

Releasing Children's Potential and Minimizing Risks

ICTs, the Internet and Violence against Children

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Introduction

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are developing ever more rapidly, with profound effects upon societies around the world. They bring with them enormous potential benefits for children — enabling access to education, health information, and social connection — but also unprecedented risks of exploitation, abuse, and exposure to harmful content.

The Challenge

An estimated 1 in 3 internet users worldwide is a child. Yet child protection frameworks have been slow to adapt to the digital environment. Perpetrators of violence and exploitation have exploited the internet to gain access to children, to distribute child sexual abuse material, and to facilitate online grooming and trafficking.

Principles for Action

- Prioritise children's safety online as a shared responsibility of governments, industry, civil society and families
- Adopt a rights-based approach that promotes child participation in digital environments
- Develop robust legal frameworks to criminalise online child sexual exploitation
- Invest in digital literacy programmes that empower children to protect themselves
- Strengthen international cooperation to tackle cross-border online crimes against children

Recommendations to Member States

Governments are urged to review and update national legislation to address online child sexual exploitation; designate lead agencies with clear mandates; invest in law enforcement capacity; and engage technology companies in developing safer products and services for children.