

Civil Society Organisations Welcome the European Commission's Proposal to Prevent and Combat Child Sexual Abuse: Open Letter to the European Union

On May 11, the European Commission released a proposed *Regulation laying down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse*. It is timely and historic, not just for Europe but for the world. When passed, this legislation has the potential to make an impact far beyond the EU and help advance the global fight against child sexual abuse in both the offline and online worlds.

Focusing on the online dimension of child sexual abuse, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson emphasizes that there has been a [6000% increase](#) in reports of child sexual abuse online in the EU in the last ten years alone. Most of the images and victims remain hidden, their abuse unseen and unreported. But even the tip of the iceberg is enormous: the [National Center for Missing and Exploited Children](#) received close to 85 million files containing child sexual abuse material in 2021. In the previous year, that number was 65 million. [Over 62% of online child sexual abuse material](#) (CSAM) worldwide is hosted on servers based in the EU. It will take collaboration between citizens, institutions, policymakers, tech companies, and nonprofit organizations to tackle a problem at this scale.

We, as a collective of organisations that strive for children's rights, safety, and security online and offline, support the European Commission's proposal as a critical step toward better protection of children's rights. The proposed Regulation presents a vision of a responsible internet where children are free to be curious and explore online spaces safely. It aims to ensure that technology is developed and used in conformity with European Union values and in accordance with fundamental rights, with particular attention paid to protecting children.

The current legislative frameworks vary greatly across EU Member States. They rely on voluntary actions by online service providers and do not look to address the problems that could arise as technology and societal engagement with it evolves. The Regulation lays out a **harmonised, binding, and future-proof framework** which will allow us to tackle known CSAM, new CSAM, and grooming for sexual exploitation, for years to come. Therefore:

- We support the **strong safeguards** this Regulation will put in place to ensure that online service providers and the technology used respect the fundamental rights of

all users, including children. Among other things, technologies will need to be assessed by the European Data Protection Board and not being able to extract any other information than what is strictly necessary to detect the abuse. Their use will be subject to a balancing of fundamental rights by an independent authority and any user affected will have the right to effective redress.

- We welcome the proposed **EU Centre** as an independent institution with strong ties to the existing ecosystem. This will serve as a vital pillar to fighting CSAM. Similar centres exist in various jurisdictions around the world and have demonstrated their value and utility in coordinating efforts to fight child sexual abuse. With a strong mandate to ensure action by online service providers, support prevention efforts, and provide crucial victim redress, the success of the new centre will require sustained collaboration from all sectors from the start. We offer our knowledge and support to aid in its formation.
- We also commend the general **obligation to assess risks and adopt prevention measures** as laid out by the proposed Regulation, hence supporting safety by design. Creating a new system of transparency between technology and users will foster meaningful and measurable action to tackle CSAM.
- We have learned over time that voluntary actions alone will not solve this problem. In addition to these efforts, the **mandatory use of safe technologies** ordered by an independent authority is a welcome initiative to tackle this crime at scale.

As with any Regulation, getting the details right will be of paramount importance to its success in bringing about sustainable outcomes for children. We welcome the Commission's proposal and look forward to working with all interested parties to share our unique expertise to create a safer online environment. Our coordinated response against online threats to children is the only way to turn the tide on child sexual exploitation and abuse online.

For more information or to add your name and organisation to the list please contact emily.slifer@wearethorn.org

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Children's Fundamental Rights



THE good LOBBY



be brave france



#stop_sexting Educational Project

5Rights Foundation

AjudAjudar

AMANE

Arbeitsgemeinschaft Allergiekranke Kind

Astra anti trafficking action

Augusta Associates

Be Brave France

Bund Deutscher Amateurtheater e.V. (BDAT)

Canadian Centre for Child Protection

Cesta z krize

Child Fund Alliance

Child Helpline International

Child Rescue Coalition

Child Safety Line Slovakia

Childnet

Different & Equal

Droit d'Enfance

ECPAT Albania

ECPAT Austria

ECPAT Germany

ECPAT International

ECPAT Korea

ECPAT Liberia

ECPAT Luxembourg

ECPAT Netherlands

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ECPAT Spain

ECPAT Sweden

Eurochild

Foundation Together Albania

Fundacion ANAR

German Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk

Gyerekesély Közhasznú Egyesület (GYERE) Chances for Children Association (CCA)

Hintalovon Child Rights Foundation (ECPAT Hungary)

Hope for Children

Innocence in Danger

Instituto de Apoio à Criança

International falcon movement socialist educational international (IFM SEI)

International Justice Mission Germany

International Justice Mission: Center to End Online Sexual Exploitation of Children

Internet Watch Foundation

Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

KARO

Keep Kids Safe Movement

Kindernothilfe e.V.

l'Association Camerounaise pour la Promotion et la Défense des Droits de l'Enfant (ACPDE)

La Strada International

Lantern Foundation

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Lightup Norway

Lynn's Warriors

Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society

Marie Collins Foundation

Missing Children 116 000 hotline (Switzerland)

Missing Children Europe

Monique Burr Foundation

Montessori Deutschland

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

National Child Protection Task Force

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

Network for Children's Rights

NGO Magnolia

Operation Light Shine

Patent Association (Patent Patriarchátust Ellenzők Társasága - Hungary)

PFAD Bundesverband der Pflege- und Adoptivfamilien e.V.

Plan&Go

Porrfri Barndom (Porn Free Childhood)

PRAKSIS

Professor Abhilash Nair

Protect Children Finland (Suojellaan Lapsia ry)

RAINN

Real Pearl Foundation/Igazgyöngy Alapítvány

Rights4Girls

roterkeil Deutschland e.V.

Royal Virgin Islands Police Department

Save the Children Romania

SchlussStrich e.V.

Sentinel Foundation

Society for Media Education and Communication Culture eV, GMK

SOLWODI Deutschland e.V.

Sonia Livingstone, LSE

SWGfL

Telefono Azzurro

Terre des Hommes International Federation

The Child 10 Foundation

The Good Lobby

The International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC)

The Jensen Project

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation

The Smile of the Child

Thorn

UK Safer Internet Centre

Vatra Psycho Social Centre

Weisser Ring

WeProtect Global Alliance

Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE)

Women's World Summit Foundation - Children Section

World Vision International