COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

LANZAROTE COMMITTEE

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

Replies to the thematic questionnaire

"Screening of professionals, volunteers and other persons in contact with children"

BULGARIA

Replies received by the Secretariat on 7 July 2026

Main relevant provisions of the Lanzarote Convention and previous recommendations

Article 5 paragraph 3 of the Lanzarote Convention requires Parties to take the necessary legislative or other measures, in conformity with their internal law, to ensure that the conditions to accede to those professions whose exercise implies regular contacts with children ensure that the candidates to these professions have not been convicted of acts of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse of children. The Explanatory Report to the Lanzarote Convention indicates that this obligation can be also applied to voluntary activities (see paragraph 57).

In the 2nd implementation report of the 1st monitoring round (2018), the Lanzarote Committee urged those Parties that limited mandatory screening to certain professionals to extend it to the recruitment of all professionals (public or private) in regular contact with children (R19) and invited Parties to encourage continuous screening of all professionals (R20) and volunteers (R21) in regular contact with children.

Article 27 paragraph 3.b of the Lanzarote Convention requires Parties to take the necessary legislative or other measures to deny the perpetrator, temporarily or permanently, the exercise of professional or voluntary activity involving contact with children in the course of which the offence was committed.

Article 37 paragraph 3 of the Lanzarote Convention requires Parties to take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the information referred to in paragraph 1 (i.e. data related to the identity and to the genetic profile (DNA) of persons convicted of the offences established in accordance with the Convention) can be transmitted to the competent authority of another Party, in conformity with the conditions established in its internal law and the relevant international instruments.

Whenever the term "screening" is used in this questionnaire, this should be understood as "verification of criminal convictions for sexual offences against children".

In all your answers, please provide details to the extent possible and refer to specific laws, policies, programmes, measures, etc.

Please describe the legislation, policy and practice which are in force on 27 March 2026 or are in the process of adoption (in this case, please specify the planned date of entry into force).

Please indicate:

a. State Party in respect of which the questionnaire is submitted - Bulgaria

b. Entities and bodies which have been involved in responding to this questionnaire - Letters requesting contributions were sent to 275 recipients—including government agencies, NGOs, and institutions. Responses were received from, Ministry of Justice (MJ), Agency for Social Assistance (ASA), Bulgarian Red Cross (BRC), Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Youth and Sports, State Agency for Refugees, Ministry of the Interior, "Child and Space" Association, General Labour Inspectorate Executive Agency, Agency for the Quality of Social Services, 106 municipalities (including municipal social services)

<u>Persons concerned by screening requirements</u>

1. Is the absence of criminal convictions for sexual offences against children required as a pre-condition in order to accede to professions, employment or volunteer positions whose exercise implies regular contacts with children? Please specify whether such restrictions apply to professions, employment or volunteer positions in the following sectors or areas of activities (additional details to be inserted below the table):

	Criminal conviction check for employment in public sector?	Criminal conviction check for voluntary activity?	Criminal conviction check for employment in private sector?	Criminal conviction check for self-employed professionals?	Please specify the professionals to whom this requirement applies
Education – Pre-school	Yes	*	Yes	*	Principals, teachers, nurses, childcare workers, cooks, janitors, educators, speech therapists, psychologists, interns

Education – Primary	Yes	*	Yes	*	Teachers, educators, educational counsellors, administrative and support staff, interns, resource teachers
Education – Secondary	Yes	*	Yes	*	Teachers, coaches, interns, leaders of music and dance groups, psychologists
Education – Tertiary	NA	NA	NA	NA	We consider this field to be “university education”
Education – Extracurricular (e.g. language schools)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Leaders and educators from training centres, children’s clubs, instructors, mentors, language/sports schools, lecturers
Childcare (e.g. kindergartens, crèches, childminders	Yes	NA	Yes	Yes	Nurses, teachers, babysitters (in cooperatives)
Institutional or residential care (e.g. foster homes, orphanages, closed residential facilities)	Yes	NA	Yes	NA	Directors, social workers, childcare providers, educators, medical staff (family-style placement centres, crisis centres, shelters, transitional housing
Detention	Yes	NA	NA	NA	Inspectors, staff in services for minors and children, educators
Migration facilities (e.g. reception centres)	Yes	Yes (from international organizations)	NA	NA	Social expert, social worker, technical assistant, SAR staff
Sport	Yes	*	Yes	*	Coaches, instructors, referees, organizers of sports schools and camps
Culture and leisure activities	Yes	*	Yes	*	Artistic directors, vocal instructors, choreographers, entertainers
Entertainment sector	Yes	*	Yes	*	Entertainers, puppeteers, event planners
Faith and religion	No information provided	No information provided	No information provided	No information provided	Clergy, Sunday school teachers—subject to internal regulations

Healthcare (including psychological and psychiatric services)	Yes	NA	Yes	Yes	Paediatricians, nurses, psychiatrists, General practitioners,
Social protection services	Yes	NA	Yes	NA	Social Assistance Directorates and Child Protection Services, Day Centres, Community Support Centres, Social Services for Children and Families, Community-Based Rehabilitation Centres
Law enforcement	Yes	NA	Yes	NA	police officers, inspectors, probation officers
Judicial	Yes	NA	Yes	NA	Judges, prosecutors,
Civil society organisations	Yes	*	Yes	*	NGOs, international organizations, civil organizations, associations,
Victim services (including Barnahus, domestic violence services)	Yes	*	Yes	NA	Psychologists, social workers, lawyers, crisis centres
Any other sectors (please specify)	Yes	*	Yes	*	Drivers, maintenance staff, attendants

Here you can insert additional details or specify any exceptions.

When interpreting the information requested in this questionnaire, several fundamental provisions of national legislation on this subject should be taken into account.

- Under current national legislation, in order to hold certain positions and practice certain professions, a background check must be conducted prior to starting work by obtaining a Criminal Record Certificate. This is an official document issued by the Criminal Records Office at the district courts at the request of a specific individual, employer, or government institution. It contains information regarding an individual's criminal record—whether they have been convicted of any crimes, including convictions for which the individual has been rehabilitated, when required by law. The document is valid for 6 months from the date of issuance. The document is mandatory for certain professions: lawyers, teachers, educators, security guards, doctors, government employees, prospective adoptive parents, and foster parents.
- The Law on Preschool and School Education (LPSE): According to Art. 215, par. 1, a person may not hold a position as an educational specialist if they have been convicted

of an intentional crime of a general nature, regardless of rehabilitation; have been deprived of the right to practice the profession; or suffers from illnesses or disorders that endanger the lives and health of children and students. The same rules apply to positions in kindergartens, schools, and centres for personal development support, including centres for special educational support.

- Pursuant to Art. 43a of the Child Protection Act, the Ministry of the Interior establishes and maintains a National Information System for the Prevention of and Protection Against Paedophilia and a National Registry of cases of paedophilia committed within the country or involving Bulgarian citizens abroad, who have sought help and support, and of persons convicted of crimes under Section VIII "Sexual Misconduct" of the Criminal Code committed against minors, hereinafter referred to as the "National Register," as well as the issuance of reports and certificates regarding the recorded circumstances. It is part of the national information system and contains a permanent electronic database of up-to-date information on the following circumstances subject to entry therein: acts of sexual assault against minors for which convictions have been handed down; information on the perpetrators; type of crime; duration of the offense; unlawful consequences and damages caused; history of the crimes committed and the penalties and measures imposed for them, as well as any rehabilitation that has taken place; a database of foreign nationals who have been granted extended, permanent, or long-term residence status in Bulgaria and who have been convicted in other countries of sexual offenses. The Ministry of the Interior ensures the registration, storage, and updating of the data referred to in par. 1, and also ensures cooperation with foreign information systems for the exchange of information concerning cases of paedophilia and regarding persons convicted of crimes under Section VIII "Sexual Misconduct" of the Penal Code, committed against minors. The information to be entered into the National Information System, the procedures for its collection and provision, the organization and operation of the system, the level of access, and the manner of its interaction with foreign information systems shall be determined by a subordinate legislative act. The authorities of the Ministry of the Interior and the judiciary shall provide the National Information System with the relevant data in accordance with the procedure established by this act, which shall enter into force in 2025. Persons who, by virtue of their occupation, work with minors are required to submit a written request to the National Register to verify the circumstances described above when entering into employment or civil contracts with workers and employees. The existence of such a circumstance constitutes grounds for refusing to enter into an employment or civil contract.

- Another fundamental provision is the possibility of requesting and obtaining a document certifying that no pretrial proceedings or criminal case has been initiated against the person for an intentional crime of a general nature. This document is issued by the relevant competent prosecutor's office or investigative agency.

- Under the Social Services Act, a license is issued when the applicant "has not been convicted of a general-law offense"; for legal entities, this requirement applies to the members of their governing and supervisory bodies. The licensing procedure requires applicants for social service provider status to submit criminal records for foreign citizens, and, for foreign legal entities, criminal records for their managers and the members of their management and supervisory bodies; for Bulgarian citizens and legal entities, these circumstances are established ex officio by the Agency for the Quality of Social Services.

- Volunteer work is not yet regulated by national legislation. If a person works for an association, a company, or another organization, they will be screened in their capacity as an employee through a criminal record check or a search of the registry. Employees of such companies may serve as volunteers in one form or another, but they are actually screened as company employees, not in their capacity as volunteers.

Information has been provided indicating that nongovernmental organizations require volunteers who will work directly with children to submit a criminal record check. However, if volunteers come as part of a corporate initiative or as a team from a company, they are briefed on the Child Protection Policy and the Code of Ethics for Working with Children. For individuals who are self-employed and/or members of associations, societies, or organizations (which may vary depending on their legal status), their work is monitored by internal Ethics Committees or other forms of oversight*.

- For individuals who work with children in a private capacity—such as the parents of children who visit these specialists, teachers, therapists, babysitters, and others—the parents bear responsibility*.

2. In requiring the verification of criminal convictions for sexual offences against children in order to accede to the positions listed in question 1, does your State:
   a. define the level or threshold of contact with children (one-off, regular, etc.) which necessitates such a verification
   b. distinguish between direct, indirect or online contact with children?

   If yes, please provide details.

Bulgarian law does not set thresholds for the intensity of contact (one-time or regular) and does not distinguish between direct, indirect, or online contact. The criterion in the law is based entirely on the nature of the position or activity held. If a full-time or contract-based position (including civil contracts) involves working in an educational, social, or health care institution for children, a background check is mandatory. The law also covers support staff who do not have direct educational contact but are present in the same environment.

At the municipal level, there is no separate procedure for determining the degree or type of contact with children (one-time, regular, direct, indirect, or online contact) that requires a background check. When filling positions involving work with children, the municipality requires the submission of a criminal record check in accordance with applicable law and the requirements for the position in question.

Article 126 of the Social Services Act governs the conditions for the participation of volunteers in the provision of social services. The law stipulates that the involvement of volunteers is carried out on the basis of programs developed by social service providers, which define the activities, rights, obligations, training, and supervision, with the social service provider assuming responsibility for their activities. The social service provider must have an approved employee selection procedure that governs the processes and necessary documentation for selecting, hiring, and entering into contracts with employees (and volunteers) in accordance with the criteria of the Social Services Act. In cases where an employee or volunteer works with children or vulnerable individuals, the social services provider must conduct a background check regarding circumstances that could endanger service users. The programs that providers are required to develop include a requirement to submit a criminal record check. Bulgarian law imposes restrictions on individuals convicted of certain crimes against children from engaging in activities involving work and direct contact with children. The Criminal Procedure Code provides for the possibility of verification, under which the competent authorities may conduct searches in the National Information System for the Prevention and Protection against Paedophilia (NISPP) and in the National Register of Paedophilia Cases, maintained by the Ministry of the Interior. At present, there is still no publicly accessible electronic portal, but the possibility of requesting information is guaranteed.

3. Is the absence of criminal convictions for sexual offences against children required to become:
   a. an adoptive parent
   b. a foster parent
   c. a child’s legal guardian (including for unaccompanied children)?

   Please provide details.

Under the provisions of the current Family Code, persons who are legally incapacitated, have been deprived of parental rights, or have been convicted of intentional crimes may not serve as members of a guardianship council, guardians, or deputy guardians. The guardianship and custody authority conducts an ex officio investigation to determine a person’s criminal history.

A criminal record check is required as part of the adoption process. Screening is conducted during the application process.

Individuals who have been convicted of an intentional crime of a general nature or against whom criminal proceedings have been initiated for an intentional crime of a general nature are not eligible to apply to become a foster family.

4. Is the absence of criminal convictions for sexual offences against children required for the household members of:
   a. persons carrying out professional activity in their home who are in contact with children
   b. persons carrying out volunteering activity in their home who are in contact with children
   c. persons wishing to become an adoptive parent, a foster parent, or a child’s legal guardian?

   Please provide details.

See the answer to Question 1. With regard to prospective adoptive parents, information about the adoptive parents’ household members is included in the social report attached to their case file.

5. Does the requirement to verify the absence of criminal convictions for sexual offences against children also apply to:
   a. children applying for professional or volunteer positions
   b. adults in respect of criminal convictions received before the age of 18?

   Please provide details.

See Q.1

6. If a person legally changes their name, how does your State ensure that their criminal record remains linked to their new name?

   Please provide details.

When a person legally changes their name, the court must send the court decision regarding that proceeding to the competent court in the person's place of birth, i.e., to the criminal records office in their place of birth or to the Central Criminal Records Office at the Ministry of Justice, if the person was born outside the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria or their place of birth is unknown.

This circumstance is reflected in the national criminal record registry—the Centralized Automated Information System "Judicial Status"—by entering the new name(s) into the system and updating the individual's data. This circumstance is also linked to the person's criminal history, if a criminal record is available for that specific person.

The Republic of Bulgaria has a centralized civil registration system—the Unified Civil Number—managed through the National "ESGRAON" System. This is a unique 10-digit code assigned at birth that never changes, regardless of legal name changes (due to marriage, divorce, or a court decision). If there are convictions or pending proceedings, they will be linked to the UCN rather than to the person's name as it appears in text. Even if an individual completely changes their first and last names, the system automatically reflects the change and links their entire criminal history to the new name.

7. Is access to public funds for projects implying contact with children conditional on the absence of criminal convictions for sexual offences against children for persons employed in or volunteering for such projects?

   Please provide details.

Yes, this is standard practice; when announcing a public tender, the subject matter is taken into account, especially when it concerns children, their safety, and their protection. Applicant organizations and their representatives (directors, managers) must ensure that risks to the ultimate beneficiaries (the children). The organization receiving public funds is required to screen the entire project team (staff and volunteers). If a violation is found, funding may be suspended, and the funds already disbursed must be repaid.

Information included in screening

8. Does the criminal record check include criminal convictions for:
    a. sexual abuse of a child (Article 18 of the Lanzarote Convention)
    b. sexual exploitation of a child ("child prostitution" Article 19 of the Lanzarote Convention)
    c. acts involving child sexual abuse material ("child pornography" Article 20 of the Lanzarote Convention)
    d. offences related to the participation of children in pornographic performances (Article 21 of the Lanzarote Convention)
    e. corruption of a child (causing a child to witness sexual activities) (Article 22 of the Lanzarote Convention)
    f. solicitation of a child for sexual purposes ("grooming"), including online (Article 23 of the Lanzarote Convention)
    g. aiding and abetting or attempting the above offences (Article 24 of the Lanzarote Convention)
    h. any other convictions (please specify)?

    Please provide details.

Upon verification, the National Information System for the Prevention and Protection Against Paedophilia contains data on individuals who have received final convictions for sexual offenses against children, in accordance with the definitions of such offenses under national law and the offenses listed above.

9. Does the screening of persons applying for roles or positions specified in questions 1 and 3 above extend beyond criminal convictions for sexual offences against children to:
    a. relevant administrative or disciplinary sanctions
    b. other information available to the authorities (e.g. judicial decisions in civil proceedings)?

    Please provide details.

The standard criminal record in Bulgaria contains only criminal convictions.

- Disciplinary sanctions: Disciplinary dismissals are recorded in the individual's employment record, which the employer reviews during the hiring process. For teachers, there is an internal registry at the Ministry of Education and Science where imposed disciplinary sanctions are recorded.
- Civil cases and other information: When a background check is conducted by social services (child protection departments) for the purposes of adoption or guardianship, they conduct a comprehensive social investigation. This includes official reports on civil court decisions (e.g., termination of parental rights, measures under the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act), as well as information from the Ministry of the Interior regarding ongoing investigations or police records.

10. If restrictions on the exercise of the relevant activities apply as a result of a criminal conviction for sexual offences against children, in line with Article 27 paragraph 3.b:

a. are they life-long?

b. if they are not life-long, please specify the time-limits applicable

c. are they applied only to activities in the public sector?

Please provide details.

Persons who, by virtue of their occupation, work with minors are required to submit a written request to the National Registry to verify the circumstances described above when entering into employment or civil contracts with workers and employees. The existence of such a circumstance constitutes grounds for refusing to enter into an employment or civil contract.

In the Child Protection Act: pursuant to Art. 43a, par. 8 of the Child Protection Act, persons who, by virtue of their occupation, engage in activities with minors are required to submit a written request to the National Register to check for the circumstances described above when entering into employment or civil contracts with workers and employees. These checks are free of charge. The existence of such a circumstance constitutes grounds for refusing to enter into an employment or civil contract.

The Penal Code provides for restrictions on the exercise of certain activities, as follows: Art. 49, par. 1— penalties involving deprivation of rights under Art. 37, para. 1, items 6 and 7, when imposed independently or in conjunction with another penalty not involving imprisonment, shall be imposed for a fixed term of up to three years within the limits established in the Special Part of the Criminal Code. There is a provision for imposing this deprivation of rights together with a sentence of imprisonment. The term begins to run from the date the judgment becomes final, but the convicted person may not exercise the rights of which they have been deprived until they have served the sentence of imprisonment.

11. Does the criminal record check verify the existence of an expunged or spent criminal conviction for sexual offences against children for persons applying for roles or positions specified in questions 1 and 3?

Please provide details.

Even if the person has been rehabilitated, a check of the National Information System for the Prevention and Protection against Paedophilia (a registry maintained by the Ministry of the Interior) will reveal all convictions for sexual offenses against children. A certificate may be requested from the prosecutor’s office and the investigative service regarding any currently pending investigations or legal proceedings.

Screening procedure

12. How is the screening procedure set out in your legal framework (in a single piece of legislation, sector-specific legislation, or other)?

    Please provide details.

There are several options for background checks that serve the same purpose but are conducted by different sources, which are regulated by different laws and subordinate legislation. See Q 1.

13. If screening is required, who is required to act?
    a. the employer, volunteer recruiter or child protection authority is expected to obtain the necessary information directly from the authorities
    b. the candidate must provide proof of absence of convictions
    c. another scenario. Please specify

    Please provide details.

Both options, a) and b), are realistic and possible.

Art. 12 of Regulation No. 8121z-192 of February 26, 2025, on the National Information System for the Prevention and Protection Against Paedophilia stipulates that: "Persons who, by virtue of their occupation, engage in activities with minors and are required, upon entering into employment or civil contracts with workers and employees, to conduct background checks in the National Register, are those who carry out and/or organize supervision, transportation, recreational activities, classes, training, or events in the field of sports; activities and events in the field of culture and the arts; education, care, protection, and security; activities related to the serving of sentences; and activities involving the upbringing, treatment, or education of persons under the age of 18, with the exception of:

1. persons implementing Art. 215 of the Law on Preschool and School Education;
2. persons other than those specified in item 1, to whom, pursuant to a regulatory act, a criminal record certificate must be presented prior to the conclusion of an employment or civil contract;
3. other persons to whom the individual with whom an employment or civil contract is to be concluded submits a criminal record certificate based on administrative regulations or at the express request of the employer or the appointing authority, as applicable."

The executive branch, local self-government bodies, and local administrative authorities, the State Agency for Child Protection, the Social Assistance Agency, municipal commissions on children, the National Assembly, and judicial authorities are entitled to free access to data in the National Information System for the Prevention and Protection against Paedophilia upon written request.

Information from the National Register is provided to individuals who, by virtue of their occupation, work with persons under the age of 18, following the submission of a written application—either in person or through an authorized representative—for the issuance of a certificate.

Both the employer and the person to be hired may request and/or submit a criminal record or a certificate from the aforementioned registry.

14. If screening is required, who bears the costs of screening procedures?

    Please provide details.

The check in the National Information System is free of charge. The issuance of a criminal record certificate or a certificate from the prosecutor's office or the investigative service is subject to a minimal fee, which is paid by the applicant. It is also possible for an employer to conduct an official criminal background check electronically.

15. How does your State monitor that employers, volunteer recruiters or child protection authorities comply with the relevant regulations on screening?

    Please provide details.

Monitoring can be two-tiered:

- Internal—within the organization or institution, carried out by an internal oversight body responsible for monitoring compliance with specific rules and obligations;
- External—carried out by a higher-level authority through an inspectorate or oversight body.

16. If screening is required, are there sanctions foreseen for failure to comply with it? If yes, what type of sanctions?

    Please provide details.

Under the provisions of the Child Protection Act, persons who, by virtue of their occupation, engage in activities with minors are required when entering into employment or civil contracts with workers and employees, to conduct background checks by submitting a written request to the National Registry to verify whether the individual has been convicted of crimes under Section VIII "Sexual Misconduct" of the Penal Code committed against minors. Anyone who fails to comply with an obligation under the Child Protection Act shall be punished with a fine of 500 to 1,000 BGN for a first violation, and 1,000 to 2,000 BGN for a repeat violation, unless the act is subject to a more severe administrative penalty under a special law or constitutes a criminal offense.

17. Is regular screening, beyond the initial recruitment process, required, for:
    a. professionals in contact with children
    b. volunteers in contact with children
    c. foster parents and legal guardians?

    If regular screening is required, please specify its frequency and provide other details.

Pursuant to Art. 43a, par. 8 of the Child Protection Act, persons who, by virtue of their occupation, engage in activities with minors are required to submit a written request to the National Register to check for the circumstances described in par.1 when entering into employment or civil contracts with workers and employees. These checks are free of charge. The existence of such a circumstance constitutes grounds for refusing to enter into an employment or civil contract.

18. Where a person working or volunteering in contact with children is under investigation for a sexual offence against a child, are law enforcement or other authorities allowed to inform the employer or volunteer organisation about the ongoing investigation? If yes, what is the consequence?

    Please provide details.

The Child Protection Act provides for the protection of a child who is a victim of violence or exploitation, specifically:

Art. 36e (1) Protection of a child at risk or a victim of violence or exploitation shall be undertaken following an assessment of the case by a multidisciplinary team and in accordance with the action plan proposed by that team. The plan shall include health, social, and educational services aimed at preventing violence or at the child's recovery. When the violence is committed by a parent, a person entrusted with the child's care, or a person to whom the child has been entrusted, the child victim may be provided with protection through out-of-home placement in a social service facility for children who have suffered violence or are victims of trafficking. The court's decision shall prescribe measures regarding parental rights and refer the parents to social services to enhance their parenting capacity, upon the recommendation of the Social Assistance Directorate.

If there is evidence of a crime, the "Social Assistance" Directorate notifies the district prosecutor's office to take action against the perpetrator under the Criminal Code. When the violence or exploitation of a child is committed by a person to whom the child has been entrusted for the provision of care, protection, treatment, or education pursuant to a court order, an employment contract, or other agreement, the prosecution authorities, upon filing the case with the court, shall immediately notify the Social Assistance Directorate at the child's current address and the relevant employer to ensure that the person is immediately separated from the child or children.

Cross-border screening

19. If the candidate for roles or positions specified in questions 1 and 3 has previously resided or worked in different countries, is it required to verify the absence of criminal convictions for sexual offences against children in each of those countries in respect of:

    a. professionals

    b. volunteers

    c. persons wishing to become an adoptive parent, a foster parent or a child's legal guardian?

    Please provide details.

In cases where the applicant has lived or worked in a foreign country and wishes to become a guardian or foster parent, please note that a criminal background check—including for sexual offenses against children—is not required by the Directorate for International Legal Protection and International Adoption. As we emphasized in our previous internal letter—for the purposes of cooperation under Art. 79 and 80 of Regulation No. 209/1111 and the 1996 Hague Convention—the collection and transmission of information are subject to data protection rules; our ministry does not collect or transmit information regarding a person's health or financial situation, nor regarding their criminal history or any police or prosecutorial investigations. Accordingly, such information should not be included in reports prepared in connection with requests for cooperation.

As the central authority of the Republic of Bulgaria for the exchange of criminal record data with European Union member states, the Ministry of Justice exchanges information on convictions.

In the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS), there is a specific purpose for the exchange of information, which reads: "003 101 – request regarding the employment of a person for professional or organized volunteer activities involving direct and regular contact with children"; when this purpose is specified and there is a conviction for sexual abuse of children, this circumstance will be reflected in the corresponding response.

20. Is there a mechanism to:

    a. request data about a person's criminal convictions for sexual offences against children from the competent authority of another State outside the context of criminal proceedings[1] (please specify)

    b. provide data about a person's criminal convictions for sexual offences against children to the competent authority of another State outside the context of criminal proceedings (please specify)?

    Please provide details.

Through ECRIS and when specifying the purpose described above, Member States provide information on existing convictions for sexual offenses committed against children. Bulgaria provides information to EU Member States in response to requests received, and also receives such responses to requests it has sent.

[1] For purposes of recruitment, volunteering, adoption, foster care or guardianship.

21. Is there an obligation to provide data about a person's criminal convictions for sexual offences against children at the request of the competent authority of another State outside the context of criminal proceedings?

    Please provide details.

Yes, there is an obligation to provide this type of information through ECRIS in connection with the implementation of Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of December 13, 2011, on combating sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA.

Pursuant to Art. 10 of the Directive, "Member States shall take the necessary measures to ensure that, for the purposes of applying par. 1 and 2 of this Article, information on the existence of convictions for any of the offenses referred to in Art. 3 through 7, or of a disqualification from exercising a profession or activity involving direct and regular contact with children resulting from such convictions, shall be transmitted in accordance with the procedures set out in Council Framework Decision 2009/315/JHA of February 26, 2009, on the organization and content of the exchange of information obtained from criminal records between Member States, upon request in accordance with Article 6 of that Framework Decision and with the consent of the person concerned."

Additional details and reflections

22. Please add any further details regarding the modalities of the screening procedures applicable in your State, if relevant.

    Please provide details.

23. What challenges related to the screening for criminal convictions for sexual offences against children of professionals, volunteers and persons wishing to become adoptive parents, foster parents or a child's legal guardian exist in your State in practice (e.g. administrative costs, delays, cross-border co-operation)?

    Please provide details.

The National Information System that has been established is relatively new (2025), and as of the time of completing this questionnaire, the first steps are being taken toward its implementation and professionalizing the work on this issue.

24. What promising practices, if any, would your State like to highlight in the screening of professionals, volunteers and other persons in contact with children?

    Please provide details.

- The existence of established procedures for the selection and evaluation of employees and volunteers;
- Developed internal procedures for reporting, reviewing, and following up on reports of abuse;
- Conducting initial and ongoing training for staff;

- Provision of supervision;
- Developing inter-institutional cooperation among social service providers, child protection authorities, municipalities, the Ministry of the Interior, and other competent institutions;
- Criteria have been established regarding the provision of a safe and secure environment, the prevention of violence, exploitation, and discrimination, and the existence of internal rules and procedures for risk management and protection (in social services)
- The Agency for the Quality of Social Services is responsible for licensing, oversight, monitoring, and evaluating the quality of existing services. The regulatory framework is uniform across all three areas: residential care; social protection services; and services for victims (including Barnahus and services for victims of domestic violence). The main providers of social services in Bulgaria are the municipalities, which manage and organize the delivery of social services. Social services may also be provided by private providers after obtaining a license from the Agency for Quality of Social Services (AKSU) in accordance with the established rules and procedures.