

Serbia

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

Some links are of general nature, describing how social isolation is increasing pressure within families, strengthening the risk of family violence and children sexual exploitation. Some are targeting more groups in risk (Roma, migrants), while there is a single research on how life under pandemic is influencing children life and development.

<https://serbia.un.org/en/40598-keeping-sos-helplines-open-during-covid-19>

<https://psychosocialinnovation.net/en/2020/03/24/pin-info-about-covid-19-for-refugees-in-serbia/>

https://www.facebook.com/covid19infoforrefugees/?_tn=K-R&eid=ARC9wTPxzOP9fTpXp376pQD8WvIR81-Mfal79oSQHgKJLLeZhCR_M8XHqSHgO_Ib47_pH8POZPtLtpTM&fref=mentions

<https://ian.org.rs/ian-during-covid-19-pandemic-support-to-the-most-vulnerable-beneficiaries/>

<https://ian.org.rs/besplatna-telefonska-psiholoska-podrska-2/>

<https://www.unicef.org/serbia/en/press-releases/ministry-labour-and-unicef-together-fight-COVID19>

http://zadecu.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/child_cov_19_eng.pdf

<https://www.unicef.org/serbia/en/take-care-yourself-time-covid-19-outbreak>

Centre for Foster Care and Adoption Belgrade

During the two months of intensive preventive measures against COVID 19 in Serbia, model of practice in foster care was adapted according to the situation and needs of children in care in order to provide protection from the risk of illness and more intensive psychosocial support. Foster care counsellors (Centres for foster care and adoption) have used telephone counselling and online communication for monitoring situation in foster families. We were mindful of all risks connected to psychological aspects of situation, potential consequences on mental health of children and other family members and family dynamics which were changed. According to the available data, we don't have increasing trend of new cases of sexual abuse/exploitation among the children in foster care. We suppose that the whole situation, in which family members were more together and in more intensive

communication, in some families could have been a kind of protective factor and could help in discovering that a child was jeopardized. Also, during that period, individual communication between teachers and children was more intensive than in regular situation and that was an additional protective factor.

But, being completely aware of the risks connected to the all aspects of the situation, we used additional support measures to protect children in care. Besides the always available support from centre for foster care, we have encouraged children to use additional services like national children helpline, other helplines and other telephone and online services for children and youth. Foster care counsellors and child protection services were completely connected, cooperating with schools and, in cases of risk, with police and other institutions.

Foster care counsellors daily reported about situation in foster families during that period, and, according to the assessment, decisions were made about necessity for additional protection measures.

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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);
 - 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 information received.

- 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.**

No information received.

- 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.**

No information received.

- 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 information received.