



# THE COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN EUROPE

Developments, progress, challenges and recommended strategies for civil society

November 2014





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# FOREWORD

Over the past decade, evidence has emerged worldwide suggesting that the sexual exploitation of children is becoming more pervasive and increasingly complex. Unprecedented developments in information and communication technologies (ICTs) along with the erosion of social norms and sexual mores met with global trends that transcend national contours like poverty and the major growth in travel and tourism, all put an increasing number of children at risk of becoming victims to the various manifestations of sexual exploitation.

The sense of outrage and relentless efforts spearheaded over the years by ECPAT member organisations in collaboration with other stakeholders have undoubtedly led to progress on many fronts. Through its civil society network active in almost 80 countries and longstanding partnerships with a myriad of child protection agencies, ECPAT seeks to revitalise actions to end the commercial sexual exploitation of children in every region of the world.

The Strategic Framework that the ECPAT International Assembly sets forth every three years for the organisation is intended to guide in the achievement of this goal. The review and planning process that defines this Framework is meant to identify strategies and interventions needed to address the evolving and multi-faceted forms of child sexual exploitation. This Regional Overview on the Sexual Exploitation of Children in Europe was compiled as part of the process to determine the Framework for 2015-2018.

In addition to mapping and examining the key socio-economic factors impacting the protection of children and the emerging trends related to child sexual exploitation in Europe, the Overview assesses the status of actions taken against this crime within individual countries in the region. It also proposes recommendations for strengthening child protection systems and responds to the prevention, protection and recovery needs of child victims and vulnerable children. The document was validated during the ECPAT Regional Consultation in Freiburg, Germany (10-11th October, 2014), which led to the identification of regional priorities and strategies for enhancing political will and actions in Europe.

The development and validation of the Overview was facilitated by Katlijn Declercq and Maia Rusakova, Regional Representatives to the ECPAT International Board of Trustees, ECPAT member organizations, officials of regional mechanisms and entities and child rights experts. We are indebted for their generous technical inputs, collaboration and commitment in fighting the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

The year 2014 marks the 25th the anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. ECPAT presents this Overview with a reminder to all duty bearers of child rights in Europe that according to the Convention every child – regardless of background, ethnic origin, gender or location– has the right to live free from sexual exploitation. Protecting children from this intolerable crime is everyone's responsibility and can only be realised with the commitment and support from all key stakeholders and sectors.



Dorothy Rozga  
Executive Director  
ECPAT International

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Significant review, consultation and planning went into the development of this Regional Overview that merits recognition and appreciation.

The Overview draws on the ECPAT's Country Monitoring Reports on CSEC in each member country in the region and relied on the substantive inputs from ECPAT member groups, partner organizations, child rights experts and the Secretariat staff.

We would like to especially acknowledge the contribution of the following individuals and organizations:

Carol Bellamy, Chair of ECPAT International Board of Trustees; Katlijn Declercq, Vice Chair of the ECPAT International Board of Trustees and Regional Representative for Western Europe; and Maia Rusakova, Regional Representative to the ECPAT International Board of Trustees for Central and Eastern Europe for their guidance and leadership.

## **Following ECPAT member organizations for their review and feedback in strengthening the Regional Overview:**

Mechtild Maurer, Erika George-Monney and Dorothea Czarnecki, ECPAT Germany; Astrid Winkler, ECPAT Austria; Emilie Vallat and Guillemette Vuillard, ECPAT France; Theo Noten, ECPAT Netherlands; Bharti Patel, ECPAT UK; Gabriela Kühn, Nobody's Children Foundation/ The Polish Coalition Against CSEC; Malle Roomeldi, Tartu Child Support Center (Estonia); Lydia Zagorova, Neglected Children Society (Bulgaria); ECPAT Italy; Ariane Couvreur, ECPAT Belgium; Thomas Kauffman, Hannah Bristow and Susanna Greijer, ECPAT Luxembourg; Selma Fernández, ECPAT Spain; Anders Pettersson, ECPAT Sweden; Talia Bongni and Rudolf Gafner, ECPAT Switzerland; Laura Stanciu, Save the Children Romania.

## **ECPAT Secretariat staff:**

Special appreciation to the Communications and Programme team for their substantive inputs in compiling this document. The Overview was written by Alessia Altamura with contribution from François-Xavier Souchet and edited by Alison Raphael. The Overview was designed by Manida Naebklang. Overall project supervision was provided by Junita Upadhyay, Deputy Executive Director for Programmes.

# ACRONYMS

<b>CBSS</b>	Council of Baltic Sea States
<b>CEOP</b>	Child Exploitation and Online Protection
<b>CIS</b>	Commonwealth of Independent States
<b>CEF</b>	Connecting Europe Facility
<b>CIRCAMP</b>	Comprehensive Internet-Related Child Abusive Material Project
<b>CoE</b>	Council of Europe
<b>CSEC</b>	Commercial sexual exploitation of children
<b>CYP</b>	Child and youth participation
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EGCC</b>	Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk (CBSS)
<b>EICYAC</b>	ECPAT International Youth Advisory Council
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FRA</b>	EU Agency for Fundamental Rights
<b>GSMA</b>	European Mobile Industry Observatory
<b>ICTs</b>	Information and communication technologies
<b>ILO</b>	International Labor Organisation
<b>INGOs</b>	International non-governmental organisations
<b>INHOPE</b>	International Association of Internet Hotlines
<b>ISP(s)</b>	Internet service providers
<b>NGO</b>	Non-government organisation
<b>NPA(s)</b>	National Plan(s) for Action
<b>OP3CRC</b>	Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communication Procedure
<b>OSCE</b>	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
<b>RCC</b>	Regional Cooperation Council
<b>SIP</b>	Safer Internet Programme
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>YPP</b>	Youth Partnership Programme (ECPAT)



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This overview addresses the complex factors underlying the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) in Europe – mainly in the 28 countries of the European Union (EU) – and describes and assesses measures being taken to counteract this severe violation of children’s rights. Finally, it presents strategies and recommendations for consideration by ECPAT and others to improve and intensify anti-CSEC activities in the region.

Countries in Eastern and Western Europe often experience CSEC differently; for example, those in the West are generally recipients of trafficked children, while those in the East are more often the source. But across the region there are clear signs that CSEC is increasing and evolving, particularly in relation to the use of modern technological tools to identify and exploit children and the reach of organised criminal networks. Dramatic political and economic changes following the dismemberment of the Soviet Union produced pockets of poverty and deprivation that create opportunities for those who exploit children. One result of economic inequalities is increased migration across (now easily traversed) borders; unaccompanied minors face special risks of sexual exploitation during the migration process and after arriving at their destination. Migration by parents has weakened family structures, again, leaving children vulnerable. Certain groups, particularly Roma children, children living on the street, young migrants and disabled children often face discrimination and marginalisation, and are especially vulnerable to all forms of commercial sexual exploitation.

## Specific Manifestations

*Prostitution of children:* Despite a lack of reliable regional data on child prostitution, sharp increases have been noted, especially in countries hard-hit by the global recession. The use of children in prostitution appears to be closely tied to child trafficking, although some young people exchange sex for cash needed to survive or to obtain drugs or high-end consumer goods. The prostitution of children mainly involves girls aged 14 to 17, but growing boys’ involvement has been noted in some countries. Children forced into prostitution usually face stigma and often criminal charges, even those forced to commit crimes by traffickers or others, making it difficult for them to create a new life.

*Child sex trafficking:* The criminal nature of human trafficking makes estimating the number of children trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation extremely difficult, especially as traffickers are finding new ways to hide their activities, such as shifting from the streets to more private venues and making use of weaknesses in countries’ legal environment. The European Commission published two reports on trafficking in the EU. The first, covering 2008-2010 found that 15% of trafficked persons were children. A second report on 2010-2012, found that more than 30,000 people had been trafficked within or to the EU between 2010 and 2012. These numbers increased each year; nearly three-quarters (69%) were trafficked for sexual exploitation and 65% were EU citizens. Traffickers are rarely convicted, and support services for young trafficking victims are spotty in most of the EU.

*Child Sexual Exploitation Online:* The widespread use of new information and communication technologies throughout Europe has encouraged a growing trend in the production and distribution of abusive child images, especially in Western Europe. Among the more disturbing new trends identified are the increased use of “live streaming” of child sexual abuse, offering ‘pay-per-view’ websites and increased use of “hidden” features on the Internet that facilitate anonymity, making apprehension of offenders more difficult.

*Sexual exploitation of children in tourism:* Although Western European child sex tourists often travel to other continents, a trend of increased travel and tourism within Europe, with the intent sexually abusing children, has been noted. Some engage in the relatively new mode of “voluntourism,” seeking out children for abuse in orphanages, schools or shelters. New technologies (such as websites and chat rooms) are helping predators identify the lowest-risk venues and even to “meet” child victims online before they travel.

## Addressing CSEC in the region

Europe has well-developed regional institutions with a strong commitment to child protection, including the EU, Council of Europe and Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Yet despite a number of promising child protection agreements and initiatives developed and led by these entities, child victims of CSEC are often left out of the equation, since the special protections and support they require (legal, psycho-social/recovery) are rarely addressed. Regional initiatives often cover one aspect of CSEC (usually trafficking) while ignoring others. Similarly, only a few countries have current National Plans of Action (NPAs) against CSEC, preferring to focus on more general “child protection” action plans. Nevertheless, the analysis

revealed several areas of potential collaboration between ECPAT and ongoing initiatives in Europe and its sub-regions, particularly in relation to trafficking, online safety and children’s right to be free from sexual violence and exploitation.

## Way Forward

Among the main recommendations for further action by ECPAT in Europe are:

- Study national plans and programmes for children to assess how well they address CSEC, and develop an advocacy plan to encourage increased mainstreaming of CSEC in these and other regional instruments.
- Establish an ECPAT office in Brussels to strengthen partnerships and collaboration with regional organisations and support national ECPAT groups in their advocacy efforts.
- Conduct research on specific aspects of CSEC where knowledge is weak, including new trends in victimisation and prostitution of boys, and prepare studies on online exploitation and prostitution of children to raise the visibility of these CSEC components in the region.
- Work more closely with the private sector, especially travel and tourism and information/communication firms, raising awareness of their responsibility to prevent CSEC and presenting opportunities for joint action.
- Train a variety to professionals to deliver more tailored and effective services for child victims.
- Build youth capacity, especially for victim rehabilitation, using peer-to-peer methods and create platforms for children’s voices to be heard.



## INTRODUCTION

Despite numerous preventive, protective and even punitive measures put in place by governments and civil society organisations involved in the global fight against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC), recent studies show that CSEC remains a serious problem in all regions, including Europe. Many factors have been identified as root causes of this phenomenon. Its manifestations are as varied as its causes, and more effort is required to curb this fundamental children's rights violation and protect its victims. ECPAT International offers this Overview of CSEC in Europe to its network member organisations, partners and other stakeholders with the hope that it will guide the setting of priorities

and development of strategies and concrete plans to end child trafficking for sexual purposes, child prostitution and child pornography on the continent. The present Overview addresses the situation in European countries with emphasis on those that are members of the European Union such as Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom (UK). A separate Overview has been developed with countries that belong to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) like those of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.



## **SECTION 1. CONTEXT AND INTERSECTING VULNERABILITIES**

A complex matrix of interrelated factors makes children vulnerable and shapes the forces and circumstances that allow them to be commercially sexually exploited. These factors are grounded in the political and socio-economic context in which a child lives and develops. In Europe, as in other regions, several structural facilitators underpin violations of children's rights, influencing their extent and nature.

The vast European region has undergone various dramatic changes since the 1990's. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the expansion of the European Union (EU) have altered the regional landscape, creating and reinforcing regional forums and organisations as mechanisms to guide policy development and the renewal and revitalisation of national structures. In Central/Eastern Europe as well as in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), millions of people have had to adapt to a transformed political, economic and social context<sup>1</sup>, moving from centrally planned to market economies. These and other transformations over the past two decades have had a significant impact on the situation of children and their protection from sexual exploitation.

## Economic factors

Although Europe<sup>2</sup> is one of the wealthiest continents in the world (only 2.4% of the population in Europe and Central Asia were living on less than US\$2 a day in 2010)<sup>3</sup>, there are still sharp sub-regional differences. For example, the World Bank estimated that in 2009 – in the midst of the global economic recession – some 40 million people in Central/Eastern Europe and Central Asia were living in poverty and 120 million were very close to impoverishment.<sup>4</sup> Still, human development indicators confirm that living conditions in all EU countries are among the best in the world.<sup>5</sup> Despite these positive signs, disparities and the risk of falling into poverty are growing within the EU. According to recent estimates, at least 25 of the over 100 million

children and young people aged 0-18 living in the EU (more than one in four children in the region) are at risk of poverty and/or social exclusion.<sup>6</sup> A report published by Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the EU, found that exposure to poverty is particularly prominent among children growing up with a single parent or in a household consisting of two adults and three or more dependent children<sup>7</sup>, as well as among children from a migrant background or whose parents have a low level of education.<sup>8</sup> The severity of child poverty and social exclusion and the extent of child deprivation vary greatly between EU member states, and is generally more pronounced in newly acceded countries.

***According to one study, in Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, Netherlands and Sweden deprivation rates are under 10%, whereas in Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia and Romania deprivation rates range from 40% to nearly 80%.<sup>9</sup>***

The economic crisis is further exacerbated poverty levels. Between 2008 and 2011, the risk of impoverishment increased in 17 member states, with marked consequences for the lives of children and young people. Reductions in income support and child benefits, cuts in services directly affecting children (e.g. health, education, etc.), increasing unemployment and insecurity at work (for both young people and their parents) and increased demands on child protection services have combined to produce a deterioration in living conditions for millions of children. As the economic crisis continues, homelessness is growing in several EU member states, along with demand for food aid and other emergency services.<sup>10</sup> The situation in the Western Balkan region<sup>11</sup> – now moving toward stability after years of armed conflicts – is also particularly worrying due to the deep, ongoing economic recession, massive unemployment<sup>12</sup> and high child poverty rates. In Kosovo, for example, using the generally accepted consumption poverty line of €1.417 per person per day, data from the 2006/7 Household Budget Survey data revealed

that nearly half of all children (48.6%) were living in poverty.<sup>13</sup>

## EU enlargement and migration

The most significant enlargement of the EU took place in 2004, bringing in 10 new Southern and Central/Eastern European countries; in 2007 this was followed by the accession of Bulgaria and Romania and then of Croatia in July 2013. This enlargement to 28 members has had mixed effects on children's rights and child protection. Efforts to meet EU membership criteria have encouraged political moderation in newly acceded countries and significantly accelerated the modernisation of institutions, introduction of the rule of law, and construction of transparent market economies.<sup>14</sup> Readjustments by governments also centred on human rights; several nations had to implement major changes in their legislation, including in the area of child protection.

Enlargement has had a significant impact on the free movement of workers. A 2011 European Commission report showed that, although considerably diminished during the recent economic recession, post-accession labour mobility flows from the newest member states made a positive contribution to the economies of receiving countries.<sup>15</sup> However this freedom of movement has also caused concern among older EU member states, which see themselves as the likely end destination of an overwhelming number of labour migrants,<sup>16</sup> illegal immigrants and criminals. The relative economic prosperity of Western European EU countries continues to exert a considerable pull on people from Eastern countries, and high unemployment and inadequate social protection mechanisms in the former Eastern bloc constitute strong push factors. The push and pull affecting migration flows also creates opportunities for luring vulnerable populations, especially children, into

all forms of CSEC.<sup>17</sup> As noted by Europol in 2009, the eastward expansion of the EU and relaxation of internal border controls have led to an increase in human trafficking both from one EU country to another and into the EU from third countries (see section 2 for more details).<sup>18</sup>

## Children on the move

No reliable data on child migration in Europe is available. However, research indicates that about 4% of the total migrant population in the region is under 20 years of age (most are between 15 and 19 years).<sup>19</sup> In 2000 it was estimated that roughly 100,000 migrant children in Europe had been separated from their parents or other caregivers.<sup>20</sup> More recently, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported that over 15,000 unaccompanied and separated children had claimed asylum in the EU, Norway and Switzerland in 2009.<sup>21</sup> Most unaccompanied minors in the EU seem to be young males aged between 16 and 17 years, although in countries such as France a strong presence of females has also been reported.<sup>22</sup> The motives for their travel and arrival are diverse and interrelated. The majority of unaccompanied children are fleeing armed conflicts, natural catastrophes or discrimination. Some do not leave of their own free will, but are sent away by their families to avoid political persecution, gain access to education and other services denied to them at home or simply to escape poverty and find employment. Others seek to join family members already in EU territory, and some arrive as victims of human trafficking destined for exploitation.<sup>23</sup>

***Children on the move often face exhausting journeys to reach European territory. Most also endure severe hardship on arrival. Instead of receiving protection, they may face prolonged detention, intimidation and abusive***



*police behaviour; registration and treatment as adults after unreliable age exams; bureaucratic obstacles to accessing education; abuse when detained or housed in institutions; and, too often, exploitation (including sexual exploitation).*<sup>24</sup>

## Children left behind

The types of danger and harms endured by young migrants are also frequently experienced by children left behind in home countries by migrating parents<sup>25</sup> (see, for example, research on Bulgaria, Romania and Poland).<sup>26</sup> Whilst remittances help to alleviate household poverty and facilitate children's access to social services, the negative impacts of parents' absence on children undermine their emotional well-being, schooling and health, contributing to an image of these children as "different."<sup>27</sup> Although the extent of this phenomenon at EU level has not been well-researched, left-behind children have been identified as being at greater risk of human trafficking.<sup>28</sup>

## Child labour

The prevalence of child labour in Europe is difficult to ascertain. The Council of Europe (CoE) recently pointed to strong indications that this remains a serious problem in the region, and that it might be growing in the wake of the economic crisis. In Albania 19% of children are reportedly involved in child labour, while in Italy a June 2013 study indicates that 5.2% of children under 16 are working. Many of the children working across Europe engage in extremely hazardous occupations in agriculture, construction, small factories or on the street. This has been reported for example in Albania, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Turkey.

*Working on the streets leaves children vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.<sup>29</sup> The risk of sexual exploitation is also high for children employed in domestic work, including those trafficked for this purpose. In the UK, for example, research has established that a principal motive for trafficking children into the country is for use in "domestic servitude", and many of these children are subsequently used for sexual exploitation.<sup>30</sup>*

## Racism and discrimination

In recent years, Europe has seen a surge in racism and discrimination. Hostility towards and fear of "outsiders" – particularly people with different religious views, migrants and asylum-seekers – has become increasingly commonplace. Widespread discrimination affects children from minority groups, who are often denied access to quality health care and education, adequate housing and a safe environment. Whilst many different minorities suffer racism, the circumstances of the Roma, gypsy and traveller communities (the EU's largest ethnic minority group) have raised particular concern. Across Europe the Roma have experienced a long history of discrimination and persecution, including forcible resettlement and the removal of children from their families to state institutions.<sup>31</sup> The situation is particularly disturbing in South-Eastern Europe where only about 20% of Roma children ever enrol in primary school (compared with more than 90 percent of their non-Roma peers).<sup>32</sup>

Many children and young people with disabilities also regularly experience discrimination as a result of prejudice or lack of awareness, and endure the effects of poverty and social exclusion. In many countries in the region, they still have limited access to mainstream education and high quality training and are disproportionately likely to be confined to institutional care.<sup>33</sup> Children and young people who are discriminated against suffer serious violations of their rights. ECPAT International's 2<sup>nd</sup> edition Country



Monitoring Reports on the status of action against commercial sexual exploitation of children indicate that in Europe children from ethnic minorities (especially those from the Roma community), children with a migrant background and children with disabilities are particularly exposed to sexual abuse and exploitation.<sup>34</sup>

## Gaps in child welfare and protection systems

Another group of children consistently found to be exposed to abuse, trafficking and sexual exploitation in the region are those living in institutions and who go missing from the state care system. In Ireland over 500 children in the care of the state have gone missing since 2000, a shocking 90% were not found, giving rise to serious concern that many may have been trafficked. The number of separated children in asylums who have disappeared has decreased since 2010, when services transitioned from a largely Dublin-based hostel system to a national fostering service (see “support services” under section 3 for more details).<sup>35</sup> In the UK the foster care system recently faced corruption charges and suffers from a lack of effective oversight. In addition to documented cases of children missing from the system, several high-profile sex trafficking and sexual abuse cases involving foster care children have occurred.<sup>36</sup> Confirming this finding, a study by the University of Bedfordshire into child sexual exploitation showed that over half of all young people using support services on one day in 2011 were known to have gone missing, 22% were in care.<sup>37</sup> In the Netherlands, incidents of sexual abuse at two day-care centres in Amsterdam – which also involved the production of abusive images – revealed the Dutch government’s failure to protect children from sexual exploitation in such institutions.<sup>38</sup> In several Eastern European countries (e.g. Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Poland) children living in state-run institutions have been identified

as being particularly vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation (CSE), especially trafficking and prostitution.<sup>39</sup>

A study recently conducted by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) reveals that the sexual abuse and exploitation of children occurs within a wide range of institutions, including care homes, schools, churches, sports clubs, youth groups and charities. Based on interviews with practitioners and analysis of relevant literature and case studies collected in England and Wales, the report found that children in institutional settings are not only at risk from abusers but also from adults who fail to notice abuse or, if they do, fail to report it. In many of the case studies, offenders were found to groom victims by offering rewards or privilege. The report pointed out that in some cases, loyalty to the institution and protecting its reputation took precedence over reporting concerns or abuse.<sup>40</sup>

## Weakening of families

Children are particularly at risk of being exploited when families are unable to fulfil their protective role because of the absence of one or both parents, lack of parenting skills or insufficient resources. Recent studies have highlighted numerous factors affecting families’ ability to care for their children. With the economic crisis, parents have been forced to spend longer hours at work, leaving children unattended. Beyond economic circumstances, a UNICEF study found that children in Eastern Europe and Central Asia are increasingly being separated from their parents, indicating greater vulnerability of families. The study underlines that the vast array of causes – including poverty, single parenthood, migration, deprivation of parental rights, and disability of the child – actually reflect a lack of access to social services in support of parenting, including day-care or educational facilities.<sup>41</sup>

## Gender inequality

Europe has made significant efforts to address gender disparity. According to the 2012 World Economic Forum report, Europe is second only to North America on the overall Global Gender Gap Index. The region ranked third for health and survival and educational attainment and second for economic participation and opportunity.<sup>42</sup> EU-wide, gender gaps decreased in several domains in the last five years. However, a 2013 European Commission report suggests that this decline was less the consequence of improvements in the situation of women, than of a rapid deterioration of the situation of men, particularly during the early years of the crisis. Although recent trends in education and equal pay policy have helped reduce the gender pay gap, on average women in the EU continue to earn around 16% less than men. In addition to direct discrimination, women face sector and occupation segregation, undervaluation of their work and unequal sharing of caring responsibilities. Not unexpectedly, in almost all EU countries women face a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion; particularly female migrants from non-EU countries. Gender-based violence is another serious obstacle to gender equality in Europe,<sup>43</sup> as proved by the disproportionate number of women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation within the region.

## Consumerism, misuse of ICTs and evolving social norms

Consumerism is increasingly playing a role in the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Europe. Influenced by peer pressure as well as by the need to belong and conform to the value that society places on expensive, brand-name products and luxury goods and services (reinforced through advertising and other media), some children and adolescents may be persuaded to exchange sexual services for money or status products. The growth in the use of the Internet and new technologies has further intensified the risk of engaging in this behaviour online. In 2008 about 75% of children in the EU were using the Internet (a 5% increase since 2005),<sup>44</sup> and in 2011, 31% were reported to go online through a mobile phone.<sup>45</sup> While bringing many benefits and opening up unprecedented opportunities, the expansion in information and communication technologies (ICTs) has had an impact on children's social norms. The exposure of children to child pornography inspires and influences their sexual practices and affects their behaviour. Prevailing standards and peer pressure have led adolescents to share sexualised images of themselves, making them vulnerable to abuse and potentially redefining some of the social limits of acceptability of child pornography<sup>46</sup> (see next section for a broader discussion).



## **SECTION 2. CSEC MANIFESTATIONS AND EMERGING TRENDS IN EUROPE**

Whilst efforts to improve knowledge about the nature and scope of CSEC in Europe have increased in recent years, drawing a clear and detailed picture of this violation of children's rights remains challenging. Existing research and evidence suggest that despite changes in patterns, characteristics and dynamics, the region continues to be affected by all manifestations of CSEC, with some forms remaining more prevalent in Western Europe (e.g., sexual exploitation through ICTs) and others being more common in Eastern Europe (e.g., prostitution of children). The true scope of this criminal practice remains unknown, although there is evidence that it may be intensifying and becoming more complex, a reflection of the growing sophistication of the criminal networks involved. In addition to increasing links and interconnections between different forms of CSEC, emerging developments and issues of concern requiring specific attention include: the still largely invisible practice of prostitution of boys; the problem of children exploiting other children; increasing use of the Internet for trafficking of children; the phenomenon of adolescents providing sexual services independently, in exchange for consumer goods, including in the online environment; and the connected risks of abuse and self-victimisation experienced by children who use new ICTs (such as "sexting" and "grooming").

## Prostitution of children

Data and available literature on prostituted children in Europe are still scarce, and continue to refer mainly to prostitution as an end-result of human trafficking. Whilst information on the prevalence and latest trends across the region is lacking, there are some indications that prostitution of children and adolescents may be growing in some European countries. In Spain, an increase in this form of sexual exploitation has been observed since the beginning of the economic recession.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, a 150% rise in prostitution has been reported in crisis-stricken Greece, in conjunction with growing youth unemployment.<sup>48</sup>

Current knowledge suggests that prostitution of children takes place in a variety of settings and locations, although it appears to have become more hidden than in the past. In the Czech Republic, for example, major cities such as Prague, Brno and Plzen have adopted by-laws prohibiting prostitution in public places, causing an apparent shift of child prostitution from the street to private clubs and brothels.<sup>49</sup> In Italy, "indoor" prostitution involving children was reported to be on the rise to reduce visibility and detection, as well as to limit risks for exploiters.<sup>50</sup>

*Some groups of children are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation through prostitution. In Romania and Albania, for instance, a high proportion are Roma children and homeless children living on the streets; in Poland victims are mainly unaccompanied foreign minors and children living in residential care institutions. In Austria and Estonia children providing sex services include those abusing or addicted to drugs, while in Germany many child victims have experienced sexual abuse or other forms of violence in the family.<sup>51</sup>*

Although generalisation is not possible, several studies indicate that a consistent number of children engaged in prostitution (often the majority) are victims of domestic and/or cross-border trafficking, especially in Western Europe. Regrettably, prevention measures rarely target particularly at-risk populations, and thus fail to address specific root-causes.

Whilst children are frequently pushed into commercial sex for survival, research in a number of countries – mainly in Western Europe (e.g., Austria, Italy, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden) – has revealed that more and more teenagers are exchanging sexual services to purchase coveted goods or simply earn extra pocket money, often using the Internet or mobile phones to contact "customers" for subsequent online and offline encounters.

***This form of generally sporadic “independent prostitution” needs to be understood in the context of a complex set of push factors, including consumerism, early sexualisation of children in the media, inequality in power relations, etc.***

Public opinion tends to blame the children engaging in this behaviour, based on the incorrect assumption that they ‘choose’ to prostitute themselves. This misunderstanding is reinforced by the fact that the adolescents involved in this practice usually do not see themselves as victims, instead feeling that they are ‘voluntarily’ providing sex services in exchange for remuneration. As a result the role of the perpetrator, who takes advantage of their vulnerabilities during an important developmental stage, is typically ignored. This misperception is further aggravated by the fact in some European countries existing legislation fails to adequately protect children in prostitution after the age of sexual consent (see section on “Legal Context” below).

***Prostitution of children involves mostly teenage girls between 14 and 17 years old, but the involvement of boys in paid sex has been reported in several countries in the region.***<sup>52</sup>

A 2007 study of adolescent sexuality in the Baltic Sea States, for example, found that in Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Sweden, more boys than girls were involved in selling sex.<sup>53</sup> The prostitution of boys may involve both migrant children and nationals and may occur independently or be controlled by exploiters. Research conducted in a major city in Southern Italy in 2010 found boys providing sex services in exchange for money, drugs and often a place to sleep, comprised mainly Romanians and Bulgarians, followed by males from Maghreb and some Italian youth. The study also highlighted an increase in the sexual exploitation of young Roma boys and pointed out that “customers” were people with different sexual orientations, including

heterosexual couples.<sup>54</sup> In the Netherlands, male prostitution was found to include under-aged boys and men who offer their services in (gay) bars and clubs, men who market their services through gay websites and those coerced to work as prostitutes.<sup>55</sup> Despite being recognised as a major concern, the prostitution of boys has not been thoroughly investigated and continues to go generally unnoticed and unaddressed, due *inter alia* to a lack of gender perspective in research and programmes, the stigma attached to homosexuality and a tendency not to see males as victims of prostitution, which often leads to their not seeking professional help when they need it.

In many countries in Europe, young people exploited in prostitution are still seen as committing criminal offences and behaving antisocially. When unaccompanied minors are involved, their status as illegal aliens may prevail over their age, with the result that they are not treated as potential victims (see sub-section on legal context below). Due to the absence of social and psychological support, children involved in prostitution are also in danger of falling back into prostitution or may even start exploiting other children.<sup>56</sup> The phenomenon of children involved as procurers in the sexual exploitation of other children has been observed in a number of countries, such as Austria, but still needs further study and analysis.

## **Trafficking of children for sexual exploitation**

Child trafficking occurs in nearly every European country, with significant differences across sub-regions and countries in perceptions of the phenomenon and in the quantity and quality of information available. Despite several studies conducted in recent years to shed light on trafficking in children, it remains extremely difficult to quantify the number of children affected, due to challenges

in identifying trafficked children, lack of reliable and standardised data-collection systems and the illegal nature of the trade.

The European Commission (EC) tried to address this data gap by conducting the first statistical analysis of trafficking in human beings in the EU and beyond. Based on information received from all 28 EU Member States (plus Iceland, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey), the data collected revealed an increase in human and child trafficking cases detected by authorities. According to the report, more than 23,600 people were victims of human trafficking in Europe between 2008 and 2010; the number of victims identified increased by 18% over the three-year period. Three-quarters of registered victims in EU member states in 2010 were trafficked for sexual exploitation, also an increase compared to 2008. Data show that women and girls are the main victims; female victims accounted for 79% (of whom 12% were girls under 18) and male victims for 21% (of whom 3% were boys under 18). The majority of member states reported that most victims come from within the EU (mainly Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Romania). The largest number of reported victims from non-EU countries were from China, Nigeria, Russia, Ukraine or Vietnam.<sup>57</sup> The EC findings appear to be consistent with data contained in the 2012 UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report on human trafficking, which found that the number of detected cases of child trafficking had increased somewhat in Europe and Central Asia over the past few years: from 17 to 19% in Western and Central Europe, and from 7 to 10% in Eastern Europe between 2007 and 2010.<sup>58</sup>

***In October 2014, the EC published its second statistical analysis of trafficking in human beings in the EU. The report lists more than 30,000 victims in the 28 EU countries between 2010 and 2012, of which 80% were female and 69% were trafficked for sexual exploitation.***

With regard to sexual exploitation, 95% of victims were females and over 1,000 were trafficked children. Also, 65% of registered victims were EU

citizens. More than 8,500 prosecutions and 3,700 convictions for trafficking in human beings were reported by member states over the three years, of which 70% involved males.<sup>59</sup>

The 2012 UNODC report confirmed that Western, Central and Eastern Europe have different profiles in terms of human trafficking flows. Almost all the victims trafficked to Eastern European countries are Eastern European nationals that are either trafficked domestically or from other countries within the sub-region of Eastern Europe. About 70% of the victims detected in Western and Central Europe are European, and 64% of them are trafficked from countries of Western and Central European countries. Owing to the limited geographical size of this sub-region, it is clear that the bulk of victims trafficked there, are from countries close to their destination. Although domestic trafficking in Western and Central Europe appears to be less prominent than in the other regions of the world, one out of four victims detected in the sub-region between 2007 and 2010 was a national of the country where he or she was exploited.<sup>60</sup>

In some European countries, child domestic trafficking for sexual purposes has been reported to be growing and to have become increasingly complex. In the UK, for example, a recent report by the children's charity Barnardo's warned that the trafficking of British children around UK cities for sexual exploitation is rising, with the average age of victims falling from 15 to about 13 over five years. Grooming methods have also become more sophisticated as abusers now use a range of technology – mobile phones, including texts and picture messages; Bluetooth technology; and the Internet – to control and abuse children. In most cases teens are being coerced into sending, or posing for, sexually explicit photos that are then used to blackmail them (see sub-section below on "child pornography" for more details on online grooming). Although children of all backgrounds are at risk, those targeted by offenders are often the most vulnerable, such as children in care or foster homes or from dysfunctional families. The report



identifies many different patterns of abuse, ranging from inappropriate relationships to organised networks of child trafficking. The “inappropriate relationship” usually involves an older abuser with control over a child. Known also as the “lover-boy” phenomenon, this method was first identified in the Netherlands and is now being detected and reported in other European countries, including Austria and Ireland. In the Netherlands, changes in how “lover-boys” operate have been noted recently, with an increasing use of blackmail and violence against the girls and some victims being used to recruit new girls (these girls are called “lover-girls”).<sup>61</sup>

In addition to the “lover-boy” method, child sex trafficking victims are usually recruited with false promises of free housing and well-paid jobs, usually through fake employment agencies. Traffickers involved in the recruitment phase are often of the same nationality or ethnic origin as the victims. However, according to Europol, the tendency for homogeneous groups to engage or work together with crime groups of a different nationality to realise their goals is increasing. Some trafficking groups are family- or clan-based with strong codes of conduct and allegiances and provide significant challenges for law enforcement to penetrate, such as Albanian-speaking organised criminal networks groups and ethnic Roma crime groups. Nigerian traffickers rely heavily on “contracts” with their victims, reinforced by a voodoo or Juju ritual involving threats if the “contract” is broken. Recent investigations also confirm that the proportion of female offenders involved in trafficking for sexual exploitation is increasing. Although normally involved in the recruitment process and likely to be former victims of trafficking, more and more examples of women controlling victims and organising the business operation have been cited. This modus operandi is especially relevant for Nigerian-sponsored trafficking, where the role of a ‘madame’ or female supervisor is integral.<sup>62</sup>

For organised trafficking groups, moving children across controlled borders is a straightforward activity. In many cases victims travel on genuine passports of unrelated adults. Where photographs of the children are included in the passport, due to the resemblance that young children have to each other, many unrelated children are not identified. Within the Schengen Travel Area, where routine and systematic border control no longer exists, it is almost impossible to identify a trafficked person, child or otherwise, in transit.

***Due to the ease with which minors can be moved across the EU, they are often sent from one country to another to exploit weaknesses in the systems or laws of other countries. If a child comes to the notice of competent authorities, he or she will be immediately relocated and used in a new country or city to continue the revenue-making exercise and reduce the risk to the traffickers.***

In the case of children trafficked for sexual exploitation, the active rotation of girls forced into prostitution aims not only to maximise profit by supplying new ‘faces’ to “clients” and exploring new markets, but also at preventing victims from establishing relationships and avoiding detection by law enforcement.<sup>63</sup>

A new development in the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation was noted by Europol, involving a shift from traditional urban red-light districts to semi-urban and rural areas. The use of private accommodations for purchased sex activities makes it more difficult for law enforcement to detect trafficking-related offences. Another trend that deserves attention is the increasing use of the Internet, both for recruitment of victims and advertising their services. Meetings with “sex buyers” are now organised through dedicated websites and victims are rapidly rotated, remaining in the same city for no more than one or two days. The perceived anonymity and mass audience of

online services increases both the discretion and profitability of these services; it is anticipated that the number of women and girls sexually exploited in less visible, online environments will continue to rise.<sup>64</sup>

Research published in 2009 by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights exposed several challenges in the fight against child trafficking, including: rare convictions of traffickers, legislation not fully harmonised with international legal standards and inadequate protection and care for victims (e.g. difficulties in identifying victims, absence of formalised policy on non-punishment of victims for crimes committed as a result of trafficking, lack of guidelines for age assessment, lack of specialised shelters, etc.).<sup>65</sup>

## Child abuse materials and sexual exploitation of children online

In conjunction with expanded use of Internet and new information and communication technologies, the European region as a whole is facing an increasing problem of online sexual exploitation of children accompanied by growth in the production, distribution and viewing/possession of child abuse materials. Knowledge and awareness of the risks faced by children in their online interactions seems to have improved recently, in part due to a proliferation of studies on this specific topic.

***Over the last 10 years European and worldwide law enforcement operations succeeded in identifying thousands of individuals suspected of committing sexual offences against children.***

The number of offenders identified has grown every year, confirming the development of both this criminal phenomenon and improved counteraction techniques. International law enforcement agencies find that perpetrators committing child pornography offences globally are mainly from Western European countries. According to data collected by Interpol

between 2001 and 2009 (through a specialised database), the major European countries of origin of perpetrators tied to child abuse images were from France, Germany, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom.<sup>66</sup>

The growing incidence of online sexual exploitation of children has been reported by several agencies across Europe. In the UK, for example, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP), the country's leading child protection agency, published its annual review in June 2013. It revealed that a record number of children were safeguarded from sexual abusers in 2012/2013: CEOP protected a total of 790 children, an increase of 85 per cent over the previous year and the highest yearly figure since the Centre was launched in 2006.<sup>67</sup> CEOP also identified new trends and developments in online child sexual exploitation, including an increase in the number of female offenders. Among the greatest risks exposed by CEOP's report is the growth in live streaming of sexual abuse, particularly from the developing world. Furthermore, CEOP has noted a shift from distributing images on the open Internet to the so-called "hidden Internet" (that is, areas not accessible by available search engines, as well as password-protected sites and black markets masked by routing software), pointing to a rise in indecent image-sharing through secret or encrypted networks.<sup>68</sup>

Another disturbing trend exposed by Europol and other law enforcement agencies is a slight increase since 2010 in the offering of pay-per-view websites by worldwide criminal networks, permitting commercial distribution of child abuse material on the Internet through the use of several, in some cases unconventional, payment systems such as money remitters and electronic money.<sup>69</sup>

Understanding of the risks that children and adolescents encounter in cyberspace has evolved in the region thanks to new studies conducted in the framework of the Safer Internet programme (see sub-sections on "Coordination and Cooperation" and "Prevention" for more details). Among the most



important are those undertaken by the EU Kids Online network, involving thousands of children and adolescents all over Europe. Their report on “Risks and safety on the Internet” released in 2011 investigated key online risks, including those of a sexual nature, exposing the following findings: (a) 14% of 9-16 year olds surveyed reported to have seen pornography; (b) some were involved in “sexting”; 15% received peer-to-peer “sexual messages or images ...[meaning] talk about having sex or images of people naked or having sex,” and 3% said they had sent or posted such messages; (c) 30% communicated with someone they had never met face-to-face, while 9% of children met an online contact offline. The Czech Republic, Estonia, Lithuania and Sweden were found to be the countries where children were most at risk online, while Italy, Portugal and Turkey had the lowest risk. The report pointed out that risky behaviours increase with the age of the victims, but also highlighted that risks may not lead to harm. The study recommended targeting spending and advice at younger age groups to reduce risk.<sup>70</sup>

### Gendered sexual pressures and “sexting”: Exemplary research

A recent small-scale study commissioned by the UK-based charity National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) provides significant insight into the phenomenon of “sexting”. Based on focus group interviews with 35 young people between 12 and 15 years of age, the research findings suggest that gender constructions and sexist gender relations have a major influence on children engaging in this behaviour.

Along with confirming that peer pressure is one of the push factors behind sexting, the study highlights that this practice is often coercive and is not gender-neutral, as girls are more adversely affected than boys. The phenomenon appears to be “shaped by the gender dynamics of the peer group in which, primarily, boys harass girls, and

it is exacerbated by the gendered norms of culture, family and school that fail to recognise the problem or to support girls. ... considerable evidence [was found] of an age-old double standard, by which sexually active boys are to be admired and ‘rated’, while sexually active girls are denigrated and despised as ‘sluts’. This creates gender-specific risks where girls are unable to openly speak about sexual activities and practices while boys are at risk of peer exclusion if they do not brag about sexual experiences.”

Sexting was also found to be associated with wider sexual pressures on children (e.g., expectations related to viewing porn or personal appearance, such as being very thin, having large breasts, etc.) and was identified as a culturally specific phenomenon. The study stressed that children and young people may be pressured to perform particular idealised forms of femininities and masculinities that are culturally, class and ‘race’ specific. In this framework, sexting practices are found to be linked to a commercial culture that emphasises the “need” to possess the “right” types of commodities and status symbols. But sexist gender relations also play a role. “Sexting for girls can involve being subject to oppressive, racialised beauty norms and hierarchies around feminine appearance and body ideals. Boys must negotiate competitive masculinity, where status can be generated in new ways via technology (such as soliciting, collecting and distributing peer-produced sexualised images of girls’ bodies, which operate as a form of commodity or currency).”<sup>71</sup>

A risk that children and adolescents often face is online grooming for the purpose of online and (less frequently) offline sexual exploitation. This tactic has been increasingly reported in several countries in Europe and is now receiving more attention by researchers. A recent study conducted by CEOP in collaboration with the University of Birmingham found that a combination of factors is leading to some children being particularly at risk for online grooming, including vulnerabilities such as: personal issues (low self-esteem, confusion about their

sexuality and loneliness); social isolation (perhaps due to problems/dissatisfaction at school with limited support from their peer group or family); and lack of parental monitoring or involvement in online activities, especially if coupled with family problems. Children who are groomed into performing sexual activity online can feel ashamed that they lost control, desperate or even suicidal.<sup>72</sup>

### Understanding the behaviours of online groomers

A recent study conducted as part of the “European Online Grooming Project”, funded by the European Commission’s Safer Internet Plus Programme, sheds light on the dynamics of sexual offending by online groomers. Based on interviews with convicted online offenders in Belgium, Italy, Norway and the UK, the research identified at least three distinct types of groomers: ‘Distorted Attachment’; ‘Adaptable Offender’; and ‘Hyper-Sexual’.

Distorted Attachment relates to a groomer who believes he is in a romantic and consenting relationship with the young person he is grooming. Unlike what most people think about groomers, this particular offender reveals his identity to the victim and uses no indecent images of children. He spends a great deal of time becoming friendly with his victim before they meet face to face.

An Adaptable Offender uses many identities online, adapting his grooming style to suit his purposes. This offender may or may not use indecent images, but he will view the person he is grooming as being sexually mature. It is not always his objective to meet the young person in real life.

Hyper-Sexual offenders focus on securing and sharing extensive numbers of indecent images of children. This offender will be part of an online network of sexual offenders, but who has very little, if no, interest at all in meeting his victim in person. According to the research, this type of groomer will likely use various identities or a sexually explicit profile

name and photo to make fast contact with a young person. According to the research, this type of groomer will likely use various identities or a sexually explicit profile name and photo to make fast contact with a young person.

The study concludes that a vital strategy to prevent online grooming should involve tackling the disinhibition effect of the online environment on groomers and young people, educating teens about what constitutes appropriate behaviour online.<sup>73</sup>

## The sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism<sup>74</sup>

Many EU countries serve both as countries of origin and destination for the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism. While some elements and characteristics of the phenomenon appear to be recurring, new trends and routes have recently emerged. As in the past, the tourist-sending countries are mainly in Western Europe; notorious child sex tourism destinations for these travelling offenders remain countries in South and South-East Asia; East, West and North Africa; and Latin America.

The opening of new routes between Eastern and Western European countries and growth of the travel and tourism industries have led to an increase of child sex tourism within Europe. The emergence of low-cost airlines, in particular, allows Western tourists to easily travel to Eastern Europe for sexual contact with children. These can be in nearby or neighbouring countries (as in travel by Finns to Estonia), or further away, such as travel by Norwegian nationals to Bulgaria, Moldova and Ukraine. The Black Sea region appears to be attracting a growing number of child sex tourists, including from Turkey.

Another trend, specifically concerning British travelling sex offenders, was recently highlighted

in a CEOP report released in June 2013. The report found that less than one-third of cases of child sexual abuse by Britons committed abroad took place in the developing world. Instead, the majority of cases (68%) occurred in countries with advanced economies in Northern and Western Europe, North America and Australasia, where socio-economic and cultural factors do not as obviously create a favourable environment for offending.<sup>75</sup> This surprising data demands further analysis and understanding.

***Evidence collated in favoured countries of destination for European travelling sex offenders shows that in addition to targeting children working on the streets or in informal business establishments, perpetrators sometimes gain unsupervised access to vulnerable children by working in schools or orphanages.***

So called “voluntourism” or “orphanage tourism”, where travellers are allowed to visit and interact with children in institutional care, can leave children vulnerable to exploitation. So too can various forms of “home-stays”, where unknown adults accommodated in local homes frequently have unsupervised contact with local children.<sup>76</sup> According to information collected by APLE (a Cambodian non-governmental organisation dedicated to combating the sexual abuse and exploitation of children), access to children through institutions such as schools, orphanages, shelters and churches increased between 2013 and 2014 – particularly due to the absence of child protection measures at these venues.<sup>77</sup>

As in other regions of the world, sexual abuse and exploitation of children in travel and tourism committed by European citizens has been greatly facilitated by the Internet and new technologies. In Ukraine, for example, research conducted by La Strada Ukraine revealed that the main source of information for sex tourists was websites of sex tourist agencies that specifically cater to foreign “clients”. Online sex tourism forums have also

been identified, where offenders can get more “personalised” advice from experienced sex tourists and expatriates, including on locations where children are available. In Moldova, child sex-tourists were also found to use Internet chat rooms to contact children and get acquainted with them before their travel to the country. The involvement of travelling sex offenders in the production and distribution of abuse materials depicting children exploited at destination also continues to be reported, as reflected in several investigations and convictions of child sex tourists for child pornography-related offences.

## **Early marriage<sup>78</sup>**

Early, or forced, marriage is a minor concern in Europe. It can be encountered in Turkey and among some Roma communities, mostly in Eastern Europe (e.g. Albania, Bulgaria, etc.).

In Turkey, while the median age at marriage is rising, early marriage persists for large segments of the population. More than 14% of young women aged 20–24 were married before reaching the age of 18 and 51 births per 1,000 involved girls aged 15–19, according to UNFPA’s 2011 *State of World Population* report. It affects all girls in varying degrees, both in rural and urban settings, irrespective of family wealth. Although the law prohibits children from marrying, families have sufficient leeway to give their adolescent daughters in marriage, owing to inadequate birth registration procedures and the fact that many rural communities consider an *imam nikah* (religious ceremony) to be sufficient to formalise a union. As a result, many marriages remain officially unregistered and essentially invisible to the state. A major challenge in addressing the issue lies in the widespread view that once a girl starts menstruating she should marry soon to prevent her from being seduced and ‘disgracing’ her family; also, the dowry is seen as a compensation for the loss of the girl to another family. Married girls are no longer perceived as children, and thus

unlikely to enjoy any special protections. At a very young age (sometimes as early as 13) they are subjected to mature sexual activity and some are severely abused, both physically and emotionally, by their husbands, who freely exercise authority over these unprotected young females. In order to escape abusive situations, girls sometimes flee their marital homes, becoming vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation.

Forced marriage was recently identified as a potential issue of concern in nations that are experiencing immigration from countries with cultural norms that require children to become “adults” at an early age. This phenomenon is frequently associated with

trafficking. In Austria, results from a parliamentary inquiry to the Ministry for Women’s Affairs indicate that cases of forced marriage do not just occur occasionally. In 2008, the Vienna-based organisation ‘Orient Express’ carried out counselling services for 426 victims seeking help, in person or via telephone. Victims of forced marriage are mostly young girls who are second or third generation Austrian citizens, and are being forced to marry men in their family’s home country. A study published by ECPAT UK in 2009 documented 48 cases of children who were trafficked in and out of the UK for forced marriage, including cases where there were strong suspicions of an impending forced marriage involving the potential sexual exploitation of the child.



## **SECTION 3. ADDRESSING CSEC IN THE EUROPEAN REGION: PROGRESS, GAPS AND CHALLENGES**

The Overview presented above confirms that children in Europe face a number of challenges in realising and enjoying their right to protection from sexual exploitation. Government initiatives for children, as well as those of NGOs and other stakeholders, reflect and tackle these concerns. At the country level, many specialised programmes and interventions have been developed to target specific groups of children and address different types of violations. However, in line with a global trend, it is increasingly recognised in the region that while actions focused on a single issue can effectively serve a specific cohort of children, they may lead to gaps in prevention and protection for other categories of children.<sup>79</sup> It has also become evident that although children face distinct problems and forms of violence, their vulnerability is heightened by the persistence of similar and common loopholes in child protection mechanisms.

***The inter-dependence and inter-connectivity of rights and the need to integrate such rights into broader agendas have been acknowledged in policy and programme development. This has led to a growing focus on the need to adopt a systems approach to child protection, which entails integrated, inter-disciplinary and multi-dimensional interventions involving all relevant stakeholders.***

## NATIONAL PLANS OF ACTION<sup>80</sup>

The shift toward a systemic approach to child protection is reflected in the decreasing number of countries that are addressing CSEC through specific NPAs and/or policies. In some countries where such plans existed in the past (for example, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Romania)<sup>81</sup>, they have not been renewed, and measures to counteract CSEC have been integrated into national plans of action for children or strategies to counteract violence against children. In Germany, Spain and the UK efforts were spearheaded to update existing NPAs against CSEC, while in Luxembourg and Sweden updating has not yet taken place. The policy shift registered in recent

years has resulted in limited attention devoted to CSEC. In the Czech Republic, for example, the *National Plan for Combating Violence against Children* does not focus in detail on CSEC and entirely neglects the issue of child pornography. The same applies to the *National Strategy for Child Protection 2008-2018* adopted by Bulgaria, which targets child victims of violence generally, without specifically addressing CSEC manifestations or victims. With few exceptions (such as Italy and Luxembourg), most countries reviewed have developed NPAs against trafficking in human beings that usually contain only limited reference or actions specific to tackling trafficking in children for sexual purposes.

### *Areas of concern:*

Many countries have successfully fostered collaborative efforts among key stakeholders and ensured that resources are allocated to implementing NPAs.

***More often than not, effective NPA implementation was hampered by: (a) inadequate allocation of financial and human resources; (b) existence of multiple sectoral action plans with insufficient coordination among actors, leading to duplication and failure to make optimal use of resources; and (c) shortage, or absence, of monitoring and assessment mechanisms to measure the impact of actions undertaken.***

### *Priority areas and potential strategies:*

Priority area: *Adoption/Revision/Implementation of National Plans that mainstream CSEC*

The gaps identified in the current policy framework to address CSEC show that ECPAT groups in the region should continue to directly or indirectly engage to support the development and implementation of NPAs through their local activities and programmes and monitor follow-up to ensure that implementation is integral to the national agenda. It is essential that the holistic systems approach to child protection that many governments are



adopting does not divert the focus from CSEC or lead to reconsideration of its priority that would cause delays in implementation or cancellation of previously agreed commitments.

*Potential strategies:*

- Lobbying for NPAs is one of the key advocacy strategies adopted by ECPAT over the years to enhance child protection from sexual exploitation. Considering that CSEC has evolved and that NPAs dealing with this specific violation reflect differing approaches to child protection issues, ECPAT's International Secretariat should consider developing an advocacy strategy for the network detailing, *inter alia*, concrete actions that groups may promote at national and regional levels to ensure that CSEC is integrated and mainstreamed into existing NPAs, highlighting the comprehensive elements and components that an effective policy framework must capture to ensure an appropriate response to this children's rights violation.
- Based on this strategy, and using information contained in the ECPAT country monitoring reports on CSEC as a starting point, ECPAT International's Secretariat, in collaboration with ECPAT groups, might consider conducting an in-depth study on NPAs on children and young people in countries in the region to assess their comprehensiveness in relation to CSEC. Due attention should be paid to the position of key regional players, including regional institutions and initiatives (EU, Council of Europe, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, etc.), ministries, UNICEF, the International Labor Organisation (ILO) and other UN agencies and NGOs, in relation to the types of NPAs they support (e.g., NPA on human trafficking, NPA on children's issues, NPA on worst forms of child labour, etc.) and the rationale for their position. Based on the findings, ECPAT could formulate its advocacy message and strategy on NPAs in the region, identifying potential partners and various steps to be taken to promote the adoption, revision and implementation of National Plans that mainstream CSEC.

## COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

*Coordination and cooperation are crucial for an efficient and effective fight against CSEC. In accordance with the Stockholm Declaration, close interaction and cooperation between government and non-government sectors is necessary to effectively plan, implement and evaluate measures to combat CSEC. At an international level, effective cooperation is required between countries and international organisations, including regional organisations, to ensure that a concerted, coordinated approach is taken to eliminate CSEC.*

### Coordination and cooperation at national and local level

*The importance of ensuring concerted responses to CSEC at national and local levels has been increasingly recognised by governments in Europe. A number of partnerships among state actors, law enforcement authorities, NGOs, children and young people, community-based organisations and the private sector have been established in recent years.*

The main developments in this area include:

- Initiatives (working groups, task forces, committees, roundtables, etc.) to enhance coordination and cooperation against human trafficking, including child sex trafficking, have proliferated, but other manifestations of CSEC (child sexual exploitation through ICT or in travel and tourism) have received less attention, especially in Central and Eastern European countries.
- Initial progress in enhancing coordination of assistance to child victims was reported in several countries. In Albania, for example, child protection units were established around the country in response to child trafficking and other

forms of child abuse, exploitation and neglect. National referral mechanisms for adults and children affected by human trafficking were set up, *inter alia*, in Bulgaria, Netherlands, Romania and the UK, while countries such as Belgium and Estonia adopted inter-agency guidelines to facilitate the identification of victims and delivery of comprehensive, integrated support services.

- Private sector involvement in actions to address CSEC has generally increased. The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children in Travel and Tourism (The Code) was adopted by tourism industries in a growing number of countries (for example, in Albania and more recently in Poland) and the number of signatories has expanded as have efforts to ensure implementation (especially in Austria, Germany, Netherlands, Spain and Sweden). To tackle the sexual exploitation of children through ICTs, the online industry – including internet service providers (ISPs), mobile operators, content providers, hosting providers, filtering companies, search providers, trade associations and the financial sector – has taken steps such as the creation of/or contributions to reporting hotlines and blocking systems, adoption of codes of conduct, developing filters etc. (see sub-section on “Prevention”). In Sweden, a successful partnership with the financial sector led to the establishment of a financial coalition against child pornography that enables the blocking of online payments for child abuse materials. Again, despite the fact that child sexual victimisation online affects all countries in the region, most of these actions were taken in Western Europe.

#### *Areas of concern:*

Notwithstanding these positive developments, a number of areas still require further action and could potentially be targeted by ECPAT groups in the region through their national advocacy work. Although each country has identified distinct challenges to be addressed, some of the recurring loopholes include:

- Coordination is still limited, especially between local administrations and central government agencies and between state agencies and other actors (especially NGOs), including in the referral and assistance of child victims.
- In some countries (such as the Czech Republic and UK), several branches of the government are working separately on the same issues. This type of replication leads to institutional overlap and administrative confusion.
- Whilst some countries have very good collaboration experiences among NGOs and with governments, in others it is very limited, especially where there is no tradition of partnership between civil society and governmental authorities. Furthermore, meaningful involvement of children and young people in coordinating mechanisms or the design and implementation of programmes to address CSEC remains rare. *Financial resources* needed to ensure the functioning of existing coordinating mechanisms are often insufficient or not sustained over time.
- There is a general lack of data collection systems on CSEC, which impedes the development of tailored, well-designed measures and severely hampers the evaluation of programmes and projects.

### **Regional coordination, initiatives and forums**

The European region counts on powerful regional forums such as the European Union and the Council of Europe, which contribute intensively to the promotion of children’s rights and protection against sexual exploitation and abuse.

The **EU** has shown determination and political will to reinforce cooperation for children’s protection through various programmes, strategies and initiatives. Within law enforcement, a number of agencies and joint mechanisms are actively contributing to the fight against CSEC. One example



is the Comprehensive Operational Strategic Planning for the Police 'Internet-Related Child Abusive Material Project' network (known as CIRCAMP), established in 12 EU countries by the European Police Chiefs Task Force with the aim of improving coordination among EU-member law enforcement agencies to combat child sexual exploitation online. Europol also plays a key role in counteracting CSEC. In addition to supporting regional efforts to prevent and eradicate criminal networks tied to human trafficking and to the production, sale and distribution of child abuse images, Europol launched Project HAVEN (Halting Europeans Abusing Victims in Every Nation), which targets travelling sex offenders originating from the EU who exploit children both within and outside Europe. The project focuses on coordination of international operations conducted by EU law enforcement authorities. At the judicial level, Eurojust, the EU Judicial Cooperation Unit established in 2007, deals with transnational crimes, which can include cases of missing children, child sexual abuse, child trafficking and child abuse on the Internet. Eurojust facilitates the exchange of information among EU member states on good practices and experiences and plays a leading role in coordinating information and investigations.

The EU has placed significant priority on the fight against human trafficking. Besides the 'Group of Experts on Trafficking in Human Beings', formed in 2003 to assist the Commission in the preparation of legislation and in policy definition,<sup>82</sup> an **EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator** was appointed in 2011 to improve coordination and coherence among EU institutions, EU agencies, member states and international actors, and to develop existing and new EU policies to address trafficking in human beings. The EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator also monitors the implementation of the new and integrated 'EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings (2012-2016)' (see sub-section below on legal context).<sup>83</sup> A new EU anti-trafficking policy website was created, providing a one-stop-shop for practitioners and the public interested in the problem of trafficking (<http://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/index.action>).

*In an effort to ensure and support civil society participation in anti-trafficking efforts, the EU Civil Society Platform against trafficking in human beings was launched in May 2013. Comprising over 100 European civil society organisations with diverse mandates, the Platform serves as a forum for civil society to engage region-wide and exchange experiences to enhance coordination and cooperation amongst key actors.<sup>84</sup>*

Currently only six member organisations have a specific child rights focus, one of which is ECPAT, represented by three groups (ECPAT Belgium - which also represents ECPAT International, Nobody's Children Foundation Poland and ECPAT Bulgaria).<sup>85</sup> The formation of a working group within the Platform to work only on child trafficking issues is under consideration.

The EU provides **funds to support regional programmes to counteract trafficking and CSEC**. The *DAPHNE Programme* supports organisations that develop measures and actions to prevent or combat all types of violence against children, young people and women and to protect victims and groups at risk.<sup>86</sup> The *Prevention of and Fight against Crime* programme is intended to increase operational cooperation, including in relation to human trafficking and child abuse. Other examples of EU-funded programmes against human trafficking include, *inter alia*: the *European Return Fund*, which seeks to improve return management and encourage the development of cooperation between EU countries and countries of return;<sup>87</sup> the *Thematic Programme Migration and Asylum*, which includes actions against trafficking in human beings among its priorities;<sup>88</sup> and the *European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights*, which supports the promotion of democracy and human rights, particularly in non-EU countries.

In relation to child pornography, since 1999 the EU has supported the *Safer Internet Programme* (SIP) aiming to protect children and others from the dangers of new online technologies and to fight

against illegal and unwanted content. SIP brings together “stakeholders who can contribute to make the Internet safer: it funds, in particular, a network of NGOs active in the field of child welfare online, a network of law enforcement bodies who exchange information and best practices related to criminal exploitation of the Internet in dissemination of child sexual abuse material and a network of researchers who gather information about uses, risks and consequences of online technologies for children’s lives.”<sup>89</sup> In May 2012, the EU Commission adopted the *Communication for a Strategy for a Better Internet for Children*, which re-defines the priorities and objectives of the Union for Child Online Safety as stated by SIP. In the EU’s Multi-Financial Framework 2014-2020, the new Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) should provide the funds needed to implement the above-mentioned Strategy. Regrettably, it appears that the new CEF programme, focused mainly on infrastructure and digital market, will be allotted only a 1 billion euro budget and does not consider online safety for children as a priority, thus putting all the activities developed under the SIP at risk.<sup>90</sup> It is important to note that ECPAT groups in the region have already used these and other EU funding opportunities to implement joint projects against different manifestations of CSEC. “The Offenders Beware!” project, the “MAKE-IT-SAFE Peer-Experts” project, the “Don’t look away!” campaign and the “Parliamentarians against Human Trafficking” project coordinated by ECPAT UK are only some of the initiatives conducted by members in Europe.

Several steps taken at the regional/EU level have fostered increasing involvement by the private sector in the fight against CSEC, especially in relation to online sexual exploitation of children. In addition to the Safer Internet Programme and promoting the creation of the “Better Internet for Kids Coalition (involving leading digital, media and tech companies,<sup>91</sup>)...

***...another valuable EU initiative is the European Financial Coalition against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Online, established in***

***March 2009, bringing together major financial, Internet and technology corporations, law enforcement agencies and specialist child protection NGOs from EU countries to combat commercial profits made from child abuse material online.***

In November 2012 the coalition was re-launched through a three-year project that is expected to: provide support to international law enforcement investigations, study commercial child sexual exploitation on the Internet and empower law enforcement and private companies in counteracting the problem.<sup>92</sup> ECPAT Sweden is already a member of the coalition; the ECPAT Secretariat has asked to join and is awaiting approval for admission.

The **Council of Europe** also plays a major role in promoting and monitoring children’s rights in the region. A political institution, the CoE is broader than the EU, with 46 members including some CIS states such as Moldova, Russia and Ukraine. The CoE has devoted significant attention to the issue of CSEC in recent years. In addition to adopting a number of conventions and other non-legally binding instruments focusing on this violation (for a detailed analysis see sub-section on “Legal Context”), it has promoted a number of related initiatives. The Council of Europe’s programme “Building a Europe for and with children” launched in 2006 aims to eradicate all forms of violence against children. Based on a multi-stakeholder approach and focusing on the so called “four Ps” (protection of children, prevention of violence, prosecution of criminals and participation of children), the programme pays special attention to children particularly at risk (children with disabilities, living in poverty or being raised without parental care) and includes several axes of activities (from standard-setting, monitoring and policy development to cooperation and communication, education and training).<sup>93</sup> In line with the ‘CoE Strategy on the rights of the child for 2012-2015’, the programme currently pursues four strategic objectives: (1) promoting child-friendly services and systems; (2) eliminating all

forms of violence against children; (3) guaranteeing the rights of children in vulnerable situations; and (4) promoting child participation.<sup>94</sup>

As part of the “Building a Europe for and with children” programme, the CoE is implementing the **“ONE in FIVE” campaign** to stop all forms of sexual violence against children, including CSE. The campaign is intended to achieve further signatures, ratifications and implementation of the CoE *Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse* (also known as the Lanzarote Convention), and to inform and equip children, their families/carers and societies at large with the knowledge and tools to prevent and report sexual violence against children.<sup>95</sup> ECPAT is involved in the work of the Lanzarote Committee, and receives regular updates on the campaign’s progress, but has not actively engaged in the ONE-in-FIVE initiative. However, as signature, ratification and implementation of this CoE Convention is also an important objective of ECPAT’s work in the region, it would appear that failing to join this campaign may be a missed opportunity.

In April last year, an ‘Online Platform for Towns and Regions’ was set up to mobilise municipal and regional authorities for the ONE in FIVE campaign. Other associations and organisations can also sign the “Pact of Towns and Regions” (see <http://www.congress-pact1in5.eu/en/inscription.html>). Joining this platform allows signing organisations to create a page dedicated to their initiatives on a shared online platform, developed especially to facilitate exchanges of information and good practices, showcasing successful policies and initiatives, and ensuring Europe-wide promotion of local and regional authorities’ efforts to stop sexual violence against children. Organisations that join are required to contribute to the objectives of the Pact.

The **Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe** (OSCE) is yet another body that has taken up the issue of trafficking in human beings at the international level, devoting specific attention to trafficking in children. Consisting of 57 states from

Europe, Central Asia and North America, OSCE has adopted a number of political commitments against human trafficking, including the ‘*Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings*’ adopted in 2003 and its addendum on special needs of trafficked children adopted in 2005, and has also established an ‘Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings’, located in the Secretariat. In an effort to promote effective coordination and cooperation among key stakeholders, the Alliance against Trafficking in Persons was established, including numerous national, regional, international and intergovernmental authorities, as well as NGOs. The main modalities of co-operation within the Alliance involve organising, implementing and participating in events (e.g., expert level meetings, high-level conferences, and workshops) and co-ordination of a team of experts from leading international organisations, NGOs, academia and researchers, such as the Alliance’s ‘Expert Co-ordination Team’. Within the Alliance framework, the Special Representative convenes at least two meetings per year, one at the level of ministers and one for experts. ECPAT International participates in the Alliance by contributing its expertise on child sex trafficking to the Expert Co-ordination Team. According to information provided by ECPAT’s Regional Board Representatives, the OSCE is planning to develop a new strategy to fight human trafficking.

At the sub-regional level, the **Council of Baltic Sea States** (CBSS), comprising 12 member states, has been quite actively promoting collaboration against trafficking and CSEC in the Baltic Sea region, especially through its ‘Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk’ (EGCC), previously the Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk. The EGCC is comprised of senior officials from the ministries responsible for children’s issues in CBSS and European Commission member countries. It identifies, supports and implements cooperative efforts focused on children at risk, including those vulnerable or affected by sexual exploitation, among countries and organisations in the region.<sup>96</sup>

*One of the most innovative and significant initiatives recently implemented by the EGCC is the ROBERT project (“Risk-taking Online Behaviour Empowerment through Research and Training”). Involving Denmark, Estonia, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK and implemented between 2010 and 2012, it was intended to make online interaction safe for children and young people by empowering them through research and training.<sup>97</sup>*

ECPAT has established contacts and collaboration with the EGCC and ECPAT member Stelita International has also participated in the ROBERT project.

The **Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)** was officially launched in 2008 at the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the South-East European Cooperation Process in Sofia, Bulgaria as the successor of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. Through a regionally owned and led framework, the RCC focuses on promoting and enhancing regional cooperation in South East Europe and supports European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the aspiring countries. Comprising 46 countries, organisations and international financial institutions,<sup>98</sup> the RCC has made the fight against organised crime, including human trafficking, one of its regional priorities.<sup>99</sup> The RCC will coordinate its activities with civil society regional networks, which will be regularly consulted for experience-sharing and ensuring sustainability in targeted areas of interest.

#### *Areas of concern:*

- Despite the various programmes and strategies aimed at promoting a coordinated approach against CSEC, regional cooperation in terms of sharing of information, expertise and good practices is far from satisfactory, including among police and the judicial sector.
- A review of country monitoring reports suggests that whilst human trafficking, including child sex

trafficking, has attracted most of the cooperation efforts throughout the region, only Western European countries have prioritised the fight against online child sexual exploitation.

- Regional initiatives to address child sex tourism have remained sporadic across the region; the few actions undertaken in this area were mainly conducted by NGOs in Western Europe (such as ECPAT).
- With regard to human trafficking, including child trafficking, it is important to point out that although governments have signed a number of bilateral agreements for the prevention, detection, investigation, prosecution and punishment of such acts, emphasis has been placed primarily on law enforcement and judicial co-operation, stressing protection, security and prosecution (mainly to suppress and prevent migration flows). Prevention, identification, recovery, durable solutions in the best interest of children and safe repatriation of child victims have received little priority.

#### *Recommended priorities and potential strategies:*

##### **Priority Area:**

##### *Strengthening regional collaboration and partnerships*

The above analysis suggests several opportunities for ECPAT to significantly strengthen and expand action against CSEC through strategic collaborations and work with key institutions in the region. The various forums and programmes active across the region provide a channel for increasing ECPAT’s visibility in Europe and contributing to advancing anti-CSEC and child rights agendas.

##### **Strategies:**

- Establishing a regional team in Brussels with an experienced coordinator responsible for representing ECPAT with the EU, other European



institutions, international NGOs and other major players, and who will also support ECPAT groups in their lobbying and advocacy work at the regional and national levels and other areas identified in collaboration with the groups in Europe (e.g., improving communication within the network, information sharing, conducting training, etc.).

- Considering that the *EU Civil Society Platform against trafficking in human beings* facilitates the creation of partnerships and synergies on the issue of child trafficking and provides opportunities for better access to joint projects, the ECPAT network in Europe might consider enhancing its presence in this forum. In addition to improved networking with other organisations, this presence will also enable a constant and fruitful collaboration with the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator.
- In conducting its advocacy work with the EU, ECPAT should stress the responsibility of this institution for combating the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in travel and tourism, particularly in relation to actions that target European travelling sex offenders.<sup>100</sup>
- Further enhance ECPAT's capacity to access European funds and ensure that groups from Eastern Europe and the Balkans are more involved in regional programmes. In this connection, financial resources for projects on minority groups, such as Roma, are said to be available at EU level;<sup>101</sup> this clearly opens up opportunities for these groups to apply and engage.<sup>102</sup>
- Other ECPAT groups in Europe might consider joining the *European Financial Coalition against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Online* (according to information on the coalition's website, every organisation that has a part to play in the fight against the commercial sexual exploitation of children online can apply for membership).<sup>103</sup> This would ensure greater ECPAT visibility at this forum, while also facilitating access to training opportunities, participation in awareness-raising events and networking. ECPAT groups should also consider engaging more with

the financial sector in their own countries and try to establish national financial coalitions on the model of the Swedish Coalition, which to date remains unique.

- The ECPAT Secretariat and member groups might also consider being part of the Online Platform for Towns and Regions, as part of the CoE's ONE in FIVE campaign. (See <http://www.congress-pact1in5.eu/en/inscription.html>)
- As the OSCE is planning to develop a new strategy to fight human trafficking, ECPAT needs to use this momentum to ensure that more attention is placed on trafficking in children and develop closer cooperation with this regional institution.
- ECPAT should ensure that its partnership with the EGCC is sustained and further expanded, and that attention devoted to CSEC by this mechanism does not get diluted or replaced by other priorities. Furthermore, although the RCC does not appear to implement child-focused activities (and trafficking is mainly addressed from the perspective of illegal migration), ECPAT groups in the region (e.g., Albania and Bulgaria) might consider engaging with this forum. This would enhance ECPAT's strategic presence in the sub-region and provide an opportunity for mobilising interest and support on CSEC issues. The RCC Annual Meeting is open to other countries, international organisations and partners as guests, upon request.<sup>104</sup>

## PREVENTION

***The effective prevention of CSEC requires multi-faceted strategies and policies that simultaneously address different components of the problem. These strategies should target both vulnerable children and adults who engage in sexual activities with children, while also addressing root causes of CSEC such as poverty and lack of education. Long-term prevention strategies to improve the status of children most vulnerable to CSEC involve implementing policies to reduce poverty and***

*social inequality and improving access to education, health and social services. Effective short- to medium-term strategies include awareness-raising campaigns and education and training initiatives for the general public, vulnerable groups and government officials. The resources, expertise and influence of the private sector, particularly the tourism and IT industries, should also be dedicated to prevention activities, in particular awareness-raising. Finally, information, education and outreach programmes should be directed at those engaging in CSEC (e.g., “customers” of children forced into prostitution) to promote changes in social norms and behaviour and reduce the demand for child victims of commercial sexual exploitation.*

Providing a detailed analysis of prevention efforts in European countries is not within the scope of this Overview; however, an examination of ECPAT’s Country Monitoring Reports permits some conclusions to be drawn with respect to preventive efforts promoted in recent years in the region:

- Increasing attention has been paid to **promoting online safety for children and preventing their sexual exploitation through new ICTs**, especially through the EU-funded Safer Internet Programme. Thanks to this initiative, Safer Internet Centres are now present in 30 European countries all with an awareness centre, and most including a helpline and a hotline to report different forms of online abuse. INHOPE coordinates the network of hotlines.<sup>105</sup> Several European countries have also established systems to block access to child abuse materials (Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Malta, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK), most of which are coordinated under the CIRCAMP network, although they were mainly set up on the basis of a voluntary opt-in approach by individual ISPs, rather than by legislative mandate.<sup>106</sup> Mobile operators that are part of the GSMA (a global association representing the interests of the worldwide mobile communications industry),

together with the European Commission, have created a ‘European Framework for Safer Mobile Use by Younger Teenagers and Children’. Within the Framework, operators provide mechanisms for parents to control access to content by children on their mobiles; provide advice and raise awareness regarding the safe use of mobile communications by children; support the classification of commercial content according to national standards; and support national authorities in the fight against illegal content on mobiles. Mobile operators and content providers also agreed to develop self-regulatory codes of conduct to roll out the Framework nationally. In its June 2010 implementation report to the European Commission, three years after the launch of the Framework, GSMA Europe stated that operators in all 27 EU member states, covering 96% of all EU mobile customers, had developed codes of conduct to deliver the Framework.

Mobile phone companies in Europe have also joined the “Mobile Alliance against Child Sexual Abuse Content” launched in 2008 by the GSMA to obstruct use of the mobile environment by individuals or organisations wishing to consume or profit from child sexual abuse content. Members of the Alliance are working to prevent access to websites identified as hosting child sexual abuse content, while also implementing “Notice and Take Down” processes that enable the removal of all child sexual abuse content posted on their own services. They also support and promote ‘hotlines’ for customers to report child sexual abuse content discovered on the Internet or on mobile content.<sup>107</sup> Another initiative worth noting is the “Better Internet for Kids” Coalition between tech CEOs and the European Commission, established in 2011, which brings together all types of industry players, including device manufacturers, and has achieved a number of results (e.g., facilitating the exchange of good practices; all 31 Coalition members now provide parental control tools and/or age appropriate settings; etc.).<sup>108</sup>

- Awareness-raising campaigns to prevent sexual exploitation of children during sporting events such as the Olympic Games in the UK and EURO 2012 in Poland and Ukraine were conducted by governments, in collaboration with NGOs. With regard to other sensitisation activities on **sexual exploitation of children in tourism**, most efforts have been promoted in Western Europe by NGOs such as ECPAT, but with limited support from national governments (for example, the “Don’t look away!” campaign, which aims to raise awareness regarding child sexual exploitation in travel and tourism). It is important to note that hotlines to report suspected cases of sexual exploitation of children in tourism were recently created in some EU countries as a result of collaboration between police and NGOs (especially ECPAT member groups in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Netherlands and Switzerland).
- The ECPAT-The Body Shop campaign provided a significant opportunity for raising awareness on child sex trafficking in the European countries involved, while encouraging advocacy for legal and policy change and fund raising. The Mario Project – underway since 2009 by Terre des Hommes in collaboration with ECPAT groups in Belgium, Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Poland and Romania, as well as other organisations – also contributed to improving protection for migrant children vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and/or trafficking in Central and South-Eastern Europe. It operates through transnational outreach research, advocacy (including with EU institutions), training and direct support to professionals coupled with empowerment of at-risk migrant children.<sup>109</sup> Other initiatives to reduce children’s vulnerability to sex trafficking, especially in Eastern Europe, target mainly students and potential victims.
- Some efforts have been undertaken to deliver **training on CSEC** for relevant professionals and integrate **CSEC issues into school curricula**. The French Ministry of Education worked with travel industry officials to develop guidelines on CST for tourism school curricula.<sup>110</sup> In Albania, the Ministry of Education and Science included a specific module on trafficking in human beings in the national school curricula in 2007.<sup>111</sup> In Switzerland, with government support, a training tool on CSEC was developed for young persons (secondary school and college level) and is available online; it contains three modules and a special section to help teachers prepare their lessons.<sup>112</sup>
- In terms of measures to address the **demand for sex with children**, some initiatives have focused on raising awareness among “clients”, teaching them to look out for possible signs that a person is a victim of trafficking (e.g., in the Netherlands), while others have targeted child sex tourists. In Belgium, for example, since 2004 the government, private sector and NGOs such as ECPAT Belgium, have been implementing the ‘Stopchildprostitution.be Campaign’ targeting all Belgians travelling abroad: tourists, businessmen, the army on a foreign mission, embassy personnel, development-aid workers and bus and truck drivers. European countries have also adopted measures to prevent further victimisation, through offender management measures, although national systems vary greatly across EU member states. Whilst some states already have comprehensive management systems dealing with sex offenders, others have no such arrangements. In recent years, some EU countries (e.g., Malta) have made efforts to develop “sex offender registries”, and others have adopted systems to bar offenders from working with children and other vulnerable people (e.g., Denmark and Germany).<sup>113</sup>
- Some initiatives were conducted by governments, in collaboration with UN agencies and NGOs, **to improve access to education and social protection schemes**, targeting the most vulnerable children and their families (such as income-generating activities and other programmes to reduce child poverty, support school attendance by vulnerable groups of children, etc.). In Central and Eastern

Europe, UNICEF has identified several effective education programmes, policies, initiatives and interventions for Roma children that are suitable for replication.<sup>114</sup> Yet Eurochild points out that whilst in most EU countries national education targets for reducing school drop-out rates are in line with the Europe 2020 targets on educational disadvantage, these targets do not sufficiently take into account the situation of children at particularly high risk of educational disadvantage (for instance, traveller children, Sámi and Roma children, children with disabilities, young people with migrant backgrounds or from socially disadvantaged areas) who are the most likely candidates for school drop-out.<sup>115</sup>

Child care, child support and family poverty-reduction schemes and policies have been adopted by a number of EU member states. In this connection it has been observed that, on average, family cash transfers and childcare services taken together reduce the poverty risk among families with children under age seven from around 17% to around 8%.<sup>116</sup> Some social protection schemes also seek to reduce social barriers faced by children and households when accessing social services, including by addressing stigma and ensuring the involvement of beneficiaries. For example, the British Red Cross has led a three-year, Europe-wide project entitled “Positive Images” to promote positive attitudes among 12-to-25-year-olds towards vulnerable migrants. In Italy, a project called “Metropoliz” has actively engaged a group of Romanian Roma in the creation of a community that hosts a multi-ethnic football team, an Art Festival and many other cultural events. These initiatives represent a new way to address social inequalities and exclusion and point to new tools for including marginalised groups and combating racism and discrimination.<sup>117</sup>

*Areas of concern:*

- Although the proliferation of actions on online child safety represents a positive step forward, several challenges and gaps remain. Along

with lack of coordination and standardisation – and sometimes confusion among the various initiatives launched – a major problem continues to be the identification of children vulnerable or subject to sexual abuse and exploitation online. Recent figures clearly show that the percentage of children identified in abusive images is very low in EU member states, ranging from 33 victims per million inhabitants in Norway to 1.5 per million in the UK.<sup>118</sup> Other shortcomings include: a) many actors concerned with children’s well-being offline are not yet fully aware of or engaged with children’s experiences online (e.g. professionals in schools, social work, health practice and mental health services); many schools teach little or nothing about online child safety; c) parental involvement is often lacking; d) industry-led initiatives have not been assessed from a child’s perspective; e) the need to share best practices more widely, especially from wealthier to less wealthy countries.<sup>119</sup>

- Most efforts to address child trafficking have not targeted the children at highest risk. Furthermore, prevention programmes related to child trafficking are generally not sustained nationwide through structural policies, but rather implemented on a project by project basis, often with limited involvement by the wide range of stakeholders responsible for child protection.
- There is still a lack of systematic anchoring of CSEC topics in the training and further education of relevant professional groups, such as police officers, immigration and asylum authorities, judges and public prosecutors, youth welfare officials, teachers, medical personnel, etc. Moreover, examples of integrating CSEC issues into school curricula are limited, and rather than being compulsory, are typically optional and not designed to be sustainable in the long-term.
- Initiatives to improve access to education and social protection schemes targeting the most vulnerable children and their families remain generally insufficient; existing models of good practice need to be scaled-up.



- Implementation of the Code of Conduct by signatory companies in many countries remains weak.
- There is a paucity of research and programmes to address the demand for sex with children.
- Basic research that would enable specific, targeted preventive measures is still needed. New areas/aspects requiring further analysis include, *inter alia*, prostitution of boys, “independent youth prostitution”, links between child labour and CSEC, CSE of children with a disability, online sexual exploitation of children, including “sexting” and sexual offending among youth.

*Priority areas and potential strategies:*

This brief analysis demonstrates that there are several areas on which ECPAT groups in the region, in collaboration with governments, other NGOs, the private sector, children and young people and other actors, should focus their prevention efforts in the years to come, including:

Priority area 1: Expanding the knowledge base on CSEC and enhancing cooperation with academic institutions

- Expanding the existing knowledge base on different forms of CSEC is urgent, particularly with a view to examining evolving modalities of sexual exploitation and gaining new perspectives. More specifically research is needed on:
  1. *Prostitution of children* ( e.g. the move from urban to rural settings and involvement of minority groups such as children with disabilities, Roma children, children on the move and children from immigrant families);
  2. *Sexual exploitation of children online*, particularly in relation to: a) modalities of sexual exploitation not yet well researched; b) new technologies and new ways of payment; c) new trends in the media (images of ever-younger children used for marketing

purposes) and the problem of sexual exploitation of children offline; d) what is being done to address this form of CSEC;

3. *Sexual abuse and exploitation of children in travel and tourism*. This research should involve the tourism industry and focus on both perpetrators and victims. New trends such as “voluntourism” and the use of ICTs for sex tourism should be analysed and a common position on such emerging phenomena should be achieved (for example by developing an action plan);
4. *Child sex trafficking and new trends* (e.g., the use of ICTs to recruit victims and market services, vulnerable groups such children exploited for the purpose of labour, children on the move, etc.).<sup>120</sup>

- Research conducted by ECPAT is mainly action-oriented. Involving academic institutions could enhance the interest of the academic world in CSEC issues and provide ECPAT’s advocacy work with a more solid foundation.

Priority area 2: Increasing awareness and education about sexual exploitation of children online and prostitution of children

**Strategy:**

- ECPAT should organise awareness-raising campaigns, with meaningful involvement by the media, to highlight that children in prostitution are always victims and can never consent to their own exploitation. This should contribute to minimising the risk of stigmatisation that children in prostitution face in several European countries.
- In collaboration with concerned stakeholders, ECPAT should build public awareness on sexual exploitation of children online and educate parents on this issue, focusing on their responsibility for their children’s behaviour on the internet.

- In light of its expertise and extensive experience, the ECPAT network in Europe should become a think tank in the area of sexual exploitation of children online;<sup>121</sup>
- As part of its efforts to counteract sexual exploitation of children online, ECPAT should collaborate with Interpol to gather and disseminate data on the number of children who are sexually exploited online and have not yet been reached, and call for the identification and rescue of all children involved globally.<sup>122</sup>

Priority area 3: Enhancing the efficacy of cooperation with the private sector against CSEC

**Strategy:**

- ECPAT should discuss and achieve a clear and common position regarding The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism (i.e. does ECPAT stand behind The Code and promote it or does ECPAT prefer to focus more on legal systems regarding the industry?);<sup>123</sup>
- ECPAT should collaborate with ISPs, mobile phone companies, Internet cafes and other relevant actors to develop and implement voluntary Codes of Conduct and other corporate social responsibility mechanisms, along with legal tools to facilitate the adoption of child protection measures in these businesses;<sup>124</sup>
- In collaboration with groups with extensive experience working with the industry, the Secretariat should develop a Toolkit on partnership strategies for joint action by civil society and the private sector, outlining modalities for improving private sector involvement. Related training sessions should also be delivered.

Priority area 4: Enhancing the capacities of ECPAT groups to deliver training on CSEC

**Strategy:**

- The Secretariat should conduct training for ECPAT groups on how to train relevant stakeholders (social workers, law enforcement, media, etc.) on the different manifestations of CSEC, focusing on prevention, protection/legal framework and recovery/reintegration.

## THE LEGAL CONTEXT

### Ratification of international legal instruments

European countries where ECPAT has member groups have made consistent efforts to ratify international legal instruments relevant for combating CSEC. As of 5 November 2014, all the countries examined had ratified the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and *ILO Convention No. 182 and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography* (Optional Protocol). The *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children* (Trafficking Protocol) had been ratified by all countries except the Czech Republic.

Only a few countries (notably Albania, Andorra, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Monaco, Montenegro, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain) have ratified the recently adopted *Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communication Procedure* (OP3CRC). Given the importance of this new tool and considering that most European countries are not yet party to the treaty, ECPAT groups should raise awareness about

the OP3CRC and advocate for its speedy ratification and rapid entry into force. It is important to recall that in March 2012 Child Rights Connect (previously the NGO Working Group) set up a 'Coalition for the OPCRC on a Communications Procedure'. The Coalition gathers international, regional and national NGOs and networks, human rights institutions and other non-governmental bodies committed to achieving rapid ratification and entry into force of the OP3 CRC. It is led by a Steering Committee currently composed of 15 international and regional child rights NGOs. ECPAT International is a member of the NGO Coalition for the OP3CRC, and ECPAT groups in Argentina, Burkina Faso and Uruguay have also joined. Like ECPAT member organisations in Africa and Latin America, ECPAT groups in Europe might consider taking part in this international coalition, in order to obtain technical support and guidance to better advocate for the ratification of the new Optional Protocol in their respective countries.

## Regional policy and legal framework

The abundance of regional legal standards and policy documents addressing CSEC and trafficking developed by European bodies, particularly the EU and CoE, attests to the importance attributed to the fight against these violations.

Within the **EU**, children have been increasingly recognised as right-holders by EU decision-makers. Article 3 of the Lisbon Treaty explicitly makes the promotion of children's rights in internal and external affairs an EU objective. Additionally, Article 24 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights is dedicated to children, and recognises the principle of the best interest of the child and the right of all children to participation. European Commission communications "Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child" (2006) and "the EU Agenda on the Rights of the Child" (2011) reaffirm the EU's commitment to fully take into account children's rights in all EU policies.

## New directives to address new challenges

Considerable efforts were made to improve the legal framework and tackle the new challenges posed by CSEC. Following the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, which strengthens collaboration between member states and extends the power of the European Parliament, legislation was reviewed and existing framework decisions were replaced by two new Directives:

- **Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims** (replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA) was adopted in 2011. Based on a victim-centred approach, the new Directive covers actions in several areas, such as criminal law, prosecution of offenders, victim support and victims' rights in criminal proceedings and prevention. It also foresees the establishment in each member state of a national rapporteur or equivalent mechanism to report on trends, gather data and measure the impact of anti-trafficking activities. Special protective measures are envisaged for children, including during investigations and judicial proceedings.<sup>125</sup> The deadline for the transposition of this Directive into member states' national legislation was 6 April 2013, but regrettably most are lagging behind. According to the EC, to date, only six of 27 member states have fully transposed the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive into their national legislation; three reported partial transposition of the directive.<sup>126</sup>
1. **Directive 2011/92/EU on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography** (replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA) builds upon the CoE 'Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse'. It includes several key provisions that will enhance children's protection from sexual exploitation, namely: 1) *Criminal law*: punishes viewing/knowingly obtaining access to child pornography and the organisation of travel arrangements for the purpose of child sexual exploitation, as well as stating that extraterritorial legislation applies to both citizens and residents; 2) *Prevention*: includes measures to prevent re-offending (barring convicted offenders from activities with children) and special measures for children who offend; it also calls for deleting child pornography websites and an option to block access; 3) *Criminal investigation*: encourages reporting and requires no complaint on the part of the victim to initiate prosecution; 4) *Protection and assistance*: includes legal aid and appointment of a legal representative, child-friendly procedures during investigation and prosecution, physical and psychological assistance based on individual needs assessments and support for families, when possible.

The Lisbon Treaty makes the Commission responsible for monitoring implementation of the Directives. If member states violate the rules regarding transposition of the Directives into their domestic law or implementation of the Directives, they can be held liable by the European Court of Justice.

ECPAT has been closely involved in the process of reforming EU legislation on trafficking and CSEC. In collaboration with other child-rights NGOs and international organisations, inputs were provided on draft proposals to ensure that children receive the highest level of protection possible.

***ECPAT groups in the region now have a unique opportunity to contribute to these efforts. They***

***lobby national legislation with these new EU standards, and can provide legal expertise and experience while playing a vital role in monitoring the transposition process.***

In this regard, ECPAT was contacted by Missing Children Europe to work on this issue. A number of countries (Belgium, Cyprus, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden) and topics

(articles of the Directive) were selected and will be compared to evaluate the effectiveness of transposition of the Directive against sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children. Missing Children Europe also contacted a British legal firm to make the comparison. This legal document could be used in lobbying to urge the countries to do the work properly. Furthermore, considering that monitoring of both directives is still weak and that member states are supposed to submit their first report on application of the directive in 2014, ECPAT could explore the possibility of using its Country Monitoring Reports and UPR submissions to produce brief shadow reports illustrating progress and gaps in the transposition process.

Other legal instruments and policy documents adopted by the EU are also relevant for fighting CSEC, especially child sex trafficking. The most important ones include:

- **The Council Directive on residence permits for trafficking victims who cooperate with authorities** of 29 April 2004 sets out the criteria for issuing a residence permit of limited duration to non-EU nationals who are victims of trafficking. Requirements include showing clear intent to co-operate with authorities. To make an informed decision on their cooperation with investigating authorities, non-EU nationals are granted a reflection period that allows them to recover and to escape from the influence of perpetrators of the offences. When a government considers that a trafficked person does meet the criteria for a residence permit, it will be issued for at least six months. Residence permit holders should be authorised to access the labour market, vocational training and education according to rules set out by national governments. Member states may also decide to apply this Directive to minors who are or have been victims of offences related to trafficking, including unaccompanied minors. In that case, specific provisions apply. A report on the transposition of this Directive published in 2010 by the European Commission shows that some deficiencies exist and that the impact of this tool in protecting victims and dismantling traffickers' networks seems to be insufficient. The report states that the Commission will consider amending the directive to improve victim protection and effectiveness in combatting human trafficking. In this framework particular consideration is to be given to improving treatment of victims', especially minors'.<sup>127</sup> Another report on the implementation of Directive 2004/81, published in October 2014, highlights the under-use of residence permits in exchange for cooperation. However, practical measures, such as strengthening identification processes, conducting and improving individual risk assessments for all victims prior to and during the procedure were found to have been effective.<sup>128</sup> Although it remains unclear whether this Directive will be reviewed, it is important for ECPAT to engage in the reform process in case this takes place, and to continue working at the national level to ensure implementation of the Directive.
- The **EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings** was adopted in 2012 to assist member states in implementing the Directive on human trafficking. Updating the 2005 *EU Action Plan on best practices, standards and procedures for combating and preventing trafficking in human beings*, the strategy offers a set of concrete and practical measures to be implemented over the next five years. These include prevention, protection, victim support and prosecution of traffickers, as well as the establishment of national law enforcement units specialised in human trafficking and of joint European investigative teams to prosecute cross-border trafficking cases.<sup>129</sup> The Strategy also recognises the importance of better identifying, protecting and assisting child victims in the EU who are particularly vulnerable to victimisation and re-trafficking. In October 2014, the EC published a mid-term



report on the implementation of the Strategy, detailing the actions undertaken to date under each of the four priorities: a) *identification, protection and assistance to victims* (guidelines for border guards and consular services on victims' identification, guidelines on EU rights of trafficking victims, handbook for authorities and other stakeholders - "Guardianship for children deprived of parental care", etc.); b) *prevention and demand reduction* (assessing prevention work and the gender dimension); c) *investigation and prosecution* (targeted and regular training, financial investigations, EU policy cycle, role of the Internet and online recruitment); d) *coordination, cooperation and policy coherence* (creation of informal networks of national rapporteurs, creation of the EU civil society platform, the external dimension and the action oriented paper of the EU external service, and the policy implementation).<sup>130</sup>

ECPAT contributed to the drafting of this Strategy and, together with other NGOs, has attended meetings organised by the EC for this purpose. It is important for ECPAT to stay engaged in the implementation of this policy, which can be achieved by actively participating and contributing to the work of the recently established 'Civil Society Platform on Human Trafficking' (see above).

- The **Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors** (2010-2014) puts forward a common EU approach towards **unaccompanied or separated children** coming from outside the EU. The Action Plan identifies child-specific reception measures and procedural guarantees that should apply from the moment the child is identified until a durable solution is found. It also stresses the importance of appropriate representation of the child, proposes actions to address shortcomings in the care provided to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in the EU and to avoid the disappearance of those in the care of public authorities. To ensure implementation of this plan, the EU has funded numerous projects

aimed at raising awareness for children at risk and training specialised personnel to detect trafficking risk situations.<sup>131</sup> The Commission also set up an expert group on unaccompanied minors in the migration process to exchange views and practices on related issues. The meetings are attended by experts from EU Member States, local and international NGOs, EU institutions and agencies. Although ECPAT is not part of this expert group and was not directly engaged in the design, implementation and monitoring of the plan, in collaboration with Terre des Hommes Brussels it has provided recommendations to the EC on how to improve the condition of unaccompanied minors based on experience gained through the Mario Project, and plans to contribute to the evaluation of the Action Plan and to the debate around its follow-up.

The **Council of Europe** developed various instruments that substantially improve legal and policy frameworks for combating CSEC:

- The **Convention on Cybercrime** adopted in 2001 (also known as "Budapest Convention") includes a specific provision criminalising online child pornography. It also contains an exhaustive definition of child pornography and requires the criminalisation of various acts (including production, offering/ making available, distribution/transmission and possession of child pornography). A few countries with ECPAT member organisations are still not party to this treaty, notably: Poland and Sweden (information as of 5 November 2014).
- The **Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Being** is a comprehensive treaty focusing mainly on the protection of trafficking victims and safeguarding their rights. It also aims to prevent trafficking and prosecute traffickers, giving special consideration to victims under 18, especially in terms of protection measures (such as providing a recovery period and access to education). Entered into force in February 2008, the Convention calls

for setting up an effective and independent monitoring mechanism, called GRETA, capable of monitoring the implementation of obligations contained in the Convention. There are still a number of countries (where ECPAT has a group) that have not yet ratified this treaty, notably: Czech Republic, Estonia and Turkey (information as of 5 November 2014).

It is important to note that ECPAT is actively involved in GRETA work. In addition to having been invited, along with other NGOs, in Strasbourg in December 2011 to explain its work and discuss possible collaboration with GRETA, some ECPAT groups based in countries under review this year were contacted by Anti-Slavery International and La Strada International to join efforts to produce an alternative report on the status of trafficking in their country. Furthermore, at the end of 2012 the former Central & Eastern Europe Representative to ECPAT's Board and President of "La Strada-Ukraine" was appointed as a GRETA member. Because of its independence and great expertise, GRETA provides an effective platform for relaying ECPAT's recommendations to the European level. ECPAT groups can be directly involved in preparatory visits by experts, report writing and follow-up of the GRETA monitoring process at the national level.

- The **Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse** (also known as the "Lanzarote Convention") is the most advanced international legal instrument against CSEC. Entered into force in 2010, it aims to prevent and combat the sexual exploitation and abuse of children, protect the rights of victims of these crimes and promote national and international cooperation against these crimes. The Convention offers clear definitions of the terms 'sexual abuse of children' and 'sexual exploitation of children' and requires that their different manifestations be treated as criminal offences. The Convention also recognises the linkages between various forms of sexual crimes against children and groups them under a single umbrella. Several countries where ECPAT has a

member group have not yet ratified this treaty, notably: Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Poland and the UK (information as of 5 November 2014).

The Convention also provides for the establishment of a Committee of the Parties to monitor implementation (the Lanzarote Committee). Civil society representatives, in particular NGOs, may be admitted to the Committee as observers. ECPAT International is an observer and, in light of its specialised expertise, is considered a key stakeholder and partner. ECPAT's monitoring reports on the status of action against CSEC were mentioned as reference documents in the agenda of the *Exchange of views on the discussion paper "Protecting children against sexual violence: the criminal law benchmarks of the Lanzarote and Budapest Conventions"* during the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Lanzarote Committee in March 2014.

- **European Social Charter (revised), Article 7 addressing "The right of children and young persons to protection"** is another important instrument for protecting children from CSE. The European Committee of Social Rights is in charge of monitoring implementation of the Charter at the national level. Every year States Parties submit a report, on the basis of which the Committee decides whether or not the country concerned is in conformity with the Charter. Its decisions, known as "conclusions", are published every year. If a state takes no action on a Committee decision that it is not in compliance with the Charter, the Committee of Ministers addresses a recommendation to that state, asking it to reform the law or the practice. The Committee also has the power to examine collective complaints about violations of the Charter. NGOs can contribute to both procedures by sending Comments (alternative reports) on the national reports or by lodging collective complaints (as per Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter Providing for a System of Collective Complaints, entered into force in 1998). However only international non-



governmental organisations (INGOs) that have participatory status with the Council of Europe and are on a list drawn up for this purpose by the Governmental Committee can submit the complaint. ECPAT is not on the list of such organisations, which constitutes a missed advocacy opportunity for the organisation.

- **Resolution 1926 (2013) Fighting “child sex tourism”** was recently adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in an effort to make sure that children everywhere are protected from travelling sex offenders. Though not legally binding, it provides clear guidance to CoE member states on how to achieve this ambitious goal and reiterates the importance of adopting a comprehensive and coordinated approach both in countries of origin and destination, with contributions from all concerned stakeholders. The resolution, and particularly its explanatory memorandum, recognise the key role played by civil society organisations such as ECPAT, including through the Code of Conduct, which the tourism industry is encouraged to adopt.<sup>132</sup> Consultations drawing on ECPAT’s expertise at the time this document was drafted confirm that we have become an important point of reference for the CoE in relation to specialised knowledge and experience on CSEC.
- **Recommendation CM/Rec (2009)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures to protect children against harmful content and behaviour and to promote their active participation in the new information and communications environment.** In the Recommendation, the Committee states that protecting freedom of expression in the information and communications environment, while ensuring a coherent level of protection for minors against harmful content, is a priority for the CoE. The Committee of Ministers recommends to member states three categories

of strategies to protect children against content and behaviour carrying a risk of harm, namely: providing safe and secure spaces for children on the Internet; encouraging the development of a pan-European ‘trustmark’ and labelling systems; and promoting Internet skills and literacy for children, parents and educators.<sup>133</sup>

- The European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which entered into force in 1950, sets out the civil and political rights and freedoms that European States agree to ensure for people living within their jurisdiction. Complementing the European Social Charter guaranteeing civil and political rights, it is the main treaty monitored by the **European Court of Human Rights**. The Court takes on cases in which an individual has not received adequate redress for violations in the courts in his or her country, or has been unable to access the national justice system. Although the Convention makes no specific mention of children’s rights, the rights contained in this treaty apply to children, and indeed, complaints have been brought to the European Court of Human Rights alleging breaches of these rights in cases involving children. In addition, the CoE has adopted a number of treaties specifically to protect children’s rights, and which may be invoked at the European Court to challenge breaches of these rights. These include, *inter alia*, the *Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*.<sup>134</sup> It is important to note that NGOs have standing to bring claims in the European Court of Human Rights.

Although ECPAT has not engaged with the regional human rights justice system and member groups are not engaged in strategic litigation, it might consider establishing partnerships with NGOs with relevant expertise to bring CSEC cases to the Court.

## Compliance with international and regional legal standards and access to justice for child victims<sup>135</sup>

The numerous regional and international standards developed by European institutions send a strong message to countries regarding their duty to ensure legal protection to children from sexual exploitation. Regrettably, whilst legal reform has been promoted in a number of countries (e.g. Albania, Bulgaria and Czech Republic), several loopholes in national legislation remain and should be urgently closed, especially regarding provisions addressing child pornography and child prostitution.

### Child pornography

***Some areas where important gaps remain are related to child pornography: the failure to include all types of materials (especially virtual child pornography) in its definition, and to make the online solicitation of children for sexual purposes (grooming) and viewing/accessing criminal offences, as well as the lack of a reporting requirement for ISPs.***

Child pornography is defined in Article 2 of the OPSC as “any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes”. All countries in the EU have legislation that addresses child pornography, but many do not include a clear definition of child pornography (Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia).

The OPSC definition of child pornography refers to ‘any representation’, which includes virtual pornography, i.e. representations of child pornography through media such as computer-generated images, cartoons, art, and sculpture.

Virtual child pornography is explicitly included in the definition of child pornography in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic and the UK. Cyprus’s *Combating of Trafficking and Exploitation of Human Beings and the Protection of Victims Law* refers to “realistic images of non-existent children”; and Denmark’s Criminal Code requires the images to be almost identical to photographs of real children.

The OPSC (Articles 3(1)(c)) requires each State Party to ensure that the following activities, or attempt to commit such activities, are fully covered under its criminal or penal law: *Producing, distributing, disseminating, importing, exporting, offering, selling, or possessing child pornography for the purpose of distribution*. Most countries in the EU prohibit all of the acts required by the OPSC, except for Austria where production and possession are not prohibited if the victim is older than 14 years and gave consent; Belgium, where again the child must be under 14 years old; Estonia, where possession with the intent of distribution is not included; and Portugal.

Even though the OPSC does not expressly require State Parties to criminalise mere possession of child pornography, Article 5 (2) of EU Directive 2011/92/EU on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography and Article 20(1)(e) of the CoE *Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse* require State Parties to criminalise mere possession of child pornography. However, mere possession is not prohibited in Estonia; in Germany the possession of child pornography is punishable, while possession of juvenile pornography is not, if the materials were produced by children under 18 and with consent; or in Romania, where possession is only illegal if it is with the intention of distribution.

The criminalisation of knowingly accessing child pornography by means of information and communication technology, which is also required under Article 5 (2) of the EU Directive and Article 20(1)(f) of the CoE Convention is only in effect in Austria, the Czech Republic, Malta, the Netherlands and Sweden.

Online solicitation of children for sexual purposes (grooming), defined in Article 6 of EU Directive 2011/92 and Article 23 of the CoE Convention, is only prohibited in Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

### Child prostitution

OPSC Article 2 (b) defines child prostitution as *“the use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration”*. All EU countries except Hungary have legislation that specifically addresses child prostitution. However, many of the laws fail to provide a comprehensive definition of child prostitution (including Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain). In Hungary and Croatia there is no separate offence for child prostitution, which is instead a subsection of an offence related to adults; if the victim is a child it is considered an “aggravating factor”. Both Cyprus and the UK have separate laws that address trafficking and exploitation of human beings and sexual offences.

The OPSC requires all State Parties to ensure that their legislation criminalises the offering, obtaining, procuring or providing of a child for prostitution, or the attempt to do so (Article 3.1(c)). Nineteen countries in Europe prohibit all of these acts.<sup>136</sup>

In many EU countries children are not explicitly exempted from punishment for prostitution-related crimes.<sup>137</sup> Whereas there is a need to recognise that young people, especially adolescents, have the right to have sexual relationships with their peers as long as they have the capacity to freely consent to them,

the consent of a person younger than 18 can never be considered as free or relevant in situations where another person is offering some form of reward (money, housing, protection, goods, etc.), including on the Internet.

***The issue of young people above the legal “age of consent” who are criminalised or unprotected requires particular attention to ensure that all children under 18 are adequately protected against any form of sexual exploitation.***

### Child trafficking

The great majority of European countries have separate legislation on trafficking in persons that contain specific provisions criminalising child trafficking. However, legislation in several states is not in compliance with the Palermo Protocol. For instance in Croatia and Italy, if coercion or violence are not involved, the offence cannot be considered child trafficking. In Hungary, Lithuania and the UK, the definition of trafficking does not cover all forms of sexual exploitation as defined in the Protocol. For example, in Lithuania, trafficking for sexual exploitation is limited to the involvement of children in prostitution and pornography and in Hungary child prostitution is not mentioned in the definition of trafficking for sexual exploitation. In the Czech Republic, there is no mention that consent of the child is irrelevant in relation to trafficking, which is not in line with the Trafficking Protocol, and the definition does not appear to include the “receipt” of persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Child victims of trafficking are not always afforded the protection and assistance they need. Research by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development in 2009 found that the national legislation in some EU countries presents significant gaps in relation to the granting of adequate ‘reflection periods’, access to residency permits and general assistance to victims.<sup>138</sup> Because assistance is not generally provided to victims directly by the state department responsible for victim identification, the gap is often filled by NGOs

and social services, leading to unequal access to assistance. The research also found that some foreign victims of CSEC crimes do not qualify for residency permits and other assistance because the crime does not meet the criteria for ‘trafficking’. Further, non-migrant children frequently do not qualify for access to services that are tied to the allocation of residency permits<sup>139</sup> (see also section on “Support services”).

### **Extraterritorial Legislation**

Extraterritorial legislation addressing CSEC offences is in place in all EU member states exception for the Czech Republic. However, problems with public availability of legislation in some countries means that the coverage of such legislation is not always clear.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child recommends that double criminality should not be a prerequisite for conviction under extraterritorial legislation, even though this requirement is not set out in the OPSC. Double criminality means that the offence must be prohibited in both the home country of the perpetrator, and in the jurisdiction where the offence took place. In countries where the criminal or penal code requires double criminality, a national can travel to another country with a less child-friendly legal framework to engage in child sex tourism without any consequence. Perpetrators can rely on the defence that the child sexual exploitation that would be a crime in their own country was not illegal in the jurisdiction where it took place.

Nine EU countries have a requirement for double criminality<sup>140</sup>, that is, the offence must be prohibited under both jurisdictions (home country and where the crime took place). No EU member states make prosecution conditional upon the filing of a complaint by the victim or on a formal request by the state of which the victim is a national.

### **Child-friendly justice and training for law enforcement**

In addition to legal reform to close the gaps highlighted above, in Europe there is also a need to ensure the systematic implementation of child-friendly procedures during investigation and legal proceedings, in addition to sustainable and specialised training of law enforcement personnel (particularly judges, prosecutors and police but also social workers and psychologists) on child-sensitive procedures when assisting children in courts. It appears that the majority of member states have adopted child-friendly provisions for hearing children in criminal proceedings (e.g. written interviews/statements, audio-visual recording, in-camera hearings, etc.) to avoid the need for repeated interviews. Also, in several EU states, child witnesses are automatically interviewed by, or in the presence of, an expert (social worker, educator, child psychologist, etc.). Child-friendly interview rooms appear to be available throughout the Union, although not consistently. Some countries have been particularly effective in protecting child victims of crime through child-sensitive procedures and a number of models of good practice have been established among EU member states.

*In several EU Nordic States (including Denmark, Norway and Sweden) the ‘Children’s House’ model initially developed in Iceland plays a significant role in avoiding secondary victimisation. Involving police, public prosecutors, forensic doctors, social workers and child psychologists, the Children’s House is a cooperative initiative aimed at providing child victims one place to go for legal and other support services. To prevent subjecting the child to multiple interviews by different bodies in a multitude of locations, the model facilitates taped testimony with investigators, which can later be used in court.*

These promising practices have contributed to reducing hardship during criminal proceedings; however it remains unclear whether they are specialised enough to meet the needs of sexually exploited children.<sup>141</sup>

EU Member States have made little progress in establishing specialised child protection units to investigate child trafficking and sexual exploitation and ensure protection and assistance to victims. The final ECPAT-The Body Shop “Stop Sex Trafficking of Children and Young People Campaign” impact report published in 2013 found that all 21 EU countries reviewed have set up law enforcement divisions to investigate cases of human trafficking, child trafficking or sexual offences against children. Yet there is an ongoing and alarming lack of specialised training on child-sensitive approaches to CSEC crimes for law enforcers employed by these units (due mainly to limited financial resources and high turnover of personnel). Additionally, existing structures are mainly concentrated in major cities. Also, in some countries governments rely on NGOs to deliver training to police staff without ensuring constant funding, while in others capacity building does not reach the entire range of law enforcement personnel who may come into contact with CSEC victims. In some countries training focuses only on younger children, without stressing the needs of adolescents. These loopholes result in child victims going undetected and not receiving the assistance they need.<sup>142</sup>

#### **Priority areas and potential strategies:**

Priority area 1: *Promoting greater involvement of ECPAT groups in advocacy work at national, regional and global levels*

Although the Secretariat and member groups have been very active, there is a need to enhance the impact of actions against CSEC by ensuring greater involvement of ECPAT groups in advocacy work at the national, regional and global levels. The analysis presented here reveals several opportunities for member engagement.

#### Overall strategy:

- As noted under “Coordination and Cooperation”, the Secretariat should consider establishing a team in Brussels.
- Following a mapping of the various advocacy activities conducted by ECPAT groups, the Secretariat, in collaboration with groups and Board Members, should develop a clear advocacy strategy for Europe (this process is already ongoing), based on which an advocacy toolkit would be designed showcasing examples of good practices from the network (e.g. ECPAT UK’s program entitled “Parliamentarians Against Trafficking in Human Beings”) and outlining the different tactics for conducting successful advocacy/lobbying work with global mechanisms (e.g. monitoring the recommendations from international monitoring bodies such as the CRC, UPR, etc.), European institutions and national governments. Related training should also be organised, facilitating exchange among groups and active involvement of youth.

#### Priority area 2: *Strengthening the legal framework by promoting research and legal reform*

#### **Strategies:**

- ECPAT should conduct research on the legal framework for prostitution of children in European countries and, based on the findings, advocate for closing existing gaps, in conformity with international and regional standards.
- ECPAT should gather and analyse information on national legal systems on child pornography and sexual exploitation of children online in European countries. It should also develop a position paper to reach consensus on the definition of child sexual exploitation and to outline the elements of model legislation on child pornography and sexual exploitation of children online, in line with international legal standards and EU legislation.<sup>143</sup>



### *Priority area 3: Enhancing access to child-friendly justice for child victims of sexual exploitation*

#### **Strategies:**

- Access to justice is important for all children, but child victims of sexual exploitation are at the sharp edge of vulnerability and have an immediate and urgent need for effective remedies. It is imperative that European nations incorporate key provisions related to the rights of child victims of sexual exploitation, as enshrined in the CRC and the OPSC, into their national legal frameworks. This means ensuring that child protection frameworks include the right to recovery and reintegration services, amending criminal procedure rules to include child-friendly provisions and providing mechanisms for children to claim compensation.

***To promote access to justice for child victims of sexual exploitation, ECPAT is conducting research on this issue and plans to develop a “CSEC Victims’ Bill of Rights”, detailing all rights to which child victims are entitled. Groups in the region should advocate for the implementation of all the provisions under this Bill to improve access to compensation and child-friendly justice for child victims of sexual exploitation in Europe.<sup>144</sup>***

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

Despite EU enlargement, distinct patterns regarding the care and protection of child victims of CSEC are apparent in the region. Services in Western Europe (although not always fully implemented) are relatively well developed and comprehensive, with a range of options for care delivery and defined protection systems. However the extent to which resources are actually available can vary greatly, so

even though in theory there may be options for a child, in practice they can be limited. Services are delivered by both states and civil society, typically with some level of monitoring of standards by government agencies. Specialised programmes exist, but support tends to be delivered under the general umbrella of each country’s child welfare mechanism or scheme to address sexual abuse or domestic violence against women and children. Thus these programmes may not meet the specific needs of sexually exploited children.

With regard to the relatively new EU member governments and developing economies in Eastern Europe, service provision and resources dedicated to care and protection appear to be less available. Whilst structures and procedures are gradually evolving to develop alternatives for care (such as family based/foster care and enhanced protection systems), there are fewer care choices and fewer possibilities for support and reintegration, which leaves child survivors at higher risk of being re-victimised.

In recent years efforts across the EU have concentrated on developing reporting and referral mechanisms, especially through the creation of harmonised numbers for services of social value “116 – xxx” introduced by Commission Decision 2007/116/EC of February 2007. Established in a number of EU States but not yet fully implemented, these free-of-charge services are an essential channel for making complaints and providing support to child victims of abuse as well as to report cases of missing children.

A survey conducted in 2011 to examine the level of awareness among European citizens and usefulness of this initiative has, however, exposed a widespread information gap about the hotlines/helplines, confirming that better publicising these tools is necessary to ensure their full use. The final ECPAT-The Body Shop impact report on the



joint anti-trafficking campaign highlighted similar challenges. According to this review, in 86% of the 21 EU member states analysed, helplines are not staffed with personnel adequately trained to handle cases of child trafficking and sexual exploitation; moreover, many are not fully accessible to children due to limited advertising, language barriers and cost of the service. In order to address this gap, the EU has recommended to establish and expand hotlines to report human trafficking established in several EU countries.<sup>145</sup> It is also important to note that children involved in sexual exploitation may feel discouraged from reporting the abuse they suffered, since in practice the principle of non-prosecution of victims (for their involvement in criminal activities committed as a result of being subjected to these crimes) is often not applied, leaving them unprotected. Furthermore, several EU countries lack effective witness protection programmes for child victims and, when required, for their families.

The 'Stop Trafficking' Campaign impact report also illustrates the many challenges faced by children trafficked for sexual exploitation in accessing services available to them. Although on paper European countries generally recognise the right of child victims of trafficking to receive several types of assistance (shelter, access to education and training, health services, counselling, support in the return process, etc.), in practice numerous obstacles impede the full realisation of this right. The economic downturn, combined with political instability in many European countries, resulted in large cuts in public expenditure for social services, including for the care and support for child victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Some shelters in France and Greece, for example, were shut down due to lack of funds. In addition to lack of funding for service providers (including both state agencies and civil society groups), other gaps in the area of support services that should be urgently addressed by European countries include: a) assistance is often provided only if certain conditions are met, i.e. if the child victim collaborates in the legal proceedings, is identified as a victim of trafficking or is legally resident in the country; b) many child victims

cannot access assistance as a result of difficulties in identification processes; c) challenges in delivering culturally and age-appropriate services; d) the general lack of national referral mechanisms to coordinate the provision of support and specialised multi-disciplinary training; e) availability of specialist support varies among regions (especially in federal states) and is usually concentrated in capital cities; f) follow-up services for foreign victims of trafficking who return to their home countries and long-term care for CSEC victims are still limited, if not totally absent.<sup>146</sup>

Child victims of trafficking also encounter barriers in enjoying their right to reparation. A study on child trafficking in EU states identified several options for trafficked children to claim compensation (e.g. obtaining redress from offenders or the state by joining the criminal proceedings, court-ordered imposition of compensation, applying to a State compensation fund for crime victims, etc.). However, access to compensation may be subject to several criteria and limitations such as: available only for nationals and EU citizens, for crimes committed in the territory of the member state concerned, or may require the final conviction of perpetrators or cooperation of the applicant with law enforcement agencies. In many EU countries, children have difficulties accessing appropriate psycho-social and legal accompaniment in court cases that could facilitate compensation claims. In addition, child victims are often not informed of their right to seek compensation, and the actors involved (judges, prosecutors, etc.) appear to be unfamiliar with the details of legislation on victims' redress. Even when redress is provided, usually the amounts paid are significantly lower than the claims initially pursued and, in most cases, represent only a very small portion of the assets gained by the perpetrator through the exploitation of the victim.<sup>147</sup>

*Some advances have been made recently in EU member states to address the problem of children who have gone missing from care and are particularly exposed to the risk of further exploitation. In Ireland, for example, the*

***number of children missing from care declined as a result of the ‘Equity of Care Policy’ implemented since 2009 by the Health Service Executive, which demands that separated children, including trafficked children, receive the same level of care as Irish children in care, mainly by placing them in foster homes rather than large hostels.***

Similarly, in Poland a new act on foster care was adopted that allows foreign minor victims of trafficking to be placed directly in foster families rather than institutions. In an effort to address loopholes in the foster care system that resulted in high-profile sex trafficking and sexual abuse cases (see section 1), the UK government recently released National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services that will apply to local authority fostering services, independent fostering agencies and voluntary organisations.<sup>148</sup>

***A review of ECPAT Global Monitoring Reports on Europe points to a general lack of specialised support services for children abused online, sexually exploited boys and adolescents who sexually offend.***

Some promising practices, however, deserve mention, especially in the area of online exploitation. For example, the European Digital Youth Care Network is a network of social organisations that provide online counselling to young people on some of the most important issues touching their lives: sexual abuse, self-harm, etc. occurring both in the online and real world.<sup>149</sup> Successful work with children victimised online has also been conducted in Nordic countries. In Sweden, therapeutic approaches assisting child and adolescent victims of offline and online exploitation are currently being analysed at BUP Elefanten, a Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Unit that treats sexually and physically abused children in Sweden. The project has been running since 2005 and by 2008 had involved over

100 interviews with young people, therapists, police, prosecutors and social workers. The young people assisted had been subjected to a variety of abuses, including sexual harassment, engagement in webcam sex, having their images uploaded onto the Internet, online engagement leading to offline abuse. Although many of these children rejected offers of help, practitioners were advised to attempt to maintain contact with these young people until they felt ready to engage.<sup>150</sup> In Denmark, the Team for Sexually Abused Children at the University Hospital in Copenhagen provides treatment to children aged 11-16 who were exposed to online grooming. Psychological treatment focused on the grooming process and the different relationships in the child’s life more than on the physical abuse in itself. Psycho-education was used as a means to help the child understand the process of grooming. Treatment was also provided to the child’s parents, who often feel cheated by the child and the perpetrator, paying special attention to making them understand the manipulation implicit in online grooming.<sup>151</sup>

*Priority areas and potential strategies:*

Priority area 1: Enhancing capacities of ECPAT groups to deliver training on CSEC

**Strategy:**

The Secretariat should conduct training on CSEC for ECPAT groups to prepare them to train relevant stakeholders (social workers, law enforcement and other professionals coming into contact with children), focusing, inter alia, on child-friendly procedures during investigation and prosecution, identification, recovery, reintegration and safe return of child survivors.

Priority area 2: Improving the identification of presumed child victims of sex trafficking and their reintegration

### Strategy:

- After receiving training, ECPAT groups should sensitise and build the capacity of professionals who have direct contact with presumed child victims of trafficking, particularly with a view to improving their identification and referral;<sup>152</sup>
- In an effort to ensure the implementation of durable solutions for trafficked children, ECPAT should develop specific guidelines looking, inter alia, at treatment of child victims, options for their social reintegration and their involvement in making decisions about their future.<sup>153</sup>

*Priority area 3: Promote awareness of UN Guidelines on the Alternative Care of Children and support groups to ensure their implementation*

### Strategy:

The Secretariat should disseminate the UN Guidelines among groups and organise related trainings and awareness-raising.

*Priority area 4: All ECPAT groups should have operational child protection policies*

### Strategy:

Considering that only a few ECPAT groups in the region have adopted a written child protection policy, the Secretariat should organise child-safe organisation training and related follow-up to ensure that all members meet this key requirement.

## CHILD AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION

European institutions have emphasised the importance of child and youth participation in a number of legal acts and policy documents. Another ground-breaking policy document by the CoE – in addition to Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1864 (2009) on “Promoting

the participation by children in decisions affecting them”<sup>154</sup> and the abovementioned Recommendation [CM/Rec(2009)5] of the Committee of Ministers on measures to protect children against harmful content and behaviour and promote their active participation in the new information and communications environment – is the **Recommendation on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18** in decision-making adopted by the Committee of Ministers [CM/Rec. (2012) 2]. The Recommendation was developed following comprehensive reviews of the reality of child participation in several member states and, for the first time in the Council’s history, with the direct involvement of children in the work of the drafting Committee.<sup>155</sup> It covers the rights of children and young people to be heard in all settings, including schools, communities and families, as well as at the national and European level. It is also worth recalling that Article 9 of Lanzarote Convention requires states to encourage the participation of children, according to their evolving capacity, in developing and implementing state policies and other initiatives in the fight against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children. In terms of programmes and activities, the “Building a Europe for and with Children” programme places strategic emphasis on promoting child participation.<sup>156</sup> In this context another promising initiative is the ‘ELSA for Children’ legal research project conducted as part of the ONE in FIVE Campaign to stop sexual violence against children. Undertaken by the European Law Students’ Association, the research analysed the legal framework on sexual abuse and different CSEC manifestations in 23 European countries.<sup>157</sup>

Compared to the CoE, the EU appears to have devoted less attention to child and youth participation. As a follow-up to the Commission Communication of July 2006 (“Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child”), in 2011 the Commission adopted “**An EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child**”.

Based on a range of preparatory activities led by the Commission – including a wide public consultation and a consultation with children – the EU Agenda

is expected to contribute to making justice systems within the EU more child-friendly and improving children's well-being.

Notably, the Communication recognises the importance of "greater participation of children in the development and implementation of actions and policies that affect them"<sup>158</sup> and proposes to support "EU countries and other stakeholders in strengthening prevention, empowerment and participation of children to make the most of online technologies and countering cyber-bullying behaviour, exposure to harmful content, and other online risks, namely via the Safer Internet Programme and cooperation with the industry through self-regulatory initiatives".<sup>159</sup>

Examples of child and youth participation in the framework of the Safer Internet Programme can be found in nearly all countries where this initiative is being implemented. However, some NGOs have pointed out that the meaningful engagement of children and young people should not be limited to this programme, and that more actions should be developed by the Commission to support and promote wider participation of children in the EU and in member states.<sup>160</sup>

In relation to programmes and projects addressing specifically CSEC, there appears to be a general lack of government support for initiatives involving children and youth. Although the peer-to-peer approach has been increasingly recognised as a powerful tool to empower children to protect themselves from sexual exploitation, funding to organisations involved in building youth self-esteem and leadership skills, and more generally in CSEC prevention, remains limited. The few initiatives involving direct and meaningful participation by children and young people were carried out by NGOs, particularly the youth sections of ECPAT groups (e.g. ECPAT Germany, ECPAT Austria, ECPAT UK).

***Across all countries reviewed, insufficient participation by children and youth in the***

***design, implementation and monitoring of policies affecting them was identified as a key gap to be urgently addressed.***

*Priority areas and potential strategies:*

Priority area 1: *Strengthening children and young people's capacities for effective participation in advocacy and rehabilitation*

**Strategy:**

- ECPAT should support the creation of platforms to allow the voice of children to be heard by decision-makers, and should build their capacity to be advocates for themselves.
- ECPAT should also ensure the meaningful participation of child victims/survivors in rehabilitation programmes, including by delivering related training.

Priority area 2: *Promoting the involvement of children and youth in research and prevention*

**Strategy:**

- Children and young people, including child survivors, should actively participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of all research projects and CSEC prevention activities, including by delivering training for future tourism managers (in universities) and implementing peer-to-peer projects to raise awareness about the risks children face online and offline.

Priority area 3: *Enhancing documentation and scaling-up of best practices in participation*

**Strategy:**

- EICYAC and ECPAT youth groups, with support from the Secretariat, should produce and disseminate a collection of good practices; the Secretariat should also further expand the YPP project.



## SECTION 4. CONCLUSION

A persistent and alarming level of sexual exploitation of boys and girls of all ages, and from different backgrounds, exists in virtually all states across Europe. Although the true scope of this violation remains unknown, there is evidence that it may be intensifying and becoming more complex. The number of children identified as victims of trafficking in the EU has increased; domestic child sex trafficking is growing in several countries and destinations for child sex tourism are changing, leading to increased sexual exploitation in these locations. The expansion in the use of ICTs has provided new avenues for the online victimisation of children and youth (grooming and “sexting”), resulting in greater availability of child abuse materials (including live streaming). The different forms of sexual exploitation are now more frequently combined, making their counteraction particularly challenging.

ECPAT groups in Europe, especially Western Europe, are among the “oldest” member organisations in the network. Over the years, they have accumulated extensive experience and expertise in addressing CSEC in the region. An ECPAT Network Membership Survey conducted recently showed that focus on different manifestations of CSEC varies in Western and Central/Eastern Europe, reflecting their seriousness and extent in the two sub-regions. The main manifestation addressed by ECPAT groups in Europe as a whole, but especially Western Europe, is the sexual exploitation of children in tourism. This suggests that twenty years after its inception ECPAT remains a leading agency in tackling this specific phenomenon. Trafficking of children for sexual purposes is also a very important issue for the region, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, where several groups are currently developing anti-child trafficking activities. The number of ECPAT groups involved in projects and activities to combat child pornography and the sexual exploitation of children through the use of ICTs has increased, while prostitution of children continues to be the CSEC manifestation attracting the least attention from ECPAT groups.

Member groups in Europe have established fruitful collaborations with traditional partners, such as governments, UN agencies, national and international child rights organisations and NGOs and the media. It is also encouraging that partnerships with the private sector have increased in recent years, including through the joint ECPAT – Body Shop campaign against child sex trafficking. Most of the groups, especially in Western Europe (but also in Poland and Russia) have worked with the tourism industry (hotel chains, airline companies, tour operators, etc.), but only a few member organisations have developed joint initiatives with ICT companies (ISPs, Microsoft, telephone companies, social networking sites, etc.). As mentioned above, collaborations with European institutions such as the EU, CoE and OSCE, have been consolidated. Likewise, efforts were promoted to foster closer working relationships with human rights monitoring mechanisms, such as the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Council.

The analysis presented here shows that ECPAT could play a leading role in Europe in addressing the remaining gaps in areas such as prevention, policy and legal framework, coordination and cooperation, recovery and child and youth participation. Numerous opportunities were identified that ECPAT groups and the Secretariat could take advantage of to enhance ECPAT’s impact and visibility in the region. Whilst priority areas have been proposed (summarised below), it is essential that consultation with groups in the region be conducted to better define specific objectives and prioritise options and strategies. The table below summarises potential priority areas, tactics/activities, partners to be involved and resources needed, as detailed in this analysis. This is a draft framework that requires further refinement in line with broad ECPAT International objectives on CSEC, including those stated in its Strategic Directions and World Congress III targets, as well as with the network assessment and global advocacy strategy that the Secretariat plans to develop.



Priority areas	Tactics/Activities	Who should be involved	Targets	Potential partners	Resources needed
I. Adoption/ Revision /Implementation of National Plans that mainstream CSEC	<p>a) Conduct an in-depth study on national plans on children and young people in countries in the region to assess their comprehensiveness in relation to CSEC.</p> <p>Based on the findings, formulate an advocacy call on NPAs and conduct related advocacy at national level (see also II.b)</p>	<p>ECPAT Secretariat</p> <p>ECPAT groups in Europe</p> <p>Children and youth</p>	<p>National governments</p> <p>Key ministries participating in development of NPAs at national level</p>	<p>Other child rights organisations working on developing NPAs</p> <p>UNICEF, which supports governments in the design of NPAs</p>	ECPAT regional team and coordinator (see II.a), Research team
II. Strengthening collaboration and partnerships at regional level and promoting greater involvement of ECPAT groups and young people in advocacy work at national, regional and global levels	<p>a) Establish a regional team in Brussels with experienced staff, to represent ECPAT on a full-time basis with the EU, other European institutions, international NGOs, and other major players and support ECPAT groups in their lobbying and regional and national advocacy work, as well as in other areas identified in collaboration with the groups in Europe (e.g. improving communication within the network, information-sharing, training, etc.)</p> <p>b) Following a mapping of advocacy activities conducted by ECPAT groups, develop a clear advocacy strategy for Europe. Based on this, design an advocacy toolkit showcasing examples of good practice from the network and outlining the different tactics for conducting successful advocacy/ lobbying work with global mechanisms (e.g. monitoring</p>	<p>ECPAT Secretariat,</p> <p>Board representatives</p> <p>ECPAT groups in Europe</p> <p>Children and youth</p>	<p>EU. CoE and OSCE</p> <p>Other sub-regional organisations (e.g. the EGCC)</p> <p>European financial coalition</p> <p>National governments</p> <p>CRC Committee</p>	Other major child rights organisations active in Brussels	Resources (including logistics) for establishing ECPAT office in Brussels, ECPAT legal officer and other departments (e.g., programmes on online exploitation, YPP peer supporters (to facilitate training on youth-led advocacy)

Priority areas	Tactics/Activities	Who should be involved	Targets	Potential partners	Resources needed
	<p>recommendations from international monitoring bodies such as the CRC, UPR, etc.), European institutions and national governments. Organise related training sessions (for example, as part of RNREs).</p> <p>c) Based on ECPAT manual on youth-led advocacy, organise training for children and young people in the network</p>		Human Rights Council		
III. Expanding the knowledge base on CSEC and strengthening the legal framework	<p>a) Conduct research on the different manifestations of CSEC, particularly with a view to identifying emerging trends (e.g. evolving modalities of sexual exploitation, new vulnerable groups, etc.), ensuring the involvement of children</p> <p>b) Carry out a study on the legal framework on prostitution of children and sexual exploitation of children online, and develop position papers on these themes. Use these tools to conduct advocacy for legal reform.</p>	<p>ECPAT Secretariat</p> <p>ECPAT groups in the region</p> <p>Children and youth</p> <p>ECPAT Secretariat and ECPAT groups in the region</p>	<p>National governments</p> <p>Private sector</p> <p>European institutions</p> <p>National governments</p> <p>European institutions</p>	<p>Other INGOs and CSOs working on the issue of prostitution of children and with expertise on online sexual exploitation of children</p> <p>Academic institutions</p> <p>Law firms</p>	<p>ECPAT regional team and coordinator</p> <p>Research coordinators</p> <p>ECPAT regional team and coordinator</p> <p>Secretariat legal department</p>

Priority areas	Tactics/Activities	Who should be involved	Targets	Potential partners	Resources needed
IV. Increasing awareness of CSEC and enhancing the efficacy of cooperation with the private sector	a) Organise awareness-raising campaigns on prostitution of children and implement education activities on sexual exploitation of children, including using a peer-to-peer approach.	ECPAT Secretariat	Public	Media, celebrities	ECPAT regional team/ coordinator,  Secretariat staff working on “Combating Sexual Exploitation of Children Online” and participation  YPP peer supporters.
		ECPAT groups in Europe	National Governments	Private sector	
		Children and youth	Service providers	Civil society organisations	
			Potential “customers”		
b) Develop a position paper on the Child Protection Code	c) Develop a Code of Conduct with and for the ICT industry, mobile phone companies and other concerned actors	Children and youth	ECPAT groups	The Code organisation	Secretariat staff working on sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism
			Tourism industry		
			ICT industry, mobile phone companies and other concerned actors	ICT industry, mobile phone companies, other concerned actors	Secretariat staff working on the Programme “Combating Sexual Exploitation of Children Online”, the regional team and coordinator
			Private sector	Mobile Alliance Against Child Sexual Abuse Content	
d) Develop a Toolkit on civil society and private sector partnerships strategies and deliver related training			ECPAT groups	Better Internet for kids Coalition	

Priority areas	Tactics/Activities	Who should be involved	Targets	Potential partners	Resources needed
			Private sector  ECPAT groups	Private sector,  UN agencies and international NGOs with extensive experience working with the private sector	Consultant developing toolkit on civil society and private sector partnerships strategies
V. Delivering effective, child-safe and tailored services for child survivors based on the best interest of the child	<p>a) Conduct training of trainers (ToT) on CSEC, focusing, inter alia, on child-friendly procedures during investigation and prosecution, identification, recovery, reintegration and safe return of child survivors;</p> <p>b) conduct training for professionals for the purpose of identifying, rescuing and restoring child victims of sex trafficking and developing guidelines to ensure the identification/ implementation of durable solutions for trafficked children</p> <p>c) Disseminate the UN Guidelines among groups and organise related trainings and awareness-raising activities;</p> <p>d) Organise child-safe organisation training and follow up to ensure that all members adopt a written child protection policy</p>	ECPAT Secretariat and ECPAT groups in Europe that have already run ToTs (such as ECPAT Germany, Tartu, ECPAT Austria, etc.)	ECPAT groups  Police, social workers, care givers, doctors, psychologists, others who come into contact with potential victims	UNICEF  Child rights NGOs (especially for point V.c)	ECPAT regional team and coordinator  ECPAT officer on child participation  Police  NGOs  Social welfare child rights trainers

Priority areas	Tactics/Activities	Who should be involved	Targets	Potential partners	Resources needed
VI. Enhancing child and youth participation in actions to stop CSEC	a) Conduct training for children and youth to build their capacity on advocacy and rehabilitation and promote greater involvement of child survivors in rehabilitation programmes	EICYAC  Children's and youth	Children and youth, particularly child victims/survivors	Universities	ECPAT regional team/coordinator,  ECPAT child participation officer,  ECPAT officer working on CSEC in travel and tourism
	b) Create platforms to ensure that the voice of children is heard by those with decision-making power	ECPAT groups (particularly those that have participated in the YPP)	Students at tourism faculties		YPP peer supporters.
	c) Conduct training on sexual exploitation of children in tourism for future tourism managers (in universities).	ECPAT Secretariat			

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