Oslo, 29th of May 2018

GOOD PRACTICES IN IDENTIFYING CHILDREN AT RISK OF EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING

*Organized by CBSS (Children at Risk Unit) in Oslo 29-30 of May 2018*

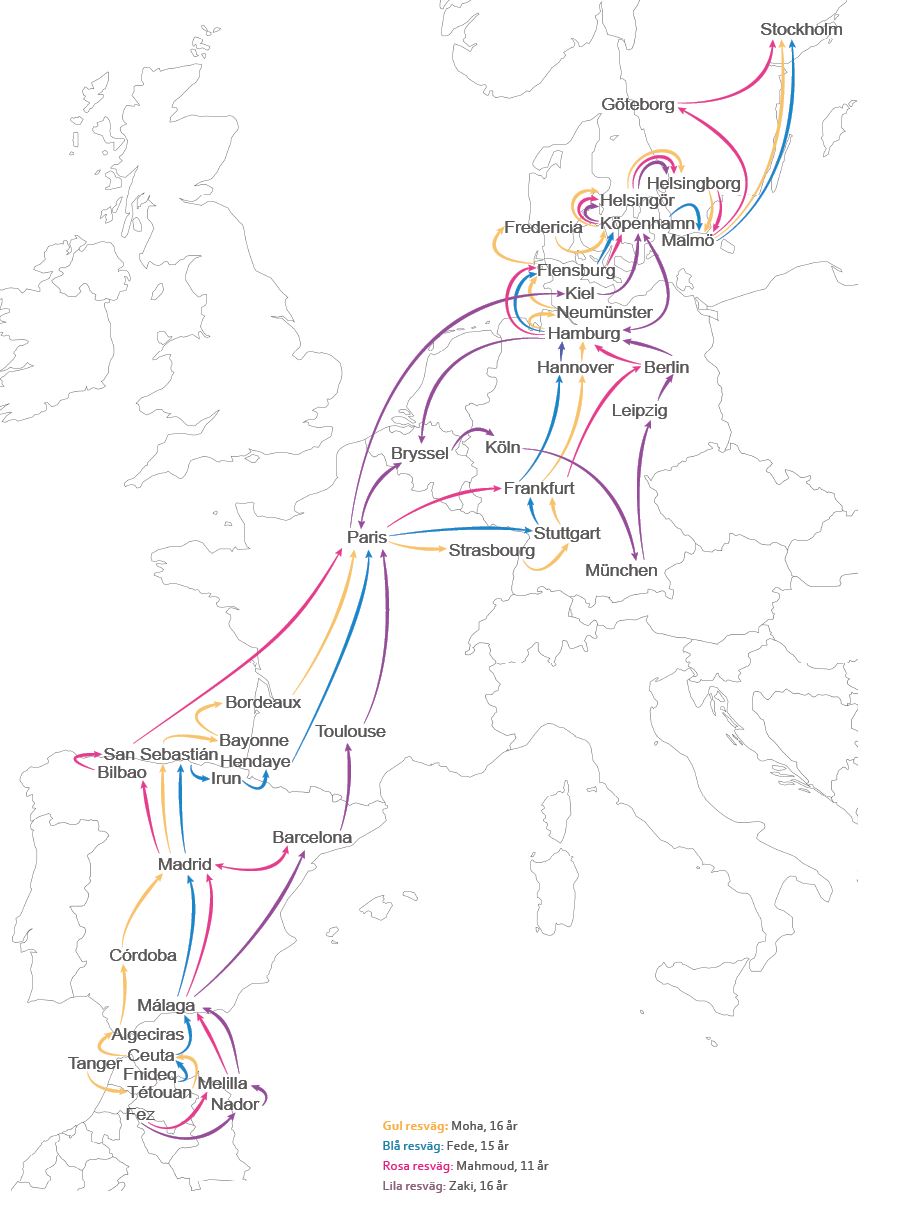
*Comments on the speech by Ms Maud de Boer-Buquicchio on “Strengthening systems of identification and referral of children on the move, victims of trafficking and other forms of exploitation” by Maria von Bredow*

Thank you Turid and the Council of Baltic Sea States for inviting me to this important meeting. Thank you to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children and to Ingrid and Anne for your interesting comment.

I´m Maria von Bredow, researcher at the County Administrative Board of Stockholm holder of the National Coordination against Trafficking until January 2018. Since then the responsibility lies within the commandment of the Swedish Equality Agency. The County Administrative Boards of Sweden (21) do still work with regional issues concerning trafficking.

I will start to comment where Maud ended her intervention. I´m eager to highlight the importance of cross-border management of child protection issues as well as the development of a trans-national operative collaboration concerning exploited children or children being at risk of exploitation.

In a recent study on children and trafficking we have published at the County Administrative Board of Stockholm[[1]](#footnote-1) children have told us about their journeys through Europe where their European Dream get blurred by exploitation and the lack of a transnationally mobile child protection system. While the children are mobile, the states are not. In some of the interviews done with young boys from Morocco they state that they are frightened of being identified since they have been abusing drugs, being forced to steal or to sell drugs and/or to transport them from one European city to another. They feel ashamed and since they think that most people in Europe hates Moroccans, they are convinced no one will listen if they try to tell about their situation. Besides, many youngsters coming to Europe need to send money back to their families and even though they don’t want to participate in criminal activities they don´t have a choice.



*This map can be found in the study “De kan alltid hitta mig” (They can always find me)[[2]](#footnote-2)*

Among authorities (social services, child protection, police etc) there is often a lack of knowledge about child trafficking, exploitation and identification of children at risk. Due to this there is a need for screening all children on the move, we must let them have a chance to understand that those working in child protection know what might have happened to them, and we must ask more than once. As a result of the before mentioned study, it was found that children and youngsters involved in criminal activities were in many cases not even asked about if someone obliged them to for example commit crime or sell drugs. They were seen by the authorities as misbehaved children and were in some cases treated differently from other children. Authorities and other adults (legal guardians, personnel at camps etc) need to see beyond the child’s own criminality in order to better identify victims of exploitation.

Since there is not much time I would like to finish this comment by highpoint the importance of being flexible in interview situations. In interviewing children and young people for this study I have been crawling on the floor examining maps together with them, I have been walking, playing football etc. Almost none of the interviews have been done in a closed room looking in each other’s eyes. Being flexible and having knowledge about the cultural context and the current situation for the child (or at least showing that you know what might have happened or that you have met other children in similar situations) makes it easier to mention situations of exploitation.

As always, there is a need for more training and support. A good idea would also be to concentrate the knowledge in specialized units for example within the social services/child protection units.

Thank you for listening!

1. Länsstyrelsen Stockholm (2018) *”De kan alltid hitta mig” Studie om människohandel och utsatta barngruppers livsvillkor*. Rapport 2018:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-2)