

## **ACTION PLAN ON CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN ON THE INTERNET**

### *Brief overview*

#### **1.**

Internet expanded and covers, nowadays, almost of the Portuguese population. In particular, access by mobile devices or smartphones allows permanent connectivity to the networks. With regard to children, this permanent – sometimes compulsive –, connexion increased the risk of exposure to harmful (and criminal) contents and actions, which exploit the particular vulnerabilities of the young population. It is thus important to be aware of these emerging realities, to prevent them, but also, where they reveal unlawful conducts, to punish.

#### **2.**

Within the communication networks and outside them, some behaviours that violate the rights and interests of children are already criminalised by the Portuguese law. On the other hand, Portugal ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (the Lanzarote Convention, in force in Portugal since December 2012), as it was previously ratified the Convention on Cybercrime of the Council of Europe (the Budapest Convention, in force in Portugal since 2010). Finally, Portugal joined the Global Alliance against Child Sexual Abuse Online, launched in Brussels in 2012 and accepted the commitment to develop efforts in this field.

#### **3.**

This was the landscape where the Portuguese Prosecutor General's Office launched, on 4<sup>th</sup> of October 2013, the Action Plan on Crimes Against Children on the Internet.

Within the overall objectives of this action plan, it is to allow prosecutors to handle more efficiently with all the criminal phenomena against children, when committed with the use of the networks. That scope requires a better knowledge of this reality at the domestic level, but also to call the attention of the community – children in particular – to the theme. Besides, prosecutors (and all the judicial community, in fact), need to be sensitised to the increasing importance of the issue, for example, by the means of specific training. Last, but not least, an effective approach to this subject requires to foster the dialogue between prosecutors and other stakeholders, as well as encourage the exchange of information, in specific cases.

**4.**

The action plan was launched during the conference on “*Children and the Internet – safe use, abuse and complaint*”, last 4<sup>th</sup> of October, in Lisbon, at the Prosecutor General’s Office’ premises. One of the remarks of this event was the released of the booklet “*You and the Internet – (ab)use, crime and complaint*”, directed to children and teenagers, with short texts and a simple language, besides of graphics by schoolchildren from Lisbon.

The purpose of this booklet is to contribute, through information, to a safer Internet, making clear that some behaviours regarding children and young people are criminal infringements. The booklet gives guidance on those infringements and on how to present a complaint, but it also points out the existence of other answers, besides the criminal, that can secure the rights of children and young victims of the misuse of the internet.

The booklet is freely available, for reading or download in pdf format, both in Portuguese and in English, at <http://cibercrime.pgr.pt>.

**5.**

Still within this action plan, it was established a training programme to prosecutors. Training sessions are already foreseen in all the Portuguese judicial districts (Coimbra, Évora, Lisboa and Porto). Besides, awareness raising sessions are being planned, in schools and other institutions.