


AUSTRIA

Report of the National Preparatory Conference “Children are Not a Commodity – Joining Forces Against the Sexual Exploitation of Children”

2 October 2008

Diplomatic Academy of Vienna

 Bundesministerium für europäische
und internationale Angelegenheiten

BM.I  REPUBLIK ÖSTERREICH
BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR INNERES



I. Objectives of the Conference

Organiser: ECPAT Austria (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) in cooperation with the ECPAT Youth Advisory Committee and UNICEF Austria

Ministries involved: Experts of the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs (FMEIA), the Federal Ministry of Health, Family and Youth, the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, the Federal Ministry of the Interior.

The objective defined for the National Preparatory Conference “Children are Not a Commodity - Joining Forces Against the Sexual Exploitation of Children” was to analyse the situation regarding sexual exploitation of children in Austria and to discuss approaches for an Austrian position to be presented at the Third World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents in Rio de Janeiro from 25 to 28 November 2008.

The organisers and experts of the ministries involved had set themselves the following specific goals for this conference:

Προμοτιον οφ τηε εξχηανγε οφ εξπεριενχεσ αμονγ εξπερτσ χονχερνεδ ωιτη τηε τοπιχσ οφ χηιλδ τραφφιχκινγ, χηιλδ προστιτυτιον ανδ χηιλδ πορνογραπηψ;

Ιδεντιφιχατιον οφ δεφιχιτσ ανδ σηορτχομινγσ ασ ωελλ ασ ελαβορατιον οφ ποτεντιαλ σολυτιονσ ωιτη α ωιεω το τηε σιτυατιον ιν Αυστρια;

Ενσυρινγ τηε αχτιωε ιν ωολωεμεντ ανδ χοντριβυτιον οφ αδολεσχεντσ; and

Συμμαρισινγ τηε ρεσυλτσ ιν αν οφφιχιαλ ρεπορτ ωηιχη ισ το σερωε ασ τηε βασισ φορ τηε Αυστριαν χοντριβυτιον το τηε Ωορλδ Χονγρεσσ.

Participants: About 80 experts from ministries, public institutions and authorities, the law enforcement authorities and the field of NGOs as well as fifteen adolescents aged between 17 and 24 years took part in the conference.

Authors of the report: The report was prepared by Regina Ruzs, Mag.a. (Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs) and Astrid Winkler, Mag.a. (ECPAT) in close cooperation with the other ministries involved and is based on the notes taken by the three rapporteurs and staff from ECPAT Austria as well as the ECPAT Austria Youth Advisory Committee.

II. Opening Panel

Speakers: Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, Dr. (Head of the Legal and Consular Affairs Section at the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs), Astrid Winkler, Mag.a (Executive Director of ECPAT Austria), Gudrun Berger, Dr. (Executive Director of UNICEF Austria), Anne-Sophie Richter (Coordinator of the ECPAT Youth Advisory Committee) and Univ. Prof. Max H. Friedrich, Dr. (child and youth psychiatrist)

Facilitator: Envoy Johann Brieger, Dr. (Head of the Department for Internal Security at the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs)

The following topics were *inter alia* considered to be of particular significance:

Johann Brieger, Dr. (FMEIA) reminded participants in his welcoming address of the tragic case of the 12-year old girl Rosario from the Philippines who had died of the severe internal injuries inflicted by an Austrian sex tourist. The Swedish best-selling author Majgull Axelsson wrote a documentary book about Rosario's story entitled "Rosario is Dead", which was translated into numerous languages including German.

Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger, Dr. (FMEIA) pointed to the human rights and peace policy dimension of the worldwide fight against sexual exploitation of children and stressed the importance of international treaties in fighting such crimes. Ambassador Tichy-Fisslberger emphasised that the FMEIA will undertake all necessary efforts in order to ensure swift ratification by Austria of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

Astrid Winkler, Mag.a (ECPAT) gave an overview of the previous World Congresses (in Stockholm in 1996 and Yokohama in 2001) a context in which ECPAT played an central role. One of the reasons for convening the World Congresses was the disastrous situation in Asia in the 1980s, when Asian girls and boys increasingly became victims of sex tourists. At that time the ECPAT campaign (End Child Prostitution Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) was launched with the goal of taking pro-active measures to combat child sex tourism. At the time the first World Congress was organised in Stockholm in 1996, ECPAT had already become an international organisation aiming to terminate all phenomena of sexual exploitation of children. Astrid Winkler pointed out that the main goal defined for the Third World Congress was to identify new challenges to be tackled as regards sexual exploitation of children and to promote the exchange of practical experience with respect to the implementation of the relevant measures and actions. It was decisive in this context to make sure that the World Congress would not remain a singular event.

Gudrun Berger, Dr. (UNICEF) drew attention to the horrific figures relating to the sexual exploitation of children: According to the United Nations Study on Violence against Children prepared in 2006, the number of children exploited sexually for the purposes of prostitution and pornography has reached 1.8 million per year. Every year 1.2 million children fall victim to human traffickers; every year some 150 million girls and 72 million boys below the age of 18 fall victim to sexual violence - in their

families, at school, at housing facilities, in prisons and in the workplace. Berger emphasised that it was the responsibility of society and the state to “detect and unveil crimes that are usually committed clandestinely”. In order to be able to effectively combat sexual exploitation of children and adolescents sufficient personnel and financial resources had to be made available.

Anne-Sophie Richter (Coordinator of the ECPAT Youth Advisory Committee) stressed the importance of involving youth and promoting their participation in the World Congresses. In this spirit it has been possible to constantly increase the number of young persons who participate in the World Congresses: in the 1996 Congress only 60 children and adolescents took part, while some 300 young persons have been registered for the forthcoming congress in Rio. It was decisive that adolescents voice their views and opinions on topics that directly affect them. *(Note: the Austrian Federal Government supported the participation of youth in the Austrian National Preparatory Conference.)*

Max H. Friedrich, Univ. Prof. Dr. (child and youth psychiatrist) outlined in his opening statement that it was often impossible for adults to recognise child abuse. “Children would feel embarrassed to tell certain things.” There was no classical abuse syndrome. Rather, the child’s “demeanour” would suddenly change. Often the child would not be able to find linguistic expression for what he or she had experienced and would thus find other ways to express his or her feelings, for instance by displaying “sudden fits of aggression” or by becoming “depressed or suddenly withdrawn”. “Perpetrators, in contrast, were very cunning and manipulated children and mothers in a way that would even make sure that no suspicions were aroused”. During court proceedings children were thus frequently faced with “a second victimisation” as “they were unable to put into words what they had experienced”. Moreover, legal terms were something strange and foreign to children as well. Therefore perpetrators were often “given the benefit of the doubt and acquitted”.

Thus it was vital to build up a relationship of trust with the children. It was, for instance, no coincidence that children who had problems often turned to their teachers at kindergarten, nursery school or school.

The abuse of children for pornographic purposes was a special problem which had to be considered in a wider context. This dealt with “depicted genitality“, which could stimulate potential perpetrators to put into practice what they had seen.

III. Panel Discussion: “How to Protect Children Against Sexual Exploitation?”

Speakers: Regine Wieselthaler-Buchmann, Mag.a (Head of the Office for Capital and Sexual Offences at the Federal Ministry of the Interior/Federal Criminal Intelligence Service), Colonel Gerald Tatzgern (Head of the Central Unit for Combating Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling at the Federal Ministry of the Interior/Federal Criminal Intelligence Service), Carolin Tener, Mag.a (Social Scientist), Tina Ring, Mag.a (Social Scientist), Marion Kreissl (ECPAT Youth Advisory Committee);

Facilitator: Christoph Riedl (Austrian Broadcasting Corporation, ORF)

Statements and Presentations:

The scientists Carolin Tener and Tina Ring explained the research work performed in connection with their study on girl prostitution in Vienna, which was also published in 2006 as a book entitled *Auf dem Strich* (“Streetwalking”). Tener and Ring investigated the underlying reasons for girl prostitution and particularly the girls’ life situations. In their study, they also dealt with the profile of a typical customer, who according to their findings cannot be assigned to a specific age group or professional background. Often it was, for instance, “men with child’s safety seats in the back seats of their cars” who paid minors for sexual services. The study evidenced *inter alia* that:

αλμοστ εωερψ χυστομερ ωαντο το ηαωε σεξ ωιτηουτ χονδομοσ;
γρλσ ωηο αλρεαδψ ενγαγεδ ιν προστιτυτιον υσυαλλψ ενχουραγε δ τηειρ φριενδσ το
ωαλκ της στρεετοσ;
αλμοστ εωερψ γρλ θυεστι ονεδ ηαδ αλρεαδψ εξπεριενχεδ ατ λεαστ ονε πρεγνανχηψ;
γρλσ οφτεν λεαδ α δουβλε λιφε , because they are ashamed;
γρλσ γενεραλλψ φεελ βυρνεδ ουτ ανδ λονελψ; and
τηε underlying causes for their life situation are usually rooted in their family
situations.

What was problematic was that many girls are sentenced to administrative penalties for illegal prostitution, while the men usually “go unscathed” because they claim that they had, for instance, not been aware that the girl was actually underage.

Colonel Gerald Tatzgern (Federal Ministry of the Interior/Federal Criminal Intelligence Service) pointed out that Austria was both a transit and a target country of human trafficking and people smuggling. With respect to child trafficking, authorities and investigators were faced with the specific challenge of actually identifying children as victims, particularly if they had also committed criminal acts. Account had to be taken of the fact that children and adolescents were often forced to commit such criminal offences as pick pocketing. Frequently “experienced” children were putting younger ones under pressure. Particularly grave phenomena of child trafficking had also been identified in Austria, including labour exploitation of Chinese children who were locked up in cellars.

Regine Wieselthaler-Buchmann, Mag.a. (Federal Ministry of the Interior/Federal Criminal Intelligence Service) presented the Child Pornography Reporting Centre

set up by the Federal Criminal Intelligence Service. In 2007 a total of 9,000 tips regarding child pornography on the Internet were reported to the Centre.

International cooperation (with, for instance, Interpol or the FBI) played a particularly important role with respect to Internet crimes. The identification of trends in the field of child pornographic representations, like, e.g., “grooming”, represented a major challenge to investigators. (*Note: the term “grooming” is used to describe the deliberate manipulation and seduction of children and adolescents by adults, preferably in chat rooms, in order to “bend them to the will” of the perpetrators for later actual abuse. This is done, for example, through sexualisation, loving attention, care, and promising “rewards”, etc.*)

Marion Kreissl (Founder and member of the ECPAT Austria Youth Advisory Committee) stressed the need for youth participation, which was enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and how imperative it was for the Third World Congress. Youth participation was an important element of all activities aimed at protecting children as it enabled gearing such activities to meet the specific needs of those affected. According to Kreissl it was not only important to give young persons a say but even more so to give them the opportunity to get involved in decision-making processes. Kreissl suggested using examples from the UK as guidance and inviting adolescents, for instance, to take part in the activities undertaken by the Task Force on Human Trafficking.

Subsequent Discussion:

A journalist from the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation pointed out that it was difficult to obtain data and figures on child trafficking. As this topic was repeatedly discussed at the international level as well, Austria was called upon to step up its relevant activities.

Regarding the issue of “children begging in the streets”, Colonel Tatzgern informed participants that the police authorities were in close contact with the *Drehscheibe* – a specialised institution run by the Vienna Youth Welfare Authority for unaccompanied alien minors. Norbert Ceipek, manager of the *Drehscheibe Vienna*, presented the concept of this care and support facility for victims of child trafficking. Children and adolescents who are taken by the police to the *Drehscheibe Vienna* are immediately given the opportunity to talk with trained and qualified interpreters. Particularly at the first contact between these children and the representatives of the *Drehscheibe Vienna* it was vital to build up confidence, and language must not pose an obstacle in these efforts.

Several conference participants pointed out that the promotion of scientific studies to investigate sexual exploitation of children in Austria would be desirable.

Some participants suggested expanding the psychological support system for people with paedophile inclinations. Experience with such projects in Switzerland and Germany had shown that a certain percentage of men were willing to undergo preventive treatment. These men were aware of their personality disorder and wanted to take steps in order to prevent them from turning their pathological inclinations into reality.

IV. Findings of the Working Groups

Working Group on Child Prostitution / Child Sex Tourism

Facilitator: Astrid Winkler, Mag.a., ECPAT Austria

Youth Co-facilitator: Julia Rührlinger, Mag.a., ECPAT Austria Youth Advisory Committee

Rapporteur: Regina Ruzs, Mag.a, Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, Unit IV/7a – International Cooperation in Crime Prevention

The Working Group was composed of some 25 participants, including representatives from victim protection institutions, the City of Vienna, the Women's Section at the Federal Chancellery, the Federal Ministry of the Interior/Federal Criminal Intelligence Service, the tourism industry and the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs.

The following topics were discussed:

- Phenomena of commercial sexual exploitation/child prostitution including the new scope of such phenomena
- Legal framework conditions, responsibilities and implementation
- Holistic cross-departmental policies – relevant cooperation at the national and international levels
- Social responsibility to be assumed by companies/private enterprises
- Strategies and goals of international cooperation

Phenomena of commercial sexual exploitation/child prostitution including the new scope of such phenomena

The participants of the Working Group discussed the current situation in Austria, referring in particular to two topical cases:

The **first case study** related to the topic of “**child prostitution**” and dealt with a 17-year old prostitute (named Stella) who, as a result of traumatic childhood experiences, concluded that her only way out was to earn her living as a prostitute.

The **second case study** related to the topic of “**child sex tourism**” and dealt with three retired men from Salzburg who had sexually abused a male minor in Morocco. The case is of a particularly topical and explosive nature, as the three retired men did not appear in court and were not excused from appearing for the trial that took place in Salzburg in mid-September 2008.

Several participants of the Working Group stressed that the term “child prostitution” was a working term, since child prostitution was always connected with the exertion of violence and the abuse of children and in the case of minors cannot be of a voluntary nature.

With a view to the situation in Austria it was stated that both Austrian and foreign minors were engaging in prostitution. According to the study “Mädchenprostitution in Wien” (“Girl prostitution in Vienna”), authored by Carolin Tener and Tina Ring, underage Austrian prostitutes usually have a difficult family background often characterised by violence and abuse. Almost no information is available on the situation of underage foreign prostitutes. Many of these children are victims of human traffickers/pimps who bring them to Austria. Some (e.g. Hungarians and Slovaks) stay only for a short period of time, while others are made to stay in Austria for an extended period. Many “work” at facilities owned by foreign nationals.

Legal framework conditions, responsibilities and implementation

The lack of a general federal law on prostitution faces practitioners with a major challenge, particularly as regards providing care and support to victims and prosecuting perpetrators and clients.

The participants of the Working Group therefore suggested *inter alia* the following approach:

- Performing an evaluation and discussing the elaboration of a general federal law on prostitution.

Holistic cross-departmental policies – relevant cooperation at the national and international levels)

- The study on “Mädchenprostitution in Wien” (“Girl Prostitution in Vienna”) represents a good initial approach, however, further such studies and research activities into this matter are necessary. Only a few studies have, for instance, dealt with the issue of prostitution of minor boys.
- There are hardly any specialised institutions that focus on the specific needs and concerns of minor prostitutes.
- The activities of the various players active in this field could be better networked. Although networking works well in some individual cases, a coordinated approach for the whole of Austria would be desirable.
- Initiatives could be developed within the framework of the school system to ensure that children who have problems actually have a place to turn to. Many children, for instance, are not aware of the Austria-wide emergency hotline for children.

The participants of the Working Group suggested *inter alia* the following approaches:

- Promoting and encouraging studies dealing with the topics of child prostitution and child sex tourism and particularly with the issue of prostitution of minor boys.
- Establishment and expansion of “low-threshold” offers/facilities (i.e. unbureaucratic and easy access).

- Intensified information and awareness-raising activities at all levels. In general, the topics of child prostitution and child sex tourism are given too little public attention.
- At school, teachers should address and draw children's attention to the rights of the child.

The Working Group participants therefore suggested the following concrete action to fight child prostitution and child sex tourism:

- The Working Group on the Exploitation of Children under the Task Force on Human Trafficking should intensify its relevant activities and focus specifically on all phenomena related to sexual exploitation of children and young persons.

Social responsibility to be assumed by companies/private enterprises

In their discussion on "child sex tourism", participants advocated a more proactive role to be played by the tourism industry in fighting child sex tourism. In Austria only three tourism companies have signed the industry's Code of Conduct against Child Sex Tourism.

Strategies and goals of international cooperation

The Working Group participants suggested the following concrete actions to fight child prostitution and child sex tourism:

- Convening an international symposium of experts on this issue in order to promote the exchange of relevant experiences and activities aimed at protecting children and young persons against sexual exploitation.
- An evaluation by the Federal Ministry of the Interior of whether it would make sense to add Bangkok to the list of destinations for dispatching a special attaché of the Federal Ministry of the Interior with a view to facilitating investigations in concrete cases and further expanding direct cooperation with the local authorities in Thailand.
- Increasing promotion by the Austrian Development Cooperation/Austrian Development Agency of projects in the field of "participatory tourism".

Working Group on Child Pornography

Facilitator: Regine Wieselthaler-Buchmann, Mag.a, Federal Ministry of the Interior/Federal Criminal Intelligence Service

Youth Co-Facilitator: Anne-Sophie Richter, ECPAT Austria, Youth Advisory Committee

Rapporteur: Günther Sablattnig, Mag., Federal Ministry of the Interior

The Working Group was composed of some 24 participants, including representatives of the law enforcement authorities, victim protection institutions, NGOs, the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Ministry of Justice.

Deliberations focused on the following items:

- Phenomena of commercial exploitation including the new scope of such phenomena
- Legal framework conditions, responsibilities and implementation
- Social responsibility to be assumed by companies/ private enterprises

Phenomena of commercial exploitation including the new scope of such phenomena

With respect to this item on their agenda, the participants of the Working Party identified the following trends and tendencies:

- “Grooming“ is on the rise.
- Photos and video tapes are produced abroad.
- Austria is a consumer country.

The participants of the Working Group suggested *inter alia* the following approaches:

- As general rule, people should refrain from posting photos on the Internet as they could potentially be used inappropriately (for instance, for photomontages and the like).
- People should refrain in any case from posting photos with sexual content on the Internet as there is risk of misuse.
- As a preventive measure, it could be demonstrated to children, who intend to post photos depicting themselves (with or without sexual content), how easy it is to modify and manipulate these photos.
- Parents should refrain from posting photos of their children on the Internet (and certainly no nude photos taken, for instance, during summer holidays).
- Preventive action is usually based on projects or activities launched by social service institutions at schools and/or social facilities. It would be desirable to increase the number and scope of such preventive actions and for the police, teachers and social workers, etc., to launch relevant activities.
- Specific training seminars for police officers should be further intensified.
- “Grooming” is not yet a punishable act. It is thus necessary to create a practicable legal basis that takes account of all aspects (e.g. people should not get a bad reputation for “just wanting to be nice”, etc.).

- All courts and some public prosecutors' offices currently have special competences and responsibilities relating to criminal law on sexual offences. A further expansion of these special competences at the public prosecutors' offices should be considered. (In this context it should be pointed out that it is already possible to share the necessary experience and expert knowledge with the public prosecutors' offices and courts. Moreover, cooperation is already very close with specialised victim protection institutions in the field of psychological and legal assistance during proceedings (*Prozeßbegleitung*)).

Legal framework conditions, responsibilities and implementation

With respect to this item on their agenda, the participants of the Working Group stated the following:

Within Interpol, there is already a Working Group on Crimes against Children. Moreover, Interpol has a database on child pornography in which photo series are collected and matched. In addition, Interpol tries to identify where these photos have been taken. Austria sends relevant photos (and videos) to this database for matching. There is also good cooperation in place within Europol.

The participants of the Working Group suggested *inter alia* the following approaches:

- Expansion of preventive measures for adolescents between the ages of 16 and 18, particularly as regards informing them and raising their awareness of the potential effect of sharing personal photos of relevant content via the Internet or their mobile phones. Moreover, adolescents are often not aware that the unauthorised circulation of such photos is punishable by law.
- Particularly as regards prevention, supra-regional cooperation between providers and police authorities is of the utmost importance.
- Moreover, it is important to clearly differentiate between children and adolescents. Paedophiles are more interested in children than in "adolescents".
- It would be desirable to create a uniform international standard governing the age until which children and adolescents still fall under the Children and Young Persons' Protection Act, including the creation of the relevant framework conditions.
- Although cooperation with Eastern Europe and the CIS states is constantly improving, the level and scope of cooperation with the various states still differs significantly. In this context it would be desirable to press for the further expansion and enhancement of police cooperation and the introduction of common minimum standards (e.g., as regards the age until which children and adolescents are still covered by the relevant legislation on children and young persons' protection).
- It should be considered whether the (demonstrable) viewing of child pornography should also be punishable by law. Currently only the possession of pornographic material depicting children is punishable, not, however, the viewing of such material, i.e. temporarily stored cached data.

Social responsibility to be assumed by companies/private enterprises

- The participants of the Working Group held the view that the mere blocking of web pages was not always a suitable measure, as it is currently usually the entire homepage that is blocked and not individual pages (this is particularly problematic in the case of “hacked” websites). Commercial child pornography pages are to be blocked (worldwide), but, not those that contain such material only because they have been “hacked” (and are immediately deleted upon notification).
- A project entitled “Lieben Sie Kinder mehr als Ihnen lieb ist?” (“Do you love children more than you really want?”) was launched in Berlin. Under this project therapeutic assistance is offered to persons who feel that they may have a paedophilic inclinations, the overall goal being to avoid criminal acts against minors in the future (preventive approach). This project could serve as a model for similar activities in Austria. The topic should therefore be discussed within the Task Force on Human Trafficking.

Working Group on Child Trafficking

Facilitator: Colonel Gerald Tatzgern, Federal Ministry of the Interior/Federal Criminal Intelligence Service

Youth Co-facilitators: Marion Kreissl and Anna-Katharina Skorpik, ECPAT Youth Advisory Committee

Rapporteur: Maria Orthofer, Dr., Federal Ministry of Health, Family and Youth, Department for Youth Welfare and the Rights of the Child

The Working Group was composed 25 participants from ministries (the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the Federal Ministry of Defence, the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, the Federal Ministry of Health, Family and Youth), the Federal Provinces' youth welfare authorities, numerous NGOs and adolescents.

The following topics were discussed:

- Phenomena of (commercial) exploitation including the new scope of such phenomena
- Legal framework conditions, responsibilities and implementation
- Holistic cross-departmental policies - relevant cooperation (at the national and international levels)

Phenomena of (commercial) exploitation including the new scope of such phenomena

As set out in the definition of child trafficking in the *Optional Protocol on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography* and the *UN Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons* (also known as the Palermo Protocol), sexual exploitation is only one of a number of purposes of child trafficking. However, almost every other purpose of child trafficking (i.e., begging; petty crimes like theft; drug trafficking; household labour) may eventually result in sexual exploitation. Further purposes of child trafficking referred to in the protocols include the removal of organs and illegal adoption.

Participants consider the identification of victims of child trafficking a major challenge and named several reasons in this context. Moreover, the relevant professional groups active in this area (youth welfare authorities, police and aliens' authorities, etc.) do not always consider child trafficking to be an (Austrian) problem. To date only few cases of child trafficking have been reported (with the exception of Vienna), and only in Vienna, Lower Austria and Tyrol is child trafficking an issue for youth welfare authorities.

Important items for discussion are:

- Participants suggest that education and training for the professional groups working in this area be enhanced and the necessary measures taken in order to enable and facilitate both identification by the relevant authorities and auto-identification on the part of victims (i.e., children and adolescents have to realise that they are victims of exploitation).

- Participants suggest that special “social work” methods be developed which are tailored to cater for the specific needs of victims of child trafficking and respond to the specific behaviour patterns displayed by these children (methods dealing with victim behaviour, using methods from social pedagogy). What is also important in this context is the development of intercultural and trans-cultural skills in order to be able to establish a relationship of trust with victims. Another key issue is that systems for care and support be made more easily accessible, both to victims and to people who wish to report a case of human/child trafficking or believe that they have “detected” such a case. As a general rule, information on assistance offered has to be made more easily accessible.
- Participants stressed that with respect to preventing child trafficking it was necessary to increasingly launch awareness-raising activities in the countries of origin and emphasised the importance of cooperating with victims in order to enable the identification of people-smuggling networks.
- Participants stressed that minimising opportunities for trafficking in human beings for gain was an absolute must.

Legal framework conditions, responsibilities and implementation

In Austria, the youth welfare authorities hold general nationwide responsibility for all children whose best interests and welfare are jeopardized.

The participants of the Working Group took note of the fact that it represented a challenge to youth welfare authorities to determine the correct point in time when private/familial responsibility ended. One participant stated that *“the borderline between the child’s right to a family and the principles of youth welfare as well as the point in time when care by third parties becomes necessary is often not clearly defined”*.

With a view to the definition of forced labour (including begging, theft and prostitution), participants found that unfair practices were often commonly accepted by society (even in Germany, for instance, an hourly wage of one euro is admissible under certain circumstances). Moreover, it is difficult to determine which cases can actually be classified as child labour – are begging or the selling of flowers to be considered child labour? Age limits are interpreted in different manners: often only children and adolescents below the age of criminal responsibility (i.e. younger than 14) are considered to be victims of child trafficking, while all those who are older than 14 and younger than 18 are not.

Holistic cross-departmental policies – relevant cooperation at the national and international levels

The Working Group participants agreed that the following players/stakeholders played a relevant role in the field of child trafficking:

- Authorities: police authorities (Federal Criminal Intelligence Service; criminal police, aliens’ police), asylum authorities, youth welfare authorities (taking account of the differentiation between public and private authorities and the fact that they report to the governing authorities of nine federal provinces), the Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs (including embassies

and consular offices), the Federal Ministry of Defence regarding activities/operations in crisis regions) and judicial authorities;

- NGOs: Care/support organisations like LEFÖ-IBF (Intervention Centre for Migrant Women Affected by Human Trafficking), Exit, institutions offering psychological services;
- International organisations like IOM and national representations of international organisations like ECPAT Austria and UNICEF Austria;
- Victims and their families/parents ;
- Perpetrators and beneficiaries (the victims' clients);
- Research institutions;
- The media;
- Institutions active in the field of data protection.

National Referral Mechanism (NRM; national care/support and coordination system)

With a view to a NRM, the participants of the Working Group agreed that it was necessary to clearly specify and determine responsibilities and cover gaps, overlaps and grey areas. Cooperation among care/support facilities was essential in this context. From the NGO point of view it would make sense to define uniform nationwide responsibilities in order to improve the provision of assistance to victims. To this end it would be necessary to establish a coordination centre. The Task Force on Human Trafficking and the Working Group on Child Trafficking established under the Task Force on Human Trafficking are important instruments with a view to coordination and information.

Cooperation within the relevant authorities both at the national and the international levels is key to identifying potential victims of child trafficking. NGO representatives called for further developing and expanding the existing cooperation schemes between the Federal Ministry of the Interior and youth welfare authorities as well as Lefö (for girls older than 16).

From the NGO point of view it would be necessary to further expand the provision of health care services as well as the offer in the fields of board and lodging, education and employment opportunities, comparable to the relevant support offered to child refugees.

Positive mention was made of the smooth cooperation between the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the *Drehscheibe*, other social service institutions and international organisations, foreign embassies and ministries as well as youth welfare authorities in the countries of origin.