

Open Letter to EU decision makers: Stop the Child Sexual Abuse Crisis now!

On this **World Day for the Prevention and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence**, we, a coalition of 73 organisations working on children right's, urgently call on you to pass critical laws to protect children against sexual abuse and exploitation, online and offline.

Europe is facing a Child Sexual Abuse Crisis. Available data indicate that [about 1 in 5 children](#) in Europe have experienced some form of sexual violence. Children across all social, economic, cultural, and geographical backgrounds are affected, facing abuse in various environments - from family homes and schools, social media and gaming platforms to institutional settings.

Online, the scale, severity, and violence of child sexual abuse are spiraling out of control, with [over half of young people having experienced some form of sexual harm online](#) in their childhood. [More than 100 million images or videos of children being sexually abused](#) were found online last year, and this may be just the tip of the iceberg. [98% of these images show children under 13](#) years - children who have to live with the ongoing trauma of their abuse circulating online perpetually.

"For a very long time, I was very stressed, and I slept very badly [...] what would happen if those images came out, and what would everyone think of me? [...] in my head it had just sort of taken on this enormous catastrophic proportion that my life was going to end" - Nora, Survivor.

In an unregulated online world, children are easily contacted by offenders, manipulated to share intimate images and sent inappropriate content. The **online solicitation of children for sexual activities** (known as 'grooming') [increased by more than 300% between 2021 and 2023](#).

[Children as young as 3-6](#) are being groomed and coerced into engaging in sexual behaviour, including penetrative and sadism activities, via webcams. In absence of adequate safeguards, **encrypted platforms are used by offenders to exploit children with impunity**. In addition, advancements in [artificial intelligence](#) and

virtual reality are being used to create child sexual abuse material with the click of a button.

It doesn't have to be this way. Together we can take action to end the Child Sexual Abuse Crisis and protect children from further harm.

EU Member States and Members of the European Parliament have a critical opportunity to adopt a strong EU legislative framework, with the [Regulation to prevent and fight child sexual abuse](#) and the [Recast Directive on Child Sexual Abuse](#). Those legislations must be tailored to the realities children face offline and online, and ensure comprehensive protection and prevention measures that ultimately safeguard children's rights. For this, the Regulation must enable the prevention, detection, removal and reporting of all forms of child sexual abuse content (including grooming) in all online spaces where children are present, including encrypted spaces. The Directive must criminalise child sexual abuse online as much as offline, extend the limitation periods for reporting and require States to provide an evidence-based, trauma-informed and child-centric response to child sexual abuse.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which EU countries are signatories, and General Comment n°25 of the Child Rights Committee is clear that the **best interests of the child** should always be front and centre in decisions relative to children. **We urge EU policymakers to act in full respect of international standards** when deciding on these pieces of legislation.

Together these tools can effectively tackle the current Child Sexual Abuse Crisis and create a safer internet, and childhood, for children in Europe.

Signed by:

1. ECLAG Steering Group formed by [Brave Movement](#), [ECPAT International](#), [Eurochild](#), [Missing Children Europe](#), [Internet Watch Foundation](#), [Terre des Hommes](#) and [Thorn](#).
8. Agarrados à Net (Clunged on the Net) - Portugal

9. [ARSIS Association for the Social Support of Youth](#) - Greece
10. [Association Elien Rebirth](#) - France
11. [Bens Place \(Survivors West Yorkshire\)](#) - United Kingdom
12. [Børns Vilkår](#) - Denmark
13. [CAMELEON Association France](#) - France
14. [Canadian Centre for Child Protection](#) - Canada
15. CCA Chances for Children Association - Hungary
16. [Centre Plan&Go](#) - Albania
17. [ChildX](#) - Sweden
18. [Child Focus](#) - Belgium
19. ChildFund Alliance - EU
20. [Child Safety Line](#) - Slovakia
21. [Child Helpline International](#)
22. [Children's Rights Alliance](#) - Ireland
23. [COFACE](#) - EU
24. [CRCA/ECPAT Albania](#) - Albania
25. [Defence for Children International](#) - Liberia
26. [Defence for Children Netherlands](#) - Netherlands
27. [ECPAT Austria](#) - Austria
28. [ECPAT France](#) - France
29. [ECPAT Foundation Thailand](#) - Thailand
30. [ECPAT Norway](#) - Norway
31. [ECPAT Taiwan](#) - Taiwan
32. [eLiberare](#) - Romania
33. [Empowering Children Foundation](#) - Poland
34. [Federación de Asociaciones para la Prevención del Maltrato Infantil \(FAPMI\)](#) -
[ECPAT Spain](#) - Spain
35. [FICE Croatia](#) - Croatia

36. [Fondation pour l'Enfance](#) - France
37. [Fondazione SOS il Telefono Azzurro ETS](#) - Italy
38. [Foundation Together Albania \(FTA\)](#) - Albania
39. [Halley Movement Coalition](#) - Mauritius
40. [Hintalovon Child Rights Foundation - ECPAT Hungary](#) - Hungary
41. ["Hope For Children" CRC Policy Center](#) - Cyprus
42. [INHOPE – the International Association of Internet Hotlines](#)
43. [Innocence in Danger e.V.](#) - Germany
44. [Instituto de Apoio à Criança](#) - Portugal
45. [International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children](#) - Singapore
46. [Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children \(ISPCC\)](#) - Ireland
47. [Lastensuojelun Keskusliitto](#) - Central Union for Child Welfare Finland
48. [Lucy Faithfull Foundation](#) - UK
49. Maja Staśko, journalist, activist, author - Poland
50. [Marie Collins Foundation](#) - UK
51. [MiudosSegurosNa.Net \(KidsSafeOnThe.Net\)](#) - Portugal
52. [National Child Helpline Albania \(ALO 116-111\)](#) - Albania
53. [National Network for Children](#) - Bulgaria
54. [Neglected Children and Women Foundation, ECPAT Bulgaria](#) - Bulgaria
55. [Network for Children's Rights \(NCR\)](#) - Greece
56. [NGO "Internet safety centre "Stop Sexting"](#) - Ukraine
57. [Novi Put](#) - Bosnia and Herzegovina
58. [Pancyprian Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children](#) - Cyprus
59. [PFAD Bundesverband der Pflege- und Adoptivfamilien e.V.](#) - Germany
60. [Protect Children, Suojellaan Lapsia ry](#)
61. Rosalba Mirci, Individual member of Eurochild - Italy
62. [Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth](#)

63. [SOLWODI Deutschland e.V.](#) - Germany
64. [Stiftung Digitale Chancen](#), Germany
65. [SWGfL](#) - UK
66. [Tacteen Naeil - ECPAT Korea](#) - South Korea
67. [The Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children \(ISPCC\)](#) - UK
68. [The Smile of the Child](#) - Greece
69. Tulir- Centre for the Prevention and Healing of Child Sexual Abuse - India
70. [Victim Support Europe](#) - EU
71. [We Protect Global Alliance](#)
72. [WWP European Network](#) - EU
73. [116000 Enfants Disparus](#) - France