

Communiqué

Condemnation of all forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse “No Grey Areas on the Internet”

We, the undersigned organisations have gathered in Berlin on October 30th, 2015 to discuss the problem of child sexual exploitation and abuse on the Internet which must be addressed from an international perspective due to its cross-border nature. In the light of our common purpose to ensure the protection of children, we support the goals of the G7 member states emphasising the respect for human rights regardless of age. Guided by our shared values and principles, we stand united in our commitment to address child sexual exploitation and abuse on the Internet as a pressing threat to children¹ all over the world.

In addition to exchanging views and coordinating actions as set out below, we endorsed our Agenda to condemn Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse on the Internet.

Definition and Relevance of Child Sexual Abuse Imagery in the “Grey Area”

Depictions of sexual exploitation of children (“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”² – so called child pornography³) are proscribed by law in many countries worldwide.

However, the sexual exploitation of children is not manifested only through child abuse images. In our modern societies children can be sexualised and treated as sexual objects in many different ways, for example on the Internet through images depicting children in erotic or suggestive poses. These are part of so called “Grey Area” imagery that does not necessarily cross the lines drawn by the law to qualify as child sexual abuse imagery, but we strongly believe it is exploitative in nature. It also violates children’s dignity and their right to privacy and damages their sense of security. These images are spread widely throughout the Internet and are much easier to find than child sexual abuse imagery. There is a risk that the free circulation and proliferation of this type of content might sustain a culture where the sexualisation of children is perceived and promoted as normal, thereby putting at risk other children as yet unharmed.

¹ A child means every human being below the age of eighteen years according to UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art. 1.

² Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Art. 2.

³ In the following we avoid the term child pornography and replace it by the term child sexual abuse imagery.

Postulations

This Communiqué is a call from the organisations who have joined together to condemn all forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse on the Internet and declare a policy of zero tolerance based on the expanded focus and understanding of exploitative imagery set out herein.

Exploitative images of children on the Internet may traumatize or re-traumatize victims, infringe children's human dignity and expose victims to harassment or additional abuse. At the same time, there is a danger that such content further promotes the sexualisation of minors, encourages more sexual exploitation of children, and creates more demand for such content.

There is a need for joint action against the sexual exploitation of children. In light of this,

- 1. we strongly condemn the possession, production and dissemination of depictions of the abuse and sexual exploitation of children on the Internet and reiterate our complete opposition to any form of commercial sexual exploitation of children;**
- 2. we stress the necessity to understand the connection of "Grey Area" images to the promotion of child sexual exploitation and call for labeling of images in the "Grey Area" as depictions of a form of sexual abuse and exploitation of children;**
- 3. we underline the need for a worldwide alignment of what constitutes depictions of abuse and sexual exploitation of children on the Internet based on common principles for the assessment of such material;**
- 4. we acknowledge the need for commonly defined criteria in order to classify such material. Terms and definitions must be precise enough to meet the standard of legal certainty; at the same time they must be worded in such a manner that they remain pertinent in dynamic developments;**
- 5. we call upon providers of platforms and hosting services to declare all depictions of abuse and sexual exploitation of children inadmissible according to their content guidelines, if they have not done it yet;**
- 6. we encourage providers to take comprehensive action against content, which may not be illegal but nevertheless is exploitative; for example by providing effective reporting mechanisms and user flagging procedures, by promoting awareness among users about this type of content and by strengthening notice and take down procedures;**
- 7. we strongly believe that hotlines and law enforcement play a key role in combating all kind of depictions of the abuse and sexual exploitation of children on the Internet and we encourage hotlines to take action on reports on "Grey Area" imagery, for which they should be provided with sufficient resources;**
- 8. we encourage users themselves to support the fight against "Grey Area" imagery by using flagging procedures and reporting such imagery to platform providers and hotlines, whenever they come across such content;**
- 9. we are convinced that joint collaboration of stakeholders from industry, government, academia and the social welfare sector is a necessity for combating depictions of abuse and sexual exploitation of children on the Internet; we therefore demand more effective actions across sectors and at policy level, so that collectively we can be more effective in disrupting such imagery worldwide;**

10. We stand united in our efforts to sharpen awareness and to fight all kind of depictions of abuse and sexual exploitation of children.

Berlin, Oct 30th, 2015

Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kinder- und Jugendschutz, Landesstelle NRW e. V.

Association e-Enfance

Barnaheill – Save the Children Iceland and SAFT (Society, family and technique) – SIC

Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Kinderschutz-Zentren e. V.

Bündnis gegen Cybermobbing e. V.

Canadian Centre for Child Protection

Child Focus

Diakonie Deutschland - Evangelischer Bundesverband

Deutsches Rotes Kreuz e. V.

Deutsche UNESCO-Kommission e. V.

Deutsches Kinderhilfswerk e. V.

Deutscher Kinderschutzbund Bundesverband e.V.

ECPAT Germany

ECPAT International

ECPAT Sweden

Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland

European NGO Alliance for Child Safety Online

gegen Missbrauch e. V.

"Hope For Children" UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Policy Center

Innocence in Danger e. V.

Internet Association Japan

jugendschutz.net

Kanner-Jugendtelefon Luxembourg – National child helpline and operator of the BEE SECURE Stopleveline

Meldpunt Kinderporno Niederlande

Missing Children Europe

Safenet BG (the Bulgarian SIC including the Hotline maintained by the Applied Research and Communications Fund)

Save the Children Denmark

Save the Children Finland

Save the Children Germany

Save the Children Italy

Service National de la Jeunesse / BEE SECURE Awareness Centre, Luxembourg

SOS Il Telefono Azzurro Onlus

terre des hommes e.V.

Zentrum für Kinderschutz im Internet – I-KiZ

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