



JUSTICE INITIATIVE

European response
to child abuse cases

Dr. h.c. Guido Fluri, President Justice Initiative

Dear Mrs. Vautmans,

Dear Commissioner Johannsen,

Representative of the Spanish Presidency,

Dear Survivors,

I am very moved by the testimonies of Mié, Saga, Juan, and Matthias. Thank you all for your courage in bearing witness here.

As a child, I grew up partly in a children's home. I know what abuse means: a child needs protection. And if protection is denied in childhood, if, in the worst case, the physical integrity is violated, then basic trust is destroyed to the core.

At the Justice Initiative, we have seen the profound impact that sexual violence and abuses have - well into old age: illness, poverty, loneliness, broken relationships, destroyed families - and also ... the many suicides as a result of abuse in childhood years. With the internet, suffering has taken on a new dimension. It will continue, again and again. And again.

Ladies and gentlemen:

Europe should be a haven for children's safety. In fact, Europe has become a hub for the trafficking of sexualized violence against children.

This is where our Justice Initiative comes in. Our European movement has joined forces with key victims' groups and 40 child protection groups from all over Europe to develop our Justice Initiative petition. Together we want and we need to stop the flood of abuse images on the Internet.



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Our Justice Initiative petition demands that the European Union votes in favour of the original EU proposal to better prevent and combat child sexual abuse.

Within a few months, over 540,000 signatures were collected – on the streets of Europe, as well as through online means. This enormous support for our petition is a clear signal to politicians.

The signatories say: enough is enough. Sexualized violence on the Internet must be stopped. Because behind every picture there is abuse. Behind every picture is the suffering of a child.

We all have a responsibility here. Consistent child protection is needed on the Internet. **Detection is critical, grooming needs to be tackled now. There can be no false compromise here.**

From Bucharest to Madrid and Lisbon, from Berlin to Paris, from Helsinki to Rome, these 540,000 signatures shall be a collective wake-up call; a wake-up call to all of us to stand up for what is right, and also a wake-up call to all the politicians in the European Union to finally improve the protection of children.

Behind every image online is the concrete abuse of a child. What the European Union decides to do about the sexual abuse images on the internet will have repercussions around the world.

This is an opportunity for global child protection. We call on politicians of all countries and parties to support the EU proposal to better protect children online. A clear majority of Europeans are behind you.

With these words, together with survivors of sexual abuse from all over Europe, we are handing over 540,000 signatures to the EU.

Thank you!



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Irene, survivor, Italy

I am a victim of childhood sexual abuse but, in the meantime, I became a psychologist, turning my traumatic experience into a helping profession. From my experience, I can tell you how the consequences of this abuse are devastating: I can testify to you how, even today, after many years of psychotherapy, I still find myself a victim of triggers.

The plaster on my nose is proof of my recent fainting a few days ago. It's not the first time I've fainted, I've fainted since I was a child following events that reactivate memories of the abuses I suffered. But I still feel lucky, because I'm still alive: in fact, the worst consequence of abuse trauma is suicide. And today I also want to remember Chiara among us, who two years ago decided to take her own life because the pain she felt was too strong. There is a term that I use in Italy to define these abuses: "Psychic Murder".

These are traumas that psychologically kill us and we don't want victims anymore. This is why I ask you to pay maximum attention to this phenomenon. Starting to protect minors from online grooming, because we know that the internet is a place full of dangers for everyone, but especially for the little ones..



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Juan, survivor, Spain

My name is Juan Cuatrecasas. At the age of 12 I suffered sexual abuse by a school teacher, member of Opus dei.

I am fully aware of the consequences that this type of violence has on people, especially when they are minors, as I was.

I would lie saying that it is overcome, because the reality is that day by day I learn to live with it.

I couldn't sleep, I hurt myself, I suffered hallucinations, seizures, I tried to take my life on several occasions, I barely ate, I didn't want to go to school, I didn't want to interact with people of my age, because as a result of the abuse I also suffered bullying and cyberbullying. In short, I was like a furniture at home, I couldn't do anything.

Today I am studying a master's degree, but it has been a suffered process, with a lot of money, effort and sacrifice. Facing fears and blocks every day when going to class or facing routine issues.

I implore from here immediate action on behalf of the victims and survivors of childhood abuse.

Boys and girls who have suffered or are suffering this type of crime rarely report it and, if they do, they end up re-victimized and persecuted. I believe that recognition and denunciation are fundamental phases for healing and, if they are avoided, the trauma will never be faced or treated. For this, therapy is essential for the victims, as well as the support of public powers and institutions, including the Church.

It is Europe's job to legislate to force platforms like Twitter, Meta or Google to eliminate any type of sexual abuse material that appears on their servers.

Networks collaborate in revictimization and must be eradicated. I ask the European Union to become the shield that minors need.

We must protect childhood. It is untouchable. It is the future. Please, become aware and take action!



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Matthias Katsch, activist and survivor, Germany

As a student in the 1970s, I suffered sexualized violence at the hands of 2 Catholic priests at the Jesuit College in Berlin. They used their pastoral power over me to sexually abuse me.

Both perpetrators had a similar hobby: they liked taking photos.

They must have taken hundreds of pictures of young boys in seemingly innocuous situations, on summer camps and outings, but also before bedtime, while swimming, changing clothes and showering.

They probably also recorded their sexual assaults in photographs. Because they knew how to develop pictures themselves in the darkroom. There was such a room at the school.

I don't know what happened to the photos later. Much of it, most of it, I hope, has simply been lost over time. The pictures of other perpetrators were still floating around decades later. They reappear in some attic in the legacies of perpetrators until recent days.

How fortunate for me and many other victims that there was no digital photography in the 1970s and no possibility of distributing images digitally! We have learned that perpetrators are often at the forefront of technological development. Their legacies from the past prove this, as do the findings of investigators today. We must find ways to prevent the dissemination of depictions of sexualized violence against children and young people - the EU Commission's planned draft serves this purpose.

I understand when civil rights activists and advocates of freedom in the digital space are concerned that the technologies and procedures intended for this purpose could be misused. But then I appeal to the tech community to propose better, different procedures that will help us make progress in the fight against the millions of cases of abuse.

The Justice Initiative is a clear signal for all of us! We have to act now



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Mié Kohiyama, activist and survivor, France

My name is Mié Kohiyama. I am a child rights activist and a survivor of childhood sexual violence. I am a member of the Brave Movement, an international movement of survivors of childhood sexual violence.

I am also here as a representative of ECLAG - the European Child Sexual Abuse Legislation Advocacy Group - a coalition of 65 European and global child rights NGOs joining forces to protect children from sexual abuse and violence and supporting Justice Initiative petition through the ChildSafetyOn campaign.

Following the Compromise voted by the LIBE Committee on the proposed Regulation, I am here to express ECLAG's and survivors' strong concerns as this EP compromise will lead to children being less safe online that they are today.

Every second, at least 2 pictures or videos of child sexual abuse are shared online and reports of grooming increased by 82% from 2021 to 2022. We must act to put an end to this global scourge.

Yet the Compromise in the EP is a clear step back in the protection of children online: It will reduce the current levels of protection of children online, eliminating the ability for platforms to voluntarily detect online child sexual abuse, not allowing for the detection of grooming, and restricting the technology to detect to a very small group of cases.

If adopted as such, the regulation would fall short in tackling these crimes at scale and will mean more children suffering from sexual abuse online, more survivors having to walk in the streets afraid of being recognised and with no way to stop images of the worst time of their lives from being shared online again and again.

Together with the 541,585 citizens that signed the petition, we urge EU decision makers to pass a strong regulation that detects, reports and removes ALL child sexual abuse online, including grooming, on ALL platforms. Children's and survivors' right to privacy must be protected and cannot be compromised.

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union must go to the negotiating table with a mandate to ensure the rights of children and of adults are equally respected online.



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We urge EU leaders not to step back in the protection of children online and to rise to the challenge by taking strong and bold actions to end child sexual abuse online NOW





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Nina Vaaranen-Valkonen, Executive Director, Senior Specialist, Psychotherapist, Suojellaan Lapsia, Protect Children ry Finland

We are here today as child sexual abuse online has become an epidemic and digital environments have become a safe haven for child sexual offenders. We need to stop this. The choice to protect children from sexual violence should not be up to tech platforms those making profit with their businesses and those platforms where these violent crimes against children are extensively and continuously taking place.

Today our voice is strong! So proud of Guido Fluri Foundation's Justice Initiative – as over 540 000 individuals have signed the petition to support the new EU legislation proposal to keep children safe online. Today we make sure the duty bearers and politicians hear our voice - the voices of survivors, parents and public as well as us child rights experts.

We have failed to protect children online and we need to make sure we demand change! Without regulation and new EU legislation children are at risk being sexually abused online and for survivors their cycle of abuse continues.

Without regulation Child sexual abuse material will not be detected nor reported and law enforcement are not able to rescue victims. We keep on hearing the loud voices of data privacy activists but what about survivors rights for privacy – They have rights to get their abuse images and videos of sexual violence removed from online platforms!

Today we can make a difference and make sure Survivors voices are heard – we together with 540 000 demands change and for survivors we want to say – we hear your voice – we hear your call – Together we can stop the cycle of abuse.



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Saga, survivor, Sweden

I am a survivor, but today I will not talk about myself and what I went through. Today I want to first talk about a girl named Jenny.

Jenny did not survive. Just after her 17th Birthday, she ended her own life. But the correct choice of words is that she was killed. The men, the perpetrators, the abusers took her life.

She was groomed online by pedophiles that sexually abused and raped her. She was only 12 years old when it started and this went on until her death. Twelve years old. Her whole life was in front of her, but they robbed her of her life and future.

Today, Jenny's mom fights for a world free from sexual abuse and exploitation of children. She is devastated that this Child sexual abuse regulation might not pass through, because that could mean that so many more children will end up like Jenny. I can't bear to think about that becoming reality. It would be like living in a nightmare.

My name is Saga Brodersen, and I am a survivor of child sexual abuse. I am standing here today representing Beyond Survivors - a cluster of survivor-led organizations, supported and coordinated by ChildX.

Our survivor cluster represent survivors from Sweden, Germany, and the Netherlands. Our mission is to support survivors of sexual exploitation and ensure that our voices are included in all efforts to combat this crime. We have first hand experience of what it is like to be groomed, sexually abused and exploited. We know better than anyone, the consequences of not effectively regulating this crime. And our collective voice therefore **MUST** be heard on this important issue.

Together, we have gotten over 500.000 signatures to support the regulation, and that must mean something. That **MUST** count for something. Because children's safety counts. And it is up to us adults to protect them.

The petition campaign has been vital to shine a light on the regulation and what will happen if it does not pass through. We must realize how easy it is for perpetrators to groom children into sexual exploitation - and that the internet is the most common crime to do so.



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I demand for the EU to advance their efforts to support children's safety and to do everything in their power to fight this abuse. We must be stubborn, and we must not give up.



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Scharliina, survivor, Finland

My name is Scharliina

I wrote this speech when I was 13 ..

First off I want every survivors to know, You are not alone!

I am here speaking on behalf of survivors, as a survivor.

I dreamed of the day when I would have a voice to speak.

When the pieces that someone stole from me at the age of 4 would return to me

I promised myself

To stay alive and keep going so that I could one day stand here in front of you all

And tell you:

When someone violates your privacy and takes away the right to your own body.

As a child...

It leaves a scar that stays with you your whole life

The sexual abuse experienced in your childhood does not only affects the survivor,
it affects everyone.

Because you become incapable of living a normal and healthy human life

My government failed me

In their duty to protect me, and help me

As a victim of these crimes

But you have the power to change that for the children of tomorrow

On an online playground that is constantly evolving and is NOT built to PROTECT
CHILDREN from sexual violence.

For the victims of online abuse

Their trauma is ongoing.

People are sharing and selling the rights to their body every single second.



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You have the power to change that NOW

By supporting the new EU legislation proposal

And you have the DUTY to protect those who do not have power to protect themselves

I don't want anyone to ever experienced what I did