



15 years of the Lanzarote Convention: Achievements, challenges and the way forward to prevent and protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse

Valletta, Malta – 1 July 2025 ¹

We, the Ministers of State Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention), as well as Observer States of the Council of Europe and of the Lanzarote Convention, gathered in Valletta, Malta on 1 July 2025, united in our shared responsibility to protect and uphold the rights, dignity and safety of every child.

On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the entry into force of the Lanzarote Convention, we affirm that this moment is not merely one of reflection, but a renewed and resolute commitment to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children. We pledge to deploy the necessary resources, recognising that the unconditional protection of children is our highest moral and legal duty.

RECOGNISING PROGRESS IN

- (1) Implementing the Lanzarote Convention through strengthened national frameworks, enhanced victim support systems, including children's houses (such as Barnahus, Barnahus-type services and Child Advocacy Centres), improved child-friendly justice processes, increased victim and survivor participation in advocacy, policy- and decision-making, and institutional enquiry and accountability mechanisms.
- (2) The Lanzarote Committee's monitoring and capacity-building initiatives, which have addressed emerging challenges, the role of technology in facilitating sexual offences against children, elevated victim and survivor voices and promoted sharing of promising practices among State Parties in relation to limitation periods and approaches to the legal age for sexual activities.

AWARE THAT

- (3) Child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse are a particularly serious and worldwide crime most often committed by persons in the child's circle of trust, where the child may find themselves stigmatised, living in fear or facing barriers to report;

¹ The declaration was unanimously adopted by all State Parties to the Lanzarote Convention participating in the Conference of Ministers: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

- (4) This complex and evolving phenomenon, affects children without distinction and with long-lasting consequences for their health and psycho-social development;
- (5) The digital transformation has significantly increased the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, creating new environments and methods that perpetrators misuse;
- (6) Despite the advances achieved, State Parties continue to face challenges in effectively preventing this crime, identifying and protecting victims, and prosecuting offenders;

CONVINCED THAT

- (7) Childhood is a foundational stage in human development, and every child must be empowered to grow in a safe and secure environment, free from any threat of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse;
- (8) Children are full members of society, and consequently, they have specific rights to:
 - a fair legal process that protects their rights and interests, that holds offenders accountable, and provides support for their emotional, psychological and physical recovery;
 - be heard and have their views taken into account, in accordance with their age and maturity, in all decision-making processes relevant to their lives;
 - access their rights without discrimination; and
 - have their best interests as a primary consideration in all actions concerning them;
- (9) Children's capacities evolve throughout their development, and they should be supported to seek help and to report the facts in case of victimisation, ensuring that their voice is heard and respected;
- (10) Investment in the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children yields substantial social benefits, affirming the importance of adequate and sustainable support.

COMMIT TO

- (11) Break the taboos surrounding child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, including by fostering an intergenerational and peer-to-peer approach to address and overcome current and emerging challenges;
- (12) Strengthen the implementation of the Convention by further combatting impunity, promoting the prompt, thorough and effective investigation and prosecution of offenders, preventing re-offending and reinforcing accountability;
- (13) Empower and protect children from an early age, including by ensuring that children, during primary and secondary education, receive information on the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, adapted to their evolving capacity. This information, provided in collaboration with parents, where appropriate, shall be given within a more general context of information on sexuality;

- (14) Raise awareness among, and encourage, platforms and private companies operating online, to actively engage in developing and implementing safeguards that help ensure that their services do not become spaces that facilitate sexual abuse of children;
- (15) Address overlapping vulnerabilities that place certain children at greater risk, including those experiencing discrimination, isolation, and exclusion, to help ensure that they are equipped to recognise sexual abuse and seek help;
- (16) Foster public awareness and societal responsibility, including by enhancing training and capacity building to equip parents, caregivers and professionals with the skills to recognise early - often hidden - signs of sexual abuse, empowering them to support children to stay safe;
- (17) Train professionals working with children to combat and prevent child sexual exploitation, including in the context of human trafficking;
- (18) Promote effective and regular screening of individuals working with or in contact with children;
- (19) Promote coordinated, cross-sectoral collaboration of all stakeholders including the judiciary, law enforcement, health, social and education sectors, and civil society to pursue a holistic and effective response to child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse;
- (20) Ensure that all children – without exception – have equitable, safe and immediate access tailored to their needs, to report instances of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse with a view of providing timely protection, support and justice;
- (21) Enhance measures to protect children from pornography and prevent and respond to online grooming (solicitation of children for sexual purposes), and all forms of technology facilitated violence, including through the development of child-friendly tools and strategies that strengthen children's ability to recognise, and report harmful contact;
- (22) Promote global efforts to protect all children against conflict-related sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

CALL ON THE LANZAROTE COMMITTEE TO

- (23) Seek to strengthen national legislative and regulatory frameworks, policies and practices to enhance the global response to child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, including online safety;
- (24) Pay particular attention to emerging challenges related to the use of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies by perpetrators of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse through a comprehensive and multistakeholder approach, while continuing to tackle existing challenges;
- (25) Ensure the Lanzarote Convention remains a living and forward-looking instrument addressing both current and evolving issues, with a view of upholding children's protection in the context of an accelerating digital transformation;



Presidency of Malta
Council of Europe
May - November 2025

Présidence de Malte
Conseil de l'Europe
Mai - Novembre 2025

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



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- (26) Reaffirm the commitment to relevant principles of international and European standards and conventions in the field of child protection with a view to strengthen synergies with other relevant Council of Europe monitoring bodies and international and regional organisations, in particular with United Nations and the European Union;
- (27) Promote accession to the Lanzarote Convention by States globally and ensure the Convention's broad visibility to foster international co-operation and co-ordination in protecting children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, and in combating these crimes more effectively.