

# Online Grooming for Sexual Purposes

## DEFINITION

### Online Grooming for Sexual Purposes\*

Online grooming for sexual purposes is the process of establishing/building a relationship with a child through the use of the Internet or other digital technologies to facilitate either online or offline sexual contact with that person.

Acts of grooming are not limited to acts where a physical, in-person meeting has been attempted and/or occurred but also applies to acts conducted online.

\*Definition derived from Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

### Legal Frameworks

Grooming is criminalised in the Lanzarote Convention.

The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children

against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of children contains article 23 on the solicitation of children or the act of intentionally proposing by an adult, through information and communication technologies, to meet a child who has not reached the minimum age for sexual activities/consent, for engaging in sexual activities with a child or producing 'child pornography', followed by material acts leading to such a meeting.


In addition it criminalises the corruption of children or the act of causing a child to witness sexual abuse or sexual activities (article 22).


Additionally, the African Union Convention on Cybercrime and Data Protection criminalises the act of facilitating or providing access to pornographic material to a minor. Article 29(3)(1)(d) could capture elements of grooming.


### Offenders and Modus Operandi


- Offenders are primarily motivated by their **sexual interest** in children or by **financial gain**;
- They operate **alone** or as part of a **network**;
- Offenders can target victims by **assessing** their **vulnerability** (e.g. self-confidence, parental control) or by targeting children randomly;
- **Contact** with a child is generally initiated **online** (e.g. in chatrooms, gaming sites or social media platforms), but offline grooming also occurs;
- Grooming usually involves establishing an **emotional connection** with a child to gain the child's trust (also called long term grooming);
- Offenders can also focus on **quickly gaining leverage** over a victim rather than first establishing a trusting relationship;
- Groomers sometimes also **groom others** such as the child's peers, family and community-at-large;
- **Grooming behaviours** include filling the needs of a child by giving e.g. attention and gifts, psychological coercion, manipulation, 'sexually educating' and desensitising a child;
- They progressively **sexualise the relationship** with the child (either quickly or slowly);
- Groomers often use **isolation, secrecy, blame** to sustain the child's participation and silence.

### What can you do?


 Advocate for stronger legal framework that criminalises the act of (online) grooming for sexual purposes;

 Advocate for better resources for law enforcement, such as dedicated capacity and tools, to tackle the issue of online grooming;

 Advocate and cooperate with the private sector, such as Internet Service Providers, to implement measures to provide safe online environments for children;

 Educate and raise awareness about online grooming;

 Conduct research and collect relevant information to enhance understanding about the issue of online grooming;

 Report when you are aware of a situation where a child is targeted by groomers online;

 Provide support and care for victims.