

Instrument for Risk Assessment of Sexualized Violence in the Digital Environment

The German National Council against Sexual Violence against Children and Youths advocates that children and young people should be better protected from sexualized violence in the digital environment. The Council wants to address and support the effective implementation of child and youth protection in the media through measures to protect their personal integrity and to combat interaction risks¹. For this reason, together with the Federal Agency for Child and Youth Protection in the Media and other members of the National Council's working group "Protection from Exploitation and International Cooperation" the present **instrument for risk assessment of sexualized violence in the digital environment** was developed. The tool is intended for providers and developers of services and applications as well as for people who work with children and young people or are responsible for them. The tool enables providers and developers to assess the risks potentially associated with their services. Thus they will be able to recognize where suitable countermeasures for risk minimization need to be implemented. The tool provides educators with information about the possible initiation and course of sexualized violence against children and adolescents. In this way, risks associated with the digital environment can also be taken into account in the classical protective concepts of educational institutions.

This instrument for risk assessment is based on hazard phenomena in the context of sexualized violence that can occur on the Internet, especially in social media and messenger services as well as in online games. The phenomena were identified in the Hazard Atlas of the Federal Agency for Child and Youth Protection in the Media² and the 25th General Comment on Children's Rights in Relation to the Digital Environment³. They reflect the state of knowledge as of September 2022.

The following charts demonstrate potential paths of escalation of sexualized violence in the digital environment. The phenomena are differentiated in actions or content relevant under criminal law on the one hand and

actions, services and applications that enable or promote hazards and risks of sexualized violence – referred to by investigators as so-called enablers – on the other hand. The paths of escalation shown are exemplary and do not necessarily lead to sexual exploitation and abuse as the final stage, but can be interrupted at any time. Countermeasures by providers can start at all stages of escalation and have a preventive or intervening effect. Protective concepts for the educational practice can accordingly show preventative options.

The paths' logic will here be illustrated exemplary based on paths no. 1 - 3 as examples: First step are classified ad portals through which strangers can contact (also) children and adolescents (enabler - black font on light blue background). In path 1, non-consensual cybersex/ onlinesex occurs after contact has been established, followed by cybergrooming and sexual harassment, which can ultimately end in sexual exploitation and abuse. In Path 2, escalation leads directly from contact to sexual exploitation and abuse. In Path 3, sexting without consent occurs after contact is made, which can result in sexualized blackmail and eventually, again, sexual exploitation and abuse. Non-consensual online communication with sexual intent and also sexual acts without the consent of all participants constitute criminal acts according to the German Penal Code (white font on dark blue background).

1 National Council against Sexual Violence against Children and Youths (2021): Gemeinsame Verständigung, p. 73, <http://www.nationaler-rat.de> (German language)

2 Federal Agency for Child and Youth Protection in the Media (2022). Hazard atlas. 2nd Edition 2022. <https://www.bzkg.de/bzkg/zukunftswerkstatt/gefahrdungsatlas> (German language)

3 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2021). General comment No. 25 on children's rights in relation to the digital environment. <https://childrens-rights.digital/hintergrund/index.cfm/topic.280/key.1738>

Legend:

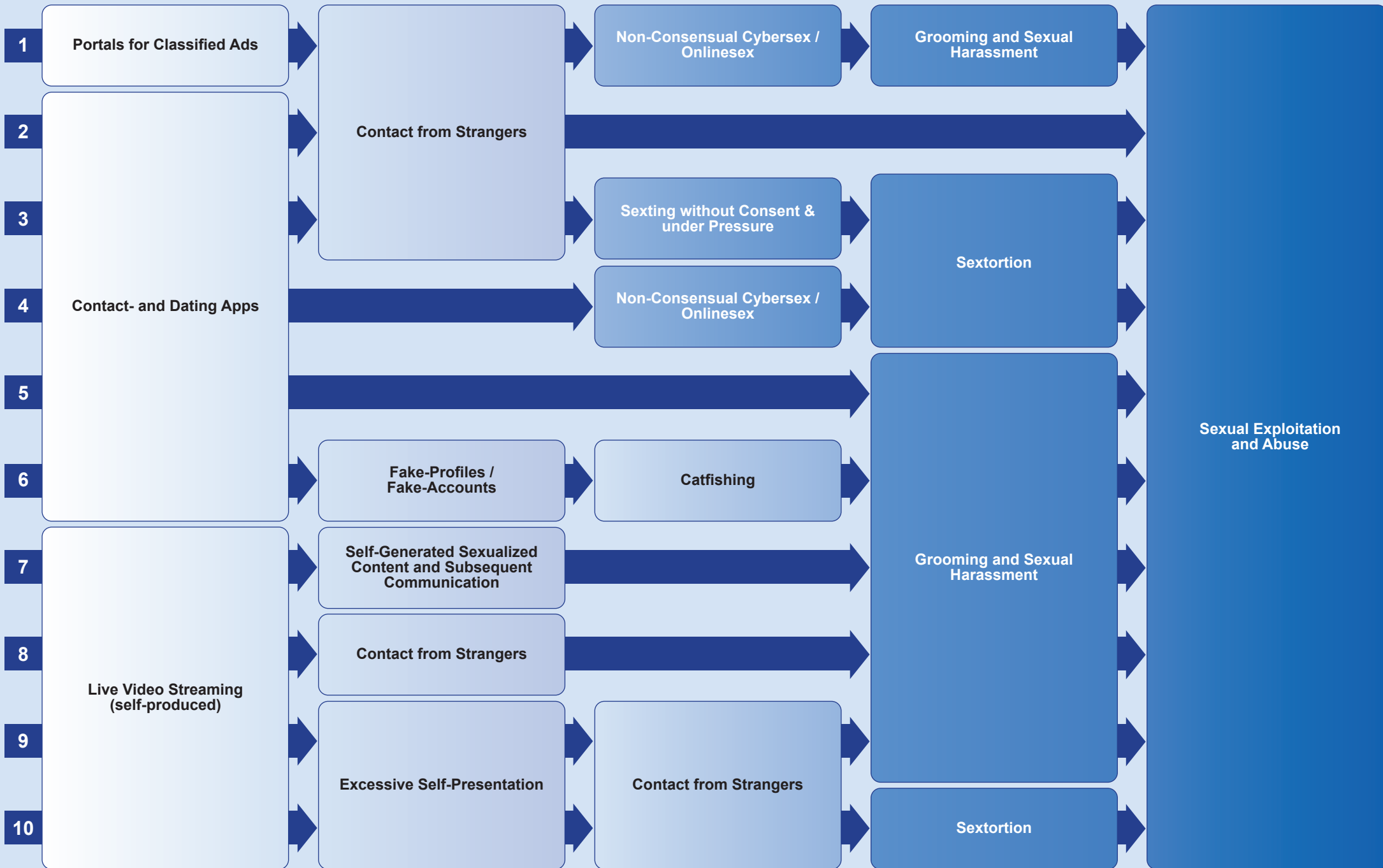
Reading direction from left to right, alphabetical sorting of the paths according to the phenomena they start with on the left

black font on light blue background = enablers

white font on dark blue background = criminal acts or content

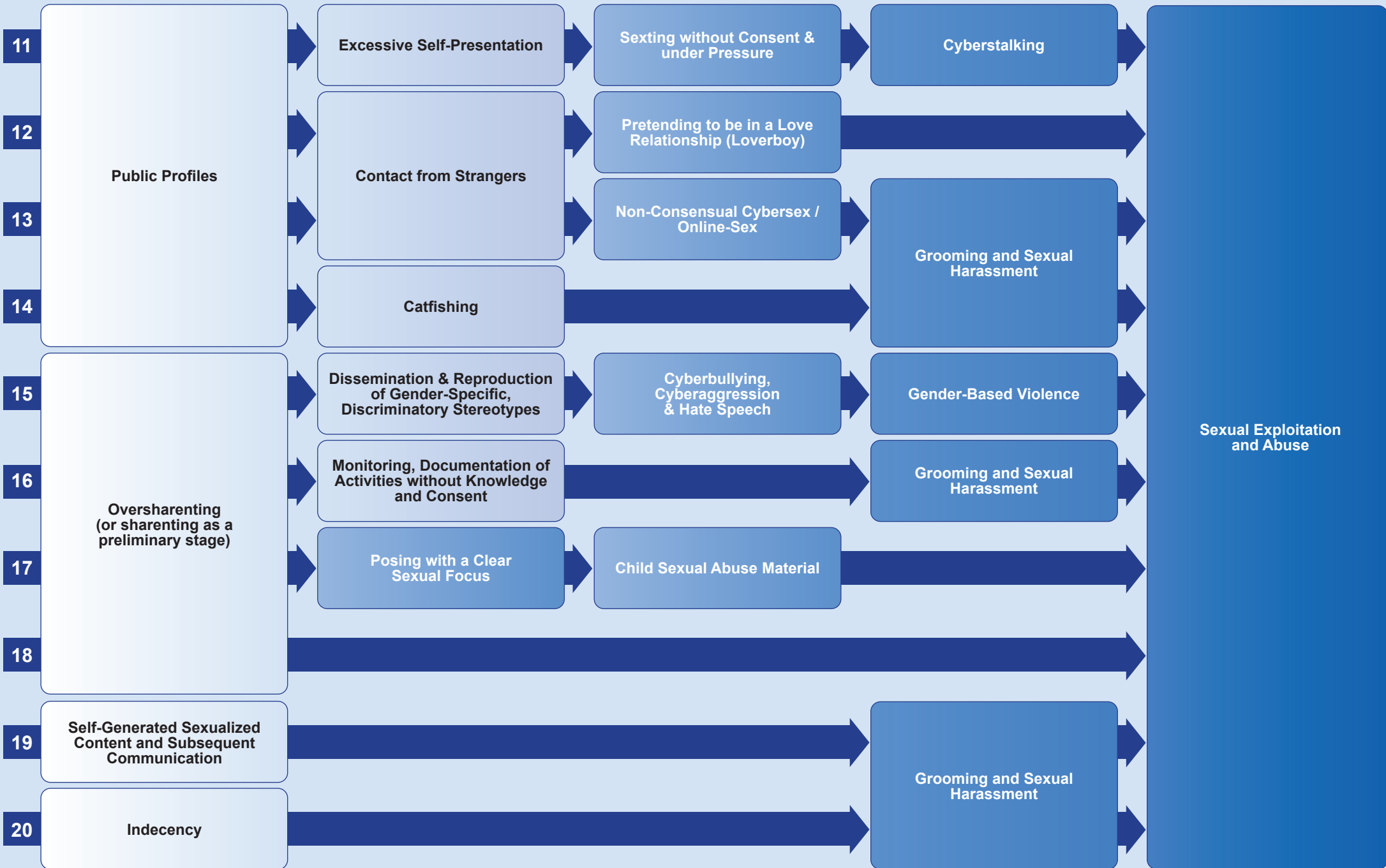
Instrument for risk assessment of sexualised violence in the digital environment

Escalation starting from enablers



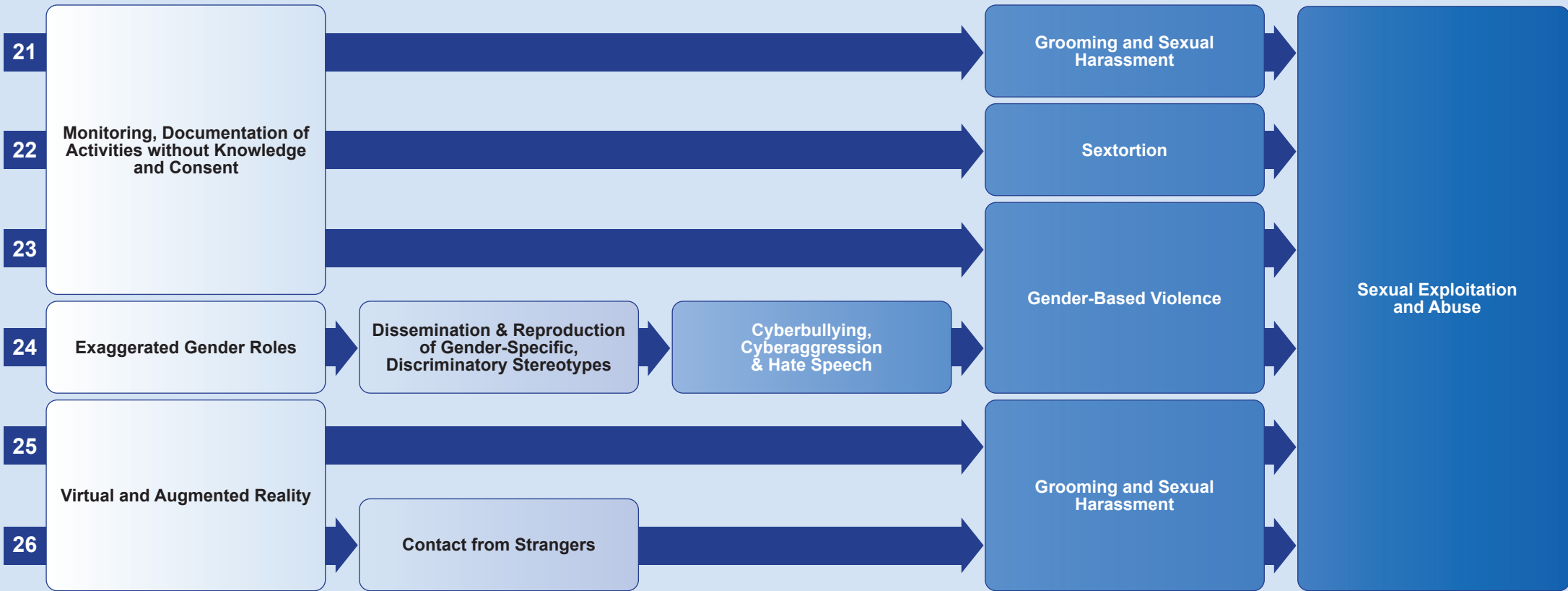
Instrument for risk assessment of sexualised violence in the digital environment

Escalation starting from enablers



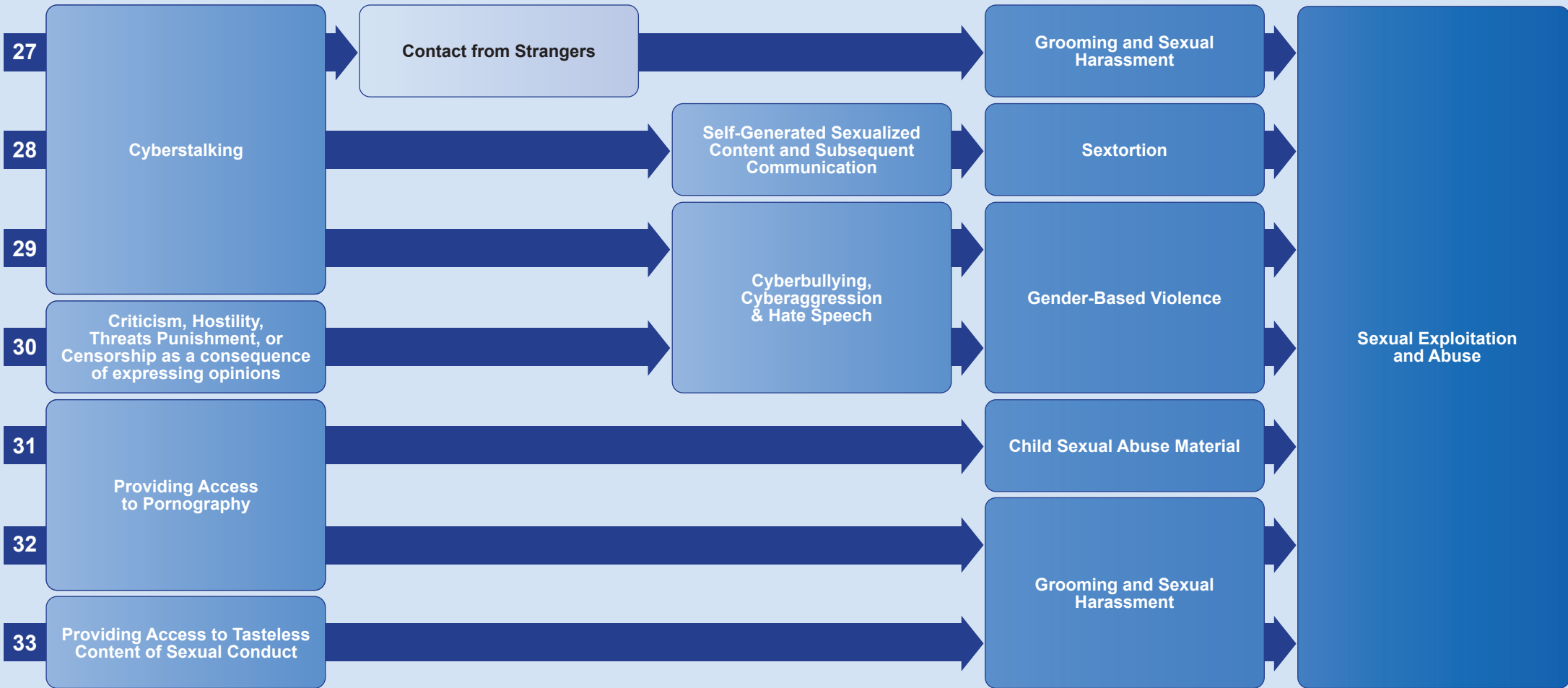
Instrument for risk assessment of sexualised violence in the digital environment

Escalation starting from enablers



Instrument for risk assessment of sexualised violence in the digital environment

Escalation starting from criminally relevant actions or content



Legend:

Reading direction from left to right, alphabetical sorting of the paths according to the phenomena at the beginning on the left.

black font on light blue background = enablers

white font on dark blue background = criminal acts or content