



T-ES-BU(2020)03_en

3 July 2020

LANZAROTE COMMITTEE

Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe
Convention on the protection of children against sexual
exploitation and sexual abuse

.....

**Response by the Lanzarote Committee to the European
Commission's open call for comments on the forthcoming
EU Strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual
abuse**

During its 27th meeting the [Lanzarote Committee](#) (the monitoring body of the [Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#)) asked its Bureau to respond on its behalf to the European Commission's open call for comments on the forthcoming EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse.

The Lanzarote Committee appreciates the opportunity to submit comments offered by the open call and welcomes the Commission's decision to step up action to prevent and combat child sexual exploitation and abuse and to work out a common and coordinated solution to eradicate these crimes and better protect victims.

To this end, the Committee recalls that the Council of Europe's Lanzarote Convention (which currently counts [46 Parties](#)) was the first regional treaty dedicated specifically to the protection of children against all sexual offences, providing a comprehensive framework (prevention, protection, prosecution and promotion of cooperation) and benchmarks to criminalise all sexual offences against children.

As countries across the globe may accede to the Lanzarote Convention, it is fundamental that the future EU Strategy, in line with the EU Council conclusions on combating the sexual abuse of children of 8 October 2019, "encourages third countries to consider accession to the Council of Europe Convention on protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse as the key legislative framework at international level to combat the crime of child sexual abuse and exploitation and a model for national legislation." (para 25)

Otherwise, the Lanzarote Committee considers that the general issues raised so far in the roadmap presented by the European Commission are all essential and stands ready to share its experience to contribute to the identification of further steps to eradicate sexual violence against children.

Meanwhile, it underlines that it considers it important that the forthcoming EU strategy does not lose sight of the fact that:

- Combating child sexual abuse requires holistic strategies which encompass prevention, prosecution, provision of support and multi-disciplinary and international cooperation;
- Child sexual abuse happens also offline, and this dimension cannot be minimised;
- The majority of cases of child sexual abuse occur within the child's "[circle of trust](#)"; thus, combating this phenomenon must take into account the particular difficulties encountered where the perpetrator is a family member or other close person (for example, relating to the child-victim's testimony, provision of support to non-offending family members, removal of the perpetrator from the family home, etc.);
- Many children are exposed to the risk of online sexual exploitation and sexual abuse also due to [current practices among children of generating and sharing sexually suggestive or explicit material of themselves](#); such practices are to be dealt with by societies more efficiently with a multiplicity of measures (apart from prosecution);
- Cases of [online child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse](#) necessarily have offline implications that need to be addressed in an interdependent and interrelated manner;

- The removal of child abuse material is fundamental, but it is equally essential that the children depicted on that material are not only identified but also provided with the necessary support and assistance to overcome the multiple trauma experienced;
- Identification of the perpetrators involved in child abuse material is equally important in order to prosecute them and prevent them from creating more victims;
- Many children are victimised beyond EU borders by offenders in the EU; measures to ensure their prosecution should be reinforced.

Finally, the Lanzarote Committee is convinced that the EU and the Council of Europe should reinforce mutual cooperation and join forces to help achieve target 16.2 (end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children) of the United Nations Agenda 2030 related to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- | |
|--|
| <p>→ For information on Lanzarote Committee work and documents adopted, click here: www.coe.int/lanzarote</p> <p>→ For information on the Council of Europe contribution to end all forms of violence against children by 2030, click here: https://www.coe.int/en/web/children/global-action</p> |
|--|