# The Safer Internet Forum

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Workshop 1 Report:
'Online-related sexual abuse of children, with a special focus on the process of grooming and  the consequences for children'

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## A. Context

The Safer Internet Forum is a European discussion forum for representatives of industry, law enforcement authorities, child welfare organisations and policy makers to exchange experience and knowledge. It provides a platform for national co-regulatory or self-regulatory bodies to discuss ways in which industry can contribute to creating a safer online environment for children and fight against distribution of illegal content, such as child abuse material.

Therefore, The Safer Internet Forum 2007 was focused on safer Internet and online technologies for children. The Forum was composed of three workshops and a plenary session for discussing relevant issues with stakeholders, which, in addition to the public consultation on Safer Internet and online technologies for children, will give input for the Commission's decision whether or in what terms to propose a follow-up programme from 2009 to 2013.

The three workshops focused on:

1. Online-related sexual abuse of children, in particular grooming

2. Assessing the need for awareness-raising for creating a safe online environment for children

3. The impact and consequences of convergence of online technologies for online safety

Among the participants were representatives of industry, law enforcement authorities, child welfare organisations and policy makers.

## B. Presentation of the workshop I – 'Online-related sexual abuse of children, in particular grooming' – Themes, basic ideas and floor contributions

Being subjected to sexual abuse is perhaps one of the most serious consequences for children of the development of different online technologies. The workshop aimed to identify relevant issues relating to sexual abuse of children associated with the use of online technologies, in particular grooming, and appropriate ways of dealing with them. The discussions have also touched upon issues concerning production and online distribution of child abuse material.

**Theme 1 - Online-related sexual abuse of the children – introduction**
        **Vernon Jones, Save the Children Europe/Denmark**
1.   UN Convention on the right of the child
Article 34 obliges State Parties to undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. All measures has to be taken in order to prevent

   a.   The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity

b. The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices
c. The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials

**What are the concerns regarding the online-related sexual abuse of the children?**

There are many ways that could lead to sexual exploitation of children via the use of Internet. For example:

a. Children sold on-line for sexual abuse offline
b. Children abused through prostitution
c. Adults/young people engaging in cyber-sex with children
d. Young people placing images of children online
e. Children of adults who download/distribute abuse images of children
f. Young people who download abuse images of children
g. Children groomed online for sexual abuse
h. Children sold online for abuse online
i. Children made the subject of child abuse images

2. Reasons for children being online

At the age of 8-9 years children are able to start expressing themselves in writing and maybe become involved in online chat, they are willing to be meeting other people in social networking sites or in a chat-room provided by the mobile operator. Chat is especially most important for teenagers, particularly girls between 12-16 years old who are prolific users (the same goes also for the use of mobile phones). Unfortunately there is tendency for the teenagers to use Internet in order to experiment with risk taking behaviour.

3. The down-side of online activity

The above-mentioned affirmations were supported by the findings of a study done by the University of New Hampshire, in 2003 (case study), that 13-15 year old girls are at the highest risk, not only they tend to take risks but also they defend the young offenders. Teenagers find it difficult to accept that their peer group could include potential abusers, because according to the stereotype, abusers are old, smelly and dirty (the *monster syndrome*).

Overall the anonymity of online chat attracts adults and young people with a sexual interest in children.

4. The complex issue of child abuse images

It is a given fact that global distribution of child abuse images is maintained by the local sexual abuse of children. While the role of Internet and other new technologies is a positive and constructive one, it also supports the link between child abuse images, travelling sex offenders and trafficking.

Another downside is that we do not have yet that much research in relation to young abusers and online abuse. Much remains to be investigated and that should be a priority of future projects so our subsequent actions will be efficient.

5. What are sexual abusers doing online and how?

Their main activities are: downloading images being sexually abused, trading these images with other sexual abusers, also they are collecting or producing child abuse images for their own gratification, commercial gain and acceptance among other abusers.Their modus operandi is based on seduction of children either in their proximity or through social network sites, chat rooms etc

Therefore we can speak of at least four broad classes of sex offending behaviours associated with the Internet:

 a. Downloading
 b. Trading
 c. Producing
 d. Seduction/Grooming

At the core of all such offending behaviours are child abuse images.

6. Why do children not disclose?

Some children are unable to disclose due a mixture of factors – poor cognitive and verbal skills, contradicting feelings etc. Others will not disclose as a result of posttraumatic stress disorder that can manifest itself through memory loss, active attempts at forgetting as a self-defence mechanism, strong feelings of fear, shame and guilt. Non-disclosure can be present also as an essential part of the grooming process.

**Grooming: definitions and types**

While the definition of O'Connell (2003) seemed rather general -

'A course of conduct enacted by a suspected paedophile, which would give a reasonable person cause for concern that any meeting with a child arising from the conduct would be for unlawful purposes' – the working definition used by Save the Children seemed to be more accurate as it follows – 'the grooming process is a strategy used by sexual abusers to manipulate the child, and potentially protective adults, so the abuse can take place in a situation where the abuser has total control over the victim. It is a process where the abuser gradually overcomes the child's resistance through a sequence of psychologically manipulative acts. It is also used to silence the victim after the abuse has taken place'.

We can identify three types of sexual grooming:
 a. Self-grooming – in which the offender prepares himself mentally, overcome inhibitions; conclude over a plan with to follow, with different strategies and specific tools. At a later stage self-grooming might involve preparing his appearance, his manners in approaching the victim;

b. Grooming the environment and the significant others – the offender will make sure that there are no obstacles between him and the child;

c. Grooming the child – personal questions or self-disclosures, gradual/abrupt exposure to images with sexual content or just to the idea of sexual encounter in order to prepare the child for online or onsite sex.

7. The grooming process and its pre-conditions

The grooming process by itself is based on the same techniques used in real life. The offender will begin by building trust and a relationship with the victim and then he will take advantage. Then he will make the victim feel responsible and eventually he will increase the feelings of stigma and shame in order to gain total control. For the grooming leading to the sexual activity itself the offender will often use explicit abuse images. The images of the actual abuse of the victim are going to be used later to silence the child, to blackmail him/her.

Therefore Finkelhor's four preconditions are:
a. Offender's motivation
b. Internal inhibitors
c. External inhibitors
d. Victim' resistance

8. How do the media perceive the problem?

Media sees the offenders as monsters from another planet – '*stranger danger syndrome*'. They do not focus very much on the sexual abuse by the acquaintances. There is a lack of understanding of who the abusers are and how the seduction of children is actually taking place. That is why the teenagers who appear to 'comply' i.e. do not resist or have been involved in prostitution are not seen as 'good victims' by the media.

9. Online offending behaviour

Internet 'allows' for the uninhibited sexual behaviour and the expression of deviant sexual practices with others online. Gradually this process is normalising the deviant and illegal behaviour within the virtual community. The offenders will suffer an increase in online activity and a decrease in social activities offline. Downloading and collecting abuse images will lead to sexual fantasy and activity, particularly masturbation.

10. Typology of online grooming practices (as exemplified by O'Connell, 2004):

a. Methodology and analysis
b. Victim selection methods
c. Friendship forming phase
d. Relation forming phase
e. Risk assessment phase
f. Exclusivity phase
g. Sexual phase

11. Aspects regarding the adolescent victims

The traits of a typical adolescent, especially a boy, are: easily sexually aroused, sexually curious, sexually inexperienced and somewhat rebellious. Because of this combination the adolescent will be one of the easiest victims of the child seduction. He is no match for an experienced adult with an organised plan. Yet offenders, who are seducing and society that judges, continue to claim that the victims consented to the abuse (Lanning 2006).

12. Age of consent

Children, up to the age of 18, have the right to special protection against sexual exploitation. The legal age of consent should be separated from the upper age of protection against sexual exploitation. A child under 18 should not be considered as able to consent to engagement in prostitution, pornography and/or trafficking for sexual purposes. The criminal responsibility should rest solely with the perpetrator.

13. Understanding the seduction process

"Most 'compliant' child victims were courted, groomed or seduced over time by an adult. True understanding of this process must be incorporated into the intervention of these cases. Because a child 'wanted' to have sex with an adult does not mean it is not abuse or a crime." (Lanning, 2006)

14. What generates the lack of understanding of this process?

The unfortunate results of understanding this process are:

   a. Victims failing to disclose and even denying their sexual victimisation
   b. Incomplete even contradictory disclosures
   c. Victim shame, embarrassment and guilt
   d. Offenders are able to continue the abuse and to have numerous other victims
   e. Ineffective prevention programmes

**What should professionals remember?**

The professionals must remember that many children victimised via this seduction process will:

-       Trade sex for attention, affection, gifts
-       Are confused over their sexuality and feelings
-       Are embarrassed and guilt-ridden over their activity
-       Describe their victimisation in socially acceptable ways
-       Minimize their responsibility
-       Deny or exaggerate their victimisation

"These things do not mean the child is not the victim. What they do mean is that the children are human beings with human needs…Many children have a vague or inaccurate concept of sex. Consent should NOT be an issue with child victims.

Sympathy for victims is, however, inversely proportional to their age and sexual development" (Lanning 2006)

15. Training needs for professionals

It is imperative that all professional working within the judicial and child protection systems receive qualified training about the dynamics of child sexual abuse and the relationship to the production and distribution of child abuse images. Training should include perspectives around online and offline sexual grooming of children as meeting potential offenders online is the new face of an old social problem.

16. The possible solutions

    a. More information to the professionals about online abuse and young people with sexually problematic behaviour
    b. Political level: understanding of the problem of grooming. Allocate resources to prevent child sexual abuse online and offline
    c. Empower children and adults to safely use the new technologies through appropriate education models
    d. Chat providers/mobile operators to engage in research and awareness
    e. The NGOs to enhance advocacy and child protection from children's rights perspective

| **Contributions, discussions, questions** |
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- *The issue of legislation across Europe – the need of clarity and standardisation*

What are the European laws against child pornography? What are the national laws in the matter of online child abuse if any? Some will require counteraction in the case of physical sexual abuse following the online grooming but they do not have yet any perspective also on just cyber abuse. Presentation of national legislation cases – UK, Sweden, Holland, Ireland, Norway proved that the laws are changing but generally is a slow process as some countries are in a more advanced stage then others. There are differences from a better understanding of the problem and use of terms in the text of the law, concrete measures stipulated and regulated until the counter-actions supported by law enforcement agencies; there is a need for a common vision at the European political level.

- *The role of mass-media – already low interest in the matter*

If not so long time ago the mass media showed great interest in online child abuse such attention has faded gradually despite the rise in the phenomenon's intensity and ramifications. Specific trainings for the mass media workers doubled by awareness campaigns are needed to draw higher attention to the problem.

- *The need of better and deeper understanding of the online grooming issue*

There are still very few research results on the matter about the actors of the online grooming and the process itself. More subjects are in need of deepening (see suggestions for researches at the end of the report.)

- *The participation in the grooming process as victim of manipulation versus willing and active participants in prostitution; what is the actual relation between online grooming and prostitution?*

This was a matter of debate or question mark, as an important number of children seem to be aware of risks and willing to engage in online/offline sex in exchange for material advantages. In end, the general understanding was that online grooming is not a form of prostitution, and that such a term would criminalize the victim, but a long-term process based on psychological manipulation and victimisation.

- *The need of statistics at the national and European level*

There are still very few statistics at the national and European level regarding the number of websites promoting child abuse materials and the number of victims – although the involved stakeholders are witnessing hundreds to thousands different pictures with new faces. There are various obstacles, related with resources and technical problems in victims/offenders identification. Measuring the length of the phenomenon through up to date statistics is a necessity that has to be translated into action.

*The relation between online grooming and parenting*

Can we talk about poor parenting skills in relation with online grooming? The opinions were diverse, some parents could have poor parenting skills, and others might simply lack the technical knowledge (setting family filters) while some might believe that Internet is a safe environment for the children or not be aware of dangers present online. Awareness campaigns are necessary.

- *The need for more multidisciplinary teams to tackle the issue*

As the online grooming/child abuse has various aspects (social, psychological, legal, technical etc) there is a need to promote interventions sustained by multidisciplinary teams. It has been proven that where such projects exist there is a greater chance for more success in the fieldwork, so these successful initiatives need to be supported and replicated (see E-SPY project presentation).

- *The unfortunate situation when police or other stakeholders can not act due legislation vacuum, lack of knowledge over the issue*

There is a need for more training in case of various professionals but also a clearer sense of who is responsible for what, to avoid inaction or overlapping.

**Theme 2 – How are the issues dealt with today? – The research perspective
Ethel Quayle, COPINE project, University of Cork**

1.  UN Convention on the rights of the child

    It was underlined again the article 34 of the UN Convention.

2.  Forms of harm posed to children

    Those are:
    a.  Online solicitation or 'grooming'
    b.  The production, distribution and use of materials depicting child sexual abuse
    c.  Exposure to materials that can cause psychological harm lead to physical harm or facilitate other detriment to a child
    d.  Exposure to a medium that can facilitate harmful behaviour
    e.  Harassment and intimidation, including bullying

3.  Threats to young people

    Bullen and Harre (2000) are offering the following examples of potential threats:

    a.  Nature of internet and age level of users makers it difficult to evaluate the information presented
    b.  Giving personal details and setting up meetings
    c.  Exposure to pornography
    d.  Occurrence and impact of sexual solicitation
    e.  Impact of racist and hate sites and threatening material

**Online solicitation or grooming**

'In the process of grooming the perpetrator creates the conditions which will allow him to abuse the children while remaining undetected by the others, and the child is prepared gradually for the first time when the offender first engages in sexual molestation '

'In the context of the Internet, intimacy can be achieved through an invitation to chat in a private room…risk of sexual themes can be taken behind the anonymity of a pseudonym. Numerous children can be cultivated at once, and whereas in the offline world, opportunities for adult strangers to be alone regularly with children do not occur easily, in the online world they are everyday possibility.'

Childnet, submission to Home Office, 2002

4.  The case of Patrick Green

    This case was about an offender who used online grooming and cell phone calling in contacting and preparing his victims.

5. Grooming and the law

Some controversial point of view or difficulty regarding grooming:

'… Grooming is not a modern concept nor is particularly high-tech and is arguably a necessary prerequisite for the sustained abuse of a child' (Gillespie, 2006)

In UK, Sexual Offences Act 2003 created an offence that mentions grooming – the purpose is to identify preparatory behaviour that could be criminalized before the offender had the opportunity to sexually abuse a child. However, offence requires an offender to have met or communicated with a child on two or more occasions and subsequently to meet or travel to meet a child with the intention in either case to have sexual contact with the child. What happens when the intention is not 'contact abuse'?

6. Abusive images

'Whilst pornography can be used as a part of the grooming process it is also important to note that in some cases the offender will wish to groom the child not for direct contact abuse but to photograph the child and produce indecent images of children' (Gillespie, 2006)

7. The case of Adrian Ringland

A case where online aggressive grooming and blackmailing were used along with viruses to gain total control of the victim's computer.

8. Solicitation

Sexual solicitation – requests to engage in sexual activities, talk or requests for sexual information that was unwanted or, whether wanted or not, was made by an adult.

Aggressive sexual solicitation – involves offline contact with the perpetrator through regular mail, by phone, in person or attempts or requests for offline contact. (Wolak et all 2006)

9. Victims of solicitation

Research showed:

60% of victims were females
More than ¾ were aged 14 or older
22% were 10-13 and were more distressed

10. Perpetrators

Research showed:

97% were people originally met online
Adults responsible for 24% of solicitations and 34% of aggressive solicitations
Majority of adults were 18-25 of age (4% known to be older)
Juveniles made up 48% of overall solicitation and 48% of aggressive solicitations
¼ were females
In 13% of incidents youth knew the person
In 49% of incidents, youth did not disclose

After 5 years the research showed:

Less sexual solicitation
More exposure to unwanted material
Aggressive solicitation has not declined
4% asked for sexually explicit photographs
Acquaintances played a growing role: 14% were offline peers and 41% of encounters took place in the company of peers

**Who is most at risk?**

'Being female, using chat rooms, talking with people met online, talking about sex with someone met online, and offline sexual or physical abuse were all associated with increased risk for aggressive and online limited solicitations…'

11. Risk characteristics unique to aggressive solicitations (Mitchell et all 2007)

Youth who sent personal information about themselves

Youth who used Internet from a cell phone

Those who feel isolated, misunderstood, depressed or lack traditional support and guidance within the family

Attention – one warning sign might be a request for pictures

12. Online relationships

Boys and girls who had high level of conflict and low level of communication with parents or who were highly troubled were more inclined to have close online relationships. (Wolak at all 2003)

13. Developmental factors

Age differences in understanding the technical and social complexity of the Internet. Children begin to understand the Internet as a complex artefact cognitively and socially during 9-12 years range (Yan 2005)

14. Grooming and offenders typology

Stage model: friendship forming, relationship forming, risk assessment, exclusivity, sexual (O'Connel 2004)

Offenders' typology: befrienders, masturbators and predators.

**The production, distribution and use of materials depicting child sexual abuse**

15. Victims of photographic abuse

   Interpol – approx. 500 children identified; NCMEC – approx. 1000 children identified

16. Who is sexually abused through photography?

   Children victims of domestic abuse – domestic production for home and abroad

   Children victims of commercial production – possibility of involvement of organised crime

   Children victims of hidden images taken without their knowledge

   Children groomed for self-generated material

17. Where do the images come from?

   Domestic, commercial, hidden and online groomed sexual abuse

18. The case of Huddings

   This was a case of 3000 photos of 42 children. The photos were made by a father of a girl whose classmates were lured into taking pictures of them bathing. None disclosed the abuse; none are in therapy and only few parents saw the pictures.

19. National Study on Child Abuse (Chowdhury, 2007)

   At least a quarter of the children victims admitting the abuses were also admitting that were being photographed.

20. The case of Svedin and Back

   This was a case of 30 children who were, at the time of the abuse, between 6 months and 14 years old. Only in 3 cases the offender was an unknown person. The children did not disclose the abuse.

21. Causes for concerns

   The phenomenon is spreading world wide, child abuse dvds in Cambodia, abusive images via cell-phones in Japan and India, sexual solicitation via cell phone in Japan.

22. The contexts that leave children open to exploitation

   Poverty, social disruption, corruption, an acceptance of abusive practice, a willingness of others to exploit.

23. What has the Internet added?

It has democratised the availability of a wide range of extreme sexual material of which abusive images of children are a part; it has made visible the unacceptable.

It made access both possible and relatively hidden.

<u>Exposure to materials that can cause psychological harm, lead to physical harm, or facilitate other detriment to a child</u>

24. Accidental and intentional exposure to sexualised materials

Livingstone and Bober (2005): high levels of exposure to online pornography (57%). Most of the materials were viewed unintentionally through pop-up, junk-mail, search for something else; 54% claimed not to be upset by it, but a significant minority did not like it.

25. Unwanted exposure

Survey on 1500 youth in 2005, 42% exposed to online pornography, out of which 66% reported unwanted exposure related to only one Internet activity. Wanted exposure was higher for teens, boys, many were involved in file-sharing programmes. Depression might be a risk factor for some youth.

26. YCWW-II (2005) – research about visiting offensive sites

16% visited porn sites, 18% visited violence or gore sites, 12% gambling sites, 9% adult chat rooms, 5% hate sites and 34% at least one of the above favourite sites were the ones with most violent and sexualised materials.

27. Sexually explicit websites

A notable finding was the perception that such content cannot affect them; it might be that adolescents are unable to judge the impact of such materials on them.

28. Findings on Google

A search, requesting information on Google, has received over 1 million results on sexual pictures and teen.

29. Bad news

Increase in unwanted exposure to sexual material and online harassment, despite filters, blocking and monitoring systems.

**Exposure to a medium that can facilitate harmful behaviour**

30. Self-victimising activities – via cameras phones, web cams, social networking sites, chat rooms, instant messaging, blogs. Are there conflicting agendas between parents, professionals on one hand and children on the other?

31. Illegal images and their content – largest group of offenders whose activities included downloading, trading and producing abuse images, was aged between 15-19 years. Regarding content used for trading or possession – most likely teen photos, children with others of their age being engaged in explicit sexual activity, including images of children aged between 2-7 years.

32. Conclusions

Internet can have a great impact on us and generates behaviour in a virtual world. We should not regard the individual or the Internet as the problem. We should rather be aware of what might happen with an unregulated medium that lacks adequate guardianship.

| **Contributions, discussions, questions** |
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- *Increased availability of digital cameras and cell phones among youth – a new phenomenon supporting the online grooming or offering alternatives*

Some years ago was not financially possible for a youth to own a cell phone, now due the current low costs is a common reality. Unfortunately, the use of technology assists the offender not only in grooming the victim but also to send the abuse images instantly and in many locations.

- *Increase in numbers of websites with level 4-5 sexual and violent materials (in public view, not just members) and particularly in sexual abuse home-made materials, decrease in the age of abused children but increase in the number of new abused children*

Domestic images are replacing commercially made ones and if in the recent past one could see level 1-2 materials on the public side of commercial websites; now these are presenting much more abusive and violent photos with younger children even babies (rape). **The trend is frightening and requires concerted action.**

- *What is the relation between depression and grooming? There is a need of research as it seems that there is a correlation for both abusers and abused*

It seems that children with a history of depression are more inclined to take part in the grooming process; they are more sensitive towards attention, gifts and offers. The mildly depressed offenders are more likely to initiate it, as a coping mechanism. Also simply depressed adults might be inclined to browsing pornography including child abuse images, in order to self-induce a mood alteration and they blame such materials' extreme availability in the Internet environment.

- *What is youth perception over offensive images, self-exposure, motivation in non-disclosure, private, and privacy vs. public?*

The youth feel they live in a highly visual environment where personal limits cannot be the same like those in the past; some also blame adults for hypocrisy (ex. use of

children in commercials for selling products vs. presence of children in sexual images).

- *The use of technologies from youth perspective – rational and emotional bases*

Any research should not explore children from a purely cognitive view but also from an emotional base, as children have strong emotional needs that normally should be covered primarily by parents and also by teachers. (Need of communication, attention, love, and respect).

- *The old stereotypes are rejected and invalidated (ex. abusers as old and totally unknown men, children being totally unaware of risks and consequences. This is a fact that needs to be presented to general public, professionals and officials*

**Theme 3 – Identifying the needs for action: How should the issues be dealt with in the future? John Stamnes, Norwegian National Criminal Investigation Service**

1. Need of a comprehensive approach and various experts working together – hotlines, help lines, awareness campaigns and blocking measures – solitary actions by different agencies will not work. In this moment we can talk about the development of a specific Internet-based behaviour that calls for our attention. On the other hand, although the debate about online grooming as an old or new crime might go on, we should not blame the Internet for such phenomenon.

2. The way teenagers perceive and relate with Internet – the virtual/digital world is very real for them, many are spending a lot of time online, and boundaries are blurry. Chat rooms in Mirc, MSN and Yahoo, social networks like Facebook, virtual interaction games like Second Life, IMV and Dreamfall are places where children meet with their friends or make new friends and these online friendships are for them just as real and meaningful like the friendships in real life. This is a fact that is known also by the online sexual abusers.

3. Self generated materials – dramatic increase. Youth are not just browsing anymore, they want to communicate and to make themselves known and understood better, usually just by their friends. Tools like blogs, file sharing, personal websites with their own photos and private information are helping them. Within minutes they can now create homepages and link them with the ones of their friends. Many times it is not the children themselves who are give away personal information but their friends. Sometimes the parents are not aware of all of this, as their children do not use any more classic tools like the home email service offered by the Internet provider or even the classic MSN and Yahoo. Children use their own tools and parents should not be critical of their need for intimacy but should use their authority to let them know that they should let them know the truth about anything that might endanger them. Sharing of personal photos and information is a dangerous weapon in the hands of potential online abusers will ultimately lead to

accidents and 'random' encounters. From that to grooming and self-made child abusive movies, made in their own bedrooms, there is just a step.

4. Specific terminology used online (see Wikipedia) – the youth have developed in time a language of signs (emoticons) to facilitate online communication. Sexual offenders seem to be well versed on them and on abbreviations. For example below are two tables with MSN emoticons:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Smile   :-) or :) | | Open-mouthed   : -D or: d | |
| Surprised        :-O or :o | | Tongue out        :-P or :p | |
| Wink   ;-) or ;) | | Sad       :-( or :( | |
| Confused  :-S or :s | | Disappointed   :-\| or :\| | |
| Crying   :'( | | Embarrassed    :-$ or :$ | |
| Hot      (H) or (h) | | Angry :-@ or :@ | |
| Angel  (A) or (a) | | Devil   (6) | |
| Don't tell anyone:-# | | Baring teeth     8o\| | |
| Nerd    8-\| | | Sarcastic        ^o) | |
| Secret telling   :-* | | Sick     +o( | |
| I don't know    :^) | | Thinking        *-) | |
| Party   <:o) | | Eye-rolling      8-) | |
| Sleepy \|-) | | Coffee cup       (C) or (c) | |
| Thumbs up      (Y) or (y) | | Thumbs down (N) or (n) | |
| Beer mug       (B) or (b) | | Martini glass   (D) or (d) | |
| Girl     (X) or (x) | | Boy     (Z) or (z) | |
| Left hug         ({ | | Right hug        (} | |
| Vampire bat    :-[ or :[ | | Birthday cake  (^) | |
| Red heart      (L) or (l) | | Broken heart    (U) or (u) | |
| Red lips        (K) or (k) | | Gift with a bow        (G) or (g) | |
| Red rose        (F) or (f) | | Wilted rose     (W) or (w) | |
| Camera         (P) or (p) | | Filmstrip        (~) | |
| Cat face        (@) | | Dog face        (&) | |
| Telephone receiver    (T) or (t) | | Light bulb       (I) or (i) | |
| Note    (8) | | Sleeping half-moon    (S) | |
| Star    (*) | | E-mail (E) or (e) | |
| Clock  (O) or (o) | | MSN Messenger icon (M) or (m) | |
| Snail   (sn) | | Black Sheep    (bah) | |
| Plate   (pl) | | Bowl   (\|\|) | |
| Pizza   (pi) | | Soccer ball      (so) | |
| Auto   (au) | | Airplane         (ap) | |
| Umbrella        (um) | | Island with a palm tree        (ip) | |
| Computer       (co) | | Mobile Phone  (mp) | |
| Stormy cloud  (st) | | Lightning        (li) | |
| Money (mo) | | | |

OR a list with Yahoo emoticons:

| Emoticon | Meaning |
|---|---|
| ☺ | Happy |
| :( | Sad |
| ;) | Winking |
| :D | big grin |
| ;;) | Batting eyelashes |
| >:D< | big hug |
| :-/ | Confused |
| :x | love struck |
| :"> | Blushing |
| :P | tongue |
| :-* | kiss |
| =(( | broken heart |
| :-O | Surprise |
| X( | angry |
| :> | Smug |
| B-) | cool |
| :-S | worried |
| #:-S | whew! |
| >:) | devil |
| :(( | crying |
| :)) | laughing |
| :| | Straight face |
| =)) | rolling on the floor |
| :-B | nerd |
| =; | Talk to the hand |
| :-c | call me - New! |
| :)] | on the phone - New! |
| ~X( | at wits' end - New! |
| :-h | wave - New! |
| :-t | time out - New! |
| 8-> | Daydreaming - New! |
| I-) | sleepy |
| 8-| | Rolling eyes |
| L-) | loser |
| :-& | sick |
| :-$ | don't tell anyone |
| [-( | not talking |
| :O) | Clown |
| 8-} | silly |
| <:-P | party |
| (:| | Yawn |
| =P~ | drooling |
| :-? | Thinking |
| #-o | d'oh |

| | |
|---|---|
| =D> | applause |
| :-SS | nailbiting |
| @-) | Hypnotized |
| :^o | Liar |
| :-w | waiting |
| :-< | sigh |
| >:P | phbbbbt |
| <):) | Cowboy |

Special abbreviations

KIT – keep in touch
ASL – age/sex/location
POS/PAS – parents over shoulder/parents are watching
TA – teacher alert
SA – sibling alarm

5. Aggressors – how the grooming actually takes place, ways of intimidation

The red flags are many direct personal questions and self-disclosure right from the beginning (mimics the interest in the child as a person). For example the sexual offenders will begin by asking questions like:

- What kind of music do you like?
- Which other sites/online communities do you visit?
- Online gaming – do you play, where in the game are you…
- Where do you go to school, what do you do after school…sports, football, handball?
- What size do you use in pants?
- Do you have a web cam?

The offender will find out personal information that will be helpful in befriending the victim, the way it looks, where can he/she be found and how successful the grooming can be. These can be used as evidence.

Eventually all this information and the intimate photos will be used for intimidation, threats and blackmailing so that the victim will submit under the total control of the abuser.

We can also talk about three stages in grooming:

- Initial phase – introductory questions, sending of self-images, requesting indecent behaviour via web-cams, ask and eventually demands face to face meeting
- Connecting with the child – consolidating behaviours from the initial phase, continue grooming, gain total control via intimidation
- Establishing direct contact – sexual abuse is taking place physically

A lot of time and efforts are spent on victim/offender identification. Special efforts are dedicated to blocking operations. In order to speed up the process Norway has protocols of collaboration with neighbouring countries but also with many other EU states. Another key for good results was the request of help from the online communities and social networks and in this way the support net and the chances for success are growing considerably.

6. Counter-actions are possible and needed, what can ensure their success?

It needs a problem-orientated approach, based more on education and prevention and not exclusively on awareness. In Norway, the police hold special classes in school. Special attention will have to be paid to dedicated websites of interest for teenagers (modelling and musical bands fans). There is a need of extensive covered investigations for victim and offender identification, with skilled and trained operators that could avoid the entrapment defence by a strong case documentation from the start. A successful way was to ensure the help of various social online networks and to develop a constant police presence - patrolling in the chat rooms as a matter of prevention. It is true that in a smaller country such a system can be build and monitored easier but in time this success can be evident also in bigger countries.

| **Contributions, discussions, questions** |
| --- |

- *The need of ongoing education for children – current Internet users and new generations. This should be done in classes as it is done for other subjects: drugs, accidents etc (Norway example). The children and parents might know of and agree already on the risks but up-date information could be helpful.*

- *Potential danger – re-victimisation via entrusting just the child with sole responsibility in matters of online grooming. This should be avoided.*

- *Children aware of the danger but inclined to risk – what is their profile, what are the children typologies (see the example of young girls entering online romances)?*

- *Distinction between age groups, smaller children and teenagers, adolescents and their different needs, psychological profiles – there is a necessity of different approaches for particular age groups.*

- *The issue of false control and the reality of post-traumatic experiences at a later stage/older age – the victims accept gratification through gifts, they seem not to care about the photos but they feel huge inner discomfort and mixed feelings (ex.: the feeling of regret when the aggressor is caught). The youth have no control in the process of manipulative abuse, as the offender's purpose is to gain full control.*

> - *The offenders and the issue of responsibility for their actions. They are fully and solely responsible for the committed abuse.*
>
> - *The helpful involvement of chat communities and social networks – collaborations which need to be replicated at large scale to ensure a safer online environment.*
>
> - *Technologies and human resources for blocking access in various countries; collaboration between stakeholders is an imperative.*
>
> - *The challenges of tracking offenders and victim identification – long and laborious processes, there is a need of more technical and human resources*
>
> - *The collaboration between social networks, police, mobile phone companies, NGOs, etc - it proves the most successful where it happens.*
>
> - *How can we establish the true age of the offender (in the case of chat rooms, social networks where there is no measure of identification as bank card in the case of pornography websites)?*
>
> - *There is a need of special new software, to assist in blocking and identification work are necessary.*
>
> - *There was an intense debate over a common list of websites posting materials with sexually abused children and specific collaborations on the matter – who can and should do it and how (ISPs vs. police, joint actions, the need of a court sentence) as such a list is very important for counter-acting measures. Internet and mobile phones providers are willing to do their share in monitoring and blocking, some have clear policies, but others are afraid that might make them legally liable for all the content on their sites. Clarification would help.*

**Theme 4 – Solutions, relevant actors and their need for support**
**National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and Greater Manchester Police – Julie Hewitt and Dawn Holt**

1. Project E-SPY proved to be a model of good practice.

2. Dedicated Units in England – Greater Manchester Police, West Midland Police, Metropolitan Police (London area).

3. The Abusive Images Investigation Unit is composed of: one detective inspector, one detective sergeant, 3 detective constables, 2 civilian investigators, 2 NSPCC practitioners.

4. Subjects of investigations: those who possess, make, take or distribute indecent images of children (under 18 years of age); use obscene/indecent material for grooming; groom children and travel to meet them for the purpose of sexual acts.

5. Aim and roles of the unit – to safeguard and promote the welfare of children by identifying and tracing children and young people who have been harmed or may be at risk of harm as a result of sexual exploitation or abuse via internet; to assess the immediate risk to children and their family; to identify longer term needs/support; to do prevention, intervention and disruption; to investigate offenders and bring them to justice.

6. NSPCC role – child protection enquiries with other agencies about the planning for operational activities; to assist officers on warrants; to preview articles seized – hard drives, discs, cds, videos etc; to conduct interviews with children; to undertake post warrant assessment visits to provide information for strategy meetings and case conferences; to undertake initial child protection assessments visits to provide information for strategy meetings and case conferences; to undertake initial child protection assessments when required by Social Services or other agencies; liaising with Social Services and relevant agencies; to contribute to the strategic planning of all child protection enquiries; to attend strategy meetings, case conferences, public protection meetings (MAPPA); to advise on post abuse therapeutic needs of the victims and their families; to liaise with relevant support agencies; to provide advice and support for the suspects immediate and wider family; to debrief and critically review investigations; shared learning; child protection consultancy.

7. Why is E-spy a success?

Different professionals work together having clear aims, roles and responsibilities. They are sharing learning and are involved in an ongoing review and development of the project.

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**Contributions, discussions, questions**

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- *Undercover operation on the chat-rooms to find offenders - how to do it efficiently? Information for other professional would be helpful.*

- *Dealing with the issue of entrapment within legal and moral boundaries – the entrapment defence needs to be prevented by efficient planning of the case intervention.*

- *The challenges posed by victims' identification – lack of details and leads, ever-growing number of new material, priority will be given to newest and dated materials. The risk assessment will not be based on the material's level, as it might not be reflecting the reality.*

- *Multidisciplinary teams and approaches – that is a desirable goal to be achieved for a systemic intervention.*

> - *Such projects need promotion and financial support to be multiplied across Europe as models of good practice.*

**Theme 5 - Safer Internet and online technologies for children**
**John Carr, CHIS, UK**

1.      Online grooming – for what specific ending?

It could involve meeting in real life for sexual acts, or providing indecent images of themselves or their friends, or persuading them to perform sexual acts alone or with others via webcam, or to watch sexual acts. The new offence of grooming in the UK does however require a meeting to be arranged and for the adult to set off the meeting – it is an offence that is now being used very much by the police.

2.      Lack of statistics and hard data

Existing statistics are not helpful as they give very poor information - if at all, media are not interested anymore, therefore there is no hard data available on the numbers of children ensnared through grooming. There are only estimates based on monitoring media coverage.

3.      The grooming tool is irrelevant

Children are being groomed now via mobiles, via games consoles, via TV based Internet connection. This is no longer limited to computers or the web.

4.      Speed in grooming

Grooming might start in a public place but it will quickly migrate to a private space, to a mobile phone and/or to email. The offending behaviour can start very quickly – within 60 seconds of logging in – and escalate very rapidly.

Classic cases: Patrick Green, Norman Burgess, Kevin Albert Turner, Luke Sadowski, Douglas Lindsell, Stephen King

5.      Combined solution – education & awareness with appropriate technical tools

Improved education and awareness are vital in combination with better technical solutions for age verification or online identification and monitoring software.  Not all child victims of grooming have been lied to, but many have been, precaution measure should therefore be in place.

*After this particular theme the participants have moved to the session dedicated to suggestions for the EC. The report divides them in two parts: research needs and actions/measures.*

# C. Overall suggestions and recommendations for the EC

> **1. Research should be supported on the following subjects:**

### a. Grooming, offenders
- Offenders migration behaviours in relation to images, triggers and grooming
- A qualitative research – grooming in the contemporary art
- Online sexual abusers – what is a child pornography downloader
- What kind of child prostitution is linked with online grooming?
- General qualitative research on online grooming
- Relation between children and offenders, specific types of websites as points of attraction on the internet (fashion, fans etc)

### b. Technical and procedural aspects
- How children use web cameras and cell phones
- Victim identification and necessary technology
- How can we establish the true age of the offender? (Offender's identification)
- The dynamic and the technical aspects of undercover operation on the chat-rooms – how can it be done efficiently?
- Age verification procedures and technology

### c. Online abused children
- Psycho-social perspectives of the children abused online; what is the impact on them?
- Youth sexuality and its relation with online grooming
- What is youth perception over offensive images, self-exposure, motivation in non-disclosure, private, and privacy vs. public?
- The understanding by children of content globalisation and its ongoing availability on Internet – extent, limitations in grasping process
- Children aware of the danger but inclined to risk – what is their profile, what are the children typologies?

### d. Family, parenting, personal history
- Concepts transfer between generations (ex. attitude towards strangers)
- The relation between online grooming and parenting – (poor parenting?)
- What is the relation between depression and grooming? There is a need of further research as it seems to be a correlation for both abusers and abused
-
### e. Figures and facts
- National and European crime statistics on this matter – quantitative research on the phenomenon's length and depth
- The issue of legislation (comparative studies and identification of the best possible and realistic legislation in the matter)
- What are the alternative opinions regarding on-line grooming of children, if any (i.e. civil liberty organisations)?

**2.Actions to be undertaken – necessary measures:**

*a. Political level*
- The Council of Europe should issue on statement on sexual exploitation of children with mention of terms like grooming, victim identification
- The EC to place the tackling of child sexual abuse higher on the European political agenda
- The European Commission should encourage governments to be informed on the subjects of online grooming and to collaborate among themselves in the necessary actions

*b. Educational and awareness' level*
- Undertaking grass-roots actions to empower children and adults in taking and disseminating preventive and educational measures by themselves

*c. Stakeholders level*
- The EC to promote and financially support joint agencies projects as models of good practice (ex. Cooperation between law enforcement agencies and hot-lines)
- The EC to facilitate further professional networking and training on this matter
- The EC should buy the copyright of the materials that could be of help in the work against online related sexual exploitation/abuse of children and place all these materials for the use of the actors involved
- The EC should enhance the use of blocking systems by the ISPs at European level, gain their collaboration, support them through legislation
- The EC should come up with a general list of websites that are promote sexual exploitation of children in order to facilitate the blocking process at the European level
- The EC should assist NGOs to enter existing networks in the field, support their work

*d. Technical level*
- The EC should support the development of software needed to effective trace, analyse and block websites promoting online child abuse
- The EC should support the development and use of tighter age identification systems
- The EC should get involved in the development of websites with good and attractive content for children as a positive preventive measure

## D. Brief analysis and conclusions

The workshop was a success, given the lively discussions, multiple interventions and the passionate involvement of the vast majority of participants. This dynamic interaction made it impractical for the workshop rapporteur to try out a personalised list of contributions per subject, during the sessions. There were very few points of disagreement or debate as can be seen from the contributions to the specific themes. The participants showed therefore a unified vision and sense of urgency regarding the

tackle of the on-line sexual abuse of children. In the same time, although the phenomenon seems to be increasing in its alarming effects, the positive results generated by the combined efforts of involved stakeholders will become more and more visible in the near future, based on the counteracting mechanisms now getting in place in the Member States.

The future development and consolidation of projects, based on the newly launched call for projects 2007, will surely increase the speed and progress. Such advancements, however, should be based on several pillars - more in-depth research, updated legislation and an enlarged involvement of more stakeholders in the field of action, while following-up the previously initiated projects at the European level.

The clear and specific suggestions which came from the participants illuminate the further course of action. Necessary measures regarding online child abuse should not be taken at the expense of other crucial actions against bullying, racism, discrimination etc – such projects should continue and be supported. In conclusion, much remains to be done regarding various fields of action against online child abuse, but we can be positive about the end result of our concerted efforts.