### "Beyond the horizon: a new era for the rights of the child"

High-level Launching Conference for the new Strategy for the Rights

of the Child (2022-2027) co-organised by the Council of Europe and

the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers

### **Deep dive conversation A:**

Protecting children from online sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

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## **Context of the phenomenon**



## **The Metaverse**



The upcoming wind of change in technological progress will bring a new urge in finding solutions to counter online child sexual abuse and exploitation



Building and maintaining connections and relationships with peers is one of the most important developmental tasks of the adolescence stage

Studies show that online relationships can be sources of satisfaction and support

Despite the beneficial aspects of the digital environment on children and adolescents' development, the risks on the online environment, especially the Metaverse, are not to be underestimated

In the upcoming scenario, not only the physical senses are affected by the new reality, but also psychological consequences should be taken into account.

The self-identification of the child is highly impacted with the creation of an avatar, which the young person can radically change based on their preferences

We must take into account that there would be major neurobiological changes in the aftermath of this technology

The behavioral, cognitive and social spheres can radically change in the new world, by leaving the child with a double life

## The new risks of child sexual abuse and Azzurro exploitation in the Metaverse

#### The unknown world of the Metaverse

ightarrow Children and young people do not know yet what is the Metaverse and how it is supposed to work and to be used

In particular, children and adolescent are sometimes not aware of the full risks and in such cases, do not have the tools or means to counter them

The new environment highly attracts children and adolescents for presenting new and innovative features, to which children are constantly used to

According to the Center for countering Digital Hate Research, in a VR Chat, every 7 minutes a molestation occurs

One element to take into account, particularly in the Metaverse, could be the ease with which a child or teenager can be spotted and groomed in the Metaverse, via chat or headset, resulting in difficulty in being able to trace that action and report it

The Metaverse possess an immersive interface and virtual interactions with other users, along with largely non uniform user safety policies across services, the technology represents a myriad of unknowns for families and young children

Reality and fantasy are blurred to such a level that for a young adolescents it would be hard to discern the two worlds,

The consequences of what happens in the Metaverse is more than real, and affects extensively the children wellbeing

# Solutions to be discussed to tackle online \* Letters child sexual abuse and exploitation

Protecting children, also in the upcoming Metaverse, will need to go beyond warning labels, by considering also tackling the problem at its roots, education and awareness campaigns

The role of Telefono Azzurro as a Hotline – 114 Childhood Emergency Service and Click and report for CSAM.
Presence of content moderators or support center in

the Metaverse

Hotline in the Metaverse

European Center to tackle child sexual abuse

Part of the EU Strategy for a more effective fight against child sezual abuse
The center wiuld provide holistic support to Member states ensuring coordination to maximise the efficient use of resources and avoiding duplication efforts Tech companies must acknowledge their role in the fight against child sexual abuse
Monitoring tools, their effectiveness

and research on what must be implemented to guarantee children's rights •The problem hit its peak at the end of the 2020, with the E-commerce directive

> Policy approach to regulate tech companies

#### Age Verification

 More restrictive privacy settings by default for any user that declares itself to be under 18 Users must be incentivized to be honest about their age, through an awareness campaign Implementation of appropriate and robust age verification mechanisms

Training on how to address the issue of CSAE in the new digital world, by finding solutions before its opening
New guidelines and methodologies to be established internationally to find the best way to detect and remove CSAM on the new digital environment

> Training of Professionals

Raising awareness to children and caregivers

Digital citizenship project by Telefono Azzurro to provide trainings to children, teachers and caregivers on specific topics concerning the fife in the digital environment
Allowing children, teachers and caregivers to address the issue also in classes and

at home , to exchange fears and best prctices