



*improving the digital environment for children*

## **The victims' voices must be heard**

### **A letter to the LIBE Committee of the European Parliament**

A child who suffers sexual abuse is a victim of a horrible and typically painful, humiliating and traumatic crime. If still images or videos of the crime are also made and the child learns they are being circulated on the internet, her or his experience of abuse is both changed and magnified.

On top of the harm done by the original abusive acts, the child now suffers *a gross violation of their right to privacy and their right to human dignity*.

All the victims who have [spoken out](#) about still images and videos of their abuse being available on the internet have been crystal clear in relation to what they think tech companies should be doing.

They want any and all relevant parts of the internet value chain to deploy the best available technical tools to identify, locate and delete the abusive pictures and videos of them, as fast as possible and to the greatest extent possible.

To find a pathway to recovery, it is important for victims to know every effort is being made to achieve this. They must know the harm they have suffered is being addressed and taken seriously.

Moreover, lest it be overlooked, to the extent the continued availability of child sex abuse materials helps create or sustain paedophile activity or networks, it also poses a threat to children as yet unharmed in every country in the world.

For these reasons the EU-based and international children's organizations and individuals shown below write to express their deepest concern about the possibility that, in December 2020, under the [European Electronic Communications Code](#), tools currently being deployed to achieve the removal of child sex abuse materials and to achieve [other child protection objectives](#) could become illegal.

How this possibility arose is an important question.

***But whatever the explanation European Institutions must find a way to maintain the legal status quo pending resolution of the matter for the longer term.***

We say this with particular feeling because the types of proactive systems we have described have been in use since at least 2009. Law enforcement agencies around the world welcome and value the contribution they make to keeping children safe, as do we. They are an example of a highly successful public-private partnership in action that can lead directly to the identification and recovery of children at risk of immediate harm.

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**From EU Member States - supporters of the letter include**



**Austria**



**Belgium**



**Bulgaria**



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**Denmark**



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Slovakia

Slovenia

Spain

Sweden

**From EU associated countries - supporters of the letter include**



**Norway**



**Switzerland**

**International children's organizations supporting the letter include**



**Individual supporters of the letter include**

**Professor Charo Sádaba Chalezquer, Dean, School of Communication, University of Navarra**

**Professor Simone van der Hof, Professor of Law and Technology, University of Leiden**

**Professor Hany Farid, UC Berkley**

**Associate Professor Maria De-Miguel- Molina, Universitat Politecnica de Valencia**

**Professor Julia Davidson, Professor of Criminology, University of East London**

**Professor Sonia Livingstone, London School of Economics and Political Science**

**Abhilash Nair, Director, Internet Law & Emerging Technologies Research Group, Aston University**

**Baroness Joanna Shields**

**John Carr, Improving the Digital Environment for Children**

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