

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 EU's priorities in the fight against serious and organised crime as part of [EMPACT 2022 - 2025](#).

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: 163

SEARCH



TYPE

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



TARGET GROUP



Q SEARCH

⊗ CLEAR ALL

08  
Jul  
2020

## MASSIVE INVESTIGATION IN ITALY COMBATING ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

NEWS/PRESS RELEASE

19  
Jun  
2020

## EXPLOITING ISOLATION: OFFENDERS AND VICTIMS OF ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

PUBLICATION/DOCUMENT

19  
Jun  
2020

## EXPLOITING ISOLATION: SEXUAL PREDATORS INCREASINGLY TARGETING CHILDREN DURING COVID PANDEMIC

NEWS/PRESS RELEASE

27  
May  
2020

## INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION LEADS TO ARREST OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSER IN ITALY

NEWS/PRESS RELEASE

You can go outside again.  
Criminals can too.



Avoid sharing  
your location  
on social media



Still spending plenty of **time online?**

- Watch out for phishing and
- Use safe online video conferencing

## A SAFETY GUIDE FOR THE 'NEW NORMAL' AFTER COVID-19

HOW-TO GUIDE

30  
Apr  
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29  
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2020

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NEWS/PRESS RELEASE

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2020

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17  
Apr  
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03  
Apr  
2020

### CATCHING THE VIRUS

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03  
Apr  
2020

### CATCHING THE VIRUS CYBERCRIME, DISINFORMATION AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

PUBLICATION/DOCUMENT

31  
Mar  
2020

### 90 SUSPECTS IDENTIFIED IN MAJOR ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE OPERATION

NEWS/PRESS RELEASE

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