European Crime Prevention Award (ECPA)

Annex I – new version 2015

Please complete the template in English in compliance with the ECPA criteria contained in the RoP (Par.2 §3).

General information

1. Please specify your country.

Belgium

2. Is this your country's ECPA entry or an additional project?

This is Belgium's additional project.

3. What is the title of the project?

FORM A CHAIN TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN

4. Who is responsible for the project? Contact details.

Dries Wyckmans, Province of Limburg, dries.wyckmans@limburg.be, +32 11 23 80 46

5. Start date of the project (dd/mm/yyyy)? Is the project still running (Yes/No)? If not, please provide the end date of the project.

Start date: 01/06/2013. The project is still running.

6. Where can we find more information about the project? Please provide links to the project's website or online reports or publications (preferably in English).

All information, reports and publications can be found at www.formachain.eu.

7. Please give a **one page** description of the project (**Max. 600 words)**

The blended learning course 'Form A Chain To Safeguard Children' focuses on guidance and training among law enforcement officers and other key agencies on how to collaborate successfully to safeguard children exposed to various forms of (online) violence, exploitation and abuse. It equips them with the necessary knowledge and skills in order for them to better know how to respond and to collaborate more effectively.

Creating these blended learning modules went beyond the mere addition of a piece of technology to replace the existing contact education. It involved the fundamental rethinking of the method of teaching, by searching for the most appropriate combination of online and offline activities to support the various learning activities.

This blended learning course addresses the different types of child abuse. But it prominently examines several manifestations that we are encountering increasingly frequently, such as forms of 'cybercrime' that affect children and young people, like cyberbullying or the abuse of personal data.

Using the Internet is an inherent part of a young person's daily life. What's more, children are using the Internet at an increasingly young age. The increasing presence of young people and children on the Internet offers a great many new opportunities. However, Internet use also involves a number of risks. Some online experiences can even be potentially harmful. Examples of this include viewing sexual images or pornography, receiving or sending sexual messages (sexting), cyberbullying, meeting online contacts offline, exposure to harmful messages or the abuse of personal data.

The aim of this blended learning course is to inform professionals about these types of child abuse in an appealing, interactive manner and to provide them with guidelines for prevention purposes, and for coping with them in a possibly multidisciplinary manner. We consider definitions, signals and the effects of each type, but there is also room for the trainees' personal input. It is precisely the experiences of people in the field that make this course so effective.

The programme includes individual as well as group tasks and group discussions in which the trainees' opinions and experiences are key. We work on knowledge transfer, reflection and awareness using all kinds of (multimedia) tasks. The technical architecture of the blended learning course has been developed in such a way that it can be used by multidisciplinary groups and by different target groups in different Member States. The state of the art content management system even enables different users/organisations to manage their own modules and keep them up to date, and they can even build brand new modules.

I. **The project shall focus on prevention and/or reduction of everyday crime and fear of crime within the theme.**

8. How does the project contribute to crime prevention and/or to the reduction of crime or the fear of crime? (**Max. 150 words**)

We know from research that families, and especially children and young people, are more likely to be safeguarded from (online) abuse if professionals are structurally and regularly trained in:
- Having a better understanding of the violence & abuse
- Recognizing key signs
- Knowing how to respond
- Knowing how to successfully collaborate.

Promoting skills and training for professionals involved in child abuse and more particularly forms of 'cybercrime' that affect children and young people, is essential, especially when implementing new legal frameworks and entering into multidisciplinary collaboration partnerships. A great many Member States provide training courses related to (online) child abuse, but only a minority of Member States provide compulsory training for actors such as the police, public prosecution services and judges.

9. How is the project contributing to raising citizens' awareness of crime prevention? (**Max. 150 words**)

When citizens are confronted with (online forms of) child abuse they are moved to the very depths of their soul. Yet they often find it difficult to talk about it. Sometimes it even appears easier to say nothing and ignore what is really happening. While people look the other way, the child continues to endure his/her painful secret. The only thing a child can do is to give out signals to show that something is wrong. These signal need to picked up!

If these signals are not picked up by adults the secret simply becomes harder and more painful to bear. Of course, it is not always easy to recognise such signs, not for ordinary citizens, even not for professionals. This blended learning course aims to provide them with guidelines for learning how to prevent, identify and recognise the issue of (online forms of) child abuse in all its forms. We also hope to provide a guiding light for learning how to cope with it.

II. **The project shall have been evaluated and have achieved most or all of its objectives.[1]**

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[1] For more information on evaluation, see Guidelines on the evaluation of crime prevention initiatives (EUCPN Toolbox No.3): http://www.eucpn.org/library/results.asp?category=32&pubdate

10. What was the reason for setting up the project? What problem(s) did it aim to tackle?

Being exposed to or being a victim of violence is especially damaging to an extremely vulnerable group: children. Children are beaten, neglected, abused, humiliated and ignored etc. And this at home, a place where children should feel safe, secure and loved, but also at school, in youth and sports associations, in circles of friends and **increasingly online**. This violence has a major impact. Children that are victims or witnesses of abuse run a risk of growing up to become offenders or victims themselves.

For those children who are identified as being at risk of, or suffering, it is essential that their needs are comprehensively assessed and that they are provided with good interventions. That's why it is our duty to develop an approach that is as consistent and coordinated as possible to prevent and stop (online) child abuse. Also to increase the protective factors in families and children so that we can prevent new incidents of violence from occurring.

Practical experience, as well as an increasing amount of research, points to the importance of effective collaboration for handling serious and complex offences of (online forms of) child abuse. In this respect each service - with joint responsibility and with the same goal in mind - fulfils its role in the overall approach.

Naturally, this is easier said than done. Because you are bringing together services with a different culture, different organisational objectives, authorities, work processes and financial resources. And while there is lip service paid to the importance of collaboration, there seems to be little guidance and few training opportunities to make these complicated processes work. Moreover, current training programmes are most often not designed for online abuse, nor with the specific needs of children in mind.

This blended learning course will therefore help to continue working towards an optimal chain approach to child abuse, as it equips law enforcement officers and other agencies with the necessary knowledge and skills in order for them to better know how to respond and to collaborate more effectively with those from other professions.

The role of law enforcement officers in safeguarding children is traditionally regarded as enforcement, but they and their multi-agency partners also make a very significant contribution to preventing these offenses from occurring in the first place. We need to provide all these agencies with sufficient tools, such as training, to be more responsive and accountable at a local, national and international level.

11. Was the context analysed **before** the project was initiated? How, and by whom? Which data were used? (**Max. 150 words**)

The Belgian and European contexts were thoroughly analysed by the project coordinators of the Province of Limburg, and the scientific research team of the University College Thomas More.

For the Belgian context we analysed the curricula of the Flemish training institutes for law enforcement professionals. On the other hand we conducted semi-structured interviews with trainers and specialised and not specialised law enforcement professionals.

For the European context we mainly used the European 'Feasibility study to assess the possibilities, opportunities and needs to standardize national legislation on violence against women, violence against children and sexual orientation violence' (Hageman-White, C., Kelly, L. & Römkens, R, 2011). The results of this study suggest that training is not installed on a regular basis nor ensured for all who need it, but tends to be sporadic or offered on a voluntary basis.

12. What were the objective(s) of the project? Please, if applicable, distinguish between main and secondary objectives. (**Max. 150 words**)

As a main objective, 'Form A Chain To Safeguard Children' wants to support a more effective joint approach to safeguard children from (online) abuse, by law enforcement officers and other agencies.

Objective 1: To offer guidance on how to collaborate effectively to safeguard children, also on international level, by providing a conceptual framework for multi-agency collaboration and by translating that framework into practical information.

Objective 2: To offer training via a blended learning course, that will equip law enforcement officers with the knowledge and skills to work more effectively with those from other professions. The training also wants to equip them with a higher level of expertise about the various (online) types of violence, exploitation and abuse.

Objective 3: To offer an online environment as a content management system, a platform of practice and for information sharing and case management, in order to describe the results concerning the content and process and to enrich fragmented information.

13. Did you build in internal goals to measure the performance of the project? If so, please describe at what stage of the project and how you measured whether the project was moving in the planned direction. (**Max. 150 words**)

The project delivery took 24 months, divided in 5 stages/phases: research & analysis (force field analysis, needs assessment, inventory and analysis of good practices, key steps, conditions), development, testing & implementation, evaluation and dissemination.

The project coordinators have managed the project very strictly throughout each stage, in order to stay on track. They didn't encounter any major problems or difficulties during the implementation of the project activities. The activities were almost always carried out as planned. Some partners did need a very strict follow-up. Therefore the project coordinators made clear agreements with the different project partners about for example the translation of the texts or the testing of the blended learning modules, so that the foreseen timing could be achieved.

Subsequently all of the planned goals/activities were achieved:
1. Preparation and project management
2. Establishment and follow-up steering committee
3. Coordination, cooperation and exchange (on a national & European level)
4. Scientific research and analysis
5. Development of the guide
6. Development of the blended learning modules
      6.1 Development concerning content
      6.2 Technical development
7. Translation of the blended learning modules & guide
8. Development of the online applications
9. Implementation & testing of the blended learning modules
10. Evaluation of the blended learning modules
11. Dissemination

14. Has there been a process evaluation? Who conducted the evaluation (internally or externally?) and what where the main results? (**max. 300 words) -** *for more information on process evaluation, see EUCPN Toolbox No.3, p.9-10 & part 2 - section 2A*

Yes. From the start of the project, we have built in an internal process evaluation, as a framework for evaluation and self-assessment. An internal team has guarded the progress of the project. The project coordinators reported on a 3-monthly basis to an external Steering Committee, that monitored the project implementation and delivery.

• All activities were delivered in time and as intended (see answer above).
• The target groups are being reached. Particularly law enforcement officers, professionals in judicial and social services and administrators – and their training institutions - benefited directly from the project. On a client level, children who are at risk and/or are exposed to (online) abuse, violence and exploitation and

their families will benefit directly and indirectly from the blended learning course.

• The engagement and satisfaction of the trainees about the course, the trainer and the facilities was measured by a built-in online questionnaire after each module (+/- 15 questions). All questions received a score of 4.1 to 4.4 out of a possible 5 (N = 615). Some of the feedback:

- o "Provide these courses widely among professionals."
- o "Provide such courses also for school teachers and educators."
- o "Easy way to learn complex and serious themes."
- o "Professionals must meet at one table to learn from each other. Thank you!"
- o "Structured, clear and interesting!"

• All initial trainers were appropriately trained at a 2-day train-the-trainer course.

• Because of all the training materials that have been developed since (trainer manual for each module + technical manual) the train-the-trainer course only takes half a day or less, or is, in certain cases, not necessary anymore.

• The blended learning course, its guidance and its technical architecture and content management system is, according to Belgian experts in training (among others Prof Dr Koen Depryck, Department of Educational Sciences, VUB), cutting edge material.

• The blended learning course has recently even been included as best practice in the Belgian national action plan on violence.

15. Has there been an <u>outcome or impact evaluation</u>? Who conducted the evaluation (internally or externally?), which data and evaluation method where used and what were the main results? (**Max. 300 words**) *- for more information on outcome or impact evaluation, see EUCPN Toolbox No.3, p.7-9 & part 2 - section 2A*

The research team of the University College Thomas More (Mrs Anke Van Vossole & Dr Anne Groenen) was – until 6 months after the implementation of the blended learning modules in the 8 participating regions - responsible for the measuring of the performance (impact and results) of the project. Focus was among others on the extent to which the training is contributing to improving knowledge and skills. They used the online questionnaires (N = 615), did pre- and post-tests (N = 120), did focus groups with trainers and trainees (N = 6), …

Main results of the impact evaluation:

• In the short term:

- o "Increased knowledge of the forms, signals and the great many factors (related to the parent, child, relationship between the parent and the child, the family and the environment) that can form a risk or a buffer to abuse, and especially online abuse."

- o "Increased knowledge about how to respond and how to collaborate

more effectively."

- o "Being better able to recognize violence on the Internet, including the role of collaboration and sharing information and experiences."

- o "An impetus on the development of new partnerships & effective joint working to safeguard children and their families in the Belgian Province of Limburg and in the participating 7 municipalities / regions, (by taking small steps forward and by making use of the practical high-quality tools that were developed (the blended learning modules, the guide/book, the online applications…))."

- o "A better understanding of the emotional effects of online abuse on children."

- Expected results in the medium term:

- o "A further transfer and securing throughout Europe of the different tools & processes that have been developed within this project."

- o "The application of the tools in more European Member States."

- o "The beginning of a European (online) 'community of practice'."

- o "The analysis and experimentation within the project will lead to common guidelines and training, and to recommendations for models, protocols, structures, ... The lessons learned from this project will be able to feed into European debate and have a broader European relevance."

- Expected results in the long term:

- o "A better and more successful preventive, curative and repressive approach and multi-agency collaboration in tackling child abuse and domestic violence in different Member States, with structural training of all relevant professionals and with more evidence-based interventions (like the chain approach in the Limburg region), because the benefits to be gained from such an approach and joint cooperation should not be underestimated (experience and research show that effective multi-agency collaboration is essential), as it can empower children and their families, make them safe, recognize their diverse needs…"

III. The project shall, as far as possible, be innovative, involving new methods or new approaches.

16. How is the project innovative in its methods and/or approaches? (**Max. 150 words**)

The project gives more insight into the functioning of chain processes and into

how you can apply these processes to collaborate with partner organizations. Different multi-agency scenarios and several examples of good practice are given.

The project uses blended learning. Blended learning encompasses all forms of learning supported by a combination of online and face-to-face means. It is an educational approach that combines the social aspect and the effectiveness of the classic campus learning with opportunities for student-centered and (inter)active learning in the online environment.

The blended training and online applications are based on a user-centred design (UCD). This is a type of user interface design and a process in which the needs, wants and limitations of end users of a product are given extensive attention at each stage of the design process.

During the training, participants have been building and maintaining an online community (open source). In this way, the online learning is extra supported and the participants can communicate and share information with each other and with experts online. The use of this social media is constructed according to the 5 stage model of Dr Gilly Salmon.

The technical architecture of the blended learning course has been developed in such a way that it can be used by multidisciplinary groups and by different professions / target groups in different Member States. The state of the art content management system even enables different users/organisations to manage their own modules and keep them up to date, and they can even build brand new modules.

IV. **The project shall be based on cooperation between partners, where possible.**

18. Which partners or stakeholders were involved in the project and what was their involvement? (**Max. 200 words**)

The project was delivered by the Province of Limburg (BE) **(project management, development, implementation, evaluation and dissemination)**, in close collaboration with various experts from the Confidential Centre for Child Abuse & Neglect Limburg (BE) **(development and training)**, the Centre for General Welfare Limburg (BE) **(development and training)**, the Limburg local and federal police **(advice and testing)**, the Limburg Police School PLOT **(testing and training)**, the Limburg Office of the Public Prosecutor **(advice)**, the Research Group Education & ICT of the University Colleges Leuven Limburg (BE) **(technical development, didactics and training)**, the Province of Antwerp (BE) **(advice and guidance)**, the Province of Flemish Brabant **(testing)** and CARDET (CY) **(usability testing)**.

The blended learning modules were **tested and implemented** on a European level by the National Police (ES), the Victim Support Unit (HU), the Ministry of

Justice - Juvenile Justice Department (IT), the Children Support Center (LT), the Establishment Center Dardedze (LV), the Mutsaers Foundation (NL) and the Nobody's Children Foundation (PL).

V. The project shall be capable of replication in other Member States.

19. How and by whom is the project funded? (**Max. 150 words**)

The project has been funded with operating funds of the Department of Police, Security & Public Order of the Belgian Province of Limburg and with funds that were granted to the Province of Limburg through the European ISEC programme (HOME/2012/ISEC/FP/C2/4000003990).

20. What were the costs of the project in terms of finances, material and human resources? (**Max. 150 words**)

- Finances (subcontracting, translation in 11 languages, design, …): € 241 110,06

- Material, travel & indirect costs: € 46 336,61

- Human resources (see partners above) (project management, (technical) development, training, testing, implementation, evaluation and dissemination…): € 437 829,36

21. Has a cost-benefit analysis been carried out? If so, describe the analysis, including how and by whom it was carried out and list the main findings of the analysis. (**Max. 150 words**)

Yes. The cost-benefit analysis (CBA) has been carried out by the research team of the University College Thomas More (Mrs Anke Van Vossole & Dr Anne Groenen). They have tried to consider all gains and losses from the project. The CBA has forced a disciplined consideration of choices and has made hidden costs and benefits explicit, although a perfect appraisal of all present and future costs and benefits is always difficult and perfection in terms of economic efficiency and social welfare can of course not be guaranteed.

The CBA has resulted in us 'only' needing € 725 276,03 of the available funds (€ 826 247,92) to deliver the complete project. And above all, by designing the state of the art technical architecture and content management system, the costs of keeping the blended learning modules technically up-to-date after the implementation are fairly limited (+/- € 5000/year, that is being paid by the Department of Police, Security & Public Order of the Belgian Province of Limburg).

We are now looking into the possibilities of making a business plan for the blended learning modules; not to make a profit, but to widely disseminate the

training and guidance, to further optimize and develop the existing and possible new modules, to structurally implement the modules and to make the blended training sustainable and self-sufficient within a number of years.

22. Are there adjustments to be made to the project to ensure a successful replication in another Member State?

The success of implementing a multi-agency approach to tackle (online) child abuse is affected by local circumstances. So while the different phases and tips within the blended learning modules consist of overall principles of good practice, what works well in one area may be less effective elsewhere.

But on the other hand, the project results, especially the blended learning modules and guidance concerning multidisciplinary collaboration in tackling (online) child abuse, are without any problem transferable to other Member States and to other societal and crime related themes, i.e. to anyone or any organization who is interested in guidance and training concerning multi-agency collaboration to tackle societal and crime problems (community care, crime prevention, child abuse, multi-problem families, unemployment, homelessness, …); it might be interesting for any other people or agencies who are participating in a partnership, as it gives an idea of what can be achieved by working together and will help them to understand certain challenges and to develop solutions.

The technical architecture of the blended learning course has been developed in such a way that it can be used by multidisciplinary groups and by different professions / target groups in different Member States. It does so by offering the possibility of combining the 'general content' of each module (in 11 languages) with 'specific content' that can be added by new editors (www.formachain.eu – Documents - Technical Manual).

The state of the art content management system even enables different users/organisations to manage their own modules and keep them up to date, and they can even build brand new modules.

The guidance and both blended learning modules (Module 1: Child Abuse, Module 2: Collaborating In A Chain) have already been tested and implemented in 9 Member States and are available online in 11 languages (DE, EL, EN, ES, FR, HU, IT, LT, LV, NL & PL).

23. How is the project relevant for other Member States? Please explain the European dimension of your project.

Governments in Europe have for years been at the forefront of legal revision to take into account the rights of children to be protected from (online) abuse, exploitation and violence. Individual countries' law enforcement agencies

regularly exchange expertise and personnel, and bodies such as Europol take individual countries' experiences and use it for regional impact.

But in practice we see that on a local, national and international level, agencies are often still working in isolation from each other, resulting in fragmented, inefficient and expensive processes. Online images of abuse, trafficking, children exposed to all kinds of violence and abuse are just some of today's challenges which individual agencies and individual governments cannot address alone. Multi-agency working on a local level, but also working with other countries in the EU and beyond is essential to find common solutions, to experiment with good practices and to improve the safeguarding of children. Cooperation helps countries identify and analyse problems, find and apply common solutions, share data and expertise, combat impunity and improve prevention and protection measures.

Since several years, we have also been struggling with these issues. But inspired by the expertise we have gathered and by international good practices, this project can play an important in the above described context, by offering concrete guidance, training and online applications to facilitate (cross-border) collaboration. Key to this is gathering new knowledge, testing innovative training methods, analysing the results and sharing this with others in a spirit of learning and capacity building. Ongoing multi-agency training of law enforcement personnel – not just the specialised forces dealing with abuse, violence and exploitation – and other professionals is extremely important.

Please provide a short general description of the project (abstract for inclusion in the conference booklet – **max. 150 words**).

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multidisciplinary manner.