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Grant Agreement number: 881677 – I.N.T.I.T. – REC-AG-2019 / REC-RDAP-GBV-AG-2019

# The Barnahus Model Across the Broader European Context

## Position Paper

# INTIT

*INtegrated Trauma Informed Therapy  
for Child Victims of Violence*



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## 1. Introduction

Violence and abuse affect millions of children around the world and the need for societies to take action is increasingly recognized in both the European context and internationally. While official statistics are limited, a 2014 European Parliament report estimates that “around 18 million children in Europe suffer sexual abuse, 44 million suffer physical abuse and 55 million suffer psychological abuse resulting each year in the deaths of at least 850 children under the age of 15.”<sup>1</sup>.

In this respect, violence against children includes all forms of physical or mental violence and takes many forms of abuse, while occurring in various settings where children grow up. The perpetrators may vary from individuals to groups that are either familiar or unfamiliar to the child, as well as institutions and larger social organisations<sup>2</sup>. The impact on the child may be direct through physical and mental injuries or indirect throughout witnessing assaults or throughout absorbing violent stimuli from the broader environment. Therefore, it becomes evident that these aspects of violence are usually not isolated incidents, but overlap in many ways, and children frequently experience multiple forms of violence in multiple settings<sup>3</sup>.

The imperative need to develop a child friendly approach was recognized in the United States in the 1980s due to the complexity of the matter along with the large number of child protection practices and traditional law enforcement procedures. Responses to the needs of child victims of violence within the EU have largely focused on the development of child friendly justice (e.g., FRA’s Checklist for Professionals), development of trauma-informed care support for children leaving alternative care (CarePath project), enhancing protections for child victims of crime (E-PROTECT), and promoting the development of Barnahus (PROMISE project).

This paper primarily aims to examine the development and promotion of the Barnahus model from the Nordic region to the broader European area, as it was first introduced in Iceland in 1998 and subsequently spread to all the Nordic countries. Furthermore, this research focuses on specific European countries’ developments, while also providing quality evidence extracted from an interview with a field practitioner in Cyprus.

The analysis of the structure of the Barnahus model and its subsequent developments around Europe is indeed of special interest for the purposes of the INTIT project. The model constituted a radical change in the procedural and organizational methodology related to violence against children and is widely considered as a best-practice on the European level.

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<sup>1</sup>Dimitrova-Stull, Anna. November 2014. Violence Towards Children in the EU. European Parliamentary Research Service. p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Violence against children in Europe-A preliminary review of research, Unicef Innocenti Research Center, June 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## 2. “Child Advocacy Center” Model towards “Barnahus”

The Child Advocacy Center model (“CAC”), which served as an inspiration for the Icelandic Barnahus, was first developed as a response to child sexual abuse in Huntsville, Alabama in 1985<sup>4</sup>. The model was motivated by the often-traumatic way that child sexual abuse was managed across several agencies, subjecting the child “victim” to many repetitive and often distressing interviews<sup>5</sup>.

The story behind the creation of the first CAC follows Bud Cramer, a district attorney in Alabama and his disturbance by the case of a child having to retell its story 16 times to different professionals and agencies. Several studies have shown that multiple and repetitive interviews taken from several professionals may lead children to change their story and be guided to give the interviewer the information they seek<sup>6</sup>. The environment in which the interview takes place is also quite crucial, as children may often be intimidated by formal places such as police stations, hospitals and courts<sup>7</sup>. In this respect, the approach was developed to reduce the systematic trauma and to deliver a set of key services (medical examinations, psychological support, and advocacy services) at a stand-alone child friendly facility that also serves as the focal point for a multidisciplinary and multiagency team who collaborate in the investigation of abuse<sup>8</sup>.

The model was structured under the auspices of a well-developed accreditation body, namely the National Children’s Alliance, which at the moment counts 900 individual centers and provided help to 371.060 children in 2019 across the United States<sup>9</sup>. While there are differences across the centers, which operate individually and are usually funded by the state, accreditation is based on compliance with ten basic standards: 1) implementation of a multidisciplinary approach as the cases are dealt with by different teams from across different disciplines and agencies that have responsibility for child sexual abuse, 2) forensic interviews with trained and experienced interviewers who utilize evidence-based interview protocols, 3) victim support and advocacy, 4) child-focused setting, 5) mental health services, 6) medical examinations, 7) case review, 8) case tracking, 9) cultural competency and diversity, and 10) organizational capacity<sup>10</sup>.

One of the core principles of the functioning of CACs, which is also found in the Barnahus model, as it will be further analyzed below, is the “one door principle” (or the “under-one-roof principle”)

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<sup>4</sup> Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (2017) Implementing the Nordic Barnahus Model: Characteristics and Local Adaptions. In: Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (eds) Collaborating Against Child Abuse. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4_1)

<sup>5</sup> James Leslie Herbert and Leah Bromfield , “Evidence for the Efficacy of the Child Advocacy Center Model”, Trauma, Violence & Abuse, Vol. 17, No. 3 (July 2016), pp. 341-357, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26638130>.

<sup>6</sup> A. Kapardis, “Children as witnesses” see in Psychology and Law (4<sup>th</sup> edition), 2014, Cambridge University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> National Children’s Alliance Annual Report 2019, <https://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/annual-reports/>.

<sup>10</sup> James Leslie Herbert and Leah Bromfield , “Evidence for the Efficacy of the Child Advocacy Center Model”, Trauma, Violence & Abuse, Vol. 17, No. 3 (July 2016), pp. 341-357, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26638130>.

meaning that professionals should come to the child and not the other way around<sup>11</sup>. CACs provide a range of services that are available on-site or through direct referral in order to improve the accessibility and ease of referral to services. Therapeutic services are ideally provided on-site, with specialized practitioners who are experienced in dealing with trauma from child sexual abuse. The one-door principle is followed by the idea of avoiding multiple contacts and interviews from multiple factors during the process by developing a child-friendly and child-centered model aimed at preventing secondary victimization<sup>12</sup>. At the same time, services also focus on the child's family, providing support in dealing with the child's recovery from trauma<sup>13</sup>. As regards the conduct of medical examinations, evidence stemming from the United States judicial system has indicated the importance of examinations for prosecution, as the lack of an examination can be questioned by defense attorneys<sup>14</sup>.

At the moment, the widespread development of CACs across the United States represents a holistic response to child sexual abuse, as a gestalt that creates positive outcomes for children, their families, and the community through the combination of a set of standards and principles, as they have been previously described in this report. Still, existing bibliography literature identifies an important gap in the body of such an important model, dealing with the issue of child sexual abuse, namely in the lack of evaluations and limited research results<sup>15</sup>. Looking ahead to the future development of the model, the focus turns on the study designs and the type of research outcomes to be used for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the model<sup>16</sup>. Identifying these outcomes, specifically in the intermediate levels, with the assistance and the experience of the involved practitioners is considered to be the most realistic approach<sup>17</sup>.

### 3. The “Barnahus” evolution in Europe

Drawing inspiration from the “Child Advocacy Centers” in the US, Iceland became the first country to adopt the “Barnahus” model in 1998<sup>18</sup>. As the concept manifests from its name,

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<sup>11</sup> Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (2017) Implementing the Nordic Barnahus Model: Characteristics and Local Adaptions. In: Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (eds) Collaborating Against Child Abuse. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4_1)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Jones, L. M., Cross, T. P., Walsh, W. A., & Simone, M. (2007). Do children's advocacy centers improve families' experience of child sexual abuse investigations? *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 31, 1069–1085.

<sup>14</sup> American Prosecutor Research Institute, 2004 see in Evidence for the Efficacy of the Child Advocacy Center Model

<sup>15</sup> James Leslie Herbert and Leah Bromfield, “Evidence for the Efficacy of the Child Advocacy Center Model”, *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (July 2016), pp. 341-357, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26638130>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (2017) Implementing the Nordic Barnahus Model: Characteristics and Local Adaptions. In: Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (eds) Collaborating Against Child Abuse. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4_1)

“Barnahus” translates as “Children’s House” in English. The implementation of Barnahus constituted a radical change and groundbreaking reform in the way cases of violence and abuse against children are addressed<sup>19</sup>. After its original implementation in Iceland twenty years ago, the model found its growth across the Nordic countries, which traditionally share common characteristics in their welfare and justice systems<sup>20</sup>. In February 2005, Sweden commissioned the Prosecution Authority, the National Police Board, the National Board of Forensic Medicine and the National Board of Health and Welfare to start up Barnahus in various locations throughout Sweden as a pilot project<sup>21</sup>. Norway followed in 2007 and Denmark in 2013. Today there are more than 50 Barnahus in the Nordic region, including Denmark, Faroe Islands, Greenland, Finland and Lithuania<sup>22</sup>.

The Barnahus model is often referred to as an example of child-friendly justice, and the model is currently promoted at the European level by the Council of Europe. Several European countries have implemented comparable models or are in the process of establishing them. In Croatia, the Netherlands and Poland child-friendly centres have been established and are committed to develop these services<sup>23</sup>. Cyprus, England (London), Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Spain, and Malta undergo in varying degrees the process of establishing a Barnahus or a comparable model<sup>24</sup>. In Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, and Scotland, significant steps have been taken for gathering support towards the establishment of Barnahus or a comparable model<sup>25</sup>.

The ongoing European efforts in establishing the Barnahus concept are strongly linked to the activities and documents produced within the framework of the PROMISE project, a multi-country partnership rolled out between 2015 and 2017<sup>26</sup>. PROMISE focuses on the promotion of a child-friendly and multi-disciplinary approach for child victims of violence, while it aims to establish high quality standards and practical guidance for the services involved. Project goals include providing support to these national services with data analysis, evaluation methodology, assessment tools and advocacy<sup>27</sup>. The project consists of partners based in Croatia, Iceland, the Netherlands and Sweden, while it 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, including Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany,

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Landberg, Åsa and Carl Göran Svedin. 2013. Inuti ett barnahus. A Quality Review of 23 Swedish Barnahus. Stockholm: Save the Children Sweden.

<sup>22</sup> Enabling Child-Sensitive Justice The Success Story of the Barnahus Model and its Expansion in Europe, <https://www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise/wp-content/uploads/PROMISE-Enabling-Child-Sensitive-Justice.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> See the PROMISE project website at <http://www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise/> and the PROMISE Vision: The PROMISE project: The Barnahus model supporting children’s right to justice and care in Europe, 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Enabling Child-Sensitive Justice The Success Story of the Barnahus Model and its Expansion in Europe, <https://www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise/wp-content/uploads/PROMISE-Enabling-Child-Sensitive-Justice.pdf>.

Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania and the UK<sup>28</sup>. Partners and pilot countries are engaged in a constant dialogue regarding the existing Barnahus and comparable models based on which national processes are expected to be improved and continue the development of the model. In this line, PROMISE 2 came as the continuation of the project's initial vision to support the involvement of national and local agencies governmental and non-governmental, in establishing Barnahus and child-friendly institutions<sup>29</sup>. In 2017, the PROMISE project published the European Barnahus Standards representing the first attempt in Europe to define the principles of the interventions and services referred to as the "Barnahus" model.<sup>30</sup> In 2019 the Promise Barnahus network was formalised. By now the network represents 36 organisations and individuals in 22 countries. Membership in the Network is a commitment to work to progressively meet the Standards with support from the European network.<sup>31</sup>

#### 4. The Barnahus model: core ideas and principles

The development of the Barnahus concept within the European context has evidently differed in how the implementation of the model has taken shape in various national policy contexts<sup>32</sup>. The role of the state and other non-governmental organizations, differences in the justice system, the complex system of services and professional practices have often turned the implementation process into different paths, not only at the national, but also at the local level<sup>33</sup>. Different national contexts have generated different institutional arrangements to achieve the implementation of the model<sup>34</sup>. In some countries, the Barnahus is embedded as a function of social services and child protection authorities, while in others, it falls under the auspices of the health system or law enforcement<sup>35</sup>. Thus, despite the acknowledged differences in the development of the model, Barnahus remains a unique concept that represents specific core principles.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> The PROMISE Vision, see at <https://www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise/vision/>.

<sup>30</sup> Barnahus Quality Standards: Guidance for Multidisciplinary and Interagency respond to Child Victims and Witnesses of Violence, see at <https://www.barnahus.eu/en/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/PROMISE-Barnahus-Quality-Standards.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> PROMISE Barnahus Greater Network, see at. <https://www.barnahus.eu/en/greater-network-map/#>

<sup>32</sup> Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (2017) Implementing the Nordic Barnahus Model: Characteristics and Local Adaptions. In: Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (eds) Collaborating Against Child Abuse. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4_1)

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> PROMISE 2 - The Barnahus Quality Standards, <https://www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise/standards/>.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

## Box 1: The main criteria of Barnahus Model<sup>36</sup>

### The Barnahus Model

The Barnahus model refers to multi-disciplinary and interagency interventions organised in a child-friendly setting fulfilling the following criteria:

1. The forensic interview is carried out according to an evidence-based protocol;
2. The evidentiary validity of the child's statement respects the due process, whilst avoiding a need for the child to repeat her/his statement during court proceedings if an indictment is made;
3. A medical evaluation is carried out for forensic investigative purposes and to ensure the child's physical well-being and recovery;
4. Psychological support is available, including short and long-term therapeutic services addressing the trauma of the child and non-offending family members and caretakers; and
5. An assessment of protection needs is carried out and followed up concerning the child victim and siblings in the family.

First of all, Barnahus constitutes a **multi-disciplinary and inter-agency approach** with the aim to facilitate the legal process, while at the same time ensuring that the child receives necessary support and treatment<sup>37</sup>. At the core of its foundation lies the “**one-stop-shop**” or “**under one roof**” principle, bringing together all the professional agencies involved in reported cases of violence and abuse of children in order to ensure a coordinated response<sup>38</sup>. The “one roof principle” means that professionals should come to the child and not the other way around and in this sense Barnahus are often described as containing four rooms: the criminal investigation room, protection room, physical health room, and mental health room with a roof at the top representing knowledge<sup>39</sup>.

The approach places the child victim at the center, following the golden rule “that the child, regardless of the legal outcome, must be in a better position at the conclusion of the process than at its start”<sup>40</sup>. The importance of a close multi-disciplinary and inter-agency collaboration in creating child-friendly environments has been highlighted in several guidelines and policy

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<sup>36</sup> Barnahus Quality Standards: Guidance for Multidisciplinary and Interagency respond to Child Victims and Witnesses of Violence, see at <https://www.barnahus.eu/en/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/PROMISE-Barnahus-Quality-Standards.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Landberg, Åsa and Carl Göran Svedin. 2013. Inuti ett barnahus. A Quality Review of 23 Swedish Barnahus. Stockholm: Save the Children Sweden.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.



documents on child-friendly justice at the international and European level<sup>41</sup>. The agencies involved “under one roof” most often represent law enforcement, prosecutorial agencies, welfare services and medical care, and thus professionals such as social workers, psychologists, police, prosecutors, and forensic doctors<sup>42</sup>. In this respect, a “hybrid organization” is formed, referring to different regulatory fields and bringing together different institutional logics, from social welfare law on the one hand and criminal (procedural) law on the other<sup>43</sup>. The aim of this coordinated response is to protect the child victim by minimizing the strains that stem from participating in the penal process, while facilitating the investigation process and possibly leading to a higher rate of prosecuted cases and convictions<sup>44</sup>.

Another core principle closely linked to the “one roof principle” is the **avoidance** of multiple and repetitive interviews and contacts in order to minimize the risk of “**secondary victimization**”<sup>45</sup>. The important tasks related to this principle include a balanced coordination of the processes between the child’s forensic interview and medical examination, while at the same time assessing the needs of the child and providing psychosocial support<sup>46</sup>. The idea of balance between the processes and placing equal importance to both the legal procedure and the treatment of the child was stressed out even in the beginning of the implementation of the model<sup>47</sup>. The efforts focus on avoiding “juridification” -- that is the possibility of giving priority to the penal procedure over the need for treatment in child abuse cases<sup>48</sup>.

In order to avoid “secondary victimization” and to facilitate disclosure, Barnahus requires the establishment of a **safe place for disclosing abuse** and therefore premises are designed to be **child-friendly**<sup>49</sup>. Hence, the model encompasses a material-aesthetic aspect, as to how the environment and specifically the children’s house should look like. In this respect, discussions on

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<sup>41</sup> Lanzarote Convention; Council of Europe 2010; FRA 2015; UN Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/20; CRC/C/ GC/12

<sup>42</sup> Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (2017) Implementing the Nordic Barnahus Model: Characteristics and Local Adaptions. In: Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (eds) Collaborating Against Child Abuse. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4_1)

<sup>43</sup> Johansson S. (2017) Power Dynamics in Barnahus Collaboration. In: Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (eds) Collaborating Against Child Abuse. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4_12)

<sup>44</sup> Enabling Child-Sensitive Justice The Success Story of the Barnahus Model and its Expansion in Europe, <https://www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise/wp-content/uploads/PROMISE-Enabling-Child-Sensitive-Justice.pdf>.

<sup>45</sup> Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (2017) Implementing the Nordic Barnahus Model: Characteristics and Local Adaptions. In: Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (eds) Collaborating Against Child Abuse. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4_1)

<sup>46</sup> Enabling Child-Sensitive Justice The Success Story of the Barnahus Model and its Expansion in Europe, <https://www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise/wp-content/uploads/PROMISE-Enabling-Child-Sensitive-Justice.pdf>.

<sup>47</sup> Johansson S. (2017) Power Dynamics in Barnahus Collaboration. In: Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (eds) Collaborating Against Child Abuse. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4_12)

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (2017) Implementing the Nordic Barnahus Model: Characteristics and Local Adaptions. In: Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (eds) Collaborating Against Child Abuse. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4_1)

the location of the house are also related to the principle of establishing a safe place for disclosure, with many advocating in favor of a location in a residential area as opposed to a more formal, office-like or agency-typical location<sup>50</sup>.

In developing a safe place for disclosing abuse, Barnahus gradually moved towards an adoption of an **inclusive definition** for its “**target group**” and not only functioning as a measure for handling sexual abuse cases like it was in the beginning. Subsequently, the child abuse definition used by the Barnahus model to set out the criteria for a child to be eligible to receive treatment, developed to encompass all forms of violence in line with several international and legal obligations<sup>51</sup>. In this way, Barnahus can play an important role in implementing the obligations of State parties by ensuring equal access and services to all children who are referred to the service<sup>52</sup>.

## 5. The case of Cyprus

In Cyprus, the national strategy and the government’s action plan on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse embraces the logic and guidance of the Lanzarote Agreement<sup>53</sup>. The Agreement was ratified by the national parliament effective from 1 June 2015, while its implementation within Cyprus has followed the Council of Europe “One in Five” Campaign, which has contributed to an increased awareness of violence against children and sexual abuse<sup>54</sup>.

Under the “One in Five” Campaign, the University of Cyprus conducted a study to identify the gravity of the problem at the national level that reported rather disturbing results<sup>55</sup>. The percentage related to children’s abuse in Cyprus amounted to one out of four, which is significantly higher than the global prevalence. Furthermore, only 15% of research participants had disclosed the abuse<sup>56</sup>. The above study was considered ground-breaking, as it revealed, for the first time, national data about these cases within the country<sup>57</sup>. Consecutive evidence

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Violence is here defined according to the UNCRC article 19 and the CRC General Comment no 13 (2011): “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse”.

<sup>52</sup> PROMISE 2 - The Barnahus Quality Standards, <https://www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise/standards/>.

<sup>53</sup> Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/201>.

<sup>54</sup> National policy and Action Plan on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, [http://www.moec.gov.cy/seayp/stratigikes/stratigikes\\_ethniki\\_stratigiki\\_schedio\\_drasis\\_katapolemisi\\_sexualikis\\_kakopoiisis\\_ekmetallefsis\\_paidion\\_kai\\_paidikis\\_pornografias.pdf](http://www.moec.gov.cy/seayp/stratigikes/stratigikes_ethniki_stratigiki_schedio_drasis_katapolemisi_sexualikis_kakopoiisis_ekmetallefsis_paidion_kai_paidikis_pornografias.pdf).

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016, see in Enabling Child-Sensitive Justice: The Success Story of the Barnahus Model and its Expansion in Europe, <https://www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise/wp-content/uploads/PROMISE-Enabling-Child-Sensitive-Justice.pdf>.

stemming from the judicial proceedings in cases of sexual violence against children supported the general argument that action should be taken to improve communication and the skills of professionals closely working with children in these cases<sup>58</sup>.

In this respect, the national plan accorded vast importance to prevention by setting out three pillars of action at the primary, secondary and third level. Under Law 112(I)/2017, a special Committee, “Foni”, was established to implement the national strategy for the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and granted several responsibilities<sup>59</sup>.

As regards the third level of action, which includes the provision of treatment in cases of abuse, the national strategy aimed to minimize the negative impact on the child victim, to avoid secondary victimization, to enforce the legal protection and to strengthen the support provided to the child and to his/her family as a whole. The plan drew particular attention to a multi-disciplinary approach, while acknowledging the complexity of the existing processes, which required the participation of at least five different services that were generally represented by more than one person<sup>60</sup>. Up to that point, 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 in a child-sensitive and child-centred way<sup>61</sup>. Conversely, the child had to adjust to the existing procedures, frequently resulting in re-victimisation, while simultaneously increasing the level of vulnerability<sup>62</sup>. The fact that child victims and their families had to approach each service separately had been identified as a main issue that needed to be addressed<sup>63</sup>.

Subsequently, the national consultation drawn by the existed evidence concluded with a clear recommendation to establish the Barnahus model in Cyprus. The National Council of Ministers decided to establish a Children’s House to provide services and support for children who were sexually abused preventing, at the same time, re-traumatisation during investigation and court proceedings<sup>64</sup>. The Children’s House initiated its operations in 2018, funded and supervised by the Social Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance<sup>65</sup>. The

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<sup>58</sup> Judicial Proceedings in Cases of Sexual Violence Against Children: the child’s experience. Country Report Cyprus, June 2016, <http://www.uncrcpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/CyprusCR1.pdf>.

<sup>59</sup> The Law on the Implementation of the National Strategy for Combating Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography Law of 2017 (Law 112 (I) / 2017).

<sup>60</sup> National policy and Action Plan on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, [http://www.moec.gov.cy/seayp/stratigikes/stratigikes\\_ethniki\\_stratigiki\\_schedio\\_drasis\\_katapolemissi\\_sexoualikis\\_kakopoiisis\\_ekmetallefsis\\_paidion\\_kai\\_paidikis\\_pornografias.pdf](http://www.moec.gov.cy/seayp/stratigikes/stratigikes_ethniki_stratigiki_schedio_drasis_katapolemissi_sexoualikis_kakopoiisis_ekmetallefsis_paidion_kai_paidikis_pornografias.pdf).

<sup>61</sup> Key informant interview with Hara Tapanidou, Social Welfare Services, Cyprus, 23 June 2016, see in Enabling Child-Sensitive Justice: The Success Story of the Barnahus Model and its Expansion in Europe, <https://www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise/wp-content/uploads/PROMISE-Enabling-Child-Sensitive-Justice.pdf>.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Key informant interview with Costas Veis, Superintendent B’, Police Headquarters, Cyprus, 26 July 2016, see in Enabling Child-Sensitive Justice: The Success Story of the Barnahus Model and its Expansion in Europe, <https://www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise/wp-content/uploads/PROMISE-Enabling-Child-Sensitive-Justice.pdf>.

<sup>64</sup> Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 80.430, dated 21/03/2016.

<sup>65</sup> Social Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, <http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/sws/sws.nsf/All/B49CC18C15CDA19EC2256E5C0034D6A1?OpenDocument>.

management and operation of the Children's House have been assigned to the international, humanitarian and independent organization "Hope For Children" CRC Policy Center<sup>66</sup> after the concession of state aid, on 8 August 2016, by the Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Insurance in the context of Announcement of the State Impact Assistance Plan<sup>67</sup>. The services provided include multidisciplinary/interagency management, forensic interviewing, medical examination, psychological evaluation, psychological therapy and support, family therapy and parental counselling, social support and rehabilitation.

Hope for Children" CRC Policy Center is also working on the implementation of the PROMISE 2 project aiming at further promoting the Barnahus model in Cyprus <sup>68</sup>. The project objectives include the promotion of national roundtables and dialogue, drawing up national/regional roadmaps, drawing up national frameworks and agreements, promoting webinars, chats, judicial sector workshops and training for Barnahus staff, developing a methodology for gathering the perspectives of children on the operation and impact of the services, developing project communication tools, and facilitating the use of the PROMISE Standards and Tracking Tool<sup>69</sup>. Along this line, a national roundtable discussion took place on 4 July 2018 followed by a workshop "Judicial Procedures - Child Friendly Justice " on 13 September 2018, a 2-day training "Medical evaluation for sexually abused children-A Multidisciplinary Approach" on 25-26 October 2018 and a psycho-therapy training "Multi-disciplinary/Interagency planning and case management in the context of Children's House in Linkoping, Sweden" on 5th -6th December 2018 in Nicosia<sup>70</sup>.

The Republic of Cyprus police has a dedicated 'Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office' and sees to all matters that concern dealing with prevention, repression and handling of domestic violence and child abuse. Cyprus has the following official child abuse (including sexual abuse) statistics. During the period 2014-2018 the following number of cases by category were reported to the Cyprus Police: child sexual abuse (151), child physical abuse (2737) and child psychological abuse (1475). Also, while during the period 2014-2018 the Cyprus Police Electronic Crime Squad investigated a total of 649 cases of child pornography, during the period 2017-June 2021 the following child pornography offences were investigated by the Cyprus Police: (a) Grooming a child for child pornography 2017 (28), 2018 (34), 2019 (16), 2020 39) and 01-06/2021 (39), and (b) being in possession of child pornographic material 2017 (2), 201 (5), 2019 11), 2020 175) and 01-06/2021 (16). Furthermore, the Home of the Child (Barnahus) received a total of 368 child sexual abuse cases during the period 01/2018-10-2019. Finally, in order to contextualize the statistics, it should be noted that according to the last census in 2011, the population of the

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<sup>66</sup> "Hope For Children" CRC Policy Center, <https://www.uncrcpc.org/>.

<sup>67</sup> See also "Foni", <http://foni.org.cy/el/hope-for-children-crc-policy-center>.

<sup>68</sup> PROMISE II. "Commitment and Capacity Building for the European Barnahus Movement". The project is co-financed by the Rights, Equality & Citizenship Programme of the European Commission (Ref. REC-CHILD-AG-2016/REC-CHILD-AG-2016-01764236), <https://www.uncrcpc.org/project/promise-ii-commitment-and-capacity-building-for-the-european-barnahus-movement/>.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> "Hope For Children" CRC Policy Center, <https://www.uncrcpc.org/category/news/>.

Republic of Cyprus entitled to be in the census was 840,407. (This excludes the Turkish-speaking population in the northern part of Cyprus, which has been occupied by Turkey since 1974).

## 5.2 The case of Estonia

A recent study on sexual abuse of minors and young people was conducted in 2019-2020<sup>71</sup>. According to the results of the study, 18% of the youths who are 16-19 years old have experienced some form of sexual violence during their life. The study found that 5% of 16-19 olds have been forced to participate in a sexual act against their will<sup>72</sup>.

Of those young people who have experienced sexual violence, nearly half have told someone about the incidence. Young people usually turn to a friend (34%), boyfriend or girlfriend (12%), or mother (9%) to receive support. Only 2% reported the case to police. The reason for not reporting the case to anyone was that young person thought the case was not serious enough (1/2 of all victims), they felt ashamed (1/3 of the victims) and only one in ten said they did not know who they should talk to<sup>73</sup>.

The research on child-friendly justice in Estonia<sup>74</sup> has found that child-friendly rooms inside police departments were used when the child was a victim of abuse and violence. In other words, most severe cases involving severe abuse were treated with care and heard in special conditions. The research recommended that hearings be conducted in child-friendly designed child protection offices. The research also found that one of the most evident problems that came out of the analysis was related to a child's right to be informed – children are often left with no or inadequate information, which causes them stress and enables misconceptions. While informing children, specialists often did not consider their age while providing information. Additionally, the issue of privacy was highlighted by the research. Children expressed the fear that their testimony might be read by other people. Children are afraid to tell the truth about their parents or close people. This fear might lead children to change their story and, as a result, the child will be left without protection and support.

The conclusions reached from the research on child-friendly justice, as well as other studies, led to the idea that system should be more child-friendly. The need to ensure a child-friendly system of detection and proceeding with child abuse cases as well as provision of help to violence victims was stated as a separate goal in the National Strategy for Preventing Violence for 2015-2020. The

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<sup>71</sup> Pärnamets, R., Hillep, P. (2020) A Study of Attitudes and Experiences of Sexual Abuse of Children and Young People. Available: <https://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/et/study-attitudes-and-experiences-sexual-abuse-children-and-young-people>

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, p.44

<sup>73</sup> The data for young people who are 16-26 years old. Due to small sample size no percentages for age category 16-19 are calculated. Ibid, pp.63-69

<sup>74</sup> Strömpl, J., Kaldur, K., Karu, M.. Child-friendly justice: Perspectives and experiences of children involved in judicial proceedings as victims, witnesses, or parties. Social Fieldwork Research Report Estonia, 2014

strategy states that “consideration must be given to the use of the child house model of Nordic countries if necessary”<sup>75</sup>.

The general quality of the services provided for children improved with the adoption of the amendments to the Victim Support Act (which entered into force on 1 January 2017).<sup>76</sup> A pilot project for Children’s House (*Lastemaja*) was also started in Tallinn in January 2017. This was done as part of the aforementioned project PROMISE and the model of *Lastemaja* is based on the Barnahus model. In 2018 the second Children’s House was opened in Tartu and the third Children’s House opened in Jõhvi in 2020. The services of each Children’s House are available to all children in Estonia.

Although the title is Children’s House, it is not a separate building or a house. What is important is that the service is child-friendly and easily accessible. Children’s House is a child-friendly interdisciplinary service for children suspected or confirmed to have been sexually abused. Different specialists such as police, child protection workers, psychologists, and many others working for the welfare of children are brought under the same roof. Investigations are made on the ground with child victims; they are also later provided with the help they need. The Social Insurance Board, the Police and Border Guard Board, the Northern District Prosecutor’s Office, the Estonian Forensic Science Institute, the Tallinn Children’s Hospital Foundation and Harju County local governments all work closely together within the framework of the Children’s House service. The need for child victims to tell their story in different locations is no longer necessary in the Children’s House. It is extremely important because secondary victimisation may have dire effects on the child and they may even refuse to speak at all, which makes it difficult to help them. Pre-interview is a predetermined process where a child is encouraged to speak about what happened in a safe environment and in a non-guiding way. During the interview, the suspicion of sexual abuse is assessed and, if necessary, the police initiate criminal proceedings. The child’s medical condition is evaluated in the Children’s House along with an assessment of the need for further help. Information on the follow-up services for the child and the family is also available at the Children’s House. The referral to the Children’s House is made by the child protection worker or by the social worker.

The number of children who receive help via Children’s Houses is growing: 138 children aged 1-17 in 2017, 245 children in 2018, 402 in 2019, and 428 in 2020.<sup>77</sup> The main reason the child was referred to the Children’s House was suspicion of sexual abuse or improper sexual behaviour of a child. In case of suspected abuse, the case is mostly referred by a child protection officer, while for cases of improper sexual behaviour, the Children’s House specialists are most often contacted by parents.

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<sup>75</sup> Strategy for Preventing Violence in 2015-2020. Available at: [https://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/sites/krimipoliitika/files/elfinder/dokumendid/strategy\\_for\\_preventing\\_violence\\_for\\_2015-2020.pdf#:~:text=The%20Strategy%20for%20Preventing%20Violence%20discusses%20violence%20prevention,victim%20protection%20and%20work%20with%20consequences%20of%20violence.](https://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/sites/krimipoliitika/files/elfinder/dokumendid/strategy_for_preventing_violence_for_2015-2020.pdf#:~:text=The%20Strategy%20for%20Preventing%20Violence%20discusses%20violence%20prevention,victim%20protection%20and%20work%20with%20consequences%20of%20violence.)

<sup>76</sup> Victims Support Act (Ohvriabi seadus). Available at: <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/akt/106052020022?leiaKehtiv>

<sup>77</sup> Frank-Viron, A. Children’s House. Presentation at INTIT transnational webinar 17.03.2021.



The research by Pärnamets and Hillep (2020)<sup>78</sup> looked at the children's awareness about help and support services, including Children's House. 13% of all young people (16 to 26 years old) are aware of the existence of the Children's House. Their awareness about the sexual violence crisis support centres, which were also established in 2017 in hospitals all over Estonia, is much higher.

### 5.3 The Case of Germany

In 2019, the German child and youth welfare offices have reported 55.500 cases of endangerment of the well-being of a child, which constitutes a 10% increase from 2018. With this 10% increase for a second consecutive year an unprecedented level is reached.<sup>79</sup> While overall numbers of child abuse increased the number of custodial cases involving unaccompanied young refugees decreased since 2018.<sup>80</sup> Amongst this latter target group between 17-62% of boys and up to 71% of girls are estimated to have evolved some symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Between 20-30% of unaccompanied minors are estimated to have developed comprehensive signs of PTSD.<sup>81</sup> While custodial cases for unaccompanied minors have decreased there has been a higher prevalence of child victims of physical and psychological abuse. In 2019, the police crime statistics reported 3.430 cases of child abuse affecting 4.100 victims, 56,9 % of them being male, 43,1 % being female.<sup>82</sup> As for sexual abuse during childhood, there were 15.701 cases officially reported in 2019. The "darkfield" of unreported cases for (sexual) abuse is expected to be much larger.<sup>83</sup>

Following the comprehensive disclosure of sexual abuse in religious and youth care institutions, in 2010 the German government established the office of an independent commissioner to address childhood sexual abuse.<sup>84</sup> In addition, substantial funding was provided for research and preventive activities in this domain. An interdisciplinary working group initiated by the office of the independent commissioner in 2016 has identified a number of obstacles for child victims of (sexual) abuse in the German criminal justice system. As a key obstacle, the working group identified the lack of inter-agency cooperation between medical services, police, the court

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<sup>78</sup> Pärnamets, R., Hillep, P. (2020). A Study of Attitudes and Experiences of Sexual Abuse of Children and Young People. Available: <https://www.kriminaalpoliitika.ee/et/study-attitudes-and-experiences-sexual-abuse-children-and-young-people>

<sup>79</sup> [https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2020/08/PD20\\_328\\_225.html](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2020/08/PD20_328_225.html)

<sup>80</sup> [https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2019/08/PD19\\_308\\_225.html;jsessionid=5A2E1B7EFAEEA70E9D8D9B6B568726D9.internet8722](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Presse/Pressemitteilungen/2019/08/PD19_308_225.html;jsessionid=5A2E1B7EFAEEA70E9D8D9B6B568726D9.internet8722) (Statistisches Bundesamt 2018)

<sup>81</sup> Sukale, T., Hertel, C., Möhler, E. et al. (2017): Diagnostik und Ersteinschätzung bei minderjährigen Flüchtlingen. *Nervenarzt* 88, 3–9. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00115-016-0244-4>

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.polizei-beratung.de/themen-und-tipps/gewalt/kinde-smisshandlung/fakten/>

<sup>83</sup> <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/38415/umfrage/sexueller-missbrauch-von-kindern-seit-1999/#professional>

<sup>84</sup> <https://beauftragter-missbrauch.de/>, Unabhängiger Beauftragter für Fragen des Sexuellen Kindesmissbrauchs  
UBSKM

system, child welfare, and psychological treatment services.<sup>85</sup> These various entities tend to remain in their respective systemic logic. The group further points to a lack of sensitivity and trauma-specific training amongst investigators and court staff. Additionally, repeated interrogations by various stakeholders constitute a risk of re-traumatization for abused children. As of December 31, 2019, the German criminal law was amended requiring mandatory video interrogations by the judge for children under 18.<sup>86</sup> All 16 states are now in the implementation phase but technical hurdles still constitute an obstacle in many court districts.

Addressing the above-mentioned gaps, Germany proceeded to open its first childhood house (Barnahus) in Leipzig in 2018. A second center followed in 2019 in Heidelberg. Both childhood houses are affiliated with children and youth medicine divisions of university hospitals and are co-funded by the World Childhood Foundation. In 2020, an additional Barnahus opened in Berlin which is affiliated with the six child protection ambulances in the city. After opening the fourth childhood house in Düsseldorf the fifth Barnahus was inaugurated in June 2021 in Ortenau. According to the Childhood Foundation Germany negotiations are ongoing with interested stakeholders and communities in 15 out of 16 German states.<sup>87</sup> By the end of 2023, 12 additional childhood houses are expected to open.<sup>88</sup>

The concerted objective is to join police investigators, prosecutors, social services, child and adolescent psychiatrists, and child health and medical care/forensic medicine services to avoid re-traumatization through repeated interrogations by multiple stakeholders.<sup>89</sup> Different from several other European countries, there is no mandatory requirement for practitioners to file a report in the case of suspected child abuse. Therefore, the interdisciplinary cooperation between child and youth social services and (family) courts is less established than in Scandinavian countries.<sup>90</sup>

At the inauguration of the first childhood house in Leipzig Andrea Möhringer, responsible for the Childhood Foundation stated:

*“Properly treating children who are victims of sexual abuse is crucial for their healing. As in many other places around the world, in Germany, the children encounter a judicial system that is not adapted to their needs. They are often passed around among different authorities, having to repeat their stories several times; they may need to tell what they’ve been through up to eight times. Naturally, this increases the risk of re-traumatization. The*

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<sup>85</sup> Unabhängiger Beauftragter für Fragen des sexuellen Kindesmissbrauchs (2016): Zentrale Ergebnisse des Positionspapiers des Beirats des Unabhängigen Beraters, Fachtagung der World Childhood Foundation „Missbrauch entdeckt – was dann?“, October 6, 2016 in Leipzig.

<sup>86</sup> <https://dejure.org/gesetze/StPO/58a.html>. § 58a StPO

<sup>87</sup> Interview with World Childhood Foundation Germany, January 27, 2021

<sup>88</sup> Childhood Haus. Barnahus in Germany, presentation by Anne Eberstein on March 17, 2021

<sup>89</sup> <https://childhood.org/childhood-opens-germanys-first-barnahus-childhood-haus/>

<sup>90</sup> Interview with World Childhood Foundation Germany, January 27, 2021



*aim of our Childhood-Haus is to improve their situation and avoid them suffering further trauma.”<sup>91</sup>*

At a recent conference on child-friendly justice the Minister of Justice of the state of Schleswig-Holstein stated that the introduction of the physical infrastructure of a childhood house with its consolidated array of services is an important first step. However, it is important to fill the structure with life, to convince independent courts to make use of the technical infrastructure, to offer training, and to secure the “buy-in” of all stakeholders and their belief in the added value of cooperation in the best interest of the child.<sup>92</sup> With this being said experiences from the first 5 childhood houses have generated significant dissemination of knowledge and interdisciplinarity beyond the individual Barnahus structures into the various professions involved.<sup>93</sup>

## 6. Issues, concerns, and future directions

The current report aimed, on a small scale, to analyze the evolution of the Barnahus model in the European context, collecting valuable feedback from the latest existing data and key informant interviews. Thus, the evidence presented does not cover a wide spectrum of the model’s implementation and therefore cannot be generalized. However, this research could be regarded as an exploratory case study and open up the door for further analysis of the phenomenon observed.

The Barnahus model was introduced in Europe twenty years ago, as a response to a growing recognition of the need for more integrated and child-oriented services for children exposed to violence and sexual abuse<sup>94</sup>. Gradually, it has been recognized as one of the most important reforms regarding the protection of children and is widely considered as a best-practice model on the European level<sup>95</sup>. Continuous research on the implementation of the model is being brought together under the EU Promise project, which provides standards, learning and best practice to all the European pilot countries<sup>96</sup>.

From the beginning of its existence up to twenty years later, it has become clear that the model is determined by the institutional context and therefore takes different forms in different

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Sütterlin-Wagner, S. (2019): Tagungsdokumentation “Kindgerechte Justiz durch interdisziplinäre Zusammenarbeit – der Childhood Gedanke, 30. Oktober 2019, Staatsanwaltschaft bei dem Landgericht Flensburg.

<sup>93</sup> Focus group interview Germany, May 6, 2021

<sup>94</sup> The Barnahus Model: Potentials and Challenges in the Nordic Context and Beyond see in Johansson, S., Bakketeig, E., Stefansen, K. & Kalldal, A. (Eds.). (forthcoming 2017). Collaborating against child abuse: Exploring the Nordic Barnahus model.: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>95</sup> Enabling Child-Sensitive Justice The Success Story of the Barnahus Model and its Expansion in Europe, <https://www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise/wp-content/uploads/PROMISE-Enabling-Child-Sensitive-Justice.pdf>.

<sup>96</sup> Pilot countries soak up expert knowledge in Iceland, June 2016, <https://www.childrenatrisk.eu/promise/pilot-countries-soak-up-expert-knowledge-in-iceland/>.

institutional contexts<sup>97</sup>. In this respect, the Barnahus' success across the Nordic region is highly linked to key and common characteristics of both the justice and welfare systems of the Nordic countries<sup>98</sup>. This differs markedly from the conditions across other European countries, with substantial differences in law enforcement, culture, economy, and welfare systems for child protection and criminal justice<sup>99</sup>. The Barnahus model in the Nordic region is for instance a continuation of broader regulatory constraints based on the principle of zero tolerance for violence and abuse of children, present in national legislation since the 1970s, and the principle that children should be protected from giving testimony in open court, in comparison with adversarial judicial proceedings in other countries and their legal systems<sup>100</sup> that require children to testify in court.

Judging by the way the model has been implemented in several countries, the role of the state and other non-governmental factors is crucial, guiding the implementation often into different paths. In Iceland the model adapted the US Children's Advocacy Centre to fit the Icelandic justice and welfare system, while Sweden and Norway modified the Icelandic model to their respective systems<sup>101</sup>. Denmark combined experiences from all the models, while Finland builds on existing specialised forensic psychology units at university hospitals<sup>102</sup>. Cyprus was prompted after a groundbreaking university research, which for the first time provided national data on the issue. This followed legislative reform to combat sexual abuse and exploitation of children<sup>103</sup>. In the United Kingdom, the "Lighthouse", London's Child House came as a continuation of the previous established "Child Sexual Abuse Hubs" (CSA Hubs) across London and grouped several similar models adopted internationally together<sup>104</sup>. The above highlighted differences draw particular attention to the analysis of the different steering mechanisms, decision making procedures and forms of regulation for the ongoing translation and implementation process of the Barnahus model in both national and local contexts<sup>105</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> Stefansen K., Johansson S., Kaldal A., Bakketeig E. (2017) Epilogue: The Barnahus Model: Potentials and Challenges in the Nordic Context and Beyond. In: Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (eds) Collaborating Against Child Abuse. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4\\_16](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4_16)

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Johansson, S. & Stefansen, K. (2019): Policy-making for the diffusion of social innovations: the case of the Barnahus model in the Nordic region and the broader European context, *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, DOI: 10.1080/13511610.2019.1598255.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> National policy and Action Plan on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, [http://www.moec.gov.cy/seayp/stratigikes/stratigikes\\_ethniki\\_stratigiki\\_schedio\\_drasis\\_katapolemisi\\_sexoualikis\\_kakopoiisis\\_ekmetallefsis\\_paidion\\_kai\\_paidikis\\_pornografias.pdf](http://www.moec.gov.cy/seayp/stratigikes/stratigikes_ethniki_stratigiki_schedio_drasis_katapolemisi_sexoualikis_kakopoiisis_ekmetallefsis_paidion_kai_paidikis_pornografias.pdf).

<sup>104</sup> The Lighthouse: London's Child House Initial Evaluation Report, December 2018, [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/childhouse\\_jan19\\_report.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/childhouse_jan19_report.pdf).

<sup>105</sup> Stefansen K., Johansson S., Kaldal A., Bakketeig E. (2017) Epilogue: The Barnahus Model: Potentials and Challenges in the Nordic Context and Beyond. In: Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (eds) Collaborating Against Child Abuse. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4\\_16](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4_16)

Furthermore, as it has already highlighted in this paper, a core principle of the Barnahus idea lies in the multi-disciplinary synergy of several different factors. Thus, even though collaboration is associated with consensus and synergy, conflicts and dilemmas often arise in collaborative practice<sup>106</sup>. In this respect, the available research highlights the need of performing a comparative analysis on the professional tensions and the balancing of competing institutional logics, in understanding the power dimensions and professional identities in the Barnahus collaboration<sup>107</sup>.

Dilemmas are also noted with regards to the role of the Barnahus model in the realization of children's rights, while providing a child-friendly environment. The task is thus challenging, considering the balancing for example between the child's right to information and the child's right to participate in criminal proceedings, as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>108</sup>. The task cannot only be seen independently in the Barnahus context, but also requires a child friendly justice system<sup>109</sup>. The right to a child-friendly approach has to be balanced with the safeguarding of the defendant's right, a dilemma that has led to the development and implementation of a specific method for child investigative interviews<sup>110</sup>. In this respect, the available research highlights the importance of developing specific competencies for the interviewer, while ensuring the constant educational training of the practitioners involved<sup>111</sup>.

Finally, apart from the positive representations of the implementation of the Barnahus model highlighted in the available literature, it is also noted that the implementation process across several European countries still is at an early stage, and needs to be further empirically investigated<sup>112</sup>. At the same time, the impact of the different regulations associated with the Barnahus, along with the evolution of the institutional set-up long-term is not clearly identified<sup>113</sup>. As mentioned earlier, the above findings sought to provide an introduction to the main principles, issues and concerns around the Barnahus model and to serve as a point of interest, opening up the door for further analysis of the phenomenon observed. From this perspective, it is important to engage in further study and reflection on the continuous implementation phases in different contexts throughout Europe

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<sup>106</sup> Johansson S. (2017) Power Dynamics in Barnahus Collaboration. In: Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (eds) Collaborating Against Child Abuse. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4_12)

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>.

<sup>109</sup> Stefansen K., Johansson S., Kaldal A., Bakketeig E. (2017) Epilogue: The Barnahus Model: Potentials and Challenges in the Nordic Context and Beyond. In: Johansson S., Stefansen K., Bakketeig E., Kaldal A. (eds) Collaborating Against Child Abuse. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4\\_16](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-58388-4_16)

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Johansson, S. & Stefansen, K. (2019): Policy-making for the diffusion of social innovations: the case of the Barnahus model in the Nordic region and the broader European context, *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, DOI: 10.1080/13511610.2019.1598255.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.



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