

Child rights organizations urge Germany to support EU legislative action to protect children online

Protect Children’s research findings on German speaking CSAM users demonstrate the urgent need for stronger EU legislation

The Council of Europe estimates that [one in five children in Europe fall victim to sexual violence](#). As reported by the [Internet Watch Foundation](#), the European Union hosts approximately 62% of all child sexual abuse material (CSAM) online, with Germany being one of the biggest hosts of CSAM in the European Union. The dramatic escalation in the amount of CSAM hosted in Germany is unmistakable: between 2020 and 2022 the [amount has increased almost tenfold](#).

Protect Children, a Helsinki-based child rights NGO, has conducted Dark Web research on individuals who search for and view CSAM. Information from over 22,500 anonymous respondents has been gathered through two surveys on the Dark Web. The newest [Communication](#) considers the results arising from the German language responses. A total of 1079 German language responses have thus far been gathered, making it the language with the 4th most responses, after English, Spanish, and Russian.

“Sexual violence against children online is an issue of epidemic proportions. We must act now with robust legislative changes in order to keep our children safe.” *Nina Vaaranen-Valkonen, Executive Director, Senior Specialist, Protect Children.*

One of the most significant findings presented in the Communication is the high correlation between viewing CSAM and seeking direct contact with a child online among German speaking respondents. **49% of German speaking respondents have at least sometimes sought direct contact with a child, this is 11% more than the average across respondents in all languages.**

Worryingly, **70% of German speaking respondents first saw CSAM when they themselves were under the age of 18. What is more, 51% report first seeing the material accidentally**, clearly signaling the sheer ease of gaining access to CSAM on the internet.

Whilst CSAM viewers and offenders seeking direct contact with children may have been thought to be two different groups of individuals, research demonstrates that this is not the case. As the existence and availability of CSAM leads to further crimes of sexual violence against children, the urgency and importance of detecting and removing CSAM from the internet is crucial.

“With the technological developments come changes in the *modi operandi* of perpetrators, and current legislation is no longer effective in the prevention of sexual violence against children online today.” *Anna Katariina Ovaska, LL.M., Deputy Director, Legal Specialist, Protect Children*

With these findings, **child rights organizations have joined together to urge Germany to support the proposed European Union Regulation 2022/0155** to ensure that:

1. online service providers are mandated to proactively scan for and remove CSAM from their platforms;
2. service providers are obliged to scan for and detect grooming on their platforms to effectively protect children from sexual violence.

To support and strengthen EU legislation in the area of online child sexual abuse and exploitation, Protect Children is a part of a petition launched by the Justice Initiative, of the Guido Fluri Foundation and leads the initiative’s work in the Nordic countries. **Sign the petition here:** <https://justice-initiative.eu/petition/>.

Protect Children’s Communication is supported by: [ECPAT International](#), [Internet Watch Foundation \(IWF\)](#), [Justice Initiative](#), [Missing Children Europe](#), [Thorn](#), [WeProtect Global Alliance](#), [Child Rescue Coalition](#), [Policing Institute for the Eastern Region \(PIER\)](#), [Canadian Centre for Child Protection](#), and [SafeToNet](#).

Suojellaan Lapsia, Protect Children ry. is the only organization in Finland dedicated to ending all forms of sexual violence against children. The survey has been conducted within the ReDirection project, which is funded by the [Safe Online Initiative](#) at [End Violence](#). Safe Online has invested over US \$71M in 89 projects around the world to create a safer internet for children. Read more: <https://www.suojellaanlapsia.fi/en>

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Read the Communication here: <https://www.suojellaanlapsia.fi/en/post/communication-on-german-speaking-csam-users>