



FACTSHEET – LATVIA

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 Latvia 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 Latvia

Exemption of criminal liability of children “producing and possessing” self-generated sexual images and videos of themselves as clarified by the Lanzarote Committee’s Opinion of 2019

The Committee observes that the production of sexually explicit images by children themselves and the possession of such images by children is criminalised in Latvia.¹ However, the Committee understands from the information submitted that there are special circumstances under which the above-mentioned offences, although established in fact and in law, are not prosecuted/punishable under national law, because closing the procedure may be considered to be in the best interests of the child.²

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

The Committee notes that in order to demonstrate compatibility with the exclusion of criminal liability for the production and possession of CSGSIV, Latvia pointed at the age of criminal responsibility, which is 14 years old, below which children cannot be held criminally liable for acts they commit.³ Latvia also noted that production and possession of self-generated material were not criminalised when the child(ren) in question have reached the legal age for sexual activities. However, the Committee underlines that relying on the age of sexual consent alone, to exclude criminal responsibility for the scenarios listed in paragraphs 3-6 of the 2019 Opinion, is insufficient as, in such case, younger children may not be covered by the exemption from criminal responsibility.⁴

- The Committee **requests** that Latvia ensures that a child will not be prosecuted when he/she possesses:
 - their own CSGSIV;
 - CSGSIV of another child with the informed consent of the child depicted on them;
 - CSGSIV of another child as a result of receiving them passively without actively asking for them.⁵

Follow-up actions:

After a meeting to evaluate the recommendation with the competent authorities, it was concluded that the amendments of the Criminal law will be the best approach to fully ensure that a child will not be prosecuted in such cases. Thus, the official permanent Criminal Law Working Group of the Ministry of Justice, which was attended by representatives of the courts, the State Police, the Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of the Interior and NGOs, agreed on the need to advance an amendment to the Criminal Law, providing that a minor who produces and stores pornographic material depicting himself or another minor after mutual consent, or distributes such material to another minor after mutual consent, or stores such material when he or she has received it from another minor without mutual consent, is exempted from criminal liability. At the same time, the amendment will be advanced in accordance with the national legislative procedure, when the Criminal Law is open for amendments in the parliament.

Sharing own self-generated material and other

¹ Paras. 67, 68.

² Para. 70.

³ Para. 71.

⁴ Para. 73.

⁵ Recommendation II-6.

children's self-generated material

The Committee observes that children are potentially criminally liable for the distribution or transmission of their own CSGSIV in Latvia.⁶ Furthermore, Latvia has rules that lead to the criminalisation of the distribution by children of CSGSIV of other children.⁷

The Committee **requests** that Latvia ensures that:

- a child will not be prosecuted for sharing his/her sexual images and/or videos CSGSIV with another child when such sharing is voluntary, consensual, and intended solely for their own private use.⁸

Follow-up actions:

After a meeting to evaluate the recommendation with the competent authorities, it was concluded that the amendments of the Criminal law will be the best approach to fully ensure that a child will not be prosecuted in such cases. Thus, the official permanent Criminal Law Working Group of the Ministry of Justice, which was attended by representatives of the courts, the State Police, the Prosecutor's Office, the Ministry of the Interior and NGOs, agreed on the need to advance an amendment to the Criminal Law, providing that a minor who produces and stores pornographic material depicting himself or another minor after mutual consent, or distributes such material to another minor after mutual consent, or stores such material when he or she has received it from another minor without mutual consent, is exempted from criminal liability. At the same time, the amendment will be advanced in accordance with the national legislative procedure, when the Criminal Law is open for amendments in the parliament.

- the distribution or transmission by children of self-generated sexually explicit images and/or videos CSGSIV 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.⁹

Follow-up actions:

After a meeting to evaluate the recommendation, including with the competent authorities, it was concluded that the regulation of the Criminal Law and Criminal procedure law is adequate for Latvia to implement the recommendation. Paragraph 2 of 379 of the Criminal procedure law establishes that an investigator, with the consent of a supervising prosecutor, or a prosecutor may terminate criminal proceedings, and send materials regarding a minor for the application of a compulsory measure of a correctional nature. In addition, according to Section 66 of the Criminal law a court may, taking into account the particular circumstances of committing a criminal offence and information received regarding the personality of the offender which mitigate his or her liability, release a minor from the punishment adjudged by applying compulsory measures of a correctional nature prescribed by law. Compulsory measures of a correctional nature may be imposed on a child if he or she has committed such offence or violation for which the laws and regulations provide criminal liability or administrative liability (hereinafter - the offence or violation).

On the "sexual extortion of children":

The Committee observes that Latvia could not provide data or details about cases of sexual extortion of children involving CSGSIV.¹⁰

In cases where the sexual extortion is intended to procure additional sexual images or videos, the Committee observes that Latvia prosecutes for offences related to "child pornography", in concurrence with offences where threat is a core element, such as extortion or coercion. Latvia also referred to threat as one of the elements of the offences related to child pornography.¹¹ Latvia also referred to the offences of corruption of

⁶ Para. 78.

⁷ Para. 82.

⁸ Recommendation II-8.

⁹ Recommendation II-9.

¹⁰ Para. 95.

¹¹ Para. 98.

children, which may be established in recognition of the constituent elements of coercion/extortion.¹²

When it is intended to procure other sexual favours from the child depicted on the images/videos or from other children, Latvia reported that it would prosecute for sexual abuse of a child in accordance with Article 18 of the Convention, for offences related to child prostitution or to participation in pornographic performances, and corruption of children. Latvia also indicated that it would qualify this

conduct as solicitation of children for sexual purposes.¹³ In addition, Latvia also prosecutes conduct relating to the possession of the initial child sexual image or video as an offence related to “child pornography” under Article 20.¹⁴

In the case where it is intended to procure a financial gain, or other property from the child, Latvia indicated that the conduct would be qualified as extortion or aggravated extortion.¹⁵

Generic recommendations of the Committee on legal frameworks

The Committee **invites** Parties, including Latvia:

- to rather use the term “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”](#)¹⁶ 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 using the term “child pornography” can undermine the gravity of the crimes it refers to.¹⁷
- to introduce a definition of CSAM in line with its Recommendation II-1 above.¹⁸
- to introduce explicit references in its 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.¹⁹
- 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.²⁰
- 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 CSGSIV.²¹
- to consider criminalising the offence of “grooming” (solicitation of children for sexual purposes), even when it does not lead to a face-to-face meeting or producing CSAM.²²
- to take into account the situation where CSGSIV are used to force, coerce or threaten the child to give additional CSGSIV, 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.²³
- to ensure that sexual extortion of children involving CSGSIV is investigated and prosecuted.²⁴

Promising practices:

¹² Para. 100.

¹³ Para. 102.

¹⁴ Para. 103.

¹⁵ Para. 106.

¹⁶ 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.](#)

¹⁷ Recommendation II-3.

¹⁸ Recommendation II-3.

¹⁹ Recommendation II-2.

²⁰ Recommendation II-4.

²¹ Recommendation II-7.

²² Recommendation II-10.

²³ Recommendation II-11.

²⁴ Recommendation II-12.

After a meeting to evaluate the recommendation with the competent authorities, it was concluded that Latvia will use the term “CSAM” and will make the relevant changes to the Law on the Restriction of Pornography and the Criminal law. The amendment will be advanced in accordance with the national legislative procedure, also transposing the new amended Directive on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA, when it is adopted. State police officials already use the term “child sexual abuse material” in their daily exchanges of information regarding “CSAM” materials.

Latvia draws attention to the fact that the Criminal Law already criminalizes grooming, even when it does not lead to a face-to-face meeting or producing CSAM. When the producing of CSAM has happened, the perpetrator also incurs criminal liability for encouraging, involvement, forced participation or utilisation of minors in the production of a material of pornographic nature (166(3)). The criminal liability is already established, when the perpetrator is encouraging children to engage in such activities.

Section 162.1 Encouraging to Involve in Sexual Acts.

(1) For a person who encourages a person who has not attained the age of sixteen years to involve in sexual acts or encourages such person to meet with the purpose to commit sexual acts or enter into a sexual relationship using information or communication technologies or other means of communication, if such act has been committed by a person who has attained the age of majority, the applicable punishment is the deprivation of liberty for a period of up to four years or temporary deprivation of liberty, or probationary supervision.

(2) For a person who commits the criminal offence provided for in Paragraph one of this Section, if it has been committed against an underaged person, the applicable punishment is the deprivation of liberty for a period of up to five years or temporary deprivation of liberty, or probationary supervision.

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 Latvia

The Committee observes that Latvia's investigation and prosecution services are already in line with some of its recommendations as it has:

- specialised units dealing with ICT facilitated offences against children within law enforcement.²⁵
- specialised investigative units for handling ICT facilitated sexual offences where these are committed by children.
- training modules provided by State authorities and by external organisations for law enforcement agents related to aspects of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.²⁶ In addition, the Committee notes that Latvian law provides for specific training and requires officials of the State Police who work with children to complete educational programmes to attain specialised knowledge in the field of protection of the rights of the child.²⁷
- training for prosecutors provided by State authorities on aspects of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.²⁸ Latvia further indicated that prosecutors must pass two training courses on children's rights, as part of a specialised education program consisting of 40 lessons, including 24 lessons on knowledge perfection.²⁹ It also informed the Committee that specialised training on the protection of children's rights is mandatory for all prosecutors working with children, and evaluation of the prosecutors' participation in the professional development activities is mandatory.³⁰ The

Committee observes that in Latvia, training for prosecutors includes children's rights as well as interviewing children and other procedures, including communicating with children throughout criminal proceedings.³¹

- training for judges provided by State authorities and by external organisations on aspects of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.³² The Committee also notes that it is mandatory in Latvia for judges who participate in cases on violence against children to pass a 40-hour training course on children's right to protection. There is, however, no specific focus on ICT facilitated offences against children.³³

- Therefore, the Committee **requests** Latvia to ensure that training on ICT facilitated sexual offences against children is available for prosecutors and judges who are or will be working on these issues.³⁴

Follow-up actions:

The Court Administration has been training judges on topics related to child sexual abuse and contact with such children in criminal proceedings since 2021.

As a follow up on the recommendations as part of the Court Administration's project "Justice Academy," it is planned to organize joint training this year for judges and prosecutors on the topic of "Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Violence Promoted by ICT." This training will address issues such as challenges

²⁵ Para. 115.

²⁶ Paras. 145, 146, 148.

²⁷ Para. 149.

²⁸ Paras. 156, 157.

²⁹ Para. 161.

³⁰ Para. 163.

³¹ Para. 164.

³² Para. 167.

³³ Para. 168.

³⁴ Recommendations III-16 and III-18.

related to sexual images and/or videos generated by children themselves, as well as ICT-enabled coercion and extortion of children. The training will incorporate practical elements, including simulated and/or real case studies, case law analysis, and a short self-assessment test.

Additionally, the Court administration will continue providing training for judges and prosecutors in the field of information and communication technologies (ICT) over this year and the coming years to ensure they have sufficient technical knowledge.

Furthermore, the training cycle "Victim Needs Oriented Approach in the Judicial System," which was launched within the project last year, will continue this year. We aim to train up to 100 judges, prosecutors, and investigators on interdisciplinary issues related to this topic.

In total, 14 different trainings on sexual offences against children were held for prosecutors in 2023 and 2024. 118 prosecutors participated in these trainings. The trainings were on the following topics:

- Crime prevention targeting high-risk victim groups;
- Seminar on detection and investigation of human trafficking for sexual exploitation;
- Crimes against morality and sexual integrity, especially against minors and persons in a vulnerable position;
- New challenges in the fight against the sexual exploitation of children enabled by the use of new technologies;
- Crimes against morality and sexual integrity, especially against minors;
- AP Twins Annual Expert Meeting on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse;
- Qualifications and Issues in the Investigation of Cruelty and Abuse against Children;
- Effective Protection of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse;
- Victim's Rights in the EU in Practice: Violence against Women and Children Sexual Abuse (CR/2024/16).

On the identification of victims, the Committee notes that Latvia has victim identification units within law enforcement for cases of ICT facilitated sexual offences against children.³⁵

The Committee observes that Latvia is connected to the INTERPOL's international child sexual exploitation (ICSE) database, but does not actively contribute to it, as it expressed some scepticism about the utility of the database in its national context.³⁶

- Therefore, the Committee **invites** Latvia to ensure that any obstacles to active contribution to INTERPOL's ICSE's database are removed and that national contributions are implemented in practice, regardless of the nationality of the victims.³⁷

- It also **requests** Latvia to take the necessary legislative or other measures, in conformity with the fundamental principles of its 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.³⁸

Follow-up actions:

Following a meeting to assess the recommendation, together with the competent authorities, including the Prosecutor General's Office and the State Police, it was concluded that the scope of national legislation is in line with the aforementioned recommendation and that the basic principles enshrined in national legislation are sufficient to ensure effective investigation and prosecution of crimes against the sexual integrity of children facilitated by the use of ICT, including the possibility of carrying out special investigative activities.

Section 6 of the CPL establishes basic principle- mandatory nature of criminal proceedings. The official who is authorised to conduct criminal proceedings has an obligation within his or her competence to initiate criminal proceedings and to lead such

³⁵ Para. 180.

³⁶ Para. 188.

³⁷ Recommendation III-27.

³⁸ Recommendation III-28.

proceedings to the fair regulation of criminal legal relations provided for in the Criminal Law in each case where the reason and grounds for initiating criminal proceedings have become known. Therefore, whenever there is knowledge of a criminal offense against the sexual integrity of a child, criminal proceedings are mandatory.

In addition, the Chapter 11 "Special Investigative actions" of the CPL also provides for the possibility of conducting "special operations" or special investigative actions to

clarify circumstances to be proven in criminal proceedings if a less serious, serious or especially serious crime is being investigated.

Latvia indicated that a key challenge for a successful prosecution phase is to obtain electronic evidence that can be validly used before courts.³⁹ It further noted that where evidence is obtained, searching the data of devices in order to isolate and analyse it requires a considerable amount of time, resources and work.⁴⁰

Generic recommendations of the Committee on investigation and prosecution

On the specialisation and training of authorities:

- Mindful of the different contexts in the Parties as recalled in para. 235 of the Explanatory Report, the Committee **requests** those Parties that are not already doing so to ensure that law enforcement and prosecution units, services or persons specialised in ICT facilitated sexual offences against children are adequately financed to ensure sufficient resources, including staff, equipment and training.⁴¹

Follow-up actions:

The resources of the State Police are being developed for processing, researching, and analyzing the information received in order to more effectively identify the sources of production and distribution of child sexual abuse materials and persons whose activities are restricted and punished in accordance with the procedure established by law. State Police officials regularly participate in activities related to this direction.

Participation in the technical online training course "Magnet AXIOM Advanced computer forensics (AX250)" (19.11. - 22.11.2024), which provided an opportunity to deepen knowledge and practical skills in conducting IT examinations in cases of child sexual abuse crimes.

State Police officials regularly participate in international conferences, working groups, and training on combating child sexual abuse

materials. Within the framework of the allocated funding, measures were initiated to purchase material, technical, and software.

The prosecutor's office also indicates that, in general, prosecutors are equipped to investigate and prosecute such criminal offenses. The Prosecutor's Office in Riga has 8 specialized prosecutors in district-level prosecutor's offices and 4 at the regional level. This is determined by the order of the Riga Court District Prosecutor's Office on specialization. The Chief Prosecutor of the Riga Court District Prosecutor's Office is informed about all cases initiated by the State Police Cybercrime Department, who instructs one of the prosecutor's offices within the Riga Court District Prosecutor's Office to supervise the investigation. And one of the 8 prosecutors is then determined as the supervising prosecutor and one of the 4 at the regional level as a senior prosecutor. Similar specialization has been determined in other regions of Latvia. Considering the above, the system works well. The Prosecutor's Office also regularly meets with representatives of the State Police and discusses issues in this area. The Prosecutor's Office, together with the State Police, organizes training at the State Police Investigator Training Centre.

At the same time, the additional training should be organized on the following topics:

- Detecting child abuse material: Applying

³⁹ Para. 203.

⁴⁰ Para. 207.

⁴¹ Recommendations III-3 and III-7.

tools and techniques to accurately detect illegal content.

- Implications of Artificial Intelligence: How does AI affect VID operations, how criminals misuse AI and how law enforcement can responsibly use AI to enhance investigations. Self-generated child sexual abuse material: Addressing cases where minors produce their own abusive content under coercion.

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

- to ensure that the capacities of any investigative unit specialised in ICT facilitated sexual offences against children take into account evolving technologies and online behaviours and reflect current practices used by perpetrators.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 have units, sections or persons specialised in ICT facilitated sexual offences committed by children against other children for authorities responsible for investigation and for authorities responsible for prosecution.⁴⁶
- 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.^{47 48}

- to ensure that training on the challenges raised by CSGSIV and ICT facilitated coercion or extortion of children is available to prosecutors and to judges.⁴⁹
- to offer joint (or "joined-up") training for professionals, and particularly law enforcement, prosecutors and judges, involved in legal proceedings involving ICT facilitated child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, in order to ensure consistency at all stages.⁵⁰
- to ensure that training on ICT facilitated sexual offences against children for law-enforcement, prosecutors and judges contains a practical element, involving simulated or real cases.⁵¹

On measures to ensure the effective investigation and prosecution:

- The Committee **requires** all Parties 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.⁵²

Follow-up actions:

According to Point 3 of Paragraph 3 of Section 14 of the CPL, when ensuring a reasonable term, in comparison with other criminal proceedings, a criminal offence against the morality and sexual inviolability which has been committed against a minor shall have preference.

On July 15, 2024, by order of the Acting Prosecutor General of the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Latvia, the Guidelines for cooperation between the prosecutor's office and investigative institutions in the investigation of priority categories of criminal proceedings were approved, including criminal offenses against morality and sexual

programmes.

⁴⁸ Recommendation III-14.

⁴⁹ Recommendations III-17 and III-19.

⁵⁰ Recommendation III-20.

⁵¹ Recommendation III-21.

⁵² Recommendation III-30.

⁴² Recommendation III-4.

⁴³ Recommendation III-5.

⁴⁴ Recommendation III-9.

⁴⁵ Recommendation III-10.

⁴⁶ Recommendation III-11.

⁴⁷ Such trainings can also be part of broader training

inviolability, if the criminal offenses were committed against a minor (Article 159, Article 160, Article 161, Article 162, Article 162.1 of the Criminal Code); Cruelty and violence against a minor (Article 174 of the Criminal Law). The Guidelines have been developed in cooperation with all investigative institutions, evaluating the opinions expressed by competent officials of investigative institutions.

In order to promote a uniform procedure for the effective application of the norms of the Criminal Procedure Law, as well as to ensure the achievement of the goal of criminal proceedings as quickly and economically as possible, the guidelines for cooperation between the prosecutor's office and investigative institutions in priority category criminal proceedings were approved by the VP Order No. 4076 of 22 July, 2024.

In addition, with the report of the Law Enforcement Institutions, criminal offenses against morality and sexual inviolability are put forward as a priority direction for combating crime at the national level.

technology available to those in charge of identifying child victims of ICT facilitated sexual offences are up to date, reflect current practices across Parties, including establishing and using national child abuse material databases, and that resources are sufficiently allocated.⁵³

- to engage in and strengthen inter Party cooperation for the purpose of identifying child victims and perpetrators of ICT facilitated sexual offences, including, where appropriate, by providing access to each other's databases or shared databases, including those containing information on such perpetrators.⁵⁴
- 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.⁵⁵
- 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.⁵⁶

It also **invites** all Parties, including Latvia:

- to ensure that measures, services and

Promising practices:

Infrastructure, incl. database, of foreign cooperation partners are used by the State Police. At the end of December 2024, access to the projectport.com resource (an information exchange platform between member states) was obtained. The information was reviewed and analyzed.

An analysis of received NCMEC reports and other information (including reports from the Latvian Safer Internet Centre - NETSAFE) on the circulation of child sexual abuse material was constantly carried out in order to identify victims and persons involved in the circulation of child sexual abuse material in Latvia.

⁵³ Recommendation III-24.

⁵⁴ Recommendations III-25, III-29.

⁵⁵ Recommendation III-31.

⁵⁶ Recommendation III-32.

IV. Jurisdiction rules

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

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

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))

The Committee observes that Latvia has established laws clarifying the circumstances in which its national criminal law will apply to a transnational situation following the territoriality principle. According to Section 2 of the Criminal law, the criminal procedure may be conducted if at least one of the actions falling within the constituent element of the criminal offense is committed in the territory of Latvia.⁵⁷

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

The Convention provides that Parties should take the necessary legislative and other measures to establish jurisdiction over offences committed by persons who have their habitual residence in their territory (Article 25(1)(e)). Latvia has made a reservation to this provision, in accordance with Article 25(3), not to apply this jurisdiction rule. However, the Committee notes that Latvia has jurisdiction over offences involving sexual abuse or exploitation of children committed by persons habitually resident in its territory.⁵⁸

- Therefore, the Committee **invites** Latvia to consider removing this reservation and establish jurisdiction for offences under the Convention when such offences are committed abroad by persons having their habitual residence in its territory.⁵⁹

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))

It appears that Latvia does not apply this condition for 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

Latvia reported that it would assume jurisdiction over offences involving sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of children, irrespective of the laws of the State where the offence was committed if committed by one of its nationals or by a person who has a habitual residence in its territory.⁶⁰

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

The Committee observes that Latvia will establish jurisdiction over an offence committed against persons who have their habitual residence in its territory but only for serious or especially serious crimes.⁶¹ The Committee further notes that in order to apply the passive personality principle in Latvia, the dual criminality principle is not a prerequisite for prosecution.⁶² However, the perpetrator must not have been held criminally liable or committed to stand trial in the jurisdiction where the offence was committed as a condition for prosecution in Latvia.⁶³

- The Committee **requests** Parties that are not already doing so, including Latvia, to endeavour to take the necessary legislative or other measures to establish jurisdiction over

⁵⁷ Para. 214.

⁵⁸ Para. 216.

⁵⁹ Recommendation IV-3.

⁶⁰ Para. 224.

⁶¹ Para. 231.

⁶² Para. 232.

⁶³ Para. 233.

any offence established in accordance with the Lanzarote Convention where the offence is committed against one of its nationals or a person who has his or her habitual residence in its territory.⁶⁴

Follow-up actions:

According to Paragraph 3 of Section 4 of the CL foreigners who do not have permanent residence permits in the Republic of Latvia and who have committed serious or especially serious crimes in the territory of another state

which have been directed against the Republic of Latvia or against the interests of its inhabitants, shall be held criminally liable in accordance with this Law irrespective of the laws of the state in which the crime has been committed, if they have not been held criminally liable or committed to stand trial in accordance with the laws of the state where the crime was committed.

Generic recommendations of the Committee on jurisdiction rules

- The Committee **invites** Parties that are not already doing so to remove the requirement for dual criminality for the following offences when committed by one of their nationals:
 - CSGSIV possessing, offering, distributing, transmitting, procuring child pornography, and the fact of knowingly gaining access to child pornography through ICTs, when CSGSIV are involved;⁶⁵
 - solicitation of children for sexual purposes.⁶⁶

Promising practice

Latvia can prosecute persons who are neither nationals nor persons who have their habitual residence in its territory for sexual abuse or exploitation of children committed abroad, including children who are not its nationals, when the offender is present on its territory as in accordance with Article 4, paragraph 1 of the Criminal Law, Latvian citizens, non-citizens and foreigners with a permanent residence permit in the Republic of Latvia shall be held liable in accordance with this Law within the territory of Latvia for a crime committed in the territory of another state or outside the territory of a state, irrespective of whether the crime has been recognised as criminal and punishable in the territory of commission. In addition, Paragraph 3 of Section 4 of the Criminal Law provides that foreigners who do not have a permanent residence permit in the Republic of Latvia and who have committed serious or particularly serious crimes in the territory of another state, which were directed against the Republic of Latvia or against the interests of its inhabitants, shall be held criminally liable in accordance with this Law, irrespective of the laws of the state in which the crime was committed, if they have not been held criminally liable or committed for trial in accordance with the laws of the state where the crime was committed.

Promising practices:

State Police officials, when investigating criminal proceedings under investigation, conduct investigations regardless of the person's nationality, both against citizens of the Republic of Latvia, non-citizens of the Republic of Latvia and foreign citizens, if there is reason to believe that the person has committed a criminal offense, the investigation of which falls within the competence of the State Police.

⁶⁴ Recommendation IV-9.

⁶⁵ Recommendation IV-7.

⁶⁶ Recommendation IV-8.

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 of the Committee on international cooperation specific to Latvia

Latvia referred to the Council of the Baltic Sea that appears as an important asset in the context of the PROMISE projects supporting Barnahus.⁶⁷

The Committee observes that INHOPE,⁶⁸ the PROMISE Barnahus Network,⁶⁹ WeProtect Global Alliance,⁷⁰ and EMPACT (European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats) cybercrime CSE/CSA⁷¹ conduct cooperation projects to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children in Latvia.⁷²

Furthermore, the Committee notes that law enforcement representatives from Latvia attend the Europol's central training course

"Combatting the Sexual Exploitation of Children on the Internet" (COSEC) and the Europol-Interpol-Cepol co-organised training course on victim identification (VID training course).⁷³

Lastly, the Committee observes that Latvia does not have the limitation introduced in the Directive 2012/29 of the European Parliament and the Council of 25 October 2012, establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA,⁷⁴ on the requirements for victims to report to another country of the European Union if the offense was committed in that country.⁷⁵

Generic recommendations of the Committee on international cooperation

- The Committee **requests** all Parties, including Latvia, to extend their international cooperation with other Parties to improve the effective implementation of the Convention.⁷⁶

Participation in the international prevention project "IWOL", where organizations and merchants have voluntarily joined to filter, identify and block access to child sexual abuse materials on the Internet in Latvia, continues. Within the framework of the national project "IWOL", which provides for the blocking of domain names in the Latvian IP address segment, the content of which is prohibited,

more than 7 700 000 attempts to access domains (more than 5 768 domains are recorded in the list of prohibited sites, which are constantly changing) with prohibited content that directly contains child sexual abuse materials were blocked during the reporting period. The project involves 8 major Latvian Internet service providers, such as Lattelecom (TET), Baltcom, Latnet, Dautkom, LMT, Telia, Telenet and Bite, whose activities cover more than 2 million Latvian subscribers. At the end of December 2024, access to the projectport.com resource (an information exchange platform between member states)

⁶⁷ Para. 253.

⁶⁸ www.inhope.org/

⁶⁹ <https://www.barnahus.eu/en/>

⁷⁰ <https://www.weprotect.org/>

⁷¹ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/empact>

⁷² Para. 255.

⁷³ Para. 259.

⁷⁴ See Article 17§2: "Member States shall ensure that victims of a criminal offence committed in Member States other

than that where they reside may make a complaint to the competent authorities of the Member State of residence, if they are unable to do so in the Member State where the criminal offence was committed or, in the event of a serious offence, as determined by national law of that Member State, if they do not wish to do so."?

⁷⁵ Para. 271.

⁷⁶ Recommendation V-3.

was obtained. The information was viewed and analyzed.

State police representatives participated in the "Annotation exercise" meeting (02.09. - 20.09.2024.) of the Europol annual expert working group "Victim Identification Task Force - 15" and the EMPACT CSE OAP 6.2. working group (categorization, research, grouping and analysis of child sexual abuse accumulated by Europol by studying/labeling their content with the aim of training artificial intelligence resources to recognize and select child sexual abuse materials in the virtual environment) with the aim of identifying victims. In total, 282 series with the mentioned materials were processed within 2 weeks, in 232 cases the possible countries and/or cities of the crime were identified, due to which SIENA reports were sent to the competent institutions for their verification, the identity of 3 child victims and 1 criminal was identified. In total, as a result of the activities of all 15 working groups, 824 child victims have been identified and 260 sex offenders have been detained, more than 7 679 series have been processed and the countries and/or cities of possible crime commission have been identified for more than 2 963 series, due to which SIENA reports have been sent to all countries to the competent institutions for their verification, 13 616 of the mentioned materials were processed within the working group.

An analysis of received PERONS reports and other information on the circulation of child sexual abuse material was constantly carried out in order to identify victims and persons involved in the circulation of child sexual abuse material in Latvia.

Participation in the Digital Child Safety Forum, where the achievements of the Member States and progress in projects, examples of information exchange between the Member States were discussed.

An analysis of the received NCMEC reports

and other information (including reports from the Latvian Safer Internet Centre - NETSAFE) on the circulation of child sexual abuse material was constantly carried out in order to identify victims and persons involved in the circulation of child sexual abuse material in Latvia.

The Republic of Latvia has concluded several intergovernmental agreements with the Member States of the European Union (for example, the Czech Republic, the Republic of Croatia, the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Cyprus, Malta, etc.) and third countries (for example, the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, the Republic of Turkey, Ukraine, etc.) on cooperation in the field of preventing and combating criminal offences. Although the sexual exploitation of children, pornography and violence against children are not specifically distinguished in the aforementioned agreements, if necessary, they can be used as a legal instrument for cooperation between the contracting parties in preventing and combating the aforementioned criminal offences.

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

- to assess, strengthen and develop international cooperation with other Parties to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children and to provide assistance to victims in matters related to CSGSIV.⁷⁷
- to expand international cooperation with countries which are not Parties to the Convention to disseminate the standards of the Convention, including for the purpose of preventing and combating sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, for the purpose of protecting and providing assistance to victims and concerning the offences established in accordance with the Convention, in matters related to CSGSIV.⁷⁸
- to regularly assess the difficulties that they

⁷⁷ Recommendations V-6, V-11.

⁷⁸ Recommendations V-4, V-7, V-12, V-15.

face when dealing with international cooperation and remedy them.⁷⁹

- to strengthen cooperation with relevant intergovernmental bodies and with transnational networks and other international organisations and initiatives due to their capacity to mobilisation, their worldwide scope, and their flexibility to work, for the purpose of preventing and combating sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children as well as for protecting and providing assistance to victims, in matters related to CSGSIV.⁸⁰
- 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.⁸¹
- 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.⁸²

- to maintain and develop efforts to strengthen international cooperation with other Parties and non-Parties to the Convention, 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.⁸³
- 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.⁸⁴

Promising practice

The Latvian Dardedze Centre cooperates with Estonia to provide trainings on interviewing children – the specialist from two countries learned how to delicately interview children and ask questions about issues concerning sexuality and violence.

This information is no longer relevant in 2025. Please note that following the "Barnahus" pilot project in "Centre Dardedze" (2017), which was based on international experience, Latvia has introduced the "Barnahus" model as a special program under the Child Protection Centre (since 2023), as well as adapted the NICHD protocol for questioning children.

Promising practices:

The Internal Security Fund project No. VP/IDF/2024/1 "Support for victims of criminal offenses - especially protected victims (especially children) within the framework of criminal proceedings" carries out several activities aimed at ensuring the rights of specially protected victims in pre-trial investigation and improving the quality of investigation:

- equipping interrogation rooms with video and sound equipment;
- developing methodological material for investigators and minors in the interrogation of specially protected victims;
- developing training materials for specialized training courses on the interrogation of minor specially protected victims.

⁷⁹ Recommendation V-5.

⁸⁰ Recommendations V-8, V-13.

⁸¹ Recommendation V-9.

⁸² Recommendation V-10.

⁸³ Recommendations V-14, V-16.

⁸⁴ Recommendation V-19.

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 Latvia

The Committee observes that although Latvia has legislation containing adequate provisions to assist child victims, they concern the protection of children in general and do not specifically provide support, assistance, and psychological help to child victims of sexual abuse or exploitation.⁸⁵

The Committee notes that the Latvian government also provides moral and financial compensation to victims of crime, including children victims of sexual abuse.⁸⁶

The Committee notes that Latvia was one of the few Parties to have provided information on the number of children who received support, assistance and psychological help in connection with the dissemination of CSGSIV.⁸⁷

- To improve the implementation of the Convention, the Committee **requires** Latvia to take the necessary legislative or other measures to assist child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, in the short and long term, in their physical and psycho-social recovery, taking due account of the child's views, needs and concerns.⁸⁸

Follow-up actions:

- In 2023, amendments came into force of the Law on the Protection of the Children's Rights, that introduces and legally strengthens the Barnahus model in Latvia. The Barnahus operated by the Child Protection Center, aims to provide support to children who have been victims of violence and their non-violent relatives, as well as to ensure the possibility of carrying out criminal procedural actions.

The Barnahus has the following objectives:

1) to ensure in one place intervention measures corresponding to the best interests of a child victim of violence, including the

assessment of the child's needs and risks, medical, psychological, and social support for the child and his or her non-abusive relative; 2) to ensure the possibility to take criminal procedural action for children who have suffered from criminal offences against morality and sexual inviolability and also from the criminal offences referred to in Section 125, Paragraph two, Clause 9, Section 126, Paragraph two, Clause 7, Section 130, Paragraph three, Clause 6, and Section 174 (Cruelty Towards and Violence against a Minor) of the Criminal Law ; 3) to coordinate and ensure that competent authorities exchange information, process the necessary data of a child victim of violence and of other persons related to him or her, including special categories of personal data required to exercise the powers of the competent authorities when leading the case of abuse against a child without repeated gathering of one and the same information from the child (repeated questioning of the child etc.), and also to ensure the retention of the information received and to create statistical analysis.

-An amendment has been developed to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 1613 of December 22, 2009, "Procedure for Providing Necessary Assistance to a Child Who Has Suffered from Unlawful Acts." The amendment specifies that in particularly severe and complex cases where a child has suffered from violence (unlawful acts), the total number of consultations provided to the child may reach up to 120, instead of the previous limit of 20 consultations. <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/202912-kartiba-kada-nepieciesamo-palidzibu-sniedz-bernam-kurs-cietis-no-prettiesiskam-darbibam>

⁸⁵ Paras. 285, 286.

⁸⁶ Para. 293.

⁸⁷ Para. 297.

⁸⁸ Recommendation VI-3.

- An amendment has been developed to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 545 of September 12, 2017, "Regulations on Institutional Cooperation in the Protection of Children's Rights." The amendment establishes a deadline for convening the cooperation group responsible for implementing child rights protection at the municipal level in cases requiring urgent action and collaboration among multiple institutions. Section 9 of the regulation is being updated to state that the head of the cooperation group must convene the group without delay, but no later than within two working days, in cases involving potential violations of children's rights where urgent action and multi-agency cooperation are

required. If needed, the cooperation group may designate a coordinator for the individual case.

<https://likumi.lv/ta/id/293496-noteikumi-par-instituciju-sadarbibu-bernu-tiesibu-aizsardziba>

- A pilot project for a new therapy method for child victims of violence, including the necessary support to the family, will be implemented from 2026 to 2028: 50 specialists will be trained, and at least 50 clients will receive treatment during the pilot project. After the final evaluation report this method could be included in the state social rehabilitation programme for child victims of violence.

Generic recommendations of the Committee on assistance to victims

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

- to promote awareness raising or specialised training for professionals who advise children through telephone or internet helplines on ICT facilitated sexual exploitation and abuse of children – including the risks associated with CSGSIV – and how to provide appropriate support to victims and to those
- who wish to help them.⁸⁹
- to assist child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse facilitated by ICTs, including of offences due to the production, possession, distribution or transmission of CSGSIV in the short and long term, in their physical and psycho-social recovery, these measures must take due account of the child's views, needs and concerns.⁹⁰

Promising practices:

Specialized support for children who have suffered from sexual abuse or domestic violence are suspected of it is provided by the Child Protection Centre's "Barnahus" program: it provides interrogation, psychological support and coordination of inter-institutional cooperation.

To expand the range of psychologists able to help in child sexual abuse cases – especially in the regions, the "Barnahus" and Centre Dardedze provide training for psychologists about working with children who have suffered sexual abuse.

The Children's Helpline addresses the issue of child sexual exploitation and abuse, including cases linked to child sexual grooming, solicitation, and online exploitation (CSGSIV), by acting as both a reporting and intervention mechanism. In 2024, the helpline received 55 calls related to this sensitive topic. When such cases are reported, specialists provide immediate emotional support to the child while gathering detailed information to assess the risks. Cases involving sexual exploitation are referred directly to law enforcement authorities and other relevant institutions, such as the Orphan's and Custody Court and social services, for further investigation and intervention.

⁸⁹ Recommendation VI-2.

⁹⁰ Recommendation VI-4.

The topic of recognizing violence is included in the State Police College's non-formal education programs "Protection of Children's Rights" and "Police Officer's Actions in Cases of Domestic Violence". However, these topics cover general principles of recognizing violence.

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 Latvia

The Committee observes that Latvia is one of the few Parties where cooperation projects are decided upon by a national body specifically dedicated to children's rights, such as the national Council on the cooperation of children's rights, which reviews the "political challenges related to the interdisciplinary cooperation in the field of the rights of the child". Convened by the Minister of Welfare, it includes social welfare workers, child protection representatives, police from the local and national level, representatives from the local educational board, as well as optional members such as educational institutions, residential institutions, prison facilities, a commission assessing special education needs, a municipal commission reviewing cases of administrative violations, State probation service, and nongovernmental organisations.⁹¹

Latvia indicated that the interaction with civil society includes preventive and awareness-raising activities to minimise the risk of abuse that children face online.⁹² The Committee notes that Latvia refers to projects aimed at awareness-raising and education on the issue of CSISIV or similar issues but the use of different terms, such as "sexting", "cyber mobbing", "child pedopornography", "provocative selfies", "revenge porn", "sextortion", "pedopornographic material", "grooming", leaves doubt as to the actual content of such projects. Although the objective may be the same (to combat the production, possession, distribution, or transmission of self-generated sexually explicit images and/or videos and self-generated sexual content), differences in terminology can be detrimental. Such content

circulates online and knows no border. Combating these offences therefore requires sustained cooperation between states, which can only be successful if there is no doubt about the vocabulary when communicating information or transmitting evidence.⁹³ Other civil society projects in Latvia - whether or not carried out in cooperation with the State - aimed at preventing abuses related to the sharing of such content are the conduction of surveys.⁹⁴

The Committee observes that in Latvia, telephonic and electronic helplines concern violence taking place in the digital environment, which is rare among the Parties.⁹⁵ The Committee notes that beyond reporting mechanisms, NGOs in Latvia offer free psychological support to children.⁹⁶

- To improve the implementation of the Convention, the Committee **requires** Latvia to involve civil society bodies in implementing preventive measures in the field of sexual exploitation and abuse of children.⁹⁷

Since year 2006 Latvian Safer Internet Centre is actively implementing awareness raising activities and campaigns to inform society about online risks for children, including grooming, sexting and child sexual abuse topics. To support children Latvian SIC also ensures the work of helpline 116111 where children can call and receive psychological help, and also hotline for submitting reports electronically about CSAM and CSEM materials. Hotline is part of international association of hotlines – INHOPE. The reports have been processed in a close cooperation

⁹¹ Para. 306.

⁹² Para. 320.

⁹³ Para. 322.

⁹⁴ Para. 323.

⁹⁵ Para. 328.

⁹⁶ Para. 329.

⁹⁷ Recommendation VII-1.

with State Police, Internet Service Providers and online platforms. The work of Latvian SIC is ensured by three partner organizations – Latvian Internet Association (NGO), Local Governments Training Centre (NGO) and Child Protection Centre (subordinated to the Ministry of Welfare).

The Child and Adolescent Hotline 116111 (Hotline) of the Child Protection Centre (BAC), “multidisciplinary and interagency program “Bērna māja”” (Barnahus) and NGO “Centre Dardedze” created the campaign “Conversation protects”. Campaign was created with the aim of drawing the attention of the wider public to the risks of sexual exploitation of children and encouraging parents to talk with their children about safety in mutual relationships. Open, simple and everyday conversations about the body, safety and boundaries can protect children from sexual exploitation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJbp5vWmh2A>

NGO Center Dardedze provides Jimba Safety Program - holistic school-based child sexual abuse prevention program for 5-10 year old children about safety in relationships, body boundaries and seeking help, while also actively training educators and providing information for parents. NGO also provides educational workshops to different professionals working with children to promote prevention and early identification of abuse. Awareness raising campaigns at a larger scale are organised annually (for example, a campaign “Read Between the Lines” about child sexual abuse risks was carried out in 2023).

In response to the invitation of the Child Protection Centre, the Prevention Management Bureau of the State Police attracted lecturers from the 1st Department of the Cybercrime Combating Department of the Main Criminal Police Department of the State Police to participate in the conference organized by the Child Protection Center on

October 11, 2024, “DIGITAL FORUM - FOREIGN POWER ON THE INTERNET”. The conference reflected the situation regarding the threat to children's sexual integrity online, as well as provided participation in a panel discussion with other experts in the field. The aim of the conference is to educate educators about the safety of children and young people in the digital environment. Special attention was paid to the risk of emotional manipulation on the Internet, which can significantly threaten the well-being of children and young people. During the conference, participants learned about current data and methods that help recognize and prevent these threats, as well as received practical advice and recommendations for promoting safety in the digital environment.

- The Committee also **requests** Latvia to encourage the financing of projects and programmes carried out by civil society aiming to prevent and protect children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.⁹⁸

Follow-up actions:

The state financially supports the implementation of the Jimba Safety Program provided by Centre Dardedze. Many municipalities also allocate annually funds for their municipal preschool participation in the Jimba Safety Program, so that preschools can be actively involved in child sexual abuse prevention. Some municipalities also finance psychological support for children who have suffered violence or sexual abuse (via social services).

Latvian Safer Internet Centre receives funding from Digital Europa program and national co-funding from the State Budget: Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Smart Administration and Regional Development and Ministry of Welfare for Child Protection Centre.

The Central Finance and Contracting Agency (CFLA) announced an open project call for 2024, inviting associations, foundations, and businesses that provide support to victims of

⁹⁸ Recommendation VII-2.

violence to apply for European Union (EU) funding. The EU fund program, developed by the Ministry of Welfare, aims to design and implement new approaches to delivering support services tailored to the specific needs of victims of violence, with the goal of preventing the risk of repeated violence and mitigating the consequences of violence. Project applications from associations,

foundations, and businesses providing support to victims of violence were accepted by the CFLA until October 21, 2024. The implementation period for approved projects extends until the end of 2029 <https://www.cfla.gov.lv/lv/4-3-6-4-k-2>

Generic recommendations of the Committee on civil society involvement and cooperation

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

- to expand cooperation with civil society to better prevent sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, including when facilitated by ICTs and the challenges raised by the exploitation of CSGSIV.⁹⁹
- to ensure that the forms of cooperation that take place with civil society in the field of prevention and protection of children against sexual exploitation and abuse are of a sustainable nature.¹⁰⁰
- to support civil society to carry out projects and programmes that include the issue of CSGSIV.¹⁰¹
- to encourage the participation of children, according to their evolving capacity, in the development and implementation of state policies, programmes or other initiatives¹⁰² and to seek children's views at the stage of drafting new legislation concerning the fight against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, including when facilitated by ICTs and as regards CSGSIV.¹⁰³

Promising practice

In Latvia, helplines/hotlines work directly in cooperation with the police or a criminal investigation department in order to report directly any suspicion of abuse.

Promising practices:

To promote cooperation, Centre Dardedze organizes expert council meetings twice a year for the exchange of information between state institutions and non-governmental organizations. Representatives of the State Police and others participate twice a year in the annual meetings of the "Expert Council" for the protection of children from sexual exploitation, in which representatives of the state administration, academia and the non-governmental sector and practitioners have joined together in an expert group to work in a coordinated manner on the prevention and detection of child sexual exploitation. The aim of the expert group is to promote research in this field, data collection and analysis, as well as education of professionals and the public. The expert group has committed to jointly regularly compile a summary of current events in the field of prevention of sexual violence against children in Latvia, etc.

In 2023, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, representatives of the Latvian sports sector and non-governmental organizations, work was initiated to develop a unified methodology for working with children, with the aim of promoting the education of sports professionals and the public about the risks of sexual violence in sports-related education.

⁹⁹ Recommendation VII-3.

¹⁰⁰ Recommendation VII-4.

¹⁰¹ Recommendation VII-5.

¹⁰² Parties are also invited to provide example(s) of how

children's views are taken into account in the context of the participation of children.

¹⁰³ Recommendations VII-6, VII-7.

The Children's Helpline addresses the issue of child sexual exploitation and abuse, including cases linked to child sexual grooming, solicitation, and online exploitation (CSGSIV), by acting as both a reporting and intervention mechanism. In 2024, the helpline received 55 calls related to this sensitive topic. When such cases are reported, specialists provide immediate emotional support to the child while gathering detailed information to assess the risks. Cases involving sexual exploitation are referred directly to law enforcement authorities and other relevant institutions, such as the Orphan's and Custody Court and social services, for further investigation and intervention.

Latvian Safer Internet Centre hotline has signed Cooperation Agreement with the State Police for processing CSAM and CSEM reports received to hotline, and works in a close cooperation with the State Police Cybercrime Unit. Together with a representative of the State Police, INTERPOL training was attended for the implementation of the CPORT project for more effective cooperation in processing of reports.

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

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

Generic recommendations of the Committee on promoting awareness of the risk 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 Latvia:

- 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.¹⁰⁴
- to ensure that awareness-raising for children about the risks that they face when generating and/or sharing sexual images and/or videos of themselves takes place early enough, before they reach their teens, and that it is “adapted to their evolving capacity” or, in other words, their age and degree of maturity.¹⁰⁵
- 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.¹⁰⁶
- to have available awareness-raising tools, materials, and activities suitable for children with disabilities.¹⁰⁷
- 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.¹⁰⁸
- to promote themselves and to encourage the information and communication of the technology sector, the media, and other professionals to raise awareness among children, their parents, persons having regular contact with children, and the general public about the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse faced by children generating and/or sharing sexual images and/or videos of themselves and about the preventive measures that can be taken.¹⁰⁹
- to step-up awareness-raising for parents and persons with parental authority about the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse faced by children generating and/or sharing sexual images and/or videos of themselves and about the preventive measures that can be taken.¹¹⁰
- 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.¹¹¹
- 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.¹¹²

¹⁰⁴ Recommendation VIII-1.

¹⁰⁵ Recommendation VIII-2.

¹⁰⁶ Recommendation VIII-3.

¹⁰⁷ Recommendation VIII-4.

¹⁰⁸ Recommendation VIII-5.

¹⁰⁹ Recommendation VIII-6.

¹¹⁰ Recommendation VIII-7.

¹¹¹ Recommendation VIII-8.

¹¹² Recommendation VIII-9.

Promising practices:

Centre Dardedze regularly organizes trainings on recognising potentially risky sexual behavior of children, the risks of self-generated content and grooming (aimed at educators and other specialists, promoting the inclusion of this topic in school lessons), also covering these topics in annual conference about child sexual abuse prevention (in 2024 the conference program was focusing on child safeguarding in sports).

Latvian Safer Internet Centre conducts awareness raising and educational activities (visits to schools, campaigns, articles in media, trainings for pedagogues, police officers and Probation Service employees) on regular basis to inform about risks for children of sharing intimate images, legislation and responsibilities. Material developed to raise awareness among youngsters about sharing intimate images: <https://drossinternets.lv/lv/materials/download/nesuti-kailfoto-padomipusaudziem>

In August 2022, the Safety Messengers Program was launched as one of the basic prevention programs of the State Police, which is designed to involve educators and representatives of educational institutions in informing minors about safety risks and the necessary actions to prevent safety risks and protect themselves. By participating in the program, safety messengers (educators) ensure the implementation of various general prevention measures, including informing minors about safety issues. The program allows you to cover a larger target audience, diversifying the methods of addressing and information transfer models, achieving greater awareness of safety among school youth. The Safety Messengers Program includes Interactive Role Plays for two age groups - (1) children aged 8 to 10 and (2) children aged 11 to 14 about various risks in the online environment, also including several topics on possible risks of sexual abuse and recommendations for recognizing and preventing the aforementioned type of violence. The aforementioned mock-ups are available on the State Police website www.manadrosiba.lv.

The State Police organizes Preventive Information Campaigns for the Protection of Children from Sexual Violence at least once a year. On May 29, 2024, marking the International Day for the Protection of Children, the State Police, together with cooperation partners from the Latvian Safer Internet Centre and the Child Protection Centre, outlined the current trends in child safety on the Internet, the results of the <https://sos.drossinternets.lv/> self-help test at a press conference, and how small a portion of the anonymously recorded cases of attempts to seduce children online reach the police. As part of the press conference, statistical data from all participating institutions for 2023 on children who have been victims of online seduction were analyzed. The self-help test sos.drossinternets.lv, developed by experts, was recalled so that children, parents and specialists could test how safe a child's friendship is on the Internet, learn how to recognize cases of seduction, and where to seek help.

On November 21, 2024, the State Police, together with cooperation partners from the Latvian Safer Internet Centre and the Child Protection Centre, updated the trends and called on parents to discuss safe Internet use with children, teach them how to critically evaluate information and what seduction on the Internet means. Criminal offenses against the morality and sexual integrity of minors directly in the Internet environment remain relevant. State Police data show that in 2023, 293 children were recognized as victims of criminal offenses against morality and sexual integrity. Of these children, 59% were victims of various sexual activities in the real environment, but the number of victims on the Internet is not far behind - a total of 41%.

The State Police Prevention website: www.manadrosiba.lv provides continuous access to various preventive materials, including materials for protecting children from sexual violence. The website

is adapted for easy use for different target audiences, creating sections:

- For children and young people, which is divided into 4 different age groups for children and young people (5-7 years, 8-10 years, 11-13 years and 14+ years);
- For adults;
- For professionals (this section contains the Safety Bulletin program)

Information about the prevention website and the materials available on it is regularly sent to cooperating institutions, with an invitation to use the materials for preventive, informative work, for example, to state and regional education boards, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, various associations, societies, etc.

In 2023 and 2024, professional competence development on health literacy for teachers was implemented for deputy heads of educational institutions and teachers at the basic education in different subject areas. The programme includes topics on sexual and reproductive health curricula for each age group, health behaviour, healthy and safe environment (including sexual issues). The programme has been further improved and in 2025 the main focus is put on safety in virtual environments, raising awareness of the risks which may be faced if generating and/or sharing sexual images and/or videos of oneself, etc.

In March 2024, the Ministry of Education and Science and the University of Latvia signed an agreement on the elaboration of a professional competence development programme for teachers "Sexuality Education: An International Approach". The content of the programme will be developed by the University of Latvia, on the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science and in accordance with UNESCO's international guidelines, to enable teachers to provide pupils with high-quality, scientifically sound and age-appropriate information on sexual and reproductive health.

On 22 October 2024, amendments to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 11 September 2018 No 569 "Regulations on the Education and Professional Qualifications Required for Teachers and Procedures for Professional Competence Development of Teachers" the procedures for the improvement of the professional competence of teachers were adopted, stipulating that the professional competence development programme "Sexuality Education: An International Approach" may be acquired by a teacher as from 1 September 2025.

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 Latvia

The Committee observes that Latvia is one of the few Parties that explicitly address the challenges raised by CSGSIV as part of the information on the prevention of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children in its national curriculum.¹¹³ Moreover, both national curricula and non-formal educational activities address the challenges raised by CSGSIV.¹¹⁴

Although Latvia did not provide information as to whether such information is provided to children in an age-appropriate manner, as required by the Convention, it specified that it is delivered in both primary and secondary education.¹¹⁵

- Therefore, the Committee **invites** Latvia 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.¹¹⁶

The Committee observes that in Latvia, information on the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by ICTs and the

challenges raised by CSGSIV is covered in “social sciences and health studies”.¹¹⁷

- To ensure the effective implementation of the Convention, the Committee **invites** Latvia to provide information to children on the risks of child sexual exploitation and abuse facilitated by ICTs, including as regards CSGSIV, within a more general context of sexuality education.¹¹⁸

In terms of the involvement of the parents in the provision of information to children, the Committee notes that in Latvia, the State Police has issued brochures for parents and teachers. For example, the 2015 edition contains facts about internet safety. The 2015 brochure contains information on social media and potential threats online. The 2016 brochure contains a test for parents to find out and check if they know what their child is doing on the internet. An interactive workbook contains probing questions that parents can ask when talking to their children about internet safety, as well as tips for them to use when teaching and explaining the various safety issues to their children.¹¹⁹

Generic recommendations of the Committee on education for children

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

- CSGSIV to consistently involve children in the development of internet safety awareness

programmes.¹²⁰

- to ensure that there is a standing national internet safety resource, with an ongoing programme of activities.¹²¹

¹¹³ Para. 383.

¹¹⁴ Para. 385.

¹¹⁵ Para. 392.

¹¹⁶ Recommendation IX-6.

¹¹⁷ Para. 399.

¹¹⁸ Recommendation IX-7.

¹¹⁹ Para. 403.

¹²⁰ Recommendation IX-4.

¹²¹ Recommendation IX-5.

Promising practices:

Latvian Safer Internet Centre is continuously implementing awareness raising and education activities about online safety for children since year 2006. It has set up a youth panel involving youngsters in activities and listening to their opinions. Each year Latvian SIC visits more than 100 schools, giving lectures and providing workshops to children of all ages about the main online risks, including information about sharing of intimate images.

Currently (in 2025), the Ministry of Education has committed to reviewing the information provided in the educational content that should reach children at certain age levels. The training of specialists and the transfer of information is hampered by the fact that there is no single specific subject in which this sexual education content should be covered. However, an online course on science-based understanding of sexuality development is currently being developed for teachers.

Jimba Safety Program - holistic school-based child sexual abuse prevention program for 5-10 year old children about safety in relationships, body boundaries and seeking help, while also actively training educators and providing information for parents - provided by the Centre Dardedze reaches up to 16,000 children aged 5 to 10 per year, though knowledge about safety should reach every child. NGO also provides educational workshops to different professionals working with children to promote prevention and early identification of abuse.

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 Latvia

The Committee observes that part of the professionals who will or already work with children in Latvia receive training and/or education on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (such information is provided to future professionals as part of their curriculum during their education), which focus specifically on the risks of child sexual exploitation and abuse facilitated by ICTs,¹²² including the risks associated with CSGSIV,¹²³ in the form of trainings.¹²⁴

The health sector is one of the sectors most likely to benefit from this education and/or training, and Latvia indicated that psychology students focusing on the “clinical and health psychology” receive courses related to the prevention and therapy of abused children (one of the activities of clinical and health psychologists is to work with children who have been victims of violence and their families) as part of their curriculum.¹²⁵

The Committee notes that in Latvia some of the professionals working in contact with children 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.¹²⁶ Furthermore, some persons working in contact with children receive information on the protection and rights of children, in different frameworks and on different topics.¹²⁷

To improve the effective implementation of the Convention, the Committee **requires** Latvia:

- 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.¹²⁸

Follow-up actions:

The Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child specifies the specialists who require specialized knowledge of children’s rights to perform their professional duties. These include professionals working in education, healthcare, social protection, and other relevant fields.

Training programs on child rights protection have been developed to suit the needs of specialists in each field. These programs cover topics such as the legal framework for child rights protection; principles of the child’s best interests and the prohibition of discrimination; the right to life, survival, and development; the principle of child participation; and inter-institutional cooperation as a method for organizing child rights protection work.

The regulatory framework also establishes the

¹²² Para. 416.

¹²³ Para. 410.

¹²⁴ Para. 412.

¹²⁵ Para. 421.

¹²⁶ Para. 428.

¹²⁷ Para. 432.

¹²⁸ Recommendation X-4.

procedures for acquiring these specialized skills and specifies the regularity of their enhancement.

Without completing this training, specialists are not authorized to perform their professional duties or work on issues related to children and the protection of their rights and interests.

Paragraph 20 of Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 11 September 2018 No 569 "Regulations on the Education and Professional Qualifications Required for Teachers and Procedures for Professional Competence Development of Teachers" states that a teacher shall improve their professional competence in regard to the protection of the rights of the child for at least six hours. (link: <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/301572-noteikumi-par-pedagogiem-nepieciestasamozglitibu-un-profesionalo-kvalifikaciju-un-pedagogu-profesionalas-kompetences-pilnveides>)

- 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 areas relating to sport, culture and leisure activities.¹²⁹

The legislator has established the obligation for every individual whose professional duties affect or may affect a child's rights and legal interests to acquire specialized knowledge in the field of child rights protection. This includes learning about the types, signs, and consequences of violence against children, as well as the challenges associated with identifying such cases. *Please see previous point.*

Information on the protection of the rights of the child and on the prevention of violence is also available in sports education institutions, non-governmental sports organizations and sports clubs. For example, the Latvian Football Federation's "Guidelines for the Protection of Children's Rights" (<https://lff.lv/files/documents/1888/B%C4%93rnu%20ties%C4%ABbu%20aizsardz%C4%AB>

[bas%20VADL%C4%AANIJAS.pdf](https://lff.lv/files/documents/1940/LFF_vadlinijas_klubiem_bernu_tiesibu_aizsardziba.pdf)) and "The LFF Guidelines for the Protection of Children's Rights for Clubs" (https://lff.lv/files/documents/1940/LFF_vadlinijas_klubiem_bernu_tiesibu_aizsardziba.pdf).

In 2022, the Latvian Council of Sports Federations developed and approved the "Guidelines on Good Governance for Sports Federations", where one of the aspects of good governance requires sports federations to develop and adhere to internal cultural and ethical codes of conduct.

In the courses for children's camp leaders, the topic "Various problem situations and their prevention" analyses some situations, including sexual issues, that may arise between children in camps. The topic is led by specialists from the Centre Dardedze.

In order to prevent any, including sexual, violence against children, amendments are being prepared to the Cabinet of Ministers Regulations of 1 September 2009 No. 981 "Organization and Procedures for the Operation of Children's Camps", strengthening the requirements for camp staff and their compliance with the requirements set out in Section 72, Part five of the Protection of the Rights of the Child Law, as well as stipulating that the camp organiser, in cooperation with the camp leader, prepares and ensures an action algorithm for the measures to prevent any violence and for an action in the event of any violence. The camp is expected to have at least one adult employee (excluding economic activity staff) per 10 participants, who shall be responsible for monitoring the health, life, well-being and safety of the participants.

In order to raise the issue of action in the event of emotional or physical violence or other threats, on 2 May 2023, the Ministry sent a letter to sports education institutions with instructions that the internal regulations and the procedure for reviewing applications and complaints should be publicly available on

¹²⁹ Recommendation X-5.

the website of the professional sports education institution and that the aforementioned internal regulations should stipulate the algorithm of actions of a student in the event of emotional or physical violence or other threats, as well as that this issue should be raised by repeatedly informing the students, their legal representatives and educators (sports coaches).

In addition, in accordance with Paragraphs 15 and 20 of Cabinet of Ministers Regulation of 11 September 2018 No 569 "Regulations on the Education and Professional Qualifications Required for Teachers and Procedures for Professional Competence Development of Teachers" , in cases of necessity, a teacher (sports coach) may be required to improve the professional competence in the field of protection of the rights of children, including protection of children's rights, health and safety, the recognition and prevention of violence against children and violence in the family of a child .

On 14 November 2022, the Education Law laid down the so-called general algorithm for action in cases of violence in the educational environment, which is also binding on professional sports education institutions, by imposing the following obligations of the parties involved:

- obligations of the Local Government: to provide advisory assistance in the upbringing of children, and also ensure support measures for educatees and their families;
- obligations of the Local Government Education Administration Institution: in cooperation with State and local government authorities, develop a system of support measures for educatees and their families;
- obligations of the founder of an educational institution: after receiving information from the head of the educational institution about violence against the persons involved in the implementation of the education process, to ensure the assessment of this information and, if necessary, submit it to law enforcement authorities, and also provide

support for addressing the situation in the educational institution;

- obligations of the head of an educational institution: to assess the information received about violence against a person involved in the implementation of the education process, to inform the founder of the educational institution and address the situation in the educational institution;

- obligations of parents: to inform the head of the educational institution about the state of health of the child and any other circumstances that might affect the acquisition of the educational programme and the persons involved therein.

- 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.¹³⁰

Follow-up actions:

According to Section 70 of the Law on the Protection of the Children's Rights it is the obligation of any subject responsible for protection of the rights of the child to provide assistance in every case to a child who has need thereof, evaluating the needs of the particular child and the circumstances of the relevant situation. The child himself or herself and other persons shall have the right to seek assistance from institutions for the protection of the rights of the child and other State and local government institutions and in each case these institutions shall take statutory action in order to prevent the offence if it has been established, and also to provide support and assistance to the child. The heads of child care, educational, health care, and similar institutions in which children reside have an obligation to determine the procedures for submitting and processing children's complaints and make them known and

¹³⁰ Recommendation X-6.

accessible to children.

In 2024, the Child Protection Centre has issued manuals that also include how to report abuse:

- Cooperation network for the provision of consultative support to children with communication difficulties and behavioural disorders

<https://www.bac.gov.lv/lv/media/2334/download?attachment>

- Methodology on how to reduce aggression and violence and promote social inclusion of children with behavioural disorders and communication difficulties

<https://www.bac.gov.lv/lv/media/2337/download?attachment>

- Manual for Orphan's and Custody Courts

<https://www.bac.gov.lv/lv/media/2763/download?attachment>

Centre Dardedze organizes trainings and consultations for teachers, sport organisations and other professionals on recognising child sexual abuse risks and taking a proactive role in preventing and reporting them. We encourage establishing that safeguarding policy is mandatory for any organisation who works with children.

“Safe Sport – True Sport” - an initiative created by the Anti-Doping Bureau of Latvia together with the Child Protection Centre with the aim of informing those involved in sports about the need to report, not be afraid to seek advice and receive support by calling the Children and Adolescents Helpline, in cases where a young person or adult encounters or notices various types of abuse in sports, to encourage them not to keep silent and to speak up.

The initiative emphasizes that there are various ways to get support:

Psychological help can be received not only by calling, but also electronically by writing: uzticibaspastis116111@bac.gov.lv. Help can also be received online – in the chat window at the top of the www.uzticibastalrunis.lv website on weekdays from 12.00-20.00!

Using the “Uzticības tālrunis”.

The Cabinet of Ministers Regulations of 22 August 2023 No 474 “Procedures for ensuring preventive health care, first aid and safety of students in educational institutions and at events organized by them” have been developed, which stipulate that an educational institution shall report to the Child Protection Centre, respectively, about possible physical or emotional violence against a minor student by an employee of a state or local government educational institution, and to the State Police or local government police about possible physical or emotional violence against a minor student by an employee of a private educational institution, as shall also, in the cases specified in the Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child, take a decision on the suspension of the employee concerned from the performance of his or her duties.

Section 30, Part 3.6 of the Education Law imposes on the head of an educational institution the obligation to assess the information received on violence against the person involved in the implementation of the education process, to inform the founder of the educational institution and to address the situation in the educational institution. In turn, the founder of an educational institution, after receiving information from the head of the educational institution about violence against the persons involved in the implementation of the education process, ensure the evaluation of this information and, if necessary, submit it to law enforcement authorities, and also provide support for addressing the situation in the educational institution (Article 29, Paragraph 6 of the Education Law).

In 2023, the National Centre for Education developed methodological recommendations “Organization of Support Team Work in an Educational Institution” (available: https://registri.visc.gov.lv/specizglitiba/dokumenti/metmat/metiet_atb_komandas_darba_org_izglit_iestade.pdf), which is accompanied by a sample crisis situation management plan for educational institutions. This sample plan can also be used

in cases of any type of violence, including cyberviolence, detected in an educational institution.

According to the information provided by the association “Board of Directors of the Sports Educational Institutions of Latvia ” (hereinafter – LSIIDP), in accordance with the first and third parts of Section 5 of the Whistleblowing Law, institutions have the obligation and the right to establish an internal whistleblowing system, violations in order to proactively report on violations that may harm the public interests by endangering a part of society or interests that are essential to society (inaction, negligence or abuse of the official position, violation of human rights, prevention of violence, etc.). For example, if an employee of an educational institution fails to comply with legal provisions and violate the rights of children. The LSIIDP has developed a “Catalogue of Legal Documents for Professional Educational Institutions in Sports”, which can be found on the LSIIDP website under the “Documents” section, where samples of various documents are posted to facilitate the development of mandatory documentation for sports education institutions, including the “Internal Whistleblowing Procedure”. The form of the whistleblower’s report is available in the annex to the Internal Procedures of Institutions “Internal Whistleblower Procedures”, which can be submitted in accordance with the procedure provided for in the regulations.

Professional qualification requirements of medical personnel (professional standards)

include general knowledge and competences in the field of law and ethics, protection of patient data, digital skills, patient safety, protection of children's rights, recognition of violence and gender equality.

ESF project No 4.1.2.6/1/24/l/001 “Provision of educational opportunities for persons involved in medical treatment” offers training for medical personnel on recent developments in respect of patients' rights in the field of health care. Nurses can apply for the continuing education programme “Ethics and Law”, within the framework of which nurses are provided with the necessary professional knowledge and professional skills in the basic principles of health care ethics and legal regulation, including the basic principles of human rights.

Paragraph 3 of Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 617 (of 24 September 2024) “Regulations Regarding Competence of Medical Practitioners and Students who Acquire Medical Education Programmes in Medical Treatment and the Amount of Theoretical and Practical Knowledge of Such Persons”, states that theoretical and practical knowledge and acquisition of competence include competences in the fields of law and ethics, patient data protection, digital skills, patient safety, child rights protection, violence recognition and gender equality.

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

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

- 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.¹³¹
- to ensure that all the sectors where professionals work in contact with children, including when working on a voluntary basis,

¹³¹ Recommendation X-2.

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.¹³²

Promising practices

In Latvia, the programme “A safe school” was developed by the State Police to inform and educate the school personnel. It includes the following topic: “What can the personnel do if they find out that a child has been communicating with a stranger and sending sexual content?”.

In Latvia, the Law on the Rights of the Child provides for an obligation that all specialists who are in contact or may be in contact with children shall require special knowledge in the field of protection of the rights of the child, including: social workers, police officers, lawyers, judges, teachers, psychologists, custody court specialists, prosecutors, etc. In practice, specialists acquire a training course of 40 hours where topics concerning the rights of the child, interinstitutional cooperation, violence prevention and identification are included. Every 5 years, specialists shall take part in a 24-hour training course on the rights of the child. Usually, these training courses are financed by the state or by the municipalities. On average, approximately 600 specialists take part in the training course annually.

There have been changes to the regulation in 2024 with the aim of developing the legal framework in terms of competence and, in line with current changes in the children's rights protection system, increasing the professionalism of specialists and the efficiency of their work.:

In Latvia, the Law on the Rights of the Child provides for an obligation that all specialists who are in contact or may be in contact with children shall acquire special knowledge in the field of protection of the rights of the child, including: social workers, police officers, lawyers, judges, teachers, psychologists, custody court specialists, prosecutors, etc.

Special knowledge is acquired by specialists in one of the following ways:

- 1) improving professional competence in accordance with the procedures and requirements specified in the normative acts of this field;
- 2) participating in a professional competence improvement program (hereinafter – competence improvement program);
- 3) participating in training organized by the employer or a competence improvement program;
- 4) participating in training organized by the State Probation Service to acquire special knowledge in child protection issues for employers who ensure the execution of criminal penalties or educational compulsory measures—community service—and their employees or volunteers.

The length of the training courses, the frequency vary depending on the respective profession or field of work. The majority of professionals are required to attend competence improvement program on the rights of children. In the framework of the competence improvement program specialists within six months of taking office, being hired, being included in the list of advocates, or starting to provide services that affect or may affect the rights and legal interests of the child, acquire an initial training course of 40 hours where topics concerning the rights of the child, interinstitutional cooperation, violence prevention and identification are included. A specialist who has completed the initial training course, improves their knowledge every two years by completing one 8 hour long module of the regular program. Usually, these training courses are financed by the state, EU co-funding or by the municipalities. On average, approximately 600 specialists take part in the competence improvement program training course annually.”

¹³² Recommendation X-3.

Promising practices:

Centre Dardedze offers assistance in developing child sexual abuse prevention plans for municipal child rights councils, preschools and schools as well as in developing child protection policies for sports schools and organizations.

Latvian Safer Internet Centre Partner - Local Governments Training Centre has a specific training program for all adults who have regular contacts with children “Violations and liability on the Internet, criminal offenses against children. Examples, explanations, recommendations for action.” In 2023 more than 200 adults were trained.

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 of the Committee on research specific to Latvia

Latvia has provided information on research undertaken on the issues raised by CSGSIV in general.¹³³

was carried out by universities, and it is unclear in what capacity they were supported by the government.¹³⁵

Latvia has also informed of its participation for one or several years in the EU Kids Online research, which is a multinational research network seeking to enhance knowledge of children's online opportunities, risks, and safety. Surveys carried out in the framework of EU Kids Online collect data and information on, *inter alia*, children's practice of sending and receiving sexual messages online.¹³⁴ In the context of these surveys, Latvia has indicated that the research

The Committee observes that Latvia has also collaborated with NGOs and non-governmental initiatives or research centres. Latvia has explicitly stated that these collaborations take the form of financial support as the Latvian Safer Internet Centre is co-funded by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development and the Institute of Mathematics and Informatics of the University of Latvia.¹³⁶

Generic recommendations of the Committee on research

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

- to collect data and undertake research at the national and local levels to observe and evaluate the phenomenon of CSGSIV.¹³⁷
- 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.¹³⁸
- 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.¹³⁹

- 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 to observe and evaluate 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.¹⁴⁰

Promising practices

In Latvia, the Latvian Safer Internet Centre organised a survey among children from 13 to 18 years old, to collect data on the number of children who had sent, received and/or disseminated CSGSIV.¹⁴¹ The

¹³³ Para. 437.

¹³⁴ Para. 440.

¹³⁵ Para. 453.

¹³⁶ Survey by the Latvian Safer Internet Centre:
<https://drossinternets.lv/en/info/about-us>

¹³⁸ Recommendation XI-2.

¹³⁹ Recommendation XI-3.

¹⁴⁰ Recommendation XI-4.

¹⁴¹ Survey by the Latvian Safer Internet Centre:
<http://www.drossinternets.lv/>

results of the survey were used in an awareness raising campaign on the risks associated with sending such material. Moreover, in the framework of the campaign “I only forwarded it” organised by the “Centre Dardedze” two online surveys were undertaken. One survey addressed children from 12 to 17 years old and included among other questions on whether they knew of any peers who had sent to someone a sexually explicit image of themselves (64%), whether they had received any such image by one of their peers (42%), and whether they had forwarded a sexual image of someone else to others (9%). The second survey was addressed to parents, who were asked whether they had spoken to their children about the risks of “sexting” and what actions they had taken if their child had sent a self-generated sexual image and subsequently suffered from a bad experience.¹⁴²

Promising practices:

Latvia plans to establish a violence data monitoring system so that data (including on child sexual abuse) is collected regularly, with appropriate funding, and analyzed for future policy development.

Centre Dardedze regularly conducts a survey to find out whether parents discuss safety-related topics with their children.

In Year 2022 Latvian Safer Internet Centre in cooperation with the State Police and Child Protection Centre developed and launched grooming prevention tool <https://en.sos.drossinternets.lv/>. During 3 years period more than 9800 children and youngsters of age 8 – 17 tested their online friendship. Their answers show that 18% have experienced that their “friend” asked them to send intimate images. And 60% answered that they actually sent their intimate images after they were requested to do so. 16–17 year old youngsters were asked if their “friend” has requested to send intimate images of their younger siblings. 10% answered affirmatively, and what is even more disturbing is that 68% of them actually sent intimate images of their siblings upon request.

¹⁴² Centrs Dardedze survey: <https://www.centrsdardedze.lv/lv/jaunumi/aptauja-katrs-otrais-pusaudzis-ir-sanemis-telefona-vienaudza-kailfoto>