

## CHILD SAFEGUARDING TEAM

### Who are we

**The Child Safeguarding Team** (established in 2010) within the Issues Affecting Children Program of International Center "La Strada Moldova" consists of an **attorney** and several **psychologists**, who provide assistance throughout the criminal proceedings to children victims and witnesses of sexual abuse and exploitation.

### Our mission

To ensure the rights and interests of children are respected throughout the entire criminal procedure in order to avoid repeated victimization and ensure that all the principles of restorative justice are followed.

### Area of competence

**Any form of sexual violence against children**, whether it is sexual abuse or sexual exploitation, represents our area of activity. **The use of informational technologies** as a means of recruiting, enticing or as an environment to commit the abuse or exploitation, represents the defining element of our specialization. We provide legal and psychological assistance to the child victim or witness of the following offences:

- Rape (art. 171 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova)
- Violent actions of a sexual nature (art. 172 of the Criminal Code of the RM)
- Sexual harassment (art. 173 of the Criminal Code of the RM)
- Sexual intercourse with a person under the age of 16 (art. 174 of the Criminal Code of the RM)
- Perverted actions (art. 175 of the Criminal Code of the RM)
- Child enticement for sexual purposes (art. 175/1 of the Criminal Code of the RM)
- Child trafficking (art. 206 para. (1) a) of the Criminal Code of the RM)
- Child pornography (art. 208/1 of the Criminal Code of the RM)
- Child prostitution (art. 208/2 of the Criminal Code of the RM)

### Our principles

- Ensure the balance between criminal justice and the best interests of the child;
- Confidentiality and protection of the identity of the victim;
- Avoid interventions that have low benefit for the child, but where the risk of damage is high;
- Involving the child in the decision-making process that concerns him/her.

### Who can request our services

- Law enforcement agencies;
- Professionals in the field of child protection and related fields (social assistance, education, health).

### Our services

- ✓ **Assist and consult law enforcement agencies** during the period of investigation;
- ✓ **Provide specialized psychological assistance to the children and the members of their families** throughout the criminal proceedings;
- ✓ **Provide specialized legal assistance and consultation to the children and the members of their families;**
- ✓ **Child-friendly hearing spaces** for children victims/witnesses of sexual abuse or exploitation.

#### ✓ **Contacts**

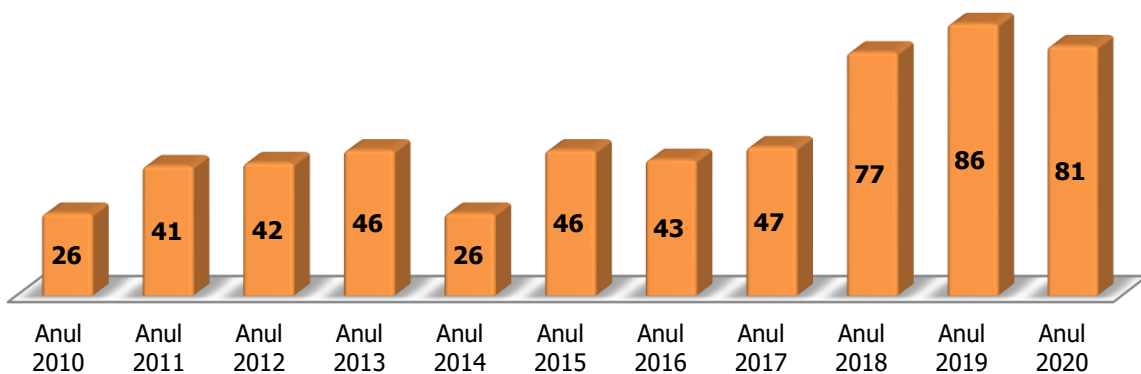
- ✓ **Tel.:** +373 78 330 406, +373 78 405 660
- ✓ **Web:** [siguronline.md](http://siguronline.md), [lastrada.md](http://lastrada.md)
- ✓ **Working hours:** 24/7.

## CHILD SAFEGUARDING TEAM

### An overview of assisted cases in the last 11 years

From the first day of activity till the end of 2020, a total of **578 children** have received support from the La Strada attorney and psychologist. These are children and adolescents who were victims or witnesses in legal proceedings related to sexual abuse (rape, sexual harassment, child enticement, violent actions of a sexual nature) or sexual exploitation (child trafficking, child pornography, child prostitution).

### Dynamic of the number of beneficiaries of the CST, 2010-2020



### 2020: statistics and trends

In 2020, the Child Safeguarding Team has provided support to 81 children victims of different types of sexual abuse or exploitation: 52 cases were registered in the current year and 29 are cases of continued assistance from previous years.

#### Cases registered in 2020



**52 cases**  
of sexual abuse and  
exploitation of **children**



Sexual abuse (sexual offences: art. 171, art. 173, art. 174, art. 175 of the Criminal Code etc.) - **32 children**



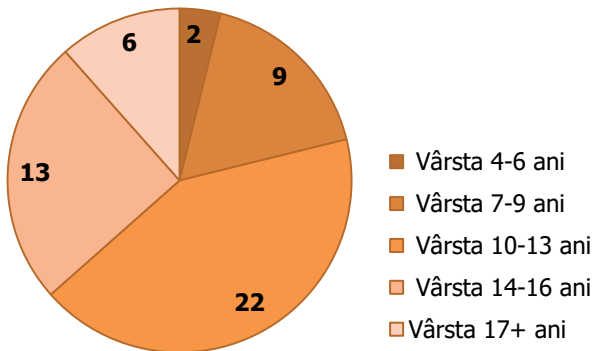
Online sexual exploitation (art. 208/1 Criminal Code) - **14 children**



Child trafficking with the purpose of sexual exploitation (art. 206 Criminal Code) - **6 children**

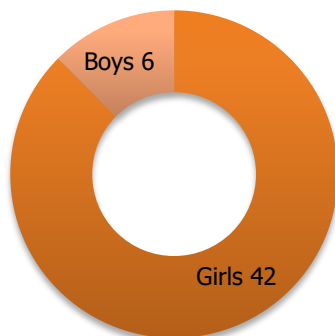
## CHILD SAFEGUARDING TEAM

### Age of the beneficiaries



During 2020, most of the victims that faced sexual abuse or exploitation were aged between 10 and 13 years. This shows a trend of younger aged children being exposed to online or offline sexual violence. Compared to 2019, more children from this age group (16% more) have been identified and have been provided with psychological and legal assistance throughout the criminal proceedings. The number of children under the age of 10 who have experienced sexual abuse, particularly online, has increased by 10%.

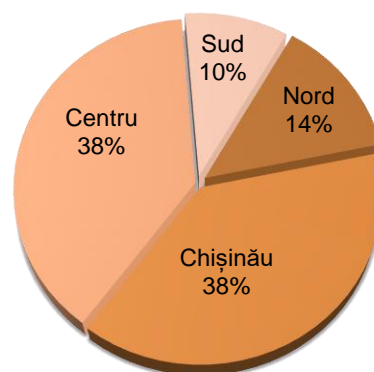
### Children assisted, by gender



This data is determined by the increased vulnerability of children browsing the Internet at this age. Children under the age of 9 have been exposed to grooming (online child enticement for sexual purposes) or have produced materials of sexual nature and published them on social media.

The number of boys who have experienced sexual abuse or exploitation and received assistance from our professionals, remains constant (approx. 10% of the total number of cases).

### The geography of cases



Like in previous years, representatives of law enforcement agencies and Prosecutor's Offices from **the Center region** have most frequently requested an intervention of the CST attorney and psychologist.

### Cases reported through the platform siguronline.md

#### Trends in online child sexual abuse and exploitation

*1. The number of potential cases of online sexual abuse and exploitation, reported through the [www.siguronline.md](http://www.siguronline.md) platform, has increased by approx. 70% compared to 2019.*

In the period January-December 2020, 49 cases of potential online sexual abuse were reported through the platform [www.siguronline.md](http://www.siguronline.md). 41 reports were made by children and 8 by adults (members of the family, teachers or members of the community). Only in **9 cases** the children have been provided with psychological and legal support and have been referred to law enforcement agencies. In all other cases the beneficiaries have refused to cooperate with the competent authorities or they have been referred to specialized services in the country they live in (Romania).

*2. The youngest child who reported an online sexual abuse was 8 years old*

The average age of children reporting a situation of online sexual abuse is decreasing. In previous years, the average age was 14-15 years, now, more and more children aged 13 write to us about cases of abuse.

*3. More children have told us that they have been sexually abused online by their peers*

Compared to 2019, the number of requests regarding sexual abuse among peers has increased by 30%. Most often it was about adolescents that our beneficiaries have met online, started talking to or they were in a relationship/friends with. Our beneficiaries said that they weren't very cautious because they were talking to someone of the same age as them.

*4. More and more often the child is exposed to various types of sexual abuse on online gaming platforms*

In some situations, children have been exposed to sexual content on gaming platforms. We have registered cases when the first contact of the abuser with the child was through the gaming platform, and then moved to social media.

*5. Sextortion is still the most frequently reported type of sexual abuse*

In previous years, it was just girls telling us about sexual blackmail online. In 2020 we have registered complaints from boys as well.