



FACTSHEET – ITALY

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 Italy
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 Italy

On production, possession, and transmission of CSGSIV

The Committee notes that within Italy's legislative framework, the term "child pornography" is used as defined within Article 20(2) of the Convention.¹

- The Committee **invites** Italy 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](#)"² 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.³

As regards adults' role in the production of CSAM through child self-generation, in 2019 the Italian Supreme Court specified that the production of CSAM by "using" a child to generate sexual images and/or videos qualifies as induction or instigation. The Supreme Court also qualified as conduct related to "child abuse material" the dissemination of sexual images and/or videos self-generated by a child. As of 2019, Italian law explicitly punishes the illicit dissemination of sexually explicit images and videos, including of children.⁴

As regards criminalisation of production and possession of CSGSIV by children themselves, Italy pointed at the age of criminal responsibility (14) below which children

cannot be held criminally liable for acts they commit to demonstrate compatibility with the above-mentioned exclusion of criminal liability for the production and possession of CSGSIV.⁵ Italy also noted that self-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 underlines that relying on the age of criminal responsibility and the legal age for sexual activities to exclude the criminal responsibility of children, as advised in its 2019 Opinion, is insufficient as, in such cases, younger and older children may not be covered by the exemption.^{7 8}

The Committee observes that Italy criminalises distribution and transmission by children of their own CSGSIV subject to special circumstances.⁹

- The Committee thus **requests** that Italy ensure in its legal framework¹⁰ that 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.¹¹

Follow-up actions:

The Supreme Cassation Court in Italy, in a judgment delivered by its full assembly, stated that the consensual sharing of intimate media by a child who has reached the age of consent (14 years old) should not be interpreted as the dissemination of child pornography punishable under Article 600-ter of the Italian Criminal Code. The most recent case law provides the correct interpretation of child pornography,

¹ Para. 49

² 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.

³ Recommendation II-1

⁴ Para. 52

⁵ Para. 71

⁶ Para. 73

⁷ Ibid

⁸ As the age for criminal responsibility in Italy (14)

coincides with the legal age for sexual activities (14), the situation in practice appears to correspond to the Lanzarote Committee's above-mentioned recommendations. However, Italy would no longer be in compliance with Recommendation II-6 should these legal age thresholds no longer coincide in the future.

⁹ Para. 78

¹⁰ The expression "legal framework" is not limited to legislation but should be understood in a broader way, e.g., through prosecutorial guidance or practice.

¹¹ Recommendation II-8

clarifying that children consensually sharing intimate pictures of themselves should not be prosecuted (Judgment n. 4616/2022).

The same Judgement establishes that a child's self-production of sexual images or videos (e.g., selfies) does not constitute child pornography under Article 600-ter,

paragraph 1, of the Penal Code. This is because the article requires the "producer" and the child depicted to be distinct individuals.

Sharing such self-produced material with another child, when genuinely voluntary, consensual, and for strictly private use, does not lead to prosecution.

Generic recommendations of the Committee on the legal frameworks

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

- 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;¹²
- to introduce in their legal framework a definition of "child sexual abuse material" in line with its Recommendation II-1 above;¹³
- 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;¹⁴
- 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;¹⁵
- 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;¹⁶
- 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;¹⁷
- to ensure that sexual extortion of children involving CSGSIV is investigated and prosecuted.¹⁸

The Committee also **requests** that Parties:

- 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.¹⁹

Follow-up actions:

The dissemination by children of self-generated sexually explicit images and/or videos of other children remains an offense under Italian law, specifically Article 600-ter, paragraph 3, of the Penal Code. While the self-production of such material by a child may not fall under Article 600-ter, paragraph 1, dissemination to others is a separate offense. The Supreme Court of Cassation, in ruling 5522/2020, clarified this distinction to avoid a legal loophole, ensuring that the absence of a production offense (paragraph 1) does not preclude prosecution for subsequent dissemination to others.

However, the prosecution of children for such dissemination is not automatic and is

¹² Recommendation II-2

¹³ Recommendation II-3

¹⁴ Recommendation II-4

¹⁵ Recommendation II-7

¹⁶ Recommendation II-10

¹⁷ Recommendation II-11

¹⁸ Recommendation II-12

¹⁹ Recommendation II-9

considered within the broader context of juvenile justice, which prioritizes re-education and rehabilitation.

The following age-related considerations apply:

- children under 14 are non-imputable and cannot be subjected to criminal proceedings. Instead, the Juvenile Court can intervene with protective measures focused on their well-being, education, and development;
- children aged 14-17 can be subject to criminal proceedings, but their imputability is assessed on a case-by-case basis, considering their age, maturity, and understanding of the wrongfulness of their actions. Even when prosecution occurs, the emphasis remains on rehabilitation and reintegration. Probation and alternative measures, where applicable, are prioritized.

Since its creation by Presidential Decree n. 448/88 and along all its subsequent developments, the juvenile penal process has always emphasized juvenile offenders' re-education and reintegration within the juvenile justice system.

The recent Decree Law of September 15, 2023, no. 123, further reinforces such focus on re-education and reintegration within the juvenile justice system and introduces new forms of early interventions prioritizing re-educational programs and community-based alternatives to detention.

While dissemination of child-pornographic material to others is an offense, the Italian system's emphasis on rehabilitation, particularly for younger children, and the availability of alternative measures effectively mean that prosecution is often used as a last resort. The focus is on addressing the underlying issues and preventing further harm, rather than simply punishing the child. The courts consider the child's best interests and the specific circumstances of each case when deciding

whether prosecution is necessary. The availability of alternative measures, such as educational programs, counseling, and community service, allows for a more nuanced approach that prioritizes rehabilitation and reduces the likelihood of future offenses.

By Legislative Decree 150/22 [*Implementation of Act no. 134 of 27/09/2021 concerning the delegation to the Government for the efficiency of the penal process as well as in the field of restorative justice and provisions for the speedy definition of judicial proceedings*] - the so-called Cartabia Reform - a new system to implement Restorative Justice programs has been outlined, with a significant extension of institutional activities in the RJ field, both at central and peripheral level of the Juvenile & Community Justice Department (DGMJ). Access to such RJ program can be submitted by the defendant (personally or through a special proxy) or by the victim of the offence (under Article 42).

Actually, in order to avoid recidivism it seems essential that juvenile sex-offenders, in their different forms, find a qualified support within an 'educating' community, fostering 'reparation', i.e. '*material conducts that may have a material or symbolic indemnifying, restorative, compensatory, value*', up to possible forms of (direct or indirect) mediation for a full and progressive awareness of their liability. As to the specific area of protection of pornography victims, to provide a complete picture, it should be noted that in May 2024, the Italian Constitutional Court declared Article 600-ter of the Italian Criminal Code unconstitutional. This article addressed the production of child pornography. The Court's decision, which invalidates the article in its current form, highlights the need for a revised legal framework that allows for proportionate penalties, including reduced sentences in appropriate cases, and prioritizes the rehabilitative function of punishment.

Promising practices:

In response to the Committee's invitation for Italy to use the term "child sexual abuse material" (CSAM) to refer to material depicting acts of sexual abuse of children and/or focusing on their genitalia, Italy has begun to adapt its terminology accordingly. For example, in the National Plan for Preventing and Combating Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation the terminology used is "*materiale pedopornografico*" instead of "*pornografia minorile*". This terminological choice has been further confirmed within the framework of the proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child sexual abuse material and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA (recast). Both in the Italian version of the proposal and in the text of the general approach approved by the Ministers at the JHA Council in December 2024, the term "*pornografia minorile*" has been replaced with "*materiale pedopornografico*".

In response to the Committee's invitation to adopt legislative and educational measures supporting children's safe sexual development and mitigating risks related to self-generated sexual content (CSGSIV), Italy has undertaken significant initiatives. Italian Law No. 92/2019 introduced civic education, including digital citizenship, in all schools, from kindergarten onwards, to promote online safety, responsible digital behavior, privacy management, and cyberbullying prevention. Ministerial Decree No. 183/2024 reinforces this approach, focusing on responsible interaction with technology, artificial intelligence, and the development of critical digital skills for safety and well-being. Furthermore, information and awareness campaigns, along with legal education programs in schools, are conducted by public administrations, law enforcement agencies, and specific NGO projects.

In response to the Committee's invitation to consider criminalizing the solicitation of children for sexual purposes ("grooming"), regardless of physical meetings or CSAM production, Italian legislation already addresses this issue. Article 609-undecies of the Criminal Code criminalizes the solicitation of children under 16, with penalties of imprisonment from one to three years. Specifically, it states: "*anyone who, for the purpose of committing the offenses referred to in articles 600, 600 bis, 600 ter, and 600 quater, including those related to pornographic material as per Article 600 quater 1, 600 quinquies, 609 bis, 609 quater, 609 quinquies, and 609 octies, solicits a child under the age of sixteen(2), shall be punished, unless the act constitutes a more serious offense, with imprisonment from one to three years. Solicitation means any act aimed at gaining the trust of the child through artifice, flattery, or threats, including those carried out through the use of the internet or other networks or means of communication*". Notably, Italian law does not require a physical meeting or the production of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) for the conduct to constitute a crime. The act of establishing a relationship of trust with the child, with the intent to commit a sexual offense, is considered sufficient.

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 Italy

On the specialisation and training of authorities

The Committee observes that the investigation and prosecution units in Italy are already in line with some of its recommendations. Thus, it notes that Italy has a specialised unit in the law enforcement dedicated exclusively to child abuse material.²⁰ Part of the law enforcement work is outsourced: a list of websites disseminating CSAM, called a "blacklist", is handed over to Internet Service Providers, in order to prevent and block access to these websites through filtering systems. The National Center for the Fight against Child Pedopornography on the Internet (CNCPO), acting as an operational body, frequently liaises with the Observatory for the Fight Against Paedophilia and Child Pornography, which acts at an institutional level. It is Italy's contact point for the police offices of the G7 countries dealing with cybercrime and is part of the Virtual Global Task Force (VGT) network.²¹

In prosecution, cases concerning sexual abuse or exploitation of children facilitated by ICTs are managed by offices dedicated to combating cybercrime.²² Italy has a pool of prosecutors in charge of dealing with ICT facilitated sexual offences against children.²³

As regards judicial proceedings, In Italy's largest cities, there are court sections specialised in offences against vulnerable victims (including children) or crimes against

the person, family and children, which include proceedings for sexual crimes committed against children and ICT facilitated crimes.²⁴

It appears that there is no specialised investigative unit in Italy dealing with child offenders; however, there is a specialised prosecution service handling ICT facilitated sexual offences committed by children.²⁵ Italy also has specialised sections within the court system which handle such offences.²⁶

- The Committee **invites** Italy to have units, sections or persons specialised in ICT facilitated sexual offences committed by children against other children for authorities responsible for investigation.²⁷

The Committee observes that Italy has training modules in place for law enforcement agents and prosecutors related to aspects of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.²⁸ The content of trainings covers children's rights and international law and sexual offences and violence against children (law enforcement)²⁹, and sexual violence against children (prosecutors)³⁰. Italy has specific law enforcement training on production, possession, distribution or transmitting of CSGIV, and ICT facilitated coercion or extortion.³¹ In 2018, Italy devoted a training course addressing judges, prosecutors and attorneys on children's rights in the digital

²⁰ Para. 116

²¹ Para. 120

²² Para. 125

²³ Para. 126

²⁴ Para. 129

²⁵ Para. 138

²⁶ Para. 139

²⁷ Recommendation III-11

²⁸ Paras. 146 and 150

²⁹ Para. 152

³⁰ Para. 164

³¹ Para. 153

environment including topics which were then included among the criminal offenses covered by the so-called “Red Code” (Law No. 69/2019).³²

- The Committee **invites** Italy to ensure that training on the challenges raised by CSGSIV and ICT facilitated coercion or extortion of children is available to prosecutors.³³

In Italy, judges and prosecutors are trained together and/or have the same training options available to them.³⁴ The Juvenile Court works with ‘honourable judges’, with high and proven professionalism and competence, in relation to protection of and problems relating to children.³⁵

- The Committee **requests** Italy to

- To improve the prosecution of perpetrators, the Committee **requests** Italy to take the necessary legislative or other measures, in conformity with the fundamental principles of their internal law, to ensure an effective investigation and prosecution of ICT facilitated sexual offences against children, allowing, where appropriate, for the possibility of covert operations.³⁹

Follow-up actions:

To identify suspects operating anonymously, especially on the dark web, the Postal and Cyber Security Service (a specialized unit of the Italian State Police) regularly conducts judicially authorized undercover operations.

ensure that training on ICT facilitated sexual offences against children is available for judges who are or will be working on these issues.³⁶

Follow-up actions:

On victim and perpetrator identification

The Committee notes that Italy has victim identification functions located within units dedicated specifically to child abuse material or cyber-related sexual offences³⁷ (CNCPO). Italy makes an active contribution to the INTERPOL’s International Child Sexual Exploitation image and video database through units dedicated to cybercrime involving children, sexual offences, or child abuse materials.³⁸

The legal framework allows undercover investigators to engage appropriately with these individuals. Specifically, Article 14(1) and (2) of Law 269 of August 3, 1998, "Provisions against the exploitation of prostitution, pornography, and sexual tourism involving children, as new forms of enslavement," authorizes the Postal and Cyber Security Service, with judicial authorization, to:

- conduct simulated purchases and exchanges of child sexual abuse material;
- operate undercover websites;
- conduct online undercover operations;
- participate in sexual tourism investigations using undercover agents.

Generic recommendations of the Committee on investigations and prosecution

On the specialisation and training of authorities

³² Para. 165

³³ Recommendation III-16

³⁴ Para. 167

³⁵ Para. 168

³⁶ Recommendation III-18

³⁷ Para. 180

³⁸ Para. 186

³⁹ Recommendation III-28

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

- to ensure that law enforcement units, services or persons specialised in ICT facilitated sexual offences against children are adequately financed to ensure sufficient resources, including staff, equipment and training;⁴⁰

Follow-up actions:

Recently an ISF (Fondo per la sicurezza interna) funded program has been approved to tackle child sexual exploitation online with the most updated tools and best technologies available.

- to ensure that 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.⁴¹

Follow-up actions:

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

- 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;⁴²
- 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;⁴³
- 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;⁴⁴

- to ensure that units, services or persons within courts responsible for ICT facilitated sexual offences against children have sufficient specialisation in offences involving CSGSIV;⁴⁵
- to ensure that training on the challenges raised by CSGSIV and ICT facilitated coercion or extortion of children is available to judges;⁴⁶
- 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.⁴⁷

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 CSGSIV, and ICT facilitated coercion or extortion to law enforcement agents who are likely to come into contact with such cases;⁴⁸
- 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;⁴⁹
- 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.⁵⁰

On victim and perpetrator identification, data retention and expeditious proceedings

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

- to engage in and strengthen inter-Party cooperation for the purpose of identifying child victims of ICT facilitated sexual offences,

⁴⁰ Recommendation III-3

⁴¹ Recommendation III-7

⁴² Recommendation III-4

⁴³ Recommendation III-5

⁴⁴ Recommendation III-9

⁴⁵ Recommendation III-10

⁴⁶ Recommendation III-19

⁴⁷ Recommendation III-24

⁴⁸ Recommendation III-14

⁴⁹ Recommendation III-20

⁵⁰ Recommendation III-21

including, where appropriate, by providing access to each other's databases or shared databases;⁵¹

- to engage in and strengthen inter-Party cooperation for the purpose of identifying perpetrators of ICT facilitated sexual offences against children, including, where appropriate, by providing access to each other's databases or shared databases containing information on such perpetrators;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.

Promising practices

In addition to training, *carabinieri* in **Italy** receive a handbook on “Guaranteeing the Rights of children – Vademecum for Police Forces”, which covers topics such as cyberbullying and CSAM, including that which results from CSGSIV.

Promising practices:

Regarding the Committee's statement that Italy lacks a specialized investigative unit for child offenders, it's important to clarify the structure of juvenile justice in Italy. Investigations and proceedings concerning offenses committed by children, including sexual exploitation and technology-facilitated crimes, fall under the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court and its Public Prosecutor. These bodies, staffed by magistrates specializing in juvenile law, operate with regional competence. The Juvenile Court benefits from the expertise of Honorary Judges with qualifications in psychology, social work, and childhood and adolescent issues, ensuring high and proven professionalism and competence in the protection of children. When children are accused of sexual offenses against other children, the Office of Social Services of Juvenile Justice assumes responsibility within the criminal proceedings before the Juvenile Court. This ensures that specialized expertise is applied throughout the investigative and judicial process.

Moreover, the "Ufficio Minori" (Juvenile Office) within the Anti-Crime Division of each "Questura" (Police Headquarters) addresses these issues. Established in May 1996, its purpose is to provide initial and effective support to children in distress and their families. This office employs qualified personnel trained to listen to children who are either perpetrators or victims of crimes, collaborating with relevant entities and associations in the juvenile sector.

In cases involving children as victims, Italy prioritizes their protection through the integration of specialized expertise within its investigative structures. For instance, in cases of sexual abuse and exploitation, judicial police and prosecutors are required to be assisted by court-appointed psychologists or child psychiatrists during child interviews, ensuring both the child's well-being and developmentally appropriate information gathering. Furthermore, in many Public Prosecutor's Office, specialized working groups have been established to address specific types of crimes: one of this group is dedicated to crimes against sexual freedom, the family, children, and vulnerable victims. Their work encompasses a broad range of offenses, including the critical areas of child

⁵¹ Recommendation III-25

⁵² Recommendation III-29

⁵³ Recommendation III-30

⁵⁴ Recommendation III-31

pornography, child prostitution, and online child grooming.

Concerning law enforcement agencies in Italy, the following should be noted.

Guardia di Finanza, as an economic-financial police force, is engaged, among other things, in the fight against sexual crimes and violence against children on the Internet, also through the sharing with the National Centre for the fight against online child pornography of the State Police, by the Special Currency Police Unit, of the information coming from the anti-money laundering prevention system pursuant to Legislative Decree no. 231/2007 from the National Financial Intelligence Unit and from foreign ones. The criminal phenomenon in question is also addressed in the basic training courses reserved for all Corps personnel, within the “criminal law” discipline.

Within the Arma dei Carabinieri, a specialized unit addresses gender-based and domestic violence crimes: the Stalking Section. This Section has developed an “Operational Handbook for Gender Violence Crimes and the Approach to Particularly Vulnerable Victims”. This handbook serves as a practical guide, summarizing best practices in this specialized field to improve interactions with the most vulnerable individuals. The handbook includes a chapter on technology-facilitated crime, highlighting how a lack of understanding regarding technology can exacerbate vulnerabilities for certain individuals, including those with protected characteristics (e.g., age, sex, race, disability, LGBT). The handbook stresses the importance of digital education initiatives, beginning with adults (particularly parents), to foster safe online practices and awareness of the potential dangers of social networks. Furthermore, it offers practical advice on reporting procedures and emphasizes sensitive victim support, specifically warning against victim-blaming.

Psychological literature indicates that children exposed to sexual abuse can experience a range of psychological, mental, and behavioral difficulties, varying in duration and severity. A key function of the Stalking Section is conducting protected hearings for these children, either by court mandate or in support of local law enforcement, to mitigate the risk of secondary victimization. This secondary victimization arises not directly from the abuse itself, but from institutional and societal responses, such as police interviews, court proceedings, interactions with legal and healthcare professionals, media portrayals, and social judgments. Recognizing this, the Stalking Section has developed a specialized procedure for interviewing children in abuse cases. The primary objective is to gather information from potential child victims or witnesses while minimizing further trauma. Children are interviewed in a dedicated, safe space. Interviewers prioritize objectivity, avoiding leading questions, particularly with younger children who are more susceptible to suggestion. This specialized interview technique for child sexual abuse cases encompasses several key elements: assessing the likelihood of abuse, interview preparation, questioning strategies, and the use of tools such as anatomical dolls.

Strategies for the prevention of criminal phenomena to the detriment of children adopted by the State Police also see, for years, the development of educational initiatives in schools, in agreement with school authorities, as well as their own information and awareness campaigns. Important are the legality education campaigns in schools, which the Police Headquarters carry out every year. Strong is the commitment of the State Police to provide knowledge tools for families, teachers and empowerment for the children themselves, in order to raise awareness especially of those who activate the report, such as, for example, those who work in the social fabric and can provide the Police Offices with an alert of possible situations of risk or abuse. At the territorial level, the Police Headquarters are engaged in information and awareness projects, collaborating with educational institutions, meeting with students and teachers with particular attention to the indications of Law 71 of 2017 bearing “Provisions for the protection of children for the prevention and contrast of the phenomenon of cyberbullying.”

In August 2023, the Central Anticrime Directorate issued the directive “Juvenile Deviance. Reporting of Problems Emerging in Operational Activities” in which, among other things, initiatives were shared regarding the ‘Free to Choose’ Protocol, created at the input of the Juvenile Court of Reggio Calabria, whose objective is to ensure a concrete life alternative for children from families embedded in mafia-type contexts. In addition, good practices have been shared for combating school dropout and on the subject of distress in the family environment, in order to bring to light those situations that, while not constituting autonomous hypotheses of crime, may constitute risk factors for the child's involvement in a network of criminal relationships, through the conveyance, to the Public Prosecutor's Office at the Juvenile Court and the Juvenile Court, of a flow of communications concerning the aforementioned issues and any other anomalous situation that could justify civil or administrative interventions by the juvenile judicial offices.

The YOUNPOL APP, made by the State Police, has been operational since March 2018, through which reports of bullying, drug dealing and domestic violence incidents can be sent. As of Nov. 25, 2021, the APP has been revamped with a new graphic design and new features, so as to allow greater interaction between the Police Headquarters operations room and the reporter. It is now possible to attach not only images but also video and audio files to the report, so that the State Police operator can get a complete picture of what is happening and intervene in an even more timely manner. An important new feature is the introduction of chat, which can be activated by the receiving operations room, and on which messages and multimedia files can be exchanged, in real time, as normally happens in an instant messaging application. In order to protect reporters, who may be the victims of the crime themselves, the possibility of “hiding” forwarded reports has been included. Geolocation via the application is possible in two ways. The reporter can be located by the operations room but, at the same time, has the ability to see which is the nearest police office. As in the previous version, it is also possible to report anonymously and one can call directly from the APP the N.U.E. 112 or, where not present, the Police Headquarters 113.

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 Italy

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))

Italy did not submit information as to whether it applies the territoriality principle.

- The Committee **requests** Italy to take the necessary legislative or other measures to establish jurisdiction over transnational cases of child sexual exploitation and abuse facilitated by ICTs, when one of the constituent elements of the offence has taken place in its territory.⁵⁵

Follow-up actions:

Article 6 of the Italian Criminal Code establishes the principle of territorial jurisdiction.

It stipulates that Italian jurisdiction applies even if only part of the criminal act or omission occurs within Italy, or if the resulting harmful event takes place there. This principle is particularly relevant in cases involving offenses composed of multiple actions, where the constituent acts may occur in different locations.

Article 6 - Criminal Code:

“Anyone who commits an offense within the territory of the State shall be punished according to Italian law.

An offense is considered to have been committed within the territory of the State when the action or omission constituting it occurred there wholly or partly, or when the event that is the consequence of the action or omission occurred there”.

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

Italy informed that it could prosecute offences committed abroad by its nationals.⁵⁶ The Committee notes at the same time that Italy does not establish jurisdiction over offences established in accordance with the Convention committed abroad by persons who have their habitual residence in its territory.⁵⁷

- The Committee thus **requires** Italy to establish jurisdiction over offences established in accordance with the Convention committed abroad by persons who have their habitual residence in its territory.⁵⁸

Follow-up actions:

Jurisdiction is determined by the act, even if it constitutes only part of a crime. Therefore, a person who is not habitually resident in Italy can still be prosecuted if they commit a crime or any part of it within Italian territory.

Pursuant to article 6 of the Italian Criminal Code, Italian jurisdiction extends to any act constituting part of a crime committed within its territory, regardless of the perpetrator's residency status.

Moreover, article 604 of the Italian Criminal Code extends Italian jurisdiction to offenses related to child prostitution, child pornography, sexual violence, sexual acts with children, corruption of children, and group sexual violence, even when committed abroad, if the perpetrator or the victim is an Italian citizen, or if the perpetrator is a foreign citizen acting in concert with an Italian citizen. The foreign

⁵⁵ Recommendation IV-1

⁵⁶ Para. 215

⁵⁷ Para. 217

⁵⁸ Recommendation IV-4

citizen in such cases is punishable only if the offense carries a maximum sentence of at least five years' imprisonment and the Minister of Justice requests prosecution.

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))

Italy did not submit information as to whether it applies this condition.

- The Committee **requires** Italy to remove the requirement that prosecution can only be initiated following a report from the victim or a denunciation from the State of the place where the offence was committed for offences of sexual abuse (Article 18), offences concerning child prostitution (Article 19), the production of "child pornography" (Article 20(1)(a)) and offences concerning the participation of a child in pornographic performances (Article 21), when committed by one of their nationals or by a person who has his or her habitual residence in its territory.⁵⁹

Follow-up actions:

All the aforementioned criminal offenses can be prosecuted regardless of a report from the victim. Italian jurisdiction applies even if only part of the act or omission occurred in Italy or if its consequences took place within Italian territory.

Pursuant to article 6 of the Italian Criminal Code, Italian jurisdiction extends to any act constituting part of a crime committed within its territory, regardless of the perpetrator's residency status. Moreover, article 604 of the Italian Criminal Code extends Italian jurisdiction to offenses related to child prostitution, child pornography, sexual violence, sexual acts with children, corruption of children, and group sexual violence, even when committed abroad, if the perpetrator or the victim is an Italian citizen, or if the

perpetrator is a foreign citizen acting in concert with an Italian citizen. The foreign citizen in such cases is punishable only if the offense carries a maximum sentence of at least five years' imprisonment and the Minister of Justice requests prosecution.

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

Italy did not submit information as to whether it applies this principle.

- The Committee **requires** Italy to remove the requirement for dual criminality for offences of sexual abuse (Article 18), offences concerning child prostitution (Article 19), the production of child pornography (Article 20(1)(a)) and offences concerning the participation of a child in pornographic performances (Article 21), when committed by one of their nationals.⁶⁰

Follow-up actions:

Italy is a party to the Budapest Convention, ensuring that offenses related to CSAM are harmonized with those of other member states.

The European Arrest Warrant (EAW) is a fundamental judicial cooperation instrument within the European Union, which has simplified and accelerated the surrender of wanted persons between Member States. Article 8 of Law No. 69/2005 provides for mandatory surrender for a series of serious offenses, including specifically 'offenses related to prostitution, including child prostitution, or matters of child pornography'.

Article 7 of the Italian Penal Code outlines the extraterritorial application of Italian criminal law, specifying that under certain conditions, Italian law may apply to crimes committed abroad by Italian or foreign citizens. Specifically, it mandates that crimes are punishable under Italian law

⁵⁹ Recommendation IV-5

⁶⁰ Recommendation IV-6

when special legal provisions or international conventions explicitly establish the applicability of Italian criminal law. A practical example of Article 7's application is found in Article 604 of the Penal Code. This article stipulates that certain provisions, including those outlined in Articles 609bis, 609ter, 609quater, 609quinquies, 609octies, and 609undecies (dealing with offenses such as sexual violence and child pornography), are applicable when the offense is committed abroad in the following scenarios: by an Italian citizen, against an Italian citizen, or by a foreign citizen in collaboration with an Italian citizen. In this latter case, the foreign citizen is only punishable if the offense carries a maximum imprisonment penalty of at least five years and the Minister of Justice has issued a formal request.

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 (Art. 25(2))

The Committee notes that Italy applies the passive personality principle in respect of offences committed against a national, only for offences punishable of imprisonment of at least 6 years.⁶¹ It further notes that in order for this principle to be applicable in Italy, the dual criminality principle is not a prerequisite of

prosecution.⁶²

- The Committee **requests** Parties that are not already doing so, including Italy, 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.⁶³

Follow-up actions:

Under article 9 of the criminal law, a citizen who commits a crime abroad, punishable under Italian law by life imprisonment or a minimum of three years' imprisonment, is prosecuted under Italian law, provided they are on Italian territory. For crimes with lesser penalties, prosecution requires a request from the Minister of Justice or a complaint from the victim.

Moreover, article 604 of the Italian Criminal Code extends Italian jurisdiction to offenses related to child prostitution, child pornography, sexual violence, sexual acts with children, corruption of children, and group sexual violence, even when committed abroad, if the perpetrator is an Italian citizen, or the victim is an Italian citizen, or if a foreign citizen acts in concert with an Italian citizen.

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;⁶⁴ 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.

Promising practices:

⁶¹ Para. 231

⁶² Para. 232

⁶³ Recommendation IV-9

⁶⁴ Recommendation IV-7

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 Italy

INHOPE, WeProtect Global Alliance and ECPAT carry out projects in Italy to prevent and combat sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children.

Italy did not provide information as to whether it allows victims of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse in matters related to CSGSIV in the territory of a Party other than the one where they reside to make a complaint before the competent authorities of their State of residence, in accordance with Article 38 (2) of the Convention.

- The Committee thus **requires** Italy 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.⁶⁵

Follow-up actions:

Victims of sexual exploitation can always make a criminal complaint in Italy regardless of their nationality or state of residence.

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.⁶⁶

Follow-up actions:

The unit dedicated to combat child sexual exploitation online is constantly putting efforts to extend the network of cooperating countries. Delegations from every country are often visiting the CSAM investigation unit and the personnel is always involved in the international cooperation entities such as Europol, Interpol, G7 to name a few.

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

- 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;⁶⁷

- to assess on a regular basis the difficulties that they face when dealing with international cooperation and remedy them;⁶⁸
- 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;⁶⁹
- 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

⁶⁵ Recommendation V-18

⁶⁶ Recommendation V-3

⁶⁷ Recommendation V-4

⁶⁸ Recommendation V-5

⁶⁹ Recommendation V-6

abuse of children in matters related to CSGSIV;⁷⁰

- 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;⁷¹
- 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;⁷²
- 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;⁷³
- to assess, develop and strengthen cooperation between them to protect and provide assistance to victims in matters related to CSGSIV;⁷⁴
- 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;⁷⁵
- 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;⁷⁶

- to maintain and develop efforts to strengthen international cooperation in investigation and 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;⁷⁷
- 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;⁷⁸
- 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;⁷⁹
- 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.⁸⁰

Promising practices

Romania reports European projects with Bulgaria, Italy and Spain for the development of good practice manuals.

⁷⁰ Recommendation V-7

⁷¹ Recommendation V-8

⁷² Recommendation V-9

⁷³ Recommendation V-10

⁷⁴ Recommendation V-11

⁷⁵ Recommendation V-12

⁷⁶ Recommendation V-13

⁷⁷ Recommendation V-14

⁷⁸ Recommendation V-15

⁷⁹ Recommendation V-16

⁸⁰ Recommendation V-19

The Italian Development Cooperation supports anti-trafficking projects by financing IOs interventions and targeted actions, directly or through IOs and NGOs, to prevent and combat child trafficking, abuse and exploitation, including in travel and tourism, involvement in armed conflicts, child labour.

Promising practices:

The SIC - Generazioni Connesse project (for more details, please see Chapter IX) is also projected at the level of European cooperation in synergy with the other European Safer Internet Centers for the exchange of good practices, materials, educational and communication resources. The Italian Safer Internet Centre has been actively represented at all meetings foreseen by the European Commission: Safer Internet Forum and Insafe training meeting, aimed at fostering the exchange of good practices.

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 Italy

The Committee notes that in Italy, helplines for children are accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.⁸¹

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;⁸²
- to ensure that the assistance measures referred to in Recommendation VI-3 (to assist child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, in the short and long term, in their physical and psycho-social recovery, and taking due account of the child's views, needs and concerns) 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.⁸³

Promising practices:

Regarding the Committee's recommendation to take the necessary legislative or other measures to assist child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, Italy highlights the following.

Italy's legal system ensures access to free legal assistance for child victims of sexual abuse. Presidential Decree 115/2002 (Articles 74 et seq.) outlines the legal aid provisions, stating that victims of specific crimes, notably those related to sexual exploitation and abuse of children, are eligible for legal aid regardless of their income. The Court of Cassation, in Sentence 52822/2018, reinforced this right, confirming that the mere status of victim of these specified crimes automatically grants access to legal aid, independent of financial circumstances.

When criminal proceedings are initiated for crimes against children, including slavery, child prostitution, child pornography, sex tourism, trafficking, sexual violence, solicitation, mistreatment, sexual acts with a child, article 609-decies of the Italian Criminal Code requires the Public Prosecutor to notify the Juvenile Court, enabling it to implement appropriate child protection measures. The article further stipulates that the child victim's emotional and psychological well-being must be supported at all stages and levels of the proceedings. This support is provided through the presence of parents or other suitable individuals chosen by the child, as well as by qualified groups, foundations, associations, or NGOs with demonstrated experience in victim assistance and support. These organizations must be registered on a special list and admitted by the prosecuting judicial authority, and their involvement requires the child's consent.

Furthermore, Italy prioritizes child protection by incorporating specialized expertise into investigative structures. For instance, in cases of sexual abuse and exploitation, judicial police and prosecutors are required to be assisted by court-appointed psychologists or child psychiatrists

⁸¹ Para. 280

⁸² Recommendation VI-2

⁸³ Recommendation VI-4

during child interviews, ensuring both the child's well-being and developmentally appropriate information gathering.

Child victims are guaranteed assistance throughout legal proceedings also by the Juvenile Services of the Administration of Justice (Department of Juvenile and Community Justice of the Ministry of Justice, through the Offices of Social Service for Children - U.S.S.M.) and local authorities. This assistance, provided in cooperation with specialized services such as counseling centers, local health units (ASL), private social communities, and anti-violence centers, includes support and guidance regarding the trial process, as well as participation in hearings, including an *ad hoc* pre-trial child's hearing in chambers to collect special evidence (so called '*incidente probatorio*') where the child's testimony is collected. These collaborative, multidisciplinary interventions ensure comprehensive support for the child victim.

In many Regions, in agreement with the juvenile and ordinary judiciary, agreements have been established with local authorities, local health authorities, and accredited private entities for the care of underage victims, with the aim of ensuring an effective handover and the implementation of coordinated interventions. In particular, the Department for Juvenile and Community Justice, in collaboration with the Public Prosecutor's Office at the Juvenile Court of Naples, has promoted the establishment of a territorial inter-institutional operational network for the care and protection of underage victims of crime, with particular regard to the cases under consideration. An operational protocol was signed on June 29, 2023, activated on an experimental basis for the city of Naples, which aims to identify and apply methods, processes, and tools capable of ensuring the guarantees provided by current legislation to underage victims.

Psychological and psychotherapeutic assistance to children who have experienced or witnessed any form of abuse and /or violence is also included in the national Essential Levels of Assistance (LEA), namely the benefits and services that the National Health Service is required to provide to all citizens through public resources, for free or upon payment of a participation fee (ticket).

Action number 5 of the Equity area of the National Plan against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (2022-2023) provides for the development of the capacity to respond and take charge (reception, accompaniment, listening, care) of victims of sexual abuse and exploitation and their families as well. The National Plan can be viewed at the following link: <https://famiglia.governo.it/media/2847/piano-nazionale-di-prevenzione-e-contrasto-dellabuso-e-dello-sfruttamento-sessuale-dei-minori.pdf>.

The Department of Family Policies finances, through the National Fund for Children and Adolescents, established by Law 285/97, the implementation of interventions at the national, regional, and local levels to favor the promotion of the rights, quality of life, and development of children and adolescents. This includes also projects focused on prevention and support for children experiencing sexual abuse, exploitation, abandonment, maltreatment, and violence.

On November 18, 2019, the Department of Family Policies issued a Public Notice for the Funding of Projects for the Protection and Support of Child Victims of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation. This initiative aimed to fund projects by local authorities, public agencies, associations, and educational institutions to provide comprehensive support to child victims of sexual crimes and their families. The strategic objective was to fund innovative projects addressing: A. Preventing peer violence, including technology-facilitated violence; B. Supporting parents and families of child victims and abusers; C. Combating child sexual exploitation; D. Protecting child victims of violence and mistreatment in sports.

Concerning helplines for children, please consider the following.

The 114 Child Emergency Service, a multi-channel public utility service, is under the authority of the Department for Family Policies of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, and is currently operated by the SOS Telefono Azzurro Foundation. Free, multilingual, and active 24/7, accessible for reporting emergencies concerning children and adolescents, it is aimed at children, adults, and operators. Accessible via the number 114, the chat on www.114.it, and WhatsApp, it offers psychological and legal counseling, activating local support services. The intervention model involves collaboration with local institutions (law enforcement, social and health services, courts), for immediate emergency resolution and the creation of a long-term plan, ensuring continuous support for the child and the family.

The YOUPOL APP, made by the State Police, is an internet application that has been operational since March 2018, through which reports of bullying, drug dealing and domestic violence incidents can be sent. As of Nov. 25, 2021, the APP has been revamped with a new graphic design and new features, so as to allow greater interaction between the Police Headquarters operations room and the reporter. It is now possible to attach not only images but also video and audio files to the report, so that the State Police operator can get a complete picture of what is happening and intervene in an even more timely manner. An important new feature is the introduction of chat, which can be activated by the receiving operations room, and on which messages and multimedia files can be exchanged, in real time, as normally happens in an instant messaging application. In order to protect reporters, who may be the victims of the crime themselves, the possibility of “hiding” forwarded reports has been included. Geolocation via the application is possible in two ways. The reporter can be located by the operations room but, at the same time, has the ability to see which is the nearest police office. As in the previous version, it is also possible to report anonymously and one can call directly from the APP the N.U.E. 112 or, where not present, the Police Headquarters 113.

The Department for Juvenile and Community Justice (DGMC) actively contributes to the development of support services for crime victims. A key initiative is the 'Inter-institutional Coordination Table,' established by the Ministry of Justice in 2018, which aims to create an integrated network of victim assistance services, in line with EU Directive 2012/29. The DGMC is collaborating with the Department for Justice Affairs on a comprehensive online portal for all crime victims. This portal will provide accessible and transparent information about victims' rights and available support services, both public and private. To ensure the portal's effectiveness, the DGMC's regional services have been actively involved in identifying local victim assistance organizations, services, and initiatives.

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 Italy

The Committee notes that the Italian state authorities encourage the implementation of prevention projects and programs carried out by civil society not only at the national level but also at the regional/local level.⁸⁴ NGOs are the most involved counterparts in the field of prevention and assistance to child victims, along with the media and different helplines. Schools and other educational institutions are also frequent actors.⁸⁵

Italy's support for the development of prevention activities by civil society takes the form of financial support and grants.⁸⁶ 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.⁸⁷

The interaction with civil society includes preventive and awareness-raising activities to minimise the risk of abuse that children face online.⁸⁸ Other civil society projects - whether or not carried out in cooperation with the State - aim at preventing abuses related to the sharing of such content are educational activities, field research and analysis, and surveys.⁸⁹ Civil society also provides shelters where victims of violence, including children, can seek support in cases of sexual abuse.⁹⁰

Generic recommendations of the Committee on civil society involvement and cooperation

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

- 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 CS/SIV;⁹¹
- 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;⁹²
- to support civil society to carry out projects and programmes that include the issue of CS/SIV;⁹³
- 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 CS/SIV.⁹⁴

Promising practices:

Regarding the Committee's invitation for Italy to encourage child participation in policy

⁸⁴ Para. 307

⁸⁵ Para. 308

⁸⁶ Para. 310

⁸⁷ Para. 315

⁸⁸ Para. 320

⁸⁹ Para. 323

⁹⁰ Para. 329

⁹¹ Recommendation VII-3.

⁹² Recommendation VII-4.

⁹³ Recommendation VII-5.

⁹⁴ Recommendations VII-6, VII-7.

development and seek children's views on legislation concerning sexual exploitation and abuse, particularly in the context of ICTs and CSGSIV, please consider the following.

The “Guidelines for the participation of girls and boys”, adopted by the National Observatory for Childhood and Adolescence and approved in July 2022, promotes a culture of listening to and involving children and adolescents in all decisions that affect them. This strategic tool strengthens children's participation in families, communities, and schools, in line with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, UN Committee recommendations, and the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child. These guidelines promote the integration of child participation throughout all stages of National Plans. They emphasize meaningful dialogue between adults and young people, including vulnerable, marginalized, and transitioning youth. Child participation is framed not simply as a right, but as an essential, everyday practice in all legal, organizational, family, school, educational, social, and recreational settings. Crucially, the guidelines stress that children's opinions must be heard and taken seriously. They champion authentic participation through respectful and non-discriminatory information sharing and dialogue, both among children and between children and adults, empowering children to see how their perspectives, and those of adults, can shape outcomes. These guidelines have informed recent initiatives to engage children in developing important national and international documents, such as the Council of Europe's Child Rights Strategy, the Child Guarantee National Action Plan, and the National Plan for Preventing and Combating Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation.

To ensure the National Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of children was developed with broad input, the Observatory for Combating Child Pedophilia and Pornography prioritized the involvement of children (girls and boys). This participatory approach reinforces the right of children to be heard, as stated in Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The consultation process was expertly supported by the Istituto degli Innocenti of Florence, in collaboration with the National Center for Documentation and Analysis for Childhood and Adolescence and the Department for Family Policies. Children were introduced to the topics of sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as the priorities identified by the Observatory's working groups. They were encouraged to share their opinions on these issues, including through online platforms designed to foster interaction and collaboration. The consultation aimed to gather children's perspectives on the Observatory's key areas of focus: prevention, protection, and combating child sexual abuse and exploitation, both online and offline. Starting in March 2021, four online sessions were held via Zoom, with approximately seventy children participating. The consultation concluded with a set of recommendations endorsed by the entire group. These recommendations align with the findings of the Observatory's thematic working groups and have informed the implementation of actions defined within the National Plan.

In response to the Committee's invitation to enhance cooperation with civil society to prevent child sexual exploitation and abuse, Italy highlights the role of the Observatory for the Fight against Paedophilia and Child Pornography. This key body, operating within the Department for Family Policies and chaired by its Head, fosters collaboration through its three-year term composition. It includes representatives from: the Political Authority for Family matters (four members, including a scientific coordinator); the Political Authority for Equal Opportunities (one member); central government administrations (six members); law enforcement agencies (three members); national associations combating child sexual abuse and exploitation (three members). The National Authority for Children and Adolescents is a “permanent guest” at the Observatory. In June 2024, the Observatory was re-established, and the Italian Episcopal Conference, the National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Directorate, and the SOS Foundation – Telefono Azzurro ETS also held “permanent guest” status.

Italy has fostered a robust collaboration with civil society, particularly through a long-standing partnership between the State Police and Save the Children since 2007. This collaboration, initially established under the European AGIRE project (2007-2010), focused on developing operational protocols to combat human trafficking, especially of children. Key outcomes included multi-agency training seminars and the publication of guidelines for identifying trafficked children, which were later incorporated into the 2016 National Action Plan against trafficking. Since 2017, a designated official within the State Police's Central Anti-Crime Service has served as the primary contact for Save the Children, facilitating the reporting of suspected child mistreatment and abuse identified by the NGO's personnel. This established a vital information exchange, ensuring timely intervention in critical cases. In December 2024, the State Police and Save the Children further strengthened their partnership by signing a new memorandum of understanding, building upon the 2020 agreement. This expanded scope includes the involvement of the Central Anti-Crime Directorate and allows the Central Anti-Crime Service to handle reports of particularly problematic cases of alleged mistreatment and abuse of children, that Save the Children may encounter through their "child safeguarding policy", creating a virtuous information circuit.

In March 2024, the public notice 'DesTEENazione - Desideri in azione' was approved by the Minister of Labour and Social Policies to ensure the effective implementation of the Child Guarantee. This initiative establishes pilot multifunctional integrated services for adolescents (11-17 years) and young adults (18-21 years). These services will offer diverse experiential areas, including: socio-educational preventive activities focused on developing relational and emotional skills; socio-educational support programs to combat school dropout; individual and group psychological counseling for young people and parents; and territorial projects fostering collaboration between local educational stakeholders. A mandatory component (Line 5) of the project is dedicated to psychological support and the promotion of emotional intelligence. This includes providing initial psychological assistance to help young people manage temporary crises, referring them to specialized services, and enhancing their ability to understand emotions and develop interpersonal skills. Furthermore, the advisory service plays a crucial role in informing young people about healthy emotional and peer relationships, as well as the risks of social media and technology addiction.

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.

Observations and recommendations of the Committee on promoting awareness of the risk of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse faced by children generating and/or sharing sexual images and/or videos of themselves specific to Italy

The Committee notes that in Italy, the Department for Equal Opportunities (DPO) is the organisation responsible for co-ordinating government action and devising national strategies for preventing and combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children. It works with the Paedophilia and

Child Pornography Monitoring Unit, a body set up in the Prime Minister's Office (Law No. 38 of 6 February 2006). The monitoring unit is in charge of acquiring and monitoring data and other information about the work done by all public authorities to prevent and punish the abuse and sexual exploitation of children.⁹⁵

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 Italy:

- 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;⁹⁶
- to ensure that awareness-raising for children about the risks that they face when generating and/or sharing CSGSIV 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;⁹⁷
- 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;⁹⁸
- to have available awareness-raising tools, materials, and activities suitable for children with disabilities;⁹⁹
- 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;¹⁰⁰
- 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 CSGSIV of themselves and about the preventive measures that can be taken;¹⁰¹
- 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 CSGSIV

⁹⁵ Para. 378

⁹⁶ Recommendation VIII-1.

⁹⁷ Recommendation VIII-2.

⁹⁸ Recommendation VIII-3.

⁹⁹ Recommendation VIII-4.

¹⁰⁰ Recommendation VIII-5.

¹⁰¹ Recommendation VIII-6.

- of themselves and about the preventive measures that can be taken;¹⁰²
- 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;¹⁰³
- 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.¹⁰⁴

Promising practices:

Further to the information previously provided to the Committee regarding the role of Italy's Department for Equal Opportunities (DPO) in coordinating governmental strategies against child sexual abuse and exploitation, Italy wishes to present the following updates.

Law Decree No. 86/2018 consolidated key entities within the Department for Family Policies, namely the National Observatory for Childhood and Adolescence and the Observatory for Combating Paedophilia and Child Pornography (formerly under the Department for Equal Opportunities).

The Department for Family Policies now plays a central role in advising the Prime Minister or the designated political authority on all family-related matters. It coordinates government initiatives to implement family-friendly policies across sectors and addressing the needs of all generations, particularly children and adolescents.

Notably, the Department chairs the Observatory for the Fight against Paedophilia and Child Pornography, a key body dedicated to preventing and combating the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. Established under Article 17, paragraph 1-bis, of Law No. 269 of August 3, 1998 (and further defined by Law No. 38 of 2006), the Observatory's operational guidelines, as detailed in Ministerial Decree No. 240 of 2007 (and amended by Ministerial Decrees No. 254 of 2010 and April 15, 2020), delineate its composition and core responsibilities.

The Observatory operates within the Department for Family Policies, chaired by the Head of the Department. Its three-year term composition includes representatives from various governmental bodies and civil society organizations:

- Four members designated by the Political Authority delegated to Family matters, including a scientific coordinator from the Department for Family Policies;
- One member designated by the Political Authority delegated to Equal Opportunities;
- Six members from central government administrations (Interior, Justice, Health, Labor and Social Policies, Education, and Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation);
- Three members designated by law enforcement agencies (Polizia di Stato, Arma dei Carabinieri and Guardia di Finanza);
- Three members designated by national associations active in combating child sexual abuse and exploitation;
- the National Authority for Children and Adolescents participates as a permanent guest.

In June 2024, the Observatory was re-established, and the Italian Episcopal Conference, the National Anti-Mafia and Anti-Terrorism Directorate, and the SOS Foundation – Telefono Azzurro ETS also held “permanent guest” status.

The Observatory is responsible for acquiring and monitoring data and information on the activities of all public administrations related to preventing and combating child sexual abuse and

¹⁰² Recommendation VIII-7.

¹⁰³ Recommendation VIII-8.

¹⁰⁴ Recommendation VIII-9.

exploitation. Its specific responsibilities include:

- Collecting national and international data and information on prevention and intervention efforts, including strategies used in other countries;
- Analyzing and processing data from public administrations;
- Promoting research on the issue;
- Disseminating information through its website and publications;
- Producing an annual technical-scientific report, contributing to the Prime Minister's report to Parliament (as required by Article 17, paragraph 1, of Law No. 269 of August 3, 1998);
- Developing the National Plan for Preventing and Combating Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, integrated into the National Plan for Children and Adolescents;
- Coordinating the acquisition and ensuring the consistency of data related to monitoring and evaluation activities;
- Participating in the work of relevant European and international bodies.

Reconstituted in 2021, the Observatory developed the National Plan for Preventing and Combating the Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children 2022-2023, approved on May 5, 2022. It subsequently focused on monitoring the implementation. Reconstituted again in 2024 after its three-year term expired, the Observatory is currently drafting the new National Plan for Preventing and Combating Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation.

The Observatory maintains a comprehensive database to organize data from various administrations, for the purpose of monitoring the phenomenon of violence and sexual exploitation of children. Agreements with relevant administrations govern data acquisition, coding, and information flow, specifically excluding the processing of personal data but ensuring data traceability.

Italy has taken significant steps to address the Committee's recommendations regarding awareness-raising campaigns.

In 2022, the Department for Family Policies launched the “Cyberbullying, Telling Helps You” national campaign, aimed to raise awareness among children, adolescents, and their families about cyberbullying. It focused on the relational, emotional, and social consequences for victims, witnesses, and perpetrators, and highlighted the moral and legal responsibilities involved. The campaign also addressed the risks of increased technology use among children, particularly vulnerable individuals, which has become more prevalent in recent years. Objectives included: raising awareness of online risks, informing about cyberbullying consequences and defense mechanisms, and communicating institutional efforts to combat cyberbullying and promote healthy online relationships. The primary target audience was adolescents, children, and vulnerable children, while the secondary target audience included families, educators, teachers, the general public, social health workers, and administrators. The campaign used a video portraying cyberbullying within the youth's world, depicting a younger brother as a victim and an older sister as a cyberbully. It showed everyday scenarios of online bullying and encouraged viewers to share their experiences with friends, family, and adults. The campaign's tagline was: 'Cyberbullying, Telling Helps You.' The campaign was disseminated on RAI TV and radio networks, and through sponsored social media content on platforms like TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Spotify.

On International Missing Children's Day, May 25, 2022, the Department for Family Policies, in collaboration with the Office of the Government Commissioner for Missing Persons, launched an awareness and prevention national campaign. This initiative responded to the increased number of refugee children arriving from Ukraine. Objectives included: informing citizens about missing children and institutional efforts, providing guidance on actions to take in case of disappearance, and promoting dedicated emergency numbers. The primary target audience was parents, families, adolescents, and children, while the secondary target audience included teachers, educators, local

administrators, and the general public. The campaign used a 30-second animated spot to illustrate the impact of a child's disappearance, emphasizing the importance of timely reporting and providing emergency numbers: 112, 114, and the European number 116 000. The campaign's tagline was: "Help us find them." The campaign was disseminated on RAI television networks, the Department's social media profiles, and the websites of the involved administrations, specifically famiglia.governo.it and interno.gov.it.

To address growing concerns about youth violence and online safety, Italy enacted Decree-Law 123 of September 15, 2023 (converted into Law 159 of November 13, 2023). This law strengthens protections for children online, focusing on content, services, and well-being. Key provisions include prohibiting children's access to pornography through robust age verification mechanisms on online platforms, mandating the availability of parental control applications, improving digital literacy regarding harmful content, and requiring annual public awareness campaigns on responsible internet use. The Department for Family Policies and the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy are responsible for these campaigns. Moreover, the Department for Family Policies is currently developing - as provided for by the law - guidelines for electronic device and parental control application users with particular attention to educators, families and children.

In 2023, the "Parental Control: Protect the world of your children" joint campaign by the Department for Family Policies and the Department for Information and Publishing promoted parental control tools to protect children from harmful online content. While focusing on the practical use of these tools, the campaign implicitly addresses broader online risks, including those related to the sharing of sexual images and videos. Its objectives are to: inform parents and families about the availability and importance of free parental controls on various devices; support families in promoting healthy online habits for young people; raise public awareness about the benefits and dangers of technology, emphasizing the need for improved digital literacy; highlight institutional support for families in promoting children's well-being in the digital environment; the campaign primarily targets parents, caregivers, and educators, with a secondary focus on the general public.

In 2023, the Department for Family Policies published a child-friendly guide to explain the National Plan for Preventing and Combating Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (2022-2023) to young people (Guide for Children and Adolescents on the National Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of children (2022-2023)). Children participated in its development, offering valuable input on how to stay safe from abuse and exploitation. Released on November 18th, 2023, the European Day for the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, this publication simplifies the 2022 National Plan (from the Observatory for the Fight against Paedophilia and Child Pornography) and outlines key definitions, the child consultation process, and the Plan's objectives and strategies.

The Department for Family Policies, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Merit and the Communications Regulatory Authority, conducts periodic cyberbullying prevention and awareness campaigns. On February 6, 2023, for Safer Internet Day, the fourth edition of the campaign, "Together We Win," was launched. This initiative aimed to educate children and adolescents about the consequences of cyberbullying on their relationships, emotions, and social behavior, whether as victims, witnesses, or perpetrators. It also emphasized how to seek help from peers, school staff, families, and authorities, identifying key adults for support. The campaign was disseminated through RAI radio-TV networks and popular social media platforms, including TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Spotify.

In 2024, the Department for Family Policies published a guide for parents and caregivers titled "Lights and Shadows of an Interconnected Generation: Understanding Cyberbullying." The guide

aims to help families understand cyberbullying, its impact on children's well-being, and the relevant legal framework. The guide directly addresses online risks, including cyberbullying, which can be a precursor to or intertwined with the sharing of sexual images and videos. By empowering parents with knowledge and tools, it indirectly contributes to raising awareness among children and the general public. The Department for Family Policies is currently working on an update of the Guide, to include all forms of bullying, both online and offline, according to Law no. 70/2024.

In 2024, the Department for Family Policies launched the fifth edition of the institutional communication campaign, "Together Against Cyberbullying." This initiative aimed to raise awareness among parents and adults about cyberbullying, providing tools to counter it and promoting responsible social media use. Informational materials, including the guide "Lights and Shadows of an Interconnected Generation: Understanding Cyberbullying," were disseminated through RAI television and radio commercials and social media throughout 2024. The primary target audience was parents and teachers, with adolescents and the general public as secondary targets.

Launched also in 2024, the Department for Family Policies' third annual '114 - Child Emergency' campaign promotes awareness of this crucial service, which offers support to children experiencing abuse, maltreatment, or psychological distress, and to adults reporting violence against children. Objectives include informing about 114's accessibility via phone, app, online chat, and WhatsApp; highlighting its multilingual support of 20+ languages; encouraging children to report violence and abuse; and raising public awareness of child violence and risk factors, urging adult reporting. The primary target audience is adolescents aged 11-18 years, and the secondary target audience is families, teachers, and caregivers. The key message is that 114 is a trusted, accessible public service offering immediate help in multiple languages. The campaign is disseminated via RAI TV and radio, and social media.

The Italian State Police employs a multi-faceted approach to preventing crimes against children, including robust awareness-raising campaigns that address the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse. These campaigns are designed to reach a variety of audiences, including children themselves, their families, and the broader community. Specifically, the State Police undertakes several key initiatives.

- In partnership with school authorities, the State Police develops and delivers educational programs in schools to inform children about the risks of online sexual exploitation and abuse
- The Police Headquarters conduct annual "legality education campaigns" in schools, which include information about online safety and the potential consequences of engaging in risky online behaviors.
- The State Police provides resources and information to families, teachers and children empowering them to discuss these sensitive topics and to recognize signs of potential exploitation or abuse.
- The State Police conducts awareness campaigns aimed at various audiences, including those working within the social fabric (e.g., social workers, community organizations).
- At the local level, Police Headquarters are actively involved in information and awareness initiatives. They collaborate with educational institutions, meeting with students and teachers to address the prevention and combating of cyberbullying, in line with the provisions of Law 71 of 2017.

The YOUPOL app, developed by the Italian State Police and operational since March 2018, represents a promising practice in raising awareness and facilitating reporting of various crimes, including those relevant to the Committee's focus on child sexual exploitation and abuse.

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 Italy

The Committee notes that in Italy, the project "School as a place of prevention and protection: how to protect children and teenagers from the phenomena of violence, bullying and cyberbullying, sexual abuse and exploitation" addresses the issues related to

child abuse and sexual exploitation and risks related to CSGSIV. However, it is implemented at national level, in four editions, only in some schools in the four macro-areas North-Centre-South and Islands.¹⁰⁵

Generic recommendations of the Committee on education for children

- The Committee **requires** all Parties, including Italy, 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.¹⁰⁶

Follow-up actions:

- Legge 20 agosto 2019, n. 92, Introduzione dell'insegnamento scolastico dell'educazione civica (Law No. 92 of August 20, 2019, Introduction of Civic Education in Schools).

Law No. 92 of August 20, 2019, mandates the integration of civic education as a transversal, curricular subject across all primary and secondary schools. This initiative aims to cultivate understanding of societal structures - social, economic, legal, civic, and environmental -and includes awareness campaigns on responsible citizenship from kindergarten onwards.

Key objectives of this educational framework include:

- understanding digital etiquette, adapting communication in digital environments, and recognizing cultural and generational diversity

- online;
- comprehending privacy policies governing personal data use by digital services;
- mitigating health and well-being risks associated with digital technologies;
- ensuring personal and collective safety in digital spaces;
- recognizing the impact of digital technologies on psychophysical well-being and social inclusion, with a focus on bullying and cyberbullying.

Ministerial Decree No. 183 of September 7, 2024, introduced new **guidelines for civic education**, embedding Digital Citizenship as a core concept. This encompasses the ability to interact with technological advancements responsibly. The guidelines also highlight the importance of a nuanced approach to Artificial Intelligence.

Skill development goals within these guidelines emphasize:

- critical, responsible, and informed access to digital information, sources, and content;
- appropriate digital communication, adhering to context-specific rules;
- effective management of digital identity and network data, ensuring

¹⁰⁵ Para. 387.

¹⁰⁶ Recommendation IX-3.

personal and collective safety in digital environments, and preventing threats to physical and psychological well-being.

- Legge 17 maggio 2024, n. 70, Disposizioni e delega al Governo in materia di prevenzione e contrasto del bullismo e del cyberbullismo (Law No. 70 of May 17, 2024, Provisions and Delegation to the Government for the Prevention and Combating of Bullying and Cyberbullying).

Law No. 70 of May 17, 2024 has broadened the scope of Law 29 May 2017 n. 71, "Provisions for the Protection of the Child for the Prevention and Fight Against Cyber Bullying", extending its intervention beyond combating cyberbullying to include phenomena related to bullying. It introduces additional tools to reinforce preventive actions, addressing both children who are victims and those who are responsible, while also promoting educational and training initiatives. Article 1 increases resources for awareness campaigns and mandates the adoption of an internal code for bullying and cyberbullying prevention by each school, as well as the provision of psychological support services by regional authorities. Law No. 70 of May 17, 2024 requires all schools, within their autonomy and in accordance with the Guidelines for the Prevention and Combating of Bullying and Cyberbullying, to adopt an internal code for prevention and to establish a permanent monitoring committee. This committee includes representatives from students, teachers, families, and sector experts (paragraph 2 bis). Furthermore, each school must incorporate the Guidelines into its regulations, including procedures for preventing and combating bullying and cyberbullying. The law also reiterates the necessity of appointing a designated teacher to coordinate related initiatives, collaborating with law enforcement, associations, and youth centers in the local area.

- Legge 30 dicembre 2024, n. 207, Bilancio di previsione dello Stato per l'anno finanziario 2025 e bilancio pluriennale per il triennio 2025-2027, comma 345 e comma 346 (Law No. 207 of December 30, 2024, State budget forecast for the financial year 2025 and multi-year budget for the three-year period 2025-2027, paragraph 345 and paragraph 346).

For the experimental activation of territorial outposts with expert psychologists to support educational institutions, aimed at providing psychological support services as per Article 4-bis of Law No. 71 of May 29, 2017, and consistent with the objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding of March 19, 2024, between the Ministry of Education and Merit and the National Council of the Order of Psychologists, a Fund for Psychological Support Services for Students is established within the budget forecast of the Ministry of Education and Merit. The fund is endowed with 10 million euros for the year 2025 and 18.5 million euros annually from the year 2026 onwards, constituting an expenditure limit. The regulation specifies that a subsequent Interministerial Decree will define the criteria for using the Fund, aimed at providing psychological, psychotherapeutic, and counseling assistance within educational institutions of all levels. This includes addressing educational poverty and school dropout, supporting orientation activities, preventing psychological distress, managing emerging relational difficulties, and initiating programs for effective education and the acquisition of personal life skills. It also includes recognizing the activities performed by expert psychologists.

- Tavolo tecnico per la prevenzione e il contrasto del bullismo e del cyberbullismo - DM n.232/2024 (Technical Working Group for the

Prevention and Countering of Bullying and Cyberbullying - Ministerial Decree No. 232/2024).

The table's institutional tasks include:

- drafting an integrated action plan for the prevention and combating of bullying and cyberbullying, in compliance with European directives on the matter and within the framework of the European Union's multiannual program under Decision 1351/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of December 16, 2008;
- establishing a data collection system aimed at monitoring the evolution of these phenomena and, also by collaborating with the Postal and Communications Police and other Police Forces, controlling content for the protection of children.
- Fondo destinato alla prevenzione ed al contrasto del fenomeno del cyberbullismo (Fund for the prevention and combating of cyberbullying).

Through Law No. 234 of December 30, 2021 (Article 1, paragraph 671), the State Budget for the financial year 2022 and the multi-year budget for the three-year period 2022-2024, a specific fund was established at the Ministry of Education and Merit, dedicated to the prevention and combating of cyberbullying. The allocated resources were used through a distribution to the Regional School Offices, employing criteria such as the number of students, the rate of school dropout, and the total number of bullying/cyberbullying cases derived from the monitoring results conducted through the "Elisa Platform" in collaboration with the University of Florence. The Regional School Offices provided the disbursement of contributions, aimed at the implementation of projects, through the issuance of specific Notices for the identification of beneficiary school institutions.

The intent is to support actions in the

territory aimed at combating cyberbullying and raising awareness of the conscious use of the internet, educating students on the awareness, transversal to the various curricular disciplines, of the rights and duties related to the use of technologies.

With Decree prot. No. 1176 of 18/05/2022, the Administration allocated to the Regional School Offices, for the combating of cyberbullying phenomena in schools, the sum of 2,000,000.00 euros following the provisions of art.1 paragraphs 671 and 672 of Law No. 234 of December 30, 2021.

This amount was distributed among the Regional School Offices using the following criteria:

40% based on the number of students present in the regional territory, as detected by the information system of the Ministry of Education;

20% based on the number of students at risk of dropout in upper secondary school;

40% based on the number of students who reported cases of cyberbullying, detected through monitoring carried out on the Elisa Platform, in collaboration with the University of Florence.

The aforementioned decree stipulated that the Regional School Offices would provide the disbursement of contributions by creating specific Notices, based on the provisions of art.1, paragraph 673 of the aforementioned Law No. 234 of December 30, 2021, and article 4, paragraph 4, of Law No. 71 of May 29, 2017, specifically mentioned in the aforementioned provision. The Regional School Offices, after selecting the beneficiary schools, proceeded to disburse the resources by the deadline of June 30, 2022.

The interventions carried out by the schools were subject to monitoring.

With Law No. 197 of December 29, 2022, the State Budget for the financial year 2023 and the multi-year budget for the three-year period 2023-2025, the refinancing of the aforementioned fund was provided for, amounting to 2 million euros for each of the years 2023, 2024 and 2025.

For the year 2024, the departmental decree for the distribution of funds to the Regional

School Offices was issued on 12.02.2024 prot.n.256. The criteria adopted for the distribution of resources are the same as in the previous decrees.

Given the structural nature of the financial intervention, it was considered appropriate to prepare data and information collection tools at the conclusion of the activities, to allow a systematic reading and analysis of the main results of the actions taken.

- Safer Internet Centre (SIC) – Generazioni Connesse

The Safer Internet Centre (SIC) - Generazioni Connesse is the national center for the promotion of safe and positive use of the web.

The SIC is aimed at younger generations, pupils and students, actively involving also teachers, parents, institutions, associations and companies to make the Net a better environment with activities that offer (in)formative tools useful to promote a positive and critical use of the Net and to prevent possible situations of discomfort.

The reference portal of the project is <https://www.generazioniconnesse.it/>.

Support materials for teachers and contact teachers for combating bullying and cyberbullying identified in individual schools are also published on the site.

The Safer Internet Centre - Generazioni Connesse project is co-financed by the European Commission and has been coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Merit since 2012, and is carried out in partnership with some of the main Italian organizations that deal with online safety: the National Authority for Children and Adolescents, the State Police, the Universities of Florence and 'La Sapienza' in Rome, Save the Children Italy, Telefono Azzurro, the EDI onlus cooperative, Skuola.net, the Giffoni Experience Autonomous Body.

The Project includes Listening and Reporting Lines for problems related to online activities, reserved for Internet users to report the online presence of child pornography and any kind of illegal or potentially harmful content present on the

web. The Hotlines are directly connected with the Postal Police and it is possible to make reports anonymously. The Ministry provides approximately one million euros for each biennial edition of the SIC, of which 50% is co-financed by the European Commission.

Online risks represent all those dangerous situations deriving from a non-conscious and responsible use of digital technologies by users.

The Safer Internet Centre includes 7 macro-actions, including awareness campaigns, online training for teachers, meetings and thematic in-depth seminars; it also provides support and help, online and by telephone, to students, parents and teachers who encounter difficulties in using digital technologies.

Among the most relevant actions of the SIC, it is necessary to mention the e-learning path aimed at teachers of all schools for the creation of an internal institutional ePolicy. This is a fundamental document to plan and/or update digital citizenship activities (Article 5 of Law 92-2019), aimed at promoting skills in preventing online risks, recognizing, managing, reporting and monitoring episodes related to incorrect use of digital technologies, as well as useful to identify prevention actions against bullying and cyberbullying phenomena to be included in the PTOF (Three-Year Plan for the Educational Offer) of schools.

Among the most common risks beyond cyberbullying, we can mention hate speech, sexting, online grooming, online child pornography, inappropriate content, privacy violation, gambling, internet addiction and the dangers associated with online video games (for example: improper contact with adults, violent and/or inappropriate content; uncontrolled purchases, etc.).

The SIC - Generazioni Connesse project is also projected at the level of European cooperation in synergy with the other European Safer Internet Centers for the exchange of good practices, materials, educational and communication resources. The Italian Safer Internet Centre has been

actively represented at all meetings foreseen by the European Commission: Safer Internet Forum and Insafe training meeting, aimed at fostering the exchange of good practices.

The Safer Internet Centre has biennial editions. The Ministry renews its membership in the project periodically during the school year.

As foreseen by the Commission Decision C(2023) 1862 with which the 2023 - 2024 work plan was adopted which aims to guarantee the continuity, evolution and sustainability of the actions started within the Digital Europe program, on 11 May 2023 the Call for Proposals DIGITAL-2023-DEPLOY-04 - Accelerating the best use of technologies was published on the Funding & Tenders website.

The EU's objectives in the field of digital transformation are defined in the communication "2030 Digital Compass: The European way for the Digital Decade" which establishes a governance framework and lists the digital objectives for 2030 based on four cardinal points: digital skills, digital infrastructures, digitalization of businesses and public services. The EU is also committed to the path towards digital economies and societies by accelerating the transition to digitalization and the use of digital tools for work and life and in protecting the rights of children in the digital world through the Better Internet for Kids strategy as foreseen by the communication COM(2012) 196.

The objective of the Call for Proposals DIGITAL-2023-DEPLOY-04 - Accelerating the best use of technologies is to continue to support the national Safer Internet Centers formed by government bodies and agencies, third sector organizations of the private sector, in providing information on online safety, educational resources, public awareness tools and counseling and reporting services (through dedicated helpline and hotline services) for young people, teachers and parents. The activities carried out by the SICs will have to help children to face online risks and to become digital citizens, resilient and competent in

the media, as well as to allow citizens to anonymously report online child pornography material.

- Linee di orientamento per la prevenzione ed il contrasto del bullismo e cyberbullismo (Guidelines for the prevention and combating of bullying and cyberbullying).

The Ministry of Education and Merit has been committed for years to the prevention of bullying and cyberbullying (as provided for by Law No. 71 of May 29, 2017, containing "Provisions for the protection of children for the prevention and combating of the phenomenon of cyberbullying," amended by Law No. 70 of May 17, 2024) and, more generally, of all forms of violence, activating various intervention strategies useful to stem risky behaviors determined, in many cases, by conditions of social distress not attributable only to the school context.

In implementation of the aforementioned law, the Ministry adopted the "Guidelines for the prevention and combating of cyberbullying." The document aims to give continuity to the Guidelines already issued in April 2015, making the necessary additions and changes in line with recent regulatory interventions. With the issuance of the aforementioned Guidelines and the "National Plan for the prevention of bullying and cyberbullying at school" presented since 2016, the Ministry wanted to give a strong signal of the resumption of activities to prevent the phenomenon of bullying and cyberbullying, making available to schools specific financial resources to implement initiatives of a national character, with the aim of involving the largest possible number of schools and creating a national network aimed at combating youth distress.

The Guidelines were further updated on February 18, 2021 for the following three-year period, incorporating the necessary additions and changes provided for by regulatory interventions, with particular reference to the innovations introduced by the aforementioned Law No. 17 of May 29,

2017.

The regulatory text attributes to a plurality of subjects specific tasks and responsibilities, reiterating the central role of the School which is called to carry out preventive actions that include: the training of school staff, the appointment and training of at least one contact person for activities to combat the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying for each school autonomy, the promotion of an active role of students, as well as former students who have already worked within the school in peer education activities, the provision of support and re-education measures for children involved.

On the level of awareness-raising initiatives, strong is the commitment of the State Police to provide knowledge tools for families, teachers and empowerment for the minors themselves, in order to raise awareness especially of those who activate the report, such as, for example, those who work in the social fabric and can provide the Police Offices with an alert of possible situations of risk or abuse.

In this context, there is also the collaboration with civil society initiated with Save The Children, which allows the association's contact person to report situations of mistreatment and abuse of which they may become aware through communication to the contact person for the State Police, a position since 2017 assigned to an official of the Central Anticrime Service.

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

- to address in educational contexts the issue of the risks of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by ICTs, including as regards CSGSIV;¹⁰⁷
- 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);¹⁰⁸
- to consistently involve children in the development of internet safety awareness programmes;¹⁰⁹
- to ensure that there is a standing national internet safety resource, with an ongoing programme of activities;¹¹⁰
- 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;¹¹¹
- 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;¹¹²
- 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.¹¹³

Promising practices:

The Italian State Police implements comprehensive strategies to prevent crimes against children, including sustained educational initiatives in schools, in close collaboration with school authorities. These initiatives are complemented by dedicated information and awareness campaigns.

A key component of this approach is the annual "legality education campaign" conducted by each Police Headquarters within schools. This program ensures that all children at the primary and

¹⁰⁷ Recommendation IX-1.

¹⁰⁸ Recommendation IX-2.

¹⁰⁹ Recommendation IX-4.

¹¹⁰ Recommendation IX-5.

¹¹¹ Recommendation IX-6.

¹¹² Recommendation IX-7.

¹¹³ Recommendation IX-8.

secondary levels receive information about various risks, including those facilitated by ICTs, such as child sexual exploitation and abuse.

The State Police's commitment extends to providing resources and knowledge to families, teachers, and children themselves, with a particular focus on empowering those who are most likely to report abuse, such as social workers and other professionals who can alert police to potential risks or abusive situations. Furthermore, at the local level, Police Headquarters actively engage in information and awareness projects, collaborating with educational institutions and meeting directly with students and teachers. These efforts specifically address the provisions outlined in Law 71 of 2017, focusing on the protection of children and the prevention and combating of cyberbullying, a significant risk often intertwined with child sexual exploitation and abuse facilitated by ICTs.

It is also noted that Action 3, "Promoting in children and adolescents the knowledge of the phenomenon of sexual abuse against children" of the National Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (2022-2023), aims to promote among children and adolescents the knowledge of the phenomenon of sexual abuse against children in its multiple facets, including the risk modalities inherent in the use of digital technologies, so that, from childhood, they adopt correct and conscious behaviors, know how to recognize risk signals, know how to implement active protection strategies for themselves and others (reports, requests for help or information).

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 Italy

The Committee observes that the higher education curriculum and continuous training in Italy are already in line with some of its recommendations. Thus, teachers and others working in educational institutions in Italy receive continuous training on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. It focuses specifically on the risks of child sexual exploitation and abuse facilitated by ICTs. Childcare professionals receive continuous training as part of the “Free to be free” project aimed at raising awareness, training and educating them on the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children and conducts related with CSAM, as well as cyberbullying. Some of the professionals working in contact with children in Italy have been trained and/or received education on how to identify potential situations where a child is a victim of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse.

Nevertheless, to improve the implementation of the Convention in this regard, the Committee **requires** Italy:

- 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;

- 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 health sector
 - in the social protection sector
 - in areas relating to sport, culture and leisure activities;¹¹⁴

Follow-up actions:

In the awareness of how important it is, in activities to prevent criminal phenomena to the detriment of the so-called “weaker groups,” to spread a culture of safety and respect for oneself and others, information and awareness campaigns have been launched, including in schools.

Fundamental have been the interventions aimed at investing resources in dedicated specialized Offices. In 1996, the Department of the PS established Offices dedicated to the protection of children and families as part of the Project called the Rainbow Project. The Juvenile Offices of the Anti-crime Divisions have essentially preventive functions and, as the founding circular states, First Aid for the family unit in difficulty, performing, in this area, functions of liaison with other Bodies and Institutions operating in the territory.

The Italian Sports Reform (Legislative Decree 39/2021) significantly strengthens measures against abuse, discrimination,

¹¹⁴ Recommendation X-5

and violence in sports, promoting gender equality and child protection in both professional and amateur organizations. Key requirements include:

- adopting organizational and control models, plus codes of conduct, to prevent discrimination (including based on ethnicity, religion, disability, age, or sexual orientation), harassment, and gender-based violence;
- appointing a Safeguarding Officer by December 31, 2024 (per Legislative Decree 36/2021 and Resolution 159/89) to address abuse, violence, and discrimination against children.

Within the strategic area of education of the National Plan for the Prevention and Countering of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (2022-2023), the overall objective is to develop awareness and training initiatives on child sexual abuse and exploitation for a wide range of recipients across various settings. This overarching objective is implemented through several specific actions.

- Action 2: promote the adoption in Italy, by all organized entities, both public and private, that operate in contact with children, of a protection system, starting with a Child Safeguarding Policy, that promotes an organizational model for the identification, prevention and management of improper behavior by adults, belonging to the organizations themselves or external to them, in order to build safer and more protective environments for children and adolescents.
- Action 4.1. - Ensure specialized training for professionals operating in the healthcare sector; Action 4.2. - Ensure specialized training for operators in the social and educational field; Action 4.3 - Ensure specialized training for teachers; Action 4.4. - Ensure specialized training in the judicial and police forces fields: ensure awareness and training programs for

teachers within the school environment, focusing on recognizing the signs of abuse and appropriate reporting procedures; ensure training and refresher courses for professionals working with children across various sectors, including healthcare, social protection, education (territorial), justice, law enforcement, family-style communities, social volunteering, and sports, cultural, and leisure activities. These courses will equip professionals with the skills to identify and respond to child sexual abuse and exploitation.

With reference to the health sector, IPAZIA project, "Strategies for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and children: Healthcare Worker Training with a Focus on COVID-19 Effects" extended violence prevention training to territorial socio-health services, with a specific focus on violence against children, including children exposed to domestic violence. Implementing a 'Problem-Based Learning' approach, the project trained professionals across emergency services, general practice, social work, and addiction services, enhancing their ability to recognize and care for victims. Led by Tuscany, it unites the Italian National Institute of Health (ISS), the National Institute for the Health Promotion of Migrant Populations (INMP), IRCCS Cà Granda Foundation, Maggiore Policlinico Hospital, and six Italian regions.

- 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;¹¹⁵

Follow-up actions:

¹¹⁵ Recommendation X-6

Awareness-raising initiatives, which have already begun in the context of educational institutions, can also extend to different spheres, such as sports and even reach teacher training.

For example, in 2021, classes were organized by the Central Anticrime Service for support teachers, who worked with children with Down Syndrome.

Italian law mandates reporting of suspected child sexual abuse and exploitation, and professionals in regular contact with children are legally obligated to report such suspicions.

Specifically, under Article 333 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, "any person who has knowledge of a crime which may be prosecuted ex officio may report it". The legal framework protects individuals who report with reasonable grounds for suspicion.

Article 331 of the Code of Criminal Procedure places a legal obligation on public officials and those in charge of a public service (including law enforcement, judicial authorities, physicians, healthcare workers, teachers, social workers, and others working with children in public or delegated capacities) to report crimes prosecutable ex officio, including child sexual abuse, mistreatment, trafficking, and related offenses. This obligation applies to information learned in the course of their duties.

- 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.¹¹⁶

Follow-up actions:

In the awareness of how important it is, in crime prevention activities, to spread a culture of safety and respect for oneself and others, information and awareness-raising campaigns have been launched in addition

to the "historical" legality education campaigns in schools.

Within the framework of awareness-raising initiatives in varied contexts, there is also the collaboration with Save The Children already mentioned.

Within the strategic area of education of the National Plan for the Prevention and Countering of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children (2022-2023), the overall objective is to develop awareness and training initiatives on child sexual abuse and exploitation for a wide range of recipients across various settings. This overarching objective is implemented through several specific actions.

- Action 2: promote the adoption in Italy, by all organized entities, both public and private, that operate in contact with children, of a protection system, starting with a Child Safeguarding Policy, that promotes an organizational model for the identification, prevention and management of improper behavior by adults, belonging to the organizations themselves or external to them, in order to build safer and more protective environments for children and adolescents.

To address the Committee's recommendation to enhance awareness of child protection and rights among judicial and law enforcement personnel, please consider the following.

As already mentioned, Italy mandates the involvement of court-appointed psychologists or child psychiatrists in child interviews during sexual abuse and exploitation investigations, actively fostering awareness of child protection and rights within these crucial sectors.

As already mentioned, Guardia di Finanza personnel receive basic training on the issue of online sexual crimes and violence against children as part of their "criminal law" studies.

¹¹⁶ Recommendation X-7

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

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

- 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;¹¹⁷
- 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.¹¹⁸

Promising practices

In Italy, as part of a project implemented in collaboration between the Department for Equal Opportunities and the Ministry of University and Scientific Research, an experimental distance training course for some primary and secondary school teachers of the first grade is dedicated to the issues of sexual exploitation and abuse of children, which will be further developed through the opening of the distance learning platform available to all school coordinators and teachers in Italian schools.

Further, a seminar entitled “Identification of School Intervention Models to Promote Child Protection from Violence, Abuse and Sexual Exploitation, Bullying and Cyberbullying” is provided in various schools in the country as part of a project implemented in collaboration between the Department for Equal Opportunities and the Ministry of University and Scientific Research. Aimed at school directors and teachers at each school level, as well as representatives of the Regional School Offices, its objective is to take stock of the regulatory and institutional context, to support the development of capacities to identify the phenomena, and to provide an overview of educational tools that can be used in the school environment to plan educational interventions and training courses in relation to these phenomena.

Promising practices:

Following the entry into force of Law No. 71 of May 29, 2017, and the issuance of the Guidelines for the prevention and combating of cyberbullying, the Ministry of Education and Merit has committed itself to the implementation of a national teacher training plan for contact teachers for combating bullying and cyberbullying. The Ministry, in collaboration with the Department of Education and Psychology of the University of Florence, has prepared, starting in October 2018, the ELISA platform www.piattaformaelisa.it (E-learning Training of Teachers on Anti-Bullying Strategies), to provide schools with tools to intervene effectively on the issues of cyberbullying and bullying with two specific actions: an area dedicated to schools for online monitoring of bullying and cyberbullying and a section dedicated to teachers for training through e-learning modules aimed at teachers and school principals.

Action 1 E-Learning Training aimed at teachers and school principals: Each school, within its own autonomy, is called to appoint (or reconfirm) up to two contact teachers to support the strategies for the prevention and combating of bullying and cyberbullying. Starting in 2021, the target

¹¹⁷ Recommendation X-2.

¹¹⁸ Recommendation X-3.

audience has expanded, opening the training to school principals and teachers interested in taking part in the work groups of the Anti-Bullying and Emergency Team. Within the teacher training, dedicated to the management and prevention of bullying and cyberbullying, the numerous forms of peer bullying are analyzed, making a careful distinction between bullying acted and suffered and their respective declinations. Regarding the phenomenon of cyberbullying, particular attention is paid to the numerous manifestations of further forms of online bullying ranging from hate speech to sexting, etc.

Action 2 Monitoring of bullying and cyberbullying phenomena in Italian schools: The Ministry, through the scientific support of the University of Florence, has prepared periodic national surveys for the analysis of the prevalence of bullying and cyberbullying phenomena in Italian schools. Online monitoring was launched for the first time in May 2021 and was also re-proposed for the school years 2021/2022 and 2022/2023. A new monitoring is planned in the current school year 2024/2025. The monitoring, in addition to returning to the Ministry of Education and Merit a photograph of the phenomena at the national level, for the first time under a coordinated action from within, offers individual participating schools a personalized summary report that allows them to deepen the situation with respect to the phenomena of bullying and cyberbullying. Within the questionnaires aimed at teachers and students, the Administration is evaluating the possibility of including, in the next surveys, items that can bring out reports of any abuse of children, including online, and illustrate the method of taking charge of the management of cases by school institutions.

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 Italy

The Committee notes that Italy provided information on research undertaken on the issues raised by CSGSIV in general. It was included in the broader topic of awareness and perception of material shared online. The Polizia Postale e delle Comunicazioni (Postal and Communications Police) collaborated with

“La Sapienza” University in Rome. Italy has participated for at least one year in the EU Kids Online surveys. According to EU Kids Online 2020 Report,¹¹⁹ the Italian national authorities supported the research and enabled the surveys to be carried out.

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;¹²⁰
- 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.¹²¹

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

- 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;¹²²
- 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.¹²³

Promising practices:

In line with the Committee's recommendations, Italy is committed to establishing robust mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating child sexual exploitation and abuse.

The Department for Family Policies leads the Observatory for the Fight Against Paedophilia and Child Pornography, a central body responsible for data collection, analysis, and research on child sexual exploitation and abuse. This Observatory, comprising representatives from key ministries, law enforcement, and child protection organizations, drafts the National Plan against child sexual abuse. Its comprehensive, privacy-protected database tracks prevention and suppression efforts. Further details on the Observatory are available in the promising practices section of Chapter VIII.

¹¹⁹ See EU Kids Online Report 2020: <https://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/assets/documents/research/eu-kids-online/reports/EU-Kids-Online-2020-10Feb2020.pdf>

¹²⁰ Recommendation XI-1

¹²¹ Recommendation XI-4

¹²² Recommendation XI-2

¹²³ Recommendation XI-3

The Report to Parliament on coordination activities (article 17, paragraph 1, Law 269/98) on measures against the exploitation of children in prostitution, pornography, and sex tourism (new forms of slavery), submitted annually to Parliament, provides an overview of national and international initiatives and best practices aimed at combating the sexual exploitation of children. It details the activities undertaken during the year by public administrations involved in child protection, third-sector associations within the Observatory for the Fight Against Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, and the Observatory's permanent invitees.

This report serves two primary purposes:

- to increase public understanding of the serious issue of child sexual abuse and exploitation;
- to pinpoint emerging problems and areas requiring intervention, considering all forms and methods of dissemination, including those related to technological and digital advancements.

This report demonstrates the shared commitment of public institutions and civil society organizations to addressing this complex and sensitive issue. It offers a valuable opportunity for reflection, enabling the development and refinement of effective and coordinated actions, strategies, and policies to strengthen the national child protection system.

Within the Observatory, a research study on relevant themes is being finalized, with particular reference to violence suffered or perpetrated by children.

To address youth distress, educational poverty, juvenile crime, and digital safety for children, Decree-Law No. 123 of September 15, 2023, requires the Presidency of the Council of Ministers' Department for Family Policies to conduct research and draft guidelines for users of electronic devices and parental control apps, prioritizing educators, families, and children, which are currently being finalized.

Recognizing the growing problem of online gender-based violence, especially against girls through stalking, blackmail, and verbal abuse, the Department for Juvenile Justice and Community initiated a study in 2023 titled "Gender-based Violence Among Peers Online." This research project investigates the prevalence of such violence within gendered relationships, noting the rise in cyberbullying and revenge porn targeting children. The study's objective is to explore the complex interplay between online and offline behavior among young people, and to provide data for developing effective prevention and support programs for youth involved with the juvenile justice services.