

Child sexual exploitation refers to the sexual abuse of a person below the age of 18, as well as to the production of images of such abuse and the sharing of those images online.

Online child sexual exploitation is a constantly evolving phenomenon and is shaped by developments in technology. Mobile connectivity, growing internet coverage in developing countries and the development of pay-as-you-go streaming solutions, which provide a high degree of anonymity to the viewer, are furthering the trend in the commercial live-streaming of child sexual abuse.

As a form of cybercrime, child sexual exploitation is one of the nine **EMPACT priorities**, Europol's priority crime areas, under the 2018-2021 EU Policy Cycle.

Europol has [identified key threats](#) in the area of child sexual exploitation:

- Peer-to-peer (P2P) networks and anonymised access like Darknet networks (e.g. Tor). These computer environments remain the main platform to access child abuse material and the principal means for non-commercial distribution. These are invariably attractive for offenders and easy to use. The greater level of anonymity and the strong networking possibilities offered by hidden internet that exists beneath the "surface web" appear to make criminals more comfortable in offending and discussing their sexual interests.
- Live-streaming of child sexual abuse. Facilitated by new technology, one trend concerns the profit-driven abuse of children overseas, live in front of a camera at the request of westerners.

To a lesser degree, there is also some evidence that forms of commercial child sexual exploitation such as on-demand live streaming of abuse is also contributing to the rise of the amount of CSEM online.

Live distant child abuse has the most obvious links with commercial distribution of CSEM. As new and/or unseen CSEM is valuable currency within the offending community, live distant abuse is therefore a way to not only acquire more CSEM, but to simultaneously generate material with a high 'value'.

- Online solicitation and sexual extortion. The growing number of children and teenagers who own smartphones has been accompanied by the production of self-generated indecent material. Such material, initially shared with innocent intent, often finds its way to "collectors", who often proceed to exploit the victim, in particular by means of extortion.
- Networking and forensic awareness of offenders. Offenders learn from the mistakes of those that have been apprehended by law enforcement.

ASSISTANCE AND EXPERTISE

Europol's [European Cybercrime Centre \(EC3\)](#) supports the competent authorities in Member States in preventing and detecting all forms of criminality associated with the sexual exploitation of children.

It provides assistance and expertise in combatting the distribution of child abuse material through all kinds of online environments, and tackles all forms of criminal online behaviour against children, such as grooming, self-generated indecent material, sexual extortion and live-streaming on the web.

Fighting the distribution of child abuse material includes preventing and intercepting it, and stopping it from being shared through peer-to-peer networks, as well as through commercial platforms. In this regard, EC3 is involved in the [European Financial Coalition against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Online \(EFC\)](#), a network funded by the European Commission composed of law enforcement, NGOs and public and private sector stakeholders.

EC3 is also involved in the [Virtual Global Taskforce \(VGT\)](#), a collaborative partnership of law enforcement agencies, who have come together across the digital divide to combat online child sexual abuse worldwide. The [Report Abuse button](#) on the VGT website is an effective way to report suspicious online behaviour.

Cooperation at an international level has proven to be very effective in identifying victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation. In 2015 Europol hosted a [Victim Identification Taskforce](#), which resulted in 240 new collections of material being uploaded to Interpol's child sexual exploitation image database and the extension of the existing 100 collections.

In addition, Europol's Project HAVEN (Halting Europeans Abusing Victims in Every Nation) supports EU Member States in detecting and intercepting child sexual offenders travelling abroad to abuse children.

NUMBER OF ITEMS FOUND: 161

SEARCH



TYPE

Article/Story, Event, How-To Guide, Landing Page, Multimedia, News/Press Release, Operation, Page, Publication/Document



TARGET GROUP



SEARCH

CLEAR ALL

17
May
2021

EUROPEAN MIGRANT SMUGGLING CENTRE 5TH ANNUAL REPORT – 2021

PUBLICATION/DOCUMENT

10
May
2021



STOP CHILD ABUSE
TRACE AN OBJECT



NEW TRACE AN OBJECT UPLOADS: FRESH LEADS NEEDED IN CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE COLD CASES

NEWS/PRESS RELEASE

03
May
2021

4 ARRESTED IN TAKEDOWN OF DARK WEB CHILD ABUSE PLATFORM WITH SOME HALF A MILLION USERS

NEWS/PRESS RELEASE

12
Apr
2021

EUROPEAN UNION SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME THREAT ASSESSMENT

PUBLICATION/DOCUMENT

12
Apr
2021

SERIOUS AND ORGANISED CRIME IN THE EU: A CORRUPTING INFLUENCE

NEWS/PRESS RELEASE

03
Mar
2021

TRACE AN OBJECT INITIATIVE EXPANDS TO THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION



20
Jan
2021

FRANCE ARRESTS 14 SUSPECTS IN SWEEP AGAINST CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE ONLINE

NEWS/PRESS RELEASE



19
Nov
2020

THREE VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE PUT TO SAFETY IN FRANCE

NEWS/PRESS RELEASE



18
Nov
2020

EXPERTS MEET TO IDENTIFY VICTIMS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

NEWS/PRESS RELEASE



05
Oct
2020

COVID-19 SPARKS UPWARD TREND IN CYBERCRIME

NEWS/PRESS RELEASE



05
Oct
2020

INTERNET ORGANISED CRIME THREAT ASSESSMENT (IOCTA) 2020

PUBLICATION/DOCUMENT



08
Jul
2020

MASSIVE INVESTIGATION IN ITALY COMBATING ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

NEWS/PRESS RELEASE

Source URL: <https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-trends/crime-areas/child-sexual-exploitation>