



Building a Europe
for and with children
Construire une Europe
pour et avec les enfants

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 19 August 2020

CDEF(2020)16

Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDEF)

Opinion on PACE Recommendation 2175(2020) on Addressing sexual violence against children: stepping up action and co-operation in Europe*

www.coe.int/cdef

* Adopted pursuant to the provisions of Article 13 of Appendix I of Resolution CM/Res(2011)24.

Opinion on

PACE Recommendation 2175(2020) on Addressing sexual violence against children: stepping up action and co-operation in Europe

1. Following its adoption on 26 June 2020 by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (hereafter “PACE”), Recommendation 2175(2020) on Addressing sexual violence against children: stepping up action and co-operation in Europe was submitted to the Committee of Ministers. The Committee of Ministers agreed, among other things, “to communicate it to the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF), for information and possible comments by 22 August 2020” (see document [CM/Del/Dec\(2020\)1380bis/3.2](#) of 8 July 2020).
2. The CDENF examined the Recommendation by applying the procedure set out in Article 13 of [CM/Res\(2011\)24](#), and approved the following comments concerning those aspects of PACE Recommendation 2175(2019) which are of particular relevance to its Terms of Reference.
3. The CDENF welcomes the PACE’s calls to step up action and co-operation in addressing sexual violence against children in Europe and congratulates the Rapporteur for this initiative.
4. The CDENF wishes to draw attention to the focus upon sexual violence against children in the [Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child \(2016-2021\)](#) (see chapter 3.2) as well as the promotion of an integrated approach to protection from all forms of violence (chapter 3.1). In its [terms of reference \(ToR\) for 2020-2021](#), the CDENF is tasked with continuing to promote the implementation of international and Council of Europe standards on the protection of children from violence in member states. This shall be undertaken notably through [the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#) and the development of non-binding instruments on systems for professionals to report violence against children, and on measures and interventions aimed at preventing peer violence and sexual abusive behaviour by children (ToR, specific task iii). It is further charged with reviewing progress towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In the light of these objectives and mandates, the Strategy and the work of the CDENF are crucial to achieving the key aims of PACE Recommendation 2175(2020), and in particular those noted in **paragraphs 4, 5.1, 5.2 and 5.4**. The CDENF therefore regrets that neither the Strategy nor the Committee were mentioned explicitly in the text of the Recommendation.
5. The CDENF welcomes calls for remaining member states to ratify the Lanzarote Convention on the Protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (**paragraph 5.1**). The CDENF notes, in relation to **paragraph 2**, that 45 out of the 47 member states of the Council of Europe have ratified the Convention, with Armenia and the Republic of Ireland taking concrete steps to do so. The CDENF also welcomes the call for non-member states of the Council of Europe to consider becoming Parties to the Lanzarote Convention (**paragraph 5.2**). It further draws attention to the fact that Tunisia has recently become the first non-member state to accede to the Convention, which, in respect of this State, entered into force in February 2020. It should also be noted that accession by the European Union to the Lanzarote Convention is a priority in the period 2020-2022.¹
6. The CDENF welcomes calls for further development of the “Start to Talk” campaign and the design and promotion of Council of Europe materials on addressing sexual violence

¹ See https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/council-europe/82788/node/82788_en.

against children (**paragraph 5.3**). In this regard, it wishes to draw attention to a number of materials recently developed in this field, and to be further promoted, including:

- [“Learn about your rights in the digital environment”](#) child-friendly version of the [“Council of Europe Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment” \(CM/Rec\(2018\)7\)](#), which will soon be available in 14 languages¹ Based on the Guidelines, an implementation handbook for policymakers has also been developed and will soon be published.
- [“So this is sexual abuse?”](#) booklet for teenagers based on the Lanzarote Convention and soon to be available in 12 languages² 7.

7. The CDENF further welcomes mention of the co-operation that has developed between the Council of Europe and bodies of the United Nations. With regard to **paragraph 5.5**, the CDENF wishes to draw attention to the close work and regular exchanges in which it engages with different bodies of the UN. For example, representatives of the UNHCR, the Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children and UNICEF attended the CDENF’s [first plenary meeting](#), while a representative of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child participated in the Council of Europe’s high level conference on [“Redefining power: Strengthening the rights of the Child”](#), held 13-14 November 2019. The CDENF would warmly welcome the appointment of a regular member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to take part at future CDENF meetings.

8. The CDENF notes that the European Commission has recently adopted a [Strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse](#) and is in the process of preparing (by 2021) a [Strategy on children’s rights](#), with input from the Council of Europe and the Lanzarote Committee. The CDENF calls for emphasis upon closer cooperation between the two organisations in this respect, particularly bearing in mind that the Council of Europe will, at the same time, be preparing its new Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027).

9. Finally, the CDENF wishes to draw attention to pan-European and national cooperation activities in the area of sexual violence against children implemented by the Council of Europe. This includes, notably, the pan-European End Online Child Sexual Abuse @ Europe project ([EndOCSEA@Europe](#)), as well as bilateral projects in Ukraine, Moldova and [Slovenia](#). It wishes to underline the importance of, and the Council of Europe’s efforts in, strengthening co-operation both at the European level, between governments, and the national level, between all relevant stakeholders, to prevent and combat sexual violence against children.

¹ Albanian; Armenian; Azerbaijani; Bosnian; English; French; Georgian; German; Montenegrin; Portuguese; Romanian; Serbian; Turkish; Ukrainian.

² Albanian; Armenian; Azerbaijani; Bosnian; English; Georgian; Hungarian; Montenegrin; Romanian; Serbian; Turkish; Ukrainian.