

PRESS RELEASE

Title: Celebrating ChildPact's New Status

ChildPact, the Regional Coalition for Child Protection, announced its formal registration with Romanian authorities today. As a coalition representing over six hundred NGOs and ten national coalitions in ten countries throughout the wider Eastern European region, ChildPact members came together to legally incorporate in Romania.

With formal registration, ChildPact is now able to legally represent its members in grant acquisition, partnership, and policy dialog with key regional and international stakeholders. Romania was chosen as ChildPact's legal home for a variety of reasons, including Romania's worldwide experience in child protection that can be shared regionally. As evidence of the many lessons learned by Romania in the last 25 years and the willingness of this country to continue to learn and share, Romania's own Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports ChildPact activities within its own development cooperation commitments in the region.

ChildPact's official signing ceremony took place during the Eurochild Annual Conference held in Bucharest from 26 to 28 November 2014. ChildPact's founding members signed the documents for ChildPact's official registration: Raimonda Bozo, President of BKTF Albania, Mira Antonyan, President of the Child Protection Network Armenia, George Bogdanov, Executive Director of the National Network for Children Bulgaria, Mariana Ianachevici, President of APSCF Moldova, Roxana Ogrendil, Executive Director of FONPC Romania.

ChildPact leaders extend appreciation to World Vision International for its capacity building, assistance and partnership throughout its years of development. World Vision's ability to strengthen local ownership while unifying civil society is a testament to its own development mission in the region.

ChildPact was established as an informal network at the Black Sea NGO Forum in 2011, when seven leaders of child rights networks from the region decided that a regional coalition of child protection NGOs is needed. The initial objectives, which are continued by the newly registered entity, are to: **1.** Monitor and influence child-related policies; **2.** Strengthen the capacity of the members. **3.** Advocate for regional cooperation at inter-governmental and civil society level. **4.** Raise public awareness of child rights and protection issues.

With legal registration, ChildPact and its members have begun work on an independent government monitoring tool called the child protection index with an expected release date in 2015.

The index will measure each country's child protection reforms in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). ChildPact members are now collecting data for the index in 5 of the 10 ChildPact countries: Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Romania and

Serbia with new collection to begin in January for the remaining 5 countries. The index is made possible due to funding made available by World Vision International and by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (through the Official Development Assistance Unit, with UNDP Regional Office for Europe and CIS).

Mirela Oprea, ChildPact Secretary General and Senior Liaison Manager at World Vision International high-lighted the importance of this initiative: ‘Ending violence’ against children remains an embarrassingly elusive goal that flies in the face of the thousands of child-focused NGOs, specially mandated inter-governmental institutions and global commitments like the (nearly) universally signed UNCRC. I believe that ‘ending violence’ against children, a goal which is so much talked about in the last decades, can only be made possible if we create strong networks that coordinate efforts, take advocacy risks and share information about what works and what stopped working. But networks are often the victims of a misconception and donors rarely fund them adequately. We are here to change this perception and contribute to system changes’.

Mira Antonyan, President of the Child Protection Network Armenia, showed how ChildPact has supported its members even before its official registration: ‘For us ChildPact has been a great gift. With ChildPact we have learned from those who are older and stronger than us so that now we are also much stronger. We learned so many important things from ChildPact and we grew a new level of self-confidence in our capacity to come together and influence the policy decisions which are made in our country. ChildPact is such a good idea, that I can’t understand why we waited so long to create it.’

Roxana Ogridil, Executive Director of FONPC Romania spoke about the need for regional cooperation: ‘There are so many excellent models in the region that we could learn from, but unfortunately they are not shared. In our region we have a number of more or less frozen conflicts and this is surely not helpful. ChildPact wants to create a regional cooperation mechanism so that civil society and governments come together to learn from each other. While still non-registered we have jointly wrote to the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organisation, the only treaty-based, inter-governmental organization in our region, to create a working group or a task force for cooperation in the field of child protection’.

George Bogdanov, Executive Director of the National Network for Children, chose to thank all those who helped ChildPact be established and grow: ‘A special word for the role of World Vision International. This organization played a crucial role in bringing us together and their investment in creating a regional network that now is being registered is commendable. We wish that World Vision continues to support ChildPact and we hope other important NGOs will join World Vision in this sense. The Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was our first donor, through World Vision Romania and FONPC Romania, at a time when we were not even registered. Their trust in us is honoring and encouraging’.

Mariana Ianachevici, President of APSCF Moldova clarified why ChildPact is being registered in Romania: ‘No wonder Romania is hosting ChildPact. Twenty years ago this country was known as one of the worst offenders in the field of child protection worldwide. There are many things that need to be achieved still, but the truth is that Romania has achieved a systemic reform that can be

an inspiration for many other countries in the region. Moldova is one of the countries which benefited most from the Romanian models’.

Raimonda Bozo, BKTf President, talked about who is ChildPact now and who it aims to be in the future: ‘ChildPact is a regional coalition which brings together 10 different countries, representing 600 NGOs, which work with more than 500,000 children. Initially we were created as a coalition from the ‘wider Black Sea area’, but we had to drop this geographic reference from our name, as other networks who are not connected geographically to the region, wanted to be part of ChildPact. We think that ChildPact will continue to grow as it offers services and a cooperation philosophy that is unique in the countries which still struggle with the socialist past in child protection’.

About ChildPact: <http://www.childpact.org/about-us/about-2/>

For more information about ChildPact: www.childpact.org.

For short bios of our founding members: <http://www.childpact.org/about-us/steering-committee/>

For our brief on why networks are important: <http://www.childpact.org/2014/03/26/why-networks-encourage-innovation-and-why-donors-should-invest-in-them/>

For more information about the Child Protection Index: <http://www.childpact.org/gravity-landing/childpact-child-protection-index/>. Here is an brief **animation** explaining this initiative: <http://www.childpact.org/2014/05/08/creating-a-child-protection-index/>.

For our Open Letter to BSEC: http://www.childpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Open-Letter_ChildPact-to-BSEC_Why-Create-a-WG-for-Children_05.12.2013.pdf

For our brief on regional cooperation: <http://www.childpact.org/2013/07/01/regional-cooperation-in-the-wider-black-sea-area-why-successful-child-protection-demands-a-regional-response/>

You may also follow us on Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/ChildPact> - or on Twitter - <http://www.twitter.com/ChildPact>.

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