

## Expert Group on Children at Risk – 20 Years Celebration

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Just recently a **high-level conference** was organised in Stockholm on implementing the prohibition of corporal punishment of children. I was deeply impressed by the effective organising, the attendance of several Ministers - and other important stakeholders outside the Baltic Sea Region. The commitment of the participating experts and professionals were outstanding. This is the way that we can show the countries, the region and other regions of the world that our work matters!

I am also impressed with how the Expert Group has managed to export **the Barnahus** – the Children's House – concept to the region and beyond. By 2019, nearly all countries in the Baltic Sea Region will have one or more Barnahus – and many other countries in Europe as well. Their work is based upon the **Barnahus Quality Standards** – and gives children victims of violence access to **child-friendly justice and care**.

The results of these 2 projects are clear examples of **the added value of regional work**. It would not have happened without the Expert Group. **Congratulations**.

I welcome the **significant development** in the fields of education, health and social welfare that has taken place in each of the 11-member States of the Council of the Baltic Sea States during the past 20 years. Many children are relatively well informed and live in safety and security in their family setting.

**However, too many children still experience different forms of violence** and feel that they have few reliable adults to turn to. To fulfil the vision of the Baltic Sea Region **as a violence-free zone for children**, the Expert Group on Children at Risk is on the right path. The Expert Group is already a success story in the region and I am confident that they will continue to identify the right issues and projects that will add value to the work carried out at national level.