

## **Republic of Moldova**

**Information provided further the statement by the Lanzarote Committee Chair and Vice-Chairperson on stepping up protection of children against sexual exploitation and abuse in times of the COVID-19 pandemic**

No information available.

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**Responses to specific questions by the Bureau of the Lanzarote Committee on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse**

**1. To what extent, if at all, has the threat of child sexual abuse/exploitation changed due to COVID-19? If so:**

- **Please tell us about whether the level of risk has increased/decreased/remained the same and if possible specify this with regard to the various types of sexual offences against children (Articles 18-23 of the Convention);**

Basing on the statistical data on criminal cases (also see Q2) there is a decrease of risk of child abuse and exploitation during the pandemic, comparing to the same period of 2019 for the cases involving physical contact with child victims (Art. 18, 19, 21, and 22 of the Convention). Thus, the threat remained the same for the cases committed via ICTs (Art. 20 and 23).

- **You may also wish to indicate any emerging trends relating to child sexual abuse/exploitation, as the result of COVID-19, and point at measures taken to address them.**

No emerging trends observed during pandemic.

**2. Did lockdown cause child sexual abuse/exploitation cases (identified/reported) to increase, decrease or stay the same? Please submit data (number of victims/offenders) and highlight what you think may explain the trend.**

According to the national criminal records database, there was a decrease of child abuse and exploitation cases during the pandemic, comparing to the same period of 2019, as follows:

Article of Criminal Code, paragraph, letter, crime description	March 1 - May 31, 2020	March 1 - May 31, 2019
171, Para. (2), b), Rape, committed knowingly against a juvenile	15	7
171, Para. (3), b), Rape, of a juvenile under the age of 14	13	3
172, Para. (2), b), Violent actions of a sexual character, committed knowingly against a juvenile	1	1
172, Para. (3), a), Violent actions of a sexual character, committed against a person certainly known to be under the age of 14	6	1
174, Sexual intercourse with a person under the age of 16	36	32
175, Perverted actions	15	13
175/1, Solicitation of children for sexual purposes ( <i>i.e. Grooming</i> )	0	1
208/1, Child Pornography	9	6
208/2, Resorting to prostitution practiced by a child	0	0

As for CAM cases, an increase of its distribution was observed in the period of lockdown among people who are believed to have no sexual interest in children. In most cases, this CAM was distributed via social networks as shocking images/video, as single file.

The lockdown has certainly increased other types of offences committed in domestic conditions, in particular family violence among adults. No child victimization in such cases was reported in this period.

**3. Please also tell us whether and how general child safeguarding measures were, or are likely to be, affected by measures taken by governments in response to COVID-19. In addition, highlight any additional, specific measures put in place during lockdown to ensure reporting by victims of child sexual abuse/exploitation as well as to support and assist them, and whether these measures will be maintained even when the lockdown is lifted.**

The threat of COVID-19 generated the need of major actions to be taken by the Parliament and by the Government of the Republic of Moldova in social, educational, legal and other areas. These measures are targeting prevention of virus spread, with focus on social distance and isolation.

The period of March 17 – May 15 was declared by the Parliament as State of urgency at national level. Afterwards, the period between May 15 – 30 June was declared by the Government as State of urgency in health. The period may be extended.

It is the first time for the Republic of Moldova when all education institutions (including schools and kindergartens) were closed, and online education (distance learning) was implemented in all schools. Also, it was prohibited to appear at public child playgrounds. This means that children spend more time at home during pandemic.

The period between end of March and beginning of April was declared free for budgetary institutions and companies, except for social assistance, medical staff, law enforcement, among other emergency services.

During the State of urgency at national level, the services of medical staff were limited to urgent interventions. This limitation was not applicable to cases of sexual abuse of children.

For a period, legal criminal proceedings were limited and terms of procedural actions suspended, excepting cases involving children (which were allowed to be postponed or limited only in cases of no imminent threat), among other cases of imminent danger for life and health of individuals.

The number of employees present at work in judiciary sphere (police, prosecutors, judges) was limited according to possibility which would not affect their activity. According to the data provided by the section of General Prosecutor's Office responsible for cases involving children, only in one case of violence against child the interrogation was agreed to be postponed taking in consideration no imminent threat and the potential risk of virus contamination of child.

The lockdown affected indirectly the new child safeguarding measures, which were adopted at legislative level and are under implementation in practice. We are speaking about the new legal framework for Barnahus, adopted in the end of last year (Government Decision No. 708 of 27.12.2019).

Public presentation on Barnahus approach at national level was held on February 29 before the lockdown. The NGO "CNPAC" is running the Barnahus project in Moldova. In the beginning of 2020, CNPAC started organizing the logistics, training, and other needed for the Child house to launch its work. Due to the lockdown, these activities were postponed. Now the possibility for online training is examined.

- 4. Finally, please tell us whether children have been duly listened to on decision-making concerning their protection against sexual abuse/exploitation during this period. Please also tell us whether and how children will be involved in decision-making on or assessing the impact of COVID-19 measures in the future.**

No relevant data to be submitted.