

TEACHER TRAINING AS AN OBLIGATION TO PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN: MEETING INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

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Abstract: This paper holds that teacher training constitutes a binding preventive obligation arising from Articles 19 and 34 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 5 of the Lanzarote Convention, and Article 23(3) of Directive 2011/92/EU. Subsequently, the main international standards behind of it are identified, encompassing requirements for initial and continuous certification, detection and reporting capacities, and regular evaluation. Analysis of the level of compliance with this obligation reveals a context of shortcomings that has led to the implementation of civil society initiatives aimed at reducing the gap. In this context, the article briefly presents a local teacher training project on the prevention of sexual violence as a good practice that can be replicated.

Keywords: International obligation, Due diligence, CRC Article 19, Lanzarote Convention, Directive 2011/92/EU, Teacher training.

1. INTRODUCTION

Both in its commission and its aftermath, violence against children and adolescents constitutes a serious violation of human rights. In the case of children and adolescents, such acts entail, in addition to the right to integrity, the violation of the right to development, which is specifically recognized for this social group in Article 6 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereinafter CRC or Convention). This connection between violence and the violation of children's development explains why the Committee on the Rights of the Child (hereinafter, CRC Committee or Committee), (its interpretative and supervisory body), conceptualizes violence in a broad manner, going beyond the traditional conception that links it to the use of physical force. In this regard, in its General Comment No. 13, the CRC Committee indicated that the term "violence" should in no way exclude the effects of non-physical and/or unintentional forms of harm (such as neglect or negligence and psychological abuse, among others), nor the urgency of addressing them (2011, paras. 4 and 17).

Within violence against children, sexual violence is of particular gravity and specificity in its treatment due to a number of factors. Firstly, due to its prevalence. The Council of Europe, in its aforementioned 1 in 5 Campaign of 2010, echoing various studies, noted that 20% of children in Europe have been victims of this form of violence (Council of Europe, 2010). The most recent international epidemiological studies reiterate this figure (Cagney et al., 2025; Piolanti et al., 2025). In the domestic context, a recent study on the prevalence of violence against children and adolescents, commissioned by the Spanish Ministry of Youth and Children, indicates that 28.9% of the adult population

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has suffered sexual violence during their childhood or adolescence (2025). This study is based on a large-scale survey of adults aged 18 to 30, which yielded a sample of 9,037 valid responses. The data source was the self-reported recall of young adults and information was collected through a random, self-administered online interview. The sample was designed to be representative of the Spanish population, and the questions covered different forms of violence, including sexual violence (Spanish Ministry of Youth and Children, 2025).

Second, the severity of sexual violence experienced by children is also explained by its effects on the lives of victims². This experience is associated with multiple psychosocial and physical health consequences that may vary according to different factors, such as the duration of the acts or the victim's previous relationship with the perpetrator. It is impossible to list them exhaustively, but documented sequelae range from post-traumatic stress episodes or dissociative disorders to cognitive difficulties, sexual dysfunction or increased risk of cardiovascular disease (Lachapelle and Savard, 2025). Clearly, this is an experience with the potential to affect all dimensions of long-term health. Furthermore, studies suggest that such a violation increases the risk of victims experiencing other forms of violence in the future, as well as being a risk factor for victimizing others (Woolweaver et al., 2024; Dunn et al., 2020; Barsalou-Verge et al., 2015; Committee CRC, 2011, para. 15 (b); Pinheiro, 2006). Specific effects on the learning development of victims have also been documented (including significant concentration problems and high rates of absenteeism), which strongly condition academic performance, and thus their future ability to develop professionally and achieve a satisfactory labour market insertion (Woolweaver et al., 2024; Ochoa et al., 2023; Assini-Meytin et al., 2022; Mitchell et al., 2021).

Thirdly, another particularity of this violence is the form in which it is committed. According to different authors, sexual violence against children typically takes place within a complex and gradual dynamic. This dynamic often does not end with a single act, but involves continuity and progression in the intrusiveness towards the victim. The implementation of different strategies of manipulation of the child and his or her environment to facilitate the commission of undetected sexual violence (Winters and Jeglic, 2017; Katz and Barnett, 2016; Van Dam, 2006). The process activated by perpetrators includes strategies such as selecting a vulnerable child, securing access to the child, building trust and desensitizing the child to physical contact (Winters and Jeglic, 2017). For Faller, this abusive process has its breeding ground in environments or relationships of trust or authority, and unfolds in such a way that the aggressor succeeds both in a progression of sexual contact and in installing in the victim a sense of false reciprocity and guilt that hinders any attempt to break out of this dynamic or ask for help (Faller, 1993). Manipulative strategies might include favoritism when the perpetrator lives with a wider circle of children, for example the victim's cousins or brothers (Christiansen and Blake, 1990), or romanticization of the perpetrator-victim relationship, particularly in the context of pre-established relationships between adult men and girls (Ramírez, 2023).

² In paragraph 15 of its General comment No. 13, the CRC Committee outlines some of the “devastating effects of violence against children”.

Fourthly, the context in which it occurs and the social and institutional response to this violence could constitute another specificity factor whose understanding is indispensable for its adequate treatment. Although the very serious fact that the family is the environment with the highest incidence of violence against children in general, as the CRC Committee itself has recognized (2011, para. 72 d), the particular fact is found in the social and institutional response to intra-familial sexual violence in particular, especially when the father is the accused. In Spain, a recent study by Save the Children, based on the analysis of sexual violence sentences (2021), showed the father as the main aggressor. Regarding the inadequate and unjust response to sexual violence, Young-Bruehl warns that sexual violence is the only form of child maltreatment in which victims must prove that they did not “provoke” their abuse by seducing their abusers or that they are not lying when they report it (2012, 165).

Whittier is another author who has analyzed this social response. She has done so by systematizing the organized defense of the aggressors, which has achieved media and even institutional support, aimed at undermining the credibility of the victims through different strategies, which have mutated over time, and which have often used pseudo-science as an alibi (2009)³. In the 1990s, a large counter-movement would emerge of parents denounced by their adult daughters who, invoking the pseudo-false memory syndrome, would question the credibility of their daughters (Whittier, 2009, 133-166)⁴. In the 2000’s, began to document in several countries the use in court of the pseudo-parental alienation syndrome (known as PAS by its acronym in English), through which the credibility of victims of sexual violence committed by fathers or partners of the mother is questioned, arguing that the testimony is the product of maternal manipulation⁵.

Institutional rejection of the scientific validity of that construct is widespread, both internationally and nationally. In this regard, the Spanish Association of Neuropsychiatry,

³ While Whittier’s work focuses on the United States, the response to sexual violence against children is paradigmatic of other social contexts, such as Spain. More recently, organized collective responses have also emerged here in order to invalidate the testimony or voice of child victims of sexual violence against children. In Spain, there is a lack of systematic work aimed exclusively at showing this social and media response in historical terms (García-Mingo and Díaz, 2023). These authors identify among the ranks of the heterogeneous group of “Men’s Rights Activists” - who have emerged as a response to the advances of gender equality in Spain and who have a special presence in the digital world - parents who consider the judicial treatment of custody decisions to be unjust, and who are deniers of sexual violence.

⁴ It is a term that emerged in the field of psychology in the 1980s in the United States to name a supposed set of symptoms linked to trauma that included loss and reconstruction of memories. According to some authors, its use in relation to sexual abuse, booming in the 1990s, was a malpractice through which the credibility of victims was unduly questioned. In any case, it is a pseudo syndrome without scientific or empirical validity (Dallam, 2001).

⁵ Various international bodies, human rights organizations and researchers have documented and denounced the problem of the application of the so-called (pseudo) parental alienation syndrome in the Spanish judicial sphere. According to various researchers, such as Reyes, Sordo and Casas, despite lacking scientific backing, this mechanism is being used frequently in judicial practice in Spain, a fact about which various United Nations bodies and even institutions within the State itself have expressed concern. Among them, the General Council of the Judiciary has expressed its rejection of the use of this artifice in the courts (Reyes, 2025; Sordo, 2022; Casas, 2020).

on March 25, 2010, issued a statement against the clinical and legal use of the so-called “parental alienation syndrome”, as well as other terms that reproduce the same content and practical guidelines of said “syndrome”. Subsequently, the State Pact against Gender Violence⁶ also emphasised that its inclusion as a scientifically based syndrome has been rejected by major mental health diagnostic systems (such as the DSM-IV of the American Psychiatric Association and the ICD-10 of the World Health Organization). Therefore, the Pact establishes, “it is inadmissible as an accusation by one party against the other in proceedings involving gender violence, separation, divorce, or child custody”.

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls has already echoed of different studies, pointing out the incompatibility of the judicial use of this artifice with the human rights framework, and enunciating a series of recommendations for States (2023). In this report, the Rapporteur points out the deep roots of such a response, linked to deep-rooted prejudices (stereotypes, myths and taboos surrounding childhood, sexuality and the family) which prevent it from being adequately perceived and addressed (2023, para. 26); and which should be dismantled by States⁷.

The seriousness of its consequences, the affront it represents to integrity, to a dimension as intimate as the sexual dimension, and its commission against a social group in a situation of special vulnerability, has led to the recognition of sexual violence, in certain circumstances, as a form of torture⁸. This recognition has highlighted the high threshold of seriousness of the acts. The CRC has referred to two relevant circumstances to determine whether this threshold of gravity is met: the commission of the acts of aggression by state agents or agents with authority over the victim, and the depth of the after-effects of such acts. Both elements are some of the main ones in cases of sexual violence against children and adolescents. According to Cantón-Cortés and Cortés, the consequences are more serious when the violence has been extended over time, the aggressor has resorted to the use of force, more intrusive acts have been committed, and when there is a closer relationship between victim and aggressor, especially when the aggressor is the father

⁶ The State Pact against Gender Violence is an institutional, political, and social agreement in Spain, approved in 2017, to coordinate the actions of all public administrations in the fight to eradicate gender-based violence. The Pact was initiated by a non-binding resolution unanimously approved by the Congress of Deputies in 2016 and establishes a long-term common roadmap for combating gender-based violence, as well as the key areas of action to achieve this goal.

⁷ A study on stereotypes present in the institutional response to sexual violence against children can be found in Ramírez (2025a, pp. 353-408).

⁸ According to the CRC Committee, the concept of “Torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment [...] includes any act of violence against a child to force a confession, extrajudicially punish the child for unlawful or unwanted conduct or compel the child to perform activities against his or her will, usually committed by police and other law enforcement officials, personnel in homes and residences and other institutions and persons having authority over the child, including armed non-State actors. Victims are often marginalised, disadvantaged and discriminated against children who lack the protection of adults responsible for upholding their rights and best interests. This category includes children in conflict with the law, street children, indigenous and minority children and unaccompanied children. These brutal acts often cause permanent physical and psychological harm and social stress. Staff in homes and residences and other institutions and persons having authority over the child, including armed non-State actors” (2011, para. 21).

or stepfather (2015, 554). Recognition of the seriousness of the consequences of sexual violence when it occurs against children is also found in the work of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR). This Court has noted that “in the case of child victims of sexual violence, [the] impact may be severely aggravated, and they may suffer emotional trauma distinct from that of adults, and an extremely profound impact, particularly when the perpetrator maintains a bond of trust and authority with the victim, such as a parent” (IACtHR, 2022, para. 105).

Furthermore, the seriousness and urgency of sexual violence against children has justified the adoption of specific provisions and instruments at the international level. Within the United Nations, in addition to Article 19 of the CRC, which establishes the reinforced guarantee of protection of children from violence in general, where sexual violence is explicitly included, Article 34 of the same treaty refers specifically to the obligation to adopt measures to prohibit sexual violence⁹. At the European level, this specific attention is reflected in the adoption in 2007a of the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of the Council of Europe (known as the Lanzarote Convention due to the place of its adoption). The latter constitutes the first international treaty that expressly addresses sexual violence occurring in the family environment.

Whether through specific international standards prohibiting sexual violence against children, or through its treatment as a violation of the general right to integrity or the prohibition of ill-treatment and torture, this form of violence has been the subject of analysis and adjudication in international tribunals. The series of verdicts that can be traced reflect the prevalence of this form of violence, and show the seriousness not only of its commission, but also of the inadequate state response to it. In the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), we find a remarkable number of judgments - since 1985 (ECtHR, Case X and Y v. The Netherlands) - condemning states for non-compliance with their obligations in the face of this violation (Ramírez, 2025a, 166-171). For its part, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, although it has fewer cases on its record, its jurisprudence brings together and expands on many of the international standards developed to date. The cases studied by international tribunals include acts of sexual violence both within and outside the family (in other environments of trust or authority). In some judgements, responsibility

⁹ “Article 19

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.

2. (...)”.

“Article 34

States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:

- (a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
- (b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;
- (c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials”.

has been determined for not having adopted the necessary preventive measures for the case in question, in others for failures in the due diligence required in the institutional response to this violence, and in others for acts of re-victimization or institutional violence in the framework of judicial processes (Ramírez, 2025a, 171-174).

2. INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS IN THE FACE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN, AND THE PRIORITY OF PREVENTION

As a human rights violation, sexual violence against children requires States to comply with a series of international obligations. In the Resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2005 on the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law, these specific obligations derived from the general obligation of respect contained in all human rights treaties were specified as follows: (a) adopt appropriate legislative and administrative and other measures to prevent violations; (b) investigate violations effectively, promptly, thoroughly and impartially and, where appropriate, take action against those allegedly responsible in accordance with domestic and international law; (c) provide those who claim to be victims of a violation of their human rights or international humanitarian law with equal and effective access to justice, regardless of who is ultimately responsible for the violation; and (d) provide victims with effective remedies, including reparation.

According to the Resolution, throughout the institutional response process, “the victims should be treated with humanity and respect for their dignity and human rights” (2005, para. 10). Accordingly, it is argued that States should deploy “appropriate measures should be taken to ensure their safety, physical and psychological well-being and privacy, as well as those of their families” (2005, para. 10). This implies that, “ensure that its domestic laws, to the extent possible, provide that a victim who has suffered violence or trauma should benefit from special consideration and care to avoid his or her re-traumatization in the course of legal and administrative procedures designed to provide justice and reparation” (para. 10). The latter can be synthesized in an obligation of non-re-victimization or special protection of the victims of human rights violations, the fulfilment of which requires appropriate measures to avoid further harm to their rights throughout the process of institutional response. The content and scope of each of these obligations has been the subject of development in international jurisprudence.

Although, in relation to violence against children¹⁰, international jurisprudential development of all the obligations contained in the above-mentioned Resolution can be identified, the work of different bodies, and particularly the CRC Committee, has insisted on the priority of preventive measures, stating categorically that “child protection must begin with proactive prevention of all forms of violence as well as explicitly prohibit all forms of violence” (2011, para. 46). This emphasis on prevention, on the one hand,

¹⁰ A review of international jurisprudence on sexual violence against children can be found in Ramírez (2025a, pp. 151-220).

responds to the approach adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO) - and taken up by the CRC Committee (2011, para. 3) - of considering violence as a phenomenon that is always preventable (Krug et al., 2002). But, in addition, when it comes to children, prevention is emphasized for different reasons.

On the one hand, all violence prevention measures not only aim directly at preventing children from experiencing violence in the first place, but also contribute to preventing violence in adulthood (CRC Committee, 2011, para. 14). On the other hand, the social and individual consequences on the victims, including their economic impact, are aggravated precisely by the developmental situation of the victims (para. 16)¹¹. The emphasis on the prevention of violence against children also responds to the responsibility of States to take all necessary measures to ensure that the agents that the State recognises as having functions and powers for the care and upbringing of children do not become places of violence; an emphasis that increases if we consider the serious figures of domestic violence (CRC Committee, 2011, para. 72 d)). Ultimately, for the Committee, “preventive measures have the best long-term results. However, a commitment to prevention does not exempt States from their obligations to respond effectively to violence when it occurs” (CRC Committee, 2011, para. 46).

The World report on violence and health (Krug et al., 2002) sets out different levels of prevention, which I will use below to group prevention obligations. According to the Report, primary prevention would encompass interventions aimed at preventing violence before it occurs (Krug et al., 2002, p. 15). Among them would be the explicit prohibition of sexual violence against children in national legislation, which the CRC Committee urges, in order to persuade people to commit it (CRC, Article 34; CRC Committee, 2011, paras. 46, 41 d), 18). Also included would be measures to promote respectful and violence-free parenting for all children, and actions to address the underlying causes of violence (CRC Committee, 2011, para. 47 (a) and (c)), included by the Committee as part of the obligation of enhanced protection of children from violence under Article 19 of the CRC. Also in this group would be measures aimed at providing children with content on their rights, identification of risk situations and tools on how to report situations of violence and/or get help (2011, para. 47 (b)).

Secondary prevention, on the other hand, would include measures aimed at responding as immediately as possible after the violence has occurred, in order to stop the violence and mitigate its impact on victims (WHO, 2022, pp. 15 and 17). Among them, the CRC Committee contemplates the creation and implementation of mechanisms for the detection and reporting of violence (2011, paras. 48 and 49). Regarding the former, according to the Committee, the State should take measures to ensure that all persons in contact with children are aware of the risk factors and indicators of all forms of violence, are trained in how to interpret these indicators and know how to deal with victims (2011, para. 48). For the CRC Committee, States should ensure that children are given as many

¹¹ A study quantifying the economic costs of sexual violence in Spain can be found in Cabrera (2024).

opportunities as possible to report their problems and for adults to recognize and act on those problems even if the child does not explicitly ask for help (2011, para. 48). Accordingly, this body insists on the need for States to exercise heightened vigilance in the case of groups of children in situations of particular vulnerability, such as children with disabilities. In such cases, States should provide “the necessary accommodations to ensure that they have the same opportunities to communicate and report problems as others” (CRC Committee, 2011, para. 48).

With regard to reporting, for the CRC Committee, States should ensure the existence of mechanisms for reporting suspected violence that are safe, well-publicized, confidential and accessible to children, their representatives, professionals in contact with them and society at large (2011, para. 49). Among such mechanisms, the Committee envisages the development of protocols adapted to different circumstances; ongoing training for staff involved in the reporting process; respect for children’s right to be heard and to have their views taken seriously; measures to protect professionals who report suspicions in good faith; and the use of 24-hour toll-free hotlines (CRC Committee, 2011, para. 49).

Finally, tertiary prevention would focus on measures aimed, at the level of victims, at addressing the long-term sequelae in the aftermath of violent acts, facilitating the restructuring of their life plans (Krug et al., 2002, pp. 15 and 17. At the social level, it would include measures aimed at preventing repeat violence by perpetrators, and addressing the conditions that favoured the commission of violence, or its occurrence with impunity, in order to prevent its reproduction. They coincide with the so-called guarantees of non-repetition or transformative reparations, articulated mainly in the framework of the IACtHR. Among the measures pointed out by the Committee are comprehensive reparation measures (CRC Committee, 2011, paras. 5, 41 f), 56), as well as specialised training for the different agents responsible for intervening in the institutional response to violence in order not to re-victimize victims (CRC Committee, 2011, para. 44 d), 51, 56)).

In this framework of prevention and protection of children from violence, education and training are of fundamental importance, and the agents responsible for the different environments in which children interact and develop must be in a position to know, put into practice and demand their rights. Article 19.2 of the CRC explicitly names educational measures as indispensable measures to ensure the enhanced protection of children from violence (CRC Committee, 2011, para. 44). On the aims of educational measures aimed at society in general, the Committee, recognising the structural roots of violence, points out that they “should address attitudes, traditions, customs and behavioural practices which condone and promote violence against children”, and to “encourage open discussion about violence”, involving, in addition to civil society, the media. In addition, States should articulate educational measures targeted at specific groups, including children, families and professionals working with children (2011, para. 44).

With regard to children, educational measures should be directed at developing the skills needed to cope with the challenges of everyday life, avert risks, combat bullying, relate positively among their peers, and generally know their rights and their enforceability, including their right to be heard and to have their views taken into account.

As for caregivers, measures should educate them in positive parenting methods; train them to actively listen to their children, to inform their children about the risks of violence and the forms of protection available to them (CRC Committee, 2011, 44 (c)).

With regard to the group of people working with children, whether professionals or not, the CRC Committee considers that the type of general and specific training, in accordance with the functions of the group in question, must be provided initially and continuously throughout the service and be structured around the rights of the child, and in particular the content of Article 19 and its application in practice. As part of this constituency, the CRC Committee mentions: teachers at all levels of the education system, social workers, doctors, nurses and other health professionals, psychologists, lawyers, judges, police, probation officers, prison staff, journalists, community workers, home and residential care workers, public officials and employees, asylum officers, and traditional and religious leaders (CRC Committee, 2011, para. 44(d)(i)).

In summary, if we focus on the educational sphere, the obligations for preventing sexual violence against children could be classified as follows:

- Primary prevention: comprehensive sexual education, human rights education, and prohibition of all forms of violence.
- Secondary prevention: detection and safe reporting mechanisms within schools.
- Tertiary prevention: reparative accompaniment in the school environment and non-revictimization.

3. HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND TRAINING AS A GUARANTEE OF PREVENTION

Among the target groups of the international obligation to provide human rights and children's rights training, teachers are key (García, 2024). The training of this professional group fulfils different functions that can be grouped into two main purposes. On the one hand, with regard to the aim of guaranteeing the school context as a violence-free environment, teacher training enables teachers to be aware of the limits that human rights and their specific guarantees for children impose on their functions, and of the consequences of non-compliance. On the other hand, in order to constitute the school environment as a preventive and protective environment, training is necessary so that teachers can adequately transfer knowledge about their rights to their students. Included in this content are the implications of their recognition as rights holders and the mechanisms of enforceability for their realization and complaint in the event of violations, in particular the right to integrity and the conception of violence as a violation of their rights. Furthermore, only teacher training can enable them to detect indicators of violence and to act in a timely and appropriate manner in response to them.

The school as a space of care - to use the terminology of the CRC Committee (2011, para. 34) - where children interact and develop under the supervision of a circumstantial

or “temporary” caregiver (the teacher) constitutes a necessary and strategic space for prevention. Firstly, human rights education is one of the aims of education (CRC, Article 29.1(b); CRC Committee, 2001, appendix, paras. 1-3). But in addition, there are practical data that demonstrate the prioritization of prevention in this space: the time and nature of such an environment and of the figure of the teacher him/herself.

Regarding time, most children spend a considerable number of hours per day in the school environment, in many cases, most of them during the day. On the other hand, the school environment is the place where “life experiences and learning processes that enable the child” to fully develop his or her personality, natural gifts and abilities, and the tools necessary to carry out life choices should take place, in recognition of the fact that each child has unique characteristics, interests and abilities as well as unique learning needs (CRC Committee, 2001, paras. 2 and 9; Universal Declaration, Article 26). States shall ensure the right to education, consistent with international standards, through education systems that are equally accessible to children (CRC, Article 28; CRC Committee, 2001, para. 9). In addition, the teacher is often the primary agent of trust or support for many children. This factor takes on special relevance if we consider that current figures point to the family environment as the context with the highest incidence of sexual violence against children, making the school context a strategic one for its detection and protection (CRC Committee, 2001, para. 72 d).

In addition to its development by the CRC Committee, the obligation to train professionals is reinforced by its inclusion in other specific instruments. At the European level, the Lanzarote Convention, ratified by Spain in 2010, and Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography stand out. Article 5 of the Lanzarote Convention, in its first and second paragraphs, establishes the obligation of States Parties to adopt such legislative or other measures as may be necessary to ensure that persons in regular contact, such as education professionals, have the appropriate knowledge to prevent and respond appropriately to sexual violence against children, including the necessary tools to detect and report to child protection services any reasonable suspicion that a child is being subjected to violence. While, according to the Explanatory Report to the Lanzarote Convention, States have discretion to decide on the means of providing such training, the same report specifies that the fulfilment of this obligation implies two requirements: the effective provision of information and the socialization of identification and reporting mechanisms among these professionals (Council of Europe, 2007b, para. 56).

Article 23(3) of Directive 2011/92/EU establishes the obligation of Member States to promote regular training for officials who may come into contact with child victims of sexual violence, in order to enable them to identify and respond appropriately to suspicions of sexual violence. While the Directive largely mirrors the Lanzarote Convention, a particularity of this instrument is that it explicitly provides for regular training as part of this obligation.

The obligation to train professionals as a guarantee of children’s rights, and in particular the specific right to be protected from violence, is in turn embedded in a broader

set of international human rights training obligations for professionals. Such training is an essential prerequisite for the agents in charge of guaranteeing human rights to incorporate a human rights perspective into their work, and to adjust their actions to the limits imposed by human rights. In the sense indicated by Ferrajoli, fundamental rights would be a limit to the exercise of all power, public or private (2011, p. 188). As a negative limit, knowledge of the content of human rights would be an indispensable condition to prevent state agents from violating them in the exercise of their functions. As a positive limit, knowledge by such agents of the content of human rights would be a necessary condition for their realization.

Under international law, the main sources of such recognition are, first and foremost, specific treaties. At the universal level, for example, Article 4 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states that States Parties must “promote the training of professionals and staff working with persons with disabilities” in the rights recognized in the Convention. At the regional level, among other provisions, Article 15 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (also known as “the Istanbul Convention”) provides that States Parties are obliged to provide or strengthen appropriate training for professionals involved in responding to such violence.

Secondly, the interpretative work of such instruments by their monitoring and interpretative bodies supports the recognition of the obligation to train; for example, in its General recommendation No. 33 on women’s access to justice (2015), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (hereinafter, CEDAW Committee) highlights the importance of training professionals in justice systems as a guarantee of the right of access to justice without discrimination. Finally, there are resolutions of international bodies that urge States to train certain groups of professionals as a remedial measure of a structural nature; for example, in the opinion of the case *González Carreño v. Spain*, 2014 (Communication No. 47/2012) the CEDAW Committee established that the State should provide mandatory training on gender stereotypes to judges and administrative staff with custodial powers.

Training measures for judges and law enforcement are probably the most addressed in international jurisprudence. Although the development of the obligation to train teachers has not reached a comparable depth, we find some references in cases of state conviction. This has occurred, for example, in the paradigmatic case of *Guzmán Albarracín et al. v. Ecuador*, 2020 resolved by IACtHR. That case concerns acts of ongoing sexual violence committed by a school principal against one of the students, and it’s the first in which the Inter-American Court established standards and guarantees of non-repetition regarding the protecting children from sexual violence in schools. Interpreting the scope of Article 19 of the American Convention on Human Rights in light of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially Article 26 on the right to education, the IACtHR determined that children “have the right to a safe educational environment and to an education free from sexual violence” (2020, paras. 117 and 118).

Consequently, the IACtHR established that States Parties have two fundamental obligations. Firstly, the obligation to “adopt appropriate measures to prevent human rights

violations during the educational process of children” (2020, para. 118). These measures include “simple, accessible, and safe mechanisms for reporting, investigating, and punishing such incidents” which are accessible within the school environment. Secondly, the IACtHR noted the obligation of educational personnel to refrain from sexual violence. For this tribunal, the States Parties must particularly “adopt the necessary measures to prevent and prohibit all forms of violence and abuse [...] by teaching staff who, by virtue of their position, enjoy a position of authority and trust with respect to students and even their families” (2020, para. 119). According to the IACtHR, omissions in protection also violate the right to education. Because “an education that is provided in violation of human rights does not allow [the objectives of education] to be met, is directly contrary to them, and, therefore, violates the right to education” (2020, para. 118).

In the section on guarantees of non-repetition in *Guzmán Albarracín* case, the IACtHR ordered the State: to adopt measures to correct and remedy the deficiencies identified in the judgment regarding, notably protective institutional protocols (2020, para. 243); to improve the detection of cases of sexual violence against girls or boys in that field and their reporting; and to provide mandatory training to teaching staff to address and prevent situations of sexual violence (2020, para. 245).

4. KEY INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS ON THE OBLIGATION TO TRAIN TEACHERS ON CHILDREN’S RIGHTS

4.1. On the target audience for training

The CRC Committee establishes that general training must be guaranteed for all professionals working with or for children (there may be a common introductory content in the training of all these professions or trades) and specific training designed for each particular group (as in the case of teachers). Within the latter, the CRC Committee considers the possibility of cross-sectoral training, as could be the case of differentiated training, according to their functions, for guidance staff, management staff or professionals with specific protection functions (2011, para. 44, d) i)). As an example of such cross-sectoral training in Spain, one could cite the training that professionals acting as ‘protection coordinators’ should receive. The latter figure, created by the Organic Law for the Protection of Children and Adolescents against Violence, of 2021 (by its acronym in Spanish, LOPIVI), to coordinate within schools the actions of prevention and action against violence against children, of which there were suspicions in this environment (LOPIVI, 2021, Article 35).

4.2. On the scope of training

On the other hand, regarding the scope and standards of training in career development and professional training, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) establishes several criteria. First, such training must be included in the academic record of all professionals planning to work with and for children (para. 44(d)(i)). Second, training must be initial and ongoing, with refresher courses throughout the professional career

(para. 44(d)(i)). Third, training must be offered in an organized manner and with official certification, within the framework of “official certification systems in collaboration with educational and training institutions and professional associations, to regulate and recognize such training” (para. 44(d)(ii)). Fourth, while it is possible to delegate training to private entities, ultimately the State has the responsibility to ensure its conformity with international standards. According to the Committee, the reference in Article 19.1 of the CRC to “appropriate measures” to ensure the protection of children from violence implies a series of measures that cover all public sectors and must be implemented in a coordinated and effective manner to prevent and combat all forms of violence. This is because “isolated programs and activities that are not integrated into sustainable and coordinated public policies and infrastructure will have a limited impact” (2011, para. 39).

4.3. On the content of training

For the CRC Committee, content that should be included in training as part of the educational background of professionals would include: a) the content of the CRC (2011, para. 44, d) iii); b) the rights of the child derived from Article 19 and their implementation in practice (2011, para. 44, d) i); c) the underlying causes of violence and/or its impunity, including content and tools aimed at “challenging attitudes, traditions, customs and behaviors that condone and promote violence against children”; and at “promoting open discussion on violence” (2011, paras. 44 and 46); d) sexual and reproductive health education content, which should refer to awareness of oneself and one’s own body, including anatomical, physiological and emotional aspects, and should be available to all boys and girls. Sexuality education should relate to sexual health and well-being, for example through information on bodily changes and maturation processes, and should be designed to enable children to learn about reproductive health, prevention of gender-based violence and responsible sexual behavior (CRC Committee, 2013, para. 60).

5. STATUS OF TEACHER TRAINING ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN FROM A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE: SPAIN

Despite the relevance of this obligation, which is necessary both to prevent the violation of rights by state agents and to create a favorable context for the respect and enforceability of rights in society in general, there are considerable shortcomings in its status, configuration and implementation (Ramírez, 2025b, pp. 709-713). Regarding its status, it is a necessary measure for the realization of rights, which can be considered an international obligation (Ramírez, 2025b, pp. 717 and 718). However, to date there is no judgment that establishes international responsibility for failure to comply with the obligation of professional training (Ramírez, 2025b, p. 710). With regard to its configuration, both at the international and national level, the wording of the obligations to train officials in human rights is often ambiguous or vague, resorting to terms that make it difficult to design adequate indicators for its evaluation (for example, “promote”, “encourage”) (Ramírez, 2025b, p. 712). With regard to their implementation, these are usually norms without a secondary development that establishes the terms for their compliance (deadlines, changes in professional curricula, etc.) and, undoubtedly, there is

a need for greater monitoring of the situation of human rights education and professional training in the different countries (Ramírez, 2025b, pp. 712 and 713).

In Spain, it is with the entry into force of the LOPIVI (2021), adopted to comply with the commitment to adjust the treatment of violence to the framework of the CRC and its development by its Committee, that training obligations are explicitly incorporated for different groups, including teachers. Training is one of the guarantees of prevention with which this Law attempts to move from a more reactive approach to violence, where the criminal response prevailed, to a more preventive legal paradigm, in line - at least in writing - with the framework of the CRC. LOPIVI contemplates the training of professionals in regular contact with children as a necessary measure to achieve its objectives (awareness-raising, prevention and detection of violence). However, the training obligation foreseen in this norm also suffers from shortcomings both in terms of its configuration and implementation.

Among the most relevant provisions of the LOPIVI regarding prevention in the educational sphere are: Article 5, on initial and ongoing specialized training, including minimum content requirements; Article 25, concerning annual early detection and reporting programs, including prevention tools aimed directly at children; and Article 36, which mandates the incorporation of violence prevention modules into university curricula. According to the LOPIVI, the public administrations are responsible for ensuring this training, which is consistent with the jurisprudence of the CRC Committee. Therefore, even when training is provided through external or private institutions, the State retains ultimate responsibility for ensuring compliance with international standards.

5.1. Problems of LOPIVI in the area of training: the normative level

The approval in 2021 of the LOPIVI has meant a great step forward in the protection of children and adolescents in Spain. With it, Spain became the first country in the world with specific legislation with a comprehensive vocation in this area. This law was made possible thanks to the mobilization of civil society and pressure from international organizations. However, as several experts have pointed out, this approval is only the beginning of a social paradigm shift to eradicate violence against children in our country (Martínez and Escorial, 2021, p. 4). After its entry into force, it is necessary to implement the mechanisms introduced through it. It is also necessary to work to change the mentality and social imaginary in which ideas that justify forms of violence against children or that hinder its perception as such are still rooted (Martínez and Escorial, 2021, p. 4). This preventive vocation has implied changes in the legal treatment of training on rights and violence prevention for professionals in regular contact with children.

Although various state regulations in Spain, both before and after LOPIVI, contain provisions on the training of these professionals in sexual education and prevention of violence, it is true that LOPIVI is the one that most clearly recognizes this obligation. Its adoption, therefore, represents a turning point, at least in the normative reception of this international obligation, which is key in the prevention of violence against children. Article 5 of LOPIVI constitutes the framework provision for the obligation of professional

training on violence against children. According to this disposition, it is the responsibility of public administrations to promote and guarantee specialized, initial and continuous training on the fundamental rights of children and adolescents for professionals who have regular contact with minors. Furthermore, the same article establishes the minimum content of the training:

- a) Education in the prevention and early detection of all forms of violence referred to in this law.
- b) The actions to be carried out once signs of violence have been detected.
- c) Specific training in safety and safe and responsible use of the Internet, including issues relating to intensive use and the generation of behavioral disorders.
- d) The proper treatment of children and adolescents.
- e) The identification of risk factors and increased exposure and vulnerability to violence.
- f) Mechanisms to avoid secondary victimization.
- g) The impact of gender roles and stereotypes on the violence suffered by children and adolescents.

On the other hand, Article 25 of LOPIVI establishes the obligation of public administrations to annually develop initial and continuous training programs for professionals whose activity requires them to be in regular contact with children and adolescents, with the specific objective of early detection of violence against children and adolescents so that it can be reported in accordance with the law. Article 36 of LOPIVI establishes, for its part, that higher education institutions in professions in regular contact with minors, such as education, must promote the incorporation in their curricula of specific content aimed at prevention, early detection and intervention in cases of violence against children and adolescents.

In addition to these general training obligations common to all professionals who regularly intervene with children, LOPIVI includes several provisions that specify obligations according to the group of professionals in question. In the educational field, Article 34 specifies that the training to be received by school professionals who intervene directly with children must be specialized so that they are trained to detect situations of this nature. Article 23 provides for the obligation of public administrations to establish prevention plans and programs for the eradication of violence against children and adolescents. According to this article, among the “prevention actions” are: “those aimed at the continuous and specialized training of professionals who habitually intervene with minors, in matters related to the care of children and adolescents, with special attention to groups in a situation of special vulnerability”¹².

On the other hand, it does not appear that the Autonomous Communities are assuming their obligation in terms of in-service training. Although most of the Autonomous

¹² Beyond the fact that we can criticise its scope, or its level of compliance, the *Fourth Final Provision on the Modification of Organic Law 6/1985, of 1 July*, on the Judiciary incorporates reforms to normative provisions that regulate the access and initial and continuous training of judges in Spain.

Communities have public teacher training centers, there is no information on the existence in all of them of a compulsory in-service training program on children's rights and the approach to violence against children from this perspective.

5.2. Problems of LOPIVI in terms of training: level of effectiveness

Studies on the level of compliance with the training of education professionals are scarce and predate LOPIVI. There is a need for up-to-date and rigorous studies on the subject that would allow us to understand the current situation, identify the main shortcomings and address them. However, the available data raise doubts about significant changes at the national level. On the one hand, we know that the regulations on the compulsory content of teacher training do not explicitly include the rights of the child, the reference to Article 19 of the CRC, nor specific content or specialized training in prevention, detection and action in the face of violence against children. On the other hand, we know that there is currently no provision, at least not for all teacher training centers, for compulsory in-service training courses or programs in this area.

Prior to LOPIVI, in its report *Eyes that do not want to see* (2017), Save the Children pointed out that none of the academic curricula for early childhood and primary education teacher degrees or master's degree programs for secondary education teachers in Andalusia, Catalonia, Valencia, Madrid and the Basque Country include content on violence against children or their right to protection from violence (2017, 70). It is true, as we shall see, that there are some authors who argue that it is possible to accommodate these contents through a strategic use of current curricula (Martínez-Bello, 2019). What is certain is that the lack of precision or concrete content in accordance with the requirements of LOPIVI and international obligations represents an obstacle to their effectiveness.

On the other hand, the figures known in 2017 pointed to a high level of under-reporting in Spain. A study by Greco et al. (2017) with a sample of 183 school professionals found that more than 74% had suspected at least one situation of a case of violence against children during their careers, but only 27% had reported these concerns. Lack of adequate teacher training is raised as one of the barriers to detection and reporting in this study. It appears that shortcomings in the implementation of mandatory training for education professionals is a problem at the European level. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (by its acronym, FRA) has pointed out that there is a significant need in Europe for training for professionals on the signs of sexual violence among children and the identification of victims (FRA, 2023).

In summary, we could say that today in Spain the obligation of specialized training for professionals in the school environment is recognized. However, its normative configuration and level of compliance do not allow it to be considered an effective guarantee of children's right to protection from violence. Adequate teacher training is not guaranteed to enable them to transmit content on violence prevention, affective-sexual education and human rights education in the classroom, nor to configure classrooms as safe environments.

6. THE EDUCAP PROJECT

Given the importance of teacher training in the prevention of sexual violence, and in general in the guarantee of children's rights, it is essential that from legal science we denounce the context of non-compliance with this obligation by Spain, while at the same time articulating proposals for its effective fulfilment. In short, as an international obligation, the response must be articulated by the State, through the existing institutional framework and mechanisms. However, given the shortcomings in the fulfilment of this obligation, various initiatives have arisen aimed at partially addressing different aspects of training in children's rights and, in particular, violence against children and its prevention, some of which have received some institutional support. In any case, these measures do not constitute a state response with the entity and structure that would allow us to speak of the fulfilment of the international obligation of training, in coherence with international standards.

The European project *Multiplying educational capacities to combat sexual violence against children* (acronym, EDUCAP Project) falls within this framework of initiatives. The project was awarded by the European Union for the period 2022-2024 to a multidisciplinary team of researchers led by the Institute of Human Rights of the University of Valencia (Spain)¹³. Its main objective was to design, implement and evaluate a program for the prevention of sexual violence against children in schools, articulated from a human rights approach, in order to have the widest possible reach, and in such a way that it could be replicated at national and European level as a good practice. Integrating these considerations, the project had three specific objectives: 1) to directly train 100 teachers from pre-school and primary schools in the Valencian Community; 2) to accompany these 100 teachers in the replication of the training received within their schools, with the rest of their teaching colleagues; and 3) to provide key indications for the replication of similar training projects on a national and international scale¹⁴.

Actors from four different spheres participated in the configuration and development of the project. On the one hand, the Human Rights Institute (center coordinating the project) and the Faculty of Education of the University of Valencia, the Human Rights Institute of the Carlos III University of Madrid and a research group specializing in child and adolescent victimization of the University of Barcelona (GReVIA) participated in the project. Secondly, the public administration, with the collaboration of a public teacher training center (CEFIRE Torrent)¹⁵, the Office for Victim Support of the Regional

¹³ The University of Valencia has a specific website with information about the EDUCAP Project: <https://www.uv.es/instituto-derechos-humanos/es/proyectos/proyectos.html?p2=1286379039783&p5=TC;0;l&idA=>

¹⁴ As part of the Project, a specific document (García et al., 2024) was prepared on key information for its replication in other latitudes

¹⁵ In the Valencian Community, these "training, innovation, and educational resource centers" for teachers are part of the Regional Ministry of Education and are known by the acronym CEFIREs. Similar training centers exist in other Autonomous Communities. The website of the Valencian Regional Ministry of Education provides the following information: <https://ceice.gva.es/es/web/formacion-profesorado/cefire-de-referencia>

Ministry of Justice and the Directorate of Educational Inclusion of the Regional Ministry of Education, all entities linked to the government of the Valencian Community. Thirdly, the educational community. In addition to the training specifically aimed at teachers, during the project various activities were carried out to involve and raise awareness among the rest of the educational community: in particular, workshops and talks with families, discussion groups with students, materials to be shared from the center and meetings with management teams. Finally, fourthly, organized civil society, with the participation of Save the Children, an organization recognized for its work in the defense and promotion of children's rights.

The project was designed and developed with a focus on violence against children primarily as a serious violation of human rights, the response to which requires compliance with various international standards. As a human rights violation, the Project was based on the certainty that the required response was that of the state; and that the structural problems that hinder such training require structural responses: normative changes (in legislation on education and teacher training) and institutional changes (inclusion of expert trainers and curricula on children's rights in teacher training institutions), which we had neither the competence nor the time to carry out within the framework of the Project. However, through the development of the project we were able to show the feasibility of training with this approach, the type of content to be included in coherence with it and the potential of such training for child protection and to try to reach as many teachers as possible.

In order to achieve a wider reach, it was decided to incorporate a "train-the-trainer" methodology, so that the 100 teachers directly trained could in turn train the rest of their fellow teachers in the school. On the other hand, in order for the prevention content to be effective, and for it to be anchored in the earliest stages of childhood, the teachers targeted for the training were specifically from pre-school and primary education¹⁶. The project activities were documented and evaluated in order to establish guidelines for replicability at national and European level. Considering the objectives and purpose of the project, the development of the training program was structured in three stages as explained below.

6.1. Phases of the EDUCAP Project

a) Development of the EDUCAP Guide

This was the first phase and product of the EDUCAP Project: the basic material for the training courses, elaborated by the members of the Project's research group, with the collaboration of a Multidisciplinary Group of external experts who reviewed and commented on the text¹⁷. The first step in its elaboration was the research of the most

¹⁶ Although it is clear that education and training in children's rights must be guaranteed to all students of all ages and to all professionals in contact with children.

¹⁷ Available in the repository of the University of Valencia RODERIC: <https://roderic.uv.es/items/5ec8dc06-5c1d-481b-b9da-45cbedce58e8>

relevant international and national instruments, regulations and jurisprudence on sexual violence against children from a human rights approach. A review of existing training materials on the subject was also carried out in order to recognize the work of numerous professionals. Finally, part of the research team conducted a focus group with early childhood and primary school teachers to find out their perceptions of this form of violence. It is worth highlighting the coincidence among the participants in their perception of the taboo surrounding sexuality, present in society in general and among teachers and families in particular, as an obstacle to the transmission of content on the prevention of sexual violence among pupils. Taking into account the results of this research, the EDUCAP Guide was structured in five modules:

Module 1. We Understand. In this module, the concept of sexual violence is addressed and its dimension as a serious violation of human rights is emphasized. This section insists on the importance of making visible and talking about this pressing social problem, understanding that silence favors its continuity and impunity. In addition, this module debunks many of the myths surrounding sexual violence against children that interfere with the detection and reporting process. Finally, stories are presented to raise awareness and distinguish between different cases of sexual violence to help teachers distinguish its indicators (García et al., 2023, 23-52).

Module 2. We prevent. This module highlights the words of the CRC Committee that all violence against children is preventable and therefore it is everyone's responsibility to prevent it, especially adults within the different spaces where children interact and develop. Prevention is also addressed as part of schools' obligations. In order to fulfil these obligations, key knowledge and tools are provided to transfer prevention content to students. Among these, an outline of basic thematic axes for prevention in the classroom is proposed; according to which, any school prevention plan should include content on:

1. Children's rights, especially information on Article 19 of the CRC, which establishes the right of children to a life free of violence.
2. Gender equality education (equality and non-discrimination), in order to dismantle gender stereotypes and roles that may facilitate impunity for violence or non-reporting (such as the expectation that girls should be appreciated or that boys should not express their feelings).
3. Affective-sexual education (right to education, right to health) which should include, according to the development of the students, knowledge of one's own body (difference between public and private parts); sensations (feeling yes, feeling no) and the importance of expressing rejection and defining limits in interpersonal relationships.
4. Understanding of sexual violence (right to personal integrity), depending on the developmental level of the students; including warning indicators of possible situations of violence, as well as dismantling the elements that facilitate its occurrence (e.g. identifying the difference between "good" and "bad" secrets or addressing the concept of guilt).
5. Personal safety and support network (right to protection from violence), consists of information on what protection from violence is, what should happen if a

child has experienced violence and how to seek protection or help in case of sexual violence (directly or through others). It includes very practical information, such as emergency contacts or a map of available resources (García et al., 2023, 57-76). An annex is attached to this module at the end of the Guide with specific materials for use in the classroom (García et al., 2023, 158-178).

Module 3. We detect (knowing how to listen, knowing how to look, knowing how to listen). In this module, the main indicators of sexual violence against children and adolescents are known and the issue of disclosure is addressed. The aim is that teachers can learn to identify possible cases of sexual violence among their students and know what to do. In addition, this module provides guidelines, in line with the human rights framework and the knowledge of the specialized academic community, for dealing with disclosure in an appropriate and sensitive manner, avoiding retraction by the child (García et al., 2023, 79-106).

Module 4. We act. In this section, the main objective is to convey to teachers that acting diligently in response to suspicions or allegations of sexual violence against children is not an option, but a legal and international obligation. This obligation is derived from its consideration as a human rights violation. The positive consequences of timely action by teachers in dealing with sexual violence are also explained. In addition, the specific duties established in the protocols and regulations in force in the Valencian Community that develop the conditions and requirements to comply with the obligation to communicate in the school environment are pointed out (García et al., 2023, 107-130). This module is accompanied by an annex on the action plan in the Valencian Community and a table of key contacts (García et al., 2023, 184-190).

Module 5. We accompany. This section can be considered a remarkable innovation in relation to other training guides on the topic. The aim was to transfer certain key tools and knowledge to support the child victim of sexual violence in the school context after the report (how a teacher can best support the child emotionally and academically). While specialized treatment to address the aftermath of violence is the responsibility of specialized professionals, the other people with whom the child lives must know how to accompany the often difficult process of institutional response. In this sense, the teacher should be able to identify issues of concern or areas of possible educational intervention with respect to the child at school, e.g. whether, in a specific case, it is necessary to inform a specialized professional or the family about the child's condition (after detection and/or notification), or whether some kind of curricular adaptation or additional support is required to follow classes (García et al., 2023, pp. 131-157).

b) Implementation of training

When designing the EDUCAP Project and analyzing training materials and experiences across the country, we detected one constant: we found examples of good practice, but they were isolated, lacking continuity and sustainability over time. On the other hand, we identified a significant amount of training materials (guides, manuals,

worksheets) which, however, were not effectively implemented. It could be said that there were more materials produced than training sessions given. Based on the experience of the research team and the information obtained in the preliminary research, the training modality offered to teachers was hybrid (face-to-face-virtual). Most of the training was delivered face-to-face at the University of Valencia, focusing on the practical aspects of each module, and a small part was virtual, focusing on the more theoretical aspects of each module. The training courses used the infrastructure of the public teacher training institution that collaborated in the project (CEFIRE Torrent). Among other things, this institution provided the project with its online training platform, which served as a channel for communication, monitoring and evaluation of the course, and at the same time provided the official certification of the training, which was particularly valued by the teachers.

The training followed the structure of the EDUCAP Guide (with the five modules). Each module was taught by professional experts, both theoretical and practical, in each of the topics. In addition, a variety of professionals were involved to pass on the knowledge of those with a protection role related to each module. For example, the “Actuamos” session was attended by staff from the Victims’ Office of the Generalitat Valenciana to explain some of the rights of child victims, and by staff from social services to resolve doubts about the notification procedure.

In parallel to the training sessions, various dissemination and awareness-raising activities were carried out with the educational community and society in general. These included workshops with teacher training students, talks with families through Parents’ Associations, participatory workshops with students from different educational centers, interventions in the media, social networks and written press, as well as seminars and congresses within the framework of the university.

Throughout the training, teachers designed a training plan to be implemented in their school, together with the rest of their colleagues, according to the needs of the school. At the end of the training period, the EDUCAP Project team of trainers provided follow-up and support to the group of trained teachers for the implementation of the training plans within their schools, in order to replicate the training among their colleagues.

In summary, the EDUCAP Project incorporates prevention tools and mechanisms corresponding to different levels of prevention. As part of primary prevention, it includes training to ensure the knowledge and skills necessary to prevention in classrooms and to understand the legal prohibitions and obligations for ensuring the safe school environment, free from violence and re-victimisation (modules 1 and 2). As part of secondary prevention, it includes training on the knowledge and skills to identify and respond appropriately, in accordance with current protocols and legislation, to indicators of sexual violence against children. The contents encompasses information on reporting instruments and procedures, as well as legal obligations within the school setting upon detection (modules 3 and 4). Finally, as part of tertiary prevention it includes providing support within the school environment to children who are victims of sexual violence and for whom institutional

response or intervention procedures exist. The main objective in this area is to provide support and adapt educational requirements to the needs of the victims (module 5).

c) *Evaluation*

Two types of evaluation (*pre-* and *post-*) were carried out to measure and contrast the degree of knowledge and tools of the target teachers on child sexual violence, before and after the training received. This evaluation was carried out by members of the project's own research team with experience in evaluating training projects in school settings. In the training phase, 105 professionals began the course and 70 completed it. In the replication phase, 20 key teachers delivered the training to 280 participants. The two evaluation questionnaires (pre-training and post-training) were administered to professionals who received the training directly and to those who received it through replication. However, due to difficulties in participation and sample control, not all participants completed the project evaluation questionnaires. Only 264 professionals participated in the pre-training questionnaire, while 109 participated in the post-training questionnaire. The comparison period between pre and post questionnaires was the timeframe for completing the training.

Both evaluation instruments collected sociodemographic information from the participants: gender (the vast majority women) and age (range 18–64 years). Secondly, information was obtained about the participants' work: type of center, including educational level (similar percentages of early childhood and primary education professionals were included) and center ownership (mostly public centers, to a lesser extent private and subsidized centers); job position (mostly teachers, to a lesser extent members of the management team, counselors, technical or support staff); years of experience (mostly more than 5 years of experience); and previous training in sexual violence against children (most participants indicated they had not received any training related to sexual violence against children). The following are some of the relevant findings from the pre-training and post-training comparison.

Firstly, no differences were found between previous and post-project's training knowledge of myths and facts about sexual violence against children. Although the majority of participants had not received previous training, the teachers demonstrated a good level of knowledge about the myths and facts from the outset. That is, the pre-questionnaire results indicated that the participants did not believe in the most frequently cited myths in the scientific literature about this form of violence. Secondly, an increase was observed in attitudes toward reporting, which is a common barrier to reporting sexual violence against children, due to various fears about reputational damage and inadequate reporting. Thirdly, the section where the most significant difference was found was in self-perception regarding the ability to address the problem of sexual violence against children. In the pre-questionnaire no more than 14.6% agreed that they had the skills to prevent, detect or report cases of sexual violence against children. While, in the post-questionnaire, almost 80% of the trained teachers stated that they had or felt more able to deal with a case of sexual violence against children.

6.2. Results

After two years and two months of the EDUCAP Project, the EDUCAP Project working group achieved the following remarkable results:

1. Open access training guide: the EDUCAP Guide for the prevention, detection, action and support against sexual violence in schools, in three languages, continues to be downloaded and shared by education professionals (more than 1000 downloads from the official repository of the University of Valencia alone).
2. Number of teachers trained: 1196 teachers trained.
3. Children benefited: 25,357 is the demonstrable number of children who will benefit directly from the project by having a teacher better trained in the prevention, detection and response to child sexual violence.
4. Networking and sustainability: the trained teachers have created the “EDUCAP Network” through which they keep in touch with each other to exchange experiences and resources, while maintaining contact with EDUCAP staff specialists.
5. Replication Guide in open access: the Replication Guide in the national and European context to multiply educational competences and combat child sexual violence, also the result of the collaborative work process within the EDUCAP team, constitutes an ideal material for the sustainability of the project results, which allows its adaptation and replicability in other countries of the European Union, as well as in other regions of Spain or in Latin American countries.
6. Notifications: an indicator of the real impact of the training received by teachers with the EDUCAP program is that at least three possible cases (confidential for obvious reasons) of sexual violence have been reported in the beneficiary schools.

ENDNOTES

Teacher training in prevention and response to violence against children is part of the obligation derived from the human right to integrity and the reinforced right of children to a life free of violence, recognized in Article 19 of the CRC. It is a fundamental preventive guarantee for both substantive and practical reasons. On the one hand, teachers must be qualified to transmit not only knowledge that allows for the labour insertion or professional development of students, but also the acquisition of theoretical and practical tools that are indispensable for the maximum development of children's capacities. Education that would have to be provided in accordance with their needs and the exercise of their rights, including their right to integrity. On the other hand, school is the place where children spend most of their time, and the figure of the teacher is often perceived by children as a figure of reference or trust.

In the Spanish domestic context, despite the explicit legal recognition of this obligation (Article 5 LOPIVI), the teachers are not currently being properly trained, in line with international standards in this area. Faced with this scenario, it is necessary to demand its effectiveness through the available channels, including the possibility of demanding

international responsibility for failures in the respective compliance. The objective must be to put pressure on the state to take training seriously and to fulfil its international commitments in this area.

At the same time, it is necessary to articulate responses, albeit partial ones, to alleviate this training deficit, and to improve child protection to some extent. The EDUCAP Project, aimed at this goal, is just one example of how much could be achieved if Spain fully meets its obligation. If, with the limitations (in time and scope) of such a project, at least three reports of suspected sexual violence are on record, how many are we missing out on because of its failure to meet its international obligations?

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