

Conference
Preventing sexual abuse of children
Madrid, 10-11 December 2013

The Lanzarote Convention and the prevention of sexual abuse of children

Mr Eric Ruelle (France), Chairperson of the Lanzarote Committee

Summary

Preventing exploitation and sexual abuse of children under the Lanzarote Convention
The prevention of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children is an essential component of the Lanzarote Convention, as stipulated in Articles 1 and 38, pinpointing such prevention as one of the aims of the Convention and a field for co-operation among States Parties, as well as a subject for assistance to third states.

Chapter II, which relates to prevention and begins by setting out the general obligation on Parties, lays down specific obligations applicable to all sectors of activity in which children are involved, covering:

- the recruitment, training and awareness of persons who have regular contacts with children, especially in the education, health, social welfare, judicial and law-enforcement sectors and in areas relating to sports, culture and leisure activities;
- education for children in the broad sense;
- provision for persons at risk who have not yet been prosecuted or convicted;
- public awareness-raising and accountability.

Other obligations set out in the Convention also contribute to the prevention goal, e.g.:

- specific measures to protect and assist victims (reporting suspicions of exploitation or sexual abuse by professionals, exclusion of the perpetrator or removal of the child from the family home, and action programmes for prosecuted or convicted persons);
- specified types of sanction (sanctions against legal persons, closure of any establishment used to commit the offence, prohibition of the exercise of the activity in the course of which the offence was committed);
- mandatory storage of data on convicted sex offenders.

Without imposing one single model, the Convention also sets out specific obligations for the implementation of these obligations based on promoting an integrated, partnership-based approach. It provides for participation by children, civil society (particularly NGOs), the private sector and the media (notably the information and communication technology sector and the tourism and travel industry), setting up specialised co-

ordinating bodies and authorities, as well as mechanisms for data collection in order to improve knowledge of the phenomenon. This means that, while leaving the States a broad margin of discretion as to the means of achieving them, the Convention imposes specific objectives covering a wide spectrum of fields of activity in which the obligations of prevention find their *raison d'être*, as well as a method of defining and developing the relevant public policies.

This is what makes the instrument so vibrant, enabling it to adapt to the challenges of the coming years, and also explains the *raison d'être* of the monitoring mechanism, particularly in terms of identifying best practice, which objective the present conference is hoping to effectively promote.

Useful link:

http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/children/default_EN.asp?