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**MULTIDISCIPLINARY COOPERATION FOR THE BENEFIT OF**  
**ENDANGERED CHILD**

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*Abstract*

Multidisciplinary cooperation is developing in many sectors helping professions. This trend is also true in the field of social work with vulnerable children. In working with the vulnerable child requires the cooperation of government agencies and nongovernmental organizations. The paper focuses on the possibilities and forms of multidisciplinary collaboration in working with endangered children. They defined the role of the various institutions involved in cooperative teams striving for effective cooperation. This paper aims to map and evaluate the effectiveness of multidisciplinary cooperation for the benefit of endangered child, especially the child as a victim of crime. Used the analysis of documents and interviews with experts in the field. Based on the interviews, it analyzes the role of social worker working with the child as a victim of a crime committed through social networks. The partial aim is to define the role of each operator in multidisciplinary cooperation for the benefit of endangered child. At the end of the field will be determined by further research and recommendations for practice

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**Keywords:** Social work, endangered child, multidisciplinary cooperation



## **1. Introduction**

Social work as a profession and applied scientific discipline covers a wide sphere of activity. Social work is an effort to prevent social exclusion and minimize the risks associated with it. This paper focuses on the possibilities of social workers in the field of assistance and support to victims of crime. Special target group consists child victims of sexual crimes committed in cyberspace for their specific vulnerability. According to the opinions of the authors to work with these victims requires special demands on the cooperation of several different institutions. At the beginning of the article will be defined basic concepts related. It will also be outlined of the Problems, one of which is to evaluate the importance of social work in work with child victims of crime. Furthermore, the definition of the target group, which focuses on multidisciplinary collaboration, this target group, children as victims of sexual crimes committed through virtual social networks. Based on the interviews, it analyzes the role of social worker working with the child as a victim of a crime committed through social networks. The conclusion of the article will be established recommendations for practice.

### **1.1. Definitions of terms**

In this part of the article will be defined terms that relate to helping children at risk of social networks. Will be discussed about multidisciplinary collaboration, case management, and will be further discussed social networks and cybernality.

The term multidisciplinary is understood multi-disciplinary, combining multiple disciplines. In this context, the term is also used interdisciplinary, which can be considered a synonym. In foreign literature is used by multidisciplinary concept, the Czech Republic, the development of social work and other helping professionals use the term interdisciplinary. For the purposes of this article I will prefer the term multidisciplinary. Forms of multidisciplinary collaboration are applied in the following areas: mental health care and psychiatry, hospice care, domestic violence, care for the elderly, work with youth at risk, etc. It is in working with endangered children can be in the last few years have seen the development efforts of multidisciplinary cooperation.

The concepts of teamwork and multidisciplinary collaboration are mentioned recently in the context of modern social work. According to Matoušek (2005), Kolářková & Kodymová (2005), a multidisciplinary team is based on the idea of cooperation and coordination process specialists. This is not a hierarchical system, representatives of various professions in the team bring specific skills and cooperate with other institutions and persons belonging to a client's social network. Teamwork is not simple, it is influenced by the willingness of team members to work together and how team members are perceived by users of the service or other service providers. The team leader must be aware of these factors, it is also his responsibility to combine insight and leadership to coordinate all activities to ensure maximum client thrived.

Multidisciplinary collaboration in working with youth at risk in the literature presents different names for forms of co-operation: case management, case conferences for youth teams. In fact, these forms of cooperation common denominator: it is a cooperation network for the benefit of the client. The basic method for social work is a case work with a client. Case management is a form of teamwork in favor of the client - the endangered child. In practice, we meet with case conferences, which can be

considered identical form of cooperation. Case conferences are conferences devoted to the debate about the case in which they participate family members or other close people and representatives of institutions that work with endangered children.

The theme of the work is related to the concept of social networks. Social networks are specific web services, focused primarily on acquiring and maintaining social contacts with other Internet users. They can be targeted universally (Facebook, G +), or targeted eg. professionally (LinkedIn, ResearchGate), based on membership in a particular group (former classmates), or by other criteria. The term social networks often coincides with the term of community service servers. Social networks have a number of common characteristics:

- the content of social networks is created by users themselves;
- social networks allow you to create social bonds;
- social networks contain large amounts of personal and sensitive information about themselves published and disseminated by users;
- social networks support a simple and effective information sharing (Kopecky, 2015).

Information and communication technologies and their users create so called cyberspace as a form of a parallel world. Consciousness is created by users of the network as a virtual world which, however, has real consequences. It covers all of the virtual space, especially the world of the Internet and other networks and mobile technologies. It offers extensive possibilities of use, from everyday communication (via email, chat, social networks, video calls using web cam) to searching for information, using information systems of various institutions (including public authorities) to saving information and finding entertainment. At the same time it offers space for harmful behaviour including crime. As information technologies grow more and more into everyday life, we use the term “cybernetic crimes”, “cybercrimes” or “cybernatality” (Gřivna, Scheinost & Zoubková, 2014). In practice, also used the concepts of cyberbullying or kyberviolence. In our state we will preferentially ingested by the notion of committing a crime via social networks because it best describes the selection of the target group - children who are victims of crime committed through social networks.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Assistance and support to victims of crime is still marginalized area for cooperation between social workers and law enforcement authorities in criminal proceedings, or administrators of justice - the Probation and Mediation Service. Helping Victims need not only be understood as a form of psychological help, that is only one of the possible forms of assistance to these victims. From the perspective of social work we can assist victims of crime understand the need to work as well as the broader social environment and especially as concrete help in a difficult situation, which could involve support in solving the basal existential worries. Therefore, we emphasize the specifics of social work with victims of crimes related to children as victims of crimes committed through virtual social networks. Presented are institutions whose representatives work with child victims of crime. These institutions were selected on the basis of pilot interviews with experts on the topic.

## **2.1. Reasons of study**

Optics restorative justice approach to crime is viewing primarily as damage to human beings and human relationships. The primary victims are those people who were directly affected by the crime, but for the victims it is necessary to be regarded family members of primary victims, family members of the perpetrators, witnesses and people belonging to a community that has been affected by crime. Remedy crime (restoration) should be primarily a response to the needs of victims and damage. The state's role is through appropriate programs create an opportunity to interested parties (victim, offender, community) could collectively discuss the causes of the crime and how to remedy its consequences, in especially with regard to the needs of victims.

## **2.2. Specifics of social work with victims of crime**

A special group of victims who may not understand the criminal proceedings, which affects their reduced mental strength or other persisting psychological problems. They especially children, elderly people, people with mental disabilities or dementia, mentally unstable people. Secondary victimization arises from improper treatment with victims, particularly in the case, unless the victim given plenty of time to explain the course of criminal proceedings, not chosen the appropriate terminology is presented too much information at one time, are required signatures on the materials that the victim does not have time to study, etc.

Social work with victims of crime is becoming increasingly important. Victims of crime are social workers can offer all basic and expert advice (see Social Services Act no. 108/2006 Coll.) And social services aimed at the target group. According to the register of social services in the Czech Republic 234 social service providers among their target groups include victims of crime. Published a register of providers of assistance to victims of crime, which includes entities providing social services, by accredited subjects, lawyers and the Probation and Mediation Service.

## **2.3. Children as victims of sexual crimes committed through virtual social networks**

Specific target groups particularly vulnerable victims are children who have become victims of crime encroachment intimacy, human dignity and are eventually motivated by sexual overtones. Internet through their easy accessibility, unfortunately recruits child victims of offenses against decency, ie kyberviolence with sexual overtones, in which they are exploited intimate images of a child. Even in this case we understand person under 18 years old.

Abuse of of intimate photographs of a child is a crime in most countries, the Czech Criminal Code ([www.zakony-online.cz](http://www.zakony-online.cz)) are defined by the following crimes:

- sexual coercion,
- production and other handling of child pornography,
- abuse of a child to produce pornography,
- seduction to sexual intercourse,
- establishing unlawful contact with a child
- human trafficking

Abuse of intimate photographs of the child is not currently developed cyberspace complicated matter offenders derive from the new dimension of communication young generation - virtual communication. This is a brief conversation, the child will gain confidence very quickly to an unknown person. The perpetrator may impersonate a person whom the child knows and has the confidence. Also offender is not only for one person and trying different contacts, different conversation. Then it may happen that one offender damaged dozens or hundreds of victims. Social workers can work with victims of crime in four phases. The first phase is prevention, the social worker training, counseling and other processes that affect possible victims of crime, with a focus on particularly vulnerable victims (children, seniors, people with disabilities) and precedes the offense. The second phase is the work of a social worker with child victims of sexual offense during pre-trial criminal proceedings. The social worker should cooperate with law enforcement authorities in criminal proceedings and other institutions. The social worker should have the competence to define their own possibilities of action, as described above (1.2). The third phase of the judicial proceedings, which is similar to the initial criminal proceedings. Phase Four - The final collaboration of the social worker with child victims of sexually motivated cyberviolence is only appropriate when the child asks for assistance, his legal representative or a competent assisting professional. This last phase will help to support the child in its natural environment and the support its own competencies.

Researches cyberbullying taking place in recent years in many countries around the world. Researchers from the USA (Brown, Demaray & Secord, 2014) pointed out that in cyberbullying, regardless of gender differences, because girls aren't more often victims than boys. Other researchers from Canada (Beran & Li, 2007) draw attention to connection of cyberbullying and traditional bullying, the research reveals that one third of victims of cyberbullying were simultaneously victims of traditional bullying. US researchers Ybarra and Mitchell (2014) highlight the phenomenon of changeover roles when the victim of bullying or cyberbullying are becoming aggressors. An interesting study conducted on a sample of 10,008 people aged 13 to 22 years of age, UK, USA and Australia (Ditch the Label, 2013) points out that 7 out of 10 children were victims of cyberbullying, with 20% experiencing cyberbullying day. According to this study are most often used for cyberbullying to social networks Facebook and Twiter Ask.fm. Kopecky, Szotkowski and Krejci (2014) from the Czech Republic draw attention to increase in serious cases of cyberbullying in the form of blackmail and threats to child. The attacks are abused intimate material elicited from a child. They point to the interconnection of cyberbullying and sexting, which facilitates the implementation of intensive attacks on children. Authors of this article are aimed on this particular target group of multidisciplinary collaboration, because according to our experience from practice, crimes of this type are growing rapidly. Verification of this phenomenon and other facts is an area for further exploration.

#### **2.4. Participants multidisciplinary cooperation for the benefit of endangered child**

Important element multidisciplinary teams for children - by which we mean children under 18 years of age - should be employees of the *authority for social and legal protection*. Child protection in the Czech Republic was defined by Act no. 359/1999 Coll.. The main areas of child protection include protecting the favorable development of the child, measures to protect children in crisis situations,

arranging adoption and foster care, monitoring the development of children living in foster care or in the care of institutions and the protection of children from socially pathological phenomena. This law strongly supports the cooperation with other institutions.

Other essential members of multidisciplinary teams are *workers representing criminal justice*. These are understood to police, prosecutors and courts. In this category also includes Probation and Mediation Service. The task of the Probation and Mediation Service is interposition an effective and socially beneficial resolution of conflicts associated with crime while ensuring the execution of alternative sanctions and measures. Emphasis is placed on the interests of victims, community protection and crime prevention. This is a relatively new institution in the field of criminal policy, which binds two professions: social work and criminal law (Poslání a cíle..., [www.pmscr.cz](http://www.pmscr.cz)).

To the team of cooperating for the benefit of the client include psychological or psychiatric help. Psychologists and psychiatrists are focus on mental health in cases where the child-victim of a crime such assistance needs. Some psychologists and psychiatrists specialize in working with victims of crime. Work with child victims of crime is difficult and specialists in this area in the Czech Republic is very little. For the purposes of this paper we will refer to the area of psychological and psychiatric effects of health care, because collectively is the area of mental health. Into this complex we can also include other medical care that the victim may need as a result of the trauma caused by the offense. For child victims of sexual kyberviolence are mainly the need for mental health care, treatment disturbed the crime.

Its significant role of partner organizations working with vulnerable children play and non-profit organizations that provide professional counseling and other social services for victims of crime (see 2.1).

The child spends a significant part of the day at school. School is a place where they can find safety and danger. Teachers often know a child from the other side better than the parents. This is a fact which promotes active involvement in the schools, that teachers in various forms of multidisciplinary cooperation. It is important that the participation of a man who endangered child knows and can see it every day, it will always be for the benefit of the child.

Victimological oriented research has determined that the needs of victims of crime are directly proportional to the severity of the damages suffered, but rather correspond with subjective feelings and abilities to successfully enforce their claims for psychological support, material compensation and other professional assistance. Victims who know their rights, are able to articulate and enforce their demands, they have a much higher chance of getting the necessary help, but in fact they can get it at the expense of "more necessary" victims who were harmed, although serious crime, they do not know how to ask for help (Grivna, Scheinost & Zoubková, 2014). Child victims of sexual crimes committed through virtual social networks regard as particularly vulnerable victims for two reasons: it is a child whose interests must be protected by the law and it is a crime affecting human integrity. Children can not express their needs, they fail to ask for professional help. For this reason we focus on exploring cooperation among institutions that deal with the help and support of child victims of vice crimes committed through virtual social networks.

### **3. Research Questions**

The object of this study is to find out what institutions are involved in collaboration work with child victims of crime committed through social networks and what their role is. We wonder which institution assumes responsibility for the child victim, which is connecting the cell and other related information.

#### **3.1. The central research question**

Established a central research question (CRQ): As experts evaluated the state of multidisciplinary cooperation in relation to child victims of crimes committed through social networks in the Czech Republic?

#### **3.2. Sub research questions**

Based on this main research questions were set partial research questions that correspond to the main research question.

Sub research question no. 1 (SRQ1): As experts evaluate the role of the individual participants of the multidisciplinary team in relation to child victims of crimes committed through social networks?

Sub research question no. 2 (SRQ2): As experts evaluate the role of social worker in a multidisciplinary team cooperating for the benefit of child victims of offenses committed through social networks?

Sub research question no. 3 (SRQ3): As experts evaluate the role of social worker in relation to child victims of crimes committed through social networks?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The findings, which will be obtained from this study will be further elaborated in detail for purposes other bases of research solutions. The findings should lead to a further direction. It is necessary to describe the roles of the individual institutions that work with child victims of crime in general, with a particular focus on a specific area - threat to children criminal offenses committed through social networks. The aim of this study was to determine:

- the role of the individual participants of the multidisciplinary team in relation to child victims of crimes committed through social networks;
- the role of social worker in a multidisciplinary team cooperating for the benefit of child victims of offenses committed through social networks;
- the role of social worker in relation to child victims of crimes committed through social networks.

#### **4.1. Exploitation**

It is necessary to describe the roles of the individual institutions that work with child victims of crime in general, with a particular focus on a specific area - threat to children criminal offenses

committed through social networks. Based on the results of the analysis of the roles of individual institutions in the field of multidisciplinary cooperation can be developed specific methodology for the implementation of the cooperation in this team and established roles, tasks and objectives in this collaboration. The study is particularly focused on the role of social work in the form of performance of child protection.

Following study deals with risk phenomena that threaten children in cyberspace. Further follow-up studies can compare ways of working with child victims of crime in different countries. They may also deal with the legislative sanction for the crimes against children in cyberspace. These studies will be used by social workers, child protection, police-specialists on the issues of child victims, as well as psychologists, psychiatrists and other helping professionals, focusing on children's issues. The findings will be useful for prevention specialists.

## 5. Research Methods

As a research method were used semistandardized interviews, because this method uncover monitored issues in the best way. It was done six interviews with informants from different areas working with vulnerable children. Interviews were conducted with a social worker in child protection, a judge, a probation officer, educational consultant at the school, a police officer, employee a low-threshold facility for children and youth. To create of the sample was used deliberate choice, because it was necessary to obtain information from competent persons who deal with the issue of bullying and come into contact with victims of cyberbullying. Experts were chosen from one location, specifically the Hradec Králové region in the Czech Republic (see Tab. 01).

**Table 01.** Marking informants

<b>Informant</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Practice</b>
I1	social worker in child protection	38 y.	12 y.
I2	judge	53 y.	19 y.
I3	probation officer	35 y.	9 y.
I4	educational consultant at the school	44 y.	20 y.
I5	police officer	38 y.	18 y.
I6	Social worker in a low-threshold facility for children and youth	26 y.	2 y.

### 5.1. The roles of individual participants of the multidisciplinary team in relation to child victims of crimes committed through social networks (SRQ1)

Most informants said that the victims of crime come together over the past two years frequently. Least informed on this issue were informants I4 and I6, at least with child victims encounter. Informant I1 said that interconnects other professionals. He creates teams of pediatric victims of crime, but it is in contact with every professional who works with such a child. It requires the reports from the other



because of the planning of further progress in working with vulnerable children. Its role should be the key. Other informants agreed that if a child becomes a victim of crime, it is usually the first encounter with a child police or social workers (social and legal protection). Other informants agreed that the target group of children who were victims of crimes committed through social networks is specific. Child needs special help to settle with this offense. According to most respondents, it is in most cases a virtual blackmail or coercion to assault on the intimacy of the child. The child therefore has the courage to talk about this attack with his parents and even the parents entrust. It succeeds need to work with the entire family system, which plays a key role in worker social-legal protection. Informant I5 said some children need while long-term psychotherapeutic help, but not many, about 10% of child victims. In many cases, it works in collaboration with employee social-legal protection. Informant I5 said that the aftercare of child uses and collaboration with psychologists and psychiatrists in the place of residence of the child and that about 15% of child victims, victims of crime of a sexual type committed through social networks. Most respondents considered the psychological and psychiatric services for complementing and building on the work of child protection. I2 and I3 would be welcomed as a member of a team psychologist or psychiatrist. According to most informants are important members of multidisciplinary teams representing employees of criminal justice. These are understood to police, prosecutors and courts. According to one of the informants, the probation service is important for mediating efficient and socially beneficial resolution of conflicts associated with the crimes committed against children. Emphasis is placed on the interests of victims. According to several informants have a significant role of partner organizations working with endangered children and NGOs. Specific social services focusing on work with children and youth provided by NGOs, for example, streetwork, low threshold facilities for children and youth volunteer projects. All participants deem necessary multidisciplinary team meetings for the benefit child victims of crime through social networks. These meetings do not take place yet. They work only teams that deal with children's delinquent behavior, not the child victims of crime.

## **5.2. The role of social worker in a multidisciplinary team cooperating for the benefit of child victims of offenses committed through social networks (SRQ2)**

That question was partially answered in SRQ1. Most informants consistently stated that the contacts and calls for cooperation social worker or police officer. In further contact, however, remain a social worker. The policeman solves the criminal prosecution of the offender, the duty social worker's child protection is to defend the interests of the child. Informant I2 said that systematic work in favor of the child expects from a worker social-legal protection. From it also requests a report, what are the next steps in working with the child and his family, and what is the impact of the offense on a child's life. Informant I1 said that the reports required from all professionals who are in contact with the child. On that basis, provides further procedure. Informants I4 and I6 cooperate much with the social worker. Most informants would welcome at least two meetings with child victims is an obvious serious impact of crimes committed via social networks. According to interviewed experts, will increase children's damaged communications on social networks. This does not only crime, but also situations that are the responsibility of solving the school.

### **5.3. The role of social worker in relation to child victims of crimes committed through social networks (SRQ3)**

Informant I1 said that his role is to defend the interests of the child. It was his duty. Experience shows that it is often the child's confidant. Participating in the interrogation of a child and all actions to the police. The police are obliged worker social-legal protection inform. This employee is a key worker who knows about the child the most information. S/he has responsibility for further action, an individual plan for the child and his family. S/he is often a mediator between the child and the police, as well as a mediator between the child and his parents. S/he contact other professionals when working with them important for the child. Informant I2, I3 and I5 stated that for their work with the child is the necessary contact with the social worker. They expect from her/him to contact other professionals. They expect from her/him much relevant information about the child and his family situation. They expect from the social worker planning further action in the work with the child and his family. Informant I5 worker evaluates child protection as the next person of the child during criminal proceedings. Informant said that in many cases the child has a social worker great confidence. He feels that in the area of sexual offenses with children easier to entrust a foreign person who has the experience than the parents. The child is afraid of moralizing and judging from their parents.

## **6. Findings**

Based on the evaluations referred to specific research questions we can conclude the following findings:

In response to research questions dealing with the role of the individual participants of the multidisciplinary team in relation to child victims of crimes committed through social networks (SRQ1) can be stated that according to experts, is the key to helping professionals in these cases, both for the child and multidisciplinary team is social worker child protection. Initiating and managing links multidisciplinary teams for children - by which we mean children under 18 years of age - should be employees of the authority for social and legal protection. Important members of multidisciplinary teams of workers, representing criminal justice. An important role of partner organizations working with vulnerable children have even NGOs. Specific social services focusing on work with children and youth provided by NGOs, for example, streetwork, low threshold facilities for children and youth volunteer projects. Psychological and psychiatric services build on the work of child protection. They are not required for all child victims. Psychologist or psychiatrist should be part of a multidisciplinary team of cooperating for the benefit of the child.

On sub-question no. 2 (SRQ2) can be stated that all respondents are in contact with the worker in child protection and also expect will be planning next steps to work with the child and family. The social worker should convene a meeting of the multidisciplinary team. The social worker should manage meetings and plan further work. Experts perceive the absence of of multidisciplinary collaboration of teams of cooperating for the benefit of a child who had happened a victim of crime. Experts want in serious cases of child endangerment Internet communications meet at least twice during the investigation.

Based on the evaluation interviews can be sub-question no. 3 (SRQ3) respond that the role of social worker in relation to child victims of crimes committed through social networks is important,

accompanies the child to the police. This employee is a key worker who knows about the children the most information, all information is collected on the agenda of the exercise of social and legal protection. Social workers, social and legal protection has responsibility for further action, an individual plan for the child and its family.

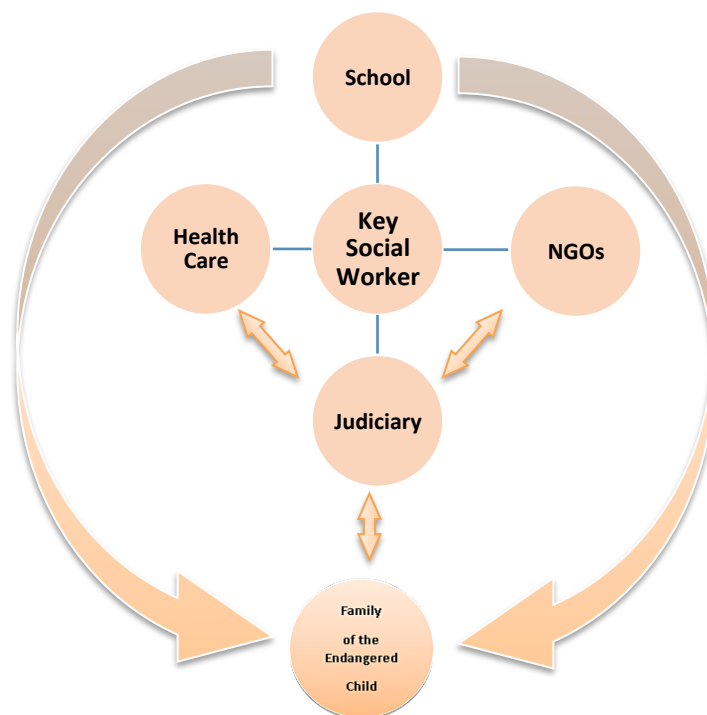
The central research question (CRQ) can answer that multidisciplinary cooperation in relation to child victims of crimes committed through social networks in the Czech Republic has not yet been put into practice. The greatest responsibility for the creation and coordination is attributed to workers of social and legal protection. The social workers of the social and legal protection is on maximizing the share of responsibility in relation to determining an appropriate procedure for the child and its family.

### **6.1. Scheme of multidisciplinary cooperation**

Interviews were evaluated and selected key institutions for effective multidisciplinary cooperation for the benefit of the endangered child. Based on an analysis of interviews was created simplified scheme for setting up effective cooperation for the benefit of the endangered child - victim of crime (see Figure 01).

### **6.2. Discussion**

Based on our evaluation were established institutions whose workers should participate in multidisciplinary cooperation in favor of a child who had happened a victim of crime committed through social networks. This study is aimed at finding the situation in the Czech Republic. Studies are starting to study further. We consider it important to clarify the roles and competencies of the various helping professions involved in the system for the benefit of the endangered child. Our study focuses on specific target groups: children under 18 who are victims of crime committed through social networks. Our study may inspire foreign studies or comparative studies. It would be interesting to evaluate the work of multidisciplinary teams with the target group abroad.



**Figure 01.** Linking institutions based on an assessment conducted interviews; own investigation

## 7. Conclusion

The child is understood as a biopsychosocial individuality and therefore is needed to assess the situation, both in terms of health and in terms of psychological and of course socially. The social worker should be in this constellation assume the role of coordinator and assemble a team needed to tackle each individual case. It should, in cooperation with other experts to determine the optimal composition of the team, plan and organize the process of working with the endangered child and coordinate the work of individual researchers. Along with them should map the situation of endangered child and propose steps to minimize the risk of social exclusion.

### 7.1. Recommendations for Practice

Based on the evaluation interviews with experts on work with children, we can determine the following recommendations for the practical exercise of child protection:

- define the methodology for the work of members of the multidisciplinary team with a child victim of a crime committed through social networks during the criminal proceedings, which will set the objectives and tasks of the various participants multidisciplinary team;
- define the methodology for social workers working with the family of the child victim of a crime committed through social networks;
- provide training of social workers to work with child victims of crime;
- provide training of social workers in the development of multidisciplinary collaboration, creation and coordination of multidisciplinary teams;
- provide the education of social workers and other members of the multidisciplinary team about the criminal proceedings.

The multidisciplinary teams cooperating for the benefit of child victims of crime should be created based on the the needs of professionals help. Teams should be created within the competence of local offices pursue social and legal protection of children. The initiators and coordinators should be social workers the authority of social and legal protection of children. Social worker in working with a specific target group of child victims of offenses committed through social networks for social workers and other helping professionals specifically demanding. All members of the multidisciplinary team should have an overview of the criminal proceedings and should understand the work of the other members involved in the team. Only then can a multidisciplinary team to work effectively for the benefit of endangered child.

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