



## **SOUTHEASTERN EUROPEAN CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN (SEEC)**

### **ACTION PLAN 2015**

Athens, January 2015

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#### **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This Action Plan is the fifth annual Action Plan of The Southeastern European Center for Missing and Exploited Children (SEEC), which purpose is to establish an overall direction to guide SEEC in 2015.

The Action Plan is in line with the SEEC Action Plans for the last four years, comprising both continuation of the activities undertaken during this period and those aimed at further development of SEEC.

SEEC works in close cooperation with its main partners - US based International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (ICMEC) and Missing Children Europe (MCE).

MCE – SEEC Common action plan 2015 foresees common activities of MCE and SEEC in 2015, which are listed below in the paragraph Development in 2015 – Planned Activities.

SEEC operates under the hub of the Greek NGO "The Smile of the Child", a board member at ICMEC, which has been active in the field of child rights protection since 1995.

#### **2. MISSION & VISION**

SEEC's mission is to generate co-operative actions, improving, sharing and expanding best practices between all relevant stakeholders from Southeastern Europe in order to efficiently combat the growing problem of missing and exploited children.

SEEC vision is to create a safe environment within the region of Southeastern Europe where children:

- will not disappear
- will not be exploited in any way, regardless of their country of origin, the country of transit or the country of their final destination

In the focus of SEEC's activities are the following countries: Albania, FYROM, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, Ukraine, Moldova, Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Cyprus, Slovenia and Greece.

### **3. OBJECTIVES**

SEEC's key objectives in addressing the specific needs of the Southeastern European region are:

- Applying common and effective approaches to deal with the existing problems of missing and exploited children and child trafficking, and furthermore to introduce and apply mechanisms to improve cross-border cooperation and coordination.
- Supporting the incorporation of the 116 000 - the European hotline number for missing children and the establishment of emergency public broadcasting systems (according to the model of AMBER Alert system) in all Southeastern European (SEE) countries, as well as encouraging cooperation between and among these systems.
- Encouraging the establishment of National Centres for missing and exploited children.
- Playing a leading role and advocating the protection of children's rights in the region.

More specifically, SEEC's objectives include:

- Providing training and technical assistance to law enforcement and other organizations entrusted with the protection of children.
- Advocating ratification and implementation of the international Conventions with respect to child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, trafficking of children, internet crimes against children and children's rights.
- Encouraging the adoption of bilateral and multilateral agreements to ensure the safe repatriation of children to their countries of origin, and working towards stopping the process of arbitrary child deportation.
- Reviewing existing systems and policies, and use this review to work with government officials and policy leaders in order to improve regional cooperation in the field of child exploitation and child trafficking in particular.
- Promoting the adoption of formal cooperation agreements between governments, NGOs, law enforcement, and other public agencies, and encouraging the appointment of liaison officers between and among these institutions.
- Reviewing laws and policies in the SEE region with a particular focus on identifying and addressing the gaps and loopholes impeding effective prosecution of child exploitation cases and child trafficking in particular.
- Working with national, regional and international public and private stakeholders to harmonize the collection of data and statistics on child exploitation and child trafficking in particular.
- Encouraging agencies with existing databases to share information gathered about exploited and trafficked children, as well as information regarding the consumers of these illegal enterprises.
- Undertaking the gathering of improved data and statistics in order to better profile the problem and to introduce new or even modify existing models and best practices in the respected field.

- Working to eliminate the profitability of commercial child sexual exploitation by following the flow of money and shutting the illegal enterprises down.
- Encouraging implementation of existing best practices and model protocols regarding border controls and procedures to interdict child trafficking, and develop additional best practices and model protocols as necessary.
- Working in a collaborative way to attack the demand for trafficking and exploitation, and expand the legal tools available to hold customers accountable.
- Developing a system for evaluating the services and effectiveness of NGOs from the region, working to combat child sexual exploitation.

#### 4. PARTNERSHIPS

##### THE SMILE OF THE CHILD

SEEC currently operates under the hub of the Greek NGO "The Smile of the Child".

"The Smile of the Child " ([www.hamogelo.gr](http://www.hamogelo.gr)) is a Greek NGO which has been active in the field of protection of children's rights since 1995, providing wide range of services for children in need 24 hours per day, 365 days a year.

##### ICMEC

Since its inception, SEEC has been developing close partnership with the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children ([www.icmec.org](http://www.icmec.org)), the US based organization with the leading role at global level in fighting problems of child disappearance and exploitation.

##### MISSING CHILDREN EUROPE - MCE

SEEC cooperates closely with Missing Children Europe – MCE, Brussels based umbrella organization of NGOs active in the field of combating the phenomena of missing children, on a basis of annual common action plans.

##### EPLO

"The Smile of the Child" has signed a cooperation agreement with the Athens-based European Public Law Organization – EPLO, aimed at strengthening already existing cooperation in the field of combating trafficking in children in the region, particularly within the scope of SEEC further development.

##### FRENCH MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

"The Smile of the Child" has signed a cooperation agreement with the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs which provides support for further development of SEEC.

#### 5. OVERVIEW OF ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2011, 2012, 2013 AND 2014

- Initial partnerships were established with respective national stakeholders, both government and NGOs, in Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Romania, Ukraine and Turkey.
- SEEC advocated for the expansion of the 116000 - European Hotline Number for Missing Children in the following SEE countries: Serbia, Croatia, Bulgaria, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine and Turkey. To this end, numerous consultations with relevant national stakeholders in these countries took place,

as well as 9 on-sight visits were conducted by SEEC representatives in 6 regional countries (Serbia, Croatia, Bulgaria, FYROM, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina), where joint meetings with representatives from relevant government institutions and leading NGOs were held.

- The concrete result that came out from these activities is successful implementation of the 116 000 hotline in Serbia as of July 2012, in Croatia as of May 2013, and in Ukraine through mobile networks as of October 2014.
- 4 study visits to Athens, including introductory trainings on operational aspects of the 116 000 hotline were organized: in February 2012 for the Serbian NGO ASTRA; in July 2012 for the consortium of two NGOs from Cyprus; in September 2013 for the Croatian NGO Center for Missing and Exploited Children; and in December 2013 for the NGO Magnolia from Ukraine. The trainings were provided by "The Smile of the Child" 116 000 team.
- Upon SEEC initiative, there are ongoing processes for the implementation of the 116000 hotline in Montenegro, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Turkey. SEEC provides the partnering national NGOs which carry out respective activities at national level with all necessary technical assistance, as well as other support needed.
- Involvement in the EU projects: SEEC participates in the EU-funded project VICTOR - Victims of Child Trafficking – Our Responsibility. VICTOR project is coordinated by "The Smile of the Child" in a strong partnership of 15 stakeholders from 7 different countries of Southeastern Europe. VICTOR activities started in June 2013, and the project will end on March 31, 2015.

#### PROJECT VICTOR OBJECTIVES

1. Promoting and developing coordination, cooperation and mutual understanding among law enforcement agencies, other national authorities and civil society in combating trafficking in children;
2. Improving situation in the field of identification of children victims/possible victims of trafficking by training of actors likely to come into contact with them
3. Stepping up prevention of trafficking in children through awareness raising activities targeting vulnerable groups of children at risk

#### PROJECT VICTOR ACTIVITIES

1. Trainings for actors working in fields where they are most likely to come into contact with children victims/potential victims of THB (law enforcement, health care workers, judiciary, labour inspectors, NGOs).
2. Information desks on Child Trafficking, a pilot NGO in-house model, for a period of 6 months, operational in four countries.
3. Workshops aimed at organizing and evaluating the pilot work of information desks, as well as developing recommendations for EU Guidelines for the identification of victims of child trafficking.
4. Raising awareness campaigns: in countries of origin-addressed to potential children victims; in countries of destination, aimed at reducing of demand and designed to address potential "clients".
5. Networking activities-creation of a website and development of Southeastern European Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (SEEC), promotion of a project's publicity material through local networks.

- SEE Forum “Missing Children in the Context of Child Trafficking”, organized on May 8-9 2014 in Thessaloniki, Greece

The Forum was organized by SEEC and The Smile of the Child, under the auspices of the Hellenic Presidency to the Council of the European Union, with the support of ICMEC and the US Embassy in Athens. It was focused on the phenomena of missing children and child trafficking, and the links between the two in particular.

Specific issues discussed at the Forum were:

- the vulnerability of children who runaway from home or institution in the light of their exposure to traffickers
- missing unaccompanied migrant minors as victims or potential victims of trafficking
- role and presence of the 116000 European hotline number for missing children in the EU , its expansion to the SEE and a transfer of the 116000 hotline services to the field of fighting THB

The Forum gathered more than 90 participants from around 50 both governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as international stakeholders (OSCE, CoE, IOM). It provided the stakeholders from SEE with an opportunity to exchange good practices, as well as to join their efforts and strengthen regional cooperation in the field.

Final document of the event, the *Thessaloniki Forum Recommendations*, reflects participants’ commitment to continue common work, as well as to encourage involvement of all the other relevant actors across the region, with an aim to better respond to the phenomena of missing children, child exploitation and child trafficking in particular in the region of SEE and beyond.

*Thessaloniki Forum Recommendations* document forms integrated part of this Action Plan.

- Participation in a number of national, regional and international conferences and other events where the topics related to missing children, child exploitation and child trafficking were covered, amongst other:

- OSCE Alliance Against Trafficking in Persons meeting in Vienna, October 2012 and June 2013
- UNODC sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNCTOC, October 2012, Vienna
- The Council of Europe, in partnership with the National Commission for Combating HB of Bulgaria International Conference on expert level on combating THB, Sofia, December, 2012
- EU Platform against THB meetings in Brussels, May and December 2013
- EC Annual Conference on Missing Children in Brussels, June 2013
- Regional Implementation Initiative on THB of the Austrian Institute for International Affairs – Dialog forum in Vienna, June 2013
- Regional Conference Combating THB in SEE: For a better protection of children, jointly organized by French and Moldovan authorities in Chisinau, Moldova, October 8 - 9 2013
- First conference of the European Financial Coalition against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Online in Brussels, October 2013
- CoE and OSCE Conference on THB Not for Sale, Vienna, February 2014
- Final conference of the EU funded project “CONNECT: Identifying good practices in, and improving, the connections between actors involved in reception, protection and integration of unaccompanied children in Europe”, Brussels, June 2014
- Day of General Discussion of the Committee on the Rights of the Child “Digital Media and Children’s Rights”, Geneva, September 2014
- Global Missing Children Network Conference, Warnsveld, Holland, December 2014

## 6. DEVELOPMENT IN 2015 – PLANNED ACTIVITIES

- Following up initiated processes of the 116000 European hotline for missing children implementation in FYROM, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova and Turkey
- Working with national stakeholders to extend the implementation of the 116000 hotline in Ukraine through landlines, as it is currently operational only through mobile networks
- Conducting on sight visits for holding meetings with national stakeholders, namely:
  1. with regards to implementation of the 116000 hotline - in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldova
  2. with regards to establishing a child alert system – in Serbia and Croatia

Undertaking this activity will be subject to the needs of respective ongoing processes for the 116000 hotline implementation and establishment of a child alert system in designated countries, respectively. Should the need arise for on sight visits to regional countries that are not mentioned above, a possibility of organizing these visits will be explored.

- Organizing 3 study visits including trainings for partnering NGOs from 3 different SEE countries (expectedly: Slovenia, Montenegro, FYROM), on the operational aspects of the 116000 hotline and/or on best practices in dealing with missing children cases. The visits will be hosted at “The Smile of the Child” and the trainings will be provided by its 116000 hotline team.
- Working with regional governments, law enforcement, NGOs and all other relevant stakeholders to fulfill the objectives set up in *Thessaloniki Forum Recommendations*.
- Expanding implementation of VICTOR info – desks in the countries of Southeastern Europe and further at the European level. VICTOR info –desks serve to raise awareness on THB and child trafficking in particular, as well as to provide general public, vulnerable communities and actors who are likely to come in contact of children victims/possible victims of trafficking with relevant information about the phenomenon.
- Implementing MCE – SEEC common activities, foreseen for the MCE – SEEC Common action plan 2015. Specific emphasize will be given to the following activities:
  1. Considering possibilities of providing assistance and/or working together with actors active in Ukraine in the field of protection of children and their rights, taking into account current situation in the country. Particular focus will be given to the problems of missing children, child exploitation and child trafficking.
  2. Organizing a round table in Croatia to raise awareness on the existence and services of the 116000 European hotline number for missing children in the country, aimed at achieving its full recognition by respective government authorities and developing solid cooperation among all actors at national level.
  3. Reinforcing joint efforts to implement the 116000 European hotline number for missing children in Moldova.
- Participating in the final phase of implementation of VICTOR project. The project will end by March 31 and the work for further expansion of VICTOR info – desks, a new tool introduced as a pilot activity in VICTOR, will follow.

- Participating, as an associate partner, in the implementation of the project in Turkey: *Strengthening existing child rights networks to act as a movement to amplify the voices of children - linking international to national and local*. The project coordinator is SEEC partner in Turkey, ICC – International Children’s Center. The project will start in January 2015 with a foreseen duration of 30 months.
- Participating in the ICMEC’s global Missing Children Research Project for the region of Southeastern Europe, by taking an active part in preparing a final draft of the regional report, as well as by undertaking a verification process for the report.
- Developing further already established as well as initiating new partnerships at regional and European level.
- Exploring funding possibilities at the EU and other available resources and submitting project proposals accordingly.

## 7. EVALUATION

The evaluation of the SEEC Action Plan 2015 and its elements will be taken upon its completion. Actions taken will be internally reviewed and evaluated monthly.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Further initiating, encouraging and coordinating regional actions among all relevant stakeholders, in order to improve situation in addressing the problem of missing children, child exploitation and child trafficking in particular in the countries of Southeastern Europe, as well as in a wider international context, will remain SEEC highest priority in 2015.

Specific emphasize in 2015 will be given to:

1. Activities related to finalizing the processes of establishing the 116000 - European hotline for missing children in Montenegro and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia primarily, as well as in the other countries where this process is ongoing.
2. Expanding implementation of VICTOR info – desks in the countries of Southeastern Europe.

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