

18 November 2025

**Joint Statement on the Day for the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation
and Sexual Abuse (18 November 2025)**

**issued by six Council of Europe member States
(Andorra, Belgium, Luxembourg, Monaco, San Marino and Slovenia)**

and supported by 40 other Council of Europe member States:

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Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden,
Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom**

**“Strengthening the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse through
evidence-based policy making”**

This year marks the **15th anniversary** of the entry into force of the Lanzarote Convention, a treaty that is and remains a landmark instrument of international law destined to tackle child sexual abuse and exploitation.

On this occasion, we express our heartfelt compassion with those children who have been victims of sexual abuse and exploitation. Their suffering is a stark reminder of the continuous need for protection, compassion, and justice.

The Council of Europe and its member States remain steadfast in **their commitment to ending child exploitation and abuse**, and to upholding every child's right to safety, dignity, and well-being, as demonstrated by the [declaration](#) adopted during the Informal Ministerial Conference in Valletta.

Yet, as we strive to build effective prevention mechanisms, the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention continues to encounter a critical obstacle, namely gaps in **the data**. Missing, inaccurate, or underdeveloped data continues to hinder progress.

While the word “data” may sound abstract, technical, or impersonal, we must never lose sight of the fact that every statistic represents a child. A story. A life. And today, we ask to look beyond the abstract nature of these numbers and confront a sobering reality: 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 7 boys globally still experience sexual exploitation or abuse.

Despite the consensus that these abuses must be addressed, underreporting remains prevalent, which not only creates a dangerous knowledge gap but also threatens response capabilities, putting children at risk of not receiving the help they need.

We therefore call upon states to give due attention to the recommendations outlined in the 2025 Lanzarote Committee's implementation report [“Data collection mechanisms on child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.”](#)

First and foremost, we need to **expand data collection practices beyond traditional crime statistics**. It is essential to incorporate data from education, health, social services, and civil society. These actors can provide crucial insights into the broader context of abuse, thereby exposing risks factors and patterns, shedding light on the dynamics of the circle of trust and identifying opportunities for early intervention.

Moreover, for data to be meaningful, it must be collected **in a manner that is accurate, consistent, and methodologically sound**. States are encouraged to adopt harmonised standards for data entry and classification, allowing the collected statistics to be catalogued in internationally comparable categories. The designation of regional and national focal points that coordinate the collection, systematisation, and analysis

of child protection data is another tool to ensure that data effectively informs policy, and that it does so in a way that allows for adaptation, evaluation, and accountability over time.

A subsequent recommendation points towards the vital importance of **enhanced cooperation across borders**. To this end, frameworks such as the *United Nations' International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes* and the *International Classification on Violence Against Children*, allow the harmonisation of data, the sharing of insights across borders and therefore the more effective tackling of international phenomena such as the proliferation of child sexual abuse material.

For effective and responsive child protection policies, the inclusion of children's voices is equally important. While this is undoubtedly a sensitive issue, the **report underscores that surveying children's experiences and perspectives** is both feasible and necessary. As the primary stakeholders and beneficiaries of child protection policies, their insights are indispensable to understanding what works, and what doesn't. The perspective of survivors and victims of abuse during their childhood can also be a valuable source of best practices.

These are just a few recommendations put forward by the report. Today, we call upon states to act on these core areas and ensure that these recommendations are not only acknowledged but also applied.

When collected, analysed and implemented effectively, data can be harnessed as a powerful tool for combating child sexual abuse and exploitation. It can enable governments, institutions, and civil society to more easily identify risk factors, allocate resources strategically, monitor progress, and implement targeted, evidence-based measures to protect children more effectively.

Data should not remain statistical information: it must be given a face and translated into actions, strategies and policies. We cannot stress this enough: **better data saves more children from the devastating and life-altering effects of sexual abuse and exploitation.**