

Guidelines for policy makers on engaging with victims and survivors of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

“Nothing About Us Without Us”



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Guidelines for policy makers on engaging with victims and survivors of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

"Nothing About Us Without Us"

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*French edition:
Lignes directrices destinées aux responsables
politiques concernant la participation des victimes
et survivant-es d'exploitation et d'abus sexuels
subis dans l'enfance
« Rien sur nous sans nous »*

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Each child has the right to grow up free from violence. The responsibility to uphold and respect this right as well as to protect children from all forms of violence is shared by all those who come into contact with the child. Clear, evidence-based legislation and policies provide the framework within which each child can enjoy their right to a life free from violence and access redress in case of a violation of that right.

Child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse are some of the worst forms of violence a child can experience. They can negatively affect all areas of the child's life and often result in trauma that will also impact their health and well-being as adults. When ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 195 countries around the world¹ made a legally binding commitment to protect children from these crimes. This commitment was further reinforced through its [Optional Protocol](#) on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (ratified by 178 countries²). 48 countries to date have further strengthened these commitments by ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse ([Lanzarote Convention](#)), which provides a comprehensive blueprint to prevent sexual violence against children, protect victims and fight the impunity of perpetrators. The 48 countries that have ratified this Convention to date monitor its implementation through the Lanzarote Committee which, since 2016, has sought to strengthen its engagement with victims and survivors.

Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse affect children in every country, in every community and at every level of society. Preventing these crimes and protecting children is a complex task which requires co-operation among multiple public and private stakeholders. Countries must establish comprehensive legislation to criminalise all forms of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation (Articles 18 to 24 of the Lanzarote Convention), ensure clear procedures for investigations, prosecutions and offender management (Articles 30 to 37 of the Lanzarote Convention), and policies to raise awareness, train professionals and provide support to victims and their families (Articles 4 to 14 of the Lanzarote Convention).

Victim or survivor?

It is important to note that people with lived experience may choose to identify with the term "victim" or "survivor" or another term. We have decided to refer to "victims and survivors" throughout this text to be as inclusive as possible. It is recommended to use the term that an individual prefers when engaging with them.

Engaging with people who have experienced sexual exploitation and sexual abuse during childhood (victims and survivors) is critical to ensure an evidence-informed approach to legal and policy reforms that will efficiently prevent and respond to sexual violence. Meaningful engagement with victims and survivors allows us to identify gaps in systems and services, to learn from past failures and, very importantly, offer an opportunity for people with lived experience to advocate for the changes needed. Because of their traumatic experience, victims and survivors may have special needs and expectations that must be taken into account when inviting them to participate in discussions and processes concerning sexual

violence. These guidelines are designed to support policy makers in engaging with victims and survivors in a meaningful way. By implementing these guidelines policy makers will take important steps towards establishing a victim-survivor centred framework based on prevention, healing and justice. Their implementation will help States to meet their international obligations to end all forms of sexual violence.

1. State of ratifications as at 1 February 2024.
2. State of ratifications as at 1 February 2024.

Background

In 2016 the Council of Europe hosted the first international forum for victims and survivors of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, which was organised by ECPAT International. Many survivor advocates spoke at this forum, including the authors of these guidelines, to raise awareness about the importance for policy makers to engage with victims and survivors. One of the outcomes of the forum was a call for the development of a protocol or guidance document for policy makers on key safeguards and procedures that need to be in place in order to engage meaningfully with victims and survivors whilst minimising any risk of re-traumatisation.

Since 2016, the Committee of the Parties to the Lanzarote Convention ([Lanzarote Committee](#)) has sought to strengthen its engagement with victims and survivors in the context of monitoring the implementation of the Convention, building capacities and raising awareness about these crimes and the steps policy makers can take to effectively prevent and protect children from them.

In 2023, the Lanzarote Committee granted observer status to the [Brave Movement](#) and the [Global Collaborative](#), which are both international civil society organisations led by victims and survivors, thus ensuring engagement with victims and survivors of childhood sexual violence in the course of its work.

The 2023 edition of the annual awareness-raising day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (18th of November) was dedicated to: “[Learning from victims and survivors of childhood sexual violence to inspire policy change](#)”. In November 2023, the Lanzarote Committee held an [exchange](#) with survivor advocates and organisations. These guidelines include feedback received from the Committee and panel members during that meeting. In addition to the development of these guidelines, the Council of Europe has published a [paper](#) which also includes findings from an online consultation with organisations about their engagement with victims and survivors.

Some victims and survivors who have taken up the mantle of public and active engagement in advocacy efforts within their communities and with policy makers prefer to be referred to as “Survivor advocates”. This commitment generally implies:

- ▶ investing time and resources in personal healing to be able to engage with policy makers;
- ▶ being well informed of gaps and solutions needed to bridge those gaps at country or regional level;
- ▶ establishing networks and working collaboratively with various government and community sectors to better protect children.

The Lanzarote Convention requires State Parties to raise awareness about child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse at all levels of society (Article 8), and to encourage the participation of children, the private sector, media and civil society in efforts to prevent and combat these crimes (Article 9). It also emphasises the importance of multi-stakeholder co-ordination at national and local level between different agencies in charge of protecting children and preventing child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Article 10).

Engaging with victims and survivors in line with these guidelines will significantly contribute to meeting these obligations.

Scope of these guidelines

These guidelines have been designed to provide a framework to support policy makers to meaningfully engage with victims and survivors. They can be used to engage victims and survivors in:

- ▶ the development, review or reform of legislation, policies and initiatives;
- ▶ social engagement initiatives;
- ▶ healing initiatives;
- ▶ community education; and
- ▶ change platforms.

This would ensure that both the lived experience and professional expertise of victims and survivors are utilised to guide and enhance policies, legislation and law reform which is critical to address and combat this crime.

Engagement with victims and survivors should be mainstreamed across all activities and policy-making processes, including in a wide range of contexts beyond the development or review of legislation and policies directly linked to child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, such as:

- ▶ child-friendly justice reforms;
- ▶ health and social care planning;
- ▶ urban planning and design;
- ▶ design of sport and leisure facilities; and
- ▶ development of other services.

It is important to remember that victims and survivors may choose to engage with policy makers in a variety of ways, ranging from anonymous or confidential contributions to calls for evidence in the context of an inquiry, to public participation in public hearings or public advocacy. It is important to remember that victims and survivors engage with policy makers for different reasons and may choose not to publicly disclose their identity for multiple reasons. These may include considerations such as: stages of healing, risk of stigmatisation, or threats to their safety.³

These guidelines provide insights into the process necessary to engage with victims and survivors and create a space for dialogue. They identify some key actions that policy makers can take to address the needs of victims and survivors during this process. These guidelines can also help policy makers understand the challenges victims and survivors may face during this process. The four principles set out below can help to ensure that victims and survivors engage on their own terms and that necessary enabling environments, safety measures and structures are in place to support them.⁴

Use of these guidelines can inform policy makers regarding the structure and process necessary to ensure meaningful engagement. This in turn will enhance policy and legislative reform processes. Meaningful engagement can also be a way to give visibility and recognition to victims and survivors as people with lived

3. For further information and resources see Moreno, E (2023) [Advocacy by persons with lived experience of sexual violence in childhood](#).

4. Idem.

experience and professional expertise while at the same time reducing the public stigma and discrimination they face. This is essential to encourage disclosure of child sexual abuse and ensure access to appropriate support to empower victims and survivors to fully participate in society. These guidelines provide a structure upon which policy makers can develop strategies and victims and survivors can build their advocacy efforts.

Combatting child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse requires multi-stakeholder and interagency co-operation (see Article 10 Lanzarote Convention).

These guidelines have not been designed to address specific considerations and safeguards applicable when engaging with children under the age of 18. Specific safeguards need to be in place when engaging with this age group on child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Useful resources and guidance for engaging with children under 18 can be found in the Council of Europe Handbook on children's participation: "[Listen – Act – Change](#)" and the Child Participation for Europe [CP4E web platform](#).⁵

"Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being"⁶

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5. Other useful resources include: Cody, C and Soares, C. (2023) 'Seeing things from both sides: A comic to help young people and professionals understand each other's views about young survivors' participation in efforts to address child sexual abuse and exploitation'; and also WeProtect Global Alliance child and survivor participation resources: www.weprotect.org/response/child-survivor-participation/
 6. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. [SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#). HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014.

What is meaningful engagement?

The concept of meaningful engagement with people with lived experience emphasises that the people most impacted by any policy or advocacy work should always be involved in its creation and implementation. In the context of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, victims and survivors are the people most impacted.

“Meaningful engagement in policy making” means:

respectful, dignified and equitable inclusion of individuals with lived experience in a range of processes and activities within an enabling environment [...] valuing lived experience as a form of expertise [...],⁷ and ensuring that people who are or have been impacted by an issue are involved in developing, implementing, and evaluating the effectiveness of strategies to address the issue.⁸

In order to be meaningful engagement will be:

1. trauma informed;
2. uphold the self-determination of those involved;
3. empower and value the victims and survivors involved; and
4. ensure equality.

It is a continuous and ongoing process: from conceptualising a policy, adopting and implementing it, through to evaluating the impact it has had. The engagement of victims and survivors is not a one-off event but a process, and will look different at each stage of the policy cycle.

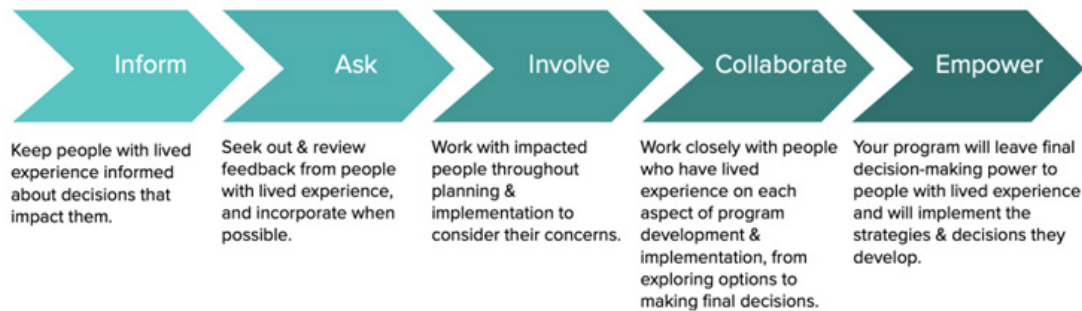
Meaningful engagement occurs across a spectrum of different situations and should be understood as occurring along a scale of different levels of engagement rather than something one can simply turn on and off. Different levels of engagement may be appropriate in different contexts.⁹

7. World Health Organisation definition of [Meaningful engagement of people with lived experience of noncommunicable diseases and mental health and neurological condition](#).

8. C. Ash and S. Otiende. [Meaningful Engagement of People with Lived Experience: A framework and assessment for increasing lived experience leadership across the spectrum of engagement](#). Global Fund to End Modern Slavery and National Survivor Network-Cast, Washington, DC (2023).

9. Idem.

Spectrum of Meaningful Engagement



Adapted from the International Association of Public Participation's [Spectrum of Public Participation](#) by Chris Ash for [Expanding Our Reach, 2019](#).

Inform

At this stage, the goal is to keep victims and survivors well-informed about the policies and decisions that affect them. The emphasis is on transparency, a fundamental principle in trauma-informed practice.

This approach ensures openness and implies providing victims and survivors with accessible, clear, and precise information regarding policies and policy-making processes, which enables them to articulate and exchange their perspectives effectively.

Example

Ensure that information and materials about a policy are available in plain language and can be understood by victims and survivors.

Ask

At this stage, policy makers intentionally seek out feedback by having victims and survivors review documents or policies and try to incorporate their feedback. This can be as simple as sending out a survey inviting victims and survivors to give feedback. It can also include hiring victims and survivors as consultants to review policy documents and give feedback.

Example

Gather testimonies from victims and survivors about their experiences of policies and services designed to prevent sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and protect children, and incorporate analysis of those findings to improve and strengthen policies.

Involve

At this stage, victims and survivors actively participate in the planning and implementation process, their concerns are addressed, and their feedback is incorporated into the process. This involvement starts from the initial stages of conceptualising a project plan or policy-making process, ensuring a robust foundation. There is a deliberate effort to involve victims and survivors from the outset, facilitating their ongoing engagement with the policy development team. This continuous involvement allows them to offer feedback on the policy-making process and participate in the final review process.

Example

Establishment of a 'lived experience' advisory committee comprised of victims and survivors to engage in and support policy development.

Case study:

[Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse](#) (England and Wales)

The Inquiry was established in 2015 to gather testimonies and investigate institutions that failed to protect children in their care, identify what should have been done differently, and make recommendations for change and improvements. It published its [final report](#) in 2022.

Ask: The Inquiry heard from thousands of victims and survivors through the Truth Project. This was a listening exercise to gather testimonies and experiences from victims and survivors to help shape the Inquiry's final recommendations. A Victim and Survivors' Forum was also set up in 2016, experiences gathered through this forum resulted in the publication of [summary reports](#) on specific topics.

Involve: The Inquiry also included a Victims and Survivors Consultative Panel (VSCP) consisting of seven victims and survivors with professional experience of providing specialist services, advocacy and support for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. The VSCP provided advice to the Chair and Panel of the Inquiry and offered guidance across all areas of the Inquiry's work.

Collaborate

At this level, victims and survivors work closely with policy makers in every facet of the process, from exploring options to the ultimate decision-making process. This deep level of engagement implies that victims and survivors are included and well-represented in policy-making bodies.

Example

Employ victims and survivors within the workforce or as contractors.

Case Study:

[Independent Commission on incest and sexual violence against children](#) (France)

The Commission was established in 2021 for an initial fixed term of 3 years. After publication of its [final report](#) in 2023 its mandate was prolonged in 2024.

Ask: The Commission's mandate was to provide victims and witnesses with a space to share their testimonies, conduct research and make recommendations to strengthen policies to better prevent sexual violence and protect children. More than 30,000 testimonies were collected during its mandate.

Collaborate: The Commission was composed of 27 experts, including various professionals, victims and survivors and representatives of victims' and survivors' associations.

Empower

This form of engagement refers to a situation where victims and survivors are recognised for their lived experience expertise and its relevance in guiding policy design, research, and implementation. This form of engagement means that policy makers commit to implement the strategies and decisions formulated in collaboration with victims and survivors.

It is important to note that while 'empowerment' is the highest level of engagement, it does not necessarily mean that victims and survivors have the ultimate say in decision making. In this context 'empowerment' implies that the opinions, ideas and input from victims and survivors are respected, valued and included, even if the decisions makers retain the responsibility and discretion in how to implement the recommendations made on legislation, policy and practice. Empowerment may also imply that decision makers can be asked to report on the implementation or lack of implementation of recommendations made by victims and survivors.

Example

Recommendations made by victims and survivors result in the development of a new law or policy.

Case study:**Office of the Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues** (Germany)

The Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues is the Federal Government's Office which was established in 2010 to address the concerns of victims and survivors, their families and other relevant stakeholders engaged in the protection of children and adolescents from sexual violence. The Office was declared permanent by the Federal Cabinet in 2018. Its main tasks include identifying areas where legal action or investigation is needed and ensuring systematic and independent investigations into child sexual abuse.

Ask: An Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Germany was established in 2018 to investigate sexual violence against children. The inquiry gathers experiences and testimonies from victims and survivors through confidential hearings and written reports and makes recommendations to policy makers and civil society.

Collaborate: The Survivors' Board provides structured and continuous advice to the Commissioner's Office. Survivors' Board members advocate for action on the basis of the concerns of victims and survivors of sexual violence, including by gathering feedback from victims and survivors in Germany in order to bring their concerns into political discourse and raise public awareness.

Empower: The current Independent Commissioner for Child Sexual Abuse Issues, Kerstin Claus, was a member of the Survivors' Board for seven years before her appointment. The Commissioner has a mandate at Federal and State level to:

- ▶ inform and raise awareness about child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse;
- ▶ improve protection against child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse;
- ▶ identify legal gaps, areas for action and research gaps;
- ▶ take care of the concerns of victims and survivors;

ensure a systematic and independent investigation into child sexual abuse in Germany.

In addition, a national council of 300 experts including politicians, child protection professionals, academics, civil society organisations and victims and survivors was established in 2019 to ensure long-term multi-stakeholder co-operation and dialogue. The Council is jointly led by the Commissioner and the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs.

Why should policy makers engage with victims and survivors?

Meaningful engagement between policy makers and victims and survivors not only enhances policy development but can also create a shift in the healing and recovery of the victims and survivors involved. It can also result in increased confidence among victims and survivors to engage with the policies and legislation designed to assist them.¹⁰ Victims and survivors must be afforded a respectful and inclusive place in policy making to ensure effective, robust, productive and holistic policies. Victims and survivors are a source of insights and solutions needed to address this global crime. It is crucial for engagement to be structured and embedded in long-term policies to avoid tokenistic pockets of engagement.

Remember that engaging with policy makers in a public manner takes a lot of energy and may expose the victim and survivor to media attention. It is important to provide opportunities for victims and survivors to engage in different ways, including by respecting their wish to not publicly disclose their experience. Policy makers should ensure that victims and survivors can engage in a way that is suited to their needs and expectations. The appropriate safeguards need to be in place to ensure an enabling environment for victims and survivors who chose to engage.

Collaborating with and incorporating victims and survivors into policy making can yield considerable benefits, including:

- ▶ greater understanding and awareness of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse itself and how to engage with victims and survivors in appropriate ways across all layers of government and community sectors;
- ▶ greater awareness about child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse which contributes to reduce ignorance, silence and stigma faced by victims and survivors;
- ▶ increased visibility for victims and survivors engaging in open and respectful dialogue which in turn may increase the confidence for other victims and survivors to start to engage with policy makers;
- ▶ access to real-time feedback from people with lived experience, ensuring that policies are designed in an effective way to address the real needs and issues faced by victims and survivors;
- ▶ policy efficiency by means of ensuring those most impacted by these issues are able to contribute to policy development and implementation;
- ▶ enhanced mutual understanding and strengthened respectful and active relationships between policy makers, victims and survivors through dialogical engagement and communication, leading to reciprocal insight, learning and positive relationship growth.

It is expected that such dialogical engagement will bring profound benefits to policy makers, victims and survivors when done well. Sharing of promising practices on engagement with victims and survivors is crucial and can assist policy makers around the world to develop such engagement in line with these practices.

¹⁰ Taylor, S Caroline, Bradley, David, Muldoon, Shane & Norma, Caroline *Policing Just Outcomes: Improving the Police Response to Adults Reporting Sexual Assault (Final Report)* 2012.

How can policy makers plan engagement processes?

When planning how to engage with victims and survivors, policy makers should think about the purpose and scope of the engagement. Can it be open to all victims and survivors or do you need a combination of lived experience and professional expertise? In the latter case it may be more appropriate to engage with victims and survivors who are already actively engaged in advocacy (sometimes referred to as survivor advocates – see above). Safety and equality, including gender equality, are also important considerations at this planning stage.

Survivor advocates will often be linked into victim and survivor groups or organisations and may also have connections with other stakeholders who could be relevant to the process. They may have developed the capacity to identify relevant issues and needs and be able to articulate the varying degrees of urgency needed to address them. They may also have experience in campaigning and media messaging.

Principles for meaningful engagement

In order to be meaningful engagement will:



Trauma-Informed engagement

Engagement with victims and survivors should consider the impact of trauma and the effects it can have, in order to create a process that does not further re-traumatise victims and survivors.

Being Trauma-informed means:

1. Realising the prevalence of trauma and understanding how it can affect families, groups, organisations, communities and individuals;
2. Recognising the signs of trauma;
3. Responding by putting this knowledge into practice; and
4. Actively seeking to resist re-traumatisation.¹¹

What does this look like in practice?

- ▶ **Training** - Policy makers should be trained on how to engage with victims and survivors. Social workers, psychologists, and other health professionals trained in trauma could deliver such training. Survivor advocates with professional experience in this area are also an excellent resource, as they can convey a trauma-informed understanding of the extent and range of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, as well as insights into current barriers to detection, disclosure, prosecution and healing. Survivor advocates would also be able to provide first-hand insights into the short- and longer-term mental and physical health implications for victims and survivors and the importance of addressing them.¹²
- ▶ **Safety** - ensuring that victims and survivors who participate are physically and psychologically safe is vital. The process should recognise that the safety needs are personal. Therefore, it is essential to work with participating victims and survivors to identify their needs and support required in order to create an enabling environment for their participation. This should be done in advance of any participation or engagement activities and could lead to the establishment of an agreement between the participating victims, survivors and policy makers on the “ground rules” applicable throughout the engagement process. This also requires incorporating trauma awareness into the process when developing policies with victims and survivors. This can include training for everyone involved on the impact of trauma and how to identify situations that could lead to re-traumatisation or triggering. It could also include ensuring that victims and survivors have access to mental health support and any other support they might need throughout the engagement process.
- ▶ **Peer support** - working with more than one victim or survivor ensures that those participating do not feel isolated and can have peer support from people with lived experience. This means avoiding engaging with only a single victim or survivor.

11. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. [SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#). HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014.

12. Useful resources include: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. [SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#). HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014. See also Taylor, SC, Pugh, J., Goodwach, R. & Coles, J. 'Sexual Trauma in Women: the importance of identifying a history of sexual violence' *Australian Family Physician* (2012) 41(7), 538.

Upholding self-determination

When engaging with victims and survivors, it is crucial to acknowledge and respect their autonomy. In this case, acknowledgement is the recognition that they are experts in their own experience. In addition, their expertise deserves respect like any other expertise in the process. This principle also requires policy makers to be led and guided by them on what they feel comfortable discussing, specifically from their own experience, during the engagement process. Self-determination begins by allowing victims and survivors to define themselves and their boundaries as they engage with policy makers.

What does this look like in practice?

- ▶ **Informed and continuous consent** – Informed consent must be obtained when working with victims and survivors on policy development in line with established promising practices. The ethical process of obtaining permission should consider all the power dynamics involved when working with victims and survivors in situations where they might not feel like they have control. An ethical process should ensure that the permission obtained is:
 - **Voluntary** – Victims and survivors know they are engaging of their own free will, understand the process of withdrawing consent and the impact at each stage if they decide to withdraw that consent. Policy makers should give this information at the beginning of the process, clarifying what the process will look like from beginning to end and informing victims and survivors of how to withdraw consent.
 - **Informed** – victims and survivors should understand the process of policy development and the impact of its implementation. Clarity should also be given regarding the expected participation level and how much participants can control the process. When ensuring that victims and survivors understand consent, accessibility becomes extremely important: language, comprehension and skills should be considered when communicating with participants.
 - **Continuous/dynamic** – consent is not an event, it is a process. Confirmation of boundaries or what encompasses consent should continuously be evaluated and the opportunity to withdraw consent should always be available. When designing an engagement process, having the flexibility to allow people agency to participate in different ways ensures that consent is continuous.
- ▶ **Self-identification** – This requires victims and survivors to choose how they want to be identified throughout the process.
 - Do they want to engage publicly or anonymously?
 - What names and titles do they want to use?
 - Do they want their images used?

The above might change throughout the engagement, and the process should be flexible enough to make these changes possible, as individuals choose how to exercise their agency during this process.

It is important to note that just because they have agreed to participate in the process does not mean they want to be identified as victims or survivors. Individuals can face stigma as a result of using these terms. Therefore, allowing them to choose how they are identified gives them the agency to select something they are comfortable with and guarantees their safety.

If it is not clear, the best option would be to cite and acknowledge the contribution of the person with lived experience.

Empowering and valuing victims and survivors

The process of engaging with victims and survivors should empower them to continue to grow as stakeholders in the policy-making process. An empowering process guarantees that victims and survivors can participate by addressing all the barriers that may limit their participation.

What does this look like in practice?

- ▶ **Compensation** – There should be compensation for engagement in the process. It is not appropriate to solely rely on volunteer activists to engage with policy makers in these processes. The policy development process needs to value and compensate lived experience in the same way as any other expertise is valued and compensated. Hiring victims and survivors as staff or consultants, depending on the form of engagement, and paying them at the market rate would ensure this is the case.
- ▶ **Transparency** – Policy makers need to provide clarity about the level of influence the feedback and engagement of victims and survivors will have on the outcome of the engagement process. This can be achieved by being clear on how, where and in what form input will be used. It is essential to be honest about the limitations of the policy development process, for example if the input received from victims and survivors will be taken into account but not necessarily determine the final outcome.
- ▶ **Accessibility** – Ensuring engagement is accessible requires a deliberate process to identify and implement measures to limit any barriers to participation that may be faced by victims and survivors. This includes adapting language, technology and taking into account any cultural differences. It is important to ensure that materials are available in accessible languages that are relevant for the victims and survivors that policy makers are seeking to engage with; This may imply translating materials when appropriate. For example, the official language in a country may not be the first language for the victims and survivors you are seeking to engage with. Failing to provide appropriate translation and interpretation services could be a barrier to engagement. Many processes have also become dependent on technology, especially as regards online procedures; victims and survivor must have access to and understand the technology used by the policy-making process.

Ensuring equality

Survivors come into the policy development process with many experiences, and policy makers can benefit from the contribution of multiple, diverse experiences. In order to uphold the principle of equality policy makers should think about the diversity of experiences of those who will participate and integrate participation into the policy development process.

Offenders of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse permeate all layers of culture, society and class. It is also important to remember that a significant percentage of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse occurs within a familial setting, where family members are the offenders. Particular attention should be taken to ensure that victims and survivors of intrafamilial abuse are included in engagement processes.

What does this look like in practice?

Policy makers will need to take into account the personal characteristics, status or groups that victims or survivors represent. This would require considerations of personal characteristics including but not limited to: "race",¹³ colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics. It may also be important to consider socio-economic status, regional presence and locality to ensure equality and diversity in the context of policy development.

Policy makers will also need to identify any barriers that might hinder certain groups from participating over others and then take action to remove those barriers. For example, victims or survivors living with a disability might need special adjustments to be able to participate effectively. Victims or survivors with pending criminal or civil justice proceedings may require their identity to be withheld from public circulation. Victims or survivors with changed identities or who are involved in their capacity as public figures may also require specific support.

Remember that a significant majority of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse is committed by someone the child knows and trusts (including family members). It is urgent for policy makers to address this issue when developing or reviewing policies related to safeguarding children, online safety and embedding identified promising practices to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

13. Since all human beings belong to the same species, the Committee of Ministers rejects, as does ECRI, theories based on the existence of different "races". However, in this document, the term "race" is used in order to ensure that those persons who are generally and erroneously perceived as "belonging to another race" are not excluded from the process.

Practical steps to implement these guidelines

Thank you for taking the time to read these guidelines, you are now invited to:

- ▶ Endorse the principles contained in these guidelines;
- ▶ Raise awareness among other relevant stakeholders to encourage them to use these guidelines;
- ▶ Implement these guidelines by:
 - planning milestones for implementation including: training of staff, identification of victims and survivors to be involved, timelines for the engagement process, expected outcomes, communication of outcomes including how the engagement will influence the results/conclusions of the process;
 - securing funding in order to train staff, provide support to victims and survivors and implement safeguards set out in these guidelines; and
 - utilising, where possible, training programmes designed and led by victims and survivor advocates with professional experience in the delivery of training and education.
- ▶ Monitor the implementation of these guidelines throughout the policy cycle;
- ▶ Make your activities and initiatives known by including information on progress made to engage with victims and survivors in policy development in reports to international bodies such as the Lanzarote Committee, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the UN Human Rights Council, and other fora such as the WeProtect Global Alliance.

Glossary

Child	Any person under the age of 18 years; Article 3 a) of the Lanzarote Convention
Child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (CSEA)	Behaviour as referred to in Articles 18 to 23 of the Lanzarote Convention; Article 3 b) of the Lanzarote Convention
Policy makers	Governments, local and regional authorities, parliamentarians, public and private stakeholders delivering public services (including in education, health, social care and justice sectors)
Victims and survivors	Any person who has experienced sexual exploitation or sexual abuse as a child
Survivor advocates	Victims and survivors of child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse who are actively engaged in advocacy efforts in their communities and with policy makers
Trauma	“Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being” ¹⁴
Trauma-informed practice	Practices that have these key elements: “(1) realising the prevalence of trauma; (2) recognising how trauma affects all individuals involved with the program, organisation, or system, including its workforce; and (3) responding by putting this knowledge into practice, (4) Actively seeking to resist re-traumatisation.” ¹⁵

14. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014.

15. Ibid.

www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.