

## Protecting children against sexual violence

Sexual abuse is one of the worst forms of violence against children. One in five children under the age of 18 is a victim of sexual violence, and in 70 to 85% of reported cases the perpetrator is a family member or another person the child trusts, such as a family friend, sports trainer or faith leader. It is estimated, however, that 90% of cases of abuse are not reported to the police.

The Council of Europe has given top priority over many years to its work on fighting sexual violence against children through legal, political and educational measures. The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) is the most comprehensive global instrument combating sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children. It aims at preventing sexual violence, protecting victims and prosecuting perpetrators.

## Lanzarote Convention and Lanzarote Committee

[www.coe.int/lanzarote](http://www.coe.int/lanzarote)

The Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Lanzarote Convention, CETS No. 201) was opened for signature in 2007 and came into force in 2010.

It requires **criminalisation of all kinds of sexual offences** against children. It also requires its Parties to establish specific legislation and take measures to prevent sexual violence against children, to protect the victims and to prosecute the perpetrators. It also requests countries to ensure that the statute of limitation for initiating proceedings with regard to sexual offences against children continues for a period of time sufficient to allow the efficient start of proceedings after the victim has reached the age of majority.

The Lanzarote Committee **monitors** whether Parties effectively implement the Lanzarote Convention. The Committee decided in its first meeting in September 2011 to monitor the implementation of the Convention according to a thematic approach.

The 1<sup>st</sup> [monitoring round](#) (report published in December 2015) focused on sexual abuse of children in the circle of trust. The 2<sup>nd</sup> regular monitoring round was launched in May 2017 and focuses on the protection of children against the criminal use of child self-generated sexual images and videos; the report is expected in 2019. Urgent monitoring focusing on [protecting children affected by the refugee crisis from](#)

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[sexual abuse and exploitation](#) was launched in June 2016; its report was published in March 2017. [Protecting asylum-seeking children in the transit zones at the Serbian/Hungarian border](#) was the topic of another urgent monitoring conducted in May-October 2017.

All States Parties are monitored at the same time (not through a country-specific evaluation). The aim is to create a momentum around specific aspects of the monitoring theme in all Parties at the same time and encourage the exchange of good practices, as well as detection of inadequacies or difficulties.

The Lanzarote Committee is also mandated to facilitate the collection, analysis and exchange of information, experience and good practice to better prevent and combat sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children.

The Lanzarote Convention has been [ratified](#) by 44 out of 47 states-members of the Council of Europe. The United Kingdom has ratified the Convention on 20 June 2018. In Europe, only Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ireland still remain outside the space of legal protection offered by the Lanzarote Convention.

As sexual violence against children is a global concern, any country across the globe may accede to the Lanzarote Convention. So far, the Committee of Ministers, the key decision making body of the Council of Europe, has agreed to accept accession requests by the Kingdom of Morocco and by Tunisia. Both countries might soon become the first non-European parties to the Convention.

[Infographic about the Lanzarote Convention](#)

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