

Presidency of Malta of the Committee of Ministers of the  
Council of Europe  
May 2025 – November 2025

**Informal Conference of Ministers  
15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Lanzarote Convention:  
Achievements, Challenges and a Way Forward to Protect Children from Sexual  
Exploitation and Abuse**

**Valletta, 30 June - 1 July 2025**

Fifteen years ago, the [Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#) – the Lanzarote Convention – entered into force, a clear testament of the international community's commitment to eradicate this most heinous crime. Significant progress in the protection of children's rights has been achieved, not least through the work of the [Lanzarote Committee](#), the development of comprehensive national regulatory frameworks and prevention programmes, as well as a steady increase in setting-up child-friendly settings such as the 'Barnahus'.

Nevertheless, it is equally important to recognise that violence against children – be it physical, emotional or sexual – continues to be alarmingly present in our societies. According to the latest UNICEF data, around one in five women and around one in seven men alive today have experienced sexual violence in their childhood.<sup>1</sup> For decades victims suffered in silence. Nowadays, the digital transformation has compounded the reach of sexual exploitation and abuse, creating an environment where sharing, disseminating and spreading abusive material with millions is just a click away.

Against the backdrop of such a rapidly changing context, we must redouble our efforts to uphold the safety and well-being of all children, to address the emerging challenges and to shine a light on these injustices. This is both in our mutual interest and our common goal.

The Conference, organised under the auspices of the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers in co-operation with the Lanzarote Committee, will symbolically take place on the 1 July 2025, commemorating the exact 15-year anniversary since the entry into force of the Lanzarote Convention. It will be the first Council of Europe Conference for Ministers responsible for Social Policy, Family and Children's Rights dedicated to addressing the prevention and protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, with the aim of taking stock of the progress achieved and explore strategic pathways to tackle existing gaps, particularly in the advent of new technological realities.

---

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF Data (October 2024) *Sexual Violence*. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/violence/sexual-violence/>

**The Conference will be organised across four sessions.**

**Session I: Taking Stock: 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Lanzarote Convention**, will explore the historical concerns that prompted the development of the Lanzarote Convention and highlight the key achievements in state parties since its entry into force. High-level representatives with extensive experience in the field will be invited to share their insights.

**Session II: Keeping harm away from children**, aims to generate a vital discussion on proactive strategies and measures to prevent the unimaginable trauma of child sexual abuse from occurring in the first place.

Ministers and high-level officials will be invited to contribute to the following guiding questions:

- How can screening and training programmes be improved to equip adults who are in contact with children with the necessary knowledge and skills?
- What are the effective strategies to develop a supportive environment that encourages help and rehabilitation among adults and young people at risk of (re)offending?
- What measures can be employed to keep up the protection of children in the light of technological advancements, including artificial intelligence?
- How to protect children in a situation of vulnerability, including during crisis situations and in alternative care?

**Session III: Empowering children to flourish free from sexual violence**, will delve into the critical role of legislation, policies and programmes in breaking the cycle of harm and empowering children to thrive in a safe environment that prioritises their well-being.

Ministers and high-level officials will be invited to contribute to the following guiding questions:

- What are the most effective evidence-based legislation and policy approaches to enhance prevention and protect children from sexual violence, and how can they be improved?
- How to address emerging trends, including peer-to-peer sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviour by children?
- In what ways can comprehensive sexuality education be leveraged to prevent sexual violence?
- What measures can be employed to create a safe environment that prevents abuse and breaks the cycle of harm?

**Session IV: Way forward**, will delve into the avenues to integrate the Lanzarote Convention within the broader international landscape, including in the context of the United Nations and the European Union.

The **Closing session** will feature concluding remarks by high-level representatives, a children's statement and the adoption of an outcome document.

\*\*\*\*\*