

# SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE IN ORGANIZED STRUCTURES OF VIOLENCE AND IN RITUAL STRUCTURES OF VIOLENCE

*Strengthening Prevention, Intervention and Help for Victims  
and Survivors*

## *Recommendations for Policymakers and Society*

FROM THE EXPERT COMMITTEE “SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE  
IN ORGANIZED STRUCTURES OF VIOLENCE AND IN RITUAL  
STRUCTURES OF VIOLENCE”, AT THE  
GERMAN FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR FAMILY AFFAIRS, SENIOR  
CITIZENS, WOMEN, AND YOUTH

APRIL 2018



by



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# Expertise

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## STRATEGIES FOR FIGHTING SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE IN ORGANIZED STRUCTURES OF VIOLENCE AND IN RITUAL STRUCTURES OF VIOLENCE – A TASK FOR POLICYMAKERS AND SOCIETY

Consistently combating sexualized violence is a responsibility which falls to society as a whole. After the federal government's action plans of 2003 and 2011 for the protection of children and adolescents from sexual violence and exploitation, with the establishment of the Round Table Concerning Child Sexual Abuse and the Office of the Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues, important steps were taken toward ensuring that children and adolescents in Germany are protected from sexualized violence and that people who were subjected to violence and exploitation during childhood or adolescence are given the help they need. In 2014, the recommendations of the Round Table and the measures of the 2011 action plan were consolidated in an overall concept and then developed further. A federal-state-NGO working group has accompanied implementation of the measures since 2003 and discussed changes to framework conditions as well as new insights and requirements for action.

Organized ritual violence as a form of sexualized violence and exploitation has not been expressly taken into account in the action plan to date. The complex structures of violence and severe traumatization of the victims and survivors necessitate a specific, interdisciplinary approach. Reports made by victims and survivors as well as their professional supporters, and a not inconsiderable number of applications submitted to the "Sexual Abuse Fund" vividly describe the desperate situation<sup>1</sup>: It is often particularly difficult for people who have experienced violence to obtain protection and appropriate support and to be heard. In the final report of the Independent Commissioner for Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (2011), ritual violence is one of five subjects specified as being in need of "urgent investigation and research". The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, appointed in 2016, took on this subject as one of several areas of emphasis. In addition to carrying out confidential hearings with victims and survivors of ritual violence and organized violence, the Commission supported a research project on this subject and conducted a corresponding workshop dialogue in 2017.

In 2016 the federal-state-NGO task force defined sexualized violence in organized structures of violence and in ritual structures of violence as one of the areas of emphasis of their work. An external expert committee was set up to develop recommendations for action. Approximately 20 experts from various professions and spheres of work provided their professional expertise and contributed to this expert report in a leadership or advisory capacity. Initial findings were discussed with the expert audience for the network conference action plan in Dialogue 2016.

These recommendations for action are to supplement the programme of the Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues and serve as a basis for updating the measures of the federal government.

<sup>1</sup> In the case of the Additional Help System "Sexual Abuse Fund" ("Fonds Sexueller Missbrauch", <https://www.fonds-missbrauch.de>), 476 applicants specified "ritual/cult-like abuse" in their applications (status May 2013 – 15 January 2018).

## 1. DEFINITION

### Sexualized violence in organized and ritual structures of violence

Organized structures of violence and ritual structures of violence involve the systematic use of severe, sexualized violence (in conjunction with physical and psychological violence) against children, adolescents, and adults by several perpetrators working together and are frequently associated with commercial sexual exploitation (forced prostitution, trafficking in children, child pornography/violent pornography). If an ideology is used as an explanation or justification of violence, this is referred to as a ritual structure of violence.

Some structures involve the integration of families across generations. A bond is formed with the perpetrators, group, and ideology in early childhood. There is also a rule of silence. Those who attempt to leave are subject to pressure, extortion, and persecution.

Organized and ritual structures of violence can include extensive control and exploitation of others by means of mind-control methods. The regular and repeated use of severe violence brings on a child's specific dissociation and/or splits the child's personality intentionally. The dissociative personality parts that result are trained and used for specific purposes. The goal of this systematic training is to create an inner structure which the perpetrators can control at any time, a structure of which the child, and later the adult, has no conscious memory in everyday life.

For people who have experienced this, it is particularly difficult to obtain protection and appropriate support.

### Background information

#### Traffic in and exploitation of children

On the basis of Article 3 of the Voluntary Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 25 May 2000 regarding the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography, offering, delivering, or accepting, by whatever means, a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation of the child, transfer of organs of the child for profit, engagement of the child in forced labour, illegal adoption, as well as offering, obtaining, procuring, or providing a child for child prostitution, and producing, distributing, disseminating, importing, exporting, offering, selling, or possessing child pornography are to be fully covered under criminal law. This experts' report refers to the international definition, since in German criminal law, while containing penal provisions pertaining to trafficking in persons/forced prostitution/forced labour which also refer to persons under 21 years of age, the heading "Child Trafficking" in § 236 of the German Criminal Code (StGB) refers to other elements of the offence.

#### Dissociation

Dissociation is (based on the understanding of structural dissociation according to Janet, expanded by Nijenhuis et al amongst others) the ability to keep something separate from everyday consciousness and from consciously accessible memory; it is a means of protection against overload which is instinctively available to everyone in order to enable them to survive being traumatized and prevent their being overwhelmed. The more overwhelming the feelings and experiences are, the greater the amount of information which is not integrated.

The symptoms of the various forms of dissociation are characterized by the functions which are missing (breakdown of sensory functions, lack of emotion, memory loss, non-existing presence) or the involuntary manifestation of partial memories in the form of flashbacks (suddenly reliving images/feelings/physical sensations arising of the threatening situation) and intrusions.

In traumatic situations which are experienced early and repeatedly, dissociation enables survival by forming separate structures of consciousness in the as yet immature personality. The structures thus created can appear and act as independent personalities. This can result in a dissociative identity structure with an inner system of more or less separate personalities/ personality parts. Without protection and appropriate support, the structure persists through adolescence and adulthood (like any long-term trauma symptom) since it was created as a survival mechanism. This falls into the clinical category of dissociative disorders and/or dissociative identity disorder.

**Dissociative identity disorder (DIS) <sup>2</sup>**

Since the standard ICD diagnosis manual in Germany is currently being reissued, we refer to the most current diagnosis manual for mental disorders DSM 5. It describes dissociative identity disorder using the following criteria:

- a) a) Presence of two or more distinct identities or personality states. There are clear differences in the awareness of one's self and one's actions, accompanied by related changes in affect, behaviour, awareness, memory, perception, thinking, and sensory-motor functions. Different personality parts take control of the person's behaviour at different times, which can lead to visible changes. These changes can be observed by the person himself/herself as well as by others.
- b) An inability to remember important personal information, important everyday and/or traumatic incidents, which cannot be put down to ordinary forgetfulness.

The revised version ICD 11 scheduled for 2018 is expected to contain a similar definition.

**Intentionally induced DIS**

This involves intentionally utilizing the dissociative protection mechanism and forcing splitting by means of planned, repeated use of severe violence. The resulting personality parts are trained for specific purposes. Intentionally induced DIS can go unnoticed for long periods of time. There is usually no discernible personality change, instead there is an external everyday person, alongside of or through whom other personalities act. As a rule, this occurs without the everyday person being able to detect or talk about it.

<sup>2</sup> DIS and other dissociative disorders are not rare. A review article in the Deutsches Ärzteblatt refers to a DIS prevalence of 0.5 % in the general population and 5 % in psychiatric populations (Gast et al. 2006, see also Gast & Wabnitz 2017). The International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation's (2011, German translation 2014) expert recommendation for the treatment of dissociative identity disorder (DIS) in adults assumes 1 – 3 % in the general population, based on studies.  
DIS induced intentionally within the scope of ritual violence and mind control is rarely, if ever, recorded.

2. AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND RESEARCH

Organized violence and ritual violence as phenomena of psychosocial and therapeutic practice

Since the 1990s there have been numerous reports, surveys, and articles in professional literature, which document this topic's high level of relevance in practice (cf. Annex Research Paper Evidence Base and Research). But so far there has been no definition used consistently in Germany or internationally, which makes comparability difficult. There are no representative scholarly studies on prevalence and consequences. In view of the severe traumatization of the victims and survivors and the pressure to conceal what occurred, it is also doubtful as to whether representative surveys of the population would even result in relevant findings. Neither is there any specific data collection by police or the judiciary thus far.

Consequently, there is a great discrepancy between practical relevance on the one hand and the secured data situation on the other. This leads to problems of understanding in the interdisciplinary discourse and allows for polemically led debates as to credibility, all of which hinder objective treatment of the subject.

Improving the data situation

Based on how the victims of domestic violence and human trafficking were treated starting at the end of the 1990's, it has been possible (e.g. in a federal-state-NGO task force) to check data collection options and specify measures for improving investigation, prevention, intervention, and support of victims and survivors using the expert committee's definitions and recommendations for action. As the example of domestic violence shows, substantial improvements are the result of a structurally based, intensive interdisciplinary work process over the course of many years.

Integration in research and teaching

The research associations supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research have advanced the research on the subject of sexualized violence and its entry into the mainstream. Integration of the subject of sexualized violence in organized structures of violence and ritual structures of violence, however, has not yet taken place. Research proposals, funding criteria, and appraisals have not yet been established in this complex field of research.

Research of sexualized violence in organized and ritual structures of violence and their impacts must analyse individual aspects in depth as well as encompass complex structures and interdependencies. For this purpose, it is essential that scholarly research projects make use of experiences from practice and/or work together with experienced persons from the areas of practice and scholarship and integrate this into scholarly and interdisciplinary discourse. Precisely tailored research methods and evidence criteria need to be developed – and then be given a chance with established research funding. Research findings need to be integrated in reference and teaching materials, training, and continuing education measures for all relevant professional groups and ongoing transfer between theory and practice.

High-priority subject areas and research questions are:

- **Care research:** Existing measures, requirements, and gaps need to be compiled. Good care needs to be tested in model projects and evaluated. What helps victims and survivors in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood so that they can escape the structures of organized violence and ritual violence? What actions of support are helpful and/or required?
- **Protection and gaps in protection:** Systematic analysis is required. Where are there legal gaps in protection and/or problems in application of the law (protection against violence legislation, family law, rights of victims and survivors, witness protection, etc.) and difficulties in the use of existing protection facilities (women's shelters, etc.) for victims and survivors of organized violence and ritual violence? How can existing protection options be adapted to fit specific requirements of these groups of victims and survivors? Which structures and individual framework conditions can facilitate access to protection, safety, compensation, and support?
- **Research on diagnostics and therapy:** Within the scope of psychotraumatology research, possibilities for diagnostics and treatment of intentionally induced dissociative identity disorder are to be analysed and/or developed. Research on trauma, dissociation/dissociative identity disorder, and memory can advance the development of methods in criminal law and compensation law for appropriate assessment of victims and survivors of extreme violence. Evaluation and long-term follow-up studies of trauma therapy processes in the case of dissociative identity disorder are necessary.
- **Criminological research:** Research on the strategies of perpetrators and structures of violence, on the ideological framework of destructive groupings, and on their effects on victims and survivors, indirect victims and survivors, and society can open up opportunities for prevention, prosecution, and the support of victims and survivors. Analysis of closed criminal cases and interviewing those involved can help to work out structural problems in the prosecution of crime.
- **Social science research:** Investigations of the historical, economic, and societal context of organized sexual exploitation and ritual violence can contribute to objective inquiry and the sensitization of society. More precise definitions and analysis of overlaps among familial, organized, and ritual structures of violence would be helpful for many areas of prevention, intervention, and improvement of the data situation. Concepts must be developed and tested for interdisciplinary collaboration and continuing education.
- **Consolidation of insights:** In interdisciplinary cooperation, the insights from various perspectives and fields of research are to be consolidated in order to do justice to the complexity of the subject.

3. PROTECTION AND HELP

In our society, support for traumatized persons and systems of standard care as a whole are not sufficient, and thresholds to access and to financing options are often too high. The more complex and extensive the experiences of violence and their consequences are, the more difficult it is to find adequate support. For many victims and survivors of organized and ritual violence, when they seek help, these difficulties grow exponentially.

Moreover, in addition to the goal of exploiting children, adolescents, and adults in organized structures and ritual structures of power and violence, perpetrators are very much focused on making it impossible to prove their actions and on ensuring that victims and survivors remain silent and/or lack credibility. Current legislation, especially the German Federal Participation Act (BTHG), is based on the assumption that participation in society constitutes the norm, and thus is accompanied by safety and protection. Help is not given until health and participation in society are damaged or jeopardized by permanent disability or a proven threat to the welfare of the child and/or criminal offences. For the group of victims and survivors described here, as a rule, the hurdles are too high. Victims and survivors are doomed to failure due to complicated application forms, requirements which they cannot fulfil (e.g. for the witness protection programme), difficulty in proving crimes and threatening situations sufficiently, specific threats generated by means of mind-control, and gaps in self-preservation, as well as many other things.

This has an impact on private and professional supporters. And it generally leads to a lack of available funding for necessary protection measures, such as escorts for errands (going to therapy, participating in society, etc.), a safe place to live, made available quickly, and intensive support as needed.

The following demands refer to victims and survivors of all ages and gender identities in various life situations as well as their supporters.

Protection, safety, and help for victims and survivors

Victims and survivors are often affected and/or endangered for a lifetime. This can take place as attacks and threats, for example, or occur as a result of dissociative structures and inner dependencies that have been created. One important objective of many measures is therefore to help victims and survivors break off harmful contact to perpetrators permanently and stop or resolve destructive inner dynamics.

To do so, it is necessary to:

1. **Create prerequisites**
  - Creation of a network to accompany those fleeing abuse/leaving cults and to provide support of other kinds. The minimal specific help already in place needs to be given sufficient resources and supplemented by the creation of new methods with standards of quality and based on genuine need.
  - Financial support of victims and survivors who flee abuse/leave cults beyond a basic income (to fund moving, to support persons and measures for safety, etc.).



- Development of new funding models and/or supplemental aid systems, which provide fast and non-bureaucratic assistance, also for self-help, especially when access by means of the previous regular support structures is not possible, takes too long, and/or jeopardizes safety.
- Members of the Council of Victims and Survivors demand an independent point of contact/grievances office at the federal level for residents of protected shelters.

## 2. Make safe environments possible

- Add shelters and crisis centres to standard care structures. They are to be able to meet the various needs of victims and survivors of organized and ritual violence, e.g. in terms of level of anonymity, type and extent of help required, etc.
- Sensitize standard care options for outpatient, partial inpatient, and inpatient residential care appropriately and add specific proposals.
- Support in the implementation of protective measures such as concealment of data, name changes, residence changes, etc.
- Enable participation in society and everyday life, functional skills by means of escorts on errands (e.g. to government offices, visits to doctors and places which are important for participation in society). Easier access to a disability status which allows for escorts on errands must be made available. In addition, it may also be sensible to provide attendants or service animals.

## 3. Improve therapeutic and psychosocial support

- Enable flexible, individual intervention and support options in order to do justice to the very wide variance of the situations of victims and survivors.
- Create outpatient and inpatient therapy options which are oriented toward the needs of the victims and survivors.
- Provide victims and survivors with daily trauma-sensitive support including sociotherapy.
- Measures for creating everyday structures may be needed in order to support victims and survivors in building healthy, (more) self-determined daily routines.
- Specific measures for children and adolescents are to be developed for the support of the families of victims and survivors.
- Help in establishing support networks to secure continuity of the support.
- Support in the maintenance of apprenticeships, learning a trade, university studies, and job placements during the process of fleeing abuse/leaving cults.
- Provide and fund support after leaving cults and/or for setting up a new life, e.g. specific measures to support employment, help with applying for social welfare assistance and pension payments

## Stable and restorative framework conditions for private and professional supporters

Within the context of therapy and psychosocial work, victims and survivors require the help of a wide variety of professionals, depending on their individual situations. Doctors, therapists, social workers, (expert) counsellors, clinic staff, assisted living staff, and many other support persons can only work well long term if their own safety and appropriate framework

conditions are ensured, and the complexity and dynamics of organized violence and ritual violence are accounted for. Private supporters such as friends, life partners, and co-workers also need positive reinforcement and support.

To do so, it is necessary to:

## 1. Ensure the continuity of the measures

- Provide steady funding for help for victims and survivors of sexualized violence and specific measures for victims and survivors of organized violence and ritual violence.
- Protective and supportive work in networks and regular occurring actions such as supervision, expert counselling, and further education are to be recognized and funded as a necessary part of professional work.

## 2. Improve therapeutic framework conditions

- Quotas for psychotherapy based on need: Adaptation of the possible duration and type of psychotherapy to suit individual support requirements, special accreditation for specialized psychological trauma therapists.
- Easy access to these and other helpful additional forms of therapy such as art therapy, physiotherapy, sociotherapy, body therapy, etc.

## 3. Strengthen expertise

- Provide and fund training and continuing education in order to increase and spread awareness of structures and dynamics within the context of organized ritual violence as well as options for intervention and support. The expertise of victims and survivors should also be utilized and compensated.
- Communicate knowledge about complex traumatisation, dissociative identity disorder, and mind-control in order to reduce prejudice and inhibitions and increase confidence in taking action. Counsellors and therapists also need in-depth knowledge about intervention.
- Create measures for helping private supporters at no cost to them.
- The objective of therapeutic and psychosocial supportive actions must always include learning normality in the context of living free from violence and possessing one's own rights since, within the scope of organized violence and ritual violence, victims and survivors have been trained to act as if they had no rights, consistent with the (ideological) system.

## 4. PROSECUTION OF PERPETRATORS AND LEGAL SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS

### Criminal offences within the context of organized and ritual violence

Victims and survivors describe various forms of extreme, sexualized, physical, and psychological violence. Criminal law defines many of these acts of violence as crimes, e.g. sexual abuse, rape, forced termination of pregnancy, dissemination/acquisition/possession and production of child pornography, assault, murder, trafficking in human beings, forced prostitution, stalking, wrongful deprivation of personal liberty, coercion, harassment.

Professionals required to maintain confidentiality (psychotherapists, counsellors, lawyers, etc.) occasionally receive information indicating organized and ritual violence: more than one perpetrator/offences were filmed, profit was made through the actions, children were for sale, strategic violence and training for specific tasks, ideological rationale and justification of violence, threats, specific symptoms presenting in those seeking help, such as gaps in memory or flashbacks (with fragmented memory regarding violence experienced, religious/ideological content).

These actions rarely lead to criminal charges. And when charges do result, there are hurdles when it comes to prosecuting the crimes. Amongst other things, these hurdles result from severe post-traumatic disorders experienced by victims and survivors, a lack of witness protection due to the high demands made on participants in witness protection programmes, and failure to consider insights about trauma and structural dissociation when assessing credibility of victims. Moreover, to date there is no uniform definition of these crimes, and law enforcement agencies have no specialized criminal investigation units.

### Ensuring protection, support and help

Support which is extensive and modified to requirements of the victims is usually necessary for victims and survivors to enable them to dare to leave cults or other perpetrators and to be psychologically able to provide information about the violence experienced, organized/ritual structures of violence, and ongoing threats (see chapter on protection and help). Charges can only be responsibly considered when this is the case.

A legal right to anonymous, free-of-charge counselling in an expert counselling centre, to initial legal counsel (prior to pressing charges), and to measures for protection and safety need to be established.

### Opportunities for investigating authorities to cooperate with expert counselling centres

Specific and binding cooperation at a structural level has proven successful in other areas: as a result of cooperation projects, it has been possible to improve intervention in the case of domestic violence considerably. Structural analysis has indicated gaps in the areas of victim protection, intervention, and prosecution which at least in part have been closed as a result of changes in legislation and judicial practice, further training, and improved support. Other examples are the federal cooperation concept of “Protection and help in cases of trafficking in and exploitation of children” and the cooperation concept in the area of trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The concept’s recommendations enable effective

prosecution and adequate protection and support measures in these areas. The creation of specialized criminal investigation units for law enforcement agencies can also help.

With respect to organized ritual violence, these experiences are to be used and, in addition, the effects of mind-control, severe post-trauma disorders/dissociative disorders/dissociative identity disorders, and ideological indoctrination must be considered. Victims and survivors often behave in ways which are paradoxical and seem at first incomprehensible. Clarifying the definition(s) and creating a list of indicators with references for identifying victims and survivors would also be sensible.

### Victim/Witness protection programmes

Witness protection programmes of law enforcement agencies have high-level requirements. On the one hand, the testimony needs to be so important to the criminal proceedings that it is able to materially contribute to a conviction. On the other hand, it means a complete break with one’s current social environment. Social support is lost, arrangements must be adhered to exactly, and one’s earlier life must be kept secret. For severely traumatized victims and survivors this is often impossible to manage or makes no sense.

In such cases, lower-threshold entry requirements and programmes with specific psycho-social and trauma therapy support are necessary. Experiences gained in actual victim protection programmes in the area of trafficking in human beings and exit programmes in the areas of right-wing extremism and religious extremism are to be examined in terms of their transferability.

### Assessment of Credibility

Testimony given by witnesses is frequently the main basis or even the only basis for investigation and prosecution. Credibility assessments are often made to support testimony given by witnesses. However, these assessments were developed for witnesses with stable identities and are not suitable for victims and survivors of organized/ritual violence who have a dissociative identity disorder. The principles regarding the ability to testify and assessment of the quality of the testimony would have to be verified in terms of current insights regarding trauma and structural dissociation. The necessity of psychotherapy after extreme violence must not be used as a criterion for doubting credibility or the likelihood of testimony being based on actual experience.

### Reform of Victims Compensation Act (OEG) and additional support

To date, victims and survivors of organized violence and ritual violence can only seldom assert their claims to compensation according to the Victims’ Compensation Act (OEG). Proof of the crimes and the connection between the original circumstances and the health issues of the present day are difficult to provide. A diagnosis of dissociative identity disorder also often leads the victim’s credibility being fundamentally questioned.

Simpler access modalities were to be made possible in the planned reform of social compensation law (OEG). Specifications for creating expert evaluations must comply with the latest scholarly research. Experts must be respectively qualified and have experience in treating victims and survivors of organized/ritual violence and those suffering from a dissociative

identity disorder. Providing additional support remains necessary. One possibility is a statutory establishment of a foundation into which the positive experiences of the supplemental aid system/the fund set up to help survivors of sexual abuse flow. Structures are to be created which ensure speedy and non-bureaucratic processing which is appropriate and sensitive to the needs of the victims.

## 5. SENSITIZATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS

Very little is known about the subject of organized violence and ritual violence in almost all sections of society and in the expert community. For this reason, a good database of evidence and research is an important prerequisite for showing how widespread these forms of violence are.

Good experiences have been made in the area of continuing education, where the subject was integrated into and treated as an extreme form of sexualized violence against children, adolescents, and adults. Moreover, specific, in-depth measures are meaningful. The expert community and society require different kinds of knowledge and information in order to recognize and support victims and survivors:

Two target groups are particularly important for the expert community:

### 1. Specialized staff from the areas of education, psychotherapy, and medicine

For these areas, the following measures are necessary:

- Inclusion of the subject in curricula at technical schools, colleges, and universities as an especially severe form of (sexualized) violence.
- Continuing education for education and therapy staff in institutions and clinics concerning the various forms of violence and dissociative identity disorder as a post-trauma disorder up to and including intentionally induced dissociative identity disorder.
- Development of specialized training sessions for different groups of doctors to increase awareness and recognition of various triggers in examinations, anaesthesia, and surgery.
- Development of factual information material about how to support people who suffer from a dissociative disorder and/or various forms of dissociative identity disorder.
- Methods for expert counselling.
- Inclusion of the subject in further education measures for psychotherapists who specialize in dissociative identity disorder as a post-trauma disorder.
- Inclusion of the subject in further education measures for the protection of children and/or in support of adolescents.
- Continuing education measures for understanding ideologies which are used for the purpose of explanation or justification within the scope of organized structures of violence and ritual structures of violence.

### 2. Judiciary and law enforcement agencies

- Police and the judiciary are important partners with regard to documenting data with respect to reported cases from the known world as well as the underworld and with regard to finding ways to improve the success of prosecution and the supply of evidence.
- Information materials and continuing education measures about these forms of violence and recognizable post-trauma disorders resulting from complex traumatisation can assist in sensitization.

For all specialists, the creation of networks and task forces is equally crucial since this is the only way to consolidate knowledge and clarify questions. They should not be too large, but should involve multiple professions and be located in the immediate vicinity in order to ensure a constant exchange of knowledge and provide a trustworthy expert framework in which further development and synergy effects for the individual's scope of work are possible.

As the ministry responsible, the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth should develop structures in accordance with the federal cooperation concept "Protection and help in cases of trafficking in and exploitation of children". Those already active there can also assume key positions for this area of action.

Equally crucial is the sensitization and education of the general public with the goal of eliminating the taboos that have grown around this subject. Appropriate measures for this purpose are:

- Support of publications.
- Media presentations of discussions conducted in the expert community in order to make these discussions comprehensible, including input from victims and survivors.
- Non-scandalizing presentation of the subject in the form of PR campaigns.
- Showing examples of "best practice" in order to establish opportunities for action and to encourage support of victims and survivors.
- Giving victims and survivors the chance to represent themselves and the concerns of victims and survivors in the discussions.



## APPENDIX 1: AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH

### Availability of data – Organized violence and ritual violence as phenomena known to psychosocial and therapeutic practice

In 1997, in preparation for a hearing of the government Commission for Inquiry on “So-Called Cults and Psycho Groups”, a survey of ritual abuse was conducted with counselling centres, clinics, and therapy practices. 273 cases were reported. Destructive cults, child pornography and child prostitution, sects, and fascist factions were named as perpetrator categories, and the most severe forms of physical, emotional, and sexual violence were reported. Dissociative identity disorder (DIS) was named most frequently as the resulting damage. Most of all, there was a demand for more places available in therapy treatment and therapy funding, further education, and public awareness (FRÖHLING, HUBER & RODEWALD n. d.; Becker 2014).

Surveys conducted amongst contract psychotherapists in the Ruhr region and the states of Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland, from 2005 to 2007, found that 10–13 % of the therapists who responded had been confronted with the problem of ritual violence in their work. They reported severe violence, with contact to the perpetrator often persisting during therapy, as well as forced obedience and secrecy (KOWNATZKI ET AL. 2011; Wagner & Bosse 2007).

More than 2,000 people (victims and survivors as well as professional supporters) from 40 countries, including many from Germany, took part in the online *Extreme Abuse Survey* (2007) (BECKER ET AL. 2014; findings also in IGNEY 2010).

A further online survey (USTUPSKA ET AL. 2016) targeted specialists with contact to children and adolescents in social and health care systems throughout Germany and found considerable gaps in knowledge regarding ritual violence and uncertainty arising as a result of this.

1,070 psychotherapists and staff from counselling centres and trauma clinics in Germany took part in the online survey conducted by RUDOLPH (2016). 431 stated that they worked with clients who reported ritual violence. The victims and survivors often still have contact with the perpetrators during the term of their treatment/counselling and their abuse continues. All 16 federal states in Germany (and sites abroad) were named as scenes of crimes.

In addition, there are many reports – from victims and survivors, psychotherapists, clinics with a trauma therapy concept, an evaluation of 34 exits with support (VIELFALT e.V. 2006), scholarly research on religion (HERRMANN-PFANDT 2014), reference works, and articles (cf. Bibliography). Victims and survivors seek help in counselling centres and a violence-against-women hotline (in 2016, those seeking help reported ritual violence in 98 counselling sessions, trafficking in human beings in 109 counselling sessions) and reports were made to the Office of the Independent Commissioner for Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (cf. UBSKM 2011; FEGERT ET AL. 2013) and the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (UKASK).

In the case of the supplemental aid system “Sexual Abuse Fund”, 476 applicants specified “ritual/cult-like abuse” in their applications. This makes up 5 % of the applications collected by the deadline of January 15, 2018 (status 2013–January 15, 2018, KALTHEGENER, GStFSM, 2018); additional applications contain indications of organized structures of violence (OETKEN 2016).

There are interdisciplinary task forces which treat the subject of ritual violence in the Ruhr region, Schleswig-Holstein, Rhineland Palatinate, Münster, Plauen, amongst others. Their purpose is an exchange of experiences, continuing education, development of materials, and the improvement of support for victims and survivors.

It is difficult to estimate how frequently the organized structures of violence and ritual structures of violence overlap. Professionals from the psychosocial and therapy areas report that the following progression is often the case: first the abuse within the family becomes apparent, then commercial sexual exploitation, and there may be a background of ritual violence and mind-control beneath this surface. The focus is not the memories which arise in therapy, but instead the memories which are detached and kept separate from the conscious mind by dissociative barriers. It is only through specific, specialized, and kind support and security that these memories can become part of consciousness and accessible for processing.

### Availability of data – Police, judiciary and society

There is no specific evidence database for sexualized violence in organized structures of violence and ritual structures of violence because the cases of ritual violence are not documented separately.

There is data on specific elements of criminal offences such as sexual abuse, trafficking in human beings, and the dissemination, acquisition, possession, and production of child pornography. The numbers for the situation in all of Germany and the police crime statistics are used provisionally.

According to Germany’s Federal Criminal Police Office (Bundeskriminalamt – BKA) (2016 report on situation in Germany regarding trafficking in human beings), there were 363 proceedings concluded for “trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation” in 2016 (2015: 364) with a total of 488 victims (of whom 96 were minors, 2015: 77). In addition, in 2016 further elements of criminal offences of sexual exploitation were considered to the extent that each case involved a commercial element. In 83 such investigations, 118 of the victims were minors.

According to BKA, however, the number of unreported crimes is assumed to be high. Based on the many years of experience of the German NGO network against trafficking in human beings (KOK), attention is also drawn to the lack of reliable case counts and statistics on trafficking in children and trafficking in human beings and charges filed in which prosecution does not succeed or the case is categorized as an isolated offence and the underlying structures escape consideration (KOK 2015, p. 28 and 127).

The Progress Report 2016 of the European Commission, which describes developments in the struggle against trafficking in human beings, shows that at least 15 % of the victims of trafficking in human beings within the EU are children (p. 5).

According to police crime statistics, in 2016 there were 5,687 cases of dissemination/acquisition/possession, and production of child pornography registered in Germany. However, currently there are no reliable estimates on the number of depictions of abuse on the Internet or on the number of perpetrators (refer to DECKER ET AL. 2016 for an overview of existing data material).

By exposing the dark web platform Elysium (an online platform for distribution of child pornography, etc.) in June of 2017, investigators from BKA and Central Office for Combating Cyber and Computer-Related Crime (ZIT) had a rare success in shining a spotlight on the practice of organized sexual exploitation. Although the platform was only online for half a year, it already had more than 87,000 “users”. The photos and videos exchanged included images of extreme, sexualized depictions of violence inflicted on toddlers. Child pornography was only of secondary relevance. After a press conference of the BKA the newspaper “Süddeutsche Zeitung” reported the following: *“Perpetrators were said to have arranged meetings via ‘Elysium’ primarily in order to rape children. (...) Children were positively hawked in the forums. (...) Some raped and filmed the crime; others disseminated the images.”* Men from Germany and Austria were arrested on charges of being responsible for administration, coordination, production, and distribution of films of sexual abuse of children.

The extensive efforts to come to terms with sexualized violence in church-based and alternative educational facilities since 2010 is one example of societal education. A series of outstanding inquiry reports are available (UBSKM n. d.). They describe how structures of violence were able to function with victims, perpetrators, and accessories over years and decades without anyone being held accountable. Ideological manipulation of the victims and their environment is also described to some extent.

#### Indications of organized structures and structures of ritual violence

Actual cases are known in which professionals who must swear to maintain secrecy (for example lawyers, psychotherapists, etc.) receive information which falls under their obligation to confidentiality.

Criminal charges, investigations, and convictions are more infrequent. Since there is no specific data recorded for these cases, it is only possible to refer to empirical values and individual publications. These allow the assumption that most of the proceedings were discontinued since the offences could not be proven (GREUEL & PETERMANN 2011; MALTIS 2010; IGNEY 2012).

Sometimes individual elements of criminal offences can be proven without complete revelation of the background information and additional crimes. For example, in 2016, a teaching director of a children’s facility for children traumatized and hurt by their social environment was sentenced to six years in prison for the extreme sexual abuse he committed between 2005 and 2015. Photos and videos were discovered, and a criminal investigation of his life partner was conducted. “It must be said: this is just the tip of the iceberg,” said the prosecutor in his closing statement. There have probably been many more criminal offences. Several hard drives were not yet able to be decrypted (SPIEGEL online, 19 May 2016).

In other cases – the most famous is the Dutroux case in Belgium – testimonies were given on structures of organized ritual violence. Nevertheless, Marc Dutroux also entered the statistics as an individual acting perpetrator. During this time 27 people died under dubious circumstances

(<http://www.reportagen-archiv.com/2009/05/29/marc-dutroux-und-die-totenzeugen/>).

#### Current state of research

In preparation for a research project of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (UKASK) Commission, systematic research of the literature was carried out to determine the state of international research of organized ritual violence. 104 English-language scholarly publications from 1992 to 2017 were examined and 35 studies with original data from direct surveys were analysed in detail (presentation Nick, 2017). The studies selected were mainly those which had been published in scholarly journals and were recognized accordingly; individual unpublished studies were also taken into consideration. All in all, unlike sexual violence (e.g. in families or institutions), there has been but very little research on organized ritual violence to date.

The studies selected were based on very different definitions of organized ritual violence. There was often strong polarization and/or attempts to document the existence or nonexistence of organized ritual violence. It was often difficult to reconcile scholarly criteria of evidence with insights and experiences resulting from practical work in this area. Due to the criminal offences and the connection to organized crime, surveys on organized violence and ritual violence were carried out in ethical, legal, and professional grey areas for all those involved in the survey. Internationally there was a decline in publications in professional journals, and parallel to this decline the “false memory” movement grew in strength.

With respect to the support situation, English-language publications document:

- Ignorance, denial, fear, and disbelief amongst professionals in the healthcare system and in the fields of criminology, investigation, and forensics, as well as on the part of jurors and courts.
- Inadequate interdisciplinary cooperation and coordination between the various areas in the healthcare system and legal system.
- Consequently, this makes it extremely difficult or impossible for victims and survivors to find support and protection.
- Research hardly makes any connection between complex consequences of trauma, dissociative disorders (DDNOS/DIS), and organized ritual violence.

This corresponds to experiences in Germany. However, in Germany there have mainly been surveys and pilot studies conducted by practitioners and students writing theses. The previous practical knowledge was integrated into these studies, but in Germany they were not published in scholarly journals or recognized for the most part.

In English-speaking regions, in addition to surveys conducted by practitioners, there were ones conducted by persons who work in solely scholarly fields. It was evident, however, that in the case of solely scholarly qualified researchers, there was often a lack of practical knowledge.

There is hardly any scholarly discourse taking place, and integration of the subject into psychological trauma research and debate has not occurred at national or international levels.

From February 2017 to March 2019, within the scope of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (UKASK), a research project has been underway with the title “Professional support for people who have experienced sexual violence and exploitation, especially organized/ritual violence: The perspectives of the victims and survivors as well as those providing

treatment.” The project consists of various partial studies; the first of which has been completed in the meantime. Two online surveys were conducted in which victims and survivors of organized and/or ritual violence as well as professional caregivers (psychotherapists, counsellors, etc.) were surveyed anonymously. Information from 165 victims and survivors and 176 treatment providers was analysed in the two online surveys. All those participating in the study specified that they had experience with organized and/or ritual violence. 95.5 % of the victims and survivors and 90.3 % of the treatment providers are female. The findings will be published in scholarly journals in Germany and internationally.

In addition, within the scope of the project, interviews will be conducted with victims and survivors as well as psychotherapists, and the confidential UKASK hearings on ritual violence will be analysed. The insights gained should help improve acceptance of therapy-based support and care situation. There is an urgent need for further research, however.

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## APPENDIX: GLOSSARY

This overview provides a summary of crucial terms which are essential for understanding the recommendations of **Sexualized violence in organized structures of violence and ritual structures of violence. Strengthening prevention, intervention, and help for victims and survivors. Recommendations for policymakers and society**. This glossary is for orientation purposes and cannot serve to replace in-depth expert knowledge

### → Conditioning

In the field of the psychology of learning, conditioning refers to the targeted training of behaviours through positive or negative consequences (training through reward or punishment). After conditioning is completed, only an initial stimulus (trigger) or a similar situation is necessary to always bring forth precisely the same behaviour.

Within the context of organized ritual violence, drastic methods (torture, drastic punishments) are used on children for the purpose of defining and automating the desired behaviour, which then can be triggered their whole lives.

### → Dissociation

Dissociation is (based on the understanding of structural dissociation according to Janet, expanded on by Nijenhuis amongst others) the ability to keep something separate from everyday consciousness and to a great extent from consciously accessible memory, a means of protection against overload which is instinctively available to all persons in order to enable them to survive being traumatized and prevent their being overwhelmed. The more overwhelming the feelings and experiences are, the greater the amount of information which is not integrated. The symptoms of the various forms of dissociation are characterized by functions which are missing (failure of sensory functions, loss of sensation, loss of memory, inability to be present) or the involuntary presentation of partial memories in the form of intrusions and flashbacks (suddenly experiencing images/feelings/physical states coming from the threatening situation).

In the case of traumatic situations which are experienced early and repeatedly, dissociation enables survival by forming separate structures of consciousness in the as yet immature personality. The structures thus created can appear and act as independent personalities. This can result in a dissociative identity structure with an inner system of more or less separate personalities/personality parts. Without protection and appropriate support, the structure persists through adolescence and adulthood (like any longer-term trauma symptom) since it was created as a survival mechanism. This falls into the clinical category of dissociative disorders and/or dissociative identity disorder.

### → Dissociative identity disorder (DIS)

In the diagnosis manual for psychological disorders DSM 5, dissociative identity disorder is described using the following criteria:

- a) Presence of two or more distinct identities or personality parts. There are clear differences in the awareness of one's self and one's actions, accompanied by related changes in feelings, behaviour, awareness, memory, perception, thinking, and sensory-motor functions. Different personality parts take control of the person's behaviour at different times, which can lead to visible changes. These can be observed by the person himself/herself as well as by others.
- b) An inability to remember important personal information, important everyday and/or traumatic incidents, which cannot be put down to ordinary forgetfulness.

ICD 10, the WHO diagnosis manual, still contains the obsolete term "multiple personality disorder". The fundamentally revised version ICD 11 is to be adopted by the WHO in 2018. The Dissociative Disorders section will likely adopt the diagnosis of dissociative identity disorder on the basis of DSM 5 (current status of the formulation: <https://icd.who.int/dev11/l-m/en>, under 6B64 Dissociative identity disorder).

→ **Support for Victims Leaving Cults / Destructive Groups**

Ceasing all contact with the perpetrator and/or putting an end to the acts of violence are often stipulated as prerequisites for trauma therapy (and other forms of support such as admission to assisted living facilities, clinics, etc.). For victims and survivors of organized violence and ritual violence, this frequently renders help impossible since the goal of a destructive group/cult is explicitly the lifelong contact for the purpose of controlling and exploiting the victims and survivors.

Support for victims leaving cult is therefore necessary in order to facilitate any kind of break from organized structures and ritual structures. This includes fleeing externally AND internally:

- **Fleeing externally:** Consistent avoidance of contact, measures to ensure safety in the outside world, e.g. escorts for errands, moving, unlisted information, name change, protection letter (securely archived record of knowledge about criminal offences and structures of the perpetrator group) and possible criminal charges.
- **Fleeing internally:** Reducing internal dissociative barriers, undoing conditioning and programming, learning to live with the knowledge gained and with the consequences of the violence, in the case of ritual structures of violence: separating from the ideology, reorientation

This is a long process and can generally only be accomplished with good support (helper network).

The duration of the exit and the type, scope and duration of the required exit accompaniment may vary greatly and need to be adapted to suit the person exiting.

→ **Ideology**

In general, ideology is understood to be a system of value judgements and ideals which is also referred to as an “outlook on life”. Within the context of ritual violence, ideologies of all kinds are used as an explanation for the interests of perpetrators in power and exploitation, explaining the apparent meaning of the abuse and serving to justify the violence. These ideologies can be religious or fascist, for instance. They often have a basis rooted in existing concepts and ideas (e.g. in Christianity or Satanism, ancient pagan rituals) in order to appropriate them for their own purposes. According to reports by some who have escaped, there may also be a religious/spiritual dimension (and the corresponding abuse of spiritual needs). This reinforces the hold the group/cult possesses and makes leaving more difficult since the loss involved, lacking any reorientation, is hard to bear.

→ **Intentionally induced DIS**

Dissociation is an instinctive survival mechanism of the human organism. It is possible to trigger this dissociative protection mechanism intentionally. Forms of severe violence experienced in early childhood which are planned and repeatedly applied bring on dissociation (splitting) and the creation of personality parts which are more or less separate from each other in one person. The individual personality parts are trained for specific purposes defined by the perpetrators/groups of perpetrators, e.g. sexual exploitation, trafficking in drugs or human beings, espionage, specific tasks determined by the ideology of the group, control of the inner personality system. This makes a child especially profitable, e.g. within the scope of commercial sexual exploitation, with the child fulfilling the needs of various “clients” by means of personality parts which can be made to respond to codes or triggers. One possible example: Part A is insensitive to pain and can be used for extreme sexual violence; B knows specific patterns and automatically obeys; C shows physical arousal/“desire” etc. Intentionally induced DIS can remain unnoticed for a long time. There is usually no discernible personality change; instead there is an external everyday person, besides whom and/or through whom other personalities act. As a rule, this occurs without the everyday person being able to detect or talk about it. In addition, some of the personality parts are only active in defined situations, e.g. while being sexually exploited or within the context of the group’s ideology. At the same time, there are everyday personalities who, for example, go to school and have no memory of the violence. The gaps in memory and/or inner dissociative barriers protect the perpetrators from being discovered (see also Mind-Control, Conditioning, Programming).

→ **Mind control**

Mind-control is the deliberate and planned control of a person. Dissociation, conditioning, and programming begin at a very early stage, often from birth on (cf. Intentionally induced DIS). The child or personality parts learn that taking any kind of initiative or seeking help in any way is pointless and will be severely punished.

→ **Person, personality, personalities, personality parts**

Various terms are used in the specialized literature and in this text. It is an attempt to express complex phenomena in words.

Normally, a person is considered to be an individual (Latin *individuum* “indivisible”, “single thing”). The term “individual” is used especially for designating people as moral subjects, i.e. as possessing rights, responsibilities, and obligations. In this context, the term “persons” is used rather than “individuals”. In the case of persons, individual characteristics, interests, and features are also attributed to subjective elements of the personality, of individuality (Source: Wikipedia). The individual/person is a consistent unit – albeit with many facets and possible roles.

In the case of people with severe dissociative disorders/dissociative identity disorder (DIS), this consistency is no longer given. The personality is split as a result of dissociation serving as a survival mechanism. The emergent parts are more or less rigorously separate from each other. In the case of intentionally induced DIS in particular, the separation may be very extensive and expressed in completely distinct behaviours and thought patterns, memories, capabilities, etc. Depending on the perspective, this can be considered a matter of autonomous personalities or parts or personality parts or personality conditions. It is critical that the formation and existence of the individual parts be considered, in addition to observing the whole (inner system of the personalities). Every person is unique and impossible to control completely – despite inner systems which, in part, were intentionally created by the perpetrators and controlled by them. People with DIS can, through progressive integration (overcoming inner dissociative barriers and amnesias) and self-regulation, develop and use individual strengths, capabilities, and traits for themselves.

→ **Post-trauma disorders**

Experiencing sexualized violence normally has consequences which not only result in psychiatric illnesses but also have huge impacts on abilities to interact socially, on professional development, and on physical health. The earlier in life sexualized violence is experienced, and the more frequent and more intense the violent acts are, the more complex the consequences are, that is to say, the consequences overlap with each other. Victims and survivors of organized violence and ritual violence have to live with the consequences of complex traumatisation and with the effects of severe dissociative disorders.

→ **Programming**

Programming refers to intentionally linking different conditioned behavioural patterns to various corresponding inner parts. These behavioural patterns can then be activated by means of conditioned stimuli/triggers and thus controlled. The automated actions (programmes) may have different, possibly life-threatening, effects: e.g. a return to the group of perpetrators, refusal to eat, inability to accept help, self-mutilation, or suicide.

→ **Sexualized violence / Sexual abuse**

The term sexualized violence emphasizes the fact that the focus of the act is violence and not sexuality. Sexuality is functionalized for the purpose of committing violence and exercising power. Based on UBSKM definitions, according to social law the definition of sexual abuse corresponds to that of sexualized violence and denotes actions which are performed on or in the presence of girls or boys against their will, or to which they cannot consciously consent as a result of their being in an inferior position physically, psychologically, intellectually, or verbally. The perpetrator uses his/her position of power and authority to satisfy his/her own needs at the expense of the child. According to criminal law: anyone who forces children into sexual acts, demands that they perform sexual acts, or forces them

to watch such acts can be punished under criminal law, because special protection exists for children i.e. persons under 14 years of age. They cannot legally consent to sexual acts because their capacity for sexual self-determination is still developing. This applies to adolescents up to 16 years of age if there is a relationship of custodial care, and can even apply up to the age of 18 if perpetrators exploit their situation in a relationship of custodial care or if perpetrators take advantage of their desperate plight (cf. [www.beauftragter-missbrauch.de/recht/strafrecht/](http://www.beauftragter-missbrauch.de/recht/strafrecht/)). (<http://www.beauftragter-missbrauch.de/en/the-commissioner/the-office>)

#### → Trafficking in and exploitation of children

Referring to Article 3 of the Voluntary Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 25 May 2000 with respect to the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography, offering, delivering, or accepting, by any means whatsoever, a child for the purpose of sexual exploitation of the child, transfer of organs of the child for profit, engagement of the child in forced labour, illegal adoption, as well as offering, obtaining, procuring or providing a child for child prostitution, and producing, distributing, disseminating, importing, exporting, offering, selling, or possessing child pornography are to be fully covered under criminal law. This expert report refers to the international definition, since in German criminal law, which contains penal provisions pertaining to trafficking in persons/forced prostitution/forced labour that also refer to persons under 21 years of age, the heading “Child Trafficking” in § 236 of the German Criminal Code (StGB) refers to other elements of the offence.

#### → Trigger

Characteristics of a threatening situation (e.g. qualities which can be seen, heard, felt, or smelt) which are linked to instinctive alarm responses (flee, fight, freeze/feign death, submit) are referred to as triggers. These characteristics make it possible for an organism to quickly recognize future life-threatening situations. This enables survival with the automatic activation of an appropriate alarm response. Triggers remain active even when a threatening situation is far removed in terms of time or geography, and always cause the same alarm response regardless of how dangerous the actual situation is. Within the scope of mind-control, triggers are set intentionally which activate specific conditioned behaviours or programmes and/or specific personality parts.

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These recommendations were developed by:

CLAUDIA IGNEY, Vielfalt e.V.

ASTRID-MARIA KREYERHOFF, Zartbitter Münster e.V.

The members of the expert committee<sup>3</sup> contributed in an advisory capacity:

RUDOLF VON BRACKEN, Büro für Kinderrechte und Opferschutz

GABY BREITENBACH, Villa Lindenfels, Institut für systemische Therapie und Traumatherapie

KENO BURMESTER, Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Kinderschutz-Zentren e.V.

BRIGITTE HAHN, Fachstelle für Sekten- und Weltanschauungsfragen im bischöflichen Generalvikariat Münster, Leiterin des Beirates Rituelle Gewalt der Bistümer Münster, Osnabrück, Essen

REGINA KALTHEGENER, Geschäftsstelle Fonds sexueller Missbrauch

MECHTILD MAURER, ECPAT Deutschland e.V.

TINA MEHMEL, Lotta e.V. – Arbeitskreis gegen Rituelle Gewalt in Schleswig-Holstein

JANA SCHREMPP, ECPAT Deutschland e.V.

RENATE SCHUSCH, Clearingstelle Fonds Sexueller Missbrauch

ALEX STERN, Betroffenenrat beim UBSKM

NAILE TANIŞ, KOK - Bundesweiter Koordinierungskreis gegen Menschenhandel e.V.

HJÖRDIS E. WIRTH, Betroffenenrat beim UBSKM und ständiger Gast der Unabhängigen Kommission zur Aufarbeitung sexuellen Kindesmissbrauchs

DANIELA ZIEGLER, Velseits GmbH

Representatives of the TASK FORCE OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSIONER FOR CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE ISSUES AND THE OFFICE OF THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE and representatives of the GERMAN FEDERAL CRIMINAL POLICE OFFICE (BKA) participated as guests on the expert committee.

MARY JO RABE, with the expert assistance and support of GABY BREITENBACH (Villa Lindenfels, Institut für systemische Therapie und Traumatherapie) and SUSANNE NICK (Universitätsklinikum Hamburg-Eppendorf), is responsible for the correct English translation, including specialized terminology.

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Glinkastraße 24  
10117 Berlin  
[www.bmfsfj.de](http://www.bmfsfj.de)

### Project Partner:

Die Kinderschutz-Zentren e.V.  
Bonner Straße 145  
50968 Köln  
[www.kinderschutz-zentren.org](http://www.kinderschutz-zentren.org)

ECPAT Deutschland e.V.  
Alfred-Döblin-Platz 1  
79100 Freiburg  
[www.ecpat.de](http://www.ecpat.de)

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