

Joint statement on the occasion of the 5th edition of the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, issued by five member States (Andorra, Belgium, Luxembourg, Monaco and Slovenia)

On 18 November, the Council of Europe celebrates the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

On this 5th edition of the European Day, we unfortunately have to recognise that efforts to protect children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse are as necessary as ever. It is estimated that about one in five children in Europe are victims of some form of sexual violence before reaching the age of 18. This is unacceptable. By raising public awareness and facilitating open discussions as well as by promoting the ratification and implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention), the European Day will help maintain the momentum of our fight against these serious violations of children's rights.

2019 also marks the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We nevertheless see, in practice that children are all too often sidelined from matters that concern them. The 2019 edition of the European Day therefore focuses on the participation of children, with the theme "Empowering children to stop sexual violence".

We are convinced that children should be given the necessary means, space, opportunity and support to participate in the design and implementation of measures, policies, programmes or other initiatives aiming at preventing, combatting and responding to sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

We recall that the participation of all children is one of the five priorities identified in the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021) and that the Committee of Ministers has adopted, in 2012, a Recommendation to member States on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18.

We welcome the different initiatives and tools developed by the Secretariat of the Council of Europe that help, on the one hand, children to implement projects and, on the other, adults, as facilitators, to accompany children in their efforts.

The Lanzarote Convention, in its Article 9(1), requires Parties to "encourage the participation of children, according to their evolving capacity, in the development and the implementation of state policies, programmes or other initiatives concerning the fight against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children". We therefore welcome the guidelines for implementation of child participation, that have been drafted in the framework of the 2nd thematic monitoring round of the Lanzarote Convention, as well as the contributions of children from 10 countries, that will feed into the ongoing discussion of the Lanzarote Committee.

We invite all States that have not already done so to accede to the Lanzarote Convention, including non-member States of the Council of Europe. In this regard, we welcome the recent accession of Tunisia to the Lanzarote Convention.

Furthermore, we invite all States to respond to this year's call to promote projects undertaken by children or with the participation of children.

Finally, we express once again our firm commitment to continue to fight together against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse so that all children can grow up safely in a healthy environment.

38 delegations that have acceded to the statement issued by the delegations of Andorra, Belgium, Luxembourg, Monaco and Slovenia on the occasion of the fifth European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (18 November 2019):

Austria, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, République tchèque, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine.