Multi-sectorial co-operation to prevent and combat Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

International Conference

Draft Agenda

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Documents prepared by the Children's Rights Division
Directorate of Anti-discrimination
Directorate General II Democracy

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] More than 79% of reported victims depicted in OCSEA are children aged between 4 and 13 years old.[2] This crime is often transnational in nature and ever evolving, recent trends include live streaming of child sex abuse images, increases in streaming of self-generated sexually explicit images and increases in online sexual coercion and extortion.[3] Children of all ages are being groomed and coerced or threatened to produce images.[4] Many of the images that are found to contain criminal content show sexual abuse including rape and sexual torture of children of all ages.[5] This reality requires urgent action to prevent and combat this form of violence against children.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, furthermore requires States to take all appropriate measure to protect the child from all forms of violence, including protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse.[6] The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography outlines the substantive criminal law and child-friendly procedures necessary to effectively respond to OCSEA. World leaders have reiterated their commitment to end all forms of violence and abuse of children by 2030, as part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 16.2 (End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children).

The Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021) identifies priority areas for action including a life free from violence for all children and the rights of the child in the digital environment, including the need to address OCSEA through effective implementation of its particularly pertinent legal instruments.

The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) and the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention) provide comprehensive benchmarks to prevent and combat OCSEA. To assist member states to effectively uphold the rights of the child in the digital environment, including effective protection from OCSEA, the Council of Europe CM/Rec(2018)7 Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment also provides practical guidelines for victim-focused policing, public-private partnerships, awareness-raising activities, prevention strategies and provision of effective remedies for violations of the rights of the child.

Upholding the rights of the child in the digital environment is therefore a shared responsibility that requires a combination of public and private, legal and voluntary measures as well as the participation of children in the development, implementation and evaluation of measures.[7] As such, multi-sectorial

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

[2] INHOPE, *Annual Report 2017* (2018), available at:
http://www.inhope.org/Libraries/Annual_reports/INHOPE_Annual_Report_2017.sflb.ashx?download=true

[3] European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL), *Internet Organised Crime Threat Assessment 2018* (2018), available at: https://www.europol.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/iocta2018.pdf

[4] NETCLEAN, *Report 2018* (2018) available at: https://www.netclean.com/the-netclean-report/

[5] International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC), *Child Sexual Abuse Material: Model Legislation & Global Review 9th Edition 2018*, (2018), available at: https://www.icmec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/CSAM-Model-Law-9th-Ed-FINAL-12-3-18.pdf

[6] UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 19 and 34.

[7] The Council of Europe Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment CM rec (2018)7, Paragraph 51.

co-ordination and co-operation at national or local level is an absolute necessity to ensure end-to-end support for child-victims.[8]

In this context, the Council of Europe Project to End Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse @ Europe (EndOCSEA@Europe) supports all Council of Europe member States to prevent and combat OCSEA, with a focus on strengthening responses in: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine.

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EndOCSEA@Europe will support member states to prevent and combat OCSEA through technical support to: strengthen multi-sectorial co-operation at national and regional level, strengthen legislative and procedural responses to OCSEA, build capacities among law enforcement agencies, judges and prosecutors and raising awareness at all levels of society. A baseline mapping of Council of Europe member states will be completed by November 2019. Three pilot countries have been selected to develop in-depth gap analysis of national responses and training materials with a view to scaling up these tools in other member states. Support to raise awareness across all sectors will be provided throughout the project, including through child participation.

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

With a view to operationalising the UN and Council of Europe legal instruments to end OCSEA, this regional conference aims to raise awareness about OCSEA and to strengthen effective responses to prevent and combat OCSEA by enhancing understanding on multi-sectorial co-operation to uphold the rights of the child and protect children in the digital environment.   Participants are invited to:

- take stock and review the preliminary findings of the baseline mapping of focus countries;
- exchange views on policies, strategies and procedures to prevent and combat OCSEA;
- identify specific priority areas for action to enhance multi-sectorial co-operation at national and local level to protect the rights of child-victims of OCSEA.

PARTICIPANTS

This conference is by invitation only. The Project will cover the cost of delegations of up to five representatives from each focus country of the project EndOCSEA@Europe in line with Council of Europe rules on expert travel and subsistence. Delegations should include representatives with responsibilities to prevent and combat OCSEA in several of the following sectors:

Law enforcement agencies (specialised units)
Ministry of Justice
Specialist judges and prosecutors
Child protection agencies
Ministry of Education

In addition, representatives of ombudspersons for children, civil society organisations and other relevant actors may also be invited to participate in the conference.

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[8] Convention for the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CETS 201), Article 10. See Also WePROTECT Global Alliance, *Model National Response* (2016) capability 8, Available at:
https://www.weprotect.org/the-model-national-response

DRAFT AGENDA

Thursday 16 May 2019	
08.30	Registration
09.00 – 09.30	**Welcome remarks**
09.30 – 11.00	**Evolving trends in OCSEA: identifying the risks and adequate responses?** The digital environment is rapidly evolving, providing new opportunities for children to exercise their rights but also exposing them to increased risks of falling victims to sexual exploitation and abuse. The risks and trends in online abuse are also changing as rapidly the environment itself which in turn increases challenges for member states to effectively prevent and combat OCSEA. During this session trends in OCSEA will be identified, taking into account local environmental and societal factors and challenges to victim support. Responses provided by the Lanzarote Convention and other international frameworks, will also be considered. Participants are invited to contribute to an open floor discussion on OCSEA trends and responses in their respective countries.
11.00-11.30	*Coffee Break*
11.30-12.30	**Multi-sectorial co-ordination and co-operation: why is it so important?** The consequences of sexual exploitation and abuse are multi-faceted and long-lasting. A child-victim of sexual exploitation or abuse, whether online or offline, may have suffered physical injury, psychological trauma and social or familial breakdown, all the more so where the abuser is in the circle of trust of child-victim. A child-victim of sexual exploitation and abuse, whether online or offline, will need appropriate support and care from a wide range of actors including education, health and social services. As a victim and witness of this crime, the child-victim will also interact with law enforcement and judicial authorities in the course of investigations and criminal proceedings. Co-operation and co-ordination among these authorities and bodies, together with the judiciary and law enforcement, is therefore absolutely central to prevent the child being re-victimised and to encourage victim recovery while supporting effective investigations and prosecutions. Participants are invited to discuss how to uphold and protect the rights of victims through a multi-sectorial co-ordinated response.

12.30 – 14.00	*Lunch break*
14.00 – 15.30	**Taking stock of Policy and Governance responses to OCSEA at national level** Member states face common challenges to protect children from OCSEA despite the wide range of national contexts present across the Council of Europe. The preliminary findings of the baseline mapping as regards policy and governance structures, including for effective investigations of OCSEA will be presented during this session. *During this session participants are invited to consider promising practices identified, provide further examples and information on multi-sectorial co-operation. An open floor discussion will focus on multi-sectorial co-operation to ensure research, analysis and monitoring of OCSEA, effective legislative and policy frameworks as well as law enforcement capacities to investigate cases of OCSEA.*
15.30-16.00	*Coffee break*
16.00-17.30	**Preventing and Protecting victims of OCSEA: the state of play at national level** *Children must be empowered to participate in the procedures affecting them and should understand their rights. This requires children to be aware of the risks of OCSEA with a view to avoiding victimisation as well as the provision of support services for child-victims of OCSEA. The preliminary findings of the baseline mapping regarding victim-focused criminal justice, support and assistance for victims and awareness raising initiatives will be considered during this session.* *Participants are invited to participate in open floor discussions on promising practices identified of protective measures and assistance to victims including throughout investigations and criminal proceedings as well as preventive measures to empower children to stay safe online. Child participation in policy development will also be discussed.*
17.30	End of Day 1

Friday 17 May 2019	
8.30	Registration
09.00-09.30	**Key Note Speech**
09.30 – 11.00	*Workshop sessions: Each workshop session will have the objective of identifying at least 2 Priorities for multi-sectorial co-operation.*
	Workshop 1: Strengthening reporting and prosecution of OCSEA *The workshop will explore considerations for effective reporting, evidence gathering, referrals where reports are received, production and preservation of e-evidence including co-operation to transfer this to investigating authorities.*	**Workshop 2: Identifying child-victims** *The workshop will focus on detecting the signs of victimisation and recognising children as victims, with a view to co-operation for referral and victim support during investigations. At the same time, the workshop will contribute to identifying methods for improved law enforcement capacities to lead, support and coordinate OCSEA investigations, avoiding criminalisation of children.*
11.00-11.30	*Coffee break*
11.30-13.00	**Workshop 3: Raising awareness to sensitise all actors involved in the multi-sectorial response** *The workshop will focus on awareness raising and building capacities to prevent OCSEA at all levels of society. Participants will be invited to identify priority actions to sensitise professionals involved in the multi-sectorial response, including: education, health and social sectors, law enforcement authorities, judges and prosecutors.*	**Workshop 4: Upholding the rights of the child-victim: before, during and after the proceedings** *The workshop will focus on victim-centred procedures throughout the investigation, prosecution and criminal proceedings including giving evidence and to ensure continuity of victim-support following proceedings.*
13.00 - 14.00	*Lunch break*

14.00 – 15.30	**Strategic priorities to strengthen multi-sectorial co-operation** *Discussion on strategic priorities identified in each Workshop for multi-sectorial co-operation and reporting on discussion from each workshop.*
15.30 -16.00	*Coffee Break*
16.00 -17.00	**The way forward** *The Council of Europe is committed to supporting member states to end violence against children through various initiatives, campaigns and activities. To this end a number of grants have been identified to develop and support awareness raising activities in member states. Participants are invited to take note of the results of the grant award, to consider activities and actions at national level that could contribute to activities at international level.*
17.00	End of Conference