Strategic Priorities to prevent and combat Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse through multi-sectorial co-operation

Adopted at the Conference "*Multi-sectorial co-operation to prevent and combat Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*"
Strasbourg, France, 16-17 May 2019.

Strategic Priorities to prevent and combat Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse through multi-sectorial co-operation

The following strategic priorities to strengthen multi-sectorial co-operation to prevent and combat OCSEA were endorsed at the international conference "*Multi-sectorial co-operation to prevent and combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA)*":

Identify child-victims and strengthen reporting

- Improve and adapt legislation to address evolving trends, including grooming of children and self-produced material, to uphold the best interests of the child.

- Strengthen co-operation and collaboration between law enforcement and social services to include a coordinated approach to uphold the rights of the child victim during procedures and investigations of OCSEA.

- Provide psychological support and therapy for child victims following identification to prevent re-victimisation and co-ordinate responses to facilitate single disclosure of evidence from the child-victim.

Strengthen investigation and prosecution of OCSEA

- Set up and strengthen specialised law enforcement units to deal with cases of OCSEA including conducting online investigations.

- Implement up-to-date, initial and on-going training for specialised law enforcement units dealing with OCSEA and strengthen understanding among prosecutors and judges of OCSEA, especially as regards: forensic techniques, electronic evidence, victim identification, online harms and child rights approach during proceedings.

- Strengthen dialogue between reporting hotlines, internet service providers and law enforcement to support effective intervention, collaboration and procedures including: notifications of usable illegal content, obtaining user and server data, blocking and removing illegal content.

Uphold the rights of child-victims: before, during and after proceedings

- Develop and strengthen capacities among law enforcement, judges and prosecutors to implement child friendly procedures and up-hold the rights of the child-victim throughout reporting, investigation, prosecution and criminal proceedings.

- Strengthen understanding and responsibility sharing, including among media, to maintain confidentiality to protect victims' identities throughout reporting, investigation, prosecution and following the conclusion of criminal proceedings.

Raise awareness to sensitise all actors involved in the multi-sectorial response

- Implement long-term awareness raising campaigns in co-operation with all stakeholders (ministries, agencies, private entities and industry) and address all levels of society including children, vulnerable children, parents, teachers, policy makers and frontline professionals working with children.

- Integrate awareness raising on online safety into school curricula to increase resilience among children and capacity to implement peer to peer information.

- Regularly review programmes, awareness raising mechanisms and campaigns to ensure an evidence-based approach to prevent and combat OCSEA.

BACKGROUND

While the exact number of victims of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) is unknown, reports show that tens of thousands of children of all ages fall victim to OCSEA each year.[1] Relevant UN and Council of Europe standards require States to take all appropriate measures to protect the child from all forms of violence, including online sexual exploitation and abuse.[2] These obligations have been strengthened by world leaders through their commitments to end all forms of violence and abuse of children by 2030, as part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), in particular SDG 16.2 (End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children).

In this context, the Council of Europe Project to End Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse @ Europe (EndOCSEA@Europe) supports member States to prevent and combat OCSEA by: strengthening legislative and policy frameworks, building capacities among key stakeholders and raising awareness about OCSE at every level of society.

With a view to implementing the UN and Council of Europe legal standards, a regional conference was held on 16-17 May 2019, in Strasbourg, France, to raise awareness and to strengthen effective responses to prevent and combat OCSEA through multi-sectorial co-operation. Over 70 participants attended the conference, including representatives from Ministries of Justice, Internal Affairs, Social Affairs and Education, as well as Law enforcement officers, ombudspersons for children and civil society from Council of Europe member States.

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[1] Internet Watch Foundation, *Annual Report 2017* (2018), available at: https://www.iwf.org.uk/report/2017-annual-report

[2] UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021) ; Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse ; Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime ; Council of Europe Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment CM rec (2018)7,.