

Call for Papers – Issue 3 (2027)

Intra- & extrafamilial sexual violence: the child's voice in criminal proceedings

For its **third issue**, to **be published in September 2027**, the DPPC journal is launching a call for contributions on the voice of children and adolescents who are victims of intra- and extrafamilial sexual violence, and on its treatment in criminal proceedings. The call also extends to participation in a collective, comparative study on the assessment of the child victim's word in different legal systems.

Context and Themes

The protection of children and adolescents who are victims of sexual violence is currently one of the most complex challenges facing contemporary criminal justice systems. This violence is not confined to the family: it also occurs in the child's close circles of trust, such as the church, sport, school and extracurricular activities (youth movements, camps and other educational leisure settings). In both intrafamilial and extrafamilial contexts, sexual violence takes place in contexts of trust, dependence and asymmetry of power, marked by dynamics of silencing, concealment and control that hinder its detection, reporting and investigation, and raise significant challenges in terms of evidence and victim protection. Its particular gravity lies, moreover, in the simultaneous violation of fundamental legal interests (sexual liberty and integrity, dignity, physical and moral integrity, and the free development of the personality) aggravated by the breach of the duties of protection, care and trust inherent in the family, educational, sporting or pastoral bond. In these contexts, the child's word is frequently the main, and sometimes the only available evidence: the search for the truth, the rights of the defence and the protection of the victim all depend on how it is received, documented and assessed.

The particular vulnerability of child victims in these contexts has driven the progressive development of a robust international and regional legal framework of protection. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) recognises the right of every child to be protected from all forms of violence, abuse and sexual exploitation and to receive assistance for their full recovery (arts. 19, 34 and 39), as well as their right to be heard in any judicial proceedings affecting them (art. 12). Likewise, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979), the Convention of Belém do Pará (1994), the Lanzarote Convention (2007) and the Istanbul Convention (2011), together with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (arts. 3 and 24), Directive 2012/29/EU and Directive (EU) 2024/1385, have consolidated a normative framework imposing on States obligations of prevention, protection, investigation, punishment and reparation with regard to sexual violence against children, particularly when it occurs within the family or in the child's circle of trust.

International case law and treaty monitoring bodies have likewise insisted on the need to develop child-friendly procedures, effective risk-assessment mechanisms and coordinated institutional responses capable of preventing further victimisation and guaranteeing effective protection of the rights of child victims¹. The European Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights have

¹ Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comments No. 12 (2009) and No. 13 (2011); Council of Europe, *Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Child-Friendly Justice*, 2010.

contributed to consolidating standards on due diligence, access to justice and reinforced protection of children with regard to sexual violence committed both within the family and in institutional settings².

Nevertheless, child victims continue to face major obstacles in accessing justice and obtaining effective protection. Against this background, issues such as the assessment of the child's word, secondary victimisation and the accountability of the authorities for protection failures are today among the main challenges facing contemporary criminal justice systems, both in judicial practice and in current academic debate³.

With this special issue, the DPPC journal seeks to foster critical, interdisciplinary and comparative reflection on the legal, institutional and criminological challenges raised by the hearing, assessment and protection of the word of children and adolescents who are victims of intra- and extrafamilial sexual violence in contemporary criminal justice systems.

Call for Contributions

Proposals may fall within two main axes.

1. Writing an article on the voice of the child victim of intra- or extrafamilial sexual violence in criminal proceedings. The following questions may serve as examples.

- The reception of the child's word: hearing and forensic interview protocols (inter alia, the NICHD protocol, the Barnahus model, the Gesell chamber) and audiovisual recording of statements.
- The evidentiary value of the child victim's statement: assessment of reliability, psychological and credibility expert evidence, corroboration requirements and articulation with the rights of the defence.
- Protective measures for the child victim during criminal proceedings and the prevention of secondary victimisation: pre-recorded and anticipated evidence, limits on the repetition of interviews, child-friendly settings and protective measures against the abusive environment, whether familial or institutional.
- The representation of the child victim in criminal proceedings: procedural guardianship (guardian ad litem), the child's lawyer and independent legal representation, particularly in view of the conflicts of interest with the holders of parental authority that are typical of intrafamilial contexts.
- The support and assistance provided to child victims by specialised victim support centres: inter alia, the LAVI counselling centres in Switzerland, or the Crime Victim Support Offices (Oficinas de Asistencia a las Víctimas del Delito) and the Barnahus model in Spain.
- The accountability of institutions (church, sport, school, extracurricular activities) and of those in charge of them for sexual violence committed within them: duties of prevention, detection, reporting and cooperation with the authorities.
- The specialised training of judges, prosecutors, police officers and other professionals involved in hearing the child victim.

² Among other decisions, *Opuz v. Turkey* (2009), *Kurt v. Austria* (Grand Chamber, 2021), *De Giorgi v. Italy* (2022) and *Guzmán Albarracín et al. v. Ecuador* (2020); on the hearing of the child victim and sexual violence in institutional settings, see also *S.N. v. Sweden* (2002), *O'Keeffe v. Ireland* [GC] (2014), *X and Others v. Bulgaria* [GC] (2021), *B. v. Russia* (2023) and *V.R.P., V.P.C. et al. v. Nicaragua* (IACtHR, 2018).

³ Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General Comment No. 13 (2011): The Right of the Child to Freedom from All Forms of Violence*, CRC/C/GC/13; Committee on the Rights of the Child, *General Comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration*, CRC/C/GC/14; Council of Europe, *Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on Child-Friendly Justice*, adopted on 17 November 2010; ECtHR, *Kurt v. Austria* [GC], no. 62903/15, judgment of 15 June 2021; ECtHR, *De Giorgi v. Italy*, no. 23735/19, judgment of 16 June 2022; UNICEF, *Access to Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses, Reimagine Justice*, Technical Brief No. 7, 2024.

2. Participation in a collective and comparative study on the criminalisation of sexual violence against children and adolescents and the applicable aggravating circumstances

The comparative study could focus on the criminalisation of such conduct, the penalties and other measures provided for, as well as on relevant statistical data. In particular, it could address the following questions:

- How is sexual violence against children and adolescents criminalised, particularly with regard to the age of sexual consent, incest, and sexual abuse committed through the exploitation of a position of authority, dependency or superiority?
- Does the existence of a family relationship or a relationship of authority or trust — for example in religious, sporting or educational settings, or in the context of extracurricular activities — constitute a separate criminal offence or an aggravating circumstance?
- What penalties and ancillary measures are provided for?
- What do the available statistics show regarding the prevalence of such conduct, reports or complaints, prosecutions and convictions?

Mandatory Contextualization

Each contribution must briefly introduce the context related to the country(ies)/region(s) analyzed.

Format and Style of Contributions

Authors must refer to **the guidelines and template available** on the website www.dppc.online.

Individual contributions (general themes)

- At least 10,000 characters (including spaces) and a maximum of 80,000 characters (around 20 to 25 A4 pages). Exceptions must be justified by scientific interest.
- Contributions may be written in French, Spanish, or English (a translation of the original contribution can be submitted for online publication).
- Proposals must be original and not previously published. Adaptation or updating of an existing contribution is possible as long as it significantly differs from the original.

Participation in the collective study

- Between 10,000 and 25,000 characters (including spaces), or between 5 and 12 A4 pages maximum.
- The study must strictly address the points mentioned above.

Submission of Proposals

- Proposals must include a title, a summary of 250 to 500 words, and the contact information of the authors.
- Send your proposals to submit@dppc.online
- The deadline for submitting proposals is **30 October 30 2026**.

Review and Publication Process

- The complete manuscript must be submitted by **30 March 2027**.
- Manuscripts will be peer-reviewed (**April/May 2027**).
- Corrections – updates (**May/June 2027**)
- Editing and online publication work (**Summer 2027**)

- All contributions will be published in open access on the website www.dppc.online (in HTML format) and in a digital version (PDF) in **September 2027**.

We strongly encourage contributions from a diversity of perspectives, disciplines and legal traditions to enrich the debate and understanding of the legal, institutional and social challenges raised by the protection of child victims of sexual violence in intrafamilial and extrafamilial contexts.

The Editorial Team