



JUSTICE INITIATIVE

European response
to child abuse cases

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ABUSE SURVIVORS FROM ALL OVER EUROPE LAUNCH EU PETITION

Today, on the official European Day for Victims of Crime and in the presence of the Minister Delegate for Overseas France, Mr Jean-François Carencu, survivor groups and child protection organizations from all over Europe launched a petition for better protection against child sexual abuse in the European Union. This is intended, in particular, to strengthen legislation in the area of sexualized violence online. Tens of thousands of signatures are to be collected in all European countries in the coming months. There has never been an initiative like this before. The petition has been launched by the Justice Initiative, of the Guido Fluri Foundation, which is dedicated to the fight against child sexual abuse throughout Europe.

Paris, February 22, 2023

The distribution of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) online is growing exponentially: from 1 million reports in 2010 to 32 million in 2022, which included 88 million images and videos. Reports indicate that some active companies with servers in the EU have now become the largest hosts of CSAM globally (from hosting more than half of all CSAM detected in 2016 to 85% in 2020). This shows an alarming upward trend; Europe is becoming a hub for distributing images of sexual violence on the internet and the only way to prevent this is by stemming the flow from the source, at the internet service providers. "This sexualized violence on the Internet must be stopped," Guido Fluri, the originator of the Justice Initiative, emphasised today "because behind every image is an abuse. And behind every abuse is the suffering of a child."

Together with survivor' groups and child protection organisations from all over Europe, the Justice Initiative has launched an international petition that aims to improve legislation in the EU. Guido Fluri continues: "On the one hand, survivors of sexual violence should receive more support. On the other hand, it is about preventing children from continuing abuse. We demand that the European Union take a global leadership position and vote in favor of the current legislative proposal to prevent and combat child sexual abuse so that we can protect all children and adolescents, and bring justice to survivors."

EU Commission welcomes petition

Antonio Labrador Jimenez, Team Leader for Combating Child Sexual Abuse at the European Commission, explained at the media conference the critical nature of the proposed EU legislation to prevent and combat child sexual abuse in the years to come. Without such legislation, there will be no legal way to ensure internet service providers protect children in the European Union.

The legislation will pave the way for internet companies to prevent the circulation of images and videos of children that are being sexually abused, and of other victims and survivors, and to prevent adults from approaching children online to sexually abuse them. When necessary, the legislation will require companies to detect, report and remove such images and videos. The legislation will also create an EU Centre to prevent and combat child sexual abuse which will ensure transparency and accountability of this process and facilitate efforts to assist survivors across the EU. Antonio Labrador Jimenez welcomed the Justice Initiative petition as it will help bring attention to the problems that the legislation aims to solve.



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Child protection groups: Current protection against abuse is insufficient

"We need to act now," says Nina Vaaranen-Valkonen (Finland), Executive Director of Suojellaan Lapsia, Protect Children, one of Europe's leading child protection organisations. For survivors, she says, just knowing that a video or photo of their abuse is circulating on the Internet is devastating. There is an urgent need for regulation and new legislation, Vaaranen-Valkonen says: " Current legislation based on voluntary efforts is no longer sufficient. It is time to uphold the rights of the child and collectively demand binding rules to make the Internet safe for children. We at the Justice Initiative stand with the victims, the survivors."

European survivor groups support petition

Survivor groups from across Europe have been engaging with the Justice Initiative. One of them is the Brave Movement, an international movement of survivors and allies calling for an end to childhood sexual violence worldwide.

"We support the Justice Initiative's call along with many other NGOs," said Mié Kohiyama, co-chair of the Brave Movement Europe working group and co-founder of BeBraveFrance. Several survivors of child abuse also gave testimony at the media conference.

Among them was Saga, a survivor from Sweden: "I am honored to be part of the Justice Initiative's EU campaign and to be surrounded by other child rights activists and associations. Today we are launching the first European petition against child abuse, a vital campaign to secure every child's right to their childhood - free from sexual abuse. We must act now. I urge the EU to push forward with its efforts to support survivors and do everything in its power to combat this abuse. We must be persistent, and we must not give up. Let's all start by signing this petition."

Political support in EU Parliament

Among the many political supporters is German MEP Marion Walsmann (Shadow rapporteur on the IMCO opinion on the proposal for a regulation laying down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse). In her opinion, service providers need to be held more accountable so that child sexual abuse material can not only be detected and removed more quickly, thus avoiding its dissemination, but prevention can also be increased. "Of course data protection and the privacy of Internet users is important, but data protection must not become the protection of abusers. I signed the petition (Justice Initiative) for better child protection in Europe and so should you and I am not saying this as an MEP but as a mother of two children. Because every abused child is one too many," said MEP Walsmann.

Find the petition here: <https://justice-initiative.eu/petition/>

For more informations : www.justice-initiative.eu

Media inquiries: justiceinitiative.portugal@iacrianca.pt

