



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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LANZAROTE CONVENTION

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

FOCUSED QUESTIONNAIRE

Protecting children affected by the refugee crisis from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

MALTA

(Replies sent by the State)

Replies registered by the Secretariat on 15 September 2016

DATA (Lanzarote Convention, Chapter III)

- 1) How many migrant and asylum-seeking children (accompanied and unaccompanied)¹ are in your country as a result of the refugee crisis?
 - a) Please provide estimates, if exact data is not available, for the period between 1 July 2015 and 30 June 2016,² and specify how many of these children are victims or presumed victims of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse;

During that period, one unaccompanied minor was identified as a victim of sexual abuse (she has now turned 18)

- b) Describe how the victims of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse were identified or describe the challenges faced to identify them. Specify whether a distinction is made between victims of sexual exploitation/abuse prior to the entry on your territory (Group 1) and after entry (Group 2) and provide data/estimates of the two groups of victims. Please also explain how the age is determined in case of doubt;

All unaccompanied minors are allocated a legal guardian and a social worker who work on an individual care plan. Social workers engage with and assess minors in order to identify indicators of sexual abuse. Challenges are primarily issues of trust and fear of speaking out due to stigma. In cases where age is in doubt, a psycho-social approach is adopted to determine age. Medical tests may be used but only as a last resort.

- c) Indicate also how the data collected is used to offer a coordinated response between the different agencies in charge of the protection from, the prevention of and the fight against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children;

AWAS identifies and assists victims and refers to Appogg and the police for further specialised action.

- d) Identify the institution(s) responsible for the collection of above data.

PREVENTION (Lanzarote Convention, Chapter II)

- 2) What are the specific measures taken to prevent that children affected by the refugee crisis fall victims of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse?

Unaccompanied minors and families with minors are accommodated separately from adult single males in order to provide safety. In addition, social workers and welfare officers have liaised with the health authorities and NGOs to conduct information sessions on sexual health including sexual abuse. Moreover, social workers and welfare officers conduct one to one work with asylum seekers to identify and assist with any

¹ Please provide the definition of accompanied/unaccompanied children in your country and, if available, provide separate figures for accompanied and unaccompanied children. If such data is not available, please provide data on migrant and asylum-seeking children.

² If figures for this period are not available, please provide the most recent annual data.

concerns which may include sexual abuse. In order to prevent sexual exploitation in Malta, AWAS staff empowers asylum seekers to find lawful employment and not resort to other means.

- a) Highlight in particular the measures (e.g. awareness raising material, specialised training, screening of professionals, etc.) which have proven to be effective;
- b) Underline any lessons learnt from specific challenges (e.g. in raising awareness on sexual violence amidst other urgent priorities, etc.) that had to be faced to improve prevention.

PROTECTION (Lanzarote Convention, Chapter IV)

- 3) Has a coordinated child protection approach been put in place to cater for the specific needs of migrant and asylum-seeking children victims of sexual exploitation and/or sexual abuse?

Whenever AWAS' social workers identify a victim of sexual abuse, Appogg are asked to intervene as the specialised agency in this field.

- a) Describe the measures taken to address the situation and cater for the children's specific needs (multiple traumas, language/cultural differences, etc.), including with respect to guardianship/placement;

All unaccompanied minors are assigned a guardian who is a social worker by profession and therefore able to engage, assess and identify such matters. Re language, AWAS uses interpreters. Regarding traumas and other psychological issues, AWAS social workers refers to mainstream mental health service providers.

- b) Indicate also what measures have been taken to protect the children concerned from further exploitation/abuse and to assist the victims in seeking redress (please highlight any differences between Groups 1 and 2 of children as outlined above);

Social workers engage with victims throughout their placement in order to break the cycle of falling again into sexual exploitation, including by being given psychological support. In addition, the police are involved in such cases so that any perpetrators can be investigated. Minors are also placed in homes with curfews while staff members observe their behaviour and alert professionals of any concerning behaviour. Regarding redress, minors are offered legal representation and advice.

- c) Underline any lessons learnt from specific challenges (in reporting suspicion of sexual exploitation and abuse, in tailoring assistance to the victims, etc.) that had to be faced to improve protection.

COOPERATION (Lanzarote Convention, Chapter IX)

- 4) Provide examples of successful cooperation with other Parties to the Lanzarote Convention for the purpose of:

- a) Preventing and combating sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children affected by the refugee crisis;
- b) Protecting and providing assistance to victims;

AWAS, Appogg, the police and the victim's lawyer worked collaboratively with a female victim of sexual abuse in order to ensure safety and wellbeing of the victim. This included regular case conferences and meetings about the victim, legal advice and representation, psycho-social support, enrolment in education courses, placement and safe accommodation and financial allowance.

- c) Investigations or proceedings concerning the offences established in accordance with the Lanzarote Convention.

ANY OTHER ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- 5) Please provide any other additional information which may be useful to identify areas for targeted cooperation aimed at ensuring that children affected by the refugee crisis are effectively protected from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and in guaranteeing their human dignity and physical and psychological integrity.