

Future of the Cross-border Family Mediators network

Proposal for a strategic plan 2018-2022

> Background

The Cross-border Family Mediators (CBFM) network brings together family mediators from Europe and beyond, trained to deal with cross-border family conflicts. The network was launched in 2012 by the Belgian NGO Child Focus and the German NGO Mediation bei internationalen Kindschafskonflikten (MiKK), with the support of the Dutch Centre for International Child Abduction, in the framework of an EU funded project. The network is based on a training and crossborder family mediation model developed in cooperation with the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven.

The coordination of the network was handed over to Missing Children Europe in 2014. Missing Children Europe is the European Federation for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children which represents 30 organizations from 24 European countries. Missing Children Europe coordinates a network of hotlines for missing children, now operational in 29 countries through the same telephone number 1 16 000. 37% of the cases handled by the hotlines for missing children in 2014 were cases of parental abductions. 60% of these cases were cross-border in nature.

As permanent members of the Task Force, MiKK as well as Child Focus, still play an important role in the preparation of the policy and activities of CBFM.

More information on the network is available at www.missingchildreneurope.eu.

> Aim and objectives of the Cross-border Family Mediators' Network

The **general aim** of the Cross-border Family Mediators' network is to facilitate wider knowledge, acceptance and implementation of mediation in cases of international child abduction and to implement integrated mediation structures. The Cross-border Family Mediators' network acts in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular article 3 on the best interest of the child, and article 9 on the right to contact with both parents.

The following **specific objectives** are defined as a priority for the work of the network in 2018 - 2022, building on achievements of previous years and in accordance with the strategic programme of Missing Children Europe:

1. Ensuring quality of mediation networks;
2. Increasing the number of pre-mediation offices in Europe;
3. Raising awareness on mediation in international child abduction cases;
4. Increase the number of countries in which judges are legally obliged to propose mediation
5. Increase the % of hotline cases of international child abduction going through mediation;
6. Increasing the voice of children in cases of international child abduction in court and in mediation.



> Envisaged actions to achieve set objectives

1. Ensuring quality of mediation networks

To consolidate the work of the network, we must work on assuring a high quality offer for all parents who wish to rely on network mediators to help them resolve their conflict. Specific actions to achieve this objective will include:

- Train EU mediators of the network;
- Helping to set up a global mediation network structure: defining membership criteria and identifying appropriate members;
- Support efforts to facilitate mediation in immigration cases.

2. Increasing the number of Pre-Mediation offices in Europe

- Assess pilots and expand the model to other countries;
- Support advocacy on national level to provide funding and programme support for Pre-Mediation offices;
- Generate public awareness towards mediation

3. Raising awareness on mediation in international child abduction cases

-Establish partnerships with professionals who have direct contact with the general public and can act as intermediaries to generate awareness (e.g. of mediation and on importance of reacting at an early stage

4. Increase number of countries in which judges are legally obliged to propose mediation

- Advocate on a European level (BXL IIa recast);
- Organize trainings of liaison judges, other interested judges and Central Authorities.

5. Increase percentage of hotline cases of international child abduction going through mediation

- Set up pre-mediation process and train hotlines to provide such services;
- Include the metric of % of hotline cases going through mediation in the annual data collection of hotlines.

6. Increase the voice of children in cases of international child abduction in court and in mediation

- Develop research report on the wellbeing of children in judicial proceedings of parental child abductions cases;
- Organize training of hearing voice of children in mediation and in court procedures;
- Hold conference to disseminate research and toolkit.