

Barnahus Iceland, few remark on the birth, genetic make up and proliferation in Europe

20th anniversary of Barnahus, Iceland,
Reykjavik, the 5th of September 2018
Bragi Guðbrandsson, former director general

Historical note

- Barnaverndarstofa (Gov. Agency Child Protection) set up in 1995
 - The overtly decentralized system of child protection, “dwarf communes”
- The Stockholm Congress in 1996
- The first study on the prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse interventions in Iceland
- The concept “Barnahus” born, referring to competence center addressing child sexual abuse nationwide

The Inspiration from Across the Atlantic

- The Children's Advocacy Center's Movement in the USA: Founded on the principles of child-friendly, multiagency and comprehensive services under one roof with the aim of avoiding re-victimization of child victims of sexual abuse and ensure effective prosecution of sexual perpetrators
- Barnahus firmly rooted in the principles of the evidence based components of the CAC model – the investigative interviews, medical examination and therapeutic intervention with the overt aim of integrating:
 - The US long tradition of investigative approach in child protection
 - The great legacy of the Nordic welfare model and the principles of the UN CRC

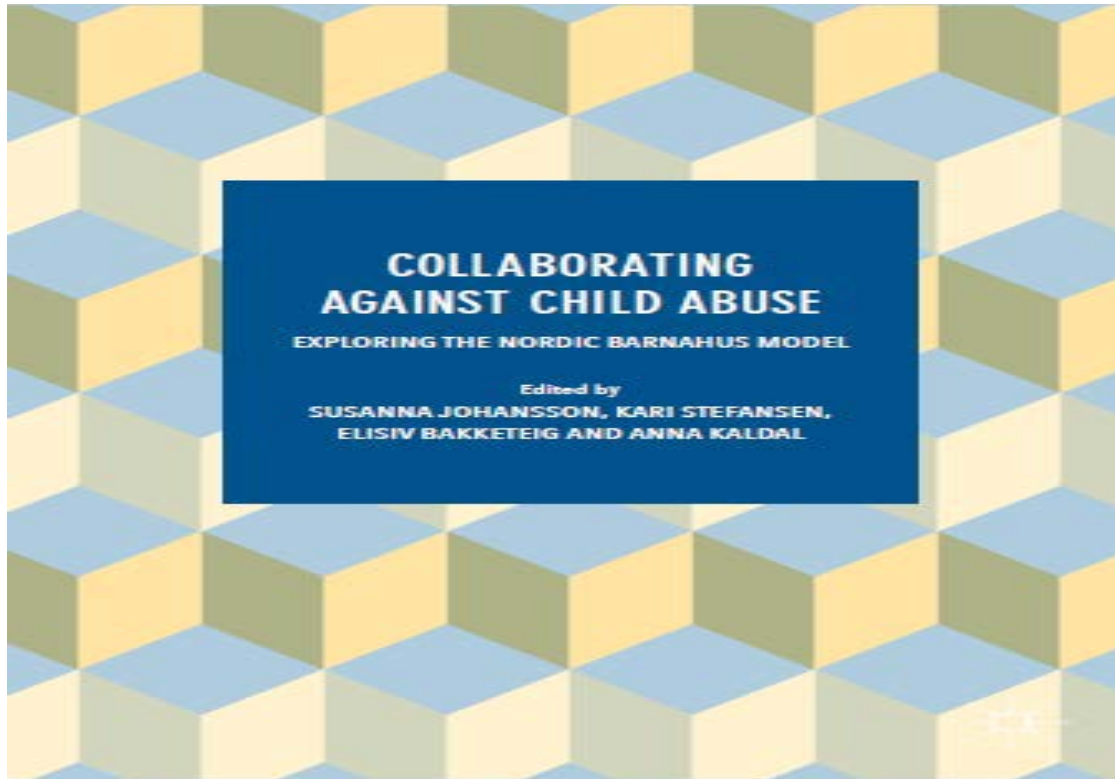
Novelty of Barnahus

- An integral feature of the public welfare services, delivered by the state, regional or local authority ensuring the rights of all child victims to quality services.
- Integrating the two human rights principles: the “best interest of the child” and the “due process”
 - An arrangement for eliciting and recording the child’s testimony under conditions required to ensure the “due process” by allowing for the representation of the defence as well as all the other relevant agencies
 - Avoiding the harmful effect on the child by repetitive interviews and having to testify again and/or being cross-examined in the courthouse during the court procedure if the case is prosecuted

Proliferation of Barnahus

- Barnahus has already become or is in the process of becoming an integral part of the Justice and welfare systems of most of the nordic and Baltic countries
- Barnahus is already in existence or taking off in many parts of Europe including countries such as Hungary, Cyprus, the Netherlands, the UK, Slovenia, Ukraine, Malta
- Barnahus in Europe: Diverse Path of coming into being as well as implementation
 - Governance, legislative framework, jurisprudence, responsibility of partners, even strategies in forensic interviews, medical examination and therapeutic services

The first Scientific publication on Barnahus, A Comparative Analysis on Diverse Implementation



A comparative analysis on the different implementation of Barnahus among the Nordic countries at the initiative of NOVA, the Norwegian Research Institute.

Published by Palgrave Oct. 2017

Can be downloaded for free:
<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007%2F978-3-319-58388-4?page=1#toc>

The **Promise** project and the European Barnahus Standards



- Developed by the EU supported **Promise** project launched 2015 and can be accessed online on the Children at Risk website of the CBSS: <http://www.cbss.org/safe-secure-region/eg-on-children-at-risk/>
- The first systemic attempt to establish quality standards for child-friendly, multi-agency response to child abuse in the European context
- Addresses the evidence based components of Barnahus including structured forensic interviews, medical examination and therapeutic services
- Ensuring necessary flexibility to allow for implementation in diverse social/legal environment with the necessary fidelity required for professional implementation

Barnahus

A Response to Child Abuse and Adult Justice

The real object may rather be to ensure a guilty verdict and **punish the perpetrator** rather than ensure the best interest of the child

- **Multiple interviews** in different locations and the corresponding re-victimization of the child-victim
 - Repeated interrogation within the justice system, in police stations and court settings adds to the traumatic experience
- The months, even years of **waiting for the trials**, with one or even more appeals, puts the life of the child victim at halt and constant distress
- **Hostile cross-examination**, intimidating and battering of the child-witness in an un-friendly environment
- Lack of appropriate **medical** and **therapeutic services** for the child victim and his/her family

The impact of the UN CRC

Development of convergence

- The **paradigm shift** generated by the UN CRC revolutionized our perception of the child as holders of rights
- The dynamic nature of the CRC as embodied in the “principle of the best interest of the child” has created international consensus on priorities and strategies in child welfare
- The “**operationalization**” of the CRC into diverse contexts of children’s live experiences has contributed to convergence of child protection systems

Talking the Talk

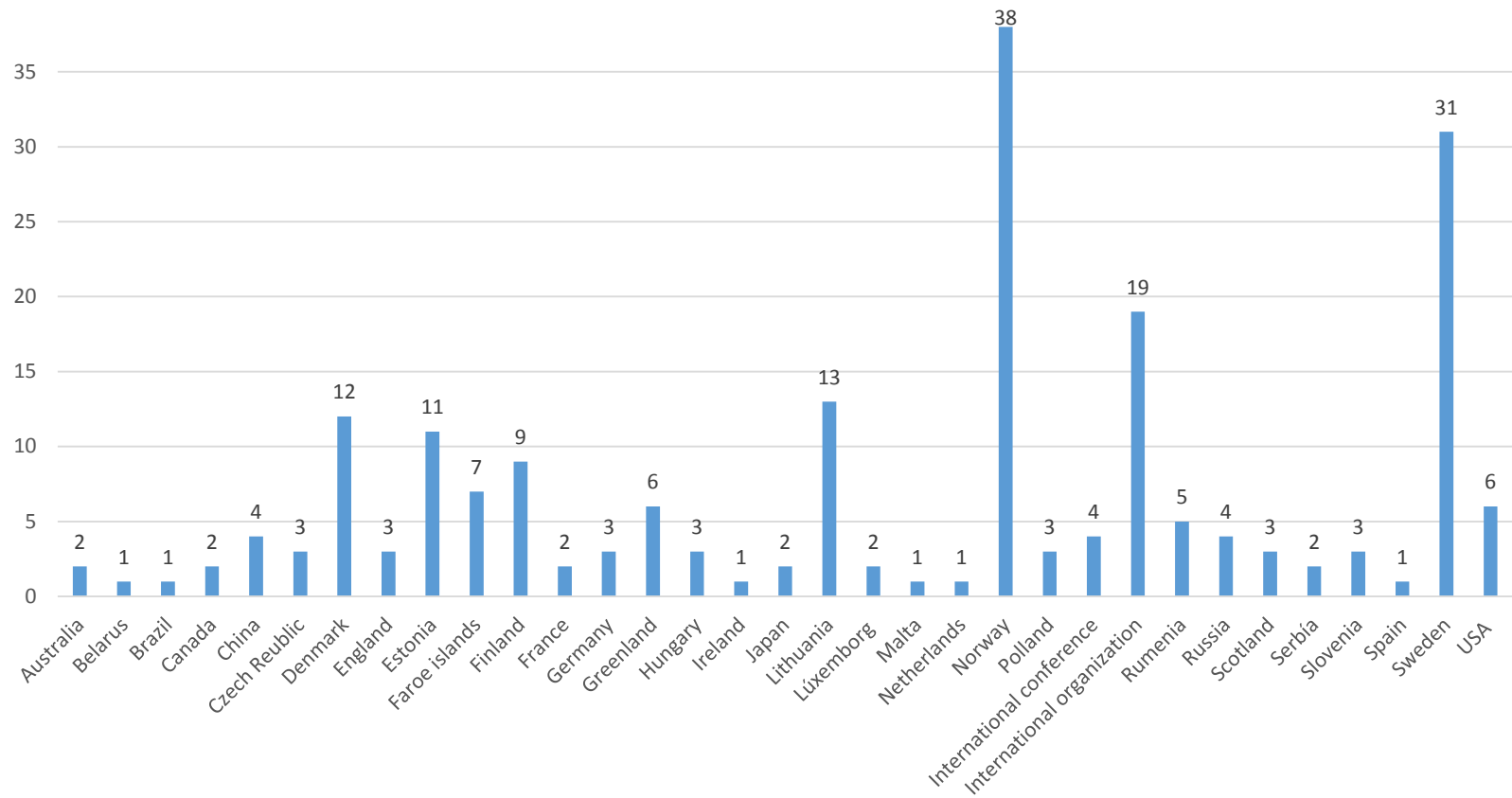
- The decline of traditional child protection models:
 - The “child rescue” response
 - The “family support” response
 - The “institutional” response
- Replaced by new paradigm of protective and participatory rights of the child
- Reflected in evidence based knowledge and skills, articulating professional context fostering the Barnahus approach and promotes its growth

Walking the Walk

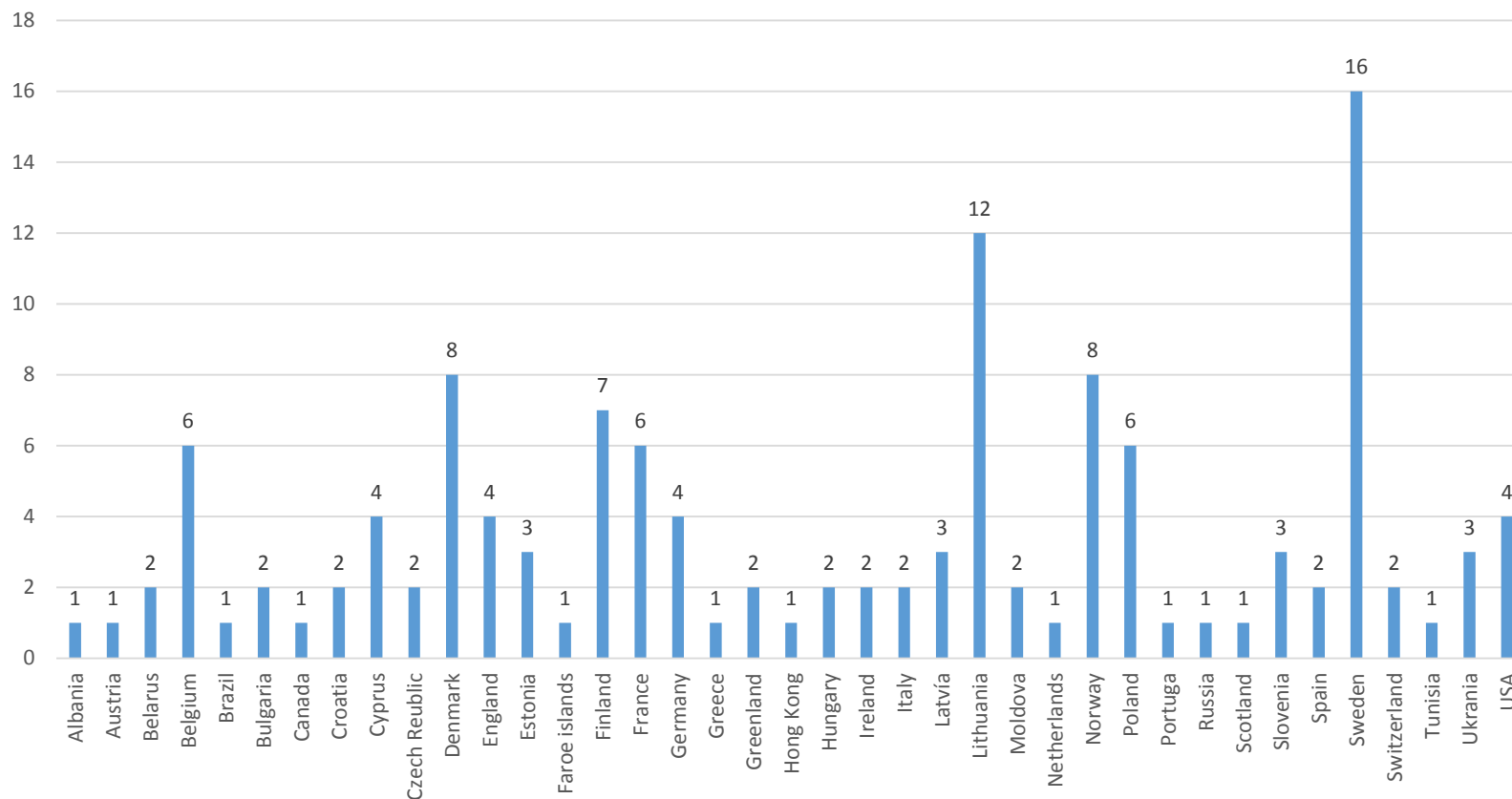
- The new paradigm and consensus is articulated and elaborated in international laws and other instruments of international bodies
- The **Council of Europe**
- The **Council of the Baltic Sea States** (CBSS)
- The European Union and the **Promise Project**
- The bodies of the **United Nations**
- It is reflected in the ruling of the **European Court of Human Rights** as reflected in the case law of the Court
- **International NGOs** (Safe the Children, Unicef) and Professional bodies such as **ISPCAN**

Study visits from abroad in Barnahus 2000 – 2018

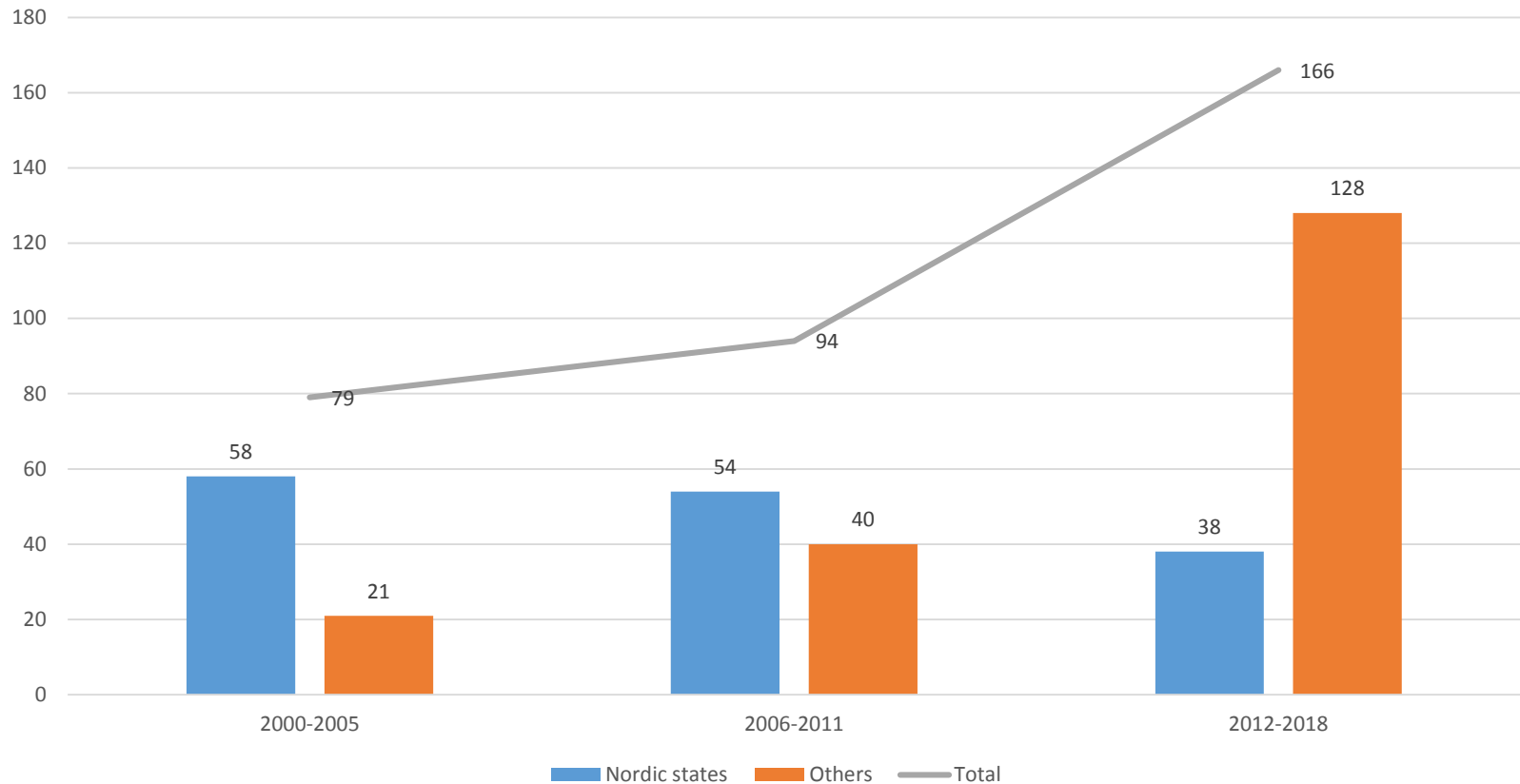
(Total 208 from 32 countries)



Presentations (events) 2000 – 2018 delivered on Barnahus abroad (131)



Presentations abroad and study visits in Barnahus: Nordic countries vs. other regions



Words of Gratitude

Thank you warmly for honouring us
by participating in this anniversary
event!