

CHILDREN AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

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Triggered by growing importance of digital environment, accompanied with significant opportunities and enormous challenges both- for children and those in charge of their wellbeing and personal development, authors have developed an idea of organizing the international scientific conference as a forum to discuss the most important issues, recent developments and perspectives, but also to prepare and issue the two thematic publications. Considering the recent developments of the international standards, especially a largely important UN CRC General comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment as the most important piece of the soft law legislation, the scope of this forum covers a wide spectrum of topics tackling children wellbeing in digital environment addressed by prominent members of academia, research community, psychologists, legal and social care professionals. The very purpose of this introductory paper is to shed a light on the theoretical, legal and practical discourse of this topic, but also to present the main attitudes of the authors who submitted their contributions to be presented and discussed during the conference.

KEY WORDS: children / digital environment / internet / online environment

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1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technologies, in conjunction with the “new reality” created in the context of the pandemic caused by the COVID 19 virus, has shifted a significant part of children’s activities into the digital environment, including both education and leisure. (Barnert, 2020, Minson, 2021) The dynamics of this process raised the question of the readiness of children themselves, their parents, teachers, professionals in the health, social protection and justice system, to address the challenges that this transition brings, including, but not limited to the following:

- Results and achievements in the learning process, health consequences due to lack of physical activity, including mental health- all related to the changed modalities of socialization.
- Risk of victimization, both in the context of hate speech, threats, blackmail and discrimination to which children are exposed in the online environment. This is of the great importance with regard to use of this environment to recruit children for sexual and other forms of exploitation, in both digital and conventional environment (Kolaković-Bojović, 2022).
- Finally, these changes have raised the question of the readiness of the police, the public prosecutor’s offices, courts and prison system to respond to the challenges of establishing mechanisms to facilitate reporting, more efficient investigation and prosecution of crimes committed in the digital environment.
- The focus must also be on the use of digital technologies as tools aimed at eliminating or reducing secondary victimization in proceedings in which children or minors appear as victims or witnesses. (Stevanović & Kolaković-Bojović, 2021)
- Last but not least, the capacities of modern technologies need to be further explored in the context of improving living conditions and treatment in penitentiaries, but also in the context of maintaining and improving the quality of family relationships, whether family separation is caused by deprivation freedom of parent and / or child.³

³ See: Kolaković-Bojović, Milica (2021) *Information and Communications Technology as a Tool to Substitute In-Person Visits in the Serbian Prison System During the Covid-19 Restrictive Measures*. Journal of Liberty and International Affairs, 7 (3). pp. 21-35. ISSN 1857-9760; Kolaković-Bojović, Milica, and Ana Batrićević. 2021. “Children in Correctional Institutions and the Right to Communicate with their Families during the Covid19 Pandemic.” Teme (4); Kolaković-Bojović, Milica and Batrićević, Ana (2020) *IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF Help e.V.’S RESOCIALIZATION PROGRAMME (Improvement of the treatment programmes in correctional institutions for adults and juveniles - SOE03-19)*. Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research, Belgrade.

2. UN CRC GENERAL COMMENT NO.25 (2021)

By adopting General Comment No. 25, On Children's Rights in Relation to The Digital Environment, in March 2021, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has taken a big step in understanding the new digital reality which largely affects the children, ranging from encouraging the development of their knowledge, skills and creativity, to generating numerous sources of danger and abuse. (Stevanović & Kolaković-Bojović, 2021)

In the context of the combating child victimization, the General Comment itself addresses several points of the great importance: Chapter VII recognizes the digital environment as a "playground" of for verbal, sexual and other forms of violence or for recruiting children for various forms of exploitation, while Chapter V (K) justice and legal remedies, paras 43-49) deals with the mechanisms of protection against abuse, ie reaction and support in a situation when abuse has already occurred. Finally, Chapter XII (B) deals with special protection measures in the context of the application of digital technologies in the protection of children from secondary victimization and as such is of great importance for the subject of this paper.

Chapter V (K), para. 43 recognizes the difficulties of detecting and investigating crimes in the digital environment, especially in the context of the need to require children to disclose sensitive or private online activities to the policy or prosecutor. It also recognizes the lack of reporting caused by the fear of peer retaliation or social exclusion. The commentary insists on establishing mechanisms for reporting this type of crime that are easily accessible and known to children and that ensure confidentiality. This provision should be interpreted in the context of the introduction of applications and digital tools that would provide children with free (legal) counseling and reporting of crime. The general comment insists that child counseling services must not be conditioned by prior notification or parental consent, as it is not uncommon for a child's fear of parental reaction to be the strongest barrier to reporting victimization. Such mechanisms could also be used to provide specialized support to child victims whose rights have been violated in or through the digital environment. (Stevanović & Kolaković-Bojović, 2021)

The Committee also recognizes the need for international and inter-ministerial cooperation and capacity building in the identification and protection of child victims in the digital environment. Such an approach would prevent re-victimization and secondary victimization of children in criminal proceedings, often caused by insufficient knowledge of information technology, digital environment and mechanisms. The Commentary also addresses the state's obligation to establish reparative mechanisms for child victims in the digital environment, including guaran-

tees of non-repetition (para. 46). Finally, General Comment No. 25 recognizes the need for child information and protection mechanisms in relation to the violation of their rights that need to be adapted not only to the child friendly language, but also in terms of accessibility modalities. In practice, this would mean that such information should be available in the form and in places like social networks, digital platforms, multimedia content, etc.), but also in other places in the real environment, so that they can be easily accessed by the child's parents or guardians. Also, accessibility of information for teacher and professionals who are in contact with children in the context of education, social and health care, as well as sports and other forms of organization of children's leisure time is of the vital importance, considering that they are often in a position to recognize that the child is a victim of violence.

Chapter XII (B) of the General Comment is devoted, among other things, to the digitization of court proceedings as a mechanism for protection against secondary victimization. Namely, the General Comment draws attention to the problem of using digital technologies in the context of surveillance systems, facial recognition software or risk assessment, which are used in the investigation and prosecution of criminal offenses, and in the context of potential violations of the child's privacy and dignity.⁴ The Committee recognizes that, where the digitalisation of court proceedings leads to a lack of personal contact with children, this may have a negative impact on rehabilitation measures and restorative justice based on developing relationships with the child. In such cases, and also when children are deprived of their liberty, States Parties should provide for personal contact in order to facilitate the content and cooperation of children with the judiciary and their smooth rehabilitation. (para. 120) This provision is in fact a kind of setting a "boundary stone" through which the digitalization of proceedings should not pass, ie recognizing the potentially negative aspects of the use of modern technologies in court proceedings.

3. EXPERT ATTITUDES

Recognizing the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to this topic, the Institute invited the most prominent experts in the field: members of academ-

⁴ More about the right to dignity see in: Kolaković-Bojović, M. and Grujić, Z. (2020) *Crime Victims and the Right to Human Dignity - Challenges and Attitudes in Serbia*. In: Yearbook. No. 3, Human rights protection : the right to human dignity. Provincial Protector of Citizens - Ombudsman ; Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research, Novi Sad ; Belgrade, pp. 239-269. ISBN 978-86-80756-36-3

ia, research community, psychologists, legal and social care professionals, to submit their contributions and to take part in the discussion. As a result of this process two publications have been prepared: Edited Conference volume *Children and challenges of digital environment* and the thematic section of the Journal of Criminology and Criminal Law, No. 2/2022.

In addition to this introductory paper, Edited Conference volume *Children and challenges of digital environment* includes 14 papers, but also English and Serbian full text version of the CRC General Comment No. 25.

Prof. Aleksandar Jugović⁵, PhD, in his paper *Children in the Digital Environment: between Well-being and Risks* presented in his paper is the analysis of the well-being and risks for children in the digital environment. The aim of this paper is to explain the thesis that information and communication technologies have a sociable and risky character for children. All children should have safe access to digital technologies and be empowered to participate, express their personalities, seek information and enjoy all the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The digital environment can negatively affect the lives of children, which raises the concern of parents and responsible adults for possible harmful consequences. Information and communication technologies create new forms of risks for children. These are the risks of contact, content, behaviour and health risks. The conclusion of the author is that state institutions have a primary obligation to respect, protect and realize the rights of every child to digital inclusion through the operation of relevant systems.

Ivana Stepanović, PhD⁶, Olivera Pavićević, PhD⁷ and Ljeposava Ilijić, PhD⁸ in their paper *Transparent Kids: How Algorithmic Surveillance Challenges the Protection of Children's Rights Online* addressed the hidden danger of the algorithmic surveillance embedded in social media, recognizing that it is not simply an organizing principle that regulates visibility, sorts the content, and polices the online spaces. It is a business method of commodifying personal data that stimulates the production of various forms of digital violence due to its virality potential. Ethical guidelines that are set to prevent or penalise cybercrimes are always external to the logic of the market and the algorithms themselves because they prioritise engagement and reproduction of data at any cost. Children are especially vulner-

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able because they are under constant surveillance while the price of opting out is too high. This paper analyses the processes of data commodification and stresses the importance of developing the legal framework for the protection of the digital rights of children while emphasising the need to reassess the impacts of surveillance practices and find comprehensive solutions against the systemic abuse of children's data online.

Prof. Zoran Pavlović, PhD⁹ in his paper *Children and Hate Speech on Social Networks* emphasizes that measures against discrimination at the international and national level, as well as the conditions for the use of social networks, cannot, however completely prevent the spread of hate speech. The debate on tightening sanctions against those who spread hate speech on social networks, and where children appear, should be led, but the right to freedom of speech and privacy, the standard of effective protection of children's rights and more should not be forgotten. Everyone is responsible, including social networks. The rights of the child are inviolable, as are the right to development or dignity. The ban on access to children's social networks is not a preventive measure, but a form of violence against them, additional victimization and not a positive educational mechanism. A responsible approach to the topic in the triangle of hate speech, children and social networks will not show its solutions through repressive measures of criminal law, but through prevention and creating zero tolerance for hate speech on social networks, regardless of whether it is posted by adults or children.

Andrej Kubiček¹⁰ and Aleksandra Marković, PhD¹¹ in their paper *Hate Speech towards the Roma Children in the Digital Space: Discourse Analyses of User's Comments* explore new modes of textual articulation of long-existing discourses towards a specific segment of a racialized ethnic minority, the Roma children. Considering the interactive dynamic nature of digital media portals, which allows users to interact with media producers, algorithms, and themselves by posting comments, authors seek new ways to explain this phenomenon, which further endangers the precarious social position of the youngest Roma. The article shows how the hidden aspects of minority children's lives are fantasized in the texts (re) generated by the readers, who became producers of media messages through digital technologies. Besides centuries-old stereotypes and interpretations of selective

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everyday experiences about Roma children, the article points out how irresponsible and unethical journalism can encourage the emergence of hate speech towards a specific group of children already in a disadvantaged social position.

Jelena Kostić, PhD¹² and Valentina Ranaldi, PhD¹³ in their paper *Social peer violence in the digital environment - students' attitudes and the possibility of prevention* analysing the phenomenon of the violence in communication between children and young people in the digital environment. As a result, their exposure to violence in the digital environment is increasing. This type of violence is specific, and the lack of direct contact can be encouraging for potential abusers. In addition, in some forms of digital violence, the reaction of the victimized person may be absent, and its absence may encourage further violence or even other forms of violence against him. During the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus, classes in schools were conducted online, and a measure of mandatory physical isolation was in force. This has certainly increased the use of social networks and messaging applications by children and young people. From April to June 2021 authors conducted two surveys through an anonymous survey among primary school students in the Republic of Serbia aged ten to fourteen. The aim of one research was to gain insight into students' attitudes and attitudes towards verbal peer violence in digital environments, and the other was to gain insight into students' attitudes and attitudes towards social peer violence in the same environment. Based on the results of the research, authors tried to give recommendations for the prevention of social peer violence in digital environments.

Nebojša Macanović, PhD¹⁴ and Ružica Stojanović¹⁵ in their paper *Cyberbullying as a Form of Peer Violence in Schools*, analysing the phenomenon of the violence by the means of the Internet, known worldwide as cyberbullying. They defined it as a general term for any communication activity using cyber technology that could be considered harmful to the individual or the common well-being. An increasing number of children and young people are being exposed to bullying via the Internet and additionally, the fact that it is still not recognized as a serious problem in society is worrying. One of the reasons why this trend is neglected lies in the fact that it occurs in the virtual world, and that it is not present in the "the real environment" of a child. The goal of this paper is to display empiri-

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cal research that aims to determine the presence and the manner of cyberbullying among students in high schools in the municipality of Modriča, as well as the connection of this phenomenon with the educational and demographic characteristics of respondents. The research focuses on students and school as a place where these problems are often identified in young people. The results of the research indicate the existence of cyberbullying, but also reveal the causes and consequences of this phenomenon.

The issue of cyberbullying has also attracted Milena Milićević, PhD¹⁶ who prepared the paper *Cyberbullying and cyber victimisation: a literature review of assessment instruments*. She notices that the knowledge regarding cyberbullying and its consequences has increased during the past two decades, but also concludes that a more detailed insight into the characteristics of cyberbullying and cyber victimisation requires a significant diversity of measures. However, no agreement on the best measurement method has been reached. The present literature review aimed to identify and present the instruments and measures constructed and utilised to assess cyberbullying and/or cyber victimisation. A systematic search identified 2031 publications. The selection process resulted in 11 assessment instruments, which were analysed. According to the findings, the starting point in the construction or adaptation of assessment instruments specific to our context should be a consistent, enhanced and standardised definition of cyberbullying comparable to the ones used worldwide, followed by the precise criteria for the representativeness of the target population and carefully considered both socio-cultural factors and the time frame. Finally, author concludes that it is necessary to conduct comprehensive statistical analyzes in order to develop and verify the psychometric properties of the cyberbullying assessment tool that would be adequate for the assessment of this phenomenon in Serbia.

Katalin Csepregi¹⁷ and István Kovacs, PhD¹⁸, put the focus on *The Increase in Domestic Violence During the Coronavirus Period: With Special Focus on Children Position*. The focus of this paper is on protecting children from domestic violence. Domestic criminal law (Hungarian) has contributed to the criminalization of domestic violence, and it protects not only women but also children. The authors conducted a statistical analysis of data collected during the coronavirus period.

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Statistical analysis includes a comparison of data on domestic violence during the coronavirus and two years before this period. The authors examine whether there was an increase in domestic violence, especially violence against children, during the coronavirus period. Restrictive measures (confinement or curfew) and psychological reactions have been identified as some of the leading causes that contribute to the increase in domestic violence.

How important role of the parents is in child cyberbullying victimization has been well recognized by Hajdana Glomazić, PhD¹⁹ and Katarina Glomazić²⁰ in their paper *How to Prevent a Child Becoming Cyberbullying Victim*. The issue of protecting children from Internet abuse cannot be viewed outside the importance of the parental role in that process. In this paper, authors investigate the relationship between parental mediation and child abuse through digital technologies. The aim of this paper is to examine whether parental mediation is a factor in reducing the risk of child abuse in the Internet space and whether intervention programs are designed to meet the needs of different categories of parents. The results have shown that parental mediation is a factor in preventing and reducing the risk of children online abuse. The extent of its success, among other factors, depends on the parental style and parental warmth. Furthermore, the data we have obtained suggest that it is necessary to deepen the current research on parental mediation in order to create better policies and program prevention.

In favor of the severity of a sexual abuse of children goes the fact that the most of the authors approached the conference topic from this perspective. Anđela Đukanović, PhD²¹ addresses the *Combating Child Sexual Abuse Online in European Union and The General Processing of Electronic Communications* starting from the position that the fight against child sexual abuse and exploitation is recognized as a priority for the EU, having in mind the significant increase in detected cases of online child sexual abuse in recent years. In order to resolve issue of online child sexual abuse, EU resorted to voluntary practice of processing online interpersonal communications by service providers, not based on firm legal basis. After extension of the scope of the Privacy and Electronic Communications *Directive 2002/58/EC*, this voluntary practice was paused, until the adoption of *Regulation (EU) 2021/1232* on a temporary derogation from certain provisions of *Directive 2002/58/EC*. Author concluded that, however, it seems that the imposed limitations on the right to private life and protection of personal data do not re-

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spect the essence of these rights, there was no detailed analysis of necessity and proportionality of general processing of content data and possible adverse effects on combating online child sexual abuse.

Aleksandar Stevanović²² approaches the topic of the sexual abuse of children from the perspective of the *Child Pornography on The Internet: Criminological Aspect and Comparative Regulation*. In order to contextualize the problem of child pornography, the author first strives to analyze the terms “pornography” and “child” in the context of the criminal law norm since it is imperative from a legal point of view to define what constitutes child pornography. Already at that step, many difficulties were pointed out, which are further implied on the adequate legal fight against child pornography. In the fight against child pornography. The influence of online technologies and Internet on the changed nature and phenomenology of child pornography was especially considered. Author especially pointed out that although the Internet makes it easier for criminals to engage in activities that fall under child pornography, child pornography would not have become so visible without the Internet. Although the constitution of incrimination of child pornography is deeply determined by the cultural and social basis in general, it is necessary to establish harmonization in terms of the legal fight against child pornography in order for it to be effective. In this context, we have analyzed several legal definitions of child pornography in both universal and regional legal acts.

Prof. Jasna Hrnčić, PhD²³ and Nina Lončar²⁴, identified e-tools and e-space as a fruitful ground for child abuse. In their paper, *Technology-assisted child sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking*, they recognized a child sexual abuse (CSA) as one of the most devastating forms of human communication. In the last decades it is facilitated by information communication technologies (ICT). The authors analyse characteristics and specifics of ICT-assisted child sexual abuse, including exploitation and trafficking of children in order to provide better understanding of the phenomenon. Terms in the field have been examined, online environments as a risk factor analysed, prevalence of the phenomenon presented. Motivation, implicit theories and cognitive distortions of offenders are explained. Current typologies of ICT assisted CSA offences and offenders and risk factor for victimization are inspected. The differences and overlaps between terms and typologies in the field are discussed and barriers to effective prevention and intervention analysed. Urgency for effective social reaction to this blatant evil is emphasized.

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Academician Prof. Dr Miodrag N. Simović²⁵ and Prof. Dr Azra Adžajlić-Devović²⁶ presented the Bosnia and Herzegovina approach to the protection of child victims of sexual abuse. Their paper *Protection of Children Victims of Sexual Violence And Sexual Harassment In Bosnia And Herzegovina* recognizes the sexual violence as always a serious violation of the victim's personality, autonomy, psycho-physical integrity, self-control and self-esteem. Numerous other persons, thereby, including family members of victims, relatives, friends, acquaintances, etc., often appear as secondary victims. The prevalent victims of sexual violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina are female minors. Unlike sexual violence, sexual harassment is a delict of power aimed at "helpless victims" in non-democratic societies where there is no equality of rights for all citizens, but one part of society (men) seeks to maintain their positions of power by preserving the "patriarchal family" and sexual/gender discrimination and violence. The aim of this paper is to present the penal policy in the context of sexual violence against children in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this regard, the protection of victims of sexual harassment and the results of the survey on fear of victimization - sexual violence and sexual harassment are analyzed. The results of the research should justify both the scientific and social significance of this paper.

Nikola Vujičić²⁷ and Nikola Drndarević²⁸ in their paper *Offenders and Their Families in A Digital Environment: A Case Study of PCI Sremska Mitrovica*, provided a review of the developments and characteristics of video visitation in PCI Sremska Mitrovica, with a focus on the contact between offenders and their families and children. The study draws upon data from fieldwork interviews with the prison employees and aims to understand experiences of using video visitation and their importance in the offender behavior as well as the prison system. The study gives voice to field experts with the knowledge and skills to suggest how video visitation impacts the offender behavior and its relevancy in the context of familial relationships. Moreover, it reflects on the nature of digital technologies in prisons and considers how they are embraced and managed in Serbia. Special focus is on the legislative framework in the Republic of Serbia.

In addition to the above presented papers, six papers submitted in Serbian have been published in the thematic section of the Journal of Criminology and Criminal Law, No. 2/2022.

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Prof. Milan Škulić, PhD²⁹ in his paper *Criminal Law Reaction to Child Pornography/Juvenile Pornography – Realized/Created by Abuse of Computer Network/Communication by Other Technical Means* explained the basic characteristics of the criminal law reaction to child pornography, i.e. pornography of minors/juveniles, especially when it is realised using appropriate so-called high technology, which boils down to the misuse of a computer network or communication by other technical means. In the paper are presented the concept of pornography in the criminal law point of view, and author analyses the key normative characteristics of the criminal offense of showing, obtaining and possessing pornographic material and exploitation of a minor for pornography, (Article 185 of the Criminal Code of Serbia). The author also pays significant attention to comparative criminal law, explaining the basic characteristics of child pornography/juvenile pornography in German criminal law and in the criminal law of the United States.

Dragan Obradović³⁰ in his paper *Use of Audio-Visual Connection in Examination of Children in Criminal Proceedings - From the Judge's Angle*, explains that in numerous criminal proceedings, there is an increasing need in Serbia to examine children and juveniles as victims or as witnesses. Having in mind their age, their maturity, the examination of these categories of participants in criminal proceedings requires specially trained people - officials who will contact them from their first appearance either in the police, in the public prosecutor's office or in court. And for their additional protection in criminal proceedings, the legislator recognized the need to examine these vulnerable categories of participants in criminal proceedings can be done with the use of technical means - through audio-visual communication, which provides additional security for children and juveniles, so it is most important by legal regulations on criminal matters, he officially prescribed this possibility. During the 21st century, Serbia has technically equipped all higher courts with special rooms and audio-visual communication systems. In this paper, we pointed out the most important international and domestic regulations related to the protection of victims and are especially important for the protection of children in criminal proceedings, the way in which the use of audio-visual communication is regulated in the most important domestic criminal regulations. We also pointed out some cases from practice in which the examination of the injured - children and minors through audio-visual connection was applied.

The subject of the paper, *Audio – Video Link as An Instrument of Protection of a Vulnerable Witness and A Counterbalancing Factor* prepared by Ivana Miljuš, PhD³¹ is the dual function of audio - video link in criminal proceedings in which vul-

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nerable witnesses are examined - protection of witnesses and victims and ensuring the exercise of the defendant's right to examine witnesses. In the first part of the paper, the author analyzes the concept of "audio - video link", its legal nature, characteristics, roles and basic risks. The second part of the paper explores the normative and practical foundations of the protection of minors in criminal proceedings. The third part of the paper deals with the requirement to establish and maintain a balance of legitimate interests of enabling testimony and effective punishment, protection of the physical and mental integrity of witnesses and the right to defense. "In the balance test" of the European Court of Human Rights, the audio-video link is a "positive measure" of the state and a "counterbalancing factor". The subject of the paper is also the normative regulation of an especially vulnerable witness. The aim of this paper is to point out the importance of proper use of technical devices for transmitting images and sound during the examination of especially vulnerable witness, but also its potential risks, possible proposals to improve the normative basis for their application and basic principles of audio - video link in criminal procedure.

Ljubinko Mitrović, PhD³², Nikolina Grbić-Pavlović³³, Sonja Tomašević³⁴ in their paper *International Standards Regulating Protection Against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in The Digital Environment* presented the international legal framework, where there are a number of documents dealing with the protection of children, which are directly or indirectly related to sexual abuse and exploitation of children. Thus, in this paper, the authors will deal with international documents dealing with the protection against sexual abuse and exploitation of children with special emphasis on documents that directly deal with the protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation in the digital environment. Due to the volume of international documents regulating the protection of children in this area, attention will be paid only to the most important international documents.

Vladimir M. Simović, PhD³⁵ and Marina M. Simović³⁶ in their paper *Child Pornography In The Light Of Computer Crimes: International Standards And Law Of Bosnia And Herzegovina*, addressed an international standards from a number of universal (UN) and regional (Council of Europe) documents, a large number of national legislations, including positive law of Bosnia and Herzegovina, that pro-

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vide for several computer (computer, IT, information, cyber) crimes that violate or endanger various social values by using (or abusing) computers, computer systems or information technology. These are various forms of illegal activities of natural and legal persons, through, with the help of, through or by using computer systems, whether it is about old crimes take on new forms (forms of manifestation), or completely new crimes. Among these criminal offenses, computer crimes occur in a special, specific, or extremely dangerous way, especially for children and youth. This paper, in addition to the system of international standards and the basic characteristics of computer crimes, considers the content of computer crimes as mean of production or propagation of pornographic material in the legal system of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Dragan Jovašević, PhD³⁷ recognizes in his paper *Encouraging Sexual Abuse of Minors Through Computer Devices* that sexual abuse of children and minors is an old crime that has been known since ancient times, both in the world and in our country. In modern criminal law, these sexual crimes acquire new forms of manifestation, especially if they are committed with the use of computer devices or systems. Thus, these criminal acts gain in importance due to the danger and severity of the consequences caused, ie a higher degree of guilt of their perpetrators. Legal protection of sexual freedom of minors from the abuse of computer information technology today occupies a prominent place in both international and national criminal law of the region. The paper analyzes the specific criminal offense of inciting minors to sexual exploitation through computer information technology in European documents, the law of Serbia and the law of the countries of the region.

In addition to the papers published in the Conference volume and the Journal of Criminology and Criminal Law, several prominent authors have submitted summaries/concept notes of their oral presentations.

Prof. Stanko Bejatović, PhD³⁸ in his presentation *Technology in a service of taking procedural actions in criminal proceedings where juveniles appear as victims or witnesses of crime* addresses capacities of the modern technologies, mostly ICT tools like video link, in elimination or reduction of the secondary victimization. The focus of his presentation is on the legislative framework of Serbia and perspectives to amend and improve it.

Sladana Jovanović³⁹ i Ljubinka Marković⁴⁰ in their presentation *Juvenile Offenders and Victims of Digital Violence* focus on the issue of digital violence

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⁴⁰ Psychologist at the Higher Court in Belgrade

among juveniles: factors, main characteristics, actual legal and social responses to it. The base for their presentation is the latest research results of judicial practice (of the Higher Court in Belgrade), data gathered by questionnaires filled out by juveniles from one high school in Belgrade, and other available studies on the topic. Some recommendations regarding improved response to digital violence among juveniles were made, having in mind General Comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to digital environment adopted by Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Prof. Miodrag Simović, PhD⁴¹ and Prof. Mile Šikman, PhD⁴² in their presentation *The impact of the digital environment on children and responding to socially unacceptable behavior* analyze the increasing impact of the digital environment on the psychophysical development of children. The type and degree of impact can be different, and the consequence is always the same and is reflected in the harmful effects on psychophysical development children. At the same time, numerous studies on victims show that the real impact is high technology on the psychophysical development of children much higher than that expressed through the available data. The main reason for such a situation could be found in the reasons for not reporting this behavior by the victim or rather non-recognition of the harmful effects of high technology on psychophysical development of children. The authors also recognize the detrimental effects of secondary victimization, which they are very often covered victims of crime. In that sense, the question arises in which way society can most adequately respond to these behaviors. Different models of prevention can give promising results, but raise issues of protection of children's rights, including personal data. On the other hand, criminal repression, as the *ultima ratio*, has a full justification for its introduction, but also significant limitations. The authors pointed out that this is exactly the subject of their approach: prevention and suppression socially unacceptable behavior manifested by the use of high technology, either children are victims or actors of these behaviors.

Prof. Milana Ljubičić, PhD⁴³ and Prof. Đorđe Ignjatović, PhD⁴⁴ in their presentation *Victimization of young people on social networks - research results of Belgrade University students* presented results of their joint research the victimization of youngsters conducted among students of the University of Belgrade.

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⁴³ Full Professor, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy

⁴⁴ Full Professor, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Law

In addition to the previously presented papers on the victimization, but also on the responsibility of juvenile offenders for crimes committed in digital environment, Mladen Jeličić, PhD⁴⁵ in his presentation *Misdemeanor responsibility of parents for child misdemeanor in the digital space* approaches to this issues differently- considering decreased age limits in terms of the active use of smart devices for activities in online space, he addresses it from the perspective of the parental responsibility for misdemeanor committed by their child under 14, who are therefore still irresponsible before the law.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the main points addressed in the UN CRC General Comment No. 25 (2021), but also taking into account selection of topics made by the experts who presented their papers and the concept notes of their oral presentations, it could be concluded that victimization of children in digital space has been recognized as the one the main challenges of the digital environment. Both, CRC and international experts who took part in this initiative of the Institute of Criminological and Sociological Research agree upon the main issues attributed to this type of victimization:

- Lack of parental control mostly attributed to the insufficient digital skills of parents;
- Significant obstacles in investigation and proving this type of crimes;
- Harmful and longstanding influence of the cybervictimization on child personal development and wellbeing in general;
- Crucial importance of the prevention together with the strengthening capacities of professionals in contact with children as in police, prosecution service, courts, social protection and education sector as through the continuous raising awareness among children and their parents on how to deal with all challenges of digital environment and avoid child victimization.

In addition to this, some of authors well recognized that digital environment plays “two sides of one coin” role, so that digital environment as a space which daily hosts millions of children can be used as a fruitful environment to inform and strengthen them to report the crime.

The last, but not least, digital environment should be wider recognized and used to prevent secondary victimization of child victims and witnesses caused by direct contact with offender and the state officials within criminal procedure.

⁴⁵ Judge at the Misdemeanor Court Šabac, Research Fellow

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