



FACTSHEET – CROATIA

Lanzarote Committee Implementation Report on:

“The protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by information and communication technologies (ICTs): addressing the challenges raised by child self-generated sexual images and/or videos (CSGSIV)”

This factsheet was prepared by the Secretariat in March 2023.

It has been updated with information submitted by the Government of Croatia in March 2025 displayed in orange and blue text boxes.

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I. Introduction

One of the main functions of the Lanzarote Committee (“the Committee”) is to monitor the effective implementation of the Lanzarote Convention (“the Convention”). The monitoring procedure is divided into rounds, each concerning a specific thematic area and involving all State Parties (“the Parties”) simultaneously. The monitoring rounds start with the launch of a thematic questionnaire, to which the national authorities are asked to respond, and which other relevant stakeholders can comment on. After carrying out its **evaluation procedure**, consisting of the analysis of such replies, the Committee adopts an **implementation report** where it draws conclusions about the different national frameworks, strategies and policies in place, makes recommendations to Parties, and highlights promising practices as well as some challenges. Sometime after the adoption of the implementation report, the Committee conducts a **compliance procedure** with the aim of assessing whether Parties comply with the recommendations made by the Committee as part of the evaluation procedure.

The compliance procedure seeks to assess the follow-up given by Parties to the recommendations made by the Committee in the evaluation procedure. In the [implementation report of its 2nd monitoring round concerning the challenges raised by child self-generated sexual images and/or videos](#), the Committee made **three types of recommendations**:

- **“Require”**: when the steps the Committee recommends Parties to take correspond to obligations arising from the Convention, as clarified by its explanatory report.
- **“Request”**: when the steps the Committee recommends Parties to take correspond to obligations arising from the Convention, as clarified by documents adopted by the Committee (such as previous monitoring round findings, opinions or other documents).
- **“Invite”**: when the steps the Committee recommends Parties to take correspond to promising practices or other measures to enhance protection of children against sexual violence even beyond specific requirements of the Convention.

At its 41st meeting (13-15 February 2024), the Lanzarote Committee agreed on a new methodology for the assessment of State Parties’ compliance with the 2nd monitoring round recommendations ([see point 4 of the Appendix to the List of decisions](#)). It entrusted the Secretariat to insert boxes in the 2nd monitoring round country [factsheets](#) to highlight where information on follow-up measures taken or changes occurred may be inserted. It is recalled that these factsheets are a synthesis of the Committee’s implementation report findings with respect to specific Parties. The factsheets are structured along the lines of the implementation report and the footnotes in this document refer to the specific paragraphs of the implementation report.

The orange boxes contain information submitted by the State Party regarding progress made towards the implementation of the recommendation.

The blue boxes contain examples of national promising practices that respond to “invite” recommendations made by the Committee.

II. Legal frameworks

Interpreting the Convention, in conjunction with its [Opinion on child sexually suggestive or explicit images and/or videos generated, shared and received by children](#) (6 June 2019), the Committee identifies what Parties ought to have in place as well as what they are encouraged to do to better protect children against the exploitation of their self-generated sexual images and/or videos (CSGSIV).

Observations and recommendations of the Committee on the legal framework specific to Croatia

The Committee notes that Croatian law refers explicitly to CSGSIV.¹ It further notes that within the Croatian legal framework the term “child pornography” is used as defined within Article 20(2) of the Convention.²

- The Committee **invites** Croatia to rather use the term “child sexual abuse material” (CSAM) for material depicting acts of sexual abuse of children and/or focusing on the genitalia of the child following the guidance set out in the [“Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse”](#)³ in the development of future national, regional and international legal instruments and policies addressing the prevention of and protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, as the Committee acknowledges that the term “child pornography” can be misleading and undermine the gravity of the crimes it refers to.⁴

Regarding the interplay of the age of criminal responsibility and the age of sexual consent

It appears that Croatia does not criminalise the production, acquisition or possession of material involving children who have reached the age of sexual consent where that material is produced and possessed with the consent of those children and only for the private use of the persons involved, in so far as the acts did not involve any abuse, in application of Article 8(3) of EU Directive 2011/93. Indeed,

Article 163 paragraph 5 of the Croatian Criminal Code (criminal offence of “child pornography”) prescribes that a child shall not be punished for producing and possessing pornographic material depicting him or her alone or him or her and another child, where this material is produced by themselves and possessed by them with their consent and solely for their own private use.⁵

In addition, to demonstrate compatibility with the exclusion of criminal liability for the production and possession of CSGSIV as prescribed by the above Opinion, Croatia pointed at the age of criminal responsibility below which children cannot be held criminally liable for acts they commit (14) and noted that production and possession of self-generated material were not criminalised when the child(ren) in question have reached the legal age for sexual activities.⁶ The Committee highlights, however, that reliance upon the age of criminal responsibility and the legal age for sexual activities alone to exclude criminal responsibility does not correspond to a situation of full compliance with the 2019 Opinion, since children of the age above the age of criminal responsibility and below the legal age for sexual activities cannot avail themselves of this exemption.⁷

The Committee thus **requests** Croatia to ensure in its legal framework that:

- a child will not be prosecuted when he/she possess:

¹ Para. 43

² Para. 49

³ The Terminology Guidelines also refer to the term “child sexual exploitation material”, indicating that this term can be used in a broader sense, see [“Luxembourg](#)

[Terminology Guidelines”](#), pages 38-40 in particular.

⁴ Recommendation II-1

⁵ Para. 60.

⁶ Paras. 71 and 73

⁷ Paras. 72 and 73

- their own self-generated sexually suggestive or explicit images and/or videos;
- self-generated sexually suggestive or explicit images and/or videos of another child with the informed consent of the child depicted on them;
- the self-generated sexually suggestive or explicit images and/or videos of another child as a result of receiving them passively without actively asking for them;⁸

Follow-up actions:

According to Article 163 (5) of the Criminal Code (Official Gazette, nos. 125/11, 144/12, 56/15, 61/15, 101/17, 118/18, 126/19, 84/21, 114/22, 114/23, 36/24) the child shall not be punished for production and possessing of pornographic material depicting himself/ herself alone or himself/herself and another child, where they produced this material by themselves and possess it with consent of each of them and solely for their private use.

This exemption from criminal liability concerns all children, below and above the legal age for sexual activities (which is in Croatia 15 years of age).

Receiving self-generated sexual images and/or videos of another child passively, without actively asking for them, does not amount to procuring or knowingly obtaining access through information communication technologies to child pornography. In this case there is no intent present, which is essential element of the criminal offence of Exploitation of Children for Pornography (Article 163 of the Criminal Code). In this regard, the Republic of Croatia is in line with point 6 of the Opinion on child sexually suggestive or explicit images and/or videos generated, shared and received by children (6 June 2019).

However, receiving other children's self-generated sexual images and/or videos without asking for them and subsequently

deciding to keep (i.e. store, not delete) such images and/or videos would be considered as possessing child pornography under Article 163 (2) of the Criminal Code.

To exclude criminal liability for possession by a child of the self-generated sexual images and/or videos of another child as a result of receiving them passively without actively asking for them, as such, without any further requirements as to the consent of the child depicted, would be contrary to obligations of member states of the EU under Directive 2011/92/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA (hereinafter: the Directive 2011/92/EU), Article 5 in relation to Article 8(3).

This Directive prescribes in Article 8(3) that it shall be within the discretion of Member States to decide whether Article 5(2) and (6) apply to the production, acquisition or possession of material involving children who have reached the age of sexual consent where that material is produced and possessed with the consent of those children and only for the private use of the persons involved, in so far as the acts did not involve any abuse.

However, the legal response *in concreto* shall depend on circumstances of each case.

If a child perpetrator has turned 14 at the time of commission of the offence, it shall be subject to procedure under Juvenile Courts Act („Official Gazette”, no. 84/11, 143/12, 148/13, 56/15, 126/19) , which is *lex specialis* for young perpetrators of criminal offences, with emphasis on urgency and purposefulness. During this proceedings the panel of judges for juveniles may decide to suspend the proceedings if it deems that it is not

⁸ Recommendation II-6

purposeful to impose on the minor a punishment or educational measure (Article 88 (2) of the Juvenile Courts Act).

For more details about characteristics of criminal proceedings against minors, please see „follow up actions” response to recommendation II-9.

- a child will not be prosecuted for sharing his/her sexual images and/or videos with another child when such sharing is voluntary, consensual and intended solely for their own private use.⁹

Follow-up actions:

The expansion of the exemption from criminal liability referred to in Article 163(5) of the Criminal Code to acts of „sharing” at this moment would be contrary to requirements of the Directive 2011/92/EU.

This Directive prescribes in Article 8(3) that it shall be within the discretion of Member States to decide whether Article 5(2) and (6) apply to the production, acquisition or possession of material involving children who have reached the age of sexual consent where that material is produced and possessed with the consent of those children and only for the private use of the persons involved, in so far as the acts did not involve any abuse.

In relation to acts of distribution, dissemination or transmission, member states of the EU do not have such a discretion to exempt children from criminal liability.

However, the legal response *in concreto* shall depend on circumstances of each case.

If a child perpetrator has turned 14 at the time of commission of the offence, it shall be subject to procedure under Juvenile Courts Act, which is *lex specialis* for young perpetrators of criminal offences, with

emphasis on urgency and purposefulness. During this proceedings the panel of judges for juveniles may decide to suspend the proceedings if it deems that it is not purposeful to impose on the minor a punishment or educational measure (Article 88 (2) of the Juvenile Courts Act).

For more details about characteristics of criminal proceedings against minors, please see „follow up actions” response to recommendation II-9.

The Committee notes that in Croatia children are potentially criminally liable for the distribution or transmission of their own self-generated sexual images and/or videos¹⁰ and for the distribution of self-generated sexual images and/or videos of *other* children.¹¹

- Accordingly, it **requests** Croatia to ensure that the distribution or transmission by children of self-generated sexually explicit images and/or videos of *other* children is prosecuted as a last resort when such images and/or videos qualify as “child pornography” in accordance with Article 20(2) of the Convention.¹²

Follow-up actions:

Distribution or transmission by children of self-generated sexually explicit images and/or videos of other children when such images and/or videos qualify as “child pornography” in accordance with Article 20(2) of the Convention would be considered as a distribution or transmission of child pornography under Article 163 (2) of the Criminal Code.

It is also a criminal offence under Article 5 (4) of the Directive 2011/92/EU.

However, legal response *in concreto* shall depend on circumstances of each case.

⁹ Recommendation II-8

¹⁰ Para. 78

¹¹ Para. 82

¹² Recommendation II-9

If a child perpetrator is a person under the age of 14, he/she shall not be held criminally liable (Article 7(1) of the Criminal Code). If during proceedings it is established that the child at the time of commission did not turn 14 years of age, criminal report shall be dismissed or proceedings suspended and information on the act and child-perpetrator shall be referred to the Social welfare centre (Article 49 of the Juvenile Courts Act).

If a child perpetrator has turned 14 at the time of commission of the offence, it shall be subject to procedure under Juvenile Courts Act, which is *lex specialis* for young perpetrators of criminal offences.

Criminal proceedings against minors is a specific procedure, with emphasis on urgency (Article 4 and Article 59 of the Juvenile Courts Act) and purposefulness.

The purpose of this proceedings is different than proceedings against adults. Sanctions that can be imposed upon minors are, according to Article 5 of the Juvenile Courts Act, educational measures, security measures and juvenile prison (applicable only for older minors, who turned 16 years of age at the time of commission of the offence).

The purpose of educational measures is to influence the upbringing, development of the overall personality and strengthening of the personal responsibility of the minor by providing protection, care, assistance and supervision and by ensuring general and professional education, in order to refrain from committing criminal offences again (Article 6(1) of the Juvenile Courts Act). The purpose of juvenile prison is to influence the further development of the personality of the minor and strengthening of his personal responsibility, by taking measures of upbringing, education and professional training, in order to refrain from committing criminal offences again, as well as to influence others not to commit

criminal offences (Article 6(2) of the Juvenile Courts Act).

Educational measures are: judicial reprimand, special obligations, increased care and supervision, increased care and supervision with daily stay in an educational institution, referral to a disciplinary centre, referral to an educational institution, referral to an educational institute, referral to a special educational institution (Article 7(1) of the Juvenile Courts Act).

Besides police officers for juveniles, state attorneys for juveniles and judges for juveniles (under Article 38 of the Juvenile Courts Act state attorney for juveniles and judges for juveniles must have a strong interest in the education, needs and benefits of juveniles and possess basic knowledge in the fields of criminology, social pedagogy, youth psychology and social work for young people), in this proceedings also participate other institutions, since information needed for assessment of minor's psycho-physical development and information on his personal and family circumstances are also collected in criminal proceedings against minor (Article 78 (1) of the Juvenile Courts Act).

Therefore, relevant information shall be collected from parents/caregivers and the Social welfare centre shall give its report, and also, if needed for assessment of minor's health condition, psycho-physical development or other characteristics, the opinion of doctor, psychologist, pedagogue or other institution shall be requested (Article 78 (2) and (4) of the Juvenile Courts Act).

According to Article 54 of the Juvenile Courts Act, in this proceedings the minor must obligatory be represented by an attorney, since first action taken due to the existence of grounds for suspicion that he has committed a criminal offense until the final conclusion of criminal proceedings. If minor or his family member/caregiver does

not engage an attorney, the judge for juveniles shall appoint him an attorney ex officio (an attorney with practice of at least five years, who must have a strong interest in the education, needs and benefits of juveniles and possess basic knowledge in the fields of criminology, social pedagogy, youth psychology and social work for young people).

It is important to emphasize that the panel of judges for juveniles may decide to suspend the proceedings if it deems that it is not purposeful to impose on the minor a punishment or educational measure (Article 88 (2) of the Juvenile Courts Act).

On sexual extortion of children

In the situation where the coercer already in possession of child self-generated material, attempts to procure or knowingly obtain access to further CSGSIV, Croatia would prosecute for offences related to “child pornography” (in concurrence with offences where threat is a core element, such as extortion or coercion),¹³ or corruption of children.¹⁴ It also referred to threat as one of the elements of the offences related to child pornography.¹⁵

When the coercer, possessing the CSGSIV, threatens the child for some other kind of sexual gain, Croatia would prosecute for sexual abuse of a child in accordance with Article 18, or for offences related to child prostitution and participation in pornographic performances.¹⁶ Croatia would also prosecute conduct relating to the possession of the initial child sexual image or video as an offence related to “child pornography” under Article 20,¹⁷ and for sexual coercion in general.¹⁸

In a situation when the offender possessing CSGSIV exploits them to gain money or other property from the child, Croatia would qualify

¹³ Para. 98

¹⁴ Para. 100

¹⁵ Para. 98

¹⁶ Para. 102

¹⁷ Para. 103

¹⁸ Para. 104

such conduct as extortion or aggravated extortion.¹⁹

When dealing with sexual extortion cases involving children, the Committee **invites** Croatia:

- to take into account the situation where CSGSIV are used to force, coerce or threaten the child to give additional self-generated sexual images and/or videos, other

sexual favours, a financial gain or other gain to the offenders by:

- either creating a specific incrimination to address this situation,
- or prosecuting both the initial detention of CSGSIV and the act of extortion;²⁰
- to ensure that sexual extortion of children involving CSGSIV is investigated and prosecuted.²¹

Generic recommendations of the Committee on legal frameworks

The Committee **invites** all Parties, including Croatia:

- to strengthen the protection of children by introducing explicit references in their respective legal frameworks to conduct concerning CSGSIV, identifying the circumstances when children should not be held criminally liable and when they should be prosecuted only as a last resort;²²
- to introduce in their legal framework a definition of “child sexual abuse material” in line with its Recommendation II-1 above;²³
- to contemplate appropriate legal responses to conduct involving non-visual self-generated sexual material produced by children in the context of offences covered by the Convention;²⁴
- to adopt legislative or other measures which promote as a priority educational and other measures that will aim to support children in safely exploring their sexual development

while understanding and avoiding risks deriving from the production and possession of self-generated sexual images and/or videos;²⁵

- to consider criminalising solicitation of children for sexual purposes (“grooming”), even when it does not lead to either a face-to-face meeting or to producing CSAM;²⁶
- when dealing with sexual extortion cases involving children, to take into account the situation where CSGSIV are used to force, coerce or threaten the child to give additional self-generated sexual images and/or videos, other sexual favours, a financial gain or other gain to the offenders by:
 - either creating a specific incrimination to address this situation,
 - or prosecuting both the initial detention of CSGSIV and the act of extortion;²⁷
- to ensure that sexual extortion of children involving CSGSIV is investigated and prosecuted.²⁸

Promising practices:

Regarding criminalising solicitation of children for sexual purposes (“grooming”), even when it does not lead to either a face-to-face meeting or to producing CSAM, we would like to point out that legal description of criminal offence of Solicitation of Children for Sexual Purposes (Article 161 of the Criminal Code) does not require for the face-to-face meeting to actually take place, nor that CSAM material is produced in order to hold the perpetrator criminally liable and punish him.

The criminal offence reads, as follows:

¹⁹ Para. 106

²⁰ Recommendation II-11

²¹ Recommendation II-12

²² Recommendation II-2

²³ Recommendation II-3

²⁴ Recommendation II-4

²⁵ Recommendation II-7

²⁶ Recommendation II-10

²⁷ Recommendation II-11

²⁸ Recommendation II-12

Solicitation of Children for Sexual Purposes

Article 161

(1) An adult who proposes to person under the age of fifteen, with the intention that he or she or a third party commits the criminal offence referred to in Article 158 (Sexual Abuse of a Child under the Age of Fifteen) or Article 163 paragraphs 1 and 2 (Exploitation of Children for Pornography) or Article 164 paragraph 1 (Exploitation of Children for Pornographic Performances) of this Code against him/her, through information and communication technologies or in some other way, to meet up with him or her or a third party, where this proposal is followed by material acts leading to such a meeting, shall be punished by imprisonment from six months to five years.

(2) Whoever collects, gives or transfers data on a person under the age of fifteen for the purpose of committing the criminal offence referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be punished by imprisonment not exceeding three years.

Furthermore, Article 163 (1) of the Criminal Code incriminates the acts of solicitation, recruitment or incitement of a child to participate in recording of child pornography, as well as organizing or enabling recording of child pornography (prescribed punishment is from one to ten years of prison).

Article 164 (1) of the Criminal Code incriminates the acts of solicitation, recruitment or incitement of a child to participate in pornographic performances (prescribed punishment is from one to ten years of prison).

III. Investigations and prosecution

In its [Interpretative Opinion on the applicability of the Lanzarote Convention to sexual offences against children facilitated through the use of information and communication technologies](#) (ICTs) (12 May 2017), the Committee called on Parties to ensure effective investigation and prosecution of ICT facilitated sexual exploitation and sexual abuse by providing resources and training to responsible authorities.

Observations and recommendations of the Committee on investigations and prosecution specific to Croatia

On the specialisation and training of authorities

The Committee notes that Croatia has specialised units dealing with ICT facilitated offences against children within law enforcement.²⁹ There are 5 specialised civil servants within the Ministry of Interior, Police Directorate, Department for Juvenile Delinquency and Crime against Children and Family. The units collaborate closely during criminal investigations. There are also 5 positions within the Department for High-Tech Crime.³⁰ As regards prosecution, cases concerning sexual abuse or exploitation of children facilitated by ICTs are managed by offices dedicated to juvenile justice.³¹ As to the judicial system, in accordance with Article 37 of the Juvenile Courts Act, there are juvenile divisions within county courts, as well as in municipal courts located in places where county courts have their seats. These divisions are composed of juvenile panels and judges who are competent for criminal offences committed by young adults and by adult perpetrators who commit sexual offences against children.³²

Training for law enforcement agents is provided by the State, as well as by external organisations in Croatia.³³ A training course is provided by the Police Academy for police

officers specialising in youth. It addresses topics related to sexual abuse and exploitation of children on the internet. A second training course is provided for police officers investigating criminal offences committed against children through the internet.³⁴ Other forms of training are also available in police schools.³⁵ Trainings cover combating online child sexual abuse and exploitation and investigative processes, including interviewing techniques, where a child victim is involved.³⁶ Croatia also has State-organised training for prosecutors³⁷ and for judges.³⁸

The Committee **requests** Croatia to ensure that training on ICT facilitated sexual offences against children is available for judges who are or will be working on these issues.³⁹

Follow-up actions:

In 2022, the Judicial Academy organised 6 workshops entitled “Juvenile Courts Act – case law and application” for a total of 56 participants. The target group is judges for juveniles and court counsellors and deputy state attorneys and state attorney counsellors of the municipal and county level.

In 2023, the Judicial Academy organised 5 workshops entitled “Juvenile Courts Act –

²⁹ Para. 115

³⁰ Para. 118

³¹ Para. 125

³² Para. 129

³³ Para. 148

³⁴ Para. 149

³⁵ Para. 150

³⁶ Para. 152

³⁷ Para. 157

³⁸ Para. 167

³⁹ Recommendation III-18

case law and application” for a total of 89 participants. The target group is judges for juveniles and court counsellors and deputy state attorneys and state attorney counsellors of the municipal and county level.

In 2024, the Judicial Academy organised 3 workshops entitled “Protection of children victims of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation” for a total of 44 participants. The target group is criminal judges and counsellors of municipal and county courts, judges and counsellors dealing with misdemeanour cases at municipal courts, deputy state attorneys and state attorney counsellors of the criminal department of the municipal and county level.

In 2024, the Judicial Academy organized two workshops entitled "Education on combating sexual violence and sexual harassment and on standards for the protection of the rights of children victims of sexual abuse and neglect in domestic and European legislation" for a total of 17 participants. The target group is criminal judges and counsellors of municipal and county courts, judges and counsellors dealing with misdemeanour cases at municipal courts, deputy state attorneys

and state attorney counsellors of the criminal department of the municipal and county level.

In 2025, the Judicial Academy plans to organise 5 workshops entitled “Criminal offences of criminal-law protection of children”. The target group is: judges for juveniles and court counsellors, and state attorneys of municipal and county level.

In 2025, the Judicial Academy plans to organise 3 workshops entitled “Education on combating sexual violence and sexual harassment and on standards for the protection of the rights of children victims of sexual abuse and neglect in domestic and European legislation”. The target group is: criminal and misdemeanour judges of municipal and county courts and state attorneys.

On victim identification

Croatia has victim identification units for cases of ICT facilitated sexual offences against children within cybercrime or high-tech crime departments.⁴⁰ Through these departments, it also makes an active contribution to the INTERPOL’s international child sexual exploitation database.⁴¹

Generic recommendations of the Committee on investigations and prosecution

On the specialisation and training of authorities

The Committee **requests** those Parties that are not already doing so:

- to ensure that law enforcement and prosecution units, services or persons specialised in ICT facilitated sexual offences against children are adequately financed to ensure sufficient resources, including staff, equipment and training.⁴²

Follow-up actions:

2022.-2024. Through NPOO project “Strengthening police capacity to combat cybercrime”, a total of 260 electronic computers have been procured for police officers from all Police Administrations. 130 kits for cybercrime investigation, searching open sources on the Internet and digital computer forensics have been procured, together with 130 investigative analytical computer kits for digital evidence analysis. Through the same project, police officers received training in cyber security and digital forensics, which includes

⁴⁰ Para. 180

⁴¹ Para. 186

⁴² Recommendation III-3, III-7

investigating criminal sexual offences committed against children on the Internet. 77 police officers received training in total duration of 150 workdays through 11 education modules in 2024.

The General Police Directorate continually organizes and conducts systematic and standardized police officer trainings through the cooperation between the Police Academy and competent lines of work with a view to acquiring new knowledge on criminal offences against sexual freedom and sexual abuse and exploitation of children through a program of further professional training. National trainings and workshops for police officers working on cyber security and juvenile delinquency are organized and conducted every year at the level of police administrations which include training in conducting criminal investigations of sexual abuse of children online:

- “Investigation of criminal offences of sexual abuse of children online” - 2 workshops in 2023; 2 workshops and 1 training in 2022
- “Investigation of open sources online” - 2 workshops in 2023; 2 workshops in 2022
- A specialist course for juvenile delinquency and crime against youth and family - 1 course every year
- Conducting an investigative interview with child victims of criminal offences
- Seminar on new modalities of abuse and good practices in preventing child victimisation
- “Handling electronic evidence at the crime scene” - minimal 1 workshop every year
- “Advanced methods and procedures in digital forensics” - minimal 1 workshop every year

In 2024 a new course “Criminal methods of investigating complex forms of cybercrime” was introduced as part of the specialist graduate professional study programme in

criminal investigation, which is the highest level of criminal education and upon graduating students acquire competences to conduct more complex criminal investigations. This course also provides students with the knowledge in criminal investigations of sexual abuse of children online.

The aim of the course is to acquire knowledge and skills about forms and specifics elements of criminal investigations of complex forms of cybercrime.

The Committee **invites** all Parties, including Croatia:

- to ensure that the capacities of any investigative units, services or persons specialised in ICT facilitated sexual offences against children take into account evolving technologies and online behaviours, and more specifically, that they reflect current practices used by perpetrators. Additionally, the Committee invites all Parties to exchange best practices between the relevant investigative units;⁴³
- to ensure that law enforcement units, services or persons specialised in ICT facilitated sexual offences against children adequately cover and/or are specialised in offences against children involving CSGSIV;⁴⁴
- to ensure that units, services or persons within courts responsible for ICT-facilitated sexual offences against children have the necessary specialisation in the intersecting areas of children’s rights, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children, and ICT technical knowledge;⁴⁵
- to ensure that units, services or persons within courts responsible for ICT-facilitated sexual offences against children have sufficient specialisation in offences involving CSGSIV;⁴⁶
- to ensure that training on the challenges raised by CSGSIV and ICT facilitated coercion or extortion of children is available to judges;⁴⁷

⁴³ Recommendation III-4

⁴⁴ Recommendation III-5

⁴⁵ Recommendation III-9

⁴⁶ Recommendation III-10

⁴⁷ Recommendation III-19

- to ensure that measures, services and technology available to those in charge of identifying child victims of ICT-facilitated sexual offences are up to date, reflecting current practices across Parties, include the establishment and use of national child abuse material databases, and that resources are sufficiently allocated.⁴⁸

The Committee also **invites** Parties that are not already doing so:

- to provide specific training on ICT facilitated sexual offences against children, including when such offences involve CS/SIV, and ICT facilitated coercion or extortion to law enforcement agents who are likely to come into contact with such cases;⁴⁹
- to offer joint (or “joined-up”) training for professionals, and particularly law enforcement, prosecutors and judges, involved in legal proceedings involving ICT-facilitated child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, in order to ensure consistency at all stages;⁵⁰
- to ensure that training on ICT-facilitated sexual offences against children for law-enforcement, prosecutors and judges contains a practical element, involving simulated or real cases.⁵¹

On victim and perpetrator identification, data retention and expeditious proceedings

The Committee also **invites** all Parties, including Croatia:

- to engage in and strengthen inter-Party cooperation for the purpose of identifying child victims of ICT facilitated sexual offences and perpetrators of ICT facilitated sexual offences against children, including, where appropriate, by providing access to each other’s databases or shared databases;⁵²
- to ensure that investigations and criminal proceedings in ICT facilitated sexual offences against children are treated as priority and carried out without any unjustified delay;⁵³
- to take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that preservation of specified stored computer data in connection with a specific criminal investigation or proceedings is made possible, fully upholding the rights of the parties involved;⁵⁴
- to take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the investment in human, financial and physical resources is sufficient to have data generated by ICTs analysed in a timely manner so that investigations are carried out without any unjustified delay.⁵⁵

Promising practices

Cybercrime units in Croatia conduct proactive collection and analysis of intelligence.

Promising practices:

According to Article 4 of the Juvenile Courts Act criminal proceedings in cases of criminal-law protection of children are urgent. Cases of criminal-law protection of children, according to Article 113 (3) of the Juvenile Courts Act, include criminal proceedings for criminal offences of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of a child (criminal offences referred to in Title XVII of the Criminal Code).

⁴⁸ Recommendation III-24

⁴⁹ Recommendation III-14

⁵⁰ Recommendation III-20

⁵¹ Recommendation III-21

⁵² Recommendation III-25, III-29

⁵³ Recommendation III-30

⁵⁴ Recommendation III-31

⁵⁵ Recommendation III-32

IV. Jurisdiction rules

Due to their online component, offences related to conducts involving CSGSIV have an inherently international aspect. As the prosecution of offences related to this material may involve more than one jurisdiction, the report analyses the jurisdictional rules in place in the Parties, enabling the determination of which Party may prosecute a particular case and under what conditions.

Observations and recommendations of the Committee on jurisdiction rules specific to Croatia

Jurisdiction in cases of child sexual exploitation and abuse facilitated by ICTs committed on the territory of a Party: the territoriality principle (Article 25(1) (a-c))

According to the Croatian Criminal Code, an offence is considered to be committed in every location in which the person engaged, or is suspected of having engaged, in the proscribed conduct, or in the location in which the result of the offence, in whole or in part, occurred or is suspected of having occurred.⁵⁶

Jurisdiction based on nationality and residency (Article 25(1)(d), (e))

Croatia informed that it can prosecute offences committed abroad by its nationals.⁵⁷ It also appears that Croatia has jurisdiction over offences committed abroad by persons having habitual residence on its territory.

Jurisdiction not subordinated to the condition that prosecution can only be initiated following a report from the victim or denunciation from the State where the offence was committed (Article 25(6))

The Committee notes that in Croatia, offences of sexual abuse (Article 18), offences concerning child prostitution (Article 19), the production of child pornography (Article 20(1)(a)) and the participation of a child in pornographic performances (Article 21) are prosecuted *ex officio*.⁵⁸

Jurisdiction not subordinated to the condition that the acts are criminalised at the place where they were performed (Article 25(4)): the

dual criminality principle

Croatia reported that it would assume jurisdiction over offences involving sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of children, irrespective of the laws of the State where the offence was committed, if committed by one of its nationals or by a person who has his or her habitual residence in its territory.⁵⁹ Croatian criminal legislation will also be applicable to a foreigner who commits a criminal offence punished by at least 5 years of imprisonment under Croatian law, if the act is also considered as a criminal offence in the territory where it was committed and if extradition of the perpetrator is permitted under national or international law but has not been made.⁶⁰

Jurisdiction in cases of child sexual exploitation and abuse facilitated by ICTs committed against nationals or habitual residents of a Party: the passive personality principle (Article 25(2))

The passive personality principle is applied in respect of offences committed against a national in Croatia, only for certain offences punishable of imprisonment of at least 6 years, e.g. sexual offences and incest in relation to this report. Croatia will also establish jurisdiction over an offence committed against persons who have their habitual residence in its territory, in the case of a stateless person granted permanent residence.⁶¹ In order to apply the passive personality principle, the Croatian Criminal Code requires dual

⁵⁶ Para. 214

⁵⁷ Para.215

⁵⁸ Para.218

⁵⁹ Para. 224

⁶⁰ Para. 230

⁶¹ Para. 231

criminality.⁶² A further condition of prosecution in such cases is that the perpetrator must be present on the territory of the Republic.⁶³

The Committee **requests** Parties that are not already doing so, including Croatia, to endeavour to take the necessary legislative or other measures to establish jurisdiction over any offence established in accordance with the Lanzarote Convention where the offence is committed against one of its nationals or a person who has his or her habitual residence in its territory.⁶⁴

Follow-up actions:

According to Criminal Code, Article 15 (1) (passive personality principle) the criminal legislation of the Republic of Croatia shall apply to an alien who outside the territory of the Republic of Croatia perpetrates a criminal offence other than those specified in the provisions of Articles 13 and 16 of this Code against a Croatian national, a person with a permanent residence in the Republic of Croatia or a legal person registered in the

Republic of Croatia, if this criminal offence is also punishable under legislation of the state of its commission.

Therefore, jurisdiction of the Republic of Croatia can be established based on passive personality principle over any offence established in accordance with the Lanzarote Convention, subject to dual criminality principle (Article 15(1) of the Criminal Code). Further condition is that criminal proceedings shall be instituted only if the perpetrator is present on the territory of the Republic of Croatia (Article 18(7) of the Criminal Code).

Statement included by drafters of this Form, above this recommendation, stating that “the passive personality principle is applied in respect of offences committed against a national in Croatia, only for certain offences punishable of imprisonment of at least 6 years, e.g. sexual offences and incest in relation to this report” does not apply to the Republic of Croatia.

Generic recommendations of the Committee on jurisdiction rules

The Committee **invites** those Parties that are not yet doing so:

- to remove the requirement for dual criminality for offences of possessing, offering, distributing, transmitting, procuring child pornography, and the fact of knowingly gaining access to child pornography through ICTs,

when CSGSIV are involved when committed by one of their nationals;⁶⁵

- to remove the requirement for dual criminality for offences concerning solicitation of children for sexual purposes (Article 23) when committed by one of their nationals.⁶⁶

Promising practices:

In Republic of Croatia, jurisdiction based on active personality principle is not subject to requirement of dual criminality when it comes to criminal offence of solicitation of children for sexual purposes (Article 23 of the Convention, corresponding to Article 161 of the Criminal Code) nor when it comes to acts of possessing, offering, distributing, transmitting, procuring child pornography, and the fact of knowingly gaining access to child pornography through ICTs (which are criminalised under Article 163 (2) of the Criminal Code).

⁶² Para. 232

⁶³ Para. 233

⁶⁴ Recommendation IV-9.

⁶⁵ Recommendation IV-7

⁶⁶ Recommendation IV-8

This is explicitly prescribed by Article 14 (3) of the Criminal Code, which states:

Application of Criminal Legislation for Criminal Offences Committed Outside the Territory of the
Republic of Croatia by its Nationals

Article 14

(1) The criminal legislation of the Republic of Croatia shall be applied to its national or a person who has his or her permanent residence in its territory who outside the territory of the Republic of Croatia commits a criminal offence other than those specified in the provisions of Articles 13 and 16 of this Code, if this criminal offence is also punishable under legislation of the state of its commission.

(2) The provision of paragraph 1 of this Article shall also apply to cases where the perpetrator acquires Croatian nationality after having committed the criminal offence.

(3) In cases referred to in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this Article, with respect to criminal offences established in Article 115, paragraphs 3 and 4, and Articles 116, 153, 154, 158, 159, 161, 162, 163, 164, 166 and 169 of this Code and other criminal offences for which this is provided by international treaties to which the Republic of Croatia is a party, the criminal legislation of the Republic of Croatia shall apply even if the criminal offence is not punishable under legislation of the state of its commission.

V. International cooperation

The implementation report also analyses cooperation practices and examples of coordinated international responses, not only in the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse of children, but also in areas related to the prevention, protection and assistance of child victims and persons related to them.

Observations and recommendations of the Committee on international cooperation specific to Croatia

INHOPE, the PROMISE Barnahus Network, WeProtect Global Alliance, and EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats) cybercrime CSE/CSA carry out projects in Croatia to help prevent and prosecute sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children.⁶⁷ The Promise Barnahus network and competence centre provide training for forensic interviewers from Croatia.⁶⁸ Croatia also refers to the collaboration with the European Cybercrime training and education Group (ECTEG) and with the European Police College (CEPOL). Law enforcement representatives from Croatia attend the Europol's central annual training course "Combating the Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Internet" (COSEC). They also attend the Europol-Interpol-Cepol co-organised training course on victim identification (VID training course).⁶⁹ As regards international police cooperation, Croatia refers specifically to a European Initiative (CIRCAMP, Copal internet related Child abusive material project) and to the US-based FBI.⁷⁰

- The Committee **requires** Croatia to ensure that the victims of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse in matters related to CSGSIV in the territory of Parties to the Convention which are not members of the European Union other than the one where they reside, may make a complaint before the competent authorities of the State of their residence.⁷¹

Follow-up actions:

Residents of the Republic of Croatia who became victims of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse in the territory of Parties to the Convention which are not members of the European Union other than the one where they reside (outside Croatia), may make a complaint before the competent authorities of the Republic of Croatia. In this regard, there is no difference whether the criminal offence was committed in the territory of the member state of the EU or at the territory of non-member state.

All victims residing in the territory of the Republic of Croatia can file a report personally at police stations, by email or by using the web application of the Ministry of the Interior for online reporting "Red Button".

Article 14 of Criminal Code prescribes that the criminal legislation of the Republic of Croatia shall be applied to its national or a person who has his or her permanent residence in its territory who outside the territory of the Republic of Croatia commits a criminal offence other than those specified in the provisions of Articles 13 and 16 of this Code, if this criminal offence is also punishable under the legislation of the state of its commission. With respect to criminal offences established in, among others, Article 161 (Solicitation of children for sexual purposes), 163 (Exploitation of children for pornography) and 164

⁶⁷ Para. 255

⁶⁸ Para. 266

⁶⁹ Para. 259

⁷⁰ Para. 262

⁷¹ Recommendation V-18

(Exploitation of children for pornographic performances) of the Criminal Code and other criminal offences for which this is provided by international treaties to which the Republic of Croatia is a party, the criminal legislation of the Republic of Croatia shall apply even if the criminal offence is not punishable under the legislation of the state of its commission.

Article 15 of the Criminal Code prescribes that the criminal legislation of the Republic of Croatia shall apply to an alien who outside the territory of the Republic of Croatia perpetrates a criminal offence other than those specified in the provisions of Articles 13 and 16 of this Code against a Croatian national, a person with a permanent residence in the Republic of Croatia or a legal person registered in the Republic of Croatia, if this criminal offence is also punishable under legislation of the state of its commission.

Article 17 of the Criminal Code prescribes that the criminal legislation of the Republic of Croatia shall apply to an alien who outside its territory commits a criminal offence for which under the Croatian law a punishment of five years of imprisonment or a more severe penalty may be imposed, where this does not concern the cases referred to in Articles 13 through 16 of this Code, if this criminal offence is also

punishable under the legislation of the state of its commission and if the extradition of the perpetrator is permitted under the law or an international treaty but has not been made.

Based on jurisdiction established upon Articles 14, 15 and 17 of the Criminal Code, criminal proceedings shall be instituted only if the perpetrator is present on the territory of the Republic of Croatia (Article 18(7) of the Criminal Code).

However, Article 18(1) of the Act on International Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters („Official Gazette”, no. 178/04) prescribes that domestic judicial authorities (state attorney’s offices and courts) may, without prejudice to their own investigations or proceedings and under the condition of reciprocity, without prior request, forward to competent foreign judicial authorities information regarding criminal offences, collected in their own investigations if they deem that forwarding such information could help to initiate or the conduct of the investigation or judicial proceedings or lead to submitting request for legal assistance.

Generic recommendations of the Committee on international cooperation

- The Committee **requests** all Parties to extend their international cooperation with other Parties to improve the effective implementation of the Convention.⁷²

Follow-up actions:

In specific cases, the Croatian police urgently establishes international police cooperation with other countries using all Interpol and Europol channels. The scope of social media and platforms for data

exchange used for establishing cooperation with a view to exchange relevant user data for the purpose of identifying offenders, but also the identities of CSA victims, is continuously expanded.

The General Police Directorate, Criminal Police Directorate actively takes part in conducting operational activities in the area of combating sexual abuse of children as part of the EU policy cycle to tackle organised and serious international

⁷² Recommendation V-3

crime/EMPACT CSE 2024/2025 (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats in the Area of Child Sex Abuse).

As part of the EMPACT CSA activities OAP 2024/OA 8.4. "Operational Cooperation with Western Balkans Countries", we have been co-heading the international operational action named "MOZAIK" (head of the action is Slovenia) since 2023 on a yearly basis. The aim of this activity is to establish cooperation between experts in the area of combating child sex abuse in countries which this activity is aimed at (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia), common prevention activities in said area and operational activities related to conducting criminal investigations with a particular focus on offenders and child victims from neighbouring countries who have similarities in terms of language and culture.

The Committee also **invites** all Parties, including Croatia:

- to consistently analyse the possibilities to expand international cooperation with countries which are not Parties to the Convention to disseminate the standards of the Convention;⁷³
- to assess on a regular basis the difficulties that they face when dealing with international cooperation and remedy them;⁷⁴
- to assess, strengthen and develop international cooperation between the Parties of the Convention for the purpose of preventing and combating sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children in matters related to CSGSIV;⁷⁵
- to consistently analyse the possibilities to expand international cooperation with countries which are not Parties to the Convention to disseminate the standards of the Convention for the purpose of preventing and combating sexual exploitation and sexual

abuse of children in matters related to CSGSIV;⁷⁶

- to strengthen cooperation with relevant intergovernmental bodies, and with transnational networks and other international organisations and initiatives due to their capacity to mobilisation, their world-wide scope, and their flexibility to work, for the purpose of preventing and combating sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children in matters related to CSGSIV;⁷⁷
- to consider requesting the establishment of cooperation projects managed by the Council of Europe to assist them in their efforts to preventing and combating sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children in matters related to CSGSIV;⁷⁸
- to support regional and international capacity building efforts to improve policy and operational measures including the pooling and sharing of successful education and awareness-raising tools for the purpose of preventing and combating sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children in matters related to CSGSIV;⁷⁹
- to assess, develop and strengthen cooperation between them to protect and provide assistance to victims in matters related to CSGSIV;⁸⁰
- to regularly analyse the possibilities to expand international cooperation with countries which are not Parties to the Convention to disseminate the standards of the Convention, for the purpose of protecting and providing assistance to victims in matters related to CSGSIV;⁸¹
- to assess, develop and strengthen cooperation with relevant intergovernmental bodies, transnational networks and other international organisations and initiatives due to their capacity to mobilisation, their world-wide scope, and their flexibility to work for the purpose of protecting and providing assistance to victims in matters related to CSGSIV;⁸²
- to maintain and develop efforts to strengthen international cooperation in investigation and

⁷³ Recommendation V-4

⁷⁴ Recommendation V-5

⁷⁵ Recommendation V-6

⁷⁶ Recommendation V-7

⁷⁷ Recommendation V-8

⁷⁸ Recommendation V-9

⁷⁹ Recommendation V-10

⁸⁰ Recommendation V-11

⁸¹ Recommendation V-12

⁸² Recommendation V-13

proceedings concerning the offences established in accordance with the Convention, in particular in the area of police cooperation, namely ensuring that their law-enforcement agencies can connect and contribute to the Europol and Interpol databases, and develop the areas of data, training, vetting, and selection, in matters related to CSGSIV;⁸³

- to analyse the possibilities to expand international cooperation with countries which are not Parties to the Convention, on investigation and proceedings concerning the offences established in accordance with the Convention, in matters related to CSGSIV;⁸⁴
- to further maintain and develop efforts to strengthen international cooperation in

investigation and proceedings concerning the offences established in accordance with the Convention, with countries which are not Parties to the Convention, in particular in the area of police cooperation, namely ensuring that their law-enforcement agencies can connect and contribute to the Europol and Interpol databases, and develop the areas of collecting data, training, vetting, and selection in matters related to CSGSIV;⁸⁵

- to integrate, where appropriate, prevention and the fight against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children in matters related to CSGSIV, in assistance programmes for development provided for the benefit of third States.⁸⁶

⁸³ Recommendation V-14

⁸⁴ Recommendation V-15

⁸⁵ Recommendation V-16

⁸⁶ Recommendation V-19

Promising practices:

In the Republic of Croatia, the implementation of the project "Establishment of the Barnahus model in Croatia" is currently underway. It is a joint project of the European Union and the Council of Europe, the main beneficiary of which is the Ministry of Justice, Administration and Digital Transformation.

This project aims to support the Republic of Croatia in the establishment of the first Children's House at the national level, based on the Barnahus model, in which child victims of crimes, primarily sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children, will be treated, in accordance with international guidelines and promising European practice.

Barnahus is the leading European model for the protection of the rights and interests of child victims and child witnesses of violence or abuse, which is fully adapted to children. The Committee of Parties to the Council of Europe (CoE) Convention on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Committee), to which the Republic of Croatia is a party, recognized the Barnahus model in 2015 as an example of good practice. The Barnahus model implies a multidisciplinary and inter-agency approach, ensuring cooperation and coordination of different bodies (judicial, social, medical) in one child-friendly institution that offers complete services for the child and family under one roof. The goal of such a unique approach is to avoid re-traumatization and victimization of the child during the investigation and court proceedings, to ensure a coordinated and effective response to the violence experienced by the child, and to provide the child with support and assistance, including medical assessment and treatment, in a child-safe environment.

On October 20, 2022, the Republic of Croatia submitted to the European Commission a request for technical support with the aim of securing financial resources for the establishment of the Barnahus model in the Republic of Croatia. The project is co-financed by the European Union through the Instrument for Technical Support and implemented and co-financed by the Council of Europe, in cooperation with the European Commission, the Directorate General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM). The project budget is EUR 666,503, and the expected duration is 30 months (September 2023 - February 2026).

During the duration of the project for the Republic of Croatia, which officially started in September 2023, until February 2026, technical assistance will be provided in the establishment of an operational and organizational framework for the implementation of the Barnahus model at the national level, which will be achieved through a series of activities aimed at the following results:

- establishing a legal, political and institutional framework for the operation of the Barnahus model in Croatia
- strengthening the knowledge and capacity of experts who work with children in the areas of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children
- strengthening the awareness of professionals and the general public about the problem of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children.

After the completion of the project and the fulfillment of all necessary prerequisites, it is expected that the Children's House will start operating at the operational level.

VI. Assistance to victims

This chapter provides a comparative study of national mechanisms and measures for assisting child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, particularly where this results from the CSGSIV.

Observations and recommendations of the Committee on assistance to victims specific to Croatia

The Committee notes that in Croatia, helplines are run in collaboration between different bodies, including ministries and NGOs.⁸⁷

- The Committee **requires** Croatia to take the necessary legislative or other measures to encourage and support the establishment of information services, such as telephone or internet helplines, to provide advice to child victims of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by ICTs as well as persons wishing to help them, in a confidential manner or with due regard for their anonymity. These information services should be made available as widely as possible. This can be done in several ways: the service is available at extended hours, it is delivered in a language that the caller, and especially the child, can understand, and it is free of charge.⁸⁸

Follow-up actions:

The Government of the Republic of Croatia at the session held on April 15, 2024, adopted a new *Protocol on dealing with violence among children and young people*⁸⁹, which replaces the Protocol from 2004. The key changes relates to the expansion of the existing definition of violence and to the area of all forms of online violence, public awareness of the problem of violence among children and young people, reporting of suspected cases, implementation of preventive programs in educational, healthcare and social welfare institutions, early identification of risks and mutual exchange of information for the

comprehensive protection of children and young people, an integrated approach in protection from violence among children, prescribing the duty of care for the healthcare system and the roles of NGOs and other organizations registered to work with children. The Protocol underscores the role of educational institutions in recognizing and reporting sexual violence. It stresses the need for continuous education and training for professionals to effectively address and prevent sexual violence among children and youth. An integral part of this Protocol is the *Form on reporting violence among children and young people* which encourages all competent authorities to report all forms of violence among children and young people, including electronic violence, with the aim of improving interdepartmental cooperation and more efficient flow of information. The applicant, through the mentioned Form, informs body/bodies competent to act in a particular case.

The police ensured the availability of an official web application for reporting child abuse, which is available 24/7 and also in English.

Abuse of any sort may be reported, and information on the various types, protection measures and procedures is available to children and citizens on the website of the Ministry of the Interior.

Online reporting of child abuse - RED BUTTON

<https://gov.hr/en/protecting-children-online/1236>

⁸⁷ Para. 277

⁸⁸ Recommendation VI-1

⁸⁹ <https://mrosp.gov.hr/UserDocImages/dokumen>

[ti/Socijalna%20politika/Protokol%20o%20postupanju%20u%20slu%C4%8Daju%20nasilja%20me%C4%91u%20djecom%20i%20mladima.pdf](https://gov.hr/en/protecting-children-online/1236)

<https://mup.gov.hr/online-prijave/online-prijava-zlostavljanja-djeteta-red-button/281667>

The Ministry of the Interior and the association Hrabri telefon concluded the Partnership Agreement in Project Implementation and the Memorandum of Understanding regarding the implementation of the pilot project “My follow-up”, which has been implemented in the area of jurisdiction of the Police Administration Zagrebačka since 1 October 2023.

The pilot project includes obtaining a parental consent that police officers are allowed to provide the association Hrabri telefon with the contact data of the child victim/their parents, after which the association contacts the child victim within

two working days in order to provide a traumatised child with support in a timely manner.

Helpline services for children are provided by the associations Hrabri telefon <https://hrabritelefon.hr/>, Centar za sigurniji Internet <https://csi.hr/helpline/>, Plavi telefon <https://www.plavi-telefon.hr/>.

As regards legislative or other measures to provide children with support, assistance and psychological help, the Committee notes that Croatia is one of the few parties to have legislation addressing the issue of child abuse facilitated by ICTs.⁹⁰ It also provided information on the number of children who received support, assistance and psychological help in connection with the dissemination of CSGSIV.⁹¹

Generic recommendations of the Committee on assistance to victims

The Committee **invites** all Parties that are not already doing so:

- to promote awareness raising or specialised training for professionals who provide advice to children through telephone or internet helplines on ICT facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse of children – including the risks associated with CSGSIV – and on how to
- provide appropriate support to victims and to those who wish to help them;⁹²
- to ensure that the assistance measures referred to in Recommendation VI-3 are available to child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse facilitated by ICTs, including offences due to the production, possession, distribution or transmission of CSGSIV.⁹³

Promising practice

In Croatia, a specific web application has been developed to enable internet users to report content related to various types of child sexual exploitation and abuse, including the posting of sexual images or video recordings. It is ensured that the reporting procedure was child-friendly and straightforward, emphasising that this way of reporting reduces the fear and psychological pressure usually caused by more formal reporting procedures. In turn, victims whose images are published on the Internet or who have independently produced sexual content receive assistance at the Polyclinic for the Protection of Children and Young People of the City of Zagreb, a specialized institution for providing help to children who suffer from psychological traumas.

Promising practices:

⁹⁰ Para. 288

⁹¹ Para. 297

⁹² Recommendation VI-2

⁹³ Recommendation VI-4

VII. Civil society involvement and cooperation

Civil society's involvement in protecting children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse is crucial and acknowledged by the Convention. Projects and programmes carried out by civil society, as well as cooperation between the competent state authorities and civil society, cover a wide range of issues.

Observations and recommendations of the Committee on civil society involvement and cooperation specific to Croatia

The Committee notes that in Croatia, NGOs are the most involved counterparts in the field of prevention and assistance to child victims, along with the media.⁹⁴ Croatia emphasised that its support for the development of prevention activities by civil society takes the form of financial support and grants.⁹⁵ It also develops and supports different activities which are aimed at raising the awareness of not only children but also adults such as parents, educators, doctors and social workers

about existing risks and dangers of ICTs for children.⁹⁶

The interaction with civil society includes preventive and awareness-raising activities to minimise the risk of abuse that children face online.⁹⁷ Other civil society projects - whether or not carried out in cooperation with the State - aimed at preventing abuses related to the sharing of such content are educational activities, field research and analysis, and the installation of protection software on private computers.⁹⁸

Generic recommendations of the Committee on civil society involvement and cooperation

The Committee **invites** all Parties, including Croatia:

- to expand cooperation with civil society to better prevent sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, including when facilitated by ICTs and the challenges raised by the exploitation of CSGSIV;⁹⁹
- to ensure that the forms of cooperation that take place with civil society in the field of prevention and protection of children against sexual exploitation and abuse are of a sustainable nature;¹⁰⁰
- to support civil society to carry out projects and programmes that include the issue of CSGSIV;¹⁰¹
- to encourage the participation of children, according to their evolving capacity, in the development and implementation of state policies, programmes or other initiatives and to seek children's views at the stage of drafting new legislation concerning the fight against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, including when facilitated by ICTs and as regards CSGSIV.¹⁰²

Promising practices:

⁹⁴ Para. 308

⁹⁵ Para. 310

⁹⁶ Para. 315

⁹⁷ Para. 320

⁹⁸ Para. 323

⁹⁹ Recommendation VII-3.

¹⁰⁰ Recommendation VII-4.

¹⁰¹ Recommendation VII-5.

¹⁰² Recommendations VII-6, VII-7.

VIII. Promoting awareness of the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse faced by children generating and/or sharing sexual images and/or videos of themselves

The Articles 5, 6 and 8 of the Convention establish that States Parties should take the necessary measures to prevent all forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse and to protect children from their effects. Awareness-raising is one type of preventive measure.

Generic recommendations of the Committee on promoting awareness of the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse faced by children generating and/or sharing sexual images and/or videos of themselves

The Committee **invites** all Parties, including Croatia:

- to ensure that explanations of the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse faced by children generating and/or sharing sexual images and/or videos of themselves, with or without coercion, are included in the awareness-raising campaigns that they promote or conduct, whatever the target audience;¹⁰³
- to ensure that awareness-raising for children about the risks that they face when generating and/or sharing sexual images and/or videos of themselves takes place early enough, before they reach their teens, and that it is “adapted to their evolving capacity” or, in other words, their age and degree of maturity;¹⁰⁴
- to use unchanged, wherever possible, the awareness-raising tools, materials and activities mentioned in this report or else to adapt them to their national contexts and their own languages and, if necessary, develop new ones, concentrating on videos and distribution through social media;¹⁰⁵
- to have available awareness-raising tools, materials, and activities suitable for children with disabilities;¹⁰⁶
- to ensure that awareness-raising for children regarding the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse that they face when generating and/or sharing sexual images and/or videos of themselves is led first and foremost by their peers;¹⁰⁷
- to promote themselves and to encourage the information and communication of the technology sector, the media, and other professionals to raise awareness among children, their parents, persons having regular contact with children, and the general public about the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse faced by children generating and/or sharing sexual images and/or videos of themselves and about the preventive measures that can be taken;¹⁰⁸
- to step-up awareness-raising for parents and persons with parental authority about the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse faced by children generating and/or sharing sexual images and/or videos of themselves and about the preventive measures that can be taken;¹⁰⁹
- to promote or conduct awareness-raising campaigns for the general public providing information about the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse faced by children generating and/or sharing sexual images and/or videos of themselves and about the preventive measures that can be taken;¹¹⁰
- to take the necessary measures to ensure co-ordination between the agencies responsible for raising awareness of the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse faced by children generating and/or sharing sexual images and/or videos of themselves.¹¹¹

¹⁰³ Recommendation VIII-1.

¹⁰⁴ Recommendation VIII-2.

¹⁰⁵ Recommendation VIII-3.

¹⁰⁶ Recommendation VIII-4.

¹⁰⁷ Recommendation VIII-5.

¹⁰⁸ Recommendation VIII-6.

¹⁰⁹ Recommendation VIII-7.

¹¹⁰ Recommendation VIII-8.

¹¹¹ Recommendation VIII-9.

Promising practices:

EUROPOL's "Say NO!" campaign, aimed at protecting children against sexual abuse involving the use of digital technologies and carried out through the activities of the Prevention Department of the Croatian MoI has been widely accepted by the public. The Ministry of the Interior is one of the partners in the "Surf and Sound" project led by the B.a.b.e. NGO with the aim of raising awareness about online violence against women, including sexual abuse of children who create and/or share their sexual material and forming mechanisms of its prevention and suppression. The objectives of the project are to improve the formed mechanisms of prevention and suppression of online violence - through the work of the NEON – NO! online violence platform, free psychological and legal assistance in cooperation with a telecommunications expert, support by a person of trust, and education of experts who work with victims and perpetrators of online violence, as well as to raise public awareness about various forms of online violence.

IX. Education for children

While the protection of child victims and the prosecution of offenders are key elements in the fight against the sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, preventing them from occurring in the first place is paramount. Informing children about the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and how to protect themselves is the cornerstone of prevention.

Observations and recommendations of the Committee on education for children specific to Croatia

The Committee notes that the challenges raised by CSGSIV are explicitly addressed in the national educational curriculum of Croatia.¹¹² Information is provided under the theme “sex and gender equality, responsible sexual behaviour”.¹¹³

In addition, the Ministry of Science and Education is informing parents about responsible behaviour when using network technologies at the moment when children start using them independently without constant adult supervision.¹¹⁴

Generic recommendations of the Committee on education for children

- The Committee **requires** all Parties, including Croatia, to ensure that all children at primary and secondary level receive information about the risks of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by ICTs. Organising lectures and/or activities on this topic should not be left to the discretion of schools or teachers.¹¹⁵

Follow-up actions:

During the development of new curricula for primary and secondary schools in 2019, attention was paid to the topics related to the prevention of all forms of violence.

In the subject curricula of Informatics, topics such as online safety, data protection, electronic violence, and care for one's digital reputation are covered, developing the necessary skills and attitudes essential for responsible, competent, creative, and reliable participants in the digital society.

The students recognise the types of electronic violence, analyze them, and act to prevent different cases of electronic violence, as well as express empathy towards persons suffering from electronic violence, and becomes familiar with

institutions, organisations and services that can help in cases of electronic violence.

By adopting the outcomes of curricula of cross-curricular topic Use of Information and Communication Technology, for primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia, the students develop the attitude that violence has no justification, recognise the possible danger from an unknown person in the virtual world, recognise electronic violence, and through specific examples identify electronic violence and hate speech, as well as the generally positive and negative aspects of online communication. In the interdisciplinary topic Health, in the domain of Mental and Social Health, the students acquire knowledge about the basic types of violence in both the real and virtual worlds, including sexual violence.

The learning outcomes of the curricula of cross-curricula topics are embedded in the relevant subject textbooks or are achieved through the planning and implementation of the school curriculum (curriculum at the level of education provider).

¹¹² Para. 383

¹¹³ Para. 397

¹¹⁴ Para. 403

¹¹⁵ Recommendation IX-3.

The General Police Directorate continuously carries out numerous preventive projects and activities in cooperation with police administrations and other partners at national, regional and local levels collectively entitled “Developing children’s awareness about potential dangers and risks of using the Internet, mobile phones and other communication networks” such as educational lectures, interactive workshops, information campaigns, public forums, panel discussions, round tables, public events, multimedia content, educational and press publications, websites and mobile phone applications. Over 1,374 educational lectures were held in the period from 2022 to 2024, as a result of which 49,484 persons were educated.

The Committee **invites** all Parties, including Croatia:

- to address in educational contexts the issue of the risks of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by ICTs, including as regards CSGSIV;¹¹⁶
- to ensure that information on the risks of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by ICTs, including as regards CSGSIV, is

provided to children during both primary and secondary education (whether as part of the national curricula or in the context of non-formal education for children at these levels);¹¹⁷

- to consistently involve children in the development of internet safety awareness programmes;¹¹⁸
- to ensure that there is a standing national internet safety resource, with an ongoing programme of activities;¹¹⁹
- to provide information to children on child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, facilitated by ICTs, including as regards CSGSIV, in their national curriculum or other non-formal educational contexts, in a form which is adapted to the evolving capacity of the children and therefore which is appropriate for their age and maturity;¹²⁰
- to provide information to children on the risks of child sexual exploitation and abuse facilitated by ICTs, including CSGSIV, within a more general context of sexuality education;¹²¹
- to ensure that parents, caregivers, and educators are involved, where appropriate, in the provision of information to children on the risks of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by ICTs, in particular as regards CSGSIV.¹²²

Promising practices:

Curriculum is applied in all primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia and continues with systematic education of students.

During the conference The Quest for a Better Internet which was held on February 11 2025 a strong message was sent about the importance of preventing electronic violence, protecting children’s personal data, creating a safe virtual environment and the availability of quality Internet content for children and young people.

The above mentioned conference was organized by the association „Learning Partners“, the Croatian Regulatory Agency for Network Activities, CARNET (Croatian Academic and Research Network) and the Center for a Safer Internet with partners, with the participation of representatives of the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth. Similar trainings are continuously conducted in primary and secondary schools.

CARNET and the National CERT sector (Department which deals with incidents if one of the parties of the incident is in the Republic of Croatia) worked on the following activities aimed at primary and secondary schools:

¹¹⁶ Recommendation IX-1.

¹¹⁷ Recommendation IX-2.

¹¹⁸ Recommendation IX-4.

¹¹⁹ Recommendation IX-5.

¹²⁰ Recommendation IX-6.

¹²¹ Recommendation IX-7.

¹²² Recommendation IX-8.

Hacknite

Preparation and implementation of CTF competitions in various areas of cybersecurity for secondary school students with the mentorship of secondary school teachers. Creation of educational and training content to strengthen competencies in the field of cybersecurity. The content is available to everyone with skole.hr accounts:

<https://platforma.hacknite.hr/materijali>

Activities are carried out with the support of FER (Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing). Creation of tasks and educational material in the field of cybersecurity

Implementation of the national CTF competition for secondary school students

ECSC – European Cyber Security Challenge

Participation in meetings of organizational and management bodies at the EU level that monitor and make decisions on holding the ECSC, determine the rules and scoring of the competition, adopt the competition curriculum, etc.

Selection, training and preparation of the national team for the European competition, organization of travel and accommodation, provision of necessary equipment and ensuring team visibility – promotional materials for teams. (support of the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth).

ZI4PH – ZoomIn4PinkHats

Promoting greater inclusion of women in the field of cybersecurity through the inclusion and education of 20 high school teachers in the field of cybersecurity, organizing training and education of teachers, creating small educational groups in high schools of involved teachers that included about 100 students with the aim of becoming ambassadors to their peers and developing their methods and approaches to promote and educate their colleagues on cybersecurity topics, organizing a one-day hybrid conference with the aim of developing recommendations for future actions that can help address the cybersecurity skills gap and greater inclusivity in Croatia.

Safer Internet Day

Participation in the organization and implementation of events dedicated to Safer Internet Day every year. Cooperation with the Association of Learning Partners, HAKOM, Center for a Safer Internet.

Every year in October, which ENISA (the EU Cybersecurity Agency) has declared as Cybersecurity Month, CARNET's NCERT carries out a series of activities related to raising public awareness of cybersecurity and cyber hygiene.

Through the activities of the National CERT, CARNET publishes warnings and instructions related to the responsible and appropriate use of social networks, and there is a publicly available brochure created in the campaign "Don't be a Croatian naive person" - Surf Safer on Social Networks.

In cooperation with HAKOM, CARNET has created the publication https://www.hakom.hr/UserDocsImages/2024/zastita_korisnika/Bros%CC%8Cura Vodic%CC%8Cza siguran internet i nepromis%CC%8Cljene surfere 2024.pdf?vel=2401151

which also contains instructions for the safe and responsible use of social networks for parents and children.

Participation in GEANT security awareness campaigns

CERT iffy <https://iffy.cert.hr/> service available to everyone.

Regarding the topic of internet safety, within the e-Schools project, trainings were prepared and conducted for educational staff in schools for which educational content was prepared and is still available to users for self-study. Educational content for self-study can be accessed via CARNET's website <https://www.carnet.hr/usluga/carnetove-edukacije/>

The topics of educational content for which webinar recordings and manuals are available are as follows:

- Application of measures to protect individuals and data in the digital environment
 - Solving problems when using digital technology
 - Protection of digital content and individuals in the digital environment
 - Protection of virtual identity
-
- Some of the multimedia and interactive digital educational content and teaching scenarios, developed within the e-Schools program, focus on the topics of a safe virtual environment and the prevention of electronic violence (<https://edutorij.carnet.hr/e-skole>).
 - Loomen is a secure virtual environment where teachers open virtual classrooms for their students who log in using their user accounts and teachers can also introduce additional security measures for entering their classrooms. Loomen is used in more than 50% of all public schools in the Republic of Croatia.
 - The research conducted by Catholic University of Croatia as a partner in the BrAln project will result, among other things, in guidelines for teachers and parents for the application of digital technologies while ensuring the well-being of children and young people. These guidelines should be ready by the beginning of the new school year.

X. Higher education curriculum and continuous training

Persons who have regular contact with children in the education, health and social protection sectors and areas related to sport, culture and leisure are at the forefront of the prevention of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, as they have the most interaction with children under their supervision in these different settings. However, they may not be adequately equipped to inform children about their rights, to detect situations where a child is at risk of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse and to respond appropriately. It is therefore of crucial importance that they are well informed about the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, both during their education and continuously during their careers, to enable them to adapt to emerging trends and risks in the fight against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, including when facilitated by ICTs.

Observations and recommendations of the Committee on higher education curriculum and continuous training specific to Croatia

The Committee notes that in Croatia, professionals receive education or training on Internet safety for children.¹²³

The Committee **requires** Croatia:

- to ensure that teaching or training on the rights of children and their protection for persons who have regular contacts with children (i.e. in the education, health and social protection sectors and in areas relating to sport, culture and leisure activities) is not optional;¹²⁴

Follow-up actions:

Education and Teacher Training Agency, within its remit of the professional development of teaching and non-teaching school staff (school heads and education specialists), from pre-school to secondary-school level, continuously implements training related to the cross-curricular theme of Citizenship education and human rights, targeted at teaching students from pre-school to secondary-school level.

From 2019 onwards, teaching human rights to students was the basis for teaching is the Curriculum for the cross-curricular theme of Citizenship education for primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia. Additionally, the school subject Politics and economy contains themes and

teaching content related to citizenship and human rights education

In 2023 there were 202 training events, with the total of 18.957 participants. In 2024 there were 90 training events, with the total of 12.876 participants.

In some schools, professional associates hold lectures for teacher councils on this topic, and professional workshops and roundtable discussions are also organized for educational staff.

In the context of higher education, it should be highlighted that higher education institutions in the Republic of Croatia are autonomous in terms of designing study programmes and defining their content, pursuant to Article 4 Paragraph 3(2) of the Act on Higher Education and Scientific Activity (OG 119/22).

As part of the National Plan for Combating Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period 2022-2027, the implementation of the following activities is planned.

Implementation of developed acts and procedures for handling cases of sexual violence and sexual harassment by national sports federations.

Conducting training sessions to educate

¹²³ Para. 417

¹²⁴ Recommendation X-4

coaches and other employees of sports clubs and associations about the unacceptability of sexual violence and sexual harassment, as well as the procedure for reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment by coaches and other staff members.

Participation of sports professionals (coaches and other employees of sports clubs and associations) in training sessions on sexual violence and sexual harassment, as well as on acts and procedures for recognizing and handling cases of sexual violence and sexual harassment.

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Republic of Croatia is a partner in the Croatian Olympic Committee's project named GUARD. The aim of the project is to appoint and train child safeguarding officers in national sports federations so that they acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to help transfer their expertise to the officers in sports clubs. As part of the project, the development of Guidance and procedures to safeguard and protect children in sport organizations, as well as Set of resources for Child Safeguarding Officers in sport organizations is planned. It is particularly important to highlight that the guidelines for safe recruitment comprise several crucial elements aimed at safeguarding vulnerable populations, especially children. The application process should cover several important facts - personal information, employment history, and qualifications. Additionally, applicants must disclose any criminal convictions and consent to background checks. Criminal record certificate and certificate of no ongoing criminal proceedings for all staff and volunteers are mandatory, with regular rechecks scheduled every 2 years to ensure ongoing compliance. Child safeguarding policies explicitly prohibit individuals with a history of child abuse from engaging in roles involving children.

Healthcare professionals and associates who have regular contact with children in

the activities of the health system are professionally trained, through their formal education, to perform their tasks, and are also trained on the rights of patients.

Example:

In accordance with the Ordinance on Specialist Training of Doctors of Medicine ("Official Gazette" No. 65/22), in the program of specialization in school and adolescent medicine, upon completion of specialist training, the resident of school and adolescent medicine must have fully adopted general competencies. Among other things, they must be familiar with the regulations in the field of health, especially in the field of protection of patients' rights. Specialists in school and adolescent medicine know the legal aspects of violence.

- to ensure that the persons who have regular contacts with children are equipped to identify any situation of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children:
 - in the education sector
 - in the health sector
 - in the social protection sector
 - in areas relating to sport, culture and leisure activities;¹²⁵

Follow-up actions:

Croatian Institute for Social work is by law a competent body in all cases of reported violations of children's rights and its professionals (social worker, social pedagog, psychologist, jurist) attend continuous and various education programs on different topics regarding children. Family center is a support institution that provides psychosocial counselling, including to the children and in cases of peer violence. Both Institute and Family center branches are geographically dispersed in a way to ensure access to all population.

In March 2024. The Academy of Social welfare has been established as a specialised institution for continuous training in social care professionals.

¹²⁵ Recommendation X-5

Schools are required, as part of the professional development of educational staff, to plan and implement topics related to violence prevention and the protection of students' rights at least once a year. The education of educational staff is conducted by Education and Teacher Training Agency and other institutions and associations.

School psychologists and other professional associates often pursue additional professional training in various therapeutic approaches and in working with abused children, particularly in terms of diagnosis and treatment.

Educational staff coordinate their activities during professional service meetings, as well as at class and teacher councils.

Special support, counseling, and psychological assistance are provided in accordance with the Regulation on Procedures for Educational Staff in Implementing Measures to Protect Students' Rights and Reporting Violations to Competent Authorities (Official Gazette, No. 132/2013). According to Article 13, schools are required to provide expert assistance both to students who are victims of violence and to those who have committed acts of violence.

The Protocol for Handling Cases of Sexual Violence (Office for Gender Equality of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2023) emphasizes that parents or legal guardians of a child who is a victim of sexual violence must be informed about all available institutional and non-institutional support options to aid the child's recovery and help process the traumatic experience. Over the past two years, Education and Teacher Training Agency has organized a total of 31 professional workshops (18 of which were held online), where educators, teachers, and professional associates were trained, among other things, to recognize, understand, and protect minor victims of sexual violence, as well as to comprehend the needs and appropriate approaches when working with child victims. In the field of preschool education, 330 educators and

professional associates participated in these trainings, while 2,517 educational staff from primary and secondary schools were also involved.

Education and Teacher Training Agency also provides training for teachers, professors, and professional associates in primary and secondary schools on the Violence in Teenage Relationships program. In the past two years, six professional workshops were held, attended by 189 educational staff, and the program is implemented in numerous secondary schools and student dormitories. Additionally, Education and Teacher Training Agency offers training in non-violent conflict resolution and the development of communication skills. Over the past two years, 1,965 educational staff, from preschool to secondary school levels, have participated in these programs.

The National Sports Program 2019-2026 envisages the development of a protocol for dealing with violence among children in sports club.

As part of the National Plan for Combating Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period 2022-2027, the implementation of the following activities is planned.

Implementation of developed acts and procedures for handling cases of sexual violence and sexual harassment by national sports federations.

Conducting training sessions to educate coaches and other employees of sports clubs and associations about the unacceptability of sexual violence and sexual harassment, as well as the procedure for reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment by coaches and other staff members.

Participation of sports professionals (coaches and other employees of sports clubs and associations) in training sessions on sexual violence and sexual harassment, as well as on acts and procedures for recognizing and handling cases of sexual violence and sexual harassment.

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Republic of Croatia is a partner in the

Croatian Olympic Committee's project named GUARD. The aim of the project is to appoint and train child safeguarding officers in national sports federations so that they acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to help transfer their expertise to the officers in sports clubs. As part of the project, the development of Guidance and procedures to safeguard and protect children in sport organizations, as well as Set of resources for Child Safeguarding Officers in sport organizations is planned. It is particularly important to highlight that the guidelines for safe recruitment comprise several crucial elements aimed at safeguarding vulnerable populations, especially children. The application process should cover several important facts - personal information, employment history, and qualifications. Additionally, applicants must disclose any criminal convictions and consent to background checks. Criminal record certificate and certificate of no ongoing criminal proceedings for all staff and volunteers are mandatory, with regular rechecks scheduled every 2 years to ensure ongoing compliance. Child safeguarding policies explicitly prohibit individuals with a history of child abuse from engaging in roles involving children.

In accordance with the Ordinance on Specialist Training of Doctors of Medicine ("Official Gazette" No. 65/22), program of specialization in school and adolescent medicine, specialists in school and adolescent medicine

know the legal aspects of violence and the basic obligations of healthcare professionals in preventing, detecting and procedure in the events of violence, abuse and neglect, particularly of school children and youth, in school or domestic.

Furthermore, they are familiar with the tasks of the school doctor and the procedures in case of domestic and school violence. They are familiar with the role and tasks of other health professionals in detecting and resolving the problem of

violence, but also of others, as well as the role of intersectoral cooperation, especially the judiciary, the state attorney's office, the police, the non-governmental sector and others.

- to ensure that the persons who have regular contacts with children are informed of the possibility for them to report to the services responsible for child protection any situation where they have "reasonable grounds" for believing that a child is a victim of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children:

- in the education sector
- in the health sector
- in the social protection sector
- in areas relating to sport, culture and leisure activities;¹²⁶

Follow-up actions:

Criminal Code, prescribes criminal offence of Failure to Report the Commission of a Criminal Offence (Article 302). Based on the aforesaid criminal offence, public official or a responsible person who fails to report the commission of a criminal offence which he/she has come to know about in the course of performing his/her duties, provided the criminal offence in question is to be prosecuted privately or upon request shall be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of up to three years.

These persons are obliged by law to report any form of abuse of children. According to the Family Law, Article 132. Para 1., everyone is obliged to report a violation of a child's personal or property rights (including physical and mental violence and sexual abuse) to the Croatian Institute for Social Work.

The Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools mandates the obligation to protect students' rights. Article 70

¹²⁶ Recommendation X-6

stipulates:

(1) Teachers, professors, professional associates, and other school staff are required to take measures to protect students' rights and to immediately report any violation of these rights—especially cases of physical or psychological violence, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment, or exploitation of students—to the school principal, who is then obligated to inform the social welfare authority or another competent body.

The procedure for teachers, professors, professional associates, and principals in implementing measures to protect students' rights and reporting any violations to the competent authorities is regulated by the Minister through specific regulations.

If any employee in a primary or secondary school ignores observed or reported sexual violence against a child, they will be penalized in accordance with the Act on Education in Primary and Secondary Schools. Article 70 prescribes penalties for employees who:

"Fail to take measures to protect students' rights and do not report any violation of these rights to the competent authorities, in accordance with the regulations that outline the procedures for educational staff in implementing protective measures and reporting violations to the relevant authorities."

The National Sports Program 2019-2026 envisages the development of a protocol for dealing with violence among children in sports club.

As part of the National Plan for Combating Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period 2022-2027, the implementation of the following activities is planned.

Implementation of developed acts and procedures for handling cases of sexual

violence and sexual harassment by national sports federations.

Conducting training sessions to educate coaches and other employees of sports clubs and associations about the unacceptability of sexual violence and sexual harassment, as well as the procedure for reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment by coaches and other staff members.

Participation of sports professionals (coaches and other employees of sports clubs and associations) in training sessions on sexual violence and sexual harassment, as well as on acts and procedures for recognizing and handling cases of sexual violence and sexual harassment.

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Republic of Croatia is a partner in the Croatian Olympic Committee's project named GUARD. The aim of the project is to appoint and train child safeguarding officers in national sports federations so that they acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to help transfer their expertise to the officers in sports clubs. As part of the project, the development of Guidance and procedures to safeguard and protect children in sport organizations, as well as Set of resources for Child Safeguarding Officers in sport organizations is planned. It is particularly important to highlight that the guidelines for safe recruitment comprise several crucial elements aimed at safeguarding vulnerable populations, especially children. The application process should cover several important facts - personal information, employment history, and qualifications. Additionally, applicants must disclose any criminal convictions and consent to background checks. Criminal record certificate and certificate of no ongoing criminal proceedings for all staff and volunteers are mandatory, with regular rechecks scheduled every 2 years to ensure ongoing compliance. Child safeguarding policies explicitly prohibit individuals with a history of child abuse from engaging in roles

involving children.

Physicians are obliged to file a report to the police or the state attorney's office if, during the performance of the medical activity, they suspect that the person's bodily injury was caused by violence.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Medical Practitioners Act (Official Gazette 121/03 and 117/08) and the Dental Medicine Act (Official Gazette 121/03, 117/08, 120/09 and 46/21), physicians and dental practitioners are under the obligation to file a report when they suspect that a minor's health condition is seriously endangered by neglect or abuse.

In the event of a personal injury, the physicians are under the obligation to fill out a form – a form for reporting the injury/illness of the Croatian Health Insurance Institute. The said report shall be submitted to the regional office of the Croatian Health Insurance Institute according to the residence of the insured person.

Healthcare professionals are familiar with these provisions, i.e. duties.

The Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Sexual Violence and the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Child Abuse and Neglect were submitted to health institutions. The protocols are published on the website of the Ministry of Health <https://zdravlje.gov.hr/programi-i-projekti/nacionalni-programi-projekti-i-strategije/protokoli/1566>.

- to encourage awareness of the protection and rights of children among persons who have regular contacts with children in the education, health, social protection, judicial and law-enforcement sectors and in areas relating to sport, culture and leisure activities.¹²⁷

Follow-up actions:

In 2022, the Judicial Academy organised 6

workshops entitled “Juvenile Courts Act – case law and application” for a total of 56 participants. The target group is judges for juveniles and court counsellors and deputy state attorneys and state attorney counsellors of the municipal and county level.

In 2023, the Judicial Academy organised 5 workshops entitled “Juvenile Courts Act – case law and application” for a total of 89 participants. The target group is judges for juveniles and court counsellors and deputy state attorneys and state attorney counsellors of the municipal and county level.

In 2023, the Judicial Academy organised 6 workshops entitled “Taking victim statements and questioning victims with a special focus on vulnerable groups, especially victims of domestic violence, violence against children and women and sexual violence” for a total of 81 participants. The target group is criminal and misdemeanour judges and counsellors of municipal and county courts, investigating judges, judges for juveniles, deputy state attorneys and state attorney counsellors, police officers and officials of the victim and witness support departments.

In 2024, the Judicial Academy organised 3 workshops entitled “Protection of children victims of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation” for a total of 44 participants. The target group is criminal judges and counsellors of municipal and county courts, judges and counsellors dealing with misdemeanour cases at municipal courts, deputy state attorneys and state attorney counsellors of the criminal department of the municipal and county level.

In 2024, the Judicial Academy organised 5 workshops entitled “Taking victim statements and questioning victims with a special focus on vulnerable groups,

¹²⁷ Recommendation X-7

especially victims of domestic violence, violence against children and women and sexual violence” for a total of 78 participants. The target group is criminal and misdemeanour judges and counsellors of municipal and county courts, investigating judges, judges for juveniles, deputy state attorneys and state attorney counsellors, police officers and officials of the victim and witness support departments.

In 2024, the Judicial Academy organized two workshops entitled "Education on combating sexual violence and sexual harassment and on standards for the protection of the rights of children victims of sexual abuse and neglect in domestic and European legislation" for a total of 17 participants. The target group is criminal judges and counsellors of municipal and county courts, judges and counsellors dealing with misdemeanour cases at municipal courts, deputy state attorneys and state attorney counsellors of the criminal department of the municipal and county level.

In 2025, the Judicial Academy plans to organise 3 workshops entitled “Education on combating sexual violence and sexual harassment and on standards for the protection of the rights of children victims of sexual abuse and neglect in domestic and European legislation”. The target group is: criminal and misdemeanour judges of municipal and county courts and state attorneys.

When we talk about raising awareness, especially about children's rights, one of the most important items is definitely media literacy, which the Ministry of Culture and Media has been supporting since the beginning.

Media literacy enables the competence of active and safe use of media with the aim of reducing negative influences. Critical media literacy does not mean a negative approach

to the media, but a critical attitude towards the media. The better we understand the media, the better and better we can use them.

Adults should guide children to use the media in a way that supports inclusion, participation and opportunities to make changes and develop critical thinking.

https://www.medijskapismenost.hr/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Djeca-i-medijska-knjizica_medijska_pismenost.pdf

<https://www.medijskapismenost.hr/>

The Agency for Electronic Media (AEM) tasked with handling issues on media literacy and the safe use of new media. The AEM also adopted the Recommendations for the Protection of Children and the Safe Use of Electronic Media, directed towards youth groups. The recommendations include guidelines for classifying audiovisual content potentially harmful to children and youth, recommendations for editors and media employees, recommendations for parents, and recommendations for educators.

In 2022, the AEM adopted the Ordinance on the Protection of Minors in Electronic Media. This Ordinance prescribes technical measures and procedures for audiovisual media service providers and radio media services providers, electronic publications providers and video-sharing platform providers, its application also includes age labels that help parents and guardians choose appropriate content for children. In inappropriate content for children, i.e. content that may harm children, including scenes of gross physical and/or verbal violence, frightening scenes of suffering and injury, sex and sexual exploitation, simple language and scenes, abuse of tobacco, alcohol, opiates, gambling and betting, and other similar scenes. Such content only can be displayed at certain times or under certain conditions.

There are two initiatives aimed at

enhancing young people's media literacy and awareness of online safety issues within the context of non-formal and informal learning. The Centre for Safer Internet (CIS) organizes trainings, workshops, and debates for students, youth, parents, and teachers. The CIS has developed three apps and published an educational manual on the safer use of the Internet. Additionally, they initiated a specialist study program 'Digital safety and privacy'.

The second initiative is the project Choose What You Are Watching, implemented by the AEM and UNICEF Croatia.

Legislation:

The Media Act regulates the freedom of the media and the rights of journalists, but it also prescribes certain restrictions within the media. According to Article 16 of the aforementioned law, media are obliged to respect the privacy, dignity, reputation and honor of citizens, especially children, youth and families, regardless of gender and sexual orientation. It's not allowed to publish information that reveals the identity of a child, if this endangers the well-being of the child. (NN 59/04, 84/11, 81/13 and 114/22)

Article 39 paragraph 1 stipulates that public display and advertising are prohibited newspapers with pornographic content on the cover. This ban does not apply to the sale of pornographic publications in special stores. (2) Press with pornographic content must have a visible warning that it contains pornography, as well as a warning that its distribution prohibited to minors.

Article 24 of the on Electronic Media Act stipulates that in audiovisual media services and radio programs, as well as in the contents of electronic publications, it is not allowed to: publish contributions that offend human dignity. Also, publish articles of particularly immoral and pornographic content and encourage, promote and glorify violence and crime in any way and encourage citizens, especially children and

youth, to use tobacco products, alcohol, drugs or any other form of addiction.

(2) Audiovisual media services and radio programs and contents of electronic publications that can seriously harm the physical, mental or moral development of minors, especially those involving gratuitous violence, are not permitted.

(3) Audiovisual media services and radio programs that are likely to harm the physical, mental or moral development of minors are not allowed to be published, except when the media service provider ensures, by selecting the broadcast time, age verification tools or any technical measure, that minors in the transmission area will not, as a rule, hear or see them.

(5) The publication of information revealing the identity of a child up to the age of 18 involved in cases of any form of violence is not permitted, regardless of whether he is a witness, victim or perpetrator

The Croatian Radio-Television Act, in its provisions also emphasizes the importance of respecting privacy. Therefore, in the article 6 it stipulates: "In the implementation of programs, HRT is obliged to: - promote national interests, contribute to the respect and promotion of fundamental human rights and freedoms, patriotism, tolerance, understanding and respect for diversity, democratic values and institutions, civil society, and the promotion of the culture of public dialogue. Also, respect privacy, dignity, freedom and human honor and the fundamental rights and reputation of others, especially children and young people, as well as the elderly and infirm."

Education and Teacher Training Agency conducts regular professional training sessions for all principals of educational institutions, as well as for preschool educators, teachers, professors, and professional associates on topics related to children's rights and their protection.

A portion of these professional workshops focuses on teaching media literacy, aiming

to educate and empower teachers and professors to critically analyze media messages so they can pass this knowledge on to their students. This type of education also serves as a preventive measure to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Education and Teacher Training Agency also organizes professional workshops on cybersecurity to raise awareness about the importance of protecting computer systems and applications from cyber threats, hacking, and unauthorized access. This is crucial for everyone, especially children, who are often unaware of the dangers in the online world that can lead to sexual exploitation and abuse.

In 2023, a total of 1,363 participants attended the cybersecurity workshop, while in 2024, the number of participants increased to 1,400.

As part of the National Plan for Combating Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period 2022-2027, the implementation of the following activities is planned.

Implementation of developed acts and procedures for handling cases of sexual violence and sexual harassment by national sports federations.

Conducting training sessions to educate coaches and other employees of sports clubs and associations about the unacceptability of sexual violence and sexual harassment, as well as the procedure for reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment by coaches and other staff members.

Participation of sports professionals (coaches and other employees of sports clubs and associations) in training sessions on sexual violence and sexual harassment, as well as on acts and procedures for recognizing and handling cases of sexual

violence and sexual harassment.

The Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Republic of Croatia is a partner in the Croatian Olympic Committee's project named GUARD. The aim of the project is to appoint and train child safeguarding officers in national sports federations so that they acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to help transfer their expertise to the officers in sports clubs. As part of the project, the development of Guidance and procedures to safeguard and protect children in sport organizations, as well as Set of resources for Child Safeguarding Officers in sport organizations is planned. It is particularly important to highlight that the guidelines for safe recruitment comprise several crucial elements aimed at safeguarding vulnerable populations, especially children. The application process should cover several important facts - personal information, employment history, and qualifications. Additionally, applicants must disclose any criminal convictions and consent to background checks. Criminal record certificate and certificate of no ongoing criminal proceedings for all staff and volunteers are mandatory, with regular rechecks scheduled every 2 years to ensure ongoing compliance. Child safeguarding policies explicitly prohibit individuals with a history of child abuse from engaging in roles involving children.

The Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Sexual Violence and the Protocol on the Procedure in Cases of Child Abuse and Neglect were submitted to health institutions.

The protocols are published on the website of the Ministry of Health <https://zdravlje.gov.hr/programi-i-projekti/nacionalni-programi-projekti-i-strategije/protokoli/1566>.

Generic recommendations of the Committee on higher education curriculum and continuous training

The Committee **invites** all Parties, including Croatia

- to ensure that the persons who have regular contacts with children (i.e. in the education, health and social protection, sectors and in areas relating to sport, culture and leisure activities), have an adequate knowledge of the risks associated with CSGSIV, for example through education or continuous training;¹²⁸
- to ensure that all the sectors where professionals work in contact with children, including when working on a voluntary basis, have adequate knowledge of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, including when facilitated by ICTs and with specific reference to the risks associated with CSGSIV.¹²⁹

Promising practices

The Ministry of Science and Education is continuously carrying out programs of professional training of teachers and expert associates through intersectoral co-operation by publishing brochures and manuals about the importance of universal prevention with the aim of protecting children and youth in the world of internet, network technologies and mobile phones and development of the system of education and teaching of students.

Promising practices:

During the implementation of activities outlined in the National Plan for Combating Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment for the period 2022-2027, a report was prepared for the period 2022 to 2024, which can serve as an example of good practice.

Thirteen national sports federations have, in various ways, implemented or partially implemented the developed acts and procedures for handling cases of sexual violence and sexual harassment in their operations during the period from 2022 to 2024.

During the period from 2022 to 2024, a total of 73 training sessions were held, informing coaches and other employees of sports clubs and associations about the unacceptability of sexual violence and sexual harassment, as well as the procedure for reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment by coaches and other staff members.

Between 2022 and 2024, a total of 1,400 participants took part in training sessions on sexual violence and sexual harassment, as well as on the acts and procedures for recognizing and responding to cases of sexual violence and sexual harassment.

The School and Adolescent Medicine Service of the Croatian Institute of Public Health, as a potential stakeholder in the education of experts, participated in the analysis of the needs for improvement in education within the UE/CoE project "Implementing the Barnahus Model in Croatia".

The Ministry of Health finances the program of the Center for Missing and Exploited Children (CNZD).

The Center for Missing and Exploited Children, through the "Suncokret – Universal Prevention of Addiction" program, seeks to prevent addictions to alcohol, drugs, gambling and new technologies

¹²⁸ Recommendation X-2.

¹²⁹ Recommendation X-3.

in children and young people in the Osijek-Baranja County.

Education attended by members of the organization and partners (including the health institution Teaching Institute of Public Health of the Osijek-Baranja County, Center for Health Protection of Mental Health, Prevention and Outpatient Treatment of Addiction) related to the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse:

- Round table – Combat Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in Serbia – ICMEC
- Training on gender-based violence and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse – UNHCR – one CNZD employee
- Webinar – Data for change: listening to the voices of children about their experiences online – INHOPE – one CNZD employee
- Child protection protocols – CNZD, 7 CNZD employees participated
- Safer Internet Forum – Insafe (Vienna) – 3 CNZD employees participated
- INHOPE Training Meeting - INHOPE (Malta) – 2 CNZD employees participated
- Conference – Barnahus: a European journey – Findings of a mapping study on multidisciplinary and interagency child-friendly justice models responding to violence against children

As part of the first year of the implementation of the “Suncokret– Universal Prevention of Addiction” program, educational activities were held for parents, children and young people and professionals.

XI. Research

Effective prevention mechanisms and responses to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse of children require an understanding of the issues at stake, as well as knowledge of the prevalence and characteristics of the phenomenon. Accurate and precise information may be necessary to develop quality and targeted policies and measures. The gathering of information and understanding of the phenomenon is particularly important in the context of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by ICTs, in light of their rapid development and increased use.

Observations and recommendations of the Committee on research specific to Croatia

The Committee notes that Croatia has provided information on research undertaken on the issues raised by CSGSIV in general.¹³⁰ It also appears that Croatia has participated for at least one year in the EU Kids Online surveys.¹³¹

State authorities collaborate with universities and academia for the purpose of undertaking research projects addressing the issues raised by CSGSIV. The Ministry of Interior supports research by academia by providing official data on the state and scope of the issue.¹³²

Generic recommendations of the Committee on research

The Committee **invites** all those Parties which have not already done or are not already doing so:

- to collect data and undertake research at the national and local level, for the purpose of observing and evaluating the phenomenon of CSGSIV;¹³³
- to take the necessary legislative or other measures to set up or designate mechanisms for data collection or focal points at the national or local levels and in collaboration with civil society, for the purpose of observing and evaluating the phenomenon of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, including on the issues arising from CSGSIV,

with due respect for the requirements of personal data protection.¹³⁴

The Committee also **invites** all Parties, including Croatia:

- to ensure that data on the phenomenon of CSGSIV and the risks associated with it is regularly collected and research on the issue is regularly undertaken;¹³⁵
- to build on the findings from existing research on CSGSIV, when available, to ensure that policies and measures are best developed and appropriately targeted to tackle the issues raised by CSGSIV.¹³⁶

Promising practices:

¹³⁰ Para. 437

¹³¹ Para. 440

¹³² Para. 448

¹³³ Recommendation XI-1

¹³⁴ Recommendation XI-4

¹³⁵ Recommendation XI-2

¹³⁶ Recommendation XI-3