



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

FACTSHEET – EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN

Lanzarote Committee monitoring findings 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)”

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Introduction

Protecting children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by information and communication technologies (ICTs) is a common challenge faced by all States. The often transnational nature of these offences makes international cooperation of the utmost importance especially to identify and protect victims as well as to identify and prosecute perpetrators.

The Council of Europe [Convention on the Protection of Children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse](#) (“Lanzarote Convention”) is a comprehensive instrument that sets out the applicable standards necessary to:

- Prevent child sexual exploitation and abuse, including where this is facilitated by ICTs;
- Protect victims;
- Prosecute perpetrators; and
- Promote national and international co-operation to strengthen these actions.

The [Committee of the Parties to the Lanzarote Convention](#) (“the Lanzarote Committee”) monitors the implementation of the Convention in thematic monitoring rounds. This allows for all Parties to be monitored simultaneously on the same theme.

Particularly concerned by the exponential increase in offences committed using child self-generated sexual images and/or videos (CSGSIV), the Lanzarote Committee decided to dedicate its second monitoring round to this topic. The 43 States that were Party to the Convention at the time the monitoring round was launched took part.

The [implementation report](#) adopted by the Lanzarote Committee in the context of this monitoring round is based on information provided by [State Parties](#) and [other stakeholders](#) in response to a questionnaire. The implementation report also contains information received from 306 [children](#) in 10 Parties who chose to participate.

The Lanzarote Committee indicates the different levels of urgency applicable to the recommendations made by using the following terms:

- **“Require”**: when the steps recommended correspond to obligations arising from the Lanzarote Convention, as clarified by its Explanatory report;
- **“Request”**: when the steps recommended correspond to obligations arising from the Lanzarote Convention, as clarified by documents adopted by the Committee (e.g. previous monitoring round findings, opinions, other)¹;
- **“Invite”**: when the steps recommended correspond to promising practices or other measures to enhance protection of children against sexual violence even beyond specific requirements of the Lanzarote Convention.

This thematic factsheet is based on chapter IX of the implementation report on education for children. It has been prepared by the Lanzarote Committee Secretariat as a practical tool to clearly identify the Committee’s analysis, its recommendations to States Parties and promising practices, as well as difficulties in implementing the Convention. It does not include updated information on measures implemented by the Parties since the adoption of the report in March 2022. Parties and other relevant stakeholders are encouraged to inform the secretariat of any relevant measures implemented after that date, which may have an impact on the Committee’s analysis and recommendations by completing this [online form](#) or by email to lanzarote.committee@coe.int.

¹ See Rule 30 (General comments, proposals and opinions) of the Lanzarote Committee’s Rules of Procedure.

General remarks

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. Dissemination of information in educational contexts is particularly beneficial to improve this prevention, as "children sometimes pay more attention to what is explained to them (...) at school when professionals (such as, for example, teachers, doctors, psychologists) provide the relevant information".²

In its report, the Lanzarote Committee provided an overview of the implementation of educational measures to provide children with preventive information on the risk of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse with specific reference to child self-generated sexual images and/or videos (CSGSIV). In so doing, it highlighted whether information on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse facilitated by ICTs, especially when it results from CSGSIV, is included in the national curriculum and/or in other non-formal education contexts and examines whether such information is adapted to the "evolving capacity" of children, the context in which it is delivered, and the involvement of parents in its provision.

Lanzarote Convention –Chapter IV –Protective measures and assistance to victims

Article 6 of the Lanzarote Convention Education for children

Each Party shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that children, during primary and secondary education, receive information on the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, as well as on the means to protect themselves, adapted to their evolving capacity. This information, provided in collaboration with parents, where appropriate, shall be given within a more general context of information on sexuality and shall pay special attention to situations of risk, especially those involving the use of new information and communication technologies.

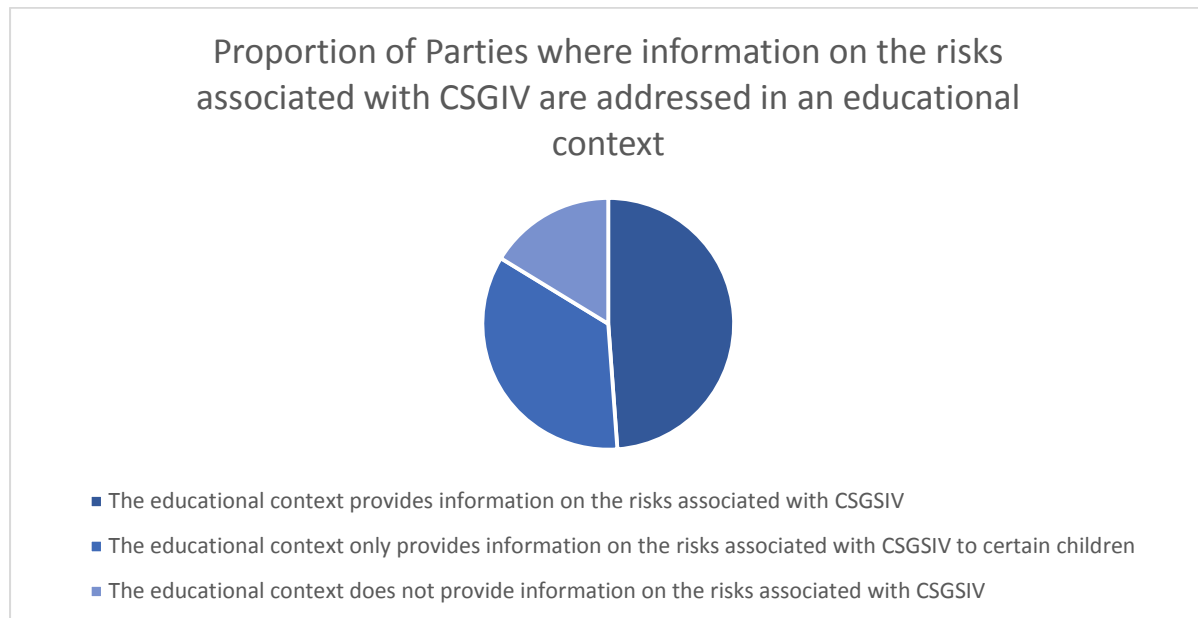
Information on the risks of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse with specific reference to CSGSIV is provided to children in educational contexts (national curricula or other non-formal educational contexts)

As clarified in the Explanatory Report of the Lanzarote Convention, the information provided to children on the risks of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse does not have to form part of a teaching programme, but could be provided in a non-formal educational context, which both form part of the educational context. The Committee specified what this twofold notion entails for the purpose of its implementation report:

- the information that is part of the national curriculum is the one teachers deliver themselves, or where schools delegate this responsibility to external professionals who are specifically trained in these subjects, which may not be the case for all teachers.
- the information that is part of "non-formal educational contexts" refers to two different situations: instances where information is provided to children in the geographical location of schools through various awareness-raising activities organised by external entities without being part of the formal national curriculum, and instances where children are educated at home.

² Explanatory Report to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, paragraph 58.

The Lanzarote Committee acknowledged that information on the prevention of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children is part of the educational context in a majority of Parties. However, only a minority explicitly address the challenges raised by CSGSIV, whether in the national curriculum or in the context of non-formal educational activities. Yet, in some other Parties, elements of information on the prevention against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by ICTs are taught to children.



The Lanzarote Committee further noted that, in 7 Parties, although information on sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and the challenges associated with CSGSIV is mentioned as being part of the national curriculum or other non-formal educational settings, it is not clear whether all children benefit from it (see, table above). In some cases, the choice to teach these subjects is left to the discretion of educational institutions or teachers, and in others, only a few schools in the country have included them in their curricula.

Furthermore, several civil society actors raised the concern that there is fragmentation in the provision of information on the prevention of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children to children of primary and secondary education levels, and on the risks associated with CSGSIV. Depending on the Parties, these topics are addressed under different headings and involve multiple learning providers and delivery models, which ultimately also affects the manner in which the issues are addressed.

Finally, the Committee recalled that, when providing information to children on the topics at stake, it is important to consider the needs of certain categories of children who may be at greater risk of becoming victims of sexual violence due to discrimination, including on the basis of their sexual orientation. For example, NGOs in Finland have addressed the need to better take into account in prevention education the LGBTIQ youth, for whom technology may well offer the only place to discover, ask questions, and get information, but at the same time might create higher risks for them. A study entitled “How is the LHBTIQ-youth doing in Finland” (Mitä kuulu sateenkaarinuorille Suomessa?), showed that 40% of trans youth have been requested to send nude photos or take their clothes off in front of a camera, 10% found themselves in situations where someone approached them online to try to get sexual favours, and 25-28% of the youth participating in the study had been approached online by a person who was five years or older than them.

Examples of promising practices identified by the Lanzarote Committee

The Greek NGO ‘The Smile of the Child’ implements projects in schools in **Greece** based on a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. At primary education, the “Real Life Story-Friends by Request” project describes the story of a student, who communicates via the internet with someone, who pretends to be of the same age with her. The girl exchanges photos with him but later he uses them to intimidate her. In secondary education, two projects are implemented, i.e. “Behind the screen” and “Stories from the Internet”. In both, visualized stories are used to inform students about Internet safety.

In **Slovenia**, police officers (members of the Expert Council of the Safer Internet Center) and detectives visit elementary schools around the country and speak about safe use of the internet, focusing on the dangers of producing and distributing self-generated sexually explicit content/private information. The target audience consists of children, parents and school staff.

In **Switzerland**, brochures produced by the Swiss Crime Prevention on cyber harassment and pornography explicitly address issues related to CSGSIV and the risks of sexual abuse and cyber harassment.³ Their contents are disseminated by the police to schools, at parents' evenings, etc., or used directly by schools. Several Swiss NGOs also develop material and/or visit schools to address issues such as the internet and sexuality, including CSGSIV (see, for example, *Zischtig, Action Innocence* and *Pro Juventute*).

In **Ukraine**, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Digital Transformation, with the support of the Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights, have developed the educational project #stop_sexting which aims to prevent and combat sexual violence on the Internet, and includes special lessons and a quest game for children in grades 7-11.

Recommendations of the Lanzarote Committee

The Lanzarote Committee **requires** all Parties 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.⁴

The Lanzarote Committee **invites**:

- those Parties that are not already doing so, to address in educational contexts the issue of the risks of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated

by ICTs, including as regards child self-generated sexual images and/or videos.⁵

- those Parties that are not already doing so, to ensure that information on the risks of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by ICTs, including as regards child self-generated sexual images and/or videos, 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).⁶

³ See [Pornographie illégale & porno-dépendance | Prévention Suisse de la Criminalité \(skppsc.ch\)](https://www.skppsc.ch/fr/actualites/pornographie-ill%C3%A9gale-et-porno-d%C3%A9pendance)

⁴ Recommendation IX-3.

⁵ Recommendation IX-1.

⁶ Recommendation IX-2.

- all Parties to consistently involve children in the development of internet safety awareness programmes.⁷

- all Parties to ensure that there is a standing national internet safety resource, with an ongoing programme of activities.⁸

Information is adapted to the “evolving capacity” of the children at different levels of education

The Lanzarote Committee observed that only a minority of Parties indicated that information given to children in educational contexts is provided in an age-appropriate manner. Instead, the majority provided information on the levels of education where this information is given. It stressed that national authorities need to ensure that education and awareness-raising on topics such as prevention of sexual violence against children are not frightening to young children and are sufficiently clear to older children to ensure an adequate preventive effect.

Example of a promising practice identified by the Lanzarote Committee:

In **Germany**, in the region of Baden-Württemberg, topics related to sexuality and sexualised violence in a digital context will be addressed in age-appropriate discussions at all scholastic levels, e.g. in connection with questions of personal identity, different sexual orientations, sexual diversity, personality growth or role models, as well as in the context of teaching modules on media usage, social media applications, consumer protection, data privacy, and personal rights. The basic Media Education course taught in fifth grade offers a particularly wide range of tie-in points in this regard.

Recommendation of the Lanzarote Committee

The Lanzarote Committee **invites** all Parties to provide information to children on child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, facilitated by ICTs, including as regards child self-generated sexual images and/or videos, 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.⁹

Context in which information is provided to children

Article 6 of the Lanzarote Convention provides that information on the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse shall be given “within a more general context of information on sexuality” as “providing isolated information on sexual exploitation or sexual abuse outside the general context of normal sexuality could be disturbing to children”.¹⁰ The Committee also notes that in a Human Rights Comment issued in July 2020, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, highlighted that “the benefits of sexuality education [for children], when comprehensive, go far beyond information on reproduction and health risks associated with sexuality.” It is “essential to prevent and combat sexual abuse against children, sexual violence and sexual exploitation”, and is important to “prevent children from falling prey to sexual offenders online”.¹¹

⁷ Recommendation IX-4.

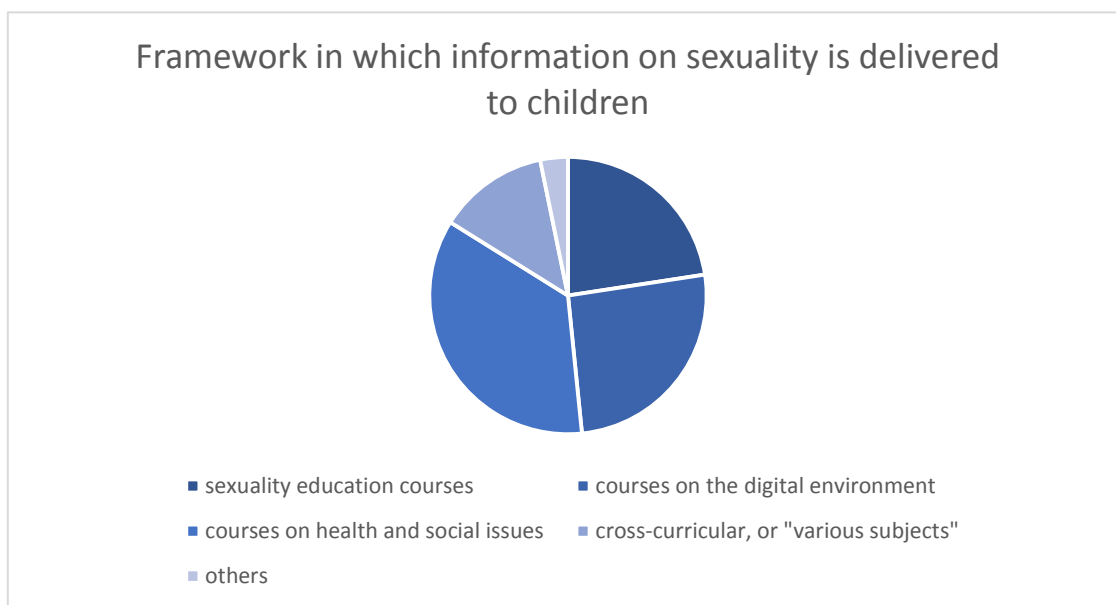
⁸ Recommendation IX-5.

⁹ Recommendation IX-6.

¹⁰ Explanatory Report of the Lanzarote Convention, paragraph 62.

¹¹ [Human Rights Comment: Comprehensive sexuality](#)

In its report, the Committee observes that children receive information on the risks associated with CSGSIV in the context of sexuality education courses only in a minority of Parties. It further notes that in some Parties, the teaching is too general and cannot be considered to provide a systematic and targeted approach to the prevention of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, including online and when it occurs as a result of the self-generation of child sexual images and/or videos.



“Most children participating believe that discussions [on sexual violence and safety on the Internet] are necessary, but some of them believe that such education of preschool children can lead to arising of their fears.” – Extract from consultations with children who participated in the monitoring round, 2019

Recommendation of the Lanzarote Committee

The Lanzarote Committee **invites** those Parties that are not already doing so, to provide information to children on the risks of child sexual exploitation and abuse facilitated by ICTs, including as regards child self-generated sexual images and/or videos, within a more general context of sexuality education.¹²

Involvement of parents in the provision of information on child sexual exploitation and abuse and child self-generated sexual images and/or videos

Article 6 of the Lanzarote Convention provides that information on the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse should be provided “in collaboration with parents”. The Explanatory Report emphasises that such a form of collaboration is “required, where appropriate”. It is therefore not sufficient to provide examples where courses and awareness raising activities are aimed at both children and parents. In fact, parents, and other care takers, must be involved as much as possible in implementing such prevention initiatives with children.

[education protects children and helps build a safer, inclusive society](#) (21 July 2020)

¹² Recommendation IX-7.

In practice, the Lanzarote Committee observed that parents and other caretakers are encouraged in only 11 Parties to participate in the provision of preventive information to children in the educational context. The need to further involve them in the prevention of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children was also emphasised by some of the children who contributed to the monitoring round, who felt that such involvement usually happens too late.

“Participants shared that parents were usually contacted by teachers and school psychologists about specific incidents, when there was already a case of online bullying related to sexual images and/or videos produced by the children themselves. Parents were not informed in advance about the possible risks associated with such material.” – Extract from consultations with children who participated in the monitoring round,, 2018

Recommendation of the Lanzarote Committee

The Lanzarote Committee **invites** those Parties that are not already doing so, 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 child self-generated sexual images and/or videos.¹³

¹³ Recommendation IX-8.