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LANZAROTE CONVENTION

Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

Replies to the general overview questionnaire and the thematic questionnaire "Sexual abuse of children in the circle of trust"

MALTA GIRL GUIDES

Replies registered by the Secretariat on 3 February 2014

As an NGO, the Malta Girl Guides have been focusing on the sexual rights of girls and young women in their last Guiding years and it therefore follows that it should be considered as one of the contributors in the local scene to the prevention of sexual abuse of children.

Our programme may be mentioned under **Question 8 on Education, awareness raising and training in the General Overview Questionnaire** and under **Question 4 on Raising awareness on sexual abuse in the circle of trust in the Questionnaire for the 1st Thematic Round: Sexual Abuse of Children in the Circle of Trust.**

I am hereby giving you an overview of our educational programme which you might find relevant to mention in the Questionnaires:

The Malta Girl Guides together with Aġenzija Żgħażaġħ and the National Council for Women conducted a survey on the perception of violent relationships amongst young people. The outcome of the survey (attached) shows that young people seem to be fully aware that they are vulnerable to violent relationships as more than 90% of them confirmed their exposure to such behaviour. They are conscious of the signs of violence such bruises and other psychological consequences. Whilst females view sexual abuse as more serious than males, the latter stated that physical abuse is more serious. However in the overall rating more than, 55% was rated sexual abuse as being the worst form of abuse, followed by physical (44%) and verbal abuse (40%). Young people attribute violent relationships to low self-esteem (35%), deserving to be mistreated, feeling emotionally numb and helpless and feeling afraid as the other pre-dominant factors. Boyfriends are seen as the most susceptible perpetrators followed by peers and persons in a higher position. The boyfriend was seen as the main perpetrator not only females but also by males. Respondents answered ambivalently when asked about reporting violent encounters. Whilst the majority said that it should be reported to police followed by social worker and a relative, they also stated that most victims do not report due to fear.

The Malta Girl Guides organised a silent march in Valletta in April 2013 to raise awareness on violent relationships. The general public had the opportunity to sign a petition in relation to the enforcement of the existing national laws and children were asked to do hand-printing as they cannot sign the petition itself. Moreover, as part of the campaign, the Guides and Rangers (teenagers) worked on a flash mob in which they included their friends and classmates. It was a very effective public event.

A comic booklet (in Maltese) was distributed in many schools about Violent Relationships. It depicted some real stories on violence amongst teenage relationships, the signs of violence and the contact numbers of social services in Malta.

The Girl Guides have launched the badge curriculum issued by WAGGGS (World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts) and UN Women. Through various activities, the girls will be looking at different forms of violence, with a particular focus on physical, sexual and psychological violence. WAGGGS is undertaking a Stop the Violence campaign which includes an educational curriculum for all members. WAGGGS and the Malta Girl Guides believe this is important because we have a responsibility to girls and young women, and this is a unique opportunity to empower girls to speak out and take action on issues that are important to them.

The Association worked on its Child Protection Policy which also goes hand in hand with this project. WAGGGS stressed on the importance of this Policy and the Guiders who shall be working on the curriculum were trained on how it should be implemented, i.e. in order to protect the best interests of the child, in principle their safety and welfare, and how the Guider should react in case a member discloses any experience during the sessions.

Through Voices Against Violence Badge Curriculum, girls should feel comfortable to talk about their rights, gender equality and violence against girls and young women in a safe and supportive environment. It urges the Guiders to actively listen to all participants, understand the girls' needs and recognise that there may be survivors and victims of violence in the group.

Should you need further information from my end whilst completing the questionnaires, please do not hesitate to contact me once again. I will be glad to provide you with more details.