

Version 04 March 2021

WEBINAR CYBER-BULLYING: TRENDS, PREVENTION STRATEGIES AND THE ROLE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

Provided jointly by the projects: EndOCSEA@Europe and
iPROCEEDS-2

Online | 09 March 2021

Outline

Background and Justification

The regional project End Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse @ Europe (EndOCSEA@Europe) is highly relevant to the new challenges of the current environment and has therefore mobilised its efforts to increase its presence online. Activities are being organised to continue to support decision-makers and practitioners working on the protection of children against online sexual exploitation and abuse with the Council of Europe expertise and experience in the combined fields of Children's Rights and Cybercrime. This is achieved in close collaboration with other projects of the Council of Europe Cybercrime Office in Bucharest (C-PROC), in particular iPROCEEDS-2, and of the Children's Rights Division.

The [Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child \(2016-2021\)](#) specifies among its priorities Protecting children from violence in various settings and forms, including cyberbullying.

Bullying is a worldwide problem, with negative and sometimes fatal consequences. The increased use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has taken bullying online and there is a blurring of the line between bullying offline and *cyber-bullying*. In addition, the anonymity of the internet has scaled up the dimension of violence seen in bullying, and acts of cyber-bullying increasingly fall into the realm of criminal offences which necessitate the involvement of law enforcement.

Studies¹ show that cyber-bullying perpetration and victimisation have common predictors, which include having weaker offline social ties and support from friends and family, loneliness, difficult relationships at school, and lower psychological well-being.

Children who are exposed to cyber-bullying can be better protected through educational training programs aimed at parents and teachers, ensuring that school rules are enforced. The

¹ Stoilova, M., Livingstone, S., and Khazbak, R. (2021) Investigating Risks and Opportunities for Children in a Digital World: A rapid review of the evidence on children's internet use and outcomes. Innocenti Discussion Paper 2020-03. UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence.

links between cyber-bullying and sexualised intimidation or violence are many, and cyber-bullying can border on online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA).

In the face of this reality, what role should law enforcement actors play, and how can the other relevant stakeholders interact and collaborate more effectively with law enforcement to prevent cyber-bullying and protect victims?

The Council of Europe has adopted legal standards to help States tackle cyber-crime and sexual exploitation and abuse of children. The [Budapest Convention](#)² and the [Lanzarote Convention](#)³ criminalise offences committed via the internet and other computer networks, including online grooming and the production of child sexual abuse material. These treaties also oblige States to take specific measures to tackle such crimes and provide for specific procedures such as interception and the search of computer networks. Furthermore, the Lanzarote Convention includes protection and rehabilitation measures for child victims.

In addition to these legally binding instruments, the Council of Europe has produced an arsenal of tools to promote the rights of children in the digital environment and to prevent cyber-violence in all its forms. One such instrument is the [Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment](#), adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in 2018. Other tools aim to assist [parents in the digital age](#)⁴ and inform parents about [children's digital citizenship](#), to promote [internet literacy](#) and to protect children from [violence in school](#). The Council of Europe campaigns "[Free to speak Safe to learn](#)" and "[No Hate Speech](#)" are also mobilising youth and schools all over Europe to tackle online violence and bullying.

Despite intense efforts to tackle the problem of cyber-bullying, it is increasing rather than decreasing in both frequency and gravity, and something has to be done. The ongoing pandemic and the related restriction measures, including school closures and reduced in-person social interaction have brought children's screen time up more than ever, and are leading to ever new manifestations of cyber-bullying.

Objectives

Carried out under result 7 of the iPROCEEDS-2 project (*International cooperation and information sharing between cybercrime units, financial investigation units and financial intelligence units (FIUs) as well as between competent authorities for judicial cooperation is more efficient*) and within the framework of the second objective of the project EndOCSEA@Europe to enhance the knowledge, skills and capacities for effective and successful prevention, investigation, prosecution and conviction of online child sexual exploitation and abuse, the webinar aims at providing different professional categories, from social workers to law enforcement working either in the cyber departments or the local police with input about Cyberbullying as starting and end point for such offences as sexual offences against children, including sexting, CSAM and sexual extortion.

In order to shed light on the role of law enforcement in the fight against cyber-bullying, this webinar will bring together speakers working on cyber-bullying from different angles: prevention initiatives, legal measures and law enforcement investigations, child protection mechanisms and psychological support.

² Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime adopted in Budapest on 23 November 2001

³ Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse adopted in Lanzarote on 25 October 2007

⁴ See also relevant [Council of Europe videos](#).

Expected outcomes

The speakers will discuss together – as well as with the audience – what can be done to step up the efforts to tackle cyber-bullying against children and youth. In particular, it will provide guidance to law enforcement and other relevant actors to identify cases of cyberbullying in need of a criminal investigation, to be aware of existing prevention measures, and to be mindful of the psychological aspects relating to both victims and bullies.

Administrative arrangements

The webinar will take place in an online environment and will be delivered in English only. It will be organised on **09 March 2021, 10.00-12.30 GMT +2.**

Important! Participants need to register beforehand using the registration form on the dedicated website. Registered participants will receive a link for access along with instructions, prior to the event. Registrations close on 7 March 23.59 GMT+2.

Acknowledgements

The Council of Europe gratefully acknowledges the financial support provided for this programme by the Fund to End Violence Against Children.

Programme

Tuesday, 9 March 2021, 10.00-12.30 GMT +2.

10h00	Opening address Moderator: Stephanie BUREL, Council of Europe
10h15	Session 1: Trends and definitions of cyber-bullying ➤ Bullying and cyber-bullying, <i>Elizabeth MILOVIDOV, Council of Europe expert</i> ➤ When cyber-bullying meets OCSEA, <i>Susanna GREIJER, Council of Europe expert</i> ➤ Cyberbullying as offences leading to criminal investigations, <i>Andrea BRADLEY, Council of Europe expert</i> ➤ Mechanisms to support victims, <i>Nina Vaaranen-Valkonen, Council of Europe expert</i> ➤ Q&A
11h10	Break – Presentation of a video
11h20	Session 2: Prevention, protection and rehabilitation measures ➤ Effective preventive measures based on the CoE standards and tools and examples of promising practices – including technical solutions, <i>Elizabeth MILOVIDOV, Council of Europe expert</i> ➤ Examples of the potential role of police in preventing cyber-bullying, <i>Andrea BRADLEY, Council of Europe expert</i> ➤ Protection measures for children who are victims of cyber-bullying, <i>Susanna GREIJER, Council of Europe expert</i> ➤ The impact on child victims and bullies and the need for psychological support, <i>TBC, Nina Vaaranen-Valkonen, Council of Europe expert</i> ➤ Q&A
12h10	Closing remarks with orientations for the future
12h30	End of the webinar

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