

Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) - Unofficial summary

The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse was adopted and opened for signature on the 25 October 2007 in Lanzarote, Spain, and entered into force on 1 July 2010. It has been signed and ratified by all Council of Europe member states. The Convention is also opened to non-member states; Tunisia has already acceded to the Convention

Purpose of the Convention

The Lanzarote Convention is aimed ensuring that its Parties are taking the necessary steps to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, to seek protection of victims and to promote national and international co-operation in the process of implementation of the foreseen measures in the treaty.

Prosecution

The Convention is the first international treaty that identifies and criminalise the offence of sexual abuse (Article 18). It also defines as criminal acts the following: "child prostitution" / Sexual exploitation of children through prostitution (Article 19); "child pornography" / Child sexual abuse material (Article 20); "participation of a child in pornographic performances" / Exploitation of a child in sexual performances (Article 21); corruption of children (Article 22) and solicitation of children for sexual purposes, also known as "online grooming" (Article 23).

Specific measures provided by the Convention

In terms of prevention, Parties are required to:

- screen, recruit and train persons working in contact with children;
- ensure that children are made aware of the possible risks and the ways to protect themselves;
- ensure regularly monitored intervention measures for both offenders and potential ones, aimed at preventing sexual offences against children.

Protective measures involve:

- establishment of programmes to support victims and their families;
- access to therapeutic assistance and emergency psychological care;
- reporting of suspicion of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse;
- establishment of telephone and Internet helplines to provide advice.

Criminal law measures:

- ensure that certain types of conduct are criminal offences, such as engaging in sexual activities with a child below the legal age for such activities;
- criminalise conduct which makes use of new technologies, in particular the Internet, to sexually harm children;
- establish common criteria to ensure that an effective, proportionate and dissuasive punitive system is put in place;
- collect and store data on convicted offenders of sexual offences against children.

Child-friendly investigative and judicial procedures:

- ensure that child victims are well protected during proceedings, and that the trauma experienced is not enhanced;
- protect the privacy, identity and image of child victims;
- establish measures adapted to the needs of child victims, respecting their rights and those of their families;
- limit the number of interviews with child victims and ensure they take place in appropriate surroundings, with professionals trained for the purpose.

Monitoring

A specific monitoring mechanism is set up for the purpose of ensuring the effective implementation of the Convention's provisions. This is the Lanzarote Committee (comprising representatives of all the Parties to the Convention). It is for the Committee to monitor and collect data from international, national, and regional sources in order to provide an overview of the situation in member states, to foster the co-operation and to detect any possible difficulties.