



**FACTSHEET – 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**

Lanzarote Committee monitoring findings on:

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

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I. Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

II. General remarks

Chapter II of the Lanzarote Convention, on “preventive measures”, states in Articles 5, 6 and 8 that States Parties should take the necessary measures to prevent all forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse and to protect children. Awareness-raising is one possible type of preventive measure, as recognised by Articles 5 and 8 of the Convention. The table in appendix II of the implementation report shows the main awareness-raising tools used by Parties to help prevent risky behaviour by children with regard to self-generated sexual images and/or videos.²

Lanzarote Convention – Chapter II - Preventive measures

Article 8 – Measures for the general public

- 1. Each Party shall promote or conduct awareness raising campaigns addressed to the general public providing information on the phenomenon of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children and on the preventive measures which can be taken.*
- 2. Each Party shall take the necessary legislative or other measures to prevent or prohibit the dissemination of materials advertising the offences established in accordance with this Convention.*

III. Promoting awareness among children

The Lanzarote Committee noted that the Parties have generally taken measures to raise awareness, mostly with a broad approach (covering the risks faced by children online and more specifically on social media, for example). The Lanzarote Committee had already commented on the need to make children aware of the risks that they face when generating and/or sharing sexual images and/or videos of themselves in its [Opinion on child sexually suggestive or explicit images and/or videos generated, shared and received by children](#) adopted on 6 June 2019.

Opinion on child sexually suggestive or explicit images and/or videos generated, shared and received by children, adopted by the Lanzarote Committee on 6 June 2019

(...) f. Concerned by the increasing number of child self-generated sexually suggestive and explicit images and/or videos that is putting more and more children at risk of harm and conscious of the need to raise children’s awareness on alternative safer ways to express their sexuality;
g. Stressing that children should be informed that “any material that visually depicts a child engaged in real or simulated sexually explicit conduct or any depiction of a child’s sexual organs for primarily sexual purposes” is defined as “child pornography” by Article 20, paragraph 2 of the Lanzarote Convention and that therefore child self-generated sexually suggestive or explicit images and/or videos could constitute “child pornography” (...)

Nevertheless, when children were consulted it was apparent that most of them were unaware of the rules applying when they generate and/or share sexual images and/or videos of themselves and many did not realise the risks involved. It is therefore essential to raise awareness among children in order to limit their risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. This must be done early enough – before they reach their teens – since it has emerged that children are generating sexual images and/or videos at an ever-younger age. Awareness-raising must also be tailored to their age and degree of maturity and be in a language that they can understand.

² The table covers the awareness-raising activities as referenced by States Parties during the monitoring period, from June 2017 to March 2022.

Recommendations of the Lanzarote Committee

The Committee **invites** the Parties:

- 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.³

- 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.⁴

1. Awareness-raising tools, materials and activities

A variety of tools, materials and activities are used to raise awareness among children: videos, cartoons, websites, posters, pamphlets, brochures, decision trees, talks, campaigns, plays and helplines. Although they are developed mainly to raise awareness among children, these tools can also be useful for promoting awareness among other key players, especially parents and persons having regular contact with children, and also the general public.

Example of a promising practice identified by the Lanzarote Committee

In **Albania**, the #Openyoureyes campaign has used a combination of visual messaging channels (TV advertisements, billboards and posters) to increase the impact of awareness-raising among children regarding the risks of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse that they may face online and the risk that the content/videos/images (including sexual content) that they generate may be misused by others.

Some awareness-raising tools and materials deal with the general aspect of online safety and staying safe on social media. Others are more specific about the risks faced by children when they generate and/or share sexual images and/or videos of themselves.

Example of a promising practice identified by the Lanzarote Committee

In the **Slovak Republic**, the Sheeplive project is a TV cartoon series for children and an international internet portal in 25 languages. It focuses on the safety of children and young people, and particularly the risks related to the internet, mobile devices and new technologies. The project is precautionary in nature for younger children. For teenagers, it seeks to highlight inappropriate behaviour, and for adults it is supposed to be informative. The “Don’t Dance with the Wolf” episode⁵ specifically considers the question of misuse of sexual photos and videos generated by children themselves.

The Lanzarote Committee suggests that awareness-raising messages for children should focus on the following:

- explaining what constitutes sexual exploitation and sexual abuse in an online environment;
- explaining the consequences and risks of creating and disseminating sexual material;
- presenting the alternatives available to teenagers for expressing their feelings and improving

³ Recommendation VIII-1.

⁴ Recommendation VIII-2.

⁵ <http://sk.sheeplive.eu/fairytales/netancuj-s-vlkom>

their relationships with others (such as conversations with a trusted person when a teenager has trouble dealing with family or peers);

- presenting the forms of support available to victims of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

The Lanzarote Committee further notes that awareness-raising tools, materials and activities must be suitable for children with disabilities so that they are not excluded, especially as they are even more vulnerable than other children.

The children consulted recommend social media and video formats as ways of spreading awareness on the risks they face when they generate and/or share sexual images and/or videos of themselves.

Recommendations of the Lanzarote Committee

The Committee **invites** Parties:

- wherever possible, to use the awareness-raising tools, materials and activities mentioned in this report as such, or else to adapt them to their national contexts and their own languages and, if necessary, to

develop new ones, concentrating on videos and distribution through social media.⁶

- to provide awareness-raising tools, materials and activities suitable for children with disabilities.⁷

2. Partners

The effectiveness of awareness-raising among children also depends on the partners.

Peer-to-peer awareness-raising

The peer-to-peer awareness-raising method is recommended by children themselves.⁸ The idea is to have a child or young adult speak to children about experience (their own or other people's) of having intimate images or videos shared against their will. This type of awareness-raising has a greater impact on children than if done by an adult, since children identify more easily with the young person talking to them. It also has the great advantage of being a practical example of participation of children in the fight against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, as required by Article 9, paragraph 1, of the Lanzarote Convention.

Example of a promising practice identified by the Lanzarote Committee

ECPAT's "make-IT-safe" project is a peer expert training project in which children and youngsters have been taught how to use the internet and smart phones safely and how to use social media, such as Facebook, Myspace, Netlog and WhatsApp in a responsible way. The two-year project started at the beginning of 2013 and is based on the peer-to-peer principle, which allows youngsters (peer experts) to learn how to use new technologies and the media, as well as prevention of online violence, in a safe way and to pass on the information and the knowledge to people of the same age. The project was supported by special trained teachers and youth leaders, known as "coaches". The particularity of the project is the fact that the project was conducted by ECPAT groups in five countries, namely in **Austria, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands** and the **United Kingdom**. The information is available in seven

⁶ Recommendation VIII-3.

⁷ Recommendation VIII-4.

⁸ Ministry of Justice, Science and Technology Foundation, Child Support Institute (Portugal), May 2019.

languages (Arabic, Serbo-Croat, Dutch, English, French, German and Turkish). Information is provided on the project's website (<http://www.make-it-safe.net/>).

Awareness-raising by the information and communication technology sector, the media and other professionals

Lanzarote Convention – Chapter II – Preventive measures

Article 9 – Participation of children, the private sector, the media and civil society

(...)

2. Each Party shall encourage the private sector, in particular the information and communication technology sector, the tourism and travel industry and the banking and finance sectors, as well as civil society, to participate in the elaboration and implementation of policies to prevent sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children and to implement internal norms through self-regulation or co-regulation.

3. Each Party shall encourage the media to provide appropriate information concerning all aspects of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, with due respect for the independence of the media and freedom of the press. (...)

Telecommunication companies also play a large part in raising awareness of the risks associated with internet use thanks to their extensive network coverage and development of free filtering programmes to block websites and forums making pornography easily available. These companies may work together with government departments involved in child protection and with psychologists and specialised educators.

Example of a promising practice identified by the Lanzarote Committee:

In **Germany**, extensive amendments were made to the Youth Protection Act (*Jugendschutzgesetz, JuSchG*), in May 2021. Special attention was paid to media protection for children and young to be able to better protect them from risks such as cybergrooming or planning and instigating sexual abuse. Pursuant to the new section 24a of the *JuSchG*, providers such as social media services or game and film platforms are required to take preventive measures. These include making available simple reporting and complaint procedures, reliable age checks, chat moderation, or tools for parents to monitor the media use of their children. The National Centre for Child and Youth Media Protection (*Bundeszentrale für Kinder- und Jugendmedienschutz*), which was established with the reform, reviews the implementation, design and appropriateness of the measures taken by service providers, and supports the orientation of children and adolescents, parents and professionals, and providers.

In most countries, besides monitoring and combating cybercrime (investigation into and identification of victims and perpetrators of crimes), the police also organises and/or actively assists in conducting awareness sessions.

Awareness-raising by civil society

Article 9 of the Lanzarote Convention makes clear that civil society also has a part to play, encouraged by the States Parties, in making children aware of the risks that they face. Another chapter of the implementation report is dedicated to civil society involvement and cooperation.⁹

⁹ Lanzarote Committee. (2022). [Second implementation report: 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. Thematic factsheet on Civil society involvement and cooperation.

Recommendations of the Lanzarote Committee

The Committee **invites** Parties:

- to ensure that awareness raising for children of 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 to improve its impact.¹⁰
- to do more to encourage the information and communication 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.¹¹

IV. Promoting awareness among parents and adults with parental responsibilities

The children consulted believed that the general information provided to parents, when it existed, did not cover issues relating to the safety of children online.

Recommendation of the Lanzarote Committee

The Committee **invites** Parties:

- to introduce or 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.¹²

V. Promoting public awareness

Public awareness programmes on challenges raised by CSGSIV do not seem to have been set up in States Parties to the Lanzarote Convention. Of course, awareness-raising tools developed in other circumstances can also be used to promote public awareness. However, they are not necessarily tailored to the specific needs of the latter. The Lanzarote Committee nevertheless draws attention to the obligation under Article 8 of the Convention: “Each Party shall promote or conduct awareness raising campaigns addressed to the general public providing information on the phenomenon of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children and on the preventive measures which can be taken.”

Recommendation of the Lanzarote Committee

The Committee **invites** the Parties:

- 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

¹⁰ Recommendation VIII-5.

¹¹ Recommendation VIII-6.

¹² Recommendation VIII-7.

about the preventive measures that can be taken.¹³

VI. Co-ordination of bodies responsible for carrying out awareness-raising activities

Lanzarote Convention – Chapter III – Specialised authorities and co-ordination bodies

Article 10 – National measures of co-ordination and collaboration

1. Each Party shall take the necessary measures to ensure the co-ordination on a national or local level between the different agencies in charge of the protection from, the prevention of and the fight against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children, notably the education sector, the health sector, the social services and the law-enforcement and judicial authorities.

The Parties to the Convention have a general obligation, under Article 10, to take the necessary measures to ensure co-ordination of the agencies in charge of, amongst other things, the prevention of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children. This also concerns the co-ordination of bodies 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. The Committee notes that there seems to be little co-ordination of these awareness-raising activities locally or nationally in the Parties.

Example of a promising practice identified by the Lanzarote Committee:

The **Hungarian** National Cybersecurity Coordination Council (established by government decree in 2013) contains various working groups, including one on child protection (especially protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse facilitated by information and communication technologies). The Council draws its members and advisers from relevant stakeholders (Ministry of Education, the police, justice system, etc.) and is responsible for running programmes, including risk prevention for children. The President of the Council may also seek advice from associations and private institutions (National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH), etc.).

Recommendation of the Lanzarote Committee

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

- 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.¹⁴

¹³ Recommendation VIII-8.

¹⁴ Recommendation VIII-9.