

*The President*

Welcome to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities' toolkit to stop sexual violence against children.

Available data suggest that about one child in five in Europe is a victim of some form of sexual violence, one of the worst forms of violence against children.

The Council of Europe's ONE in FIVE campaign aims to address this issue by raising awareness and promoting policies and strategies to equip children, their families/carers, governments and local and regional authorities with knowledge and tools to prevent and protect children from sexual violence and abuse. The Council of Europe member states, Parliamentary Assembly and Congress of Local and Regional Authorities are all cooperating to ensure changes are made in legislation and in policies to protect children.

Local and regional authorities have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the safety and welfare of children and young people, working together with partners such as the third sector, public organisations and the private sector. The challenge to Europe's towns and regions is to raise awareness of the issue, to develop and implement community-based action plans and strategies, and to invest in better services.

The Congress has devised a Pact of Towns and Regions to Stop Sexual Violence against Children which proposes measures and strategies, from simple, cost-effective initiatives to comprehensive policies, that can usefully be implemented to further the aims of the campaign. One of the proposed measures is that local and regional authorities set up multi-disciplinary child protection centres, examples of which exist already in several towns.

The Congress has prepared this toolkit which offers to local and regional authorities, associations, NGOs and other stakeholders, proposals for policies, strategies and tools to prevent abuse, protect victims, prosecute perpetrators, and ensure the full participation of children in the entire process. The toolkit is not comprehensive, rather an introduction which provides some useful ideas which will help keep children safe from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Take a look inside the toolkit to learn more about the measures that can be taken to combat sexual violence against children - and feel free to share the information with others!

I invite you to commit to the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse of children by signing up for the Congress's Pact of Towns and Regions to Stop Sexual Violence against Children online: [www.coe.int/congress-pact](http://www.coe.int/congress-pact).

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