

## **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

### **Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees**

**Information provided further the statement by the Lanzarote Committee Chair and Vice-Chairperson on stepping up protection of children against sexual exploitation and abuse in times of the COVID-19 pandemic**

No information received.

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**Responses to specific questions by the Bureau of the Lanzarote Committee on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse**

- 1. What extent, if at all, has the threat of child sexual abuse/exploitation changed due to COVID-19? If so:**
  - **Please tell us about whether the level of risk has increased/decreased/remained the same and if possible specify this with regard to the various types of sexual offences against children (Articles 18-23 of the Convention);**
  - **You may also wish to indicate any emerging trends relating to child sexual abuse/exploitation, as the result of COVID-19, and point at measures taken to address them.**

Based on the information gathered, it appears that the threat of sexual abuse / exploitation of children in the context of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Bosnia and Herzegovina has remained the same. On the other hand, it is evident that the level of risk for children has increased significantly on the Internet, given that the time spent by children on the Internet and social networks has increased, thus increasing the risk of exposing children to inappropriate content, sending explicit photos and dangers of various forms. sexual abuse and exploitation.

- 2. Did lockdown cause child sexual abuse/exploitation cases (identified/reported) to increase, decrease or stay the same? Please submit data (number of victims/offenders) and highlight what you think may explain the trend.**

For the territory of the entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, according to the Federal Police Administration, the number of cases of sexual abuse / exploitation of children has not increased significantly compared to the period March-May of the previous year. What has been recorded is an increased number of cases of "download" and "share" material of sexual exploitation of children, which is monitored through the operational work of applications associated with INTERPOL and EUROPOL.

For the territory of the entity Republika Srpska, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republika Srpska in the period March-May 2020, during the state of emergency, recorded 22 criminal offenses of sexual exploitation and abuse of children, which is 9 more criminal offenses, about 69.2% percent more than in the same time period in 2019. 12 reports were forwarded to the competent prosecutor's offices (same as in the comparable period in 2019) against 13 identified male perpetrators (more by one compared to the same period last year), of whom two are minors. Also, 13 female victims were identified - minors (more by one victim compared to the same time period last year). The actual number of child victims is far higher because in some cases, such as the exploitation of children for pornography, introducing children to pornography and other forms of crime committed through information and communication technologies, the perpetrators of crimes are known, while a large number victims are still unidentified because they are child victims from all over the world, and whose photos were exchanged between the perpetrators via social networks.

- 3. Please also tell us whether and how general child safeguarding measures were, or are likely to be, affected by measures taken by governments in response to COVID-19. In addition, highlight any additional, specific measures put in place during lockdown to ensure reporting by victims of child sexual abuse/exploitation as well as to support and assist them, and whether these measures will be maintained even when the lockdown is lifted.**

Measures implemented by the competent institutions for children and social protection in Bosnia and Herzegovina are general measures for protection of children rights and interests.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republika Srpska, as a member of the International Organization "Amber Alert Europe", on the occasion of May 25, the International Day of Missing Children, conducted the #DontBeAnEasyCatch campaign, which aims to educate children, especially teenagers, about online grooming. This prevention campaign was designed by members of the Police Expert Network on Missing Persons (PEN-MP), in the form of an animated video in which children are given valuable advice on online grooming.

- 4. Finally, please tell us whether children have been duly listened to on decision-making concerning their protection against sexual abuse/exploitation during this period. Please also tell us whether and how children will be involved in decision-making on or assessing the impact of COVID-19 measures in the future.**

No information available.