

ANNUAL REPORT 2020: THE IGF DYNAMIC COALITION ON CHILD ONLINE SAFETY (DC-COS)

Background to the DC-COS¹

The DC-COS was established in 2006 at the 2nd IGF in Rio de Janeiro by organisations, working with and for children and youth. Its aim was to establish a dialogue and address fundamental and practical issues impacting on child safety in the online environment.

Since 2006, there have been significant evolutions in the scale and nature of opportunity, risk and harm to which children are exposed in digital environments, and the relevance of the group continues to be clear.

As of January 2021, the DC-COS has nearly 60 individual and organisational members from civil society, the private sector, academia, UN and Industry across Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas.

Activities in 2020

In 2020, the DC-COS convened two key events at EuroDIG 2020 and IGF 2020.

EuroDIG 2020

This event took place on Wednesday, 10 June 2020 (Day 0), with the title: *Pre 10: Covid 19 Pandemic: Lessons Learned for Children's Safety*. The aim of the session was to discuss the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on online risks and threats for children, and to develop policy recommendations for a suitable response. Speakers and participants were invited to report measures their organisations had taken and to share their experiences. Speakers included:

1. Marie-Laure Lemineur, ECPAT International
2. Ayca Atabey, Istanbul Bilgi University IT Law Institute
3. Sonia Livingstone, London School of Economics (LSE)
4. Mr. Greg Adamson, Chair of IEEE SA Digital Inclusion, Identity, Trust, & Agency program
5. Giacomo MAZZONE, European Broadcasting Union
6. John Carr, Independent Child Rights and Online Safety Expert
7. Amy Crocker, Independent Digital Safety Consultant

The session concluded that:

- The Covid19 pandemic had highlighted the wide range of risks and threats to children, including in relation to their rights under various articles of the UNCRC, other international instruments and national laws.
- The lockdown was resulting in substantial numbers of children spending even more time than usual online, making protection from harm in the digital environment even more important. This also underlined the importance of the principle of safety by design and security by default.

¹ <https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/dynamic-coalition-on-child-online-safety-dccos>

- The closing of schools has a huge impact on children’s right to education, and the shift to home schooling shone a light on the digital divide in relation to “device poverty” and “connectivity poverty”.
- The civil rights of children such as the right to freedom of expression, to access information, to assembly and association, the right to be heard and the right to privacy were all at risk. In order to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in times of crisis it is necessary to broaden the perspective beyond the right to be protected.

The DC-COS proposed a range of actions and considerations in response to the status quo:

- Continue to advocate for child protection and children’s rights to be considered as a key dimension of Internet Governance
- Encouraging a joint approach in national legislation based on international legal instruments e.g. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) - Budapest Convention - Lanzarote Convention
- Declare Internet access as a universal right based on UN-CRC Art. 2 – Non-discrimination and Art. 17 – Access to information
- Integrate consideration of the position of children in the internet age into national and international contingency planning
- Increasing the resources available to law enforcement
- Awareness raising about the modus operandi of perpetrators of online abuse and exploitation, and about children’s right to privacy
- Support for families in regard of infrastructure, devices and media literacy training.
- Increased research on the impact of the crisis on children’s rights also in regard of digitization

IGF 2020

This event took place on Wednesday, 4 November 2020, with the title: *Lessons learned from the Pandemic: child rights and safety*.

The panel session explored the evidence of how and to what extent the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the vulnerability of children to sexual exploitation and abuse in digital environments, and was designed to highlight the central role of Internet governance in mitigating risk and shaping future crisis management.

Speakers included:

- Baroness Beeban Kidron, Founder and Chair of 5Rights Foundation
- Professor Amanda Third (PhD), University of Western Sydney, Australia
- Ms. Nina Pirk, representative of Nummer Gegen Kummer (German Kids and Youth Helpline).
- Mr. Cathal Delaney, Head of Team, Analysis Project Twins, EC3, EUROPOL

The transcript of the session is available [here](#), and the session outline [here](#).

Objectives for 2021

Name Update

The DC-COS remains a vital group within the Internet Governance landscape. To reflect the evolving of a broad nature of opportunity, risk and harm to children in the digital age, and to align with the recently adopted General Comment No. 25 to the UN Convention on the

Rights of the Child on Children's Rights in relation to the Digital Environment², the DC-COS will become the ***Dynamic Coalition on children's rights in the digital environment (DC-CRDE)***.

Policy focus

In order to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and perhaps other currently unforeseeable events which may require similar large scale and broad based responses, it is necessary to widen the perspective beyond protection to key issues such as children's right to education (SDG 4), which has been severely impacted worldwide as a result of a persistent digital divide.

At the same time, as the world has gone online, the COVID-19 pandemic has also brought the digital privacy debate even more to the fore. This has led to a false dichotomy between everyone's right to privacy and the right of children to protection. Perhaps nowhere has this been more acutely seen than in the EU in recent months. However, this issue is global, and the DC-CRDE will strive to address the arguments and implications of various legal and policy developments.

These are a few of the themes that the DC-CRDE is likely to address throughout 2021 and in particular at IGF 2021.

Report finalised on 8 February 2021 by the DC-COS Coordination Team:

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<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/GCChildrensRightsRelationDigitalEnvironment.aspx>