



COMPREHENSIVE RESPONSE TO CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Thematic Study
on the System for Prevention of Online
Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of
Children in Bulgaria

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The Centre for Inclusive Education is established in 2007 as an indigenous Bulgarian non-profit organization building its mission, structure and capacities over the long-standing experience of Save the Children UK program in Bulgaria. The team working in Bulgaria created with the support of Save the Children UK an organization that carries forward the knowledge and values built over our ten-year-old history of operation in the country. After the closure of Save the Children's office, the Centre for Inclusive Education as the officially endorsed successor, continues to work for protection and realization of child rights.

We believe each child must have the opportunity to be accepted and valued. The Centre for Inclusive Education works in partnerships to achieve social inclusion through quality education for all children and ensuring respect for child rights.

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ACRONYMS

ARC	Applied Research and Communications Foundation
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CSEC	Commercial sexual exploitation of children
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
ECPAT	ECPAT International – End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FDN	Fundacja Dzieci Niczyje (Nobody's Children Foundation)
FIVES	Forensic Images and Video Examination Support project
FRA	Fundamental Rights Agency
ICTs	Internet and communication technologies
IGF	Internet Government Forum
INHOPE	International Association of Internet Hotlines
ISPs	Internet Service Providers
IWF	Internet Watch Foundation
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
Mol	Ministry of Interior
NCPOP	National Centre for Public Opinion Polls
P2P	Peer-to-peer computer networks
SACP	State Agency for Child Protection
SEE	South Eastern Europe
UN CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
WSIS	UN's World Summit on the Information Society

INTRODUCTION

This study, conducted within the framework of *Comprehensive Response to Child Pornography* project, set out to explore the existing system and practices in Bulgaria and Eastern Europe for prevention and fighting child pornography. In the course of work the authors identified the need to provide an overview of the subject of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children and not just its manifestation in child pornography production and distribution.

The *Comprehensive Response to Child Pornography* project is implemented by Save the Children Norway SEE Regional Office in cooperation with the Office of the State Coordinator for Anti-trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Immigration in Bosnia and Herzegovina which invested financial and human resources in addressing this problem. The project is also financially supported by OAK Foundation. This study was conducted by the Centre for Inclusive Education which is partnering Save the Children in the first phase of the project with the main task to provide an overview of the situation in Bulgaria and identify and recommend good practices.¹

The overarching goal of this study is to present a comprehensive perspective to the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse of children in cyberspace by outlining the main aspects and consequences of this crime, analyzing what has been achieved and what else can be done to improve the coordination of the fragmented approach taken so far. The specific objectives of the study were as following:

- to study the existing system, procedures and capacities for prevention and fighting online sexual abuse and exploitation of children through child pornography in Bulgaria;
- to understand and, if possible, suggest recommendations for addressing the challenges and improving the system;
- to identify good practices that can be adopted and transferred by civil society organizations and public authorities in BiH.

Why focusing on child pornography? The partners in this project have recognized that crimes against children are changing because of the advance in technology, particularly the Internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs). For the past decade most efforts have been focused on anti-child trafficking systems while also touching on other often accompanying manifestations of child sexual exploitation. Child trafficking for sexual purposes and prostitution are undoubtedly priority areas for prevention work in SEE countries. However, the spread of online sexual exploitation, including child pornography, through the advancement of ICTs which has been so far not in the spot light, should also be addressed as a priority in child protection policies.

This research focuses on online sexual exploitation of children in its manifestation through child pornography materials but discusses also other ensuing aspects and dangers of the use of such materials in 'grooming' or enticing children over the Internet for sexually-oriented interactions that often spill over from cyberspace into real life. It attempts to present a more comprehensive picture of the harms involved in the exposure or involvement of children with child pornography. It argues that child pornography is not less harmful than physical violation. Child pornography is a fundamental abuse, not just a by-product of physical sexual abuse. Recent studies suggest that the use of children to make pornography 'adds value' to a commercial sexual exchange and assists in facilitating a child's submission into other forms of commercial sex or sexual abuse.²

Early desktop study of official documents and research of secondary sources revealed a lack of up-to-date data and scarce analysis materials regarding the situation and existing practices with regards to online sexual exploitation of children in Bulgaria. Despite these limitations, sufficient information was gathered to provide a broad overview of the situation in the country. The field research and round table discussion proved to be invaluable for analysis. They also served as a measure for validating information as different actors offered their perspective based on their practice.

While the recommendations and main findings of this study are aimed primarily at Bulgarian and BiH civil society actors and decision makers, they will also be disseminated to relevant stakeholders and the broader public in order to achieve involvement and support of society in the fight against this form of child abuse.

We hope that this study will add up to the first steps already taken towards building a somewhat safer world for our children, a world that not only states its support but also demonstrates respect for their rights.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study combined the following mechanisms:

DESK REVIEW OF AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

A large set of documents and secondary sources (legislative acts, official and alternative reports and other materials and publications) publicly available both printed and online, were reviewed and analyzed as a first step towards understanding the current situation in Bulgaria and planning the interviews. The desk review provided the initial information for the report and helped identify the main figures and active individuals to be contacted later on in the process of field research.

The review and individual interviews helped identify both the achievements and the challenges for improving the system for prevention and fighting online child abuse and sexual exploitation of children in Bulgaria outlined in the report.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON THE TOPIC

A limited number of previous documents deliberating on the system for prevention and fighting child abuse and sexual exploitation of children through child pornography in Bulgaria were identified.

Most of the research and analysis documents regarding the system for prevention and fighting child abuse and sexual exploitation of children are discussing trafficking of children and prostitution while touching also on the issues of child pornography.

A number of initiatives in the country, discussed further on in this study, have tackled the problem of online safety for children. Although those projects have achieved commendable results, no specific material in Bulgarian that focuses and discusses exclusively the problem of online sexual exploitation of children, and child pornography in particular, has been identified.

MEDIA ANALYSIS

The amount of media attention given to the issue of child pornography is undoubtedly high. Within this study, a representative analysis of the way Bulgarian media report on child pornography and child abuse in Bulgaria was conducted. The analysis covers materials from 26 printed, 15 online and 4 electronic media, both national and local, for the second half of 2008. The analysis included the search of 144 articles and 14 radio and TV reports focused on child pornography but also included coverage on the topics of paedophilia and online child abuse.

The main objectives of the analysis were: 1) to present a picture of the importance placed by media on these topics; 2) to identify patterns and attitudes of government authorities that are responsible for tackling any aspect of the problem; and 3) to try to identify existing gaps, both in authorities' and the general public response, and, if possible, suggest recommendations for further work with media and public authorities for prevention of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

REVIEW OF PUBLIC OPINION POLL RESULTS

The results from a number of surveys and qualitative studies were used to inform the findings of this study on various aspects important for planning and implementing prevention measures. Two of the surveys –

"Children and the Internet" were conducted in 2006 and 2009 in Bulgaria by the National Center for Public Opinion Polls (NCPOP). Additionally, the findings of one special Eurobarometer survey, two flash Eurobarometer reports and one Eurobarometer qualitative study conducted by the Public Opinion Analysis sector of the European Commission upon request by Directorate General Information Society and Media were also used as a reliable source of information on public awareness and understanding of the dangers on the Internet related to child pornography.

FIELD RESEARCH – INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS AND ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

Throughout the study, nearly fifteen one-to-one discussions were conducted with NGOs, government representatives and journalists. Out of these, five are classified as conducted interviews. Additionally, the Centre for Inclusive Education organized a round table discussion for presentation and discussion of the findings of the desk top and field research. The discussion provided a consensus ground for identifying the main recommendations for steps to be taken for improving the system for protection of children in Bulgaria from the harmful effects of child pornography.

STUDY VISITS

Most of the above mechanisms were also applied to help identify good practices for prevention of child pornography from the experience of organizations from Eastern Europe. The Centre for Inclusive Education conducted study visits and interviews with Nobody's Children Foundation in Poland and the Bulgarian organization Applied Research and Communications. The reasoning behind the preparation of the study visits was that in addition, the study will attempt to identify and collect relevant good practices, namely projects or other initiatives of public authorities or civil society organizations, that have proven to be useful, effective, innovative and are transferable to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina so they could serve as a model for future actions of civil society in BiH.

Another study visit to Italy organized by Save the Children Norway provided invaluable insight into the work and cooperation of the police, Internet providers and civil society in the country for improving the system for prevention and fighting child abuse and sexual exploitation of children through the Internet. It guided this research into seeking clear and transferable examples and lessons learned both to be applied in Bulgaria and in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bibliographical data of all used sources, as far as publicly available is provided at the end.

DEFINITIONS

DEFINITIONS GUIDING THE RESEARCH AND USED THROUGHOUT THE DOCUMENT

There is a growing debate about the use of terminology related to the issue of commercial sexual exploitation of children, in particular on the use of the term *child pornography*. Often, definitions used in legislation and other normative acts do not necessarily adequately or comprehensively reflect the nature of such criminal practices.

The following definitions were used throughout the research.

CHILD

Every human being below the age of eighteen in consistency with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child Protection Act.

COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) encompasses criminal practices that demean, degrade and threaten the physical and psychosocial integrity of children. The three primary and often interrelated forms of CSEC are prostitution, pornography and trafficking for sexual purposes.

CSEC is a fundamental violation of human and children's rights. The key element here is that this violation arises through a commercial transaction, an exchange in which one or more parties gain benefits from the exploitation for sexual purposes of someone aged below 18.³

ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

Online sexual exploitation of children is most commonly related to the production, collection, and distribution of child pornography. However, it also includes "grooming" – the online enticement of children for sexually-oriented interactions over the Internet and unwanted exposure of children to pornography. Each type of online exploitation directly or indirectly results in sexual contact between adults and children, and should receive equal attention in prevention and law enforcement efforts.⁴

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Increasingly the term "child abuse images" is being used to refer to the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in pornography.⁵ This is to reflect the seriousness of the phenomenon and to emphasize that pornographic images of children are in fact records of a crime being committed. However, the term "child pornography" is more broadly recognized and also used in legislation and policy documents. Therefore the term "child pornography" is used in this document.

The term "child pornography" includes a material that visually depicts a child or a person appearing to be a child, engaged in sexually explicit conduct or realistic images representing a child engaged in sexually explicit conduct. Child pornography includes the following conducts committed intentionally and without right, by any means:

- Producing child pornography for the purpose of its distribution;
- Offering or making available child pornography;

- Distributing or transmitting child pornography;
- Procuring child pornography for oneself or for another;
- Possessing child pornography.

The document adopts this definition of child pornography in order to be also consistent with the provisions of Article 9 of the Council of Europe's Convention on Cyber-crime and the Council Framework Decision on Combating the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography. It refers to any representation of a child (real or simulated) or parts of his/her body, by whatever means (photographs, comics, videos, films, stored in a computer system or on a data carrier etc.) engaged in explicit sexual activities. Producing child pornography for the purpose of its distribution, distributing or transmitting it through a computer, disseminating, importing, exporting, selling, offering or making available, procuring child pornography by any means for oneself or for a third person, or possessing even for personal use child pornography is a criminal activity.⁶

There is no unanimously accepted and applied general definition of child pornography. The existing definitions seem similar but there are variations in understanding between organisations, countries and jurisdictions. This ambiguity has implications on the approaches and how effectively the problem is addressed. While individual and community understandings of child pornography vary within and between societies, child pornography is still a major violation of child rights and must be addressed and prevented because it involves sexual abuse and exploitation of children. It is often linked to trafficking of children for sexual purposes, child prostitution and child sex tourism.

The variation in definitions and understandings of child pornography is not just a matter of language and terminology as it has implications for law enforcement as well. Sometimes vague or incomplete definitions may limit law enforcement options. For example, in some cases society assumes that there is no legal basis for the police to intervene or take action against child pornography producers if there is no physical sexual abuse or if the child might have given his/her consent. However, keeping with the UN CRC, young people aged under 18 cannot be expected to give full and informed consent to the making of pornographic material.

Child pornography exploits and abuses children in many ways. Children are most often physically forced, coerced or tricked to engage in making it. Pornographic images of children are often copied and remain for an indefinite time on the Internet circulated through peer-to-peer systems for information exchange. Thus the victim is abused every time that image is used. Children are also victimized through unwanted exposure to pornographic material in cyberspace. They may be exposed to pornography through spam or unsolicited email but unwanted pornography may be directed through email or instant messenger programs by sexual predators while looking for or grooming potential victims.

No matter how comprehensive the definitions of child pornography used in legislation or policy-defining documents are, they should stress that this is a criminal activity involving violence and abuse in its practice. Definitions should also focus not just on children as victims but also direct attention to the perpetrators and punishment for such crime.

GROOMING

The enticement of children over the Internet for sexually-oriented interactions occurs through various methods including chat rooms, instant messengers and email. It usually starts with online encounter under false identity which aims at gaining the child's trust through taking interest in the targeted victim's interests or dislikes. The next step includes discussions of sexual nature and often sending pornography

to the victim. In many cases, children are asked and tricked into forwarding personal details and naked pictures of themselves or participating in voice and video chat. Very often the relationship is likely to lead to physical world encounters either through earning the victim's trust or through intimidation and blackmailing. The danger posed by in-person meeting is direct sexual contact between predator and victim.

PAEDOPHILIA

Wider public perceptions of paedophiles as a marginal group of predatory strangers who seek sex with children averts attention from the fact that the vast majority of offenders victimize individuals who are known, related, or intimate to them as well as that paedophiles often have ordinary socially acceptable behaviour and lives. This makes it sometimes difficult for society to comprehend the seriousness of the abuse they commit. Although paedophilia in itself is not usually deemed a criminal offence, it is often associated with crimes against children, including most often than not, online sexual exploitation of children.

Paedophile involvement with child pornography ranges from using children to produce child abuse images (either for individual consumption or wider commercial and non-commercial distribution) to employing it as part of the process of grooming a child with the aim to manipulate and coerce him/her into sexual contact.⁷ Sharing child pornography materials is a critical component of paedophile networks. Membership in such networks not only facilitates the production and distribution of child pornography for personal use or profit, but also helps paedophiles to rationalise and normalise their behaviour and understanding of their sexual preferences.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that not only paedophiles make and access child pornography. The growing demand spurred by the technological sophistication of the global distribution of child pornography over the Internet and the fairly easy, inexpensive and relatively anonymous access it provides, has also stimulated ruthless entrepreneurs realize huge profits through catering to this market.

The person who downloads, keeps, barter and views images of child abuse seeking sexual gratification is an abuser too, whether or not they make pornography and whether or not they seek sex with children as a result of the sexual stimulation and validation provided by their use of child pornography. In the same way, the person who coerces children into making child pornography, produces, provides and distributes real or simulated materials is an abuser too. Even if these people are not consuming child pornography seeking sexual gratification themselves, they profit from it and their actions have the same potential to encourage actual sexual abuse of a child. Another consequence of the wide spread of child abuse images on the Internet is that the ready and easy access plays a key role in encouraging an interest in child pornography among people who might not otherwise have a specific interest in child sex. This fuels sexual fantasies about children and is believed to play an important part in contributing to or reinforcing paedophile behaviour.⁸ Moreover, the relatively easy access to depictions of child abuse "normalises" child pornography, it makes it acceptable or somewhat ignored problem in some countries.

BEST PRACTICE

Any type of activity, process, strategy or technique implemented in a project or program that has a successful impact against child pornography and can be replicated under similar conditions. A best practice has:

- Successful outcome based on reliable evidence and evaluated on several dimensions;

- Good process – indicating the likelihood of consistent success, not a one off lucky win
- Useful and simple description, which will enable intelligent selection, replication in-context, innovation in practice.

PREVENTION OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY IN BULGARIA: AN OVERVIEW

THE INTERNET AND ONLINE CHILD EXPLOITATION

Child pornography existed before the creation and expansion of the Internet from the early 1990s onward. This form of abuse and exploitation of children has evolved from a secretive and limited underground dissemination of pictures through localized groups to readily and sometimes openly available images and videos in websites and chat rooms around the world.

The expansion of the problem with online sexual exploitation of children is recognized not only by law enforcement authorities around the world and organizations that work for the eradication of such crimes against children. Increased attention was given to issues of child protection within the UN's World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the Internet Government Forum (IGF) processes which formerly focused almost exclusively on technology, telecommunications and security issues. A special workshop to discuss child abuse through ICTs was included at the IGF, held in Brazil in late 2007.⁹ The growing importance and interest of stakeholders to push forward recommendations to enhance child safety with regards to ICTs (e.g., to engage content providers in preventing and tackling the sexual exploitation of children, to deliberate and address measures for protecting freedom of speech without compromising protection of children from child pornography and other violations, to foster more awareness and educational campaigns on safe use of ICTs, etc.) has brought greater visibility to the problems. As a result a coalition on child safety is now formally included within the IGF. In Europe prevention of sexual exploitation of children has been a major action point for a long time now. The EU's Safer Internet programme has been running since 1999, promoting safer use of online technologies by children, and fighting illegal and harmful content, particularly child abuse images. At the end of 2008 the Council of Ministers adopted a new 55 mIn Euro Safer Internet programme (covering the period 2009-2013) that had been proposed by the European Commission to protect children in the ever more sophisticated online world and empower them to safely use web services like social networking, blogging and instant messaging.¹⁰

The Internet has become a global means of communication and as such managed to break traditional communication limits and ensured accessibility and transferability of information from all over the world to everyone who has access to a computer, at any time and any geographic location. New ICTs, the spread of the access to the Internet and the relative anonymity it can provide, the low cost of hardware and telecommunications have made it easier for individuals with sexual interest in children to record child abuse, download files or share images online. The advance of video and Internet technologies (high-speed connections and digital cameras, etc.) has brought the emergence of more ways for manufacturing and distributing child pornography materials such as video streaming on demand, webcam sessions or even virtual sexual abuse. All these developments facilitated the dramatic expanse of crimes related to online sexual exploitation, especially child pornography over the past two decades.

HOW CAN THE INTERNET BE A DANGER FOR CHILDREN?

Abuse of children and young people in cyberspace in relation to new technologies includes:

1. The use of children for the production of pornographic materials;
2. The distribution and use of materials depicting child sexual abuse;
3. Exposure to sexual or abuse related materials that can cause psychological harm or facilitate other detriment to a child;
4. "Grooming" – the process of manipulation of a child via the Internet (often including exposure to pornographic materials) in order to secure their trust and draw them into a real-life situation where they may be physically harmed or abused.

PORNOGRAPHY

Online sexual exploitation of children is most commonly related to the production, collection, and distribution of child pornography. However, the above manifestations are interrelated and children can be abused through the Internet in more than one way. They can be exposed to illegal or other harmful materials which they are usually not prepared to deal with. This includes both unwanted and purposeful exposure of children to adult and child pornography. Exposure to pornography is sometimes not viewed as a serious problem but it can be psychologically damaging. Moreover, unwanted pornography exposure may be used by sexual predators while looking for or grooming potential victims.

CHAT ROOMS AND INSTANT MESSENGERS

Cyberspace is a new social environment. It provides new virtual "meeting places" which are extremely popular with children and young people. Children have become especially vulnerable user group as they are very often unaware of or ill-prepared to deal with all dangers that exist. Public chat rooms and instant messengers are used by paedophiles who pretending to be children themselves, seek to identify a real child with whom they can then engage in conversation and further on in a relationship. Grooming or the enticement of children over the Internet for sexually-oriented interactions occurs through various methods including chat rooms, instant messengers and email. It usually starts with online encounter under false identity which aims at gaining the child's trust through taking interest in what the targeted victim likes or dislikes. Generally they will try to persuade the child to go into a private chat room to take the discussion further. The next step includes discussions of sexual nature and often sending pornography to the victim. Most often than not, children are asked and tricked into forwarding personal details or naked pictures of themselves or participating in voice and video chat. Very often the relationship is likely to lead to physical world encounters either through earning the victim's trust or through intimidating and blackmailing. The danger posed by in-person meeting is the likely possibility for sexual abuse.

THE LINK BETWEEN THE INTERNET AND THE ABUSE OF CHILDREN IN THE REAL WORLD

It is difficult some times for people to understand how viewing pornography and pictures of naked children or children chatting with and meeting strangers on the Internet can lead to a serious crime. In fact, there is a very clear link between what happens in cyber space and in real life. Children who are videotaped or photographed naked are always victims of sexual abuse in real life. Exposure to child abuse images or pornography and other materials that might be legal but are age-inappropriate, can play a vital part in making children more vulnerable to improper sexual contact with adults as this de-sensitises children and makes them believe that pornographic activity is normal.¹¹ Paedophiles often use pornographic images in the process of grooming. Very often those who publish harmful or illegal material, such as child pornography, and those seeking to make contact with children through the Internet for illegal or improper

purposes, are one and the same. Moreover, children can come into direct contact with child abusers as often virtual relations spill over to real life encounters and physical sexual abuse.

ARE WE AWARE OF THOSE DANGERS?

Child pornography has reached immense proportions with the network of paedophilia growing in all parts of the world. The growing number of discovered cases of paedophile chains shows how complicated and serious the problem of child pornography has become.

These developments have not bypassed Bulgaria. The growing threat of the expansion of online sexual exploitation of children is made apparent by the creation of specialized investigative unit on cyber crimes within the Ministry of Interior Directorate for Fighting Organized Crime which deals with this type of criminal activity. The amount of Bulgarian media attention given to the issue of child pornography and paedophile activity both in the country and around the world has risen substantially.¹² Nevertheless, the magnitude of the problem in Bulgaria is still unknown.

It is hard to determine how much the Internet is spread, because it is expanding daily, and there is no encompassing and efficient way to check all the information which exists on the net. Some estimates suggest that cyberspace is host to more than 1 million images of tens of thousands of children subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation.¹³ The latest Annual Report of the Internet Watch Foundation for 2008 reveals a fall of nearly 10% in the number of international websites with child sexual abuse content.¹⁴ The report highlights the fact that 74% of child sexual abuse domains traced by IWF are commercial operations selling indecent images of children. The production and distribution of abuse images of children is big business, estimated to be worth billions of dollars a year. 55 per cent of this material is reported to be generated from the United States and 23% from Russia. The US and Russia are also the two main countries hosting such sites.¹⁵

The Bulgarian Cyber Crimes Police Unit reports that at the end of 2008 there were at least 800 000 Internet access points in Bulgaria. Together with the growing use of the Internet, the department has also registered a steady rise of cyber crimes against children. Most of these crimes include sharing child pornography materials via P2P technologies (torrents, e-mule, skype, etc.) as well as virtual molestation through online communication.¹⁶

No comprehensive and reliable statistics or study of the magnitude of the problem in Bulgaria was identified. However, the problem of child pornography on Bulgarian websites is a reality. The majority of the content on these websites had been produced abroad. Several publicly available data sources were explored by the authors providing some statistics for further analysis.

According to the Cyber Crimes Unit at the Ministry of Interior Directorate for Fighting Organized Crime, Bulgaria is not a major country of origin for production of child pornography. There were cases of production of picture images but there is no information that these were further circulated online. Although hosting child pornography on Bulgarian websites has been limited and most of the pornographic materials have been produced abroad, there is evidence of the participation of Bulgarian children as well. Until 2003, no charges had been filed against child pornography websites, but there were 14 in 2005 alone.¹⁷ Several cases of paedophilia involving child pornography production have been covered by media, most notably the arrest of a 35-year-old Australian man at the end of 2008. He was accused of sexually abusing four boys and using the minors for making pornographic pictures and videos.¹⁸

In 2007 amendments to the Penal Code articles incriminating computer crimes and the distribution of child pornography (Art. 155a and 159) were introduced in an attempt to improve the efficiency of the fight with online sexual abuse of children. Moreover, the major free hosting servers agreed to duly inform the Ministry of Interior Directorate for Fighting Organized Crime on websites containing illegal materials.¹⁹ Official crime statistics from the Ministry of Interior Statistics bulletin reflect the overall number of registered criminal offences and closed cases related to pornography and the use of the Internet for sexual abuse but do not provide disaggregated data reflecting the number of crimes against children and minors.²⁰

Statistical data of the Ministry of Justice on the number of criminal charges, convictions and sentences show that in 2004 there were two people charged under Art. 159 of the Penal Code for criminal acts related to pornography materials with the participation of minors and under-aged.²¹ One of the accused was sentenced to less than 6 months on probation while the other was fined. In 2006 two people were charged under the same article. One of the accused was sentenced to 6 to 12 months on probation while the other was sentenced to 1 to 3 years imprisonment. The available statistical data does not contain information on criminal charges, convictions and sentences related to child pornography for the period 2002-2003, 2005 and the first half of 2007. No information regarding pornography related crimes against children and minors is available in the 2007 annual Report for the Prosecution Offices in Republic of Bulgaria Activities prepared by the Bulgarian Supreme Prosecution Office.²²

Data on crimes against children and minors publicly available at the National Statistical Institute website shows that in the period 2006 – 2008 a total of 13 cases involving child pornography have been registered (3 cases each year in 2006 and 2007 and 7 cases in 2008).²³ These statistics are based on data provided by the local Commissions for Fighting Anti-Social Behaviour of Minors and Juveniles.

It is obvious that there is lack of clear and compatible statistical data on crimes related to CSEC and child pornography in particular. Moreover, existing official crime and court statistics most likely under represent the magnitude of the problem due to the lack of a centralized system to record related complaints and crimes within and across law enforcement agencies. Another source of information used in an attempt to study the extent of the problem as well as the achievements and gaps in the system for prevention of online sexual exploitation of children were the Annual Reports for the work of the Bulgarian hotline for illegal and harmful content in the Internet – <http://web112.net> created in May 2006.²⁴

In 2006 the Safer Internet Hotline operators have received 75 signals and taken actions on 67 verified ones. Out of these, 15 (or 25%) have been forwarded to law enforcement authorities in Bulgaria or partner hotlines in Cyprus and the USA. The hotlines operators have taken action on a total of 7 signals for websites containing child pornography materials (one in Bulgaria, one in Cyprus and 5 in the USA). The hosting organization of an online teenage forum was contacted by the hotline and removed a pornographic avatar posted by a user. In 2007 the hotline has received 356 signals out of which 191 reported illegal or inappropriate for children content. The operators have taken action on 128 valid signals. Twenty eight of the signals related to websites containing child pornography and one containing images of naked children. Two signals reported suspicious attempts to contact minors through the Internet. A total of 16 signals were forwarded to law enforcement authorities while 8 were relayed to partner hotlines. In 2008 the hotline has received 565 signals out of which 157 reported illegal or inappropriate for children content on websites hosted both in Bulgaria (25 websites) and abroad. After verification of the validity of the report, the operators have registered and taken actions on 135 signals. 17 signals have been forwarded to law enforcement authorities in Bulgaria, 4 to partner hotlines. Five hosting and 16 owner companies have been contacted to remove illegal or harmful content.

After verification of the validity of the reports, the hotline has registered the following results:

Website content	2006	2007	2008
Child pornography	6	28	15
Pictures and images of naked children		1	1
Adult pornography		8	6
Adult pornography easily accessible to children			3
Hard core adult pornography		1	
Materials promoting racism and xenophobia	1	2	1
Materials promoting drug abuse		1	
Violence			13
Signals for grooming			4
Signals for child trafficking			1
Bulgarian websites procuring prostitution of women	5		
Bulgarian websites procuring prostitution of girls	1		

Usage statistics for <http://web112.net> show that during the first month of its operation the Safer Internet hotline website was visited 473 times. For the past 12 months (June 2008 – May 2009) numbers range between 5 000 up to almost 9 000 visits a month.²⁵

Although this scarce data alone does not provide a clear picture of the scope of the problem with online sexual exploitation of children in Bulgaria, it proves that the dangers posed by the Internet are real and shows gradual rise of awareness of the harmful side effects of online communication technologies. But how aware are our society and our children of the dangers?

BULGARIAN CHILDREN AND THE INTERNET

According to the latest international statistics, 32,6% of the population in Bulgaria uses Internet.²⁶ The major group of Internet users is in the age group 15-29 with 80% of secondary and high school students using the Internet.²⁷ A number of surveys conducted on EU level and domestically show that a large number of Bulgarian children and young people are using the Internet on a daily basis but are still not sufficiently aware of or recognizing the dangers it poses.

The National Center for Public Opinion Polls conducted two consecutive surveys in 2006 and 2009 as part of two national campaigns – *Child in the Web* and *The Choice is Yours!*²⁸ Two Eurobarometer surveys confirm the findings of these domestic studies.²⁹ The surveys conducted in Bulgaria by the NCPOP among 800 children aged 12 to 18, parents, teachers, Internet providers and Internet cafe administrators, studied the knowledge and attitudes towards online safety for children. Comparative analysis of the results from the two surveys shows that there is no radical change in the attitudes and behaviour of young people. The Internet is used on a daily basis by 91% of the respondents. Children use the Internet predominantly at home. Over the last three years the number of children who use a computer at home has risen from 60% to 77% while the number using Internet at home has increased from 55% to 93%. The most often used Internet applications include downloading information and instant messaging. 98 per cent of children use the Internet primarily for online communication via chat rooms, instant messengers and e-mail (83% in 2006). This is confirmed not only by the children but by parents and Internet administrators alike.

Children are most actively using the Internet between 5 p.m. and midnight which reveals lax control on the part of parents. They regularly encounter potentially shocking contents with pornographic material (58%), virtual invitations for sex (26%) or real life meetings (51%). About half of the participants report

having heard of or participated in potentially dangerous online contacts. Online harassment usually involves requests to children to send pictures of themselves (in 88% of cases), trying to negotiate an in-person meeting (76%), requests for personal data and contact information (74%), starting an open conversation about sex (68%) or sending pornography (38%). The percentage of reported harassment of any of the above types is the same or higher compared to the 2006 survey results. In most cases no reporting occurs when encountering abusive content or indecent proposals on the Internet. This attitude seems informed by the view that such instances are not regular and are not really dangerous. These figures reveal not only the expanse and intensification of Internet usage but are also indicative of the fact that an overwhelming majority of children do not have any explicit limitations in using the Internet.

Almost 93% of respondents in the 2009 NCPOP national survey state that they are aware of online risks and 86.6% are familiar with recommendations for safe Internet use (compared to 52% and 42% respectively in the 2006 survey). Nevertheless, participants in the survey say that over the past year they have started an acquaintance over the Internet with an average of 53 people. When meeting someone online 58% of children reveal their real name while 73% send pictures or videos of themselves. About half of the participants report having heard of or participated in such potentially dangerous online contacts with 15% of the cases ending with in-person meetings. Around 15% of the respondents in both surveys identify as serious risks revealing personal data and online contacts, involvement in pornographic materials production or exposure to such, sexually explicit conversations and paedophiles. Nonetheless, 19% of the children went to an in-person meeting with someone they met on the Internet on their own while 32% were accompanied by friends, classmates or siblings. It should be noted that in comparison to 2006, the percentage of children who go to such meetings alone has dropped from 27% to 19% while the number of those who do not accept offers for real life meetings has risen from 33% to 49%. Friends are the main reference group for instances of such contacts (87% of cases). Parents are informed only when serious situations arise. 45 per cent of the participants do not recognize meeting someone online and soon after in real life as potentially dangerous. The general opinion among children, parents and teachers is that online contacts that may lead to in-person meeting may be potentially dangerous primarily for children who are emotionally unstable, traumatized or not very communicative.

An Eurobarometer survey on the knowledge of the rights of the child, the extent to which these rights were protected and what actions should be taken as a priority to improve the realisation of child rights at national and European levels, also shows that Bulgarian children are lagging behind their peers in other member states in terms of their level of awareness of the dangers of sexual abuse and exploitation of children (including the dangers of online abuse). 38 per cent of the respondents in member states considered sexual exploitation of children to be the main problem to be addressed at national level. In comparison, although 30% of respondents in Bulgaria prioritize violence against children as a major problem, only 21% think that sexual exploitation of children should be tackled as a priority at national level. It should be noted that a large percentage of respondents (88%) consider the provision of information (e.g. through information campaigns, or via the creation of a website) a priority action at the European level to promote and protect the rights of the child. With this respect, Bulgaria ranks sixth with 94% of the respondents prioritizing this action.

PARENTS

The two National Center for Public Opinion Polls surveys and a flash Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2008 show that like children, Bulgarian parents are equally unprepared to identify or deal with potential online risks for their children.³⁰ Most parents do not see using the Internet as potentially dangerous because this is done from a computer at home. This is automatically perceived as ensuring some safety.

In terms of strategies for parental supervision when children use the Internet, 75% of parents in the EU state they always or very frequently talked with their son or daughter about what they are doing online. In comparison, only 22% of Bulgarian parents regularly talk to their children about this and 17% have never discussed such issues. Parents in Bulgaria are not likely to regularly supervise their child when using the Internet (e.g. sit nearby or next to their child) or check what they have done online (e.g. checking the history file is done regularly by 17% only while 36% have never done this). Parents in almost all member states are not likely to regularly check whether their child had a profile on a social networking site (30% average with 45% for Bulgaria).

Bulgarian parents' concerns and awareness about online risks are still not satisfactory. The biggest risk in parents' eyes (43%) is that their child might see violent or sexually explicit images on the Internet (25% were very worried). In terms of inappropriate contacts, parents are most worried that their child could become a victim of online grooming (45%). In terms of offering assistance to children, in 61% of cases children are likely to ask their parents for help with a technical problem like virus protection. Meanwhile only a minority of the respondents (mere 3%) said that their child asked for their help with an Internet-related problem connected to being contacted online by a stranger or having found violent or sexually explicit images on the Internet. Parents in all EU member states most often think of the police when asked how they would report illegal or harmful content seen on the Internet – 71% of the respondents in the survey conducted for Bulgaria gave this response. 48 per cent state they would report such content to the safer Internet hotline <http://web112.net> set up for this purpose.

Despite being aware of possible dangers posed by the Internet, Bulgarian parents are not proactive in looking for solutions for prevention of online risks. Half of the European parents who participated in the 2008 Eurobarometer survey answer that they have installed filtering software on the computer that their child uses at home. Monitoring software is not as popular, but is still used by almost four out of 10 parents (37%). In comparison, only 5% of Bulgarian parents use such software and almost 80% of children participating in the 2009 NCPOP survey report that there is no filtering or monitoring software installed on the computer at home. The major reasons for not using filtering or monitoring software by Bulgarian parents are that they simply see no need for using such as they trust their child (55%) while 20% do not know how to access and use such programs.

In terms of proposed measures or actions to improve Internet safety and its effective use by children, a large majority of Bulgarian parents agree that more awareness raising campaigns about online risks (82%) or providing more advice for parents on the websites that children visit (85%) would contribute to this end. Bulgarian parents most often think that more and better teaching and guidance about Internet use in schools would contribute to safer and more effective use of the Internet by children (88%). Training sessions organized for parents by NGOs, the government or local authorities are considered to be the least efficient way to achieve this goal (70%). 81 per cent of respondents point that more strict regulation for businesses that produce online content and provide online services is very important while 68% agree that improvements in the availability or the performance of monitoring software would contribute to a safer and more effective use of the Internet by their child.

The results from the surveys conducted on EU level and domestically suggest that despite their general awareness of Internet-use-related dangers, online risks are seen as a potential rather than a real threat both by children and adults. Both groups admit they need support in order to improve Internet safety and its effective use by children. However, solutions and help are usually expected from outside the family – e.g. from friends, the school system, ICT businesses, CSOs and government structures, mostly the law enforcement authorities. This does not necessarily mean that young people and parents abdicate from their responsibility for keeping children safe online. It reflects certain trends in Bulgarian society.

BULGARIAN SOCIETY AND ONLINE CHILD EXPLOITATION

No study on the general public attitudes and awareness of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children in Bulgaria has been identified. The main purpose of the representative analysis of the way Bulgarian media report on child pornography and child abuse conducted within this study, was to identify patterns and attitudes towards the problem and to try to identify existing gaps in the general public response to online child exploitation and child pornography in particular.³¹

The media analysis shows that the Bulgarian public is well aware of the role of the Internet in the expansion of child pornography and abuse. The public feels strongly about paedophilia, child pornography and sexual abuse as serious and shameful crimes. However, although the media always cover broadly all public awareness raising initiatives and local and national police operations for breaking paedophile networks, online risks for Bulgarian children are still not a priority problem in the eyes of the public. Most publications and reports come as a result of events initiated by law enforcement authorities or civil society. The subject is not regularly covered as part of the problems related to child protection in Bulgaria. Limited attention is given to popularizing the existing Safer Internet hotline <http://web112.net> and the Bulgarian Safer Internet Awareness Node <http://www.safenet.bg> or filtering software like the free and easy to use program *Child Defender* (available at <http://www.childdef.com>)³², developed especially to meet the needs of Bulgarian parents.

The use of the Internet by paedophiles for sexual exploitation of children in Bulgaria is seen as an exception rather than the rule and is related most often to the abuse of Roma children. Most materials cover sporadic production and distribution of child pornography and sexual abuse of children but the risks of meeting strangers online and grooming are still not broadly publicized or discussed. The general attitude is that online sexual exploitation and abuse happens in other European countries but not at home. One of the reasons for this attitude is that there has been no widely publicized case of child abuse resulting from online grooming. This attitude may also be supported by statements of law enforcement authorities that Internet-use-related crimes against children are still not large in numbers and that most police operations on such have been successful. The misleading perception of the seriousness of the problem of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children in Bulgaria is also due to the limited information available on the profile of paedophiles and consumers of child pornography. Several materials cover the profile of the victims of online sexual exploitation and the consequences of the abuse, but there is an evident lack of information about online child abusers as well as methods and strategies for keeping children safe from them.

Although the media often publicize information on online safety, they are usually strongly opposing any suggestion for measures related to stricter regulation for businesses producing online content and providing online services. This is usually seen as a covert attempt to abuse legal provisions. With relation to restrictions, media are generally more worried about censorship and protection of personal data than about the flood of harmful or illegal content (like openly available and abusive child pornography materials). Even though media publications educate the public that the Internet is the major tool for creation and functioning of paedophile networks, they rarely mention the existence and essence of filtering and monitoring software. This leaves the general impression that the public recognizes threats to free speech and use of the Internet as a more serious problem than keeping children safe online.

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM

EU member states are bound to protect, respect and promote the rights of the child under international and European treaties, in particular the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.³³ Other important binding documents for Bulgaria are the European Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA on combating the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse from 2007 which is still not ratified by Bulgaria and the Council of Europe Convention on Cyber Crimes ratified in 2005.³⁴

Following the 2006 European Commission Communication '*Towards a Strategy on the Rights of the Child*', in 2007 the Commission asked the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) to develop indicators to measure how child rights are implemented, protected, respected and promoted across the EU. The adopted indicators were presented in a FRA Report on Developing Indicators for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of the Child in the European Union.³⁵ The document and action are targeting economic and sexual exploitation of children. It provides a special group of indicators on *Sexual and Economic Exploitation of Children* that captures the following main categories of action: prevention, protection and prosecution for perpetrators and identification of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. It is important to note that these indicators should be seen as a starting point, requiring ongoing update and expansion. However, they also give a useful framework for evaluation of the impact of existing legislation and policy on online sexual exploitation and abuse of children. The review of the situation in Bulgaria presented below is analysing also some additional important categories of action, namely coordination and cooperation and child participation.³⁶

Despite the fact that online sexual exploitation is not still perceived as a major child protection problem in Bulgaria, several initiatives addressing the new forms of Internet crimes undertaken over the past five years have been identified. These include information campaigns for online safety targeting children and parents, the adoption of appropriate legislation, the establishment of Internet-related crimes police unit and the Public Council for fighting illegal and harmful content on the Internet, the creation of a hotline for reporting child pornography and other inappropriate material on the Internet and a number of websites offering safer Internet use information, advice, materials and a free filtering software. With few exceptions, these initiatives implemented through various international, national and local NGOs projects for raising awareness and training, lacked continuity, consistency and coordination, as well as the active involvement of state and municipal authorities necessary to ensure long-term and efficient actions against online sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

The identified initiatives fall within the following broad categories of action reflecting the stages of the process for child protection on the Internet.

PREVENTION

Prevention efforts have focussed most notably on awareness raising campaigns. The first high profile national awareness campaign *Child in the Web* was implemented in 2006 by Partners Bulgaria Foundation in partnership with SACP, the British Embassy in Bulgaria and McCann Erickson.³⁷ The 2009 campaign *It's Your Choice* is part of the rolling European safer Internet campaign *Let's Have Control!* The campaign is initiated by two Bulgarian Members of the European Parliament and is implemented in partnership with the Bulgarian Safer Internet Awareness Node, SACP and Partners Bulgaria. Campaign

activities involved surveys, public events, video broadcasting and printed materials distribution. Many useful and easy to access and use materials for children, parents and teachers are available online at the website of the Awareness Node <http://safenet.bg> and the website of Children in the Net project <http://safeweb.partnersbg.org>.

A very interesting example of public-private partnership are the annual awareness campaigns "*Children Safe on the Internet*" organised from 2006 on by Microsoft Bulgaria and one of the biggest Bulgarian children web portal – Az-deteto.com in partnership with other businesses, public authorities, the Public Council on Safer Internet Use in Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Hotline for Illegal and Harmful Content on the Internet.³⁸ The campaigns aimed at raising children`s (aged 6 to 16) and parents` awareness of the risks posed by new ICTs by promoting child participation in identifying useful advice and information on safer Internet use collected in a guidebook for children and parents. Microsoft has also developed a free educational program for interactive training of children for safer use of the web and online communication.³⁹ The program is available at <http://www.teacher.bg>.

Another initiative for prevention of child sexual abuse in the online environment aimed at bringing the topic in schools and thus ensuring greater efficiency and sustainability. Within the framework of the "*Virtual and Real Violence – Prevention through Interactive Training in Schools*" project⁴⁰ a Toolkit for trainers with 25 modules for working with students in secondary and high school was developed. The modules address through interactive training various issues related to identification and coping with virtual and real-life violence. The toolkit was accredited by the Institute of Psychology at the Bulgarian Academy of Science and approved by the MoES for use in the mainstream school system. The Toolkit was piloted and introduced in a number of schools in Sofia but is still to be spread for use in other regions of the country.

ECPAT International has been represented in Bulgaria for ten years now through its affiliate member - Neglected Children Society. Bulgaria has been involved in a number of initiatives together with other ECPAT International members and other child protection organizations. These included preparation of reports and building the capacity of public authorities and institutions and civil society organisations for prevention of sexual exploitation of children.⁴¹ Attention was concentrated mainly on prevention of trafficking of children but the opportunity provided by the membership in this international organisation might be used in future international projects focusing on supporting the capacities specifically for prevention of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children in Bulgaria.

The comparative analysis of the results from the two NCPOP surveys as well as the media analysis discussed above show that despite awareness raising activities run regularly over the past four years, much needs to be done in order to ensure behaviour change and online safety for children. This survey did not identify any practice or plans to bring Online Safety information and awareness raising as a mandatory part of the regular school curriculum (e.g. to coincide with IT training). Most initiatives undertaken so far were dependent on full financing or co-funding from outside sources (the EC Safer Internet program or other donor organizations).

Future awareness raising and knowledge developing efforts are needed. Those should focus specifically on dangers related to protection of children from sexual exploitation and abuse on the Internet as well as the reality of the risks of abuse spilling over from virtual to real life. It is necessary to provide more information on the profile of the offenders as well as raising public awareness of the serious character of crimes related to online sexual abuse of children and child pornography in particular.

PROTECTION

The major national legislation and policy documents in the context of which the problem is addressed in Bulgaria are the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Penal Code, the Child Protection Act, the Electronic Communications Act and national child protection programs.

The Constitution bestows equal rights and protection for all citizens. The Child Protection Act provides for protection and guarantees for child rights in all spheres of public life for all children. In 2007 amendments to the Penal Code were introduced, incriminating computer crimes related to the use of the Internet for molestation, coercing or forcing a minor or under-aged person into sexual interactions or prostitution (Art. 155a) and child pornography, especially for profit making (Art. 159). These legal provisions made it possible to penalise such crimes. It should be noted that the Penal Code criminalizes the mere possession of pornographic material involving children, and not only the possession of such material for the purpose of distribution. Although the existing legal provisions criminalise the production, distribution and possession of child pornography, the legal measures offer inadequate protection against grooming and online molestation. Bulgarian legislation requires further reform to meet international standards.

At present, the legal definition of child pornography is unclear and not comprehensive. It is not clear whether it considers all of the broad elements described as child pornography in documents signed or ratified by Bulgaria that are setting international standards. The definition and penalties provided in Bulgarian legislation are not adequate to the seriousness of the offence. Grooming is still not mentioned in any legal document. All these make prosecution of perpetrators inefficient. Further improvement and amendments of Bulgarian law is needed to include a clear definition of child pornography consistent with documents setting international standards in order to ensure the incrimination of all acts of producing, distributing, disseminating, importing, exporting, offering, selling and possessing child pornography, grooming as well as online molestation.

There are no legal provisions requiring Internet service providers, mobile phone companies, search engines and other relevant businesses to report to the authorities and remove websites and services containing child pornography, including chat rooms where "grooming" of children occurs. There is an apparent lack of policy and legal provisions for providing care and psychological support to children victims of child pornography such as child-friendly interviewing, protection from privacy infringements by the media, psychological treatment etc.

The first and only National Action Plan against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children for the period 2003 – 2005 was adopted and implemented by the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP). The Plan addressed the various manifestations of CSEC and envisaged activities in five main areas – prevention, protection, rehabilitation and reintegration, child participation and provision of information and international cooperation. The Minister of Interior Affairs and the SACP Chairperson were jointly responsible for coordinating its implementation. This research did not find any evidence that implementation of this policy document was funded by the State and was monitored by an independent body. At present the only national policy document referring to prevention of violence against children is the 2009 National Program for Child protection. Priority area IV: *Protection from all forms of abuse, violence and exploitation* includes several actions for raising public awareness on the risks related to Internet use, development of services targeting prevention of violence against children and rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of violence and abuse. No publicly available reports of implementation of the National Plan and the National Program were found.

The growing threat of the expansion of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children was recognised in Bulgaria and a specialized investigative unit on cyber crimes within the Criminal Police Directorate for Fighting Organized Crime was created. The Cyber Crimes Unit deals with any type of criminal activity related to illegal or harmful content on the web ranging from protection of intellectual property rights and personal data to crimes against children like downloading, trading and sharing child pornography. A special team within the Unit works on cases of distribution of pornography and paedophilia on the Internet.⁴² The Cyber Crimes Unit has had a number of high profile successful raids for breaking paedophile networks both as part of local or international operations that led to seizure of large amount of pornographic materials and pressing charges to a large number of abusers. However, the same small team is also responsible for online threats as well as terrorist, Nazi and xenophobia propaganda in cyber space. Moreover, the local police units are not prepared to address cyber crimes against children and a lot of cases are referred to the Team. Despite the professional record of the work of the Cyber Crimes Unit on fighting pornography and child molestation, the limited resources of Team III are not sufficient to ensure the successful prevention of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

Bulgarian CSOs have been engaged in protection of children from online sexual exploitation not only through awareness raising and training projects. In 2005 the Bulgarian Internet Hotline for Fighting Illegal and Harmful for Children Content on the Internet – <http://web112.net> was built by the Applied Research and Communications Fund within the framework of the *Safe-Net BG* project, co-financed by the Safer Internet Programme of the European Commission. The institutional framework for the hotline's operation already exists and national responsibilities with regard to safer Internet have been defined. The hotline is managed by Applied Research and Communications Foundation in partnership with the State Agency for Information Technologies and Communications, SACP, MoI and MoES, and operates under the general supervision of the Public Council on Safer Internet Use in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian hotline is one of the few East European members of the International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE – www.inhope.org) – a network of more than 30 Internet hotlines around the world.

The Bulgarian Safer Internet Hotline enables local Internet users to report harmful and illegal content disseminated over the Internet and has a special focus on child pornography and child sexual abuse. Using the resources of the hotline (online reporting facility, trained operators, operational channel to refer reports to police authorities), the main objective of the operator is to raise public awareness on the risks for children on the Internet. The hotline provides a reporting facility, tracing reported content and transmitting the information to the police, to other institutions concerned, to other Hotlines or contacting the content owner to negotiate the removal of harmful content in cases when it is not illegal.

A number of other options for reporting sexual abuse and exploitation of children are available though these have not been so popularly promoted. A special website of SACP – <http://www.stopech.sacp.government.bg> provides both information on commercial sexual exploitation of children and an online signal form for reporting cases of such. The special website of the Cyber Crimes Police Unit – www.cybercrimes.bg built with the help of students from Sofia provides another channel for reporting illegal or harmful child sexual abuse content.

Using special monitoring or filtering software as a means for protection of children is still not very popular in Bulgaria. The major reasons for not using filtering or monitoring software by Bulgarian parents are that they often see no need for using such or do not know how to access and use such programs. Addressing the need for an easy to use software program adapted for filtering Cyrillic as well as Latin, the Bulgarian organisation Delfin Foundation has developed a specialised free filtering program – *Child Defender*. The program gives parents a tool to protect their children when they use the Internet. It gives the opportunity to make a list of websites that cannot be accessed. This process is based on selecting a number of

forbidden key words in the content of the titles. The program gives options for control of the time spans for use of the computer and the Internet as well as recording and monitoring websites visited by the user. The filtering program can be downloaded at <http://www.childdef.com>. The website provides easy to follow instructions for installation and use as well as useful information on safer Internet use.

Bulgaria is a partner in a two-year-long Forensic Images and Video Examination Support (FIVES) project – an international initiative funded by six European partners and co-funded by the Safer Internet Programme of the EC.⁴³ The Institute of Information Technologies at the Academy of Science is the lead Bulgarian partner. The Bulgarian Cyber Crimes Unit will be involved at certain stages of the project like studying user requirements and end-user testing. The project aims at supporting law enforcement authorities' work on fighting online CSEC. The project brings together the knowledge and experience of partners from special police units, academia and businesses to improve the tools available to law enforcement authorities in the area of child sexual abuse investigation. The international team will develop novel investigative tools specifically tailored for investigations involving images and videos of child sexual abuse. The FIVES tool set is set to improve the speed and efficiency of work through:

- Speeding up the process of handling very large amounts of evidence material on seized computers, and separating previously known illegal material from new, potentially illegal, material by efficient file and file fragment matching;
- Efficiently evaluating large amounts of new material by employing perceptual optimization techniques. This aims to minimize the human effort needed when classifying new material;
- Improving the capability of linking new illegal images and video to previously known material by using object matching and image similarity techniques to allow details of crime scenes to be linked between different image sets or videos. This facilitates the widening of investigations with the aim of rescuing the victims of sexual abuse.

Although the project is at its initial stage it will definitely be beneficial for supporting the work of the small team of the Cyber Crimes Department that works on crimes against children.

IDENTIFICATION OF VICTIMS, REHABILITATION AND CHILD PARTICIPATION

So far most of the efforts were concentrated on prevention through awareness raising or supporting parents and law enforcement authorities in protecting children from online exploitation or abuse. The research did not find any good practice in terms of identification of victims, rehabilitation for children victims of online exploitation and abuse. No data collection, research or detection mechanism (e.g. systematic training of child protection or education authorities) to identify children at risk of sexual exploitation was found. However, few initiatives addressing these aspects were identified. In 2009 a specialised room for hearing children victims of violence and witnesses of crimes was opened by the Social Activities and practices Institute at the Sofia Central Police Department.⁴⁴ This is the third specialised room for child-friendly hearing opened after the ones at the Complexes for Social Services in Pazardzhik and Shumen.

The specialised rooms would allow children to be interviewed only once, in the presence of a mental health professional and in friendly surroundings. The usage of such a room for child interviewing decreases the risk of secondary traumatizing effects for the child and at the same time increases the possibility for gathering more and precise information and evidence material which on its turn provides for effective law enforcement and justice provision. In addition, this practice requires that both parents and children should be informed about the procedures and their rights. There is still no sufficient information

on the efficiency and the results from the use of the room but it is definitely necessary to expand the network of such specialized facilities into the common practice around the country.

A number of help lines and centres that provide psychological support to children victims of violence exist in the country. However, no information on coordination of the work of the Safer Internet hotline and the telephone help lines or the use of the centres' services for rehabilitation of children molested on the Internet and/or later in real life was publicly available.

Children have been involved in awareness raising campaigns through a number of activities ranging from identifying useful advice and information for children and parents on safer Internet use, production of the video materials used in the 2009 awareness campaign and the building of the website of the Cyber Crimes Unit www.cybercrime.bg with the participation of high school students.

COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

Taking into account that online sexual exploitation is a very lucrative industry and we still do not know the real face and extend of the problem in Bulgaria, it is obvious that law enforcement authorities do not have the capacity to prevent this criminal business from taking root in the country. They need the assistance and cooperation of all stakeholders – national authorities, civil society, children and their parents to restrict the distribution of harmful and illegal content on the Internet.

The research identified a shared understanding that there is efficient coordination and cooperation between the Cyber Crimes Unit and the Safer Internet hotline as well as between the latter two and the owners of the main free hosting servers. This is also proven by the results of the work of the hotline published in ARC's annual reports. All signals that have been forwarded to the police for further action have been addressed. Bulgarian police has participated in a number of successful international operations for investigating premises, organized groups and channels of production and distribution of child pornography and breaking paedophile networks. Bulgaria is also a partner in the FIVES project which brings partners from law-enforcement, academia and businesses in five European countries to work together to share experience and through cooperative effort enhance the tools available to law enforcement in the area of child sexual abuse investigations. Other identified examples of existing cooperation are the public awareness raising campaigns implemented in partnership between state authorities and CSOs. A notable illustration of such collaboration are the annual campaigns organised in a public-private partnership with big ICTs companies.

At present the only existing coordination mechanism is the National Public Council on Safer Internet Use in Bulgaria established in 2006.⁴⁵ The Council members represent all major legislative and executive government institutions and agencies, civil society organisations, computer industry representative associations and mobile phone networks. ARC Foundation which operates the Bulgarian Safer Internet Hotline functions also as a Secretariat of the Public Council. The Council can be a powerful leverage for driving the changes needed to improve the system for prevention and protection of children from online sexual exploitation and abuse. Although the research found existing partnerships and eagerness for communication between all parties that have been so far involved in working on the problem, no publicly available information on a common agenda for action ensuring sustainability of efforts and results was identified. Acknowledging the existence of instances of cooperation, it is evident that much remains to be done in building the capacities for strengthening the cooperation and active involvement of all stakeholders.

The research identified some foreign best practices that have been replicated in Bulgaria and two successful home initiatives based on international experience that can be built upon to ensure sustainability in the long run. The identified good practices discussed in the Best Practice Collection chapter aimed at raising awareness and providing a tool for proactive response of the public to the problems of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children. The review did not find any examples of good practice regarding legislation, policy, structures or practice to meet the range of issues facing children in the process of protection from or prosecution of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children. Despite the existing experience and opportunities, there are still many challenges. The achievements and lessons learned should be built upon in order to strengthen the system for prevention and protection of children from online risks. Duty bearers – government institutions responsible for child protection, Internet service providers and ICTs related businesses, parents and communities should all be involved in drafting a common agenda that should outline the most urgent steps to be taken in order to improve the national response to online sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our society and the Bulgarian government need to recognize that crimes against children are changing very quickly because of the advancement of ICTs, particularly on-line technology. The protection of children and young people in cyber space is as essential as in any other environment. Effective legislation and services must be provided to meet the dynamics of changes and challenges in order to safeguard children.

The above findings demonstrate that Bulgarian authorities, CSOs and the public have made the first steps to address the issues of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children. However, these actors are at the initial stage of developing and conceptualising a comprehensive approach to prevention and protection of children from the new risks posed by the spread and advancement of new ICTs. Based on the outlined challenges and opportunities present for speeding up the efforts and building upon the existing experience in the country, the following suggested recommendations were outlined. They are mainly aimed at improving structural areas, as opposed to identifying existing gaps. The primary aim of the recommendations is to facilitate action that will bring improved public awareness, as well as the development of a common agenda for actions and support from all major actors.

These recommendations should be seen as an attempt to facilitate the process of formulation of a common agenda. This means that the document can be used by all stakeholders for the formulation of a shared strategy outlining the priorities and actions needed to improve the system for prevention of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children through a concerted effort of the Bulgarian government, CSOs, international organisations, media, the private sector, the public, parents and children.

RECOMMENDATIONS AIMED AT PREVENTION

Prevention efforts have focussed most notably on awareness raising campaigns. Information campaigns contributed to raising awareness on issues of online safety but the risky behaviour of children perpetuates. A broad range of issues should be also addressed in order to bring changes not only in the knowledge but also the skills and attitudes of children and the public. Attention should be focused on the following issues:

1. Research on the actions and inter-actions of children on the Internet, identification and analysis of the spectrum of potential abuse situations.
2. More awareness efforts should be focussed on the techniques used by abusers for grooming as well as the reality of the risks of virtual molestation that can easily transfer to real-life abuse.
3. Specific groups, such as the consumers of child pornography, seem to not be targeted adequately. Making available the results of research done in other European countries on the abusers' profile and the profile of the crimes will have a two fold effect. It will inform future educational campaigns for children and parents but will also support awareness raising efforts promoting the fact that online sexual abuse and exploitation of children in child pornography is a serious crime. Online sexual abuse and especially child pornography should be recognised by society as a major abuse. Building intolerance of such acts should be supported by emphasising that downloading, viewing, possessing and bartering child abuse images is a serious criminal offence.

4. There is a clear need for prevention programs that go beyond information dissemination and awareness raising. For prevention programs to be effective at reducing abuse, they must be able to provide skills and education to children that transfer to approaches by potential offenders. Therefore, skills presented to children must be broad enough to cover the spectrum of potential abuse situations yet specific enough that children feel competent to use these skills in potential abuse situations. Another important condition for the success of prevention programs is the active involvement of the MoES and the implementation of prevention programs in schools as part of the curricula (either in the Information technologies classes or other forms).
5. Educational campaigns in schools should be supported through training police officers in the country to work in schools presenting issues related to online safety through the eyes of the law enforcement authorities. Thus trust in using existing reporting mechanisms and understanding of online sexual abuse and child pornography as crimes against children can be built.
6. Encouraging the active participation of children and young people in all prevention activities is vital for their success. Engaging public figures and celebrities popular among young people (especially in the 14-18 age group) is a good way to transfer targeted messages for safer Internet use. Motivating peer groups and youth organizations to take active stance and participate in all stages of information and educational campaigns will contribute to the success of such efforts to reach children and young people.
7. Information for parents through independent testing of the effectiveness of filtering software is vital. More awareness campaigns on the need and benefits of filtering software, promotion of the free and easy to use Child Defender program and other prevention methods for parents through involving and encouraging private-public partnership. These actions should also address awareness among parents and children on where to report illegal or harmful content or unwanted online sexual encounters as well as techniques for discussing online safety and online encounters of sexual nature between parents and children.
8. Public control and participation of civil society should be enhanced through information campaigns aimed at raising understanding on the criminal character of all aspects of online sexual abuse and child pornography and building trust in using existing reporting mechanisms.
9. Public-private partnerships (both involving ICTs businesses, CSOs and local authorities) in all projects should be encouraged.

RECOMMENDATIONS AIMED AT PROTECTION

The Bulgarian government and its institutions should take measures to ensure a legal, social and business environment that takes into account child safety and protection when using the Internet and other new ICTs.

1. Bulgaria should ratify the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse from 2007.
2. Although legislation changes per se are not exclusively the major barrier to tackling the problem, in order to improve the system for prevention and fighting online sexual abuse and child pornography legislation needs to be amended.

The legal definitions of child pornography and online molestation should be more clear and comprehensive so that they reflect all aspects of such crimes and meet international standards set by up-to-date documents such as the Cyber Crimes Convention. The definitions and penalties provided in Bulgarian legislation should be more adequate to the seriousness of the offence. Grooming should also be criminalized. All these measures would make prosecution of perpetrators more efficient.

Legal provisions should exist, requiring Internet service providers, mobile phone companies, search engines and other relevant businesses to introduce measures for control of illegal and harmful content, to report to the authorities and remove websites and services containing child pornography, including in social network sites and chat rooms where "grooming" of children occurs.

The Electronic Communications Act protects the public from abuse of authority in accessing and using personal data. But the provisions make the procedure for acquiring data from ISPs cumbersome thus hindering the work of law enforcement. Provisions should be made in cases of child abuse or attempts at such to reduce the cumbersome procedure regulated by art. 251 for collecting and keeping personal data as well as the use of such under the regulations of the Special Intelligence and Reconnaissance Means Act and the Criminal Procedure Code.

A consistent policy and legal provisions for providing care and psychological support to children victim of child pornography such as child-friendly interviewing, protection from privacy infringements by the media, psychological treatment etc. should be developed.

3. Bulgarian ISPs, web content and mobile communication providers should enhance child protection measures through new technology. Support for industry self-regulatory initiatives in the area of content rating of websites and online services like social networking, blogging and instant messaging and mobile phones should be ensured. ISPs should be motivated to offer and install as part of a standard protocol filtering software for home users where there is a child using the Internet.
4. Bulgarian social networking sites should join the first European agreement on Social Networking signed by the EC and seventeen of the leading web companies on the Safer Internet Day – 10 Feb. 2009.⁴⁶ The signatories have recognised their responsibility and identified potential risks on their sites for people aged under 18. These include cyberbullying (harassing children on Internet sites or via mobile messages), grooming (when an adult befriends a child with the intention of committing sexual abuse) and risky behaviour like revealing personal information. They aim to limit these risks by:
 - Providing an easy to use and accessible "report abuse" button, allowing users to report inappropriate contact from or conduct by another user with one click.
 - Making sure that the full online profiles and contact lists of website users who are registered as under 18s are set to "private" by default. This will make it harder for people with bad intentions to get in touch with the young person.
 - Ensuring that private profiles of users under the age of 18 are not searchable (on the websites or via search engines)
 - Guaranteeing that privacy options are prominent and accessible at all times, so that users can easily work out if just their friends, or the entire world, can see what they post online.
 - Preventing under-age users from using their services: if a social networking site targets teenagers over 13, it should be difficult for people below that age to register.
5. Prevention and fighting online sexual abuse and child pornography should be a clearly stated national priority in the annual National Programs for Child protection with clearly allocated responsibilities and resources as well as indicators for monitoring and evaluation. The Program can utilise and build upon

the common indicators for the implementation, protection, respect and promotion of child rights across the EU adopted by the EC.

6. There is a clear need for building the capacity of the Cyber Crimes Unit and the police in general through ensuring more resources (both material and human), providing training for police officers in the country to work in schools on educational campaigns and building and supporting a 24/7 Contact point that allows uninterrupted reporting to Mol and/or referral to other hotlines or law enforcement units for ensuring timely action.
7. The Bulgarian Internet Hotline for Fighting Illegal and Harmful for Children Content in Internet should be supported and popularised. Ensuring the sustainability of the work and the quality of operation of the Hotline should be a matter of public support and not funded through donor funds only. Ongoing promotion of trust in the services provided by the Hotline in local Internet users to report incidences of harmful and illegal content disseminated over the Internet or online abuse, with a special focus on child pornography and child sexual abuse.
8. The Bulgarian Hotline and National Awareness Node should be utilised to function as a knowledge hub offering resources and coordinating signals for online abuse and incidences of harmful and illegal content disseminated over the Internet.

RECOMMENDATIONS AIMED AT IDENTIFICATION OF VICTIMS, REHABILITATION AND CHILD PARTICIPATION

1. Introducing and utilizing special software helping police work (for example through projects like FIVES) should be supported through public and donor funds.
2. Child-friendly interviewing of victims of abuse following up-to-date European and world best practices should be introduced as a routine procedure in the work of law enforcement authorities. Children should be interviewed, if not explicitly necessary, only once. The interviewing should be done not by police officers but by specially formed and trained multidisciplinary teams of child psychologists and social workers. These teams should be trained not only in child-friendly interviewing techniques but will also take testimonies and collect evidence. The interviewing should take place in child-friendly premises specially equipped for audio and video recording. Special attention should be given to training these specialists to support police and judicial authorities when working with children victims of abuse.
3. Services should be developed and sufficient resources ensured for rehabilitation of victims of child sexual abuse, including of online CSEC.
4. Children and young people should be actively involved in all activities – from research to development of any materials used in awareness raising or educational campaigns.

RECOMMENDATIONS AIMED AT COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

1. In the fight against cyber crime, a co-ordinated approach across society is vital. Information sharing cross-industry, is the only way the risks can be dealt with effectively. The computer industry, mobile phone networks, police, social services, CSOs and governments must share information, research and experience in order to meet the increased threat.

2. Multi-stakeholder coordination is needed – coordinated action is vital to resolve the fragmented approach taken so far.
3. Assistance and cooperation of all stakeholders – national authorities, civil society, children and their parents to restrict the distribution of harmful and illegal content on the Internet.
4. State responses alone will never be sufficient. A multi-stakeholder approach is recognised as essential to upholding children's right to access to information but also to protection from harm. Such an approach emphasises the need for corporate citizens as well as governments and civil society to take their responsibilities seriously.
5. The National Awareness Node operated by ARC Fund which is also Secretariat of the Public Council on Safer Internet Use should be utilised to function as a knowledge hub coordinating efforts. A protocol ensuring that all help lines work together and re-direct signals for online abuse and incidences of harmful and illegal content disseminated over the Internet to the National hotline should be developed and adopted.
6. Public-private partnerships (both involving ICTs businesses, CSOs and local authorities) in all aspects of work for prevention and fighting online sexual abuse and child pornography should be supported and encouraged.
7. The National Public Council on Safer Internet Use in Bulgaria be supported and utilised as a powerful leverage for consensus building of a common agenda for action ensuring sustainability of efforts and results.

This research set out to provide an overview of the system in a report that is intended to be a working document. The purpose of the report and the methodology applied is for the document to be used as an opportunity to raise awareness, make online sexual exploitation and abuse a priority in child protection policy, and initiate the process of consensus building of a shared agenda for improving the system for protection of children from online sexual exploitation and abuse.

BEST PRACTICE COLLECTION

The proposed best practice initiatives have been selected after a careful consideration of existing practices, projects and experiences in Eastern Europe, executed through a desk review of primary and secondary data⁴⁷. Three spheres concerning child pornography online were examined, namely – prevention, reaction and rehabilitation of victims. Although still scarce, most of the efforts understandably, are concentrated on prevention.

Our team decided to focus on describing positive experiences in two countries – Poland and Bulgaria, respectively two raising awareness campaigns, project, targeting adolescents and children and a website. All four examples are easy to replicate – and the two campaigns already have been – are recent, and proved to be effective. They are described concisely in order to ease the reader. Implementing organisations (Nobody's Children Foundation and ARC Fund), however are ready to cooperate and provide more detailed information, if necessary. These descriptions are based on information provided through presentations, on the organisations' websites and in the organisations' annual reports, as well as on interviews with their staff members.



NOBODY'S CHILDREN FOUNDATION

ABOUT THE ORGANISATION

The Nobody's Children Foundation / Fundacja Dzieci Niczyje (FDN) is a Polish non-governmental, non-profit organisation, whose aim is to protect children from abuse and to provide psychological, medical and legal help for abused children and their families/caregivers. In particular, FDN works towards improving the situation of children who participate in legal procedures as witnesses; it also implements preventive activities to reduce Internet-related threats to children. To these ends the organisation implements large-scale awareness raising and advocacy campaigns. Two of them are described below as cases of best practice – the *Child: Witness with Special Needs* campaign and the *Child on the Web* campaign.

CHILD: WITNESS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CAMPAIGN

1.1. INCEPTION

The inception of the *Child: Witness with Special Needs* campaign started in 2004 and was based on identifying the need to change the practices of interviewing children during legal proceedings. Due to previous experience in this field, FDN was able to observe that it was necessary to raise awareness on child witness' needs among judges, prosecutors and psychologists participating in legal cases involving children. These observations were substantiated by statistical data from the Polish Ministry of Justice on child victims' interviews.

The campaign was based on the understanding that within the framework of the legal proceedings the child should be treated as a witness with special needs. He or she does not understand the procedures, may feel guilty, and is afraid about the potential consequences of accusing a close relative or another significant person. This calls for arranging interviews in child-friendly places and adjusting the interview's form to children's psychological states and levels of development. Ideally, children should be interviewed only once, in the presence of a mental health professional and in friendly surroundings. In addition, both parents and children should be informed about their rights.

The campaign was also prompted by the changes in the Polish Code of Criminal Proceeding from 10 January 2003, which stated that children who suffered or witnessed crimes should be interviewed only once throughout the whole procedure, and the role of the present psychologist became more active. In addition, it was in accord with the EU regulations and particularly with the Framework Decision of 15 March 2001 on the standing of victims in criminal proceedings.

1.2. OBJECTIVES

The general objective of the campaign was to sensitize professionals to the situation of a child witness in criminal proceedings.

1.3. ACTIVITIES



The first stage of the campaign, funded by the PHARE Programme, started in 2004 under the slogan 'Your Honour, I'm scared'. Its implementation took about one and a half years.

In the very beginning FDN contacted a professional advertising agency and negotiated its *pro bono* cooperation. The agency prepared all the visual materials for the campaign (posters, leaflets, etc.) following closely FDN's ideas. Thus, FDN had a leading role in the decisions concerning promotion – i.e., the organisation had the final word in the approval of all the materials. Eventually, the agency won an award for the campaign.

The main activities of the first stage included publication and dissemination of promotion materials and information. In collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, the materials were forwarded to all courts and prosecution offices in Poland. They were also distributed among the interested institutions and NGOs. In

addition, a number of workshops and seminars with judges, psychologists and prosecutors were conducted.

The second stage started in 2007 and ended in March 2008 under the slogan 'Your Honour, I have the right not to be scared'. It was funded both by EU funds and by Polish funds (NGO Fund, Civil Initiatives Fund).

The activities of the second stage replicated on a wider scale the activities of the first stage. Thus, in addition to the publication and distribution of information and promotion materials, a *Psychology Expert Witnesses' Club* was launched in 2007 with the aims of (1) improving the competence of psychologist, pedagogues, and psychiatrists who work with child victims and witnesses, and (2) providing opportunities for collaboration and exchange of experience, thus consolidating the expert witnesses' community. The activities of the Club include monthly seminars and supervision sessions, as well as distribution of education and awareness raising materials. The meeting takes place in Warsaw, but involves professionals from all over Poland.

Also, in 2007 a *Coalition for Child-Friendly Interviewing* was set up with the aim to advocate for protecting the rights of children involved in legal procedures. The Coalition was directly involved in the campaign through distribution of its publications in stakeholder institutions and among judges, prosecutors, and expert witnesses. It includes institutions and organisations interested in child-friendly interviewing. Among its members are the Ministry of Justice, the National Police Headquarters, the Ombudsman, courts, prosecution offices, police stations, local authority institutions, NGOs and professionals. The Coalition promotes child-friendly interviewing methods and the creation of child-friendly interview rooms. It also supports the improvement of the competence of professionals who work with children in the context of legal proceedings.

1.4. HUMAN RESOURCES

The first stage of the campaign was implemented by a team of two staff members of FDN – a coordinator and an assistant. The second stage was also implemented by a team of two, but they utilised the support

of two other staff members. The qualifications of the people involved were in the fields of sociology, psychology and law.

1.5. OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

The first stage of the campaign produced a number of outputs:

- Seminars and workshops for judges, prosecutors, policemen, and psychologists (expert witnesses in court) were conducted.
- An annual conference was held.
- Posters were printed and distributed in organisations, courts and prosecutors' offices.
- Awareness raising publications were issued – for professionals ('Crime Victims' Rights: European Standards' and 'Child in the Legal Procedures'), for children ('I'm Going to Court'), and for parents/guardians ('When a Child is a Witness in Court').

Building on the results from the first stage, the second stage produced the following outputs:

- Seminars and workshops for judges, prosecutors, and psychologists were conducted.
- Workshops for organisations with friendly interviewing rooms were conducted.
- Calendars and leaflets were issued.
- New publications were printed – for professionals ('How to Interview Children' and 'Friendly Interviewing Children') and for children ('I'll be a Witness in Court').
- A number of meetings of the *Psychology Expert Witnesses' Club* were held.
- A specially designed website (in Polish) was launched: www.dzieckoswiadek.pl. It provides useful information and also hosts a forum, thus facilitating the online exchange of ideas in the field.



The outcomes of the project were measured utilising a number of sources, including:

- questionnaire-based feedback after the workshops and seminars – most often the training events were evaluated as highly relevant and needed;
- the number of members of the *Coalition for Child Friendly Interviewing* – presently 235;
- the number of members in *Psychology Expert Witnesses' Club* – presently more than 100;
- the number of organisations running similar activities in their regions – presently there are such organisations in Gdańsk, Szczecin and Ruda Śląska.

Other sources of information for measuring the outcomes included publications' distribution lists, statistics of website visits, the number of press releases and Internet reports about the campaign and/or about matters concerning child witnesses, the number of child-friendly interviewing rooms in Poland, feedback

from individuals (by phone or on the website's forum), and raising the topic by other institutions (e.g. Parliament, Ombudsman, etc.).

1.6. SUSTAINABILITY AND REPLICATION

One of the main factors for the sustainability of the campaign's results was the active cooperation with the Polish Ministry of Justice. In both stages of the campaign the FDN team drafted the concept in consultations with the Ministry. This partner also played an important role in terms of promotion and distribution of publications.

FDN negotiated with the advertising agency the ownership of the intellectual property rights on the materials, thus making it possible for other interested organisations to replicate them for free. Consequently, the materials were translated in other languages and reprinted, allowing for the campaign to be replicated in 6 other countries – Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Macedonia, Moldova and Ukraine. Foreign partners signed the agreement with FDN concerning the adaptation of the campaign. Partners are responsible for the content of the materials, which should be adapted to their particular circumstances; to keep the visual elements; for conducting the campaign and for finding additional sponsors. Also, the final version needs to be approved by FDN, and some copies of the posters have to be sent to FDN and to the advertising agency which has prepared the campaign. Overall, the partners are expected and are responsible to follow the agreement. FDN is open to share its experience during conferences and site visits, and by the e-mail and telephone.

1.7. CONTACT INFORMATION

- Nobody's Children Foundation (Fundacja Dzieci Niczyje) address: 59 Walecznych st., 03-926 Warszawa, Poland
- Fundacja Dzieci Niczyje Office address: 10 Obrońców st., 03-933 Warszawa, Poland
- Telephone/fax: +48 22 616 02 68, +48 22 616 03 14
- E-mail: fdn@fdn.pl
- Organisation's website: www.fdn.pl
- Campaign's website: www.dzieckoswiadek.pl

CHILD ON THE WEB CAMPAIGN

2.1. INCEPTION

The inception of the *Child on the Web* campaign was based upon a research on the Internet-related attitudes and behaviour of young Internet users (aged 12 – 17), carried out in 2004. The findings showed that children often contact strangers on the Internet, provide them with personal information and receive proposition for meetings. The results from the research were very useful in formulating the goal of the campaign, in creating the media messages and in developing the educational programmes to be implemented within the campaign's framework.

2.2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the campaign were to draw public attention to the threats related to children's use of the Internet and to educate children, young people, parents, and professionals on children's online safety.

2.3. ACTIVITIES

The campaign started in 2004 and since January 2005 has been carried out within the European Commission's *Safer Internet* programme, implemented in cooperation with the Polish *Research and Academic Computer Network* (NASK).

The main activities of the campaign focused on the production and distribution of promotion materials (bookmarks, mouse pads, stickers, leaflets, and posters). FDN relied heavily on outdoor advertising – it used billboards in the 16 biggest Polish cities and displayed posters in intercity trains. Promotion materials were also published in magazines. Yet, the biggest visibility was reached through the broadcasting of TV and radio spots. As in the *Child: Witness with Special Needs*, here too FDN worked with a professional advertising agency on a *pro bono* basis. The organisation had a leading role in formulating the content of the messages, while the agency was responsible for the visual components. The crucial factor for the success of the campaign was the establishment of good working relations with the advertising agency, and particularly the fact that the agency understood the cause and let the NGO lead the process, treating its staff as peers. In addition, FDN managed to negotiate free prime time broadcasting of the TV spots in all public and commercials national TV channels in Poland.



Another important element of the campaign was the production and distribution of educational materials for schools. Lesson plans on children's Internet safety were distributed among primary and secondary schools, providing guidance to the teachers on the ways to approach the problem in the class. They were part of an educational web project for children (www.sieciaki.pl, launched in 2005). Teachers conducting classes on children's safety on the Internet were expected to send reports and class evaluations to the

campaign's office, thus providing feedback on the implementation. All these activities were implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

There were two other major initiatives within the framework of the campaign – the hotline www.dyżurnet.pl, launched by NASK in 2005 to accept reports on illegal Internet content, and the helpline www.helpline.org.pl, launched by FDN in 2007 to provide online support in cases of threats to the youngest Internet users. Finally, in 2007 the 1st International Conference *Keeping Children and Young People Safe Online* was held in Warsaw.

2.4. HUMAN RESOURCES

A team of three persons worked on the campaign, including a psychologist.

2.5. OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS

The main accomplishment of the campaign was its visibility – an Internet survey at its end showed that about 70% of the Polish population recognise its messages. The campaign made the public recognise the problems of the paedophilia on the Internet and it started a nationwide discussion on the issue. The key phrase of the campaign – ‘You never know who’s on the other side’ – became widely known and used in Poland. The images, the audio and video spots and the messages of the campaign became very popular.



As a result of the campaign, in 2007 teachers across Poland reported to have conducted classes on Internet safety attended by more than 33 thousand children.

Also in 2007, the website www.sieciaki.pl had 24 353 new registered users (altogether, by the end of 2007 there were 77 352 registered users). The website was accessed 3 354 380 million times, while its administrators sent 281 messages and 40 guidelines, and organized 50 competitions.

The 1st International Conference *Keeping Children and Young People Safe Online* was attended by nearly 300 people, including representatives of the education sector, NGOs, the justice system, law enforcement bodies and Internet service and content providers.

2.6. SUSTAINABILITY AND REPLICATION

As the intellectual rights holder, FDN is willing to provide the rights to reproduce the materials to foreign partners upon request. By now, the campaign has been translated and replicated in Latvia, Czech Republic, Albania and Bulgaria. The contacts were established through networking. The partner signs a cooperation agreement with FDN, which specifies the use of logos, the acceptance of changes, the start date and the duration of the campaign. After the translation the materials are sent back to FDN for approval. The organisation also provides advisory help in the process of adapting the materials.

2.7. CONTACT INFORMATION

- Polish *Research and Academic Computer Network* (NASK) website: www.nask.pl
- Educational website for children: www.sieciaki.pl
- Hotline: www.dyżurnet.pl
- Helpline: www.helpline.org.pl



APPLIED RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATIONS FUND

ABOUT THE ORGANISATION

Established in 1991, the Applied Research and Communications Fund (ARC Fund) is the premier Bulgarian innovation and IT policy and research institute. Its mission is to drive the development of the knowledge economy in Bulgaria and Europe in line with the renewed Lisbon objectives; to promote innovation in the European economy and facilitate the transfer of new and advanced technologies and know-how; and to support cross-border networking and capacity building of businesses, public agencies or private organizations, by using the advances in information and communication technologies. ARC Fund is actively involved in the efforts to shape policies and developments towards information society and knowledge economy in a national, regional, European and global context.

BULGARIAN INTERNET HOTLINE FOR FIGHTING ILLEGAL AND HARMFUL FOR CHILDREN CONTENT IN INTERNET

1.1. INTRODUCTION



The Bulgarian Internet Hotline for Fighting Illegal and Harmful for Children Content in Internet was built by the Applied Research and Communications Fund in the framework of the SAFE-NET BG project, co-financed by the Safer Internet Programme of the European Commission. The Safer Internet Hotline in Bulgaria enables local Internet users to report incidences of harmful and illegal content disseminated over the Internet, with a special focus on children sexual abuse images. The hotline (<http://web112.net>) is managed by ARC Fund in partnership with the State Agency for Information Technologies and Communications, the State Agency for Child Protection, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Education and Science, and under the general supervision of a Public Council on Safer Internet Use in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian hotline is full member of the International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE – www.inhope.org) – a network of more than 30 Internet hotlines around the world.

1.2. CHARACTERISTICS THAT MAKE THIS INITIATIVE BEST PRACTICE

The Hotline provides the general Internet users with the opportunity to report content in Internet that could be harmful for children. The ordinary Internet user would rarely make the effort to report to the police such content because of reluctance to enter into formal proceedings. Under adopted procedures the Hotline does not collect any personal data of the reporting persons except when they want to give contact details in order to be informed about the follow-up actions regarding their reports.

1.3. OBJECTIVES

To raise the public awareness about the risks for children in Internet. To provide a reporting facility, trace the content and transmit the information to the police, to other institutions concerned, to other Hotlines or to contact the content owner to remove the harmful content in cases when it is not illegal.

1.4. RESOURCES

Online reporting facility; trained operators; operational channel to police authorities.

1.5. ACTIVITIES

An average of 150-200 reports about really illegal or dangerously harmful content are being preceded in a year by the Hotline in close co-operation with the police and the INHOPE (International Association of Internet Hotline Operators) network.

1.6. OUTPUTS

The law enforcement agencies are provided information that helps investigate illegal online content and activities that are dangerous for children and thus illegal and harmful content in the Bulgarian Internet space is decreasing.

1.7. SUSTAINABILITY OF THE BEST PRACTICE

1.7.a. Positive results brought about by the initiative

During 3 years of activity the Hotline helped to delete more than 200 pieces of harmful content and police were given clues to investigate and arrest persons who were distributing child pornography. Many web-sites popular among children and teenagers have posted links to the Hotline and/or posted Safer Internet rules for kids and parents provided by the Hotline team.

1.7.b. Linkages with national developmental policies

With the support of the Sofia Municipality and the Ministry of Education an awareness raising educational course is taught at schools. Close co-operation with the State Agency for Child Protection was established and many joint initiatives implemented.

1.7.c. Financial viability

Various public and private organizations are willing to support the Hotline awareness raising activities and help in organising various campaigns and events.

1.8. LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSIONS

The establishing of national Internet Hotlines and the co-operation between them and with the national law-enforcement authorities helps the fight against child sexual abuse material dissemination and raises the public awareness. Many private companies are also ready to join the cause including big IT businesses.

1.9. REPLICATION

The European Commission adopted the next Safer Internet Programme to co-finance establishing national Hotlines in Europe and on other continents too.

REAL AND VIRTUAL VIOLENCE: PREVENTION THROUGH INTERACTIVE EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS PROJECT

2.1. INTRODUCTION

The 'Real and Virtual Violence: Prevention through Interactive Education in Schools' project started back in 2007. From October 2008 trained educators started teaching the prevention course in 12 schools in Sofia based on a methodological handbook for teachers. The course is taught during "free" classes when no replacing teacher could be found. The requests for trained teachers come through an online platform and they are automatically sent via e-mail and SMS to participating teachers. More than 700 lessons were delivered in 12 schools, more than a 3000 pupils had at least one lesson.

2.2. CHARACTERISTICS THAT MAKE THIS INITIATIVE BEST PRACTICE

The specially designed online platform allows very fast request sending and confirming and strict management and reporting. The interactive form of education is very well accepted by the children. School principals and teachers assess the course highly. The project was nominated for Best Project of 2008 by the main donor organization – Oak Foundation, and also for one of the best 10 projects in the country by the Academy for Civil Initiative.

2.3. OBJECTIVES

To raise emotional intelligence and sensitiveness among the children thus preventing spread of violence in real life and in Internet. To diminish the number of free classes in schools – a grey zone with high risk of inappropriate conduct and aggression among pupils.



2.4. RESOURCES

A methodological handbook with 25 lessons officially approved by the Ministry of Education and the Institute of Psychology. Forty volunteers trained for teaching the course - half of them are school teachers and half are university students.

2.5. ACTIVITIES

More than 700 lessons were delivered in 12 schools in Sofia, more than a 3,000 pupils had at least one lesson.

2.6. OUTPUTS

Children learn to recognize various forms of violence including e-violence and cyber-bullying. They are taught empathy and are given instruments to react and prevent violence and aggression.

2.7. SUSTAINABILITY OF THE BEST PRACTICE

2.7.a. Positive results brought about by the initiative

Many more schools and municipalities from around the country are interested in implementing the course at their schools. The donor asked the team to apply for continuation of the project for another 3 years.

2.7.b. Linkages with national developmental policies

The Ministry of Education adopted a Programme against free classes in the schools and the course gives an option to school principals to resolve the problem at their schools.

2.7.c. Financial viability

Some of the schools and municipalities interested in implementing the course are willing to cover the expenses, which is the way to assure sustainability in the long run.

2.8. LESSONS LEARNED AND CONCLUSIONS

Today's children are very insensitive towards violence and aggression and almost every third pupil has participated in some form of violence – as a victim or as a perpetrator. They do not recognize as violent various acts and especially e-violence and cyber-bullying. They are ready to discuss these topics, which are usually not discussed among them and to explain or find the reasons for what happens in the Internet.

2.9 REPLICATION

The project is not replicated by another organization.

CONTACTS

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LIST OF RELEVANT WEBSITES

<http://web112.net>

www.safenet.bg

www.arcfund.net



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NOTES

¹ For more information on the *Comprehensive Response to Child Pornography* project, please contact the Centre for Inclusive Education at www.cie-bg.eu and Save the Children Norway SEE Regional Office at www.scn-see.ba.

² See, for example, ECPAT International, *Violence against Children in Cyberspace*, 2005. Accessed from: <http://www.ecpat.net>.

³ See ECPAT International CSEC Terminology accessed from <http://www.ecpat.net>. ECPAT International (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) is a global network of organizations with 80 group members in more than 70 countries dedicated to eliminating the commercial sexual exploitation of children. In partnership with UNICEF and child rights NGO groups, ECPAT co-organises the World Congresses against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.

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⁹ For more information see The Internet Governance Forum Secretariat, *Synthesis Paper of the Second Meeting of the IGF*, Rio de Janeiro 12-15 November 2007. Accessed from: <http://www.intgovforum.org>.

¹⁰ For more information see http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/sip/index_en.htm The Ministry of Culture is the National Coordinator for Bulgaria for the Safer Internet Programme.

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¹⁷ Bulgarian ICT Policy Monitor, *Bulgaria: Facing the Problem of Child Pornography on the Internet*, 2006. Accessed from: http://www.bluelink.net/wsis/e_news.shtml?x=8112.

¹⁸ For more information see http://www.dnevnik.bg/morski/2009/04/08/702091_potvrden_e_arestut_na_avstraliiski_pedofil_vuv_varna.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Data from the Ministry of Interior Statistics Bulletins for 2005 and 2006 were made available for this research thanks to RiskMonitor Foundation. In 2005 and 2006 there have been respectively a total of 30 and 26 registered criminal offence related to pornography. Out of these 21 have been closed in 2005 (3 of the closed cases were opened the previous year) and 18 have been closed by the end of 2006 (4 of the closed cases were opened in 2005).

²¹ Statistical data from the Ministry of Justice were made available for this research thanks to RiskMonitor Foundation.

²² At the time of writing the report, the latest publicly available annual report of the Bulgarian Supreme Prosecution Office was the *Report for the Prosecution Offices in Republic of Bulgaria Activities 2007*. Accessed from: <http://www.prb.bg/php/document.php>.

²³ Accessed from: <http://www.nsi.bg/SocialActivities/Crime.htm>

²⁴ Applied Research and Communication Foundation, *Annual Reports of the work of the Hotline for fighting illegal and harmful for children content on the Internet – web112 for 2006 and 2007*. Accessed from: <http://web112.net>. *Annual Report of the work of the National Awareness Node and the Hotline for fighting illegal and harmful for children content on the Internet – web112 for 2008* Accessed from: <http://www.safenet.bg/report.php>.

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²⁸ National Center for Public Opinion Polls, *Children and Internet Communication-related Risks, 2006* and *Children and Internet, 2009*. Accessed from: <http://web112.net>. The 2006 awareness campaign *Child in the Web* was implemented by Partners Bulgaria in partnership with SACP, the British Embassy in Bulgaria and McCann Erickson. For more information visit <http://safeweb.partnersbg.org>. The 2009 campaign *It's Your Choice* is part of the European Safer Internet campaign *Let's Have Control!* The campaign is initiated by two Bulgarian Members of the European Parliament and is implemented in partnership with the Bulgarian Safer Internet Node, SACP and Partners Bulgaria.

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³² The program *Child Defender* can be downloaded for free at <http://www.childdef.com>. The website gives easy to follow instructions for download and installation of the program which has been developed especially for Bulgarian parents.

³³ Ratified by Bulgaria. For more information visit <http://www.bayefsky.com/docs.php/area/ratif/state/26>

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³⁵ The full text of the report was accessed from <http://fra.europa.eu>.

³⁶ These categories of action, together with prevention, protection and rehabilitation are used by ECPAT International as a framework to guide the preparation of reports on the status of implementation of the Agenda for Action as seen in the World Congressed against CSEC. These reports also add to reporting on other international mechanisms as the CRC and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

³⁷ For more information visit <http://safeweb.partnersbg.org>.

³⁸ The cable TV provider Eurocom, the State Agency for Child Protection, the Ministry of Education and Science, the State Agency for Information Technology and Communications.

³⁹ For more information about the campaigns visit <http://az-deteto.com/safe> and <http://search.microsoft.com/results.aspx?mkt=bg-BG&setlang=bg-BG&q=деца+интернет>.

⁴⁰ "Virtual and Real Violence – Prevention through Interactive Training in Schools" was implemented in 2007-2008 by Applied Research and Communication Foundation and Association Parents with the support of OAK Foundation and Microsoft Bulgaria and Sofia municipality. For more information on the results of the project see the Best Practices Collection chapter of the report.

⁴¹ ECPAT International affiliate member in Bulgaria has participated in the preparation of two reports: *A Monitoring Report on the Status of Action against CSEC* published in 2006 and *An Alternative Report on the Implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography* released in 2007.

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⁴³ More information about the FIVES project is available online at <http://fives.kau.se>.

⁴⁴ The specialized room was opened by Social Activities and Practices Institute in partnership with the Association of Bulgarian Judges and the Polish Foundation Nobody’s Children within the framework of project *Hear the Child* financed by OAK Foundation.

⁴⁵ For more information and a list of the members of the National Public Council on Safer Internet Use in Bulgaria visit <http://www.safenet.bg/social.php>

⁴⁶ For more information see

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/232&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>.

⁴⁷ Main source of information were the ECPAT International Global Monitoring reports on the status of action against commercial sexual exploitation of children, for more information contact www.ecpat.net.