

|  |
| --- |
|  |
| **December 2022** |
| **WELCOME TO CIRCLESEUROPE*****The Association for European Providers of******Circles of Support and Accountability and their supporters***Dear ColleaguesThe festive season is upon us again – how fast the year has gone! It has been a year of significant upheaval in terms of the impact of the Ukraine war, the increasing costs of energy, increasing inflation and a staggering increase in cost-of-living pressures for all. This came on the back of COVID-19 and the instability of the last few years. 2022 has been a tough year for many and I am sure we all share the trepidation of what 2023 may bring. On behalf of the CirclesEurope Board I therefore want to wish you, your loved ones and colleagues a restful festive season and a well-deserved rest. This Newsletter has fewer contributions than usual from member countries, but hopefully you will enjoy the short updates of what some member Providers have been focusing on in the last few months.

|  |
| --- |
| **THE CIRCLESEUROPE 2022 GENERAL MEETING**  |

The General Meeting of the CirclesEurope Association took place on 17 June 2022 (online) and was very well attended by all members but also our colleagues from Canada, New Zealand and the United States. At the General Meeting the results of the Board election were announced. All the current members were elected for another term (*Chair: Riana Taylor; Secretary: Ann Castrel; Treasurer: Marijke Bijlsma and Research and Evaluation lead: Kieran McCartan*). Mechtild Höing agreed to continue to support the Board as a voluntary member. The Activity and Financial Reports, together with next year’s Policy Plan were also presented to members for approval. The General Meeting was followed by a successful seminar which was delivered by Dom Williams and Lesley Martin from Circles South East in the UK who talked about Circles South East’s ‘*Working with Protective Adults*’ programme which is a support programme for non-offending partners of people who have committed sexual offences. This was followed by Marijke Bijlsma from CoSA Netherlands who talked about how CoSA Netherlands supports the families and children of Core Members. These were very interesting presentations and raised some very important issues. It clearly showed how the partners, families and friends of Core Members are affected by sexual abuse and how they often do not receive any help and support. Our thanks to Dom, Lesley and Marijke for their excellent presentations. The General Meeting and seminar were attended by representatives from 11 countries which shows the growing interest in Circles internationally.

|  |
| --- |
| **CIRCLESEUROPE MINI-CONFERENCE: SAVE THE DATE!!!**  |

Following the success of the last two, the Board is planning another CirclesEurope mini conference which will take place online on **either the 4th or 5th of April 2023 from 9-12 UK time/10-13h00 European time**. Please save the dates for your diaries and we will confirm the final date and arrangements early in 2023. The theme for the conference will be online sexual abuse. We are currently looking at doing a session on the UK’s new Circles programme (Circles ReBoot), a session on the impact of online abuse on victims and also a session for Circle volunteers.

|  |
| --- |
| **NEWS FROM COSA PROVIDERS** |

|  |
| --- |
| **From the netherlands BY MECHTILD HÖING**  |

**Study on COSA light and Mentoring by a COSA volunteer in the Netherlands:**The Dutch Probation Service has in the past years developed two new services for people with convictions for sexual offences who are in need of support during their re-integration. The first is called ‘COSA light’ which is an adaptation of the regular Circles model for people who meet all the selection criteria for a Circle but cannot thrive in the group dynamic of a full circle. Often this is because of mental health issues, e.g., a mild intellectual disability or Autism Spectrum or Neurodiverse Condition. Cosa light involves a smaller number of volunteers (2 or 3) to make meetings and the process of forming relationships less demanding for the Core Member. Mentoring by a COSA volunteer is also offered to people with convictions for sexual offences who do not need a full Circle but can use some social support during their reintegration. The Dutch Probation Service has commissioned a study on the provision and the theoretical underpinning of these two new services, which has been conducted by Mechtild Höing. The report (in Dutch) will be made available through the CirclesEurope website. We will notify members as soon as the report is available on the website. Well done to Mechtild for the hard work that has gone into the evaluation!**Collaboration with Germany:**On November 18th, Marijke Bijlsma (Board member and Circle Coordinator in the Netherlands) and Mechtild Höing (volunteer to the board and researcher at Avans University) did a presentation about COSA for the German Association for Victim – Offender mediation during their annual conference. COSA is still a very unknown concept in the German Justice landscape, and therefore we were very happy to introduce COSA to this audience. It was received very positively. In March 2023, Mechtild and Marijke will deliver a further COSA workshop during a biannual conference of the Probation Service in Lower Saxony, Germany. Hopefully this interest in COSA will eventually lead to a COSA initiative in Germany.

|  |
| --- |
| **FROM the UK BY RIANA TAYLOR** **Circles ReBoot** **(a CoSA PROGAMME specifically for people who access Child Sexual Exploitation Material, CSEM)** |

Members will remember that I previously reported that the Circles ReBoot pilot programme was delayed due to COVID-19. We managed to start the first of the 12 pilot Circles in November 2021, and all were completed by the end of October 2022. The pilot evaluation is conducted by independent researchers from onlinePROTECT, Lincoln University and Royal Holloway University in the UK, led by Professor Derek Perkins. The interim evaluation results which Circles UK received in October 2022 showed extremely positive results and confirmed that the programme design and methodology are appropriate for the service user group, the materials which Circles UK developed are effective and Circle Coordinators and volunteers confirmed that the approach of a semi-structured programme worked well. There is much in the in interim evaluation report that is positive, but we were particularly struck by the following quotes:**Comments by Core Members:***The last thing I was expecting to get out of it was confidence, which is something I haven’t had my whole life and I’m actually really confident after this whole course* (CM XXX).*My main goal out of it, as I say, all the tasks were to sort of get myself out of my comfort zone and to meet people and put myself in situations where I expand the circle of contacts, acquaintances etc which hopefully yes, with the tools I’ve got from that and the positive reinforcement, yes that should help me to move forward, to keep on going* (CM XXX).*I’ve actually been going out into social situations, alone, [by] myself, and things like that which is incredible for me, who’s been a self-isolating loner for a couple of years, say it’s like going out to a nightclub on a Saturday night and just going out and doing something socially which I’ve done since start[-ing] the Circle which is really good and just showing you that confidence that I’m willing to go out there and look for the; look for it and experience it because a lot of people when they’re depressed, it’s almost you expect it to come towards you, but no, you’ve got to go out and get it and I’m getting that confidence back* (CM XXX).**Comment by a Volunteer:***Yeah,* *socially he improved quite a lot which was not necessarily something we were expecting as we were going through it because it happened towards the end … towards the end of the process he had way more eye contact, he was talking more, even starting conversations with me yesterday which was quite a big, a big thing* (V XXX).**Comment by a Coordinator:***When we did the review, we did the review at 5 weeks and his Probation Officer came along to that and just said how he’d been transformed, how he made eye contact with everybody when he came into the Probation Office now as well as the Circle and how she thought he’d been a transformed character … physically his body language was more relaxed and comfortable and engaging, he brought Easter eggs for the Volunteers at the last meeting as a goodbye which was a very positive sign and socially adept, I’d describe it as just the clunkiness just seemed to go from him, I think that’s probably the easiest way I can describe it, it was the awkwardness possibly* (Co XXX).The final evaluation report is expected to be available in January 2023. Circles UK plans to share the findings of the evaluation at an international online event as the results are awaited with great interest. Watch this space, we will communicate with members early in 2023 about the arrangements for the event!

|  |
| --- |
| **COSA volunteers FROM latvia, the uk, the netherlands and belgium come together** |

*This is an extract from an article that was written after the event by Lucy Graham, Volunteer Coordinator of Circles South West in the UK who attended the volunteer event.*In the first event of its kind, Circles Volunteers and Coordinators from across Europe came together, by zoom, to share ideas and talk about their experiences. Four countries were involved in the meeting, which took place on 18th July 2022: Latvia, Belgium, the Netherlands and the UK, with both coordinators and volunteers attending. The meeting was facilitated by Riana Taylor, Chief Executive Officer of Circles UK and Board Chair of CirclesEurope, who had been inspired to the idea through contact with Latvia who were particularly keen to hear from Circles volunteers and coordinators from other countries.She said: “Latvia recently joined the Circles Europe Association. They are still at the beginning stages of their Circles development, and they have worked closely with Circles UK to help them develop their provision such as designing materials, getting advice to recruit volunteers and so on. They approached me recently to ask if some of their volunteers could talk to some volunteers from the UK to get some ideas. I then thought why only Latvia and the UK? Why not involve other countries. Belgium and the Netherlands were keen to join the first event. For future events we can invite a few more countries like Catalonia, Italy, etc.”The meeting, which was attended by about 20 people, allowed projects from differing countries and regions to talk about their experience as a Circle volunteer and share ideas by comparing how Circles provision in their countries differ and why.Subjects such as how many volunteers are placed in a Circle, ways volunteers communicate with core members and how to manage a Core Member you find challenging were all touched upon. Circles South East, from the UK, talked of a new app they use to communicate within the Circle to ensure confidentiality which was well received by the rest of the Circles community and Circles South West spoke of advertising, recruiting volunteers and social media – something the smaller projects will find most helpful as they grow. A problem that faced all of the projects is recruiting more men as volunteers and each country reported they find this particularly difficult.Natalie from CoSA Belgium said: “We don’t have as many men, so we try and mix in other ways, ensuring we have a range of ages, life experience, backgrounds and so on”.A particularly interesting discussion centred around the fact of whether volunteers were made aware of a Core Member’s specific offence/s before the person starts a Circle. Whilst in the UK this is standard practice on a need-to-know basis, in other countries they wait for the Core Member to disclose to the group in their own time – once a relationship has been built and a level of trust has developed. Melanie, a volunteer from Circles South West, said: *'It was an absolute pleasure to be able to participate in the International Circles conference. It was a fantastic opportunity to share practice, exchange ideas and share experiences. We can certainly learn a lot from each other and continue to build the strength of the support we are able to offer our members and the community'* Inna, a coordinator from Latvia said: *“It was amazing to hear other countries’ experiences.”***INTERESTING PUBLICATIONS**  Members may find the following of interest:* [**What works to prevent online violence against children?**](https://weprotectga.lt.acemlna.com/Prod/link-tracker?redirectUrl=aHR0cHMlM0ElMkYlMkZ3d3cud2hvLmludCUyRnB1YmxpY2F0aW9ucyUyRmklMkZpdGVtJTJGOTc4OTI0MDA2MjA4NSUzRnV0bV9zb3VyY2UlM0RBY3RpdmVDYW1wYWlnbiUyNnV0bV9tZWRpdW0lM0RlbWFpbCUyNnV0bV9jb250ZW50JTNETmV3cyUyQmFuZCUyQm9wcG9ydHVuaXRpZXMlMkJmcm9tJTJCYWNyb3NzJTJCdGhlJTJCQWxsaWFuY2UlMjZ1dG1fY2FtcGFpZ24lM0REZWNlbWJlciUyQjIwMjIlMkJOZXdzbGV0dGVy&sig=4EMBpfSut8Tz6kV7uVZRs3RcVDcvZxTqGRCQJgphSKu3&iat=1671121437&a=%7C%7C799975051%7C%7C&account=weprotectga%2Eactivehosted%2Ecom&email=Ptljupw3qn7GrY4Ng1yBmL5MChIIUN25BrHautDFNTo%3D&s=c65a1247cd7c71f7e43c63a6d2c5eb8f&i=98A185A6A1191) This report presents ways to keep children safe online, focusing also on how to prevent child sexual abuse, including grooming and sexual image abuse.
* From the World Health Organisation: [**ASEAN ICT Forum on Child Online Protection**](https://weprotectga.lt.acemlna.com/Prod/link-tracker?redirectUrl=aHR0cHMlM0ElMkYlMkZ3d3cudW5pY2VmLm9yZyUyRmVhcCUyRmJsb2clMkZwcml2YXRlLXNlY3RvcnMtcm9sZS1rZWVwaW5nLWNoaWxkcmVuLWFuZC15b3VuZy1wZW9wbGUtc2FmZS1vbmxpbmUtYXNlYW4lM0Z1dG1fc291cmNlJTNEQWN0aXZlQ2FtcGFpZ24lMjZ1dG1fbWVkaXVtJTNEZW1haWwlMjZ1dG1fY29udGVudCUzRE5ld3MlMkJhbmQlMkJvcHBvcnR1bml0aWVzJTJCZnJvbSUyQmFjcm9zcyUyQnRoZSUyQkFsbGlhbmNlJTI2dXRtX2NhbXBhaWduJTNERGVjZW1iZXIlMkIyMDIyJTJCTmV3c2xldHRlcg==&sig=J2onWnbBPeJAA129dgKrEgYn6MiugFzy2Sx7tzjbUdBk&iat=1671121437&a=%7C%7C799975051%7C%7C&account=weprotectga%2Eactivehosted%2Ecom&email=Ptljupw3qn7GrY4Ng1yBmL5MChIIUN25BrHautDFNTo%3D&s=c65a1247cd7c71f7e43c63a6d2c5eb8f&i=98A185A6A1195)- Diverse stakeholders got together to explore how to create a digital environment that puts the best interests of children first.
* From UNICEF: [**#Iamsafeonline case study**](https://weprotectga.lt.acemlna.com/Prod/link-tracker?redirectUrl=aHR0cHMlM0ElMkYlMkZ3d3cud2Vwcm90ZWN0Lm9yZyUyRmNhc2Utc3R1ZHklMkZpYW1zYWZlb25saW5lJTJGJTNGdXRtX3NvdXJjZSUzREFjdGl2ZUNhbXBhaWduJTI2dXRtX21lZGl1bSUzRGVtYWlsJTI2dXRtX2NvbnRlbnQlM0ROZXdzJTJCYW5kJTJCb3Bwb3J0dW5pdGllcyUyQmZyb20lMkJhY3Jvc3MlMkJ0aGUlMkJBbGxpYW5jZSUyNnV0bV9jYW1wYWlnbiUzRERlY2VtYmVyJTJCMjAyMiUyQk5ld3NsZXR0ZXI=&sig=DHMXzakTVFVLXkv3x8NH4JHj6r7Fx17V1q1CJ1D3zv7n&iat=1671121437&a=%7C%7C799975051%7C%7C&account=weprotectga%2Eactivehosted%2Ecom&email=Ptljupw3qn7GrY4Ng1yBmL5MChIIUN25BrHautDFNTo%3D&s=c65a1247cd7c71f7e43c63a6d2c5eb8f&i=98A185A6A1192) - UNICEF Albania’s flagship child protection programme, which intends to understand the investigation challenges of online crimes against children in Albania.
* From the WeProtect Global Alliance: [**The role of age verification technology in tackling child sexual exploitation and abuse online**](https://weprotectga.lt.acemlna.com/Prod/link-tracker?redirectUrl=aHR0cHMlM0ElMkYlMkZ3d3cud2Vwcm90ZWN0Lm9yZyUyRmxpYnJhcnklMkZ0aGUtcm9sZS1vZi1hZ2UtdmVyaWZpY2F0aW9uLXRlY2hub2xvZ3ktaW4tdGFja2xpbmctY2hpbGQtc2V4dWFsLWV4cGxvaXRhdGlvbi1hbmQtYWJ1c2Utb25saW5lJTJGJTNGdXRtX3NvdXJjZSUzREFjdGl2ZUNhbXBhaWduJTI2dXRtX21lZGl1bSUzRGVtYWlsJTI2dXRtX2NvbnRlbnQlM0ROZXdzJTJCYW5kJTJCb3Bwb3J0dW5pdGllcyUyQmZyb20lMkJhY3Jvc3MlMkJ0aGUlMkJBbGxpYW5jZSUyNnV0bV9jYW1wYWlnbiUzRERlY2VtYmVyJTJCMjAyMiUyQk5ld3NsZXR0ZXI=&sig=4iRSpdDBF8UoFHHcHtAmeCAt3in4hc4aQESEd51Qnp2i&iat=1671121437&a=%7C%7C799975051%7C%7C&account=weprotectga%2Eactivehosted%2Ecom&email=Ptljupw3qn7GrY4Ng1yBmL5MChIIUN25BrHautDFNTo%3D&s=c65a1247cd7c71f7e43c63a6d2c5eb8f&i=98A185A6A1186) – An intelligence briefing which explores the role that age assurance can play in safeguarding children, the current regulatory landscape around age and different methods of age assurance.
* [**November 18: the World Day for the Prevention of, and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence**](https://weprotectga.lt.acemlna.com/Prod/link-tracker?redirectUrl=aHR0cHMlM0ElMkYlMkZtZWRpYS51bi5vcmclMkZlbiUyRmFzc2V0JTJGazFpJTJGazFpZXRxOHppeCUzRnV0bV9zb3VyY2UlM0RBY3RpdmVDYW1wYWlnbiUyNnV0bV9tZWRpdW0lM0RlbWFpbCUyNnV0bV9jb250ZW50JTNETmV3cyUyQmFuZCUyQm9wcG9ydHVuaXRpZXMlMkJmcm9tJTJCYWNyb3NzJTJCdGhlJTJCQWxsaWFuY2UlMjZ1dG1fY2FtcGFpZ24lM0ROb3ZlbWJlciUyQjIwMjIlMkJOZXdzbGV0dGVy&sig=BR185JfozzHeYiSVnQowrYeJxw1ya8nJ51vgAyXzL7zf&iat=1668692360&a=%7C%7C799975051%7C%7C&account=weprotectga%2Eactivehosted%2Ecom&email=Ptljupw3qn7GrY4Ng1yBmL5MChIIUN25BrHautDFNTo%3D&s=c65a1247cd7c71f7e43c63a6d2c5eb8f&i=96A180A6A1117) - The United Nations passed the resolution to recognise this new international day to increase awareness, better align resources, and call for legislative solutions to tackle abuse
* [**The European Union Digital Services Act**](https://weprotectga.lt.acemlna.com/Prod/link-tracker?redirectUrl=aHR0cHMlM0ElMkYlMkZ3d3cud2Vwcm90ZWN0Lm9yZyUyRndwLWNvbnRlbnQlMkZ1cGxvYWRzJTJGRVUtRGlnaXRhbC1TZXJ2aWNlcy1BY3QtUG9saWN5LVBhcGVyLnBkZiUzRnV0bV9zb3VyY2UlM0RBY3RpdmVDYW1wYWlnbiUyNnV0bV9tZWRpdW0lM0RlbWFpbCUyNnV0bV9jb250ZW50JTNETmV3cyUyQmFuZCUyQm9wcG9ydHVuaXRpZXMlMkJmcm9tJTJCYWNyb3NzJTJCdGhlJTJCQWxsaWFuY2UlMjZ1dG1fY2FtcGFpZ24lM0ROb3ZlbWJlciUyQjIwMjIlMkJOZXdzbGV0dGVy&sig=AbvGG5KmFXVuSkvXfqAYiHAm1TsPmnnp6XGeyRzydt3b&iat=1668692360&a=%7C%7C799975051%7C%7C&account=weprotectga%2Eactivehosted%2Ecom&email=Ptljupw3qn7GrY4Ng1yBmL5MChIIUN25BrHautDFNTo%3D&s=c65a1247cd7c71f7e43c63a6d2c5eb8f&i=96A180A6A1118) - It came into force on 16 November and aims to "create a safer digital space in which the fundamental rights of all users of digital services are protected".

Remember to also regularly check the CirclesEurope website. Also feel free to contribute to the website. Marijke Bijlsma who kindly looks after the website ensures that relevant articles, blogs and other interesting information are placed on the website ([www.circleseurope.eu](http://www.circleseurope.eu/)).**FESTIVE SEASON’S GREETINGS!**Thank you for your support over the past year. The Board greatly appreciates your commitment to the development of COSA in Europe and beyond and the help and support you have given the CirclesEurope Association. We wish you all the best for the festive season and look forward to continuing to work with you in 2023.A christmas tree with ornaments and lights  Description automatically generated with low confidence**JOINING THE CIRCLESEUROPE ASSOCIATION**Full membership of the Association is open to all Circles Providers in Europe, including Trustees, Staff and Volunteers. Associate and Associate Individual membership is available for non-European Circles Provider organisations and individuals, as well as those with an interest in Circles but who are not CoSA Providers. If you want to join the Association, details are available on the website: [www.circleseurope.eu](http://www.circleseurope.eu/). Membership fees are 40 Euros for full membership, 25 Euros for Associate Membership (for organisations) and 10 Euros for Individual Associate Membership. We are pleased that the membership of the Association is steadily growing. Please circulate the information to all your volunteers and staff and encourage them to join the Association. We are always looking for funding and the limited funding that we have at the moment is limiting how much work we can do. Please may we therefore ask that you continue to share the news of the Association, and that we need donations and members to grow the Association to the benefit of CoSA in Europe. The Board will of course continue to keep you updated on its work and progress. **CONTACT****info@circleseurope.eu**www.circleseurope.eu**Board:**Riana Taylor: **riana.taylor@circles-uk.org.uk**Ann Castrel: **ann.castrel@cawantwerpen.be**Marijke Bijlsma: m.bijlsma@reclassering.nlKieran McCartan: **kieran.mccartan@uwe.ac.uk****Voluntary assistance to the Board:**Mechtild Höing, **ma.hoing@avans.nl**Audrey Alards, **a.alards@reclassering.nl***CirclesEurope Association – Vivaldiplantsoen 100, 3533 JE Utrecht, the Netherlands,* *Chamber of Commerce No. 71898190 (KvK Utrecht, the Netherlands),* *Bank Account NL73 RABO 0332 4136 67 (BIC code RABONL2U)* |
|  |