

# EUROPOL LAUNCHES PUBLIC APPEAL TO HELP IDENTIFY VICTIMS OF CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

31 May 2017

Press Release



You can help us to "Stop child abuse, trace an object"

A shampoo bottle, a magazine cover or even wallpaper. The most innocent clues can sometimes help crack a case. These small mundane objects featured in the background of a child abuse image can sometimes end up being a key lead in the investigation, resulting in the victims' identification and rescue.

While police move forward utilising conventional investigative avenues, Europol is requesting the public's assistance in identifying the origin of some of these objects. We are convinced that more eyes will lead to more leads and will ultimately help to save these children.

The increasing global availability of broadband internet and internet-enabled devices continues to fuel the growing number of child sex offenders and victims. The internet provides offenders and potential offenders with an environment in which they can operate with an enhanced level of safety and anonymity.

Law enforcement all over the world is working closely together to identify as many offenders and victims as possible. This identification process is often very complex and the identification of small objects in the background of these images can lead to a breakthrough in the investigation.

Such an approach has in the past yielded significant results. Very recently, 2 victims were identified following the identification of food packaging and waste containers in the background of child abuse imagery.

Today, Europol will upload 20 objects on the dedicated Stop Child Abuse webpage for which every other investigative avenue has already been examined. These objects are all taken from an image with sexually explicit material involving minors. Europol is appealing to the general public to see if they can recognise the objects. We specifically want to trace their origin (location/country). The images on this dedicated webpage will change periodically.

Citizens can help by clicking on an object they recognise and providing Europol with the information they have on the object. This can be done anonymously. Once the origin of an object is identified, Europol will inform the competent law enforcement authority of the involved country to further investigate this lead and hopefully speed up the identification of both the offender and the victim.

Rob Wainwright, Executive Director of Europol, comments: "The Victim Identification Task Force held at Europol has repeatedly shown the significant possibilities of rescuing victims of child abuse through experts working together analysing abuse images. In many of these cases the key breakthrough has been established through a small piece of information such as identification of objects in the background of the image that provide a vital clue to investigators. This innovative project seeks to use the global reach of the internet to allow the public to contribute to this investigation process and to play a real part in the global prevention of child abuse. Remember, your help can provide the one piece of information that leads to the rescue of a child."

The objects can be found on [www.europol.europa.eu/stopchildabuse](http://www.europol.europa.eu/stopchildabuse)

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CRIME AREAS [Child Sexual Exploitation](#)

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