

## Context

The adoption of the Resolution on the contribution of civil society in finding missing and sexually exploited children on 27 September 2001 expressed the Justice Home Affairs Council's beliefs in enhanced co-operation between civil society organisations and law enforcement services in preventing and combating these phenomena. The Council Resolution called on the European Commission to have a study drawn up on (1) the extent of the phenomena of missing and sexually exploited minors in the EU Member States, (2) the existence, role and structure of civil society organisations in the Member States actively supporting the search for missing and sexually exploited minors, along with their arrangements for involvement and co-operation with the competent authorities and (3) legal issues arising from the involvement and co-operation of such organisations with the competent law enforcement services. The Institute for International Research on Criminal Policy (IRCP) of Ghent University and the Department Research and Prevention of the European Centre for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children (Child Focus) joined forces to accomplish this study through a combined STOP/Daphne project (DAPHNE /02/037/YC - JAI/2002/STOP/108), (co-) financed by the European Commission.

The results of the three parts of the study have been embedded in separate books issued under the common label *Childscope* ([www.childscope.net](http://www.childscope.net)), aimed at serving as a vehicle for the promotion of integrated European policies on missing and sexually exploited children.

The first book entitled *Missing and sexually exploited children in the EU. Epidemiological data*, stresses the need for EU-wide multidisciplinary and integrated efforts (between competent authorities and civil society organisations) in collecting epidemiological data as a basis for improved, knowledge-based policy-making in the area of missing and sexually exploited minors. The second book is a comprehensive *Directory of civil society organisations working in the field of missing and sexually exploited children*. The directory contains information on the mission, role, structure, practices and contact details of over 250 of such organisations in the 15 EU Member States, 3 new Member States (Czech Republic, Hungary & Poland) and 1 Candidate State (Romania), including national overviews on their co-operation with the competent authorities. Alongside with this printed version, the project team has also released the information contained in the directory in a user-friendly, interactive format, producing a searchable database on CD-ROM and creating the *Childscope* website, which offers on-line access to the database information. Currently Child Focus is working at the extension of this Directory under the Daphne-program I (03/090/YC) in Belgium, Iceland, Norway and Bulgaria. NGOs active in the field of sexual exploitation and disappearance of children in these countries will be included in the Directory in January 2004. The third book is entitled *Cooperation between civil society organisations and law enforcement services in the area of missing and sexually exploited children. Possibilities and limits from a European legal perspective*. It explores data protection or criminal procedure-related legal issues arising in the context of cooperation between civil society organisations and law enforcement services

Given the priorities established by the Daphne II Programme, in particular the specific objectives of Call II, and on the basis of previous work done by Child Focus and IRCP-Ghent University in the area of missing and sexually exploited minors, a follow-up-project is proposed in order to disseminate and implement the results of *Childscope* in the European Member States.

## **Childscope 7/25 - Promoting integrated European policies on missing and sexually exploited minors in Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Slovenia and Slovakia**

Considering the importance of this joined STOP/Daphne project, Childscope, for the well being of children in the European Union, it is our intention to distribute these results at most with a view to optimise and ameliorate the fight against sexual exploitation and disappearance of children throughout Europe. In the framework of the former STOP/Daphne-project, 18 of the current 25 Member States of the European Union have already been involved, somehow or other (DAPHNE/00/064/C, DAPHNE/02/037/YC, DAPHNE/03/090/YC & JAI/2002/STOP/108). Therefore, it is our intention to promote the results of the *Childscope*-project, and thus the idea of integrated European policy on missing and sexually exploited children, in the remaining 7 countries: Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Slovakia, & Slovenia. Consequently, at the end of the proposed project, all 25 Member States will be on a same level of involvement and will be equally committed to develop a concrete policy on missing and sexually exploited children.

In view of a wide dissemination of the outcome of the whole *Childscope*-project, it is proposed to make its results public in the 7 new Member States. To that end, IRCP and Child Focus propose to launch a **comprehensive information and sensitisation campaign in these 7 Member States**.

Therefore it is suggested to organise seminars in each country at which representatives of law enforcement and civil society organisations active in the field of sexual exploitation of children and missing children as well as policy/decision makers are invited. At the occasion of these meetings the results of the STOP/Daphne project will be presented by the project-team and discussed with all participants. The ultimate objective should be the implementation of the results and recommendations in each country involved.

In each of the 7 Member States concerned a target NGO actively involved in the fight against sexual exploitation and disappearance of children will be identified and associated as a partner in the project. This partner-NGO will be entrusted with the specific task of identifying law enforcement experts, NGO-representatives and particularly policy/decision makers who have a certain power of decision in the field of sexual exploitation and disappearance of children in their country. In addition they will be responsible for the organisation of a national meeting assembling these key figures.

In order to fully prepare this important national meeting a preliminary meeting will be organised in Brussels by the project-team to which a representative of the 7 partner-NGOs will be invited. At the occasion of this preparatory meeting the results of the three parts of the *Childscope*-project will be presented. Special attention will be paid at the importance of co-operation between law enforcement agencies and civil society organisations in the fight against sexual exploitation and disappearance of children. In this framework the two instruments resulting from the third part of *Childscope*, namely the Model Protocol and the practical checklist will be discussed and put at the participants' disposal. At the same time the importance and the specific objectives of the proposed project will be explained. It is our intention that all partner-NGOs will be similarly disposed concerning the significance of the proposed project. The aim of this meeting is to agree upon the way each national meeting should be organised as efficiently as possible. Each representative of the NGO will also be asked to give a verbal explanation of how sexual exploitation and disappearance are dealt with in their country. This will enable us to determine the specificity of each Member State concerned that will have to be taken into consideration in order to have an optimum effect. Bearing this specificity in mind, the participants at the preparatory meeting will also discuss and determine the profile of the persons in their country (policy makers, law enforcement representatives...) who seem to be the most appropriate to be invited at the national meetings in order to reach the project's aim in the most effective way. This meeting will also give the 7 NGOs involved the opportunity to meet each other and to exchange experiences concerning the phenomena concerned. This networking will be of great importance in a more advanced stadium when developing integrated policies on a common European level. At the occasion of this preparatory meeting the exact planning of the 7 national meetings will be discussed and decided upon in close consultation with the NGOs and at their convenience.

During the course of a second phase 7 national meetings – one meeting in each country – will be organised by the NGO-partner. To that end, the NGO will identify and invite the aforementioned persons who play a key role in the decision-making process concerning missing and sexually exploited children at different levels (law enforcement, civil society...) in their country at the national meeting. To facilitate the comprehension of the content of the meeting by all participants simultaneous translation from English into the native language of the country involved will be provided. At the occasion of the national meeting the results of the three parts of the *Childscope*-project will be presented by the project-team (IRCP & Child Focus) and will be amply discussed with all participants. The emphasis will be laid on the importance of the involvement of civil society organisations in finding missing children and the handling of cases of sexually exploited children. At the same occasion the implementation of the results and recommendations of the *Childscope*-project will be promoted. Therefore, all documents related to the *Childscope*-project and in particular the Model Protocol and the practical checklist setting out the conditions under which law enforcement and civil society organisations can co-operate in cases of sexual exploitation of children and missing children will be distributed and extensively discussed. The European Model Protocol can thus serve as a basis for establishing official relationships between civil society and law enforcement authorities throughout these 7 Member States. The feasibility of “translating” these documents that rely on the common European standards to the specific national standards will also be given a chance at this national meeting. Eventually, this will incite all participants to be actively involved in the process of generating a start for their country to make the transition from theory to practice. Thus, the ultimate outcome of the proposed project will be the optimisation of the co-operation between law enforcement and civil society organisations based on a mutual protocol in these countries. Consequently, all this will result in raising awareness, the implementation of prevention programs and the enhancing of the combat against these phenomena in these 7 new EU Member States.