalist reporting that fails to respect the privacy of child victims can be counterproductive. Ethical reporting conscious of child protection standards, human rights and the responsibilities of society and state in this regard, can be supportive of rights-based advocacy and processes of change. Ethical reporting is also conducive to promoting a public debate that demonstrates respect for children, their dignity and human rights.

The engagement of children in advocacy did not play a strong role in any of the countries studied, although key informants underlined that it would be important to consult and engage children more actively. Some of the experiences demonstrate that the active engagement of boys and girls as advocates has an impact on the processes for the establishment of the Barnahus model and its continued development.

### Involving children in advocacy for Barnahus: National accounts and examples

The key informants who contributed to this study noted a need for consultations with children on their experiences with Barnahus. While some Barnahus and comparable models have developed different ways of seeking feedback from children about the services at Barnahus, a systematic analysis of children's views, perspectives and recommendations with regard to Barnahus has not yet been conducted. There is however a high awareness of the need to strengthen this aspect in the continuous development and refinement of the model. Only a few countries have involved children in the advocacy for Barnahus.

In **Iceland**, the National Committee for Unicef consulted with boys and girls who were victims of sexual violence. Some of them had been referred to the services at Barnahus, others had not. Unicef engaged the children in a consultation to prepare a meeting with the Minister of Justice and other national ministers in 2013. The children spoke to the ministers about the importance of Barnahus, described their experience at Barnahus and that this had helped them in their recovery. They advocated with the ministers for the need to ensure that all children who are victims of sexual violence needed to be referred to Barnahus. One girl had missed out on the support from Barnahus because the local child protection services had not referred her. After the meeting with the children, the ministers informed the media that this had been one of the most powerful meetings they have ever participated in.<sup>63</sup>

The consultation came at a time when the judges in Iceland could still use their discretion to decide whether to hear a child's testimony in the courthouse or in Barnahus. This level of discretion had led to a situation where cases of violence against children that were tried by judges in Reykjavik were not

61 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016.

62 Key informant interview with Andrea Möhringer, Executive Director, World Childhood Foundation, Germany, 16 December 2016 and 24 March 2017. Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016 and 31 March 2017.

63 Key informant interview with Ólöf Ásta Farestveit, Director, Barnahus, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

consistently heard at Barnahus. Many of the children concerned were thus deprived of the integrated support and the protected environment at Barnahus and had to make their statements in court. After the meeting with the children, the ministers informed the media that this had been one of the most powerful meetings they have ever participated in.<sup>64</sup>

Around the same time, there was intensive media reporting on sexual violence against children in Iceland. The reporting focused on a man who had committed acts of sexual violence against children over a period of 30 years before the case was investigated by the police and prosecuted. In the months that followed this intense public reporting, Barnahus in Iceland received an increasing number of cases. Handling them became more and more difficult for the institution and the staff as their resources had been developed for a lower caseload.<sup>65</sup>

The meeting of the children and the ministers was timely to address these challenges. The meeting sensitised the ministers to the importance of allocating sufficient resources to Barnahus in order to guarantee that all child victims benefit from its services. Soon after the meeting, the Minister of Justice sent a letter to all judges in Iceland inviting them to use Barnahus consistently as it was a good practice model. In this context, the children's advocacy contributed to maintaining the commitment to Barnahus high on the political agenda. Despite changes of Government and Parliament after the national elections, the state funding for Barnahus was increased. By October 2014, larger premises had been found and Barnahus moved to a new location. It was equipped with a higher budget to handle the caseload and to take on a new target group – children who are victims of physical abuse and domestic violence.<sup>66</sup>

In **Croatia**, the leading entrepreneur who pioneered the Child and Youth Protection Centre of Zagreb used stories and drawings from Croatian children for advocacy purposes. During the psychotherapy, boys and girls who had been exposed to sexual violence had expressed some of their experiences in drawings and letters. The drawings and stories of abused children, as well as patient statistics indicating a rise in abuse cases, helped to sensitise the mayor of Zagreb to the importance of developing more effective responses for child victims of sexual violence. Following an advocacy meeting with the messages conveyed by the children's drawings and letters, the mayor took leadership and ownership in the issue and called upon the city government to take action. The cases presented to the stakeholders, and illustrated by children's words and drawings, contributed to changing their awareness. This was an important prerequisite for the decision to establish the Centre within the municipality and to allocate funding.<sup>67</sup>

In **Denmark**, children were consulted in the context of a Barnahus survey, which was conducted one year after the establishment of the Barnahus model. The National Council for Children within the Ministry for Social Affairs and Integration interviewed eight children who were victims of sexual abuse and/or violence in order to consult with them on their experiences at Barnahus. The children were overall very positive about their experience at Barnahus and felt that they had been treated well by the staff in the Barnahus. They felt that Barnahus was a safe place for them and that it was child-friendly. The children provided some recommendations for improvement. They noted, for instance, that the camera in the interviewing room was very large and recommended that it should be smaller to disturb the child less during the interview. They also noted that they appreciated talking to the child psychologist at Barnahus and that they would prefer receiving longer-term support and therapy from the same person in Barnahus. According to the national law, it is possible for the municipalities to buy services from Barnahus in order to enable child victims to receive longer-term treatment at Barnahus rather than locally in the municipality. In practice, this possibility has however not yet been used consistently.<sup>68</sup>

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64 Key informant interview with Ólöf Ásta Farestveit, Director, Barnahus, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

65 Key informant interview with Ólöf Ásta Farestveit, Director, Barnahus, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

66 Key informant interview with Ólöf Ásta Farestveit, Director, Barnahus, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

67 Key informant interview with Gordana Buljan Flander, Professor and Director of the Centre for Child and Youth Protection of Zagreb, Croatia, 29 June 2016.

68 Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017.

The Barnahus in Sjælland, Denmark, convened a meeting with young adults who have experienced violence in childhood. The young people told Barnahus staff about their experiences as victims of violence, especially regarding their contact with the social services and the police. They shared recommendations on how to improve the interaction of these services with children who are victims of violence as well as the communication with them in Barnahus. Barnahus recognises the importance of listening to children's experiences with the service and their recommendations and is looking into ways of gathering the feedback from children whose cases have been at Barnahus.<sup>69</sup>

## Inspiration from abroad: How international advocates and regional cooperation have enabled change

Since the establishment of Barnahus in Iceland, there has been a growing interest in the Nordic countries to learn about the model and to promote it nationally and within the region. This interest was rooted on one side in the convincing nature of the model. On the other, high-level advocates and Barnahus pioneers played an important role in promoting the model. The active engagement of the Queen of Sweden and the Director of the Government Agency for Child Protection of Iceland and founder of the first Barnahus has been pivotal to inspire advocacy and change in many European countries and at the regional level.

In most countries that have set up Barnahus or comparable models, Barnahus pioneers, high-level advocates and experts were invited from abroad to inspire and inform the national process of change. They informed about the model and presented examples, sensitised decision makers to the benefits of investing in Barnahus, provided technical expertise and advice, or mentored the process for establishing Barnahus.<sup>70</sup> The confident influence and expertise of prominent advocates created an important momentum for change in each country they visited. It inspired national supporters and brought more on board, including state authorities and policy makers, NGOs, the academia and many others.

The first-hand information about Barnahus and how it worked in other countries has been useful for advocates and change makers in many different ways. Experience from the countries revealed that some of the aspects of the model that are considered essential in one country could not be applied one-to-one in another country. Nonetheless, raising awareness about how the model could work and what kind of solutions are possible elsewhere has been helpful to inspire and shape mindsets, to provide food for thought and generate openness for change.<sup>71</sup>

While many Barnahus in Europe have been inspired by the Barnahus in Iceland, officials and professionals in the countries that established Barnahus gradually transitioned from learning from existing models to passing their own experience on to others.

The dynamic expansion of the model in Europe demonstrates that the development of the Barnahus model does not stop short after its establishment. In many countries, the model was initially established with certain limitations and these were gradually overcome through a continued process of learning and development. The different national approaches to continued learning and development of the model are discussed further below. The European Barnahus models have thus created dynamics of inspiration and reform that benefit each

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69 Key informant interview with Kim Risom Rasmussen, Leader, Barnahus Sjælland, Denmark, 21 July 2016.

70 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016. Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016. Key informant interview with Gordana Buljan Flander, Professor and Director of the Centre for Child and Youth Protection of Zagreb, Croatia, 29 June 2016. Key informant interview with Andrea Möhringer, Executive Director, World Childhood Foundation, Germany, 16 December 2016 and 24 March 2017. Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017. Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016. Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

71 Key informant interview with Andrea Möhringer, Executive Director, World Childhood Foundation, Germany, 16 December 2016 and 24 March 2017. Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016.

and all of them and promise to fuel the continued evolution of the model. This process has also been essential to continuously refine and strengthen the model.

The Barnahus and comparable models attract a lot of attention from countries in Europe and globally and receive visits of delegations from all over the world.<sup>72</sup> The global interest, which is developing into a Barnahus movement and network, is encouraging. At the same time, providing information, receiving delegations and organising study visits to Barnahus is demanding in terms of time and human resources, especially at the receiving side. Key informants noted that leading authorities and Barnahus management need to be conscious of the importance of their transnational information and networking task. In order to continue building the movement and network, it is critical that the relevant agencies and institutions maintain this aspect of Barnahus' work.

Key informants recommended that it would be strategic to consider establishing a more formalised network or platform at the European level that makes expertise and information available in Europe and globally. In addition to facilitating the exchange among Barnahus in Europe and offering a specialised platform for debate, learning and development, a European network could support global information and advocacy. It could serve as a resource centre that gathers knowledge and expertise. It could also help making study visits to Barnahus and comparable models more effective by offering preparatory support and information for foreign delegations.

Regional and international organisations and fora have played also an important role in supporting the establishment of new Barnahus in European countries. They include in particular the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the Council of the Baltic Sea States. International and European conferences offered fora where the Barnahus model was presented and promoted as an outstanding example of good practice. They included the traditional child protection conferences organised in the Nordic countries as well as the International Society for the Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN).

In the early 2000s, Barnahus Iceland was first recognised internationally and at the European level as a good practice example. In 2002, the European report "Child Abuse and Adult Justice" by Save the Children identified Barnahus Iceland as the best practice among nine European countries. In 2006, Barnahus Iceland received the ISPCAN Multidisciplinary Award which was helpful in terms of promoting the model further.<sup>73</sup>

The Council of Europe promotes children's access to justice in its multi-year Strategies for the Rights of the Child. The partnership with regional bodies in this area, such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States, is an integral part of the Strategy.<sup>74</sup> Since 2014, the two organisations have collaborated closely to promote the implementation of the Council of Europe Guidelines on child-friendly justice in the Baltic Sea Region. In 2015, a regional conference focused specifically on the gathering, taking and testing of evidence from children in criminal, civil and administrative proceedings. At this occasion, national representatives presented the different Barnahus models and their experience with promoting the establishment of Barnahus or comparable models in their countries.<sup>75</sup>

The Council of Europe promotes child-friendly justice also through specific activities and programmes. The 'One in Five' Campaign, for instance, has been instrumental in Cyprus to sensitise public officials, practitioners

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72 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016. Key informant interview with Gordana Buljan Flander, Professor and Director of the Centre for Child and Youth Protection of Zagreb, Croatia, 29 June 2016. Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children's House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016.

73 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016. See: Diesen, Christian, *Child Abuse and Adult Justice, A comparative study of different European criminal justice systems handling of cases concerning child sexual abuse*, Save the Children, 2002, accessed from [https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/documents/childabuseadultjustice\\_entero1.pdf](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/sites/default/files/documents/childabuseadultjustice_entero1.pdf) on 3 April 2017.

74 Council of Europe, *Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021)*, 2016, p. 18.

75 Council of Europe, Council of the Baltic Sea States, *Regional Activity in the Baltic Sea Region "Child Evidence"*, 2014. Council of Europe, European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ), *Child-friendly Justice*, 2014. Council of the Baltic Sea States, CBSS Expert Group on Children at Risk, *Child-friendly justice: Handling child evidence*, 18 February 2015.

and the civil society to the need to address sexual violence against children more effectively and to enable child victims to access justice, as is discussed further below.

The Council of Europe Lanzarote Committee has consistently promoted the Barnahus model as a good practice for implementing the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. The Lanzarote Committee is a monitoring body composed of representatives of States Parties to the Convention. It is tasked to monitor the implementation of the Convention in the ratifying States. To this end, the Committee gathers information from national authorities and other sources by administering general overview and thematic questionnaires. The objective is to assess the situation with regard to the protection of children from sexual violence and to gather and analyse national experience in this field, including persisting gaps and good practice examples. In addition, the Committee organises capacity building activities and hearings on specific challenges in the implementation of the Convention.<sup>76</sup>

In 2012, the Committee visited the Barnahus in Iceland as one of its capacity building activities. The Committee members met with the Barnahus staff; they had the opportunity to see and learn from the practice and to discuss the model with representatives of all agencies and services involved. The 26 members of the Committee were convinced by the strengths of the Icelandic Barnahus model and reached consensus that Barnahus in Iceland was one of the most child-friendly models in enabling children's access to justice. After this experience, the Committee members have become multipliers and advocates themselves as they carry their learning from the study visit to Iceland into their own national contexts and professional networks. In its 2015 annual report, the Lanzarote Committee recognised the Barnahus model as a good practice example for enabling child-sensitive justice approaches.<sup>77</sup>

At the level of the European Union, the necessity to transpose EU Directives has driven reform processes in the area of child-sensitive justice in all Member States. Of particular relevance for the Barnahus model are the 2012 EU Victims' Rights Directive and the 2011 EU Directive on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children. The transposition of the 2011 EU Directive on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children was instrumental for activating the national debate on the Barnahus model in Cyprus.<sup>78</sup>

The European Union funding and grant programmes contributed also in many different ways to the advocacy processes. In Latvia, for instance, an EU co-funded project engaged a multi-stakeholder group in a joint review of the referral mechanism for child victims of violence. In this context, the Barnahus model was presented for the first time to a wide audience of national stakeholders. The EU co-funded PROMISE project has become a unique platform and an important point of reference for Barnahus pioneers, leading advocates and entrepreneurs in countries that have embarked on a process for setting up Barnahus such as Bulgaria, Cyprus, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg and the UK. The PROMISE project, for the first time, offered a platform for debate, joint learning and development of Barnahus and comparable models. The project team and partners provided technical advice and information to numerous advocates and stakeholders who are promoting the Barnahus model or its continued development within their countries.

### Inspiration from abroad: National accounts and examples

In the 1990s, when looking for inspiration for enhancing children's access to justice, the Director of the Government Agency for Child Protection in **Iceland** got to know about the Child Advocacy Centres in the

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<sup>76</sup> Council of Europe, *Lanzarote Committee*, 2017. Key informant interview with Claude Janizzi, Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, Luxembourg, Chair of the Lanzarote Committee 2016-2018, 20 December 2016.

<sup>77</sup> Lanzarote Committee, Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (T-ES), *1st Implementation Report, Protection of Children against Sexual Abuse in the Circle of Trust, The framework*, Adopted by the Lanzarote Committee on 4 December 2015, T-ES(2015)05\_en final, 8 January 2016. Key informant interview with Claude Janizzi, Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, Luxembourg, Chair of the Lanzarote Committee 2016-2018, 20 December 2016.

<sup>78</sup> Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016. Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016.

USA. At the time, there existed only few centres that worked still with a rather limited approach. The Director visited the centre in Alabama and participated in a conference focusing on the work of Child Advocacy Centres. The experience from this visit provided inspiration for developing a multi-disciplinary and interagency model in Iceland. While the U.S. model informed in particular the investigative techniques, the Icelandic model needed to be designed in accordance with the Nordic welfare system and the culture of child welfare and justice systems typical for Europe and the Nordic countries. Based on these considerations, it became clear that the model needed to involve the child protection services, the police and prosecution services, the justice sector and the medical services. The guiding interest was to allow the child victim to give evidence and to testify without having to appear in court. The main challenge while planning the model was to find the right approach in order to guarantee the human rights principles of fair trial and due process for the victim and the defendant while also safeguarding the best interests of the child and enabling the child to testify in a child-friendly manner.<sup>79</sup>

As of the year 2000, that is just two years after the establishment of the Barnahus in Iceland, the Director of the Government Agency for Child Protection started to present and promote the model abroad. The first occasion for doing so was the Nordic Child Protection Conference in the year 2000. At this occasion, the Government Agency Director and a representative from the Child Advocacy Centre in Houston, Texas, jointly presented the two models and their approaches in conducting forensic interviews with child victims. The Nordic Child Protection Conferences have become a tradition that has been in place since the 1920s. They attract a lot of attention from child protection professionals throughout the region. The presentation of the Barnahus model was received with a lot of genuine interest and excitement. This first moment of engagement in a regional debate on the model had subsequently a strong impact for the promotion of Barnahus in the Nordic countries and internationally. After the presentation at the conference in the year 2000, the Government Agency Director continued to inform about the model at numerous seminars and conferences in the Nordic countries and in Europe more broadly.<sup>80</sup>

In 2002, Save the Children presented a multi-country study on the theme of sexual violence against children in nine European countries. The study concluded by recommending the Icelandic Barnahus as a good practice model that should be taken to scale throughout Europe. The results of this study were presented widely and generated a new momentum for the promotion of Barnahus, especially in the Nordic region. Save the Children started to advocate for the model in the Nordic countries and placed this advocacy work very high on its agenda. The intense advocacy by Save the Children, in addition to the engagement of the leading Barnahus pioneer from Iceland, created an increasing political awareness and interest in the model within ministries, regional authorities and local municipalities. Politicians from Denmark, Norway and Sweden who participated in meetings in Iceland, including meetings convened by the Nordic Council, requested the possibility to visit Barnahus in Iceland and demonstrated a strong interest to learn about the model.<sup>81</sup>

Over the years, Barnahus in Iceland received more and more visits from official delegations from the Nordic countries, including high-level delegations of ministers and the Queen of Sweden, and from national and local delegations from other European countries. These study visits were an important driver for advocacy for Barnahus in Europe. The model was immediately convincing due to its positive atmosphere, the coordinated provision of all relevant services under one roof, the child-friendly environment and the multiple positive outcomes.<sup>82</sup> The first Barnahus in Iceland thus generated a wave of positive interest and the conviction that this model offers viable solutions to many challenges that states and societies are struggling with and that it is sensible for politicians, advocates and practitioners to invest in it.

In **Sweden**, the most high-level advocate and supporter of Barnahus was the Queen of Sweden. Together with the Minister of Justice, the Queen visited Barnahus in Iceland in 2005. Although the Queen does not have political decision-making power, she is an influential advocate for children. Her dedicated support and commitment to Barnahus contributed significantly to the visibility and recognition of the model in

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79 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

80 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

81 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016. Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

82 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

Sweden, in the Nordic region and other European countries. Shortly after the high-level delegation's visit to Iceland, the Government of Sweden took the decision to establish the model in Sweden.<sup>83</sup>

Also in **Norway**, the process for establishing Barnahus was inspired by existing models in the region. Study visits were made to the Barnahus in Iceland and the Child Advocacy Centres in the USA. The study visits informed a feasibility study to explore the possibilities for establishing the model in Norway. The study was commissioned by the Parliament of Norway and its findings guided subsequently the process for the establishment of Barnahus in Norway.<sup>84</sup>

In **Denmark**, the national government appointed an expert group and tasked it to develop a proposal for the Barnahus model in Denmark. The group gathered experience and studies about the Barnahus model from the other Nordic countries, assessed and validated different options.<sup>85</sup> An important source of information were the evaluations of existing Barnahus in Iceland, Norway and Sweden that had previously been conducted.<sup>86</sup> The availability of quality information, evidence and differentiated knowledge about different Barnahus models was considered important in the process of establishing the model in Denmark. These sources of information were also valuable to inform the advocacy and negotiations connected to the establishment.<sup>87</sup> Learning from other countries that was considered important for the process in Denmark was the need to support the different Barnahus in the country with a view to ensure they operate with high and uniform quality standards. The expert group incorporated the key conclusions resulting from this multi-country review process into the drafting of the national law establishing the model in Denmark. The National Board of Social Services was given the responsibility to support the implementation of the Barnahus model and the cross-sectoral collaboration within the Barnahus. In order to achieve this, the National Board coordinates the activities of different Barnahus in the country, facilitates networking and exchange between them. In addition, the National Board of Social Service has developed common national quality standards for Barnahus, in collaboration with the Barnahus and the cross-sectoral partners.<sup>88</sup>

The process in **Latvia** has also been inspired by Barnahus in the Nordic countries. The Government of Latvia is an active member of the Expert Group on Children at Risk of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). The dynamic exchange between Nordic and Baltic ministerial representatives in this context generated a growing interest of promoting the model also in Latvia. The Icelandic model as well as other Nordic examples were repeatedly discussed in the meetings of the Expert Group, at relevant conferences and expert consultations organised by the Council of the Baltic Sea States. Eventually, the PROMISE Project under the coordination of the CBSS Children at Risk Unit offered a framework to intensify this exchange even further. The consultations organised in the context of the PROMISE Project gathered experts knowledgeable about the model and how it operates in different countries. These fora were pivotal for identifying appropriate solutions for the context in Latvia. In addition, a visit by the State Secretary of the Ministry of Welfare to Barnahus in Iceland offered an important opportunity to see the model from up close. This occasion reaffirmed the political commitment and motivation to establish the model also in Latvia.<sup>89</sup>

Barnahus in Iceland provided inspiration also for the development of the model in **Cyprus**. The Director of the Government Agency for Child Protection of Iceland paid two visits to Cyprus to advise in the process of establishing Barnahus or a comparable model. The Barnahus pioneers in Cyprus appreciated the mentoring, the practical advice with regard to architectural plans and the selection of staff, and the

83 Key informant interview with Anna Petersson, Barnahus Linköping, Sweden, 22 June 2016. Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

84 Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016. Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children's House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016.

85 Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017. Key informant interview with Kim Risom Rasmussen, Leader, Barnahus Sjaelland, Denmark, 21 July 2016.

86 Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017.

87 Key informant interview with Kim Risom Rasmussen, Leader, Barnahus Sjaelland, Denmark, 21 July 2016.

88 Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017.

89 Key informant interview with Lauris Neikens, Senior Expert of Children and Family Policy Department, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia, 27 June 2016 and 2 May 2017.

technical expertise in consultations with all relevant stakeholders involved in the process.<sup>90</sup> A delegation from Cyprus paid study visits to the Barnahus in Iceland and the Child and Youth Protection Centre in Zagreb in order to gather information, inspiration and experience and to exchange with officials and professionals in these institutions. Technical expertise for the setting up of the database of Barnahus or a comparable model in Cyprus was sought from Greece. The preparations for the establishment of the Barnahus in Cyprus involved therefore expertise from different countries.<sup>91</sup>

The transnational support and the opportunities for consultation, advice and exchange were considered critical and enabled the stakeholders in Cyprus to understand the existing models in-depth and to adapt them to the specific situation and needs in their country. Gaining a sound understanding of how the model functions elsewhere was considered useful in Cyprus to provide inspiration and mobilise commitment to achieve high standards in service provision. In Cyprus, the presence of judges at the Barnahus is for instance currently not feasible. In the light of this limitation, it is considered important to continue informing the key actors of the criminal justice system, such as the Judiciary, Prosecution and the Bar Association, about the way that some of the matters are handled elsewhere. Information about the procedures in other countries, as for instance in Iceland, could help raising awareness that the model in Cyprus is starting with a minimum and that there is room for improvement.<sup>92</sup>

In **Germany**, the Barnahus model from the Nordic countries and the Child Advocacy Centres from the USA have been known and propositions to introduce and adapt this model in Germany have recurrently featured in the national debate. The leading Barnahus pioneer from Iceland paid several visits to Germany in order to inform about the model. Although the general tone of the national discussions was that it was not possible to replicate the model in Germany, there remained a certain interest in the model. In 2016, the World Childhood Foundation in Germany convened a high-level round-table in Leipzig with the participation of leading Barnahus pioneers from Sweden. The Queen of Sweden attended and addressed the round-table meeting. The presence of the Queen increased the convening power of the organisers, brought high-level politicians and experts as well as practitioners from the national, regional and local levels on board and attracted media attention.<sup>93</sup>

The World Childhood Foundation has been driving the advocacy and the process for the establishment of Barnahus in Germany. It has drawn inspiration from the leading Barnahus pioneer from Iceland and from other countries that have established Barnahus. The experience from other countries inspired the Barnahus pioneers in Germany to identify a conducive and supportive local context where the model could be introduced on the basis of existing structures for multi-disciplinary and interagency services for child victims of crime. The World Childhood Foundation in Germany initiated consultations with different municipalities and regions, including municipalities that participate in Unicef's child-friendly cities initiative and places where multi-disciplinary cooperation models are already operational. Leipzig was eventually identified as a supportive context for Barnahus in Germany. The city's hospital for children and youth became the leading local partner and the process for the local establishment was initiated by a group of committed professionals and officials within the municipality, the region and the World Childhood Foundation in Germany. Additional consultations are held with other cities to explore the possibilities for piloting the Barnahus model.<sup>94</sup>

In **England**, the Children's Commissioner has been advocating strongly for the establishment of Barnahus. The model from Iceland and the Nordic countries was a key point of reference for the advocacy. In her annual report of 2015, the Children's Commissioner has recommended Barnahus as a good practice example to be introduced in England. She published subsequently a briefing note on Barnahus to support the advocacy. The briefing note provides an overview of the concept of Barnahus, its activities and the services it offers and informs about the history and development of the model in the Nordic countries. The data and compelling evidence available from Iceland and Nordic Barnahus studies are cited to demonstrate

90 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016. Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016.

91 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016.

92 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016.

93 Key informant interview with Andrea Möhringer, Executive Director, World Childhood Foundation, Germany, 16 December 2016 and 24 March 2017.

94 Key informant interview with Andrea Möhringer, Executive Director, World Childhood Foundation, Germany, 16 December 2016 and 24 March 2017.

the positive outcomes of the model and present it as a sensible investment for England. The Children’s Commissioner emphasises specifically the flexibility of the model, which enables the adaptation to the existing structures and context in England.<sup>95</sup> In April 2016, the Children’s Commissioner led a delegation from England on a study visit to Barnahus in Iceland. Representatives from all the relevant departments, agencies and service providers as well as Parliamentarians participated in the delegation, including representatives of the Home Office and the Crown Prosecution Service. In addition, the leading Barnahus pioneer from Iceland visited London in order to inform about the Barnahus model at different occasions, including in the House of Lords, and supported the national advocacy.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> See: Children’s Commissioner for England, [Barnahus](#), Improving the response to child sexual abuse in England, undated. Key informant interview with Anne Longfield, Children’s Commissioner, England, 19 May 2017

<sup>96</sup> Key informant interview with Anne Longfield, Children’s Commissioner, England, 19 May 2017.

# Establishing the Barnahus model: Grasping opportunities and confronting challenges

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## A multi-step process towards the establishment of Barnahus

The experience from the countries that succeeded to establish Barnahus or comparable models reveals that the establishment follows typically a multi-step reform process. Different instances of change built upon each other and paved the way for the establishment of Barnahus. Advocates, supporters and entrepreneurs who promoted the establishment of the Barnahus model in their countries, demonstrated perseverance and stamina to continue advocating for the model throughout these different stages, sometimes over years.

The accounts of the informants and contributors to this study revealed that the multi-step process involved several or all of the actions outlined below. This section takes up some of the elements that have been discussed in the previous chapter and puts them into a national perspective and chronology.

The experience from the countries affirms that the process for developing a national Barnahus or comparable model does not stop once the service has been established. Many countries were motivated by the Barnahus in Iceland, which has continued to evolve in a positive and proactive way since its establishment. Learning from this experience has encouraged Barnahus pioneers and advocates all over Europe to push for the establishment of a Barnahus or comparable model even in a basic form and even before all the details were clearly regulated and defined. They trusted that it would be possible to develop and refine the model further once it became operational. When working towards the establishment of a basic multidisciplinary and interagency service with the aim to let it grow and evolve further over time, the leading actors need to ensure that the service is integrated in child protection and justice systems and guarantees the best interests and human rights of child victims who are referred to it.

## Research and analysis

In many countries, research and analysis were essential in all steps and phases of the process towards the establishment of Barnahus or a comparable model. Research generated important evidence and data for sensitisation and helped to substantiate advocacy messages and to inform policy makers, practitioners and the public. Research was commissioned by governments or ministries, for instance as national investigations and official inquiries into violence against children, or conducted by the academia, research institutes, NGOs or other civil society actors.

## Mapping and review

The mapping and review of existing structures for preventing and responding to violence against children was instrumental in some countries in order to identify strengths and gaps in the child protection and justice systems. The key informants described that these exercises helped to clarify each step from the identification of violence against children through to referral and access to justice. Where mapping exercises were conducted in a multi-disciplinary and interagency effort, they generated a broad-based understanding of the gaps, ownership of the process towards reform and the recognition of the Barnahus as a solution that works.

## National awareness raising and political campaigns

Key informants noted that national campaigns created an important momentum for sensitisation and generated a broad based public and political recognition of the need for reforms. They aligned different actors along the same objectives, which helped forming alliances and partnership in advocacy, policy planning and practice towards the establishment of a Barnahus.

## National debates on children's right to grow up free from violence<sup>97</sup>

The national debates on children's right to grow up free from violence were important in all countries. They involved policy makers, practitioners, child rights advocates, researchers, Barnahus pioneers and the media. National debates helped to inform about the Barnahus model, build recognition of this model as a good practice and a sensible investment and generated political commitment. A well-informed and carefully moderated public and political debate has contributed to shaping mindsets and attitudes, including with regard to an evolving understanding of childhood and the human right to grow up free from violence. In several countries, an intense debate on violence against children exerted public and political pressure on politicians and decision makers and contributed to strengthening accountability in preventing and responding to violence against children. Media reporting about particularly severe cases of violence against children and the failures on the side of public authorities and service providers in preventing or responding to them was an important driver of change.

## National law and policy reform processes

In some European countries, the Barnahus model presented a good practice approach to implement significant parts of international and European law, in particular the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, as well as the 2012 EU Victims' Rights Directive and the 2011 EU Directive on combating sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children. Being responsible for the incorporation of these standards into national law and defining ways for applying the new provisions in practice, policy makers gained interest in the Barnahus model. It had been tested and evaluated positively in other countries and could guide national authorities and their partners in implementing the new legal obligations under international and European law.

In some countries, the drafting of a national action plan or strategy presented opportunities for advocates and Barnahus pioneers to promote the model. In some countries, advocates succeeded to have the establishment of a Barnahus or comparable model included as a specific goal into a national action plan or strategy. In these cases, the commitment to the model was first expressed at the high levels of government while the specific measures required for setting up the model were negotiated and defined subsequently.

## International and cross-sectoral training programmes

Some key informants participated in multi-country and cross-sectoral training programmes where they gained knowledge of multi-disciplinary and child-centred approaches in responding to violence

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<sup>97</sup> 'National debate' refers to the discussion of a specific topic, in this context the prevalence and scope of violence against children and the responses to address and prevent it. National debates are led at the level of national ministries and institutions, in Parliament, in the academia, at national conferences, in the media and other relevant fora. National debates involve a discussion of concerns, questions and possible solutions to a specific topic. They are controversial as the various actors involved in a national debate represent different standpoints and views. 'Political debate' involves policy makers and politicians and discusses political or policy responses to a specific topic. 'Public debate' refers to all debates led in public. The media has a central role in providing a platform for debate, to broadcast debate and report about debates.

against children. They brought this knowledge back to their countries and spread it within their professional societies. The learning and inspiration they gained at training programmes motivated them to act as advocates for multi-disciplinary and interagency cooperation. This prepared them also to identify the Barnahus model as a good practice example and a viable solution to the needs for more effective responses to violence against children in their own countries. In some countries, national training programmes on child protection and addressing violence against children created the basis for the development of more effective responses, including multi-disciplinary and interagency cooperation models like Barnahus.

### **Study visits**

All countries that succeeded to establish the Barnahus model have previously organised study visits to a Barnahus or comparable model. Study visits were made mostly to the Barnahus in Iceland and other Nordic countries or to a Child Advocacy Centre in the United States. Key informants noted that the study visits with multi-disciplinary delegations, including political decision makers, had been decisive to pave the way for the establishment of the model in their own countries. In cases where heads of states, ministers and high-level advocates took part in the study visits, there was an intense media coverage and this in turn contributed to more vigorous public information and debate. In some cases, study visits were made by local groups of professionals and officials from different sectors who were already cooperating on cases of violence against children. The joint learning during these study visits was conducive to team building and helped strengthening their cooperation.

### **Previous initiatives to strengthen child-sensitive justice approaches**

Many countries have had specific elements of the Barnahus model in place before establishing the full model. Thus, countries have developed experience, for instance, with video-recorded testimonies, specially trained interviewers and child-friendly interviewing rooms. The experience with these methods and approaches was a good basis, as noted by some informants and contributors to this study, and generated an enhanced interest to evolve these measures further. On the other side, some countries had already gone through a reform process and established a certain practice or new working methods. It became then difficult, in some contexts, to challenge or modify the recently established practice, to generate the willingness to try out yet again different ways of working and to hand certain responsibilities over to the Barnahus model. In these cases, the involvement of the policy-making, decision-making and operative levels of the different professional sectors helped to overcome doubts and to clarify procedures and responsibilities in the new way of cooperation under the Barnahus model.

### **Building a culture of multi-disciplinary and interagency cooperation: Respectful cooperation, joint training and confidence-building**

In some of the countries that have established a Barnahus or comparable model, different forms of multi-disciplinary and interagency cooperation had previously been in place and had been operational for a while. This helped to foster a culture of cooperation, confidence and trust between the different agencies and disciplines. It prepared the ground for the Barnahus model as it gave the different actors involved a headway in learning about each other's mandates, approaches and methods, building respect for each sector's unique role and contribution. Professionals and officials who were engaged in these different forms of multi-disciplinary and interagency cooperation models reported that it was essential to develop formal agreements that define and regulate the cooperation. It was considered particularly useful to obtain the support and commitment to these

agreements at different levels, the political or administrative level, the management level and the professional operational level. In addition, joint training helped to build confidence in the benefit of working together as well as a common working language with clarity about key terms and concepts. This type of experience was perceived as an important investment to facilitate the transition into the Barnahus or comparable model later on.

In countries with a limited culture and practice of multi-disciplinary and interagency cooperation, it was specifically the multi-disciplinary approach that created obstacles in setting up the Barnahus or comparable models. Obstacles include, for instance, legal restrictions to data sharing, legal provisions that prevent the judges to take testimonies outside the court building, or the judges' discretion to decide where to hear child victims. Denmark has solved these challenges by establishing Barnahus through a new stand-alone law that regulates the multi-disciplinary and interagency cooperation and procedures in Barnahus. Other countries have decided to establish the model in spite of the limitations with the commitment to address any legal, administrative or practical challenges subsequently.

The study reveals that a lack of understanding and trust in other agencies, their mandates and working methods is one of the most frequently cited concerns and doubts about Barnahus and comparable models. Key informants noted that professionals and officials from one sector often feel uncomfortable with exposing their ways of working to other professions. A limited understanding of the specific mandates and working methods of each agency and discipline is likely to undermine trust. Directors and staff needed to be sensitised to the importance of treating one another with respect across the different disciplines. They learned that the specific knowledge, mandates and working methods of each profession were not in competition but enriching and mutually complementary.

### National accounts and examples

The process for the establishment of the Barnahus in **Iceland** was a multi-step effort that had its origins in the revision of the national Child Protection Act. This law reform led to a restructuring of the child protection system and in this context, the Government Agency for Child Protection was established in 1995. From the beginning, the Government Agency for Child Protection consciously invested in research on sexual violence against children and an analysis of the relevant state responses. Guided by the research findings, the Government Agency documented the need for a specialised multi-disciplinary and interagency response to child victims. On this basis, the concept of the Barnahus model was developed and the decision for the establishment of Barnahus was taken. The Government Agency advocated with all relevant professional societies to gradually increase the acceptance and use of the service.<sup>98</sup>

In **Sweden**, the advocacy for the Barnahus model had been going on for several years before the national Government expressed its support for the establishment of the model in Sweden. The advocacy targeted actors at all levels of the public administration and in different sectors, positions and institutions. Many leading experts and high-level officials from different backgrounds participated actively in the national advocacy for Barnahus. While Save the Children Sweden was the leading NGO promoting the model in Sweden, other actors had also decisive influence, in particular the Queen of Sweden and the World Childhood Foundation, the Minister of Justice, as well as the academia that supported the advocacy with empirical data and analysis. The visit of a high-level delegation to the Barnahus in Iceland in 2005, led by the Queen of Sweden, generated important dynamics in the national process towards the establishment of the model. The advocacy coincided with intense media reporting about failures in responding to child

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98 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

abuse cases and this generated a momentum that eventually led to the Government's decision in support of the Barnahus model.<sup>99</sup>

There had been previous experience with multi-disciplinary and interagency cooperation models in Sweden. In Linköping, for instance, the psychiatric unit BUP Elefanten had been operational since 1995 to provide services for child victims of sexual violence. The unit offered also a child-friendly interviewing room and facilitated the cooperation between child psychiatry, social workers and the police. The experience made with the multi-disciplinary and interagency cooperation in this context prepared the ground for the establishment of the first Swedish Barnahus in Linköping in 2005.<sup>100</sup>

In **Norway**, the police had taken the initiative since the early 2000s to strengthen the investigations in cases of domestic violence and sexual violence against children. In 2002, a training programme on handling domestic violence and sexual violence cases was rolled out within the police. The programme aimed to prepare every police district to appoint a coordinator for these cases, to ensure common procedures and standards and to strengthen proactive measures and interventions. The training programme was a first step to sensitise the police to the need for more effective responses to violence against children. This experience prepared the police to take the institutional leadership for Barnahus in Norway. At the same time, the need for the establishment of the Barnahus model started to be recognised from the high level of the Ministry of Justice.<sup>101</sup>

In **Denmark**, the process of defining the model, deciding about the most appropriate form of institutional affiliation and details of its establishment was completed by a group of experts within one year. This fast process was possible due to some coinciding factors: An intense public and political debate on sexual abuse, violence and neglect against children was fuelled by intense media coverage of particularly severe cases. The media reporting and the public discussion of the cases exposed politicians and public authorities to the failures in preventing sexual abuse and violence against children and protecting victims. The public awareness and outrage about child protection failures combined with the strong public pressure to redress these failures was a powerful combination to enable change. There was also a broad-based consensus that the Barnahus model was a good practice example and that the establishment of the model was a sensible investment for Denmark. These dynamics led to a prompt transition from the political commitment to Barnahus through swift law and policy reform to the establishment of the model.<sup>102</sup>

In the **Netherlands**, the national survey and intense media reporting on sexual violence against children and child neglect and the state's failure to respond adequately prompted a process of law reform in this area. In 2013, the Parliament adopted a new law on reporting cases of violence against children and neglect. The new law showed almost immediate effect and led to increased reporting of cases to the authorities. Already prior to this law reform, the response to cases of violence against children and neglect had been evolving constantly in the Netherlands over the years.<sup>103</sup>

In Haarlem, the Child and Youth Trauma Centre (KJTC), a specialised centre for traumatised children and their parents, has been operational since 1998. The Centre has developed a tradition of multi-disciplinary cooperation in providing treatment for child victims of violence and neglect. The Child and Youth Trauma Centre has gained a strongly positive reputation for its work with child victims due to the high quality of the services provided, the professionalism of the staff, the transparency of the procedures and the willingness and openness of the centre to collaborate with all relevant agencies and organisations involved

99 Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016. Key informant interview with Anna Petersson, Barnahus Linköping, Sweden, 22 June 2016. Interview with Carl Göran Svedin, Professor Emeritus and Research Leader, National Competence Centre Barnafrid, University of Linköping, Sweden, 16 March 2017.

100 Interview with Carl Göran Svedin, Professor Emeritus and Research Leader, National Competence Centre Barnafrid, University of Linköping, Sweden, 16 March 2017.

101 Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016.

102 Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017.

103 Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016.

in protecting children from violence. As a result, the police, paediatricians and family doctors, child protection services and social workers gained confidence in the capacity of the centre and referred children to the centre. The managers of the centre strived for continuous development and improvement of the staff and the services offered. In collaboration with the Free University (VU) in Amsterdam, the Child and Youth Trauma Centre in Haarlem applied for state funding to establish the Academic Workplace Child Abuse and Neglect. The well-established network of the Child and Youth Trauma Centre, and the participation of all relevant actors in the initiative, were conducive to receive state funding and, at the same time, had prepared the working ground for the establishment of a Barnahus model later on. The Academic Workplace Child Abuse and Neglect was set up in 2010. It consisted of a research unit, an educational centre for professionals, and an inter-sectoral team specialised in services for child victims of violence and neglect and their parents.<sup>104</sup>

In the context of this Academic Workplace, an inter-sectoral Child Abuse and Neglect Team was established in Haarlem, also in 2010. By setting up this team, the objective was to strengthen the multi-disciplinary and interagency cooperation and coordination in responding to cases of violence against children and neglect. The team was composed of representatives of the judiciary, prosecution services, the police, social services, child protection services, the schools system, youth welfare, adult (forensic) and child psychiatry, paediatricians, forensic medical doctors and the specialists of the Child and Youth Trauma Centre. The organisation Safe at Home, which investigates cases of violence against children and neglect in the family as well as inter-parental violence, was also part of the team. The team was established through an agreement signed by the directors of the institutions involved. The regional governors responsible for the various areas and the heads of regional departments signed as well. The agreement provided a framework for the cooperation of all the services and authorities involved without defining all the details of operations and procedures. The commitment from these different institutions and levels rendered the agreement particularly solid. The Child Abuse and Neglect Team was established at two levels: the establishment of a management team of directors was considered important to ensure longer-term commitment; in addition, the professional team was to be involved in the casework and operations. The team members initiated a tradition of weekly coordination meetings.<sup>105</sup>

In 2012, the Academic Workplace Child Abuse and Neglect organised a study visit for the members of the Child Abuse and Neglect Team, as well as representatives of the municipality of Haarlem, to the Child Advocacy Centre in San Diego, USA. The study visit included a training on the essentials of multi-disciplinary cooperation. The common experience of learning and refining their ways of working together, generated a strong team spirit with a high level of mutual trust. Subsequently, this proved to be an important investment facilitating the transition into the Barnahus model.<sup>106</sup>

In **Croatia**, the recognised need for better responses to child victims of violence led first to the establishment of a hotline for children. The establishment of the hotline was combined with large-scale awareness raising and sensitisation campaigns, including the dissemination of brochures and posters targeting the public, relevant professional groups and schools. The media supported the dissemination. An intense media coverage followed and initiated a lively public debate, while the availability of the hotline encouraged children to report incidents of violence as it became more and more known to them. The increasing number of reports and disclosures from children needed to be met by professionals who are aware, trained, equipped and competent to respond to the reports they received. Gradually, these reforms led to the setting up of ever more specialised services for child victims until the idea for establishing the Child and Youth Protection Centre of Zagreb took shape.<sup>107</sup>

104 Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016.

105 Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016.

106 In the Netherlands, there are more multidisciplinary collaboration initiatives working as a team, but the centre in Haarlem is the only one that offers these multi-disciplinary services 'under one roof'. Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016.

107 Key informant interview with Gordana Buljan Flander, Professor and Director of the Centre for Child and Youth Protection of Zagreb, Croatia, 29 June 2016.

In **Cyprus**, the 'One in Five' Campaign generated and informed a vivid political debate on the importance of addressing sexual violence against children more effectively. It involved members of the government and other officials, Parliamentarians, the Commissioner for Children's Rights, NGOs and entrepreneurs. While there had been knowledge about the challenges and the importance of addressing sexual violence more effectively, the Campaign offered a platform where existing knowledge was gathered and debated in an organised and structured way. It also reached out to and engaged key stakeholders who had previously not been involved in the debate. The period in which the Campaign was rolled out coincided with the need for the Government of Cyprus to transpose the EU Directive on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children into national law. At the same time, Parliament was debating the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Eventually the EU Directive was transposed in 2014 and the Council of Europe Convention was ratified in early 2015. These different processes were closely related and instrumental to create an atmosphere in which the need for reforms was so evident that actual change became possible. A small group of committed Parliamentarians, the Children's Commissioner and specialised NGOs had a central role in advocating for the reform of law and procedures concerning child victims of sexual violence. The Parliamentarians saw the reform process through to the adoption of the new laws while the Children's Commissioner and NGOs continued advocating for the establishment of the Barnahus. Throughout these steps and processes, a diversity of stakeholders started to appreciate the Barnahus model and promoted its establishment in Cyprus.<sup>108</sup>

In addition to the many institutions, authorities and civil society actors who were involved in the process of establishing the Barnahus model in Cyprus, an external adviser played an important role to see it through. Though not an expert in children's rights, she is a person of high social standing and with change maker's qualities. This independent entrepreneur was in a position to advocate for change, mobilise political will and maintain the important momentum generated by the Council of Europe Campaign 'One in Five' and all the political dynamics associated with it. She was tasked by the Council of Ministers to coordinate the work of different ministries. She induced the involvement of the leading Barnahus pioneer from Iceland who paid visits to Cyprus and advised in the process for setting up the Barnahus.<sup>109</sup>

In this context, the Council of Ministers formed an ad hoc committee tasked to develop a national strategy against sexual violence against children. Due to the previous intense debate, the establishment of the Barnahus was included as one of the top priorities under the strategy. The development of the strategy eventually offered a formal and official framework for taking concrete steps towards the establishment of the Barnahus model, which had previously been promoted and recommended by national studies and reports and leading advocates.<sup>110</sup>

The opportunities for information, consultation and exchange at the European level have contributed to shaping the agenda for the Barnahus model in Cyprus. Participation in international conferences, training seminars and other events convened in the framework of the European Police College, the European Crime Prevention Network, the PROMISE project and other European Commission co-funded projects under the Daphne strand have all provided valuable opportunities for cross-country learning and exchange.<sup>111</sup> The participants communicated the information and learning from these meetings and events within relevant networks in their countries and fed them into the national reform processes.

In **Latvia**, the Foundation Centre Dardedze had been operating a crisis centre in Riga since 2001 for children who were removed from the family home due to domestic violence or abuse. When the crisis centre was established, the founders decided to set up also a child-friendly interviewing room for child victims of violence who were involved in criminal proceedings. The interview room was equipped with

108 Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016.

109 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016. Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016.

110 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016. Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016.

111 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016.

video recording technology and the centre started to collaborate more closely with the police. When a child victim was placed at the crisis centre, it became a common practice that police officers would come to the centre in order to interview the child. The crisis centre model spread gradually all over the country and each crisis centre had its own interviewing room. A few years after its establishment, the crisis centre operated by the Foundation Centre Dardedze in Riga invested in setting up a resource centre. The main reason for the establishment of the resource centre was the understanding that the crisis centre had only a limited possibility to address the consequences of abuse while there was also a need for more preventive work. With the establishment of the resource centre, the Foundation started to roll out an interactive education programme for children as well as training for professionals from the social and justice sectors. At the same time, it continued working directly with child victims of abuse and with their families by offering therapy and providing legal and psychological support.<sup>112</sup>

The Foundation had been advocating for the Barnahus model for several years, at first without succeeding to generate concrete interest on the side of the national Government. It first learned about the model at an ISPCAN conference where Barnahus was presented as a good practice example. The conference promoted the model and encouraged countries all over the world to establish it. Bringing the inspiration from this conference home to Latvia, the Foundation continued its advocacy for the Barnahus model.<sup>113</sup>

In 2014, the Foundation Centre Dardedze secured European Commission co-funding for the project “Child Advocacy Centre – Toward better protection of child victims and witnesses of violence in close relationships” (2014-2016).<sup>114</sup> The project included a number of activities such as educational activities for experts, research and consultations involving national and local government representatives, awareness raising, and promoting the interests of children who have been exposed to violence as victims or witnesses.<sup>115</sup>

In the framework of the project, a National Expert Council for the prevention of sexual violence against children was set up. The National Expert Council engaged representatives from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Welfare, the State Inspectorate for the Protection of Children’s Rights, the Prosecutor’s General Office, the State Police, the Latvian Association of Local and Regional Government, the State Centre for Forensic Medical Examination and judges. The Foundation Centre Dardedze ensured the coordination of the National Expert Council’s work.<sup>116</sup>

The National Expert Council engaged in an intense debate on how to prevent and address sexual violence against children. It convened a series of meetings where the case of a fictitious child victim of sexual violence was discussed in order to map step by step the typical response. The joint mapping exercise aimed to analyse the underlying causes and contributing factors of sexual violence against children. It also aimed to gain an understanding where the existing structures work well and to identify gaps. This multi-agency consultation was conducted over a period of 8-10 months and involved all the professionals and officials involved in criminal investigations and proceedings, social workers, psychologists and medical staff.<sup>117</sup>

The Foundation hosted the meetings of the National Expert Council at its centre. It offered thereby a third space for all the institutions and agencies involved to meet and discuss the matters at stake with the best interests of the child victim at the centre. At one of the meetings of the National Expert Council for the prevention of sexual violence against children, the Foundation presented the Barnahus model, which was well received by all the participants. The Foundation succeeded to gain the National Expert Council members’ interest and support to the Barnahus model and gradually many of the members became

112 Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment “Center Dardedze”, Latvia, 14 September 2016.

113 Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment “Center Dardedze”, Latvia, 14 September 2016.

114 European Commission DAPHNE III grant reference JUST/2013/DAP/AG/5472.

115 Key informant interview with Lauris Neikens, Senior Expert of Children and Family Policy Department, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia, 27 June 2016 and 2 May 2017. Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment “Center Dardedze”, Latvia, 14 September 2016.

116 Key informant interview with Lauris Neikens, Senior Expert of Children and Family Policy Department, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia, 27 June 2016 and 2 May 2017. Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment “Center Dardedze”, Latvia, 14 September 2016.

117 Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment “Center Dardedze”, Latvia, 14 September 2016.

themselves advocates for Barnahus.<sup>118</sup> The members of the expert group, including the Ministry of Welfare, suggested concentrating the efforts and resources of the National Expert Council on the promotion of this model in Latvia, as a single major investment. This suggestion gained undivided support from all members. Further discussions followed within the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Justice as well as other governmental and non-governmental entities. Also the members of the Expert Group for Children at Risk of the Council of the Baltic Sea States were consulted, in particular Iceland represented by the Director of the Government Agency for Child Protection.<sup>119</sup>

In 2015, the Foundation Centre Dardedze and the Ministry of Welfare joined hands to organise a meeting to promote and discuss the Barnahus model in Riga. Mr Bragi Guðbrandsson, the Director of the Government Agency for Child Protection of Iceland, was invited to present Iceland's Barnahus at this event. The visit of the leading Barnahus pioneer from Iceland marked the beginning of more intense advocacy for the establishment of the model in Latvia.<sup>120</sup>

After the Ministry of Welfare and the Foundation had established a fruitful collaboration in this area, the Foundation approached also the Ministry of Justice in order to advocate for the Barnahus model. The open-minded and trusted contact between the representatives of the Ministries and the Foundation was important for their fruitful collaboration. The Ministry of Justice brought the Barnahus model on the agenda of the national Council for Crime Prevention, a high-level body involving different ministers and the Prime Minister of Latvia. As the National Council generally had the issue of sexual violence against children on its agenda, the presentation of the Barnahus model was well received.<sup>121</sup>

These consultations prepared the grounds for a seminal decision with regard to the further development of the Barnahus pilot in Latvia. On 22 June 2016, the national Council for Crime Prevention chaired by the Latvian Prime Minister decided to support the Barnahus model. Barnahus was recognised as a viable solution for the improvement of the criminal procedural practices in cases of children who are victims of criminal offences. The Council for Crime Prevention tasked the Ministry of Justice, together with the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Health and the Prosecutor General to assess the possibilities for the implementation of the Barnahus model in Latvia and to ensure a one-year pilot phase of the Barnahus model in the Riga region. The pilot was intended to inform the assessment and to provide data and experience with regard to the efficiency of the model and the possibilities to introduce it throughout the country. The decision was taken without the allocation of state budget so that the funding for the pilot phase had to be raised elsewhere and the details of the establishment needed to be negotiated subsequently.<sup>122</sup> The decision was announced publicly by the National Council for Crime Prevention. It coincided with the date in which a Latvian court issued a sentence against a paedophile in a high profile case, which generated a lot of media attention. This timely coincidence bestowed additional weight to the political commitment to the Barnahus model by the National Council.<sup>123</sup>

Against this background, the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Justice collaborated to plan and initiate the pilot project. On 3 April 2017, the Latvian Barnahus pilot project in Riga was officially launched with a duration until 31 December 2017. The piloting of Barnahus builds on the existing premises and services of the Foundation Centre Dardedze. The pilot period is used to develop working methods and routines for the multi-disciplinary and interagency cooperation under one roof. This includes the clarification of procedures and standards, responsibilities for coordination and specific activities, rules guiding information sharing between the different agencies and services and data protection, and

118 Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment "Center Dardedze", Latvia, 14 September 2016. Key informant interview with Lauris Neikens, Senior Expert of Children and Family Policy Department, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia, 27 June 2016 and 2 May 2017.

119 Key informant interview with Lauris Neikens, Senior Expert of Children and Family Policy Department, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia, 27 June 2016 and 2 May 2017.

120 Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment "Center Dardedze", Latvia, 14 September 2016. Key informant interview with Lauris Neikens, Senior Expert of Children and Family Policy Department, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia, 27 June 2016 and 2 May 2017.

121 Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment "Center Dardedze", Latvia, 14 September 2016.

122 Key informant interview with Lauris Neikens, Senior Expert of Children and Family Policy Department, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia, 27 June 2016 and 2 May 2017.

123 Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment "Center Dardedze", Latvia, 14 September 2016.

methods for the forensic interview with child victims. The working methods and routines shall be tested over a six months' period. On the basis of the experience with the pilot implementation, recommendations are to be developed to guide the implementation of the Barnahus model throughout the country. In addition, during the pilot year 2017, training seminars are organised for the Barnahus team members and informative seminars are convened in order to inform professionals from the judiciary and the social welfare system about the new cooperation model and methods.<sup>124</sup>

The Latvian Barnahus project team has sought international assistance and support from the Government Agency for Child Protection and the Barnahus in Iceland, given the country's long-standing positive experience with the development and operation of the Barnahus model. A certain level of practical guidance, consultation and supervision for the step by step implementation of the Barnahus project is considered helpful and valuable to ensure the successful implementation of the pilot project and the subsequent continuation of the Barnahus model in Latvia.<sup>125</sup>

In **Germany**, the World Childhood Foundation demonstrated perseverance and stamina in advocating for the Barnahus model despite the deeply rooted conviction that the model could not be replicated in the country. The advocacy by the Foundation was informed and inspired by the experience from countries that have already established Barnahus, by the World Childhood Foundation's global support to Barnahus, by the PROMISE project, and by the technical advice and mentoring from Barnahus pioneers in Europe. The World Childhood Foundation translated also a leaflet of the Icelandic Barnahus into German in order to disseminate information and raise awareness of the model.<sup>126</sup>

The media supported the advocacy for the Barnahus model in Germany and reported about the Barnahus model in Sweden. Different print and TV media reported periodically about cases of violence against children, including cases of sexual violence and cases where children died due to exposure to violence in the family and ineffective responses by the child protection services. Failures on the side of the state and the existing child protection services were repeatedly discussed in the media. Although the issue gained increasing attention and prominence in the public and political debates, a systematic and holistic response was still not in place. An area that is particularly weak is the referral of child victims of violence to therapy and treatment and ensuring their access to justice.<sup>127</sup>

Due to its steady commitment to promoting the Barnahus model in Germany, the World Childhood Foundation succeeded to build a network of experts, advocates and supporters in national and regional institutions, the academia, relevant professional societies and among the media. The Federal Ministry for Families, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth has been following the national debate on the Barnahus model and has been observing with interest the engagement of the World Childhood Foundation for the establishment of the Barnahus model in Germany.<sup>128</sup>

After negotiations with different actors, the Foundation identified Leipzig as a place where a solid experience of multidisciplinary and interagency cooperation for child victims of violence was already in place. Since 1999, the child and youth hospital at the university clinic of Leipzig has hosted a multi-disciplinary and interagency child protection group and a trauma counselling centre for child victims of violence. The multidisciplinary and interagency child protection group has continuously developed its structures and operations further. It is composed of representatives from the relevant medical departments within the hospital as well as forensic doctors and other medical experts from other hospitals. In addition, external partners participate in the group and represent all relevant sectors working

124 Key informant interview with Lauris Neikens, Senior Expert of Children and Family Policy Department, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia, 27 June 2016 and 2 May 2017.

125 Key informant interview with Lauris Neikens, Senior Expert of Children and Family Policy Department, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia, 27 June 2016 and 2 May 2017.

126 Key informant interview with Andrea Möhringer, Executive Director, World Childhood Foundation, Germany, 16 December 2016 and 24 March 2017.

127 Key informant interview with Andrea Möhringer, Executive Director, World Childhood Foundation, Germany, 16 December 2016 and 24 March 2017.

128 Key informant interview with Andrea Möhringer, Executive Director, World Childhood Foundation, Germany, 16 December 2016 and 24 March 2017.

with and for children and families, including Youth Offices, guardianship services, family support and early childhood care services, victim counselling and therapy services, childcare facilities and shelters, the education system as well as the police, prosecution services and the Family Court. In addition, a multidisciplinary and interagency child protection and early childhood care network is already operational in Leipzig and in the regional state. Based on the existing structures and experience with multidisciplinary and interagency cooperation in cases of violence against children, there were signs of a nascent political and professional support for the Barnahus model in Leipzig.<sup>129</sup>

The experience with the multidisciplinary cooperation in the area of child protection in the City of Leipzig, in the regional state and at the university clinic specifically has gradually fostered a climate of trust in multidisciplinary cooperation and mutual appreciation. The university clinic has become an important point of reference for cases of violence against children, including physical and sexual violence and serious neglect. Experience has shown that many children who are victims of sexual violence have previously experienced also other forms of violence and neglect. The firm establishment of the multidisciplinary child protection group at the university clinic seems to have increased the awareness of child protection matters and facilitated the reporting of cases and referral to the clinic. Since the establishment of the child protection group, the clinic has seen an increasing caseload, although the number of cases that remain unreported is considered to be still high.<sup>130</sup>

The multidisciplinary child protection group within the clinic is integrated into the child protection and early childhood care network of the City of Leipzig and the regional state. Over the years, the multidisciplinary group at the clinic has progressively taken on a coordination role in the cases of violence against children that it receives. It has established an outpatient clinic on the premises of the university clinic that is specialised on cases of violence against children and open one day per week. The referrals to the clinic are made by parents, guardians or other support persons of the child, teachers, Youth Offices, emergency social services or the police, and some adolescents come by themselves to seek help. The multidisciplinary child protection group at the university clinic has also become known as a contact point where social workers, teachers, and other professionals working with children can call and seek advice when they have suspicions or noted signs that a child might be exposed to violence.<sup>131</sup>

The coordination role of the clinic is not limited to clinical issues but involves also the Youth Offices, paediatricians and practitioners as well as the reporting to the police, where necessary. The casework and referral of cases follows the guidelines that have been developed in the context of the child protection and early childhood care network as well as internal guidelines of the university clinic. Through the long-standing experience with the multidisciplinary cooperation and the development and continued refinement of the guidelines, the multidisciplinary group has increasingly succeeded to organise and orient its work in a way that places the child at the centre and gives primary consideration to the best interests of the child.<sup>132</sup>

In October 2016, the World Childhood Foundation in Germany organised a round-table consultation on Barnahus. The consultation was convened in Leipzig and marked the set-off for the process towards the establishment of a first Barnahus in the city. Prior to the event, the World Childhood Foundation and the child and youth hospital of Leipzig had prepared a concept paper presenting the vision of a Barnahus model in Germany. The participation of the Queen of Sweden in the round-table event triggered intensive media reporting and high-level participation of policy makers, experts and practitioners from the national, regional and local levels. The event aimed to mobilise support and gain the commitment from the

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129 Key informant interview with Andrea Möhringer, Executive Director, World Childhood Foundation, Germany, 16 December 2016 and 24 March 2017. Interview with Petra Nickel, University Clinic and Child and Youth Outpatient Department, Leipzig, Germany, 31 March 2017.

130 Interview with Petra Nickel, University Clinic and Child and Youth Outpatient Department, Leipzig, Germany, 31 March 2017.

131 Interview with Petra Nickel, University Clinic and Child and Youth Outpatient Department, Leipzig, Germany, 31 March 2017.

132 Interview with Petra Nickel, University Clinic and Child and Youth Outpatient Department, Leipzig, Germany, 31 March 2017.

representatives of all relevant agencies and services in Leipzig to develop and sign a cooperation agreement.<sup>133</sup>

During 2016, the Independent Commissioner for Matters Concerning Sexual Abuse of Children launched a campaign to advocate for a child-centred approach in providing services for children who have been exposed to sexual violence. In this context, the Barnahus model was raised as a good practice example although the official position was that the model could not be replicated in Germany due to structural obstacles. On the occasion of the high-level round-table meeting organised by the World Childhood Foundation in Leipzig in October 2016, the Independent Commissioner presented a position paper on child-centred services and procedures in cases of sexual violence against children. The position paper recognises the Nordic Barnahus model as a good practice example and a source of inspiration for necessary improvements and reforms in Germany. The position paper was prepared by a working group of the Independent Commissioner's Advisory Council and presented at the round-table meeting. It discusses in particular the existing challenges with regard to the child-sensitive interviewing of children who have been exposed to sexual violence, the support and assistance for victims throughout criminal investigations and proceedings and matters of counselling, early intervention and therapy for child victims. The paper notes the need for better coordinated and more systematic responses that are child-centred and child-friendly. Although the paper refrains from recommending the Barnahus model to be introduced in Germany, it highlights and explains all the gaps and shortcomings to which the Barnahus or comparable models could potentially offer solutions.<sup>134</sup>

In follow-up to these decisive first steps taken in Leipzig, a multidisciplinary meeting took place at the university clinic in Leipzig in February 2017. The meeting gathered all agencies and services involved in cases of sexual violence against children that would be involved in the operations of the Barnahus. Subsequently, specific agencies asserted their support to the cooperation, including the Superintendent of the Leipzig Police, the Mayor of the City of Leipzig and the Mayor for Social Affairs, the Prosecutor and several independent physicians. In March 2017, the World Childhood Foundation organised a study visit to Barnahus in Iceland. The study visit aimed to inform, guide and inspire the local multidisciplinary and interagency team that is working for the establishment of Barnahus in Leipzig.<sup>135</sup>

In **England**, there is interest and growing support for Barnahus across different political parties, ministries and departments and professional groups. In 2016, the Children's Commissioner addressed a cross-party committee in Parliament in order to brief about the Barnahus model and consult with the Parliamentarians on the opportunities it holds for children, professionals and the society. The Children's Commissioner held meetings with Police and Crime Commissioners who hold responsibilities in this area. Several are interested in developing a Barnahus. These and other occasions for consultation provided important opportunities to inform about the model, to discuss questions and doubts about its relevance for England as well as practical matters and concerns related to its establishment. Due to these meetings many new supporters and advocates started to support the national process for the establishment of the model.<sup>136</sup>

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133 Key informant interview with Andrea Möhringer, Executive Director, World Childhood Foundation, Germany, 16 December 2016 and 24 March 2017.

134 Unabhängiger Beauftragter für Fragen des sexuellen Kindesmissbrauchs [Independent Commissioner for Matters Concerning Sexual Abuse of Children], *Positionspapier des Beirates beim Unabhängigen Beauftragten für Fragen des sexuellen Kindesmissbrauchs [Position Paper of the Advisory Council of the Independent Commissioner for Matters Concerning Sexual Abuse of Children]*, September 2016. Key informant interview with Andrea Möhringer, Executive Director, World Childhood Foundation, Germany, 16 December 2016 and 24 March 2017.

135 Key informant interview with Andrea Möhringer, Executive Director, World Childhood Foundation, Germany, 16 December 2016 and 24 March 2017.

136 Key informant interview with Anne Longfield, Children's Commissioner, England, 19 May 2017.

## Considerations for the establishment: Grasping opportunities and confronting challenges

Many of the countries considered for this study had some specific elements of the Barnahus model in place before the model was formally established. This was the case, for instance, with regard to specialised services for child victims of violence from social workers, child psychologists and psychiatrists; specialised police investigators for cases of violence against children; trained forensic interviewers; or forensic doctors specialised on recognising injuries caused by violence. The use of video-recorded testimonies of child victims as well as child-friendly interviewing rooms have previously been in place or were planned in some of the countries.

When the advocacy for the establishment of Barnahus started, it was reasonable to integrate these existing elements into the Barnahus model. As noted in the previous section, an established culture of multidisciplinary and interagency cooperation in responding to cases of violence against children facilitated the process for the establishment of the Barnahus model significantly.

Even when consensus for the establishment of Barnahus had been reached and some countries had already gained a solid experience in some of the areas mentioned above, the process of defining and setting up the model was a challenging one in many countries.

### National accounts and examples

In **Iceland**, one of the main tasks of the Government Agency for Child Protection is to strengthen local child protection services. To this end, the Government Agency is tasked to develop specialised services that meet the needs of local authorities that are too small to deliver such services. It was against this background that the Barnahus model was developed as the specialised services required for child victims of violence could not be provided locally in small municipalities. Barnahus was to collaborate with municipal services throughout the country in order to enhance the quality of services for child victims and children at risk locally.<sup>137</sup>

Initially, the national law created an obstacle to the establishment of the Barnahus in Iceland. At the time, the law provided that courts could not be in any way involved in the criminal investigation process. The courts could therefore not be formally part of the Barnahus model. Barnahus was therefore first established with the involvement of the police and the prosecution services but without a formal connection to the courts. The defence lawyers protested against Barnahus and launched an appeal against the model to the court. They lost the case because there were no legal provisions or regulations that would have prohibited the Barnahus model as such. After eight months of operations, a law reform process set in with the objective to ensure that child victims would not have to testify in court and stand up to an interrogation during the main proceedings. The law reform provided that the judge was responsible for taking the child's testimony. While this law reform applied specifically to the investigative judge, it left it to the discretion of the court judges to elicit the child's testimony at the Barnahus or in court. Although the prompt law reform was a success, in practice the majority of the court judges continued afterwards to take the child's testimony in the courthouse. In this situation, after only one year of operations, the chances for Barnahus to become a sustainable institution were considered very weak. At that critical moment of time, the Government Agency for Child Protection launched a campaign to solicit the support for Barnahus from all the relevant professional societies, such as social workers, psychologists and medical professions, law enforcement as well as the public. The campaign generated strong support from all these sectors, including the public. This conveyed an important message to politicians about the broad-based and solid support for the model in society. The results of the campaign started to change the mindsets of judges to the effect that more and more of them decided to use the Barnahus. This process evolved over a decade and culminated

137 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

eventually in the law reform of 2015 that made it mandatory for judges to use Barnahus for taking the testimonies of all children under 16 years of age.<sup>138</sup>

In **Sweden**, the advocacy for the establishment of the Barnahus model continued for several years before concrete steps for its establishment were taken. The Barnahus model from Iceland became known in Sweden soon after its establishment but there was no immediate consensus that this model would be the right response for the challenges identified in Sweden. The understanding of the model was, at the time, centred strongly around the idea of establishing a distinct house, which did not convince many actors in Sweden. There was less understanding of the need to change the methods and ways of working together across the different disciplines and agencies and with child victims. At the beginning of the process in Sweden, these considerations led to a decision to abandon the name Barnahus with its connotation of a “house” and to call the model a Child Rights Centre. Although this idea received support, the proposed name turned out to be already protected and the name Barnahus was eventually maintained.<sup>139</sup>

In Linköping, when the first Swedish Barnahus was to be established in 2005, the police was concerned about social workers and child psychiatry providing services for child victims of crime before the criminal investigations were closed. In addition, there were doubts about how to maintain and respect the working routines in criminal investigations when the case is handled by a multidisciplinary and interagency team. Eventually, the growing understanding of the specific mandate and working methods of each agency and service provider helped to overcome these doubts and concerns. There was an increasing recognition of the important contribution that each agency in the team made and that the different services were all relevant and necessary in order to work with the cases.<sup>140</sup>

In 2005, the Parliament of **Norway** decided to commission a feasibility study to look into the possibilities for establishing the Barnahus model in Norway. A working committee was set up and tasked to conduct the feasibility study and, as part of this process, paid a visit to Barnahus in Iceland. In considering the existing models in Iceland and Sweden, the discussions in Norway prioritised a model established under a common platform and operating with a unified structure throughout the country. It became clear early on, that the establishment under the police would be the best solution for Norway.<sup>141</sup> That resulted not only from the political initiative and commitment demonstrated by the Minister of Justice, but also on the basis of the reasoning that all children who would be referred to the Barnahus would have in common that they are victims of some form of sexual abuse, violence or neglect that required police investigations.<sup>142</sup> The reasoning behind the chosen model was that it was considered easier for health and social services to integrate to a police-led model than the other way around.<sup>143</sup> When assessing the existing models in the other countries, there was also an understanding that the target group in Norway should not be limited to child victims of sexual violence but include also cases of domestic violence against children. This was considered important as domestic violence against children was prohibited under Norwegian law and the same services were to be made available to children affected by violence, irrespective of the form of violence or the setting in which it takes place.<sup>144</sup>

Initially, there was considerable resistance to the idea that police and social workers should collaborate closely within a single institution. The resistance came from all sectors involved. On one side, social services and psychologists were sceptical of the need to integrate their ways of working into the Barnahus, which was institutionally conceived as a part of the police. On the other hand, police officers, who were used to

138 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

139 Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

140 Interview with Carl Göran Svedin, Professor Emeritus and Research Leader, National Competence Centre Barnafriad, University of Linköping, Sweden, 16 March 2017.

141 Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children’s House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016. Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children’s House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016.

142 Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children’s House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016.

143 Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children’s House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016.

144 Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children’s House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016.

conduct the investigations within their own institutional structures, had to open up and consider also the perspectives of the social work discipline in working with child victims of violence. In an effort to redress these concerns, the professionals and officials involved in the Barnahus engaged in a process of getting to know their institutional mandates and working methods. For the social services, it was important to recognise that the police had long-standing experience in conducting forensic interviews with children as part of police investigations. The police officers were made familiar with the benefits of working with social workers and child psychologists who could support them in gaining the child's trust and providing for the child's needs. In preparation for the establishment of Barnahus, the different services involved consulted intensively on topics related to cooperation, learning about their respective mandates, and the approaches and methods of different disciplines in working with cases. It was important that the professionals involved in this process could ask and respond to questions about these matters. Taking the time for building this foundation for multidisciplinary and interagency cooperation was important to create mutual respect and trust and facilitate the open dialogue.<sup>145</sup>

After the first years of operations, the experience showed that Barnahus was lacking a clear mandate to officially regulate and guide the cooperation of different agencies and disciplines. This caused several challenges in the day-to-day operations and it required time and resources to resolve these challenges. In particular, it was not regulated clearly that the police and the courts were both mandated to use Barnahus, so Barnahus leaders invested time and resources to advocate for a consistent use of Barnahus by the police and the courts. In 2015, law reform redressed this issue and clearly mandated the police and the courts to use Barnahus services in all relevant cases.<sup>146</sup>

In the **Netherlands**, some resistance to the multidisciplinary cooperation came initially from the side of the national police. The police expressed concerns about the envisaged close cooperation with health care services within a single centre and argued for keeping the two services separate. The doubts about the cooperation model decreased however over time and have eventually been overcome. It proved very helpful that the local and regional law enforcement agencies were supportive of the model. Individual law enforcement officers demonstrated openly that they were strongly convinced of the importance and added value of working with other agencies and disciplines in this cooperation model. The influence of officials in leading positions who had supportive attitudes and were open for change was strategic to overcome the concerns and to start this new form of cooperation. Another obstacle was the need to make funding for the new cooperation model available as the initiative for its establishment came just at the peak of the economic and financial crisis in the country. Due to the combined efforts of many different actors to promote this new way of working and the shared trust in the benefits of multidisciplinary and interagency cooperation, the funding was eventually allocated.<sup>147</sup>

In **Cyprus** and **Denmark**, there was a broad-based consensus on the need for the services that the Barnahus model offers. From the very beginning in the process for its establishment, there was support for the model across state and non-state actors, across different political parties and ministries.<sup>148</sup>

Despite the strong support to Barnahus in **Cyprus**, securing funding was considered one of the major challenges for the longer-term operation of the model. The leading pioneers and supporters are however confident that solutions will be found to enable the sustainability of the service.<sup>149</sup>

Another issue that created obstacles in Cyprus relates to the difficulties of challenging the known and common ways of working. Critical voices raised concerns about the establishment of Barnahus because it

145 Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children's House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016.

146 Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016. Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children's House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016.

147 Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016.

148 Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016. Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016. Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017.

149 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016. Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016.

would be too complicated to set up a new cooperation model. There was a lot of uncertainty in how to operate with the model, how to adjust current working methods and integrate existing procedures. This challenge has been perceived strongly in Cyprus and is not uncommon for reform processes in other countries as well. It has been overcome as the concern about the shortcomings in the current system, the public and political pressure to address them and the recognised need for the Barnahus model were stronger than the doubts and uncertainty about the proposed reform.<sup>150</sup>

One of the concerns relates to the new ways of working in multidisciplinary and interagency teams. While police officers were used to conducting interviews with child victims in the presence of social workers during the interview, the Barnahus model requires them to get involved with other professionals and officials during the interview, in the preparations and follow-up. At the beginning, this change was perceived as uncomfortable and unsettling, especially where the new routines were concerned. The experience from Cyprus has shown that joint learning, training and development can help to address and overcome these challenges and to create a strong team-working approach in confronting new working methods, based on trust and mutual support.<sup>151</sup>

Another concern relates to the challenge of ensuring continuity of services and stable quality in the transition from the previous way of handling cases into the Barnahus model. In Cyprus, this concern created an ambition to train and prepare the staff and to develop and test certain methods and procedures even before the Barnahus became operational. Social services are considered to be less impacted by the change as they will provide services and treatment for the children not only at the Barnahus premises but also locally where the children live. The law enforcement services, on the other side, are particularly affected by the change as it affects all aspects of their investigations in cases of violence against children. As opposed to the other professional disciplines, law enforcement officers are however not stationed within the Barnahus and are not represented among the staff. This might challenge the team dynamics and the inclusive cooperation of all disciplines. In order to facilitate the transition in light of these concerns, the police conducted a study aiming to identify the specific implications that working with the Barnahus model will have on their operations. This study was considered important to ensure preparedness and continuity in ensuring a smooth transition of police operations into the Barnahus model. On the basis of this study, a special police unit was established in December 2016 with the mandate to investigate cases of sexual abuse of children. Soon after its establishment, the special unit started to engage in joint training with other professional groups involved in these cases.<sup>152</sup>

In **Latvia**, a major challenge in the establishment of the Barnahus model relates to the different policy plans concerning interviewing rooms for child victims of crime. Currently, national policy guidance in the area of crime prevention envisages that all police units in the country shall designate a special interviewing room for hearing children who are victims of crime. The Ministry of the Interior and the State Police are bound by this policy and have to implement it. When the Barnahus model started being discussed, representatives of the law enforcement authorities expressed their concerns and noted that there was no viable reason for them to deviate from the existing policy guidance, which they are obliged to implement. Taking these concerns seriously, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Justice, the Foundation Centre Dardedze as well as other entities advocating for the Barnahus in Latvia, continued to engage in negotiations aiming to raise awareness of the benefits of the Barnahus model and the fact that it will enable higher standards in interviewing child victims than only a child-friendly interviewing room. Eventually, the Ministry of the Interior and the State Police consented to support the pilot of the Barnahus model in the Riga region. At the same time, all parties involved in the discussion agreed that there was also a need for interviewing rooms within the police for certain occasions and for certain groups of vulnerable victims of crime. The fact that the Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Justice are not only the lead agencies but also the primary funders of the Barnahus pilot model, helped to gain the support of these and other actors to the model. In the future, further efforts might be required in order to overcome obstacles to the operation of the

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150 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016.

151 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016.

152 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016.

Barnahus model that might arise over time, in particular with regard to any law reform that may become necessary in order to operate the model effectively.<sup>153</sup>

Another concern relates to the probative value of the testimony of a child victim in criminal proceedings. The judicial tradition in Latvia has tended to prioritise cases where the statement of the child victim is corroborated by additional evidence such as an expert opinion from a psychologist or a forensic medical examination. There is currently no consensus among judges whether or not a sentence can be issued solely on the grounds of the child's testimony. In addition, there is a perception that making interviews and proceedings child-friendly could undermine general principles of due process. The advocacy for the Barnahus model has continually addressed these doubts and the process of building confidence in the value of the model will continue once that the Barnahus becomes operational. The experience and evidence available from other European countries has been decisive in this context. Individual advocates in Latvia solicited the experience with addressing these concerns from Barnahus pioneers and experts from different European countries. The PROMISE project has offered an important platform for sharing experience and consulting on the challenges. The European experience has shown that there are valid methods and techniques that specialists can use to assess the credibility of a statement from a child victim. This knowledge and available evidence that confirms the added value of Barnahus for increasing the probative value of children's statements, is considered helpful to inform the ongoing debate on these matters in Latvia.<sup>154</sup>

In Latvia, the absence of specialised police units for investigating cases of sexual violence against children was also perceived as an obstacle. Specialised units have a strong potential to lead more effective investigations and prosecutions. Where they are not in place, advocating for the Barnahus model becomes more difficult, particularly in relation to the law enforcement authorities.<sup>155</sup>

There are further doubts about the transportation of child victims from all over the country to the future Barnahus, which will first be placed in the capital Riga. It is currently not clear how a child living far from Riga would react to some hours of car drive to get to the Barnahus. The pilot implementation of the Barnahus will offer an opportunity to understand how these challenges can be handled in practice.<sup>156</sup>

In 2016, the discussion around the need for coordinated multi-disciplinary and interagency services for child victims of crime gained new momentum in **Germany**. This was largely an achievement of the continued advocacy of the World Childhood Foundation in Germany and the nascent interest in the model in the city of Leipzig, which became increasingly more concrete and pronounced. During 2016, the Independent Commissioner for Matters Concerning Sexual Abuse of Children advocated intensively for a child-centred approach in providing services for children who have been exposed to sexual violence. The Independent Commissioner set up a working group of knowledgeable experts and leading professionals from the relevant sectors. The working group was tasked to develop a concept note for a child-centred model. While the concept note refers to Barnahus as a good practice model, it maintains the position that this model cannot be introduced in Germany. This view had been the prevalent position over many years and made the advocacy for the Barnahus model in Germany and any progress in this area difficult. The main obstacles were considered to be related to the legal restrictions in the area of data sharing and case-specific cooperation between different agencies and disciplines, including the judiciary. These challenges have led to a generally limited culture of multidisciplinary and interagency cooperation in child protection cases. The absence of clear reporting obligations of cases of violence against children in criminal law have created doubts with regard to the referral of children to a Barnahus or comparable model. The civil child protection laws and relevant services are legally and structurally distinct from the protection of children from violence under criminal law. This segregation creates challenges for multidisciplinary and interagency cooperation as envisaged by the Barnahus model. Leading experts in this area noted however, that the discussion of the

153 Key informant interview with Lauris Neikens, Senior Expert of Children and Family Policy Department, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia, 27 June 2016 and 2 May 2017.

154 Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment "Center Dardedze", Latvia, 14 September 2016.

155 Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment "Center Dardedze", Latvia, 14 September 2016.

156 Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment "Center Dardedze", Latvia, 14 September 2016.

Barnahus model and its potential replication in Germany and the related studies have helped to analyse, reveal and debate these structural challenges. The recognition and discussion of these challenges constitute an important achievement as they are a prerequisite for the necessary reform process. As a result, some of these structural challenges are gradually being addressed by law and policy makers.<sup>157</sup> This experience from Germany reveals how the debate around the Barnahus model can induce and inspire a process towards structural improvements, even before the establishment of the model becomes concrete itself.

Against this background, the World Childhood Foundation convened a round-table consultation in Leipzig in October 2016 with the participation of the Queen of Sweden, leading Barnahus pioneers from the Nordic countries and influential decision makers and practitioners from the local, regional and national levels in Germany. This event marked a turning point in the advocacy for the establishment of the Barnahus model. In light of the support for Barnahus that high-level advocates expressed at the meeting and the solid partnership of Barnahus pioneers at the local level in Leipzig, the possibility for the establishment of Barnahus became more tangible and concrete. After this meeting, further negotiations were held to the effect that the first concrete steps for the establishment of a Barnahus model in Leipzig started in 2017. In February 2017, special working groups were set up and started meeting periodically in order to elaborate the details of the cooperation of the different agencies and disciplines in the Barnahus model and to identify a suitable location. By mid-February 2017, a regional coordinator for the process was employed with funding provided by the World Childhood Foundation in Germany to coordinate the process for the establishment of the Barnahus.<sup>158</sup>

Setting up several small working groups and giving them time and space to discuss the practical and operational matters of the future Barnahus in Leipzig in-depth revealed itself as useful and practicable. The meetings of the working groups were hosted by the university clinic of Leipzig. The working groups discussed issues related to the mandates and ways of working of the different agencies, services and professional groups involved in addressing cases of violence against children. The working groups were tasked to engage in a discussion of what the cooperation in Barnahus would mean in specific terms, how to enable efficient cooperation while respecting the existing regulations that each party is bound by and how to overcome any obstacles or challenges.<sup>159</sup>

The group meetings helped the different officials and professionals involved in understanding the specific roles and mandates of each, sharing ideas and concerns and discussing open questions. They were also useful in order to strengthen the professional networks and contacts, which had already been built through the multidisciplinary child protection network of the City of Leipzig and the multidisciplinary child protection group at the university clinic of Leipzig. In some areas, questions emerged that required specific clarification, such as the specifics of data sharing and referral, including in cases where violence is suspected and exploratory interviews would be required. In addition, the forms of cooperation between the different actors involved in civil and criminal proceedings require clarification, such as the Youth Offices, the police and prosecution services, the criminal court and the family court. The role of the clinic and medical professions and specialised assistance and support services in the referral mechanism for victims of violence need to be clarified in detail. Some actors have also expressed their doubts as to why a distinct location for the Barnahus is proposed while all the main services appear to be already in place and operational. The aspiration is, however, that a special location will help to maximise the efficiency of the cooperation between different agencies and services, help overcoming risks and weaknesses in the cooperation while being also child-friendly and facilitating services and procedures that are child-centred.<sup>160</sup>

157 See: Fegert, J.M., Sabine Andresen, Ludwig Salgo and Sabine Walper, *Hilfeangebote und Strafrechtliche Fallbearbeitung bei Sexueller Gewalt gegen Kinder – Vom Kind her denken und organisieren, Sonderdruck, Zeitschrift für Kindschaftsrecht und Jugendhilfe [Support Services and Criminal Law Casework in Cases of Sexual Violence Against Children – A child-centred approach, Special Edition, Journal of Child and Parents Law and Youth Support]*, 2016, pp. 324-334. Key informant interview with Andrea Möhringer, Executive Director, World Childhood Foundation, Germany, 16 December 2016 and 24 March 2017.

158 Key informant interview with Andrea Möhringer, Executive Director, World Childhood Foundation, Germany, 16 December 2016 and 24 March 2017.

159 Interview with Petra Nickel, University Clinic and Child and Youth Outpatient Department, Leipzig, Germany, 31 March 2017.

160 Interview with Petra Nickel, University Clinic and Child and Youth Outpatient Department, Leipzig, Germany, 31 March 2017.

The specifics of the establishment and location of the Barnahus in Leipzig are yet to be clarified and defined. To this end, the working groups are held to review different propositions and to come up with a proposal for the location. Thus far, it appears to be a good solution to locate the Barnahus on the premises of the university clinic of Leipzig. In preparation for the establishment of the service, the Barnahus pioneers at the university clinic of Leipzig reached out once more to the different agencies and services involved in cases of violence against children, such as the Youth Offices and their coordinators, clinics and multi-disciplinary child protection groups or networks, in order to provide up-to-date information about the developments and plans.<sup>161</sup>

In **England**, there is generally a high recognition of the need for multi-disciplinary and interagency services for child victims of violence. Advocacy for the Barnahus model has raised a lot of support to the establishment of the model in England. There is however also resistance against the model, which is primarily based on structural challenges and limitations within the law. One concern relates to the timing of the forensic interview with a child victim. An important principle of Barnahus is the limitation of the number of interviews that the child has to undergo while respecting the general principles of due process and fair trial. In the Nordic countries, the defence lawyer and the accused person have a right to observe the forensic interview with the child as of the moment when the accused person has been charged with the offence. This is a requirement of due process and fair trial that needs to be observed in order to ensure that the video-recorded interview is later on admissible in court. In England, the interview with the child is however necessary during the investigation phase and prior to charging the accused person in order for the prosecution services to decide whether an indictment is made. The prosecution are held to balance the quality of evidence and the public interest in taking the case to court. During the investigation phase, the child has to be interviewed so that the quality of the child's statement can be assessed. In this phase, the accused person does however not have a right to question the child through his or her lawyer as the charges have not yet been brought forward. For the context in England, this implies that there would have to be at least two interviews with the child, one during the investigations, and one after the indictment has been made. A second concern relates to the capacity of Barnahus to conduct exploratory interviews with children where violence is suspected, even without the consent of the parents. In England, a child can only be interviewed without the consent of the parents if there is a "significant risk of harm". This is the case when a child has disclosed an act of violence. In the absence of a disclosure and in the light of mere suspicions, it is at present not clear, if exploratory interviews can be conducted without the parents' knowledge and consent. The Children's Commissioner for England informs about these concerns in her advocacy for Barnahus and holds the position that these structural limitations can be overcome and that it is highly worthwhile to look for constructive solutions in England.<sup>162</sup>

## **Funding for the establishment: Securing a diversity of budget sources to enable permanency and flexibility**

The experience from the countries demonstrates that it has been sensible and necessary in many cases to pursue a diversity of funding sources for the establishment of the Barnahus or comparable models. Informants and contributors to this study noted that it was important to secure a stable budget to cover the permanent costs of the Barnahus operations. At the same time, they considered it essential that the financing of the model enables flexibility in accommodating varying caseloads and that the management has some budget available to allow for new and emerging activities and measures and necessary adjustments of the model after its establishment.

Many countries have found it useful to obtain from the beginning a clear commitment and practical division of tasks for the budget allocation. A lesson learned from the countries that succeeded to establish the model, points to the importance of agreements on shared budget allocation.

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161 Interview with Petra Nickel, University Clinic and Child and Youth Outpatient Department, Leipzig, Germany, 31 March 2017.

162 Children's Commissioner for England, [Barnahus](#), *Improving the response to child sexual abuse in England*, undated.

Experience has shown that where such agreements were made, often at the local level and even in very basic form, they were respected. If these agreements were changed subsequently, they tended to be changed to the better.<sup>163</sup>

Where budget shortages or a general reluctance to allocate public funding created obstacles to the establishment of the Barnahus model, different solutions could be found for instance by sharing the costs between the different authorities and institutions involved, integrating the services provided by the Barnahus into mainstream health insurance schemes, raising a part of the funding from private partners, such as foundations or NGOs, or from regional institutions and donors such as the European Commission. In-kind contributions such as the donation of a house, financing training or making technical equipment available were other important preconditions for securing the economic basis for the establishment of the Barnahus model.

In some cases, the establishment of the Barnahus was at first only condoned by the national government and relevant ministries, without any financial commitment to it. In these cases, the establishment was nonetheless made possible, for instance by freeing funds from within the existing public budget or establishing the model on a project or pilot base with private funding. Arrangements like this have enabled the establishment when politicians shied away from making public spending decisions that create costs in the short term and are expected to “pay off” only in the longer run. Experience from the pioneer countries has shown that obtaining the political acceptance and support to the model is worthwhile even when public funding is not immediately allocated. Advocates have found solutions to secure the budget from private or international sources in order to enable the establishment and the first years of operations. After a successful pilot phase, the convincing nature and benefits of the model have gradually helped to bring public funding in to sustain it.

With regard to budget management rules, the experience from the countries has shown that clear rules and procedures for budget allocation and management, division of costs and approval of expenditures enable the day-to-day operations at the Barnahus. The countries that have established Barnahus or comparable models have experienced that allocating decision-making power on budgetary issues to persons who are directly represented in the Barnahus or its management and oversight bodies can help significantly to facilitate timely decision-making and smooth procedures.

In some cases, the commitment to support the establishment of a Barnahus or comparable models included the allocation of staff who would remain on their general payroll while transferring their position to the Barnahus. This has created difficulties in some cases, as the administrative reporting on staff worktime allocation could consider only case-specific tasks such as the number of cases handled or the hours of treatment delivered. In the reporting modules, staff were unable to report time spent on developing working routines and procedures and participating in multidisciplinary meetings, which are activities central to the operations of the Barnahus model. They appeared therefore to be underperforming compared to their previous jobs. These administrative challenges have been solved by involving the director and management level of the professional sectors concerned and finding innovative solutions to adjust reporting schemes.

The management of Barnahus or comparable models has made positive experience with having a part of the budget not earmarked in order to enable some flexibility in covering costs and activities that incur ad hoc or to set priorities as the model evolves. The experience from the countries has also shown that it is important to allocate budget specifically for the longer-term planning and

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163 Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

development of the model and the staff and to enable attractive and healthy working conditions for staff.

Prior to the formal establishment of the Barnahus model, funding needs to be secured to set up the model and to secure its operations at least for a first implementation phase of a few years. The countries have taken different approaches to allocating the required funding and the approaches differ in terms of quantity, duration and sustainability.

### National accounts and examples

The Barnahus in **Iceland** was financed from the beginning through the general budget of the Government Agency for Child Protection. As it was within the Agency's discretion to decide about the allocation of the available budget, the Agency decided to make some of its funding available for the establishment of Barnahus. This was possible due to the closure of a residential care unit and the premises as well as the budget were used for Barnahus.<sup>164</sup>

In **Sweden**, despite the intense advocacy targeting the national Government and the Government's decision to establish the Barnahus, the state did not allocate any funds from the national budget.<sup>165</sup> The Barnahus had to be financed at the local level and by the partners involved, whereas the municipal authorities allocated the largest part of the budget. In addition, the prosecution services, the police and the health care services were expected to contribute to covering the costs from within their general budgets. The allocation of funding was therefore divided between the different sectors. The police for instance covered from the beginning the costs related to their officers and equipment in most of the locations. The fundraising with municipal authorities required a lot of advocacy work and did not always succeed as expected. In some cases, individual officials in the municipalities committed to support the establishment of the Barnahus but when they left their position or when local political priorities changed, the same level of political, financial or in kind support could not always be maintained. A lesson learned in this regard was the importance of making local agreements on budget allocation and division of tasks. Experience has shown that where such agreements were made, they were not broken and if they were changed subsequently, they tended to be changed to the better.<sup>166</sup>

The establishment of the first Barnahus in Linköping was made possible with funding from the World Childhood Foundation, which supported the municipality of Linköping in initiating the pilot programme in the region. Once established, the Barnahus continued to be funded from different sources. The nine municipalities that participated in the pilot programme provided half of the budget and the share was divided according to the sizes of the municipalities. The health care system, which is administered at the regional level of the county, covers the other half. The police and the medical staff cover the costs of their equipment used at the Barnahus. The budget of the Barnahus covers the staff costs, the rent for the house and enables the further development of the service as well as education. The operational costs of the Barnahus are therefore relatively stable and do not depend on the number of cases coming in.<sup>167</sup>

In **Croatia**, the funding for the establishment of the Child and Youth Protection Centre was allocated by the city government of Zagreb. The Centre operates with two funding sources: The costs related to the work with cases, i.e. diagnosis and therapy, is covered by the healthcare insurance. The city government of Zagreb provides a second funding source covering some staff costs and activities such as training and continued education of staff as well as training of other institutions, research and scientific work, and the printing of information material, including for prevention measures. Overall, the funding arrangements are considered conducive to the operation of the service as they cover the day-to-day work with the cases

164 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

165 Key informant interview with Anna Petersson, Barnahus Linköping, Sweden, 22 June 2016. Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

166 Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

167 Key informant interview with Anna Petersson, Barnahus Linköping, Sweden, 22 June 2016.

while they also allow for longer-term planning and development of the centre and its staff. The funding security is important for creating attractive working conditions for staff members. The available budget covers not only the demands created by the Centre and the cases but also those of the staff, their well-being and their individual and collective professional development.<sup>168</sup>

In **Cyprus**, the funding for the Barnahus is entirely allocated by the Government. The plans for the establishment of the Barnahus coincided with the decision of an NGO to donate a house for social purposes. It was deemed sensible by all sides to donate and use the house as premises for the Barnahus. The opportunity to acquire the premises with less costs for the Government helped to some extent overcoming concerns about the financing of the service.<sup>169</sup> Different funding sources are to be explored in the course of the implementation and evolution of the service.<sup>170</sup>

In **Denmark**, the funding for the establishment of the Barnahus was allocated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration. The operation of the service is covered by 'objective' funding (60%) and 'rate' funding from the municipalities that use the Barnahus (40%). In Denmark, most of the social services of the municipalities are rate funded. This means that the municipalities pay according to how many cases they refer to the Barnahus. Objective financing differs from rate financing as the operational expenses are shared by all the municipalities in the region of a specific Barnahus. The contribution of each municipality to the objective funding is calculated in a proportionate way by various allocation means such as the child population between 0 and 17 years.<sup>171</sup>

The Barnahus law generally allows the budget to be adjusted according to the demand and emerging needs. In practice, Barnahus have made good experience engaging in an open dialogue with the municipalities in their region. The dialogue takes time off the head staff's management agenda and yet is considered strategic as it helps to establish trusted and transparent working relations. When budgetary constraints hinder the effective operations of Barnahus, due to an increasing caseload for instance, the mayor of the hosting municipality and the other municipalities are best approached directly on these matters. While the hosting municipality can address budgetary issues with the national Ministry, the municipalities within the region are all engaged in an open and solution-oriented dialogue on budgetary matters. When additional funding cannot be allocated, solutions might be found by determining funding priorities and reducing the budget in one area in order to address the shortages in another. The positive working relations between the Barnahus leader and municipal authorities are therefore considered essential to enable dynamic operations.<sup>172</sup>

In **Norway**, the budget allocation practice has evolved over time. Budget is provided by the state, through the Ministry of Justice, which allocates the largest part of the funding, while also the Ministry for Children and Social Equality and the Health Department are contributing. In practice, these three funding sources have, at times, led to disagreements about how the costs should be divided. The budget was at first earmarked for certain tasks within the Barnahus while this proved to be less practical and could create obstacles to management decisions and operations. Barnahus receives the budget through the Police Directorate and the police district where the Barnahus is located. The Police Commission holds the decision taking power on the use of the budget. All Barnahus in Norway have experienced a strong increase of forensic interviews and medical evaluations. This trend has been met with increased funding, by establishing new Barnahus and increasing the personnel.<sup>173</sup>

168 Key informant interview with Gordana Buljan Flander, Professor and Director of the Centre for Child and Youth Protection of Zagreb, Croatia, 29 June 2016.

169 Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016. Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016.

170 Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016.

171 Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017. Key informant interview with Kim Risom Rasmussen, Leader, Barnahus Sjaelland, Denmark, 21 July 2016.

172 Key informant interview with Kim Risom Rasmussen, Leader, Barnahus Sjaelland, Denmark, 21 July 2016.

173 Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016.

In the **Netherlands**, the process for the establishment of the Multi-disciplinary Centre, which is the Dutch Barnahus, coincided with some general developments in the social welfare sector. Due to the financial and economic crisis, public spending cuts were felt also in service provision for child victims of abuse and neglect. In addition, a major transformation of the youth care system started in 2015. The transformation led to a general reduction of the public budget allocated for youth care and a changed approach in service provision. The institutional responsibility for youth care was transferred from the provincial governments to the municipalities. Local generalist teams were set up in the neighbourhoods in order to provide light help with a focus on prevention, while there was also a reduced medicalisation and less treatment by specialists.<sup>174</sup>

In the Netherlands, the commitment to support the establishment of the Multi-disciplinary Centre included the allocation of staff who remained on their previous payrolls. Difficulties arose however in managing the demands of the new job, especially pioneering the operations of the newly established Multi-disciplinary Centre. The multidisciplinary and interagency cooperation that is at the heart of the Centre requires that staff time is dedicated to meetings, discussions and development tasks. As staff was caught up in these activities, which were fundamental for making the new service work effectively with all partners actively involved, they fell short of the institutional targets specified in their contracts. As a result, they could report only a reduced number of cases in which they delivered treatment or conducted investigations compared to their previous activities. Their contracts and institutional bureaucracy did not foresee that they could report on having spent working time for multidisciplinary meetings and development tasks. This created bureaucratic challenges as the institutions represented at the Centre did not meet their targets and had to justify how they spent public funds outside the common reporting scheme. While this caused tensions, the different agencies were represented, on a time-reduced basis, in the Centre at all levels, from the professional, management and director or governor levels. Their representation at the different levels helped to find constructive solutions.<sup>175</sup>

The police, the hospital and the local government pay for the rent of the premises of the centre. The placement of the experts from all the relevant agencies in the centre has, however, come under growing pressure as more and more children are referred to the centre. In addition, the medical and mental health specialists are struggling in particular to obtain appropriate funding for their activities at the centre.<sup>176</sup> Long-term funding for the Multi-disciplinary Centre is not yet secured. Yet, the Centre attracts a lot of interest from around the country, and the level of satisfaction of the professionals working in the Centre and the clients is high.<sup>177</sup>

In **Latvia**, the national Council for the Prevention of Crime decided in June 2016 to pilot the Barnahus model in the Riga region, without allocating any state budget. The Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Justice decided therefore to contribute the minimum amount of funding required for the pilot from the available budget of both ministries. In addition, the national Parliamentarian Kārlis Seržants decided to allocate his public budget quota in support of the establishment of Barnahus in his electoral constituency in Riga. In combination, these funding sources ensured the launch and implementation of the pilot between April and December 2017.<sup>178</sup>

In order to ensure the continuation of the Barnahus model in Latvia beyond the duration of the pilot, the Government of Latvia has submitted a project proposal to the EEA and Norway Grants. The proposal has

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174 Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016.

175 Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016.

176 Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016.

177 Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016.

178 Key informant interview with Lauris Neikens, Senior Expert of Children and Family Policy Department, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia, 27 June 2016 and 2 May 2017.

been prepared by the Ministry of Welfare. It aims to develop a country-wide Barnahus network for the support and protection of children who are victims of abuse and exploitation.<sup>179</sup>

While the EEA and Norway Grants proposal was being prepared, other options were also pursued. Although the Ministry of Welfare had initiated the drafting of a project proposal for funding from the European Commission, it abandoned subsequently that plan and decided instead to join the application for the PROMISE II project together with other countries. If the EEA and Norway Grants co-funding is granted, there will also be financial support from the state budget for the country-wide introduction of the Barnahus model.<sup>180</sup>

The Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Justice as well as the Foundation “Centrs Dardedze” have been actively fundraising and advocating in different fora, also with a view to secure funding for the permanent operation of the model beyond the project grant. In addition to state funding, also private sector funding is pursued as an option. The Foundation Centre Dardedze has offered to contribute to the budget by making their own facilities available for the Barnahus.<sup>181</sup>

In **Germany**, the World Childhood Foundation supported the process for the establishment of the first Barnahus in Leipzig with a grant. The grant is earmarked for the recruitment of a regional coordinator to coordinate the process for the establishment of the Barnahus. It supports also the study visit to Barnahus Iceland, training seminars and overall technical support.<sup>182</sup> The application for the grant was prepared by the inter-disciplinary child protection centre at the university clinic of Leipzig. The application process required time, resources and dedicated commitment from the clinic staff and management. Activities related to the engagement in the process toward the establishment of Barnahus in Leipzig, the participation in planning meetings and working groups and the preparation of the grant application fall broadly within the mandate of the clinic and its staff. Nonetheless, it requires the support and commitment from management and staff to make it possible to see this process through successfully without neglecting day-to-day tasks and general activities. The commitment of the other partners within the municipality, local agencies and services was equally decisive to ensure that staff time and resources were made available in support of the process.<sup>183</sup>

## Forms of establishment: Project base or institution – pilot or permanent

Countries, state regions or municipalities have established the Barnahus model, or are planning to, in different forms and set-ups. The initiative for the establishment was often taken by a combination of state and non-state actors. In some cases, local actors were the drivers for change and established a Barnahus locally or within a state region. In other cases, it was a national Ministry to take the lead. In some places, the model has been established by law, by contract or through an agreement, as a pilot, a project or a permanent body. In some places, it has been set up as a public institution whereas it is affiliated to a private organisation in others. It can take the form of a stand-alone institution or be hosted by the police, the health care sector or other services. The institutional leadership differs from country to country. The establishment is possible at the local, regional or national level. This degree of flexibility that is an inherent part of the model has facilitated the establishment of Barnahus and comparable models in many countries as the details of the institutional affiliation and set up can be defined on a case-by-case basis according to the existing

179 Key informant interview with Lauris Neikens, Senior Expert of Children and Family Policy Department, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia, 27 June 2016 and 2 May 2017.

180 Key informant interview with Lauris Neikens, Senior Expert of Children and Family Policy Department, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia, 27 June 2016 and 2 May 2017.

181 Key informant interview with Lauris Neikens, Senior Expert of Children and Family Policy Department, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia, 27 June 2016 and 2 May 2017. Key informant interview with Laura Ceļmale, Establishment “Center Dardedze”, Latvia, 14 September 2016.

182 Key informant interview with Andrea Möhringer, Executive Director, World Childhood Foundation, Germany, 16 December 2016 and 24 March 2017.

183 Interview with Petra Nickel, University Clinic and Child and Youth Outpatient Department, Leipzig, Germany, 31 March 2017.

local, regional or national structures and needs. Today, the existing Barnahus models differ not only between countries but sometimes also between the different houses in place within the same country.

The countries have taken different approaches with regard to the first establishment of the Barnahus model. While it is piloted or established as a project in some countries, others decide to set it up firmly from the beginning. In some cases, a pilot project evolves into a permanent institution, while others institute the model by law. A permanent institution would generally be desirable as it is considered more sustainable and demonstrates the firm commitment of the constituting actors to maintain the model. The pilot and project form on the other side holds advantages where certain elements of the model shall be tested for the national or local context and where the political or financial support is less pronounced at the beginning. In some contexts, there was neither strong support nor outspoken refusal of the Barnahus model. Where the situation is that neutral and yet there is a *laissez-faire* attitude to consent a pilot being done, the pilot or project establishment is certainly a promising opportunity. When pilots or projects are evaluated positively, there are often good chances for the transition into sustainable models.

The experience from the countries shows that a clear mandate for Barnahus that regulates the responsibilities of each agency and discipline as well as their cooperation with local services can help to enable effective operations from the beginning. Where such mandates or agreements were not in place at the moment of the establishment of Barnahus, they have been developed subsequently, although the practice differs from country to country.

What is reported from several contexts is the importance of being open to change and flexible to adjustments at all times after the initial establishment of the Barnahus model. While many aspects of the establishment and operation of the model are planned and defined beforehand, expectations are – and experience shows – that some issues will emerge once the model becomes operational. Continued learning and adjustments are needed to enable the continued evolution of the service, as will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.<sup>184</sup>

### National accounts and examples

Barnahus in **Iceland** was initially set up as a pilot project on the basis of a project proposal developed by the Government Agency for Child Protection. After discussing the proposal in the Government, the Minister for Social Affairs condoned the idea and gave the Government Agency for Child Protection free rein to set up the model if all the relevant authorities would be on board, without however providing any budgetary or other support. The Government Agency decided to re-allocate state funding used for a youth centre that was not functioning very well at the time. The centre was closed down with the intention to transform it into the Barnahus and make the necessary funding available from within the existing budget of the Agency. The closing down of this centre was heavily criticised by the association of local directors of social services and it took some time for the new model to gain their recognition and acceptance. After the Barnahus had been running for the first two years as a pilot project, a report was handed in to the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Ministry did however not respond formally to that report and there was no official follow-up to take a decision on the future of the pilot. The national Government maintained the same *laissez-faire* attitude it had demonstrated previously and in light of the growing professional and public support to the model, no-one questioned its continuation.<sup>185</sup>

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184 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016. Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016. Key informant interview with Kim Risom Rasmussen, Leader, Barnahus Sjaelland, Denmark, 21 July 2016.

185 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

In **Sweden**, the Barnahus was established first in six locations, following a decision taken by the national Government.<sup>186</sup> While the Government condoned the establishment of the model, it did not enact any law or regulation for the establishment of the model, nor did it define the structure.<sup>187</sup> There was however a general decision from the national Government that four agencies shall be involved with the task to implement the model, the Commission of Prosecution Authorities, the National Police Board, the Board of Health and Welfare, and the National Board of Forensic Medicine. After this decision had been taken, the Government issued a call to the municipalities to invite expressions of interest to participate in the pilot. The main responsibility for establishing and maintaining the model had to come from the local level. Save the Children and others advocated therefore strongly with municipal authorities and the local social services to gain their support and commitment to establishing the first pilots. The first Barnahus were established in Linköping, Stockholm and Malmö in 2005.<sup>188</sup>

The municipality of Linköping volunteered to do a pilot together with the surrounding municipalities as they had a long-standing history of special procedures and of multidisciplinary and interagency cooperation. Since the 1980s, they had been operating a special cooperation group involving the social welfare services in the nine municipalities in the region, the police, prosecutors and child psychiatry. The group handled cases of physical and sexual violence against children through a multidisciplinary approach. This model had been renowned as a good practice in Sweden and the understanding was from the beginning that it could be an opportunity for positive innovation to integrate the existing methods into the Barnahus model. The existing professional expertise in handling child physical and sexual abuse cases and the experience of working together across the various disciplines gave the model in Linköping a good head start.<sup>189</sup>

The initial establishment of the Barnahus as local pilots helped to convince many who were sceptical of it at the beginning. The first experience with the model yielded positive results among the staff who were working with it. They were satisfied with the methods, understood that they were effective and experienced first-hand the added value and opportunities that the model holds.<sup>190</sup>

The Multidisciplinary Centre in the **Netherlands** was established by a decision of the regional government, the police, the hospital, the youth protection services and the youth and adult mental health care who committed jointly to invest in the model. The regional government together with the police and the hospital selected premises located within the hospital in Hoofddorp, a neighbouring city of Haarlem, and committed to jointly cover the rent for these premises for 20 years. They signed a collaboration agreement that committed them to setting up the Centre. It was a longer-term agreement with the possibility for each partner to step back and resign from it. The participating institutions committed to designate staff members to work in the Centre. The staff of the Multidisciplinary Centre were therefore not newly recruited but practically seconded from their previous workplace to serve in the newly established Centre. They remained on their payroll so that no specific staff contracts or new budget sources for salaries were required for the establishment.<sup>191</sup>

The Centre became operational in September 2015. Princess Beatrix, the retired Queen of the Netherlands, was supportive of the establishment and opened the Centre in Hoofddorp officially in November 2015. She had been invited to the inauguration of the first Barnahus in Sweden and had since then been a supporter of the model. Although the Princess does not hold political power, her support added weight to the initiative and generated strong media attention and a positive reporting. The overall enthusiasm expressed by high-level figures from different agencies and by the former Queen of the

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186 Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

187 Key informant interview with Anna Petersson, Barnahus Linköping, Sweden, 22 June 2016. Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

188 Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

189 Key informant interview with Anna Petersson, Barnahus Linköping, Sweden, 22 June 2016.

190 Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

191 Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016.

Netherlands made it more and more difficult for institutions or individuals to elude the model or to withdraw from the cooperation.<sup>192</sup>

In **Norway**, Barnahus were established under the leadership of the police as of the year 2007. The first Barnahus was set up in Bergen and others followed throughout the country. Currently, there are 10 Barnahus in place in Norway and the eleventh is being established. The Barnahus in Norway are designed as a multi-departmental project with the involvement of the Ministry of Justice, which holds the main responsibility, the Ministry for Children and Social Equality, and the Health Department.<sup>193</sup>

In **Denmark**, after the Minister of Social Affairs and Integration had commissioned an investigation into cases of sexual abuse and violence against children and neglect and the state's response in handling these cases, the need for setting up a multi-disciplinary and inter-agency service became obvious. In response to this investigation and the associated public and political debate, the Ministry set up an expert group tasked to prepare a report on how to establish the Barnahus model in Denmark. The establishment of the Barnahus was part of a broader framework programme to protect children and young people from sexual abuse and violence. The four-year programme was politically agreed in 2012, with a total funding of 286 million DKR (approx. 38.5 million Euro). One of the objectives of the programme was to strengthen the cooperation of different disciplines in preventing and addressing sexual abuse and violence against children. The introduction of the Barnahus model in Denmark was one of the measures planned in this context. The framework for establishing the Barnahus was promptly developed and within one year after the political agreement of the programme, the law for establishing Barnahus in Denmark was adopted.<sup>194</sup>

From 1 October 2013, it became statutory for the municipalities to set up a Barnahus in each region to examine the situations and circumstances of children and adolescents who have been exposed to abuse or when abuse is suspected. The municipal council shall, for the purpose of the child protection examination under section 50 of the Consolidation Act on Social Services<sup>195</sup> use the Barnahus to which the municipality is connected and where at least one other sector is involved, for instance the police or the health care system. All Barnahus in Denmark were opened in October 2013. The management and operation of Barnahus, including human resources, fall under the responsibility of the hosting municipality.<sup>196</sup>

Although different forms of institutional affiliation had been discussed, within the health care system or the social services, the decision was eventually taken to establish the service under the leadership of the social services, which are under the responsibility of the municipalities. This was deemed the most suitable form of institutionalisation as the social services have a broad responsibility to provide services for children at risk, including assessing the situation of the child and the family, hearing and interviewing the children and providing services and treatment. The decision was to establish one house in each of the five regions of Denmark and in each region, a municipality would take the lead to host and operate the Barnahus. In addition, some of the Houses in the larger regions have a local department to ensure that the whole region is covered.<sup>197</sup>

When Barnahus started to become operational, there were still some open questions about operations and procedures. Addressing and resolving these questions required from the leadership and staff a general openness to learning and development. Among the issues that were unclear at the very beginning were questions concerning the number of cases to expect; the human and financial resources required to meet the children, to assess their cases and provide appropriate services for each child; and the tools and

192 Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016.

193 Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016.

194 Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017.

195 Denmark, Consolidation Act on Social Services, 2015, available from <http://english.sim.dk/media/14900/consolidation-act-on-social-services.pdf>.

196 Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017.

197 Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017.

methods that work best for psychologists to assess the child victims and their level of traumatisation in different types of cases.<sup>198</sup>

In **Croatia**, the Centre for Child Protection was established in Zagreb and allocated institutionally under the Ministry of Health. This institutional affiliation located within the public health care system was considered the most suitable set up. The reasoning behind this decision was that every child in Croatia has a health care insurance and therefore could access the services free of charge, which would enable an inclusive access by all children. The Centre reports to the Ministry and is bound by their rules as any other health-related institution in Croatia.<sup>199</sup>

In Croatia, there was from the beginning a strong interest to set up the model in a permanent way. The stable institutionalisation of the Centre was a precondition to hire staff on permanent or longer-term contracts, which is necessary for recruiting highly qualified experts into the service. The Centre was therefore established on the basis of a permanent contract with the City Government of Zagreb.<sup>200</sup>

In **Cyprus**, the Barnahus is being established with the intention to maintain it permanently. Nonetheless, for matters of practicality, it is being launched as a pilot for the first years. The pilot phase enables testing the model and to make necessary adjustments based on the experience with day-to-day operations and procedures. The pilot implementation is considered a dynamic and flexible programme that allows for learning and addressing issues that emerge. The leaders of the pilot phase are aware that certain difficulties will come up. Rather than delaying the establishment until all the open questions have been resolved, they have however chosen to proceed and leave space to confront any challenges when the service is operational.<sup>201</sup>

One of the challenges that will require a solution is the fact that the national law does currently not allow for the use of Barnahus premises for taking the testimonies of child victims. The child will have to make a statement in the courthouse even after having been at Barnahus. Conscious of this important constraint, the Barnahus will however provide essential services beyond the forensic interview, for instance therapy will be provided at Barnahus and that justifies the start of the service as soon as possible.<sup>202</sup> For the first period, the intention is to work primarily with reported cases, while prevention work shall be added subsequently to the service's tasks.<sup>203</sup>

In Cyprus, the establishment of the Barnahus model is one of the priority activities under the national strategy against the sexual abuse of children, which was adopted in 2016. The strategy had been called for by a cross-ministerial committee in charge of policy planning to address sexual violence against children. Responding to the call from this committee, the Council of Ministers decided about the development of the strategy. It set up an ad hoc committee for this purpose and appointed a Special Adviser to develop the strategy. The Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance was appointed as the national leading institution to oversee the development and implementation of the strategy and to ensure in general that the national laws against sexual violence against children are implemented in practice.<sup>204</sup> The planning process for the Barnahus went hand in hand with the drafting of the strategy. Although the Barnahus constitutes only one of the priorities under the strategy, it is institutionally and in terms of procedures so closely connected to other components of the strategy that these linkages needed to be taken into consideration for the drafting process.<sup>205</sup>

198 Key informant interview with Kim Risom Rasmussen, Leader, Barnahus Sjaelland, Denmark, 21 July 2016.

199 Key informant interview with Gordana Buljan Flander, Professor and Director of the Centre for Child and Youth Protection of Zagreb, Croatia, 29 June 2016.

200 Key informant interview with Gordana Buljan Flander, Professor and Director of the Centre for Child and Youth Protection of Zagreb, Croatia, 29 June 2016.

201 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016.

202 Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016.

203 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016.

204 Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016.

205 Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016.

A decision was made to establish the Barnahus in Cyprus as a public-private partnership. While the national Government provides funding, an NGO was appointed to lead the management and operations of the Barnahus. While the Government holds the overall political responsibility for the services provided by the Barnahus, the NGO is expected to run the services in a more flexible way. Government reforms are known to be lengthy as they have to conform to rules of bureaucracy. An NGO is expected to be in a better position to handle the day-to-day management, take prompt decisions and operate with the necessary degree of flexibility. The decision about this set up came only after lengthy discussions and an intense debate, as some actors would have preferred to establish the Barnahus as a state institution. Considering the long-standing good and trusted collaboration between public bodies and civil society in Cyprus, the decision to entrust the service to an NGO with government funding was eventually approved.<sup>206</sup>

When the Government of Cyprus outsources tasks to NGOs, usually a letter of agreement is issued to the NGO to regulate the cooperation and define the obligations of each party to the agreement. Traditionally, these types of contracts are made in a way to provide a broad framework for the cooperation with very little specific regulation or details. For the purpose of the Barnahus, there is an understanding that such a generalised contract will not suffice. The contract needs to be more detailed, regulate certain standards of service delivery, procedures, cooperation, targets and objectives as well as the monitoring. The process of clarifying and defining these contractual standards was led by several ministers. The aspiration was to make the agreement functional and practicable. It should include clear legal regulations while also guide the implementation of the services in an appropriate way.<sup>207</sup>

In **Latvia**, the Barnahus model was first planned to be established as a project led by the Ministry of Welfare and implemented in partnership with the relevant institutions and organisations. The model is therefore envisaged at first as a time-bound project. The preparations for the establishment have however taken into account the importance of building strategic partnerships that will be supportive of the longer-term operation and permanency beyond the project's duration.<sup>208</sup>

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206 Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016.

207 Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016.

208 Key informant interview with Lauris Neikens, Senior Expert of Children and Family Policy Department, Ministry of Welfare, Latvia, 27 June 2016 and 2 May 2017.

## Enabling sustainability and continued development: Evidence, standard setting and cross-border exchange

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The informants and contributors to the study affirmed that Barnahus and comparable models keep evolving significantly also after their establishment. In order to ensure the continued development and refinement of the model, the countries have invested in research, evaluation and review of the services provided at Barnahus, the development of quality standards and guidance for Barnahus services and operations as well as professional and academic training. The dialogue between Barnahus leaders and staff, the academia and research institutions, and policy makers have been essential in many countries in order to ensure the continued development of the service. In addition, international consultations and exchange on Barnahus have become an important driver for the continued positive evolution of the model. This section provides an overview of the achievements in the countries with regard to enabling the continued learning and development of the model and ensuring its sustainability.

### Fostering confidence and trust within and towards the Barnahus team

In many countries, the key informants from Barnahus and comparable models note that trusted and respectful working relations between the different agencies and disciplines are the foundation for the Barnahus model to thrive. For this to succeed, all participating officials and professionals need to have a thorough understanding of the mandate and working methods of each agency and discipline.

The experience from the countries has shown that a lack of knowledge about the mandate and working methods of the individual agencies and disciplines leads to discussions that are not conducive for the work with a specific case. Key informants in several countries had experienced moments, where one of the team members questioned the decisions or methods of another. A recurrent issue that has often raised doubts or concerns is the decision of social workers not to remove a child from the family even when violence has occurred. When matters like this come up in the multidisciplinary and interagency team meetings, the risk is that the group spends precious time on discussing team related matters rather than the child's situation and the case. Informants noted, for instance, that it was important for all professional groups to understand that social workers were guided in these decisions by their official case assessment tools and methods for decision making, which were based on an assessment of the best interests of the child. This understanding helped to foster trust in the competence of the social workers. Similar concerns or doubts arise also with regard to the decisions and working methods of police officers. Experience has shown also that, once the team has addressed such doubts and gained a better understanding of each other's mandates and working methods, there was more openness in seeking each other's support for specific cases.

Key informants noted that clear routines and protocols are essential to regulate the multidisciplinary and interagency cooperation and to ensure it remains focused on the child and the specific case. Trusted and respectful cooperation is in the interests of the professionals and agencies involved in Barnahus and comparable models as it enables them to focus on the case and use their time effectively. It is also in the best interests of the child as the cooperation can only be child-centred when discussions about professional mandates and the performance of different members of the Barnahus team are not interfering with the case assessment and planning.<sup>209</sup>

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209 Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016. Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B', Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016. Key informant interview with Gordana Buljan Flander, Professor and Director of the Centre for Child and Youth Protection of Zagreb, Croatia, 29 June 2016. Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016. Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's

Fostering trust between Barnahus and other actors, including practitioners and service providers in municipalities, is essential to ensure that the services for the child are provided with continuity inside Barnahus and outside, always with the child and his or her best interests at the centre. In most of the countries, trust and confidence in the competence of Barnahus as an institution has grown over the years. This trust has become an important foundation for consolidating the position of Barnahus as an integral part of the national child protection, social welfare and justice systems, as will be argued further below.

### National accounts and examples

In **Iceland**, Barnahus is now a firmly established institution that is widely recognised for the high quality services it provides. This has not been the case from the beginning. It has been a long journey over approximately one decade for Barnahus to overcome doubts about the role and competence of Barnahus and to foster trusted cooperation with all relevant agencies, services and professionals involved in the cases of child victims of crime. Barnahus has succeeded to build confidence due to its strong commitment to strive for quality services and to act as a neutral institution.<sup>210</sup>

As a neutral institution, Barnahus has an interest to understand what has really happened in a given case. It promotes the best interests of the child without compromising other interests, pre-empting any conclusions about the role or guilt of the defendant or taking sides in criminal investigations and proceedings. Prior to the forensic interview, Barnahus staff meet with all parties to the case and listen to the questions that each party has to the child, including the police, the prosecutor, the judge and the defence lawyer. The professionalism in conducting forensic interviews with child victims and translating the questions of the different parties into neutral and non-leading questions to the child has convinced the respective officials and professionals. The neutrality is also reflected in Barnahus' reporting about forensic interviews. The reports are fact-based and neutral and refrain from presenting any conclusions about the guilt of the defendant. Barnahus is dedicated and committed to provide quality services and to continuously improve the services to reach even higher standards of quality. This commitment constitutes an investment and has gained, over the years, the confidence and trust of the relevant authorities, service providers and the public. As a result, the referral of children to Barnahus became increasingly reliable over the years and the credibility of the institution, its case reports and expert opinions is now strongly embedded into the national child protection and justice systems.<sup>211</sup>

In **Denmark**, the national law has established Barnahus as a neutral third space dedicated specifically to facilitating the cooperation of all actors involved in responding to cases of violence against children. This neutrality by law bestows upon Barnahus a certain authority for its coordination and facilitation role that is being acknowledged and recognised by the different agencies and disciplines. In practice, the Barnahus staff chair the multidisciplinary and interagency meetings on specific cases. This approach has proven important to establish a trusted and focused collaboration. The Barnahus staff act as a neutral facilitator and direct the multidisciplinary and interagency group in a way for each participant to provide their input and expertise on the specific case. This approach helps keeping discussions focused on the case and the best interests of the child while all other issues that concern the working methods, approaches and previous actions taken by the different professionals and disciplines are set aside. If any serious concerns come up in the context of the collaboration in Barnahus, the Barnahus leader addresses these issues subsequently with the leader of the relevant agencies. This type of follow-up helps preventing problems, disagreements or frustrations that could undermine the quality of the cooperation in Barnahus. Experience has shown that constructive solutions can usually be found for each challenging situation or difficulty that the multi-disciplinary and

House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016. Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children's House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016. Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016. Key informant interview with Anna Petersson, Barnahus Linköping, Sweden, 22 June 2016. Key informant interview with Britta Bäumer, Barnahus Team, BUP Trauma Unit, Barnahus Stockholm, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

<sup>210</sup> Key informant interview with Ólöf Ásta Farestveit, Director, Barnahus, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

<sup>211</sup> Key informant interview with Ólöf Ásta Farestveit, Director, Barnahus, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

interagency group at Barnahus is facing. The perceived role of Barnahus as a third space that is primarily oriented at facilitating cooperation in the best interests of the child enables Barnahus leaders in some cases almost to act as an advocate and with a certain monitoring function. In Sjaelland, for instance, the Barnahus staff is in a good position to identify shortcomings in the operations and practice of Barnahus or the participating disciplines and agencies. When this is the case, the Barnahus leader addresses these issues in an open dialogue with relevant national, regional or local authorities. In Sjaelland, some municipalities referred notably more cases to Barnahus than others. The Barnahus leader addressed this issue in meetings with the municipal authorities in order to understand the underlying reasons. These meetings hold opportunities for awareness raising, information sharing and advocacy to strengthen the collaboration. If Barnahus becomes aware that a case is handled by local services in a way that Barnahus staff do not agree with, they can inform the National Social Appeals Board and invite a control of how the case has been handled. This positive initiative of Barnahus provides additional safeguards for children and contributes to monitoring and continuous improvement of the practice.<sup>212</sup>

In Denmark – as in other European countries – it is not uncommon that local municipalities see a high turnover of social workers. In the context of the collaboration in Barnahus, experience has shown that sometimes the social workers who follow the case of a child change while the case is handled at Barnahus, which might take some three to five months. These changes are not ideal and can cause disruptions for the cooperation at Barnahus. In consultation with Barnahus, some municipalities have solved this challenge by appointing a team of social workers who take cases to Barnahus and who are familiar with the institution and the procedures at Barnahus. This way of proceeding is facilitating continuity in the multidisciplinary and interagency cooperation at Barnahus and is beneficial for the child.<sup>213</sup>

## Increasing caseloads and expansion of the target group

Addressing cases of sexual violence against children was the starting point in many countries that have set up Barnahus or comparable models. As the multiple benefits of the model soon became evident, advocates and change makers realised that there was no reason to limit the services at Barnahus to a single group of child victims. On the contrary, the services should be provided to all children who are victims of violence in an indiscriminate and inclusive way. Many countries have therefore been through a process of expanding the target group. Gradually, they started referring to Barnahus children who have been exposed to physical and domestic violence, genital mutilation or honour related violence, children who witnessed violence in close relationships and children with disabilities. Children who are victims of trafficking and exploitation as well as migrant and asylum seeking children, as well as children who committed acts of violence against other children are also included into the target group of Barnahus and comparable models in some countries.

The informants and contributors to this study noted that the methods and approaches at Barnahus are applicable to any child who has been exposed to violence as a victim or witness and whose story needs to be heard by service providers and authorities.

By expanding the target group, the services of Barnahus have become more relevant for all population groups. Ensuring that all child victims of violence are referred to Barnahus in an indiscriminate way and irrespective of where they live remains a challenge that many countries are aware of and determined to address. As an institution, Barnahus is more solidly established as an integral part of national child protection and justice systems if it serves an inclusive target group

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212 Key informant interview with Kim Risom Rasmussen, Leader, Barnahus Sjaelland, Denmark, 21 July 2016.

213 Key informant interview with Kim Risom Rasmussen, Leader, Barnahus Sjaelland, Denmark, 21 July 2016.

without distinction. As a result of this process, the evolving institutional relevance of Barnahus holds new opportunities for the continued development of the model, standard setting and sustainability.

Expanding the target group is however also associated to a potentially increase of the caseload of Barnahus institutions. In fact, many Barnahus have experienced an increasing caseload at one point of their existence. This was observed, for instance, during the first years of operations when local services gradually adapted to referring cases to Barnahus. An increased caseload was also associated with a decision to expand the target group. In other cases, increases were noted after intensive media reporting and a public debate on violence against children and the associated growing awareness and sensitisation of the society and professionals to report cases.

### National accounts and examples

In **Iceland**, during the preparation phase for the establishment of Barnahus, the issue of the target group was addressed specifically. Iceland was inspired by the Child Advocacy Centre model in the USA, which emerged to prevent the re-victimisation of child victims of sexual abuse in criminal investigations and proceedings. In these cases, gathering evidence is especially difficult. Evidence such as medical proof or testimonies of other witnesses to support the child's account of the abuse are seldom found. The investigation and prosecution relies therefore strongly on the child's testimony and it was considered important to elicit the child's disclosure in a professional manner to maximise the reliability of the child's narrative. In cases of physical abuse, it is more likely that medical evidence exists as for instance of physical injuries such as fractures, bruises, scars or scratches. It is also more likely that witnesses can support and substantiate the child's story. It was therefore not considered obvious at the time that Barnahus should address cases of physical abuse of children in the same manner as sexual abuse cases. In addition, there was a general consensus at the time in Iceland that it was necessary to ensure that all sexual abuse cases be subject to criminal investigations, while this was not the case with regard to physical abuse. Many professionals argued that, in cases of physical abuse, criminal proceedings against the parents are more harmful for the children and their parents than engaging with the family with the aim of strengthening parental skills through parent training and education. As a result of this debate in the late 1990s, the target group of Barnahus in Iceland was initially limited to child victims of sexual abuse. There was however a clear understanding from the beginning that Barnahus welcomed all child victims in serious cases of physical or domestic violence under police investigation, or when children were traumatised, for instance as witnesses of serious violence.<sup>214</sup>

Since 2010, the Government Agency for Child Protection has prioritised measures to address violence against children in the national action plan for child protection, in particular physical abuse and domestic violence. In this context, social workers were trained in talking with children about their experiences, setting up specialised treatment services for child victims of domestic violence and physical abuse as well as implementing evidence based parent training programs. During the years 2011 to 2013, a pilot programme named "Child-friendly intervention in domestic violence" was carried out. The aim was to focus on the child in domestic violence situations by ensuring that a child specialist would accompany the police into the homes in such situations. The programme aimed also to ensure a follow-up service for the child and the non-offending parent and continued intervention directed at the offender. This programme became very successful and is now implemented countrywide in different forms.<sup>215</sup>

The expansion of the target group constituted a challenge and required strengthening the services of Barnahus for child victims of physical abuse and domestic violence. In early 2015, the Government Agency for Child Protection decided that all children who disclose physical abuse or violence and whose cases were reported to the police by the local child protection services should be referred to Barnahus to give their

214 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

215 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

testimony. Barnahus received substantially increased funding and was transferred to new facilities, which made it possible to increase the number of staff in order to accommodate this new responsibility.<sup>216</sup>

Since 2016, Barnahus Iceland started to receive children who arrive in Iceland as unaccompanied migrant or asylum seeking children. The precondition for this new expansion of the target group was an agreement between the Government Agency for Child Protection and the Directorate of Immigration of Iceland. The interviews with these children are done according to the same methods and protocols that Barnahus uses for forensic interviews with child victims. The interview is conducted for multiple purposes: to understand the child's story for the asylum procedure and to inform the assessment of the child's needs, including with regard to mental health, social support and accommodation. The interview is prepared and conducted in cooperation with the Immigration Authorities, the local Child Protection Services that provide care for the child and the child's legal guardian. All these partners watch the interview from the observation room. The police is also sometimes involved and uses the interview at Barnahus to obtain information from the child. The interview aims to understand the child's family situation and background, experiences during the journey, including experiences of violence or exploitation and, possibly, trafficking.<sup>217</sup> This practice has been positively received by all partners involved as the child-friendly environment and the competent forensic interview with the child at Barnahus makes it possible to obtain more accurate and detailed information from the child than what has previously been possible in traditional case assessments or asylum interviews.<sup>218</sup>

In **Sweden**, Barnahus works with cases of sexual violence against children as well as children who are victims or witnesses of physical violence in close relationships. Subsequently, Barnahus started to include cases of children who committed acts of sexual violence against others, child victims of genital mutilation or honour related violence. Over the years, it became increasingly clear that the target group should not be limited to child victims of specific forms of violence. As most of the cases are referred to Barnahus by social workers and social workers are generally those who receive reports about children exposed to violence, the target group evolved continuously. Social workers are also working with children who are visiting Sweden, who have migrated to Sweden or are seeking asylum. If cases of violence among asylum seeking or migrant families come to the attention of the social workers, they could generally refer the cases to Barnahus. Some asylum-seeking children have been interviewed at Barnahus after social workers have reported cases of violence within asylum seeking families.<sup>219</sup>

In **Denmark**, the caseload of Barnahus has grown steadily since Barnahus has been established. In the third year of operations, Barnahus received approximately three times as many cases as in the first year. The increase is considered to be related to the progressive implementation of the national Barnahus law and the increasing awareness and routines among municipal social services in this regard. An increase at this high rate had not been expected when Barnahus was opened and after three years of operations, an expansion of the premises is being considered. With the growing number of cases, also the budget and Barnahus staff has grown.<sup>220</sup>

Also in **Norway**, all Barnahus have seen a stark increase of the caseload in the first years of operations. In Oslo, for instance, the Barnahus started with five staff members in 2009 and had 30 staff members in September 2016. The caseload has increased to approximately 1,500 children per year. The increase is considered to be a result of the growing awareness and acceptance of Barnahus, more legal clarity about the

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216 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

217 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016. Key informant interview with Ólöf Ásta Farestveit, Director, Barnahus, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

218 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

219 Key informant interview with Britta Bäumer, Barnahus Team, BUP Trauma Unit, Barnahus Stockholm, Sweden, 29 June 2016. Key informant interview with Anna Petersson, Barnahus Linköping, Sweden, 22 June 2016.

220 Key informant interview with Kim Risom Rasmussen, Leader, Barnahus Sjaelland, Denmark, 21 July 2016.

mandate of Barnahus as well as an increasingly supportive environment for the collaboration between Barnahus and local services.<sup>221</sup>

In Norway, Barnahus has started to consider children and adolescents with problematic or harmful sexual behaviour as a new target group. Barnahus staff noted that they rarely get access to specialised services and, in many cases, they are themselves victims of violence or have experienced acts of violence earlier in their childhood. Many of these cases involve sexual violence within the family. The police has therefore started to interview these children at Barnahus. The expanding target group includes also children and young people with disabilities where specific interviewing skills are required.<sup>222</sup>

In 2017, the Norwegian Barnahus formed a national cooperation group on 'sextortion' cases, which refers to cases where sexual information or images of a child are used to extort sexual favours from the child. This form of sexual exploitation is often practiced through social media and text messages and with the threat to share the material with others. The Barnahus teams in Norway noted that many of these cases involved several victims in a single case. The victims would often live in different parts of Norway so that more than one Barnahus might be working with child victims who have been exploited by the same perpetrator. In order to target this group of children, the Barnahus in Norway have established a national 'sextortion group' in order to enhance the quality of investigations and services provided in these cases. The group is led by the State Barnahus in Oslo. It is mandated to exchange experience and knowledge to increase the understanding of the phenomenon; to develop good practice for facilitating the forensic interview with the child victims; exchange experience from therapy and the best methods for helping these victims; and develop knowledge of the applications that children and youth prefer on the internet. The national group holds regular meetings.<sup>223</sup>

In the **Netherlands** the central reporting agency for child maltreatment in every region is the organisation "Safe at Home". Safe at Home in the region Kennemerland has been a partner in the development of the Multidisciplinary Centre, the Dutch Barnahus, from the start. Safe at Home is legally obliged to attend to and act on all reports of suspected child maltreatment. The regional Safe at Home (which is reachable 24 hours on 7 days a week) is located in Haarlem and can be contacted by citizens who want to report cases of presumed child maltreatment. The Safe at Home professionals at the Haarlem location review all the incoming cases and refer acute cases and cases in which there is a structural or chronic unsafety for the children to the Multidisciplinary Centre. During regular working hours, four professionals from Safe at Home are stationed at the Multidisciplinary Centre. The cases that are referred there are discussed in the multidisciplinary team, and decisions are made whether the case needs to be handled by the team or if it has to be referred to a specialised treatment centre, the Child Protection Board or other appropriate services. When a case needs to be handled by the multidisciplinary team, the child and his/her parents (or guardians) are invited to come to the Centre. On average, two children come to the centre on each day for a full investigation. In the Netherlands, the whole family, including the alleged perpetrator, is considered the target group, so both parents as well as brothers and sisters take part in the investigation. Only persons who are considered 'safe persons' for the child can however come to the Centre.<sup>224</sup>

## Technical advice, support and mentoring

Barnahus leaders and staff actively seek and use technical advice and expertise as well as mentoring where available. They appreciate this form of support as it helps to enable the continued evolution

221 Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children's House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016.

222 Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children's House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016.

223 Statens Barnehus [The State's Children's House], Mandate for the National Sextortion Group in Barnehus in Norway, June 2017. Information provided by Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children's House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 13 June 2017.

224 Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016.

of the model. Technical advice and mentoring support is provided in several countries, for instance by specialised units in the national supervisory authority, as multidisciplinary groups visiting Barnahus or through national or regional networks and regular meetings of management and staff at the national level.

### National accounts and examples

After the Government of **Sweden** had decided to establish the Barnahus model in a pilot trial, a working group was established to support the setting up of the first Barnahus in the country and its first years of operations. The working group consisted of representatives of the National Police Board, the Prosecution Service, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the National Board of Forensic Medicine. In addition, a multidisciplinary and interagency reference group was composed, which was very active during the pilot phase. The reference group included representatives of the Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention and Save the Children Sweden. The groups visited municipalities to inform about the Barnahus model and to consult with local actors about the possibility for establishing the model. During the first two years of the pilot phase in Sweden, the groups visited periodically the first six Barnahus that were established in this period. Prior to and after the establishment, the municipalities appreciated the support provided by the group. It was a particular advantage that the reference group included officials and professionals from the relevant sectors so that local authorities and Barnahus staff could seek technical assistance directly from a competent member, while relying also strongly on the multidisciplinary and interagency nature of the advice provided by the group. The working group and the reference group were maintained for the duration of the pilot phase but were then discontinued. This left a notable gap, especially for the local Barnahus who had no longer the possibility to approach the group with questions or to benefit from the meetings organised by the group.<sup>225</sup>

In **Denmark**, the National Board of Social Services is responsible for supporting the municipalities in implementing the national Barnahus law. The National Board of Social Services provides central support for the operation of all Barnahus in the country and for the cross-sectoral collaboration within Barnahus. The aim is to ensure a qualified and uniform response in cases of child abuse. The National Board of Social Services organises and facilitates joint meeting forums for Barnahus staff and the cross-sectoral collaboration. The National Board manages also the national database of Barnahus.<sup>226</sup>

## An enabling environment for learning, teaching and development

Key informants noted that learning and development requires time, stability and dedicated commitment. They considered it helpful, when the agreements or other constituting documents establishing the Barnahus as well as the staff contracts include explicitly the objective to ensure continued learning and development of the service and the staff. Longer-term agreements and contracts as well as staff continuity are perceived essential in order to create the needed stability and permanency of staff to ensure continued learning and development. Experience has shown that the available staff time needs to enable team members to participate in meetings, seminars and training courses within the Barnahus as well as nationally and internationally. Internal meetings are important to enable the joint reflection of all team members. Key informants noted the importance of having access to a space or platform where observations, concerns and ideas can be shared, discussed and turned into joint propositions for change. In some Barnahus, for instance, the internal

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225 Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

226 Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017.

working groups offer this possibility and communicate with steering groups that have decision-making power and transform viable suggestions from the staff into concrete measures for change.<sup>227</sup>

An important precondition for the continued development of the service is the possibility for Barnahus to offer attractive working conditions for staff, including the possibilities for their professional development. Supervision of staff is also important as the job is highly demanding. Barnahus and comparable services have made good experience with providing mandatory supervision of staff during working hours. This investment is important to prevent burnout of staff and to ensure high levels of performance in each individual case and to enable continuity of staff in the Barnahus team.<sup>228</sup>

The role of data collection and analysis, research and evaluation was noted by all countries as pivotal to support the continued development and learning in Barnahus and comparable models. A special budget for research, analysis and documentation is considered valuable to enable learning and development that are empirically sound. Some countries have made positive experience with developing national guidance and quality standards in order to harmonise the practice in all Barnahus operating throughout the country. In **Sweden**, for instance, the process of developing quality standards for Barnahus started in 2008 and has since then informed the continued development of Barnahus throughout Sweden, in other countries and at the European level.<sup>229</sup>

A gap noted in this regard is the need for consultations with children and young people who are or have been users of the Barnahus services. Their views and engagement would be critical to inform the continued development of the model and the understanding of what constitutes quality services at Barnahus.<sup>230</sup>

Partnership with the academia and research institutes is essential in many countries in order to ensure that the continued development of the Barnahus service is based on knowledge, evidence and analysis.<sup>231</sup>

### National accounts and examples

The agendas of Barnahus staff are usually scheduled tightly and there remains little time for activities that are not case-related. Nonetheless, making this time available is essential in order to maintain a high quality of service provision and to enable continued development of the service. In **Iceland**, the Barnahus team

227 Key informant interview with Gordana Buljan Flander, Professor and Director of the Centre for Child and Youth Protection of Zagreb, Croatia, 29 June 2016. Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016. Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016. Key informant interview with Anna Petersson, Barnahus Linköping, Sweden, 22 June 2016. Key informant interview with Britta Bäumer, Barnahus Team, BUP Trauma Unit, Barnahus Stockholm, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

228 Key informant interview with Gordana Buljan Flander, Professor and Director of the Centre for Child and Youth Protection of Zagreb, Croatia, 29 June 2016. Key informant interview with Britta Bäumer, Barnahus Team, BUP Trauma Unit, Barnahus Stockholm, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

229 Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016 and 17 March 2017. Interview with Carl Göran Svedin, Professor Emeritus and Research Leader, National Competence Centre Barnafriid, University of Linköping, Sweden, 16 March 2017. See also: Landberg, Åsa and Carl Göran Svedin, *Inuti Ett Barnahus, A Quality Review of 23 Swedish Barnahus, Save the Children Sweden*, 2013, see especially p. 9.

230 Key informant interview with Britta Bäumer, Barnahus Team, BUP Trauma Unit, Barnahus Stockholm, Sweden, 29 June 2016. Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016.

231 Key informant interview with Kim Risom Rasmussen, Leader, Barnahus Sjaelland, Denmark, 21 July 2016. Key informant interview with Gordana Buljan Flander, Professor and Director of the Centre for Child and Youth Protection of Zagreb, Croatia, 29 June 2016. Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016. Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016. Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children's House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016. Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

makes an effort to find time for staff members to participate in conferences or training seminars in Iceland and internationally. The learning and knowledge that staff members bring back from high quality conferences makes an important contribution to the continued development of Barnahus staff and services. In 2016, the Ministry for Social Affairs allocated funding to the Government Agency for Child Protection to host a large conference in Iceland with a focus on providing services for children with disabilities who have experienced violence, including case assessments, forensic or explorative interviews and therapy. The conference addressed these issues in-depth and provided important learning opportunities for Child Protection Services, Barnahus and other relevant services. In order to consolidate the learning into action, Barnahus Iceland seeks to establish working relations and contacts with as many specialised institutions, agencies and professionals as possible. The contacts with the State Diagnostic and Counselling Centre in Iceland, for instance, has proven important to collaborate in the assessment of cases involving children with disabilities.<sup>232</sup>

In **Denmark**, a common competence programme is offering training on specific focus areas for all Barnahus in the country. The common competence programme is organised by the management of all five Barnahus with support from the National Board of Social Services. In 2016, the national training cycle comprised five one-day training seminars for Barnahus staff. One of the themes covered was the collaboration with social workers in the municipalities who call Barnahus in order to seek advice on a specific case. The training focused on the decision-making concerning the case and if it should be referred to Barnahus or not. The Barnahus staff contribute to identifying themes for training and national meetings that are relevant and needed for their daily work. The National Board of Social Services organises also other periodic meetings of Barnahus staff in order to enable the exchange of experience and learning. Four times per year, the Barnahus leaders meet in order to discuss management and operations of Barnahus and coordinate their activities throughout the country. Twice per year, the social workers and psychologists of Barnahus meet to exchange knowledge and their experience with different working methods. National networking meetings are held once a year with the participation of all professionals involved in Barnahus, including the police, doctors, forensic doctors, staff and leaders of Barnahus as well as social workers from the municipalities. On two days each year, the Barnahus administrative staff meet and exchange experiences. Twice a year, the Barnahus organise themselves a conference within their region with the participation of Barnahus staff and all relevant agencies, disciplines and professionals working with children at risk and child victims of sexual abuse and violence in the region.<sup>233</sup>

After the first year of operations, the National Board of Social Services conducted a review of the experience with Barnahus during the initial year. The review involved all relevant agencies and partners of Barnahus. It revealed strengths and weaknesses of the model and how it operates in different regions. It showed that Barnahus leaders and staff appreciated the support from the National Board of Social Services and considered it important to ensure that Barnahus are working according to common methods and quality standards throughout Denmark.<sup>234</sup>

An important added value of the work of the National Board of Social Services is the monitoring of data. The national database provides national evidence of the activities of the Barnahus and creates opportunities for learning and knowledge sharing across the Barnahus. The national data compiled and analysed by the National Board of Social Services informs the continued development and policy reform in this area.<sup>235</sup>

The support for Barnahus from the National Board of Social Services has been established for a four-year period and its mandate expired at the end of 2016. It was funded with 11 million DKR (approx. 1.5 million Euro). While the support from the National Board of Social Services was not initially envisaged as

232 Key informant interview with Ólöf Ásta Farestveit, Director, Barnahus, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

233 Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017. Key informant interview with Kim Risom Rasmussen, Leader, Barnahus Sjaelland, Denmark, 21 July 2016.

234 Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017.

235 Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017.

permanent, the national database that has been established is permanent. The National Board of Social Services can continue these operations with general funding available for working with children who have experienced sexual abuse and violence. The funding is however limited and the direct activities with Barnahus have been reduced as of 2017.<sup>236</sup>

In **Norway**, the official mandate of Barnahus comprises the task to strive for the continued development of the service. This is achieved through a diversity of activities and contacts between Barnahus, professionals and officials working with and for child victims of sexual abuse and violence, the academia, policy makers and state authorities at all levels. The objective is to steadily enhance the professionalism and quality of Barnahus services while also strengthening the integration of Barnahus into the general child protection, welfare and justice systems. The budget allows Barnahus leaders and staff also to participate in conferences and training seminars.<sup>237</sup>

Barnahus gathers and analyses data of the cases it handles. The analysis is used to inform a continued process of developing and strengthening the services offered by Barnahus and the collaboration with different agencies and disciplines for the best interests of the child. Case data analysis revealed, for instance, that many children who were referred to Barnahus for a forensic interview were not routinely referred also to a medical evaluation. Data revealed also that too much time passed between the reporting of a case to the police and the forensic interview with the child at Barnahus. Providing evidence on these matters enabled the Barnahus teams to redress them subsequently and to improve the practice. Barnahus leaders use the data to advocate for better services and more effective collaboration and monitor the progress made in this regard over time.<sup>238</sup>

In 2012, a national survey concluded that the Barnahus model worked as intended and that children and families referred to Barnahus due to violence and sexual assault were well taken care of. By November 2015, national guidelines for the Barnahus in Norway were in place. These guidelines help ensuring that the Barnahus in Norway are operating according to common practices and standards.<sup>239</sup>

The Norwegian Barnahus convene annual conferences that gather Barnahus leaders and staff from all parts of the countries. The conference costs are shared among all Barnahus, while two Barnahus organise and host the meeting each year. The conferences are an important opportunity to present and discuss new developments, achievements and challenges. They also help to align the Barnahus leaders along a common strategy for their continued cooperation and the liaison with local authorities and policy makers at the national level.<sup>240</sup>

Barnahus staff and leaders give lectures at Universities, for instance in the departments of law, medicine, social work and psychology. These lectures are very popular. Barnahus has been consulted in the review of the academic training curriculum for lawyers with a view to strengthening lawyers' competency with regard to cases of violence against children. Barnahus is also delivering training programmes at the police academy. These opportunities are strategic as they train the next generations of professionals and officials working with and for child victims of violence and embed an understanding and culture of multidisciplinary and interagency cooperation into their academic and professional training.<sup>241</sup>

The continued development of the Barnahus model requires not only internal processes of review, learning and improvement but also efforts to continuously strengthen the integration of Barnahus and its services into the general systems for child protection, social welfare and justice. To this end, Barnahus is conscious about the importance of fostering a good network of contacts and effective working relations with

236 Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017.

237 Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children's House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016.

238 Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016.

239 Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016.

240 Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016.

241 Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children's House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016. Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016.

professionals working outside Barnahus. This enables Barnahus leaders and staff to remain up-to-date with the developments outside of Barnahus and the issues that local service providers are confronted with. It is also a precondition to ensure continuity in service provision for the children who are referred to Barnahus and continue to receive therapy and support in their home municipality subsequently.<sup>242</sup>

In Norway, the close collaboration of Barnahus with the academia and research institutes offers opportunities to plan and implement research in partnership and to ensure therefore that the findings inform the continued development of the service. In Norway, research institutes have studied, for instance, the state of health of children who are referred to Barnahus and how Barnahus can help them to overcome trauma. There have also been studies into the situation of children from minority groups who are overrepresented in cases of domestic violence, and the views of children about the services received at Barnahus.<sup>243</sup>

In **Sweden**, Save the Children Sweden took the initiative to develop a first proposal for common criteria and standards for the Swedish Barnahus in 2007. The result was a set of quality standards that continued to be reviewed and developed further and should contribute to reach a common understanding of what a 'Barnahus' means in the Swedish context. In 2008, the Government of Sweden commissioned the development of national guidelines for the cooperation regarding child victims of crime. The National Police Board was tasked to lead this process in close cooperation with the Prosecution Authority, the National Board of Forensic Medicine and the National Board of Health and Welfare. On that basis, Save the Children and Linköping University published a more detailed quality review and manual of Swedish Barnahus in 2013. The process for the development of common quality standards for the services provided by Barnahus and for making these standards binding upon Barnahus in Sweden is still ongoing.<sup>244</sup>

The Government of Sweden started early on to evaluate the Barnahus model. In fact, the first evaluation started soon after Barnahus had become operational, while a second evaluation was scheduled after two years of operations. The first evaluation was conducted by the University of Lund and focused on the investigations, the interviews with children and the staff working at Barnahus.<sup>245</sup>

After the reference group that supported the first two pilot years of Barnahus in Sweden had been discontinued, Barnahus expressed a continued need for exchange, technical advice and support. As none of the state authorities stepped in to offer any form of continuation of the reference group, Save the Children Sweden decided to convene annual networking meetings of Barnahus staff country-wide. These full day meetings offer an opportunity for Barnahus staff to meet, exchange, seek advice and share good practice examples and experience. They also provide a platform for lectures, briefings about new developments and changes in national law, presentations and discussion of research findings. These meetings have been continued until present although the state has recognised the need to provide for this service.<sup>246</sup>

In Barnahus Linköping, Sweden, the commitment to continued learning and development of Barnahus services and staff has been written into the formal agreement for the multidisciplinary and interagency cooperation and the job descriptions of staff.<sup>247</sup> In Linköping and Stockholm, the Barnahus organise workshops and seminars of staff to which they invite experts on specific themes. These events enable the

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242 Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children's House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016.

243 Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016. Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children's House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016.

244 Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016 and 17 March 2017. Interview with Carl Göran Svedin, Professor Emeritus and Research Leader, National Competence Centre Barnafrid, University of Linköping, Sweden, 16 March 2017. See also: Landberg, Åsa, *Det här menar vi med Barnahus [This is what we mean by Barnahus]*, Save the Children Sweden, 2007. Landberg, Åsa, *Gemensamma kriterier, Barnahus i tio punkter [Common Criteria, Children's House in ten points]*, Save the Children Sweden, 2009. Landberg, Åsa and Carl Göran Svedin, *Inuti Ett Barnahus, A Quality Review of 23 Swedish Barnahus*, Save the Children Sweden, 2013, see especially p. 9.

245 Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

246 Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016. Key informant interview with Britta Bäumer, Barnahus Team, BUP Trauma Unit, Barnahus Stockholm, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

247 Key informant interview with Anna Petersson, Barnahus Linköping, Sweden, 22 June 2016.

staff to remain up-to-date and informed about specific patterns of violence against children or emerging issues.<sup>248</sup>

In 2015, the Government of Sweden established the national competence centre for child abuse and neglect, Barnafriid, hosted by the University of Linköping. The competence centre is mandated to identify and promote good practice examples in responding to child abuse and neglect. The centre has taken over the responsibility for the Barnahus network and cooperates with Barnahus throughout the country in order to maintain the support structure and to disseminate knowledge and information. The centre liaises also with the national government in order to promote the continued development of national quality standards for Barnahus. In addition, the competence centre is conducting and coordinating research with a view to gather data and offer analysis that can inform the continuous improvement of the services provided by Barnahus in Sweden. The mandate of the competence centre is expected to evolve in the light of its activities and the identified needs. There is a particular potential to strengthen the cooperation between the national government, the competence centre, the Swedish Barnahus, researchers and the academia. As the competence centre generates new knowledge about Barnahus, it is expected gradually to identify pertinent areas where research is needed and to propose new initiatives to strengthen the Barnahus service. Areas that could be advanced further, for instance, are the development of a common database of Swedish Barnahus, periodic evaluations of individual Barnahus to assess the progress made in meeting the quality standards and in providing services in the best interests of the children concerned.<sup>249</sup>

In **Croatia**, the Child and Youth Protection Centre of Zagreb has an annual budget earmarked specifically for education and training of the staff. The budget is used to support the participation of staff members in training programmes, conferences and international consultations. It can also be used to support a staff member in completing a PhD programme or other forms of continued education. The possibilities for continued learning and development of the staff constitute an important investment to ensure high levels of qualifications of staff and attractive working conditions as an enabling factor for staff continuity.<sup>250</sup>

The Child and Youth Protection Centre offers regular courses and lectures at Universities and in the police academy as well as training programmes for professionals. The Centre's staff give lectures and teach courses at the faculties of psychology, social work, law, education and medicine. These activities are coordinated with the relevant ministries so that they are firmly integrated into academic and professional training curricula and recognised within the relevant institutions. In addition, the Centre offers on the job training for different professions such as social workers and medical staff. Professional training is provided separately in the relevant disciplines and in multi-disciplinary courses with the participation of professionals from different agencies and backgrounds. The experience from practice is guiding the Child and Youth Protection Centre in developing training content, together with the relevant ministries, on matters where they see a specific need for training. The Centre staff realised, for instance, that doctors and other medical staff had very limited knowledge about reporting obligations in cases of violence against children. In consequences, they developed a course on legal matters in cases of violence against children for medical professions.<sup>251</sup>

In the **Netherlands**, the working group for the establishment of the Multidisciplinary Centre (the Dutch Barnahus) were trained together for three days by the Director and staff of the Children's Advocacy Centre in San Diego, U.S.A., in 2012. The participants included the designated professional members of the Centre, several managers of the participating organisations and local officials responsible for the funding of the Centre. This training preceded the yearly San Diego Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment, so the Dutch group had ample opportunities to enrich the training by following lectures and workshops on

248 Key informant interview with Anna Petersson, Barnahus Linköping, Sweden, 22 June 2016. Key informant interview with Britta Bäumer, Barnahus Team, BUP Trauma Unit, Barnahus Stockholm, Sweden, 29 June 2016.

249 Interview with Carl Göran Svedin, Professor Emeritus and Research Leader, National Competence Centre Barnafriid, University of Linköping, Sweden, 16 March 2017.

250 Key informant interview with Gordana Buljan Flander, Professor and Director of the Centre for Child and Youth Protection of Zagreb, Croatia, 29 June 2016.

251 Key informant interview with Gordana Buljan Flander, Professor and Director of the Centre for Child and Youth Protection of Zagreb, Croatia, 29 June 2016.

multidisciplinary cooperation during the Conference. In the following years, the trainers from the Child Advocacy Centre of San Diego came to the Netherlands to deliver follow-up training for the team. In 2017, new professionals of the multidisciplinary team participated again in the San Diego Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment, with a special focus on lectures and workshops on Children's Advocacy Centres and multidisciplinary cooperation.<sup>252</sup>

At the Multidisciplinary Centre in the Netherlands, there are monthly team meetings focused on professional development, peer consultation and supervision. If possible, financially or otherwise, team members can attend specialised courses. In 2016, the Verweij-Jonker Institute started longitudinal research into the effectiveness of the Multidisciplinary Centre. The results are expected to be published in 2020.<sup>253</sup>

## Connections between Barnahus management and policy makers

Many countries have found it important to ensure a good contact and communication between the management of Barnahus and policy makers at the local, regional and national levels. Barnahus leaders have noted that this contact is essential, individually as well as collectively with their colleagues throughout the country. In several countries, Barnahus leaders are in regular contact with mayors, Parliamentarians, politicians and policy makers in national ministries. They inform about Barnahus and the services it offers and the achievements or progress made. Contact with policy makers is also essential in order to communicate findings from research and evaluations, to advocate for policy reforms where necessary, to solicit continued political support and to raise funds.

Key informants noted that policy makers and professional societies tended to appreciate the model specifically when convincing data and analysis were available that were directly relevant for their sectors. In some contexts, for instance, the focus of interest was strongly limited to the number of cases taken to court and successful prosecutions. Key informants considered it therefore important that the management is equipped with a broad set of solid data to demonstrate the multiple benefits and positive outcomes of the model across a range of sectors.

### National accounts and examples

In **Iceland**, Barnahus is institutionally part of the Government Agency for Child Protection, which is responsible for the financial and staff management and professional supervision, including legal consultation. The Government Agency collects statistics from Barnahus and publishes its annual report. The Agency has a general role with regard to competence building and ensures that professionals in Barnahus receive regular training domestically and abroad as necessary. The Agency holds regular meetings with Barnahus staff and acts as a support in the daily activities. Major policy decisions are taken by the Agency after consultation with Barnahus and the Ministry of Welfare, if appropriate. Barnahus is active in the competence building among partner agencies, especially among the local social services.<sup>254</sup>

The National Board of Social Services in **Denmark** gathers and analyses data from Barnahus and manages a national database. The data and analysis are published in annual Barnahus statistics. Barnahus leaders are participating in meetings at the National Board of Social Services in order to inform about developments and share recommendations for change. The National Board of Social Services facilitates therefore the important communication between Barnahus, the ministry, the national government and political parties. This function

252 Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016.

253 Key informant interview with Janet van Bavel, Child and Youth Trauma Centre, Haarlem, The Netherlands, 5 August 2016.

254 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016. Key informant interview with Ólöf Ásta Farestveit, Director, Barnahus, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

is important in order to enable a constructive dialogue between policy and practice and the continued political support to the maintenance and development of Barnahus in Denmark.<sup>255</sup>

Barnahus leaders in **Norway** feel privileged that many policy makers are interested in their work and often seek the contact to be informed about the activities of Barnahus. Barnahus leaders have been heard in the context of law reform processes in order to gather their recommendations on how the legislation could enable more reliable referral of children to Barnahus, more effective cooperation within Barnahus and with the local services. The experience of Barnahus is also informing an ongoing reform process that aims to harmonise the organisational structure and quality of services of Barnahus in all parts of the country.<sup>256</sup> Barnahus leaders are also invited to join governmental commissions that have been mandated to investigate specific matters concerning the implementation of national laws and policies in practice. Their experience is considered important to inform the policy debate with regard to strengthening responses to sexual abuse and violence against children at all levels.<sup>257</sup>

## Barnahus as a centre of excellence and an advocate for children's rights

In many countries where the pioneers and advocates succeeded to establish Barnahus, the model evolved and thrived over the years and became more and more firmly established as an integral part of national systems for child protection, social welfare and justice. Over the years, Barnahus sustained and consolidated this position. It developed gradually into a centre of excellence for children's rights. The shared commitment from different agencies and the concentration of expertise from different disciplines in a single institution made this possible. The constant contacts with children and families, service providers, law enforcement and the judiciary, with policy makers, Parliamentarians, the academia, research institutes and advocates enabled Barnahus to become a hub of knowledge on matters concerning child victims of violence and children at risk.

Over the years, Barnahus has itself become an advocate for children's rights. It is widely recognised in the society and among policy makers as a centre of excellence for matters concerning child victims of violence and children at risk. It has a thorough understanding of the working methods and approaches of each agency and discipline individually and collectively and experiences first hand where the state's responses to child victims of violence and children at risk are working well and where gaps infringe against children's rights or put children at risk.

In many contexts, Barnahus is in a strategic position to oversee the procedures and services provided in cases of violence against children and to identify shortcomings and gaps. Barnahus staff could therefore be in a position to report their observations to state monitoring systems, such as national appeals boards. Due to its close working relations with national ministries, policy makers and Parliamentarians, Barnahus is well placed to advocate for improvements and reform processes with policy makers at the local and national levels.<sup>258</sup>

Barnahus leaders and staff have taken an active role in communicating and passing this knowledge on. They do so in meetings with policy makers, professionals and officials, with the media, and through training and teaching. In some countries, Barnahus and comparable models are active in the

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255 Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017. Key informant interview with Kim Risom Rasmussen, Leader, Barnahus Sjaelland, Denmark, 21 July 2016.

256 Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children's House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016.

257 Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016.

258 Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016. Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children's House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016. Key informant interview with Kim Risom Rasmussen, Leader, Barnahus Sjaelland, Denmark, 21 July 2016.

professional and academic training of social workers, lawyers, police officers, judges and prosecutors, psychologists and medical staff. In many countries, Barnahus leaders and staff hold lectures and courses in order to train the new generations of professionals and officials working with and for child victims of violence. The important added value of the teaching from Barnahus staff is the culture of multidisciplinary and interagency cooperation that they are able to convey to the students.

In order to activate the advocacy function of Barnahus, it is important to establish the model in such a way to bestow the institution and staff with the authority to identify good practice, to express their concerns and to communicate directly with policy makers, researchers and the media. When Barnahus leaders coordinate their recommendations and communicate together, as happens in the Nordic countries, their voices are heard even more and they are likely to have a stronger impact on the continued reform and improvement of the service.<sup>259</sup>

### **Fostering cross-border learning and exchange: Toward a European network of Barnahus**

The experience with Barnahus thus far has shown that there is room for development and improvement of the service, even if the model has been acknowledged as an outstanding good practice example. Barnahus pioneers, staff and other professional groups have enabled a continued process of reform by seeking opportunities for consultation and joint learning.

In all European countries, the establishment of Barnahus and comparable models has been inspired and informed by existing services in other countries. Cross-country exchange and learning has had a pivotal role in promoting the model. It has helped to overcome challenges and obstacles in the establishment and operation of the model and ensured its continued development.<sup>260</sup>

Key informants from the Nordic countries noted, for instance, that regional child protection conferences and national meetings of Barnahus staff have become a highly appreciated tradition. They foster national and cross-national exchange, learning and cooperation for continued development. Meetings of Barnahus staff from different cities and countries are important opportunities to exchange knowledge, discuss practice and reflect jointly on solutions to common challenges. In the Nordic countries, the Nordic group of Barnahus meets annually and involves two Barnahus staff members from each country in the region. The meetings are useful to discuss activities, quality standards as well as challenges. The multi-country group discusses also challenges with national laws and exchanges experience with regard to the impact that different law reform processes have on Barnahus services.<sup>261</sup>

In the European region, the Council of Europe Lanzarote Committee has consistently promoted the Barnahus model as a good practice for implementing significant parts of the Council of Europe

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259 Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children's House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016. Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016.

260 Key informant interview with Bragi Guðbrandsson, Director, Government Agency for Child Protection, Iceland, 24 August 2016. Key informant interview with Ólöf Ásta Farestveit, Director, Barnahus, Iceland, 24 August 2016. Key informant interview with Andrea Wagner Thomsen and Merete Bonde Jørgensen, Centre for Children, Youth and Families, National Board of Social Services, Denmark, 4 July 2016 and 5 May 2017. Key informant interview with Kim Risom Rasmussen, Leader, Barnahus Sjaelland, Denmark, 21 July 2016. Key informant interview with Ståle Luther, Director, The Children's House, Statens Barnehus, Tromsø, Norway, 1 July 2016. Key informant interview with Astrid Johanne Pettersen, Executive Director, The Children's House Statens Barnehus, Oslo, Norway, 5 July 2016. Key informant interview with Åsa Landberg, Independent Expert, Sweden, 29 June 2016. Key informant interview with Anna Petersson, Barnahus Linköping, Sweden, 22 June 2016.

261 Key informant interview with Ólöf Ásta Farestveit, Director, Barnahus, Iceland, 24 August 2016.

Convention on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.<sup>262</sup> The Lanzarote Committee is composed of representatives of States parties to the Convention and tasked to monitor the implementation of the Convention in the ratifying States. After the Committee undertook a study visit to Barnahus in Iceland in 2012, the members of the Committee were convinced by the strengths of the model and reached consensus that the Barnahus in Iceland can be considered as one of the most child-friendly models in enabling children's access to justice. The members of the Committee have thereafter become advocates themselves as they carry their experience from the study visit into their own national contexts and professional networks.<sup>263</sup>

Since 2015, the PROMISE Project has created a unique platform for expertise on the Barnahus model. It has become a point of reference for policy makers, advocates and practitioners who promote the Barnahus model in their countries or cities. It has gathered, reviewed and consolidated national standards and good practice examples and generated new dynamics for national reform processes and the European exchange.

The leading Barnahus pioneer from Iceland has been at the centre of many of these bi- and multi-lateral processes. He has relentlessly informed, inspired and guided the establishment and development of Barnahus and comparable models in Europe and beyond.

Key informants to this study have expressed a need and an interest in fostering and consolidating these forms of bi- and multi-lateral exchange in Europe as well as globally. They noted that a more formalised network of Barnahus in Europe could provide substantial added value to support the continued promotion and development of the model. A formalised network of Barnahus in Europe could contribute significantly to providing expertise and information, facilitating the exchange among Barnahus staff and offering a specialised platform for debate, learning and development while supporting also joint initiatives such as research and standard setting.

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<sup>262</sup> See for instance: Lanzarote Committee, Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (T-ES), *1st Implementation Report, Protection of Children against Sexual Abuse in the Circle of Trust, The framework*, Adopted by the Lanzarote Committee on 4 December 2015, T-ES(2015)05\_en final, 8 January 2016.

<sup>263</sup> Key informant interview with Claude Janizzi, Ministry of Education, Children and Youth, Luxembourg, Chair of the Lanzarote Committee 2016-2018, 20 December 2016.

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