



Declassified¹

AS/Soc (2023) PV01add2

16 March 2023

Asocpv01add2_2023

Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development

Minutes

Public hearing on “Right of the child to protection while using the internet” held in Strasbourg on 26 January 2023

In connection with the preparation of the report on “Right of the child to protection while using the internet” by **Mr Joseph O'Reilly** (Ireland, EPP/CD), the Committee **held** a public hearing with:

- ✓ **Mr Uri Sadeh**, Co-ordinator – Crimes against Children Unit, INTERPOL
- ✓ **Ms Ana Balcells Cartagena**, Legal and Policy Officer, DG CNECT.F.2 – Digital Services (Programme Office & Societal aspects), European Commission

Ms Selin Sayek Böke (Türkiye, SOC), **Chairperson of the Committee**, opened the hearing and introduced the guest speakers, **Mr Sadeh**, who was at the meeting, and **Ms Balcells Cartagena**, who was joining it by video link, together with her colleagues at the European Commission, Ms Margarita Akritidiou and Ms Anna Sobkiewicz.

Presentation by Mr Uri Sadeh, Co-ordinator – Crimes against Children Unit, INTERPOL

Mr Sadeh explained that the International Criminal Police Organisation, also known as INTERPOL, consisted of 195 member countries connected by a secure network. Work on crimes against children hinged on capacity building, technology development and strengthening the network of specialised units at national level. By analysing the digital, visual and audio content of photographs and videos, victim identification experts could retrieve clues, identify any overlap in cases and combine their efforts to locate victims of child sexual abuse. In 2022, 4 811 victims had been identified. INTERPOL's technical platform – the International Child Sexual Exploitation Database (ICSE) – contained more than 4.3 million images and videos. It optimised searches, as the exact same image was often posted on different platforms and could still be found even after victim identification. The database, which connected 68 countries, had helped to identify 32 700 victims and 14 500 perpetrators (often with more than one victim) worldwide. To gain access to the database, a specialised national unit was required. So far, eight Council of Europe member states (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Montenegro, North Macedonia and San Marino) had not yet joined. There were plans to use artificial intelligence for the faster screening and checking of images.

At its meeting in New Delhi in October 2022, INTERPOL's General Assembly had called on member countries to develop specialised units. The future ICSE augmented database would incorporate the most advanced technology and artificial intelligence to enable faster identification of victims and offenders, thereby more rapidly reducing children's exposure and the spread of illegal content. INTERPOL had also been compiling a list of “worst internet domains” (INTERPOL's Worst of List, IWOL) over the past decade and working with hosting services to remove the images. In 2022, 4 693 sites containing 121 276 links had been identified. In January 2023 alone, 600 sites had already been identified. The Baseline system (composed of images and videos listed by a digital signature) enabled partners in the public and private sectors to recognise, report and remove child sexual abuse material from their networks. Lastly, criminals were identified thanks to in-depth crime analysis. Experts in crimes against children were focusing on 1) victim identification, 2) violent and serious crimes, 3) victim services, 4) infiltration and 5) technological solutions.

In conclusion, **Mr Sadeh** called for technology platform providers to get more involved in efforts to combat such crimes and for the global anti-child sexual abuse network to be strengthened, including in Europe, via Europol.

Discussion

Noting the importance of worldwide co-operation, **Ms Jazłowiecka** enquired how INTERPOL worked with Europol in this field. **Mr Sadeh** replied that there was no information sharing between the two platforms, although the two organisations functioned in the same way.

¹ The minutes were approved and declassified by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development at its meeting on 16 March 2023.

In response to remarks by **Mr Grin**, who noted the absence of Asian countries connected to the database, **Mr Sadeh** confirmed that there were very few specialised units in Asia and Africa. However, INTERPOL was in the process of signing an agreement with access providers in the Philippines.

Asked by **Ms Hart** about the lack of regulation for internet users and the role of technology companies, **Mr Sadeh** said that the latter were making huge efforts to attract children and therefore had a responsibility to protect them. It was not down to the police to do everything. Companies must also get involved.

Mr Bērziņš asked what roles parents and the education system should play. **Mr Sadeh** replied that more awareness-raising and prevention work could be done. Although this was not a police matter, he had noticed that parents held little sway over their children. The industry should also have prevention tools, especially since it was better placed than the police to identify new developments and trends.

In reply to a question from **Ms Sayek Böke** about assessing the ICSE's impact, **Mr Sadeh** referred to two indicators to track the number of victims identified and the number of specialised units in as many countries as possible.

Presentation by Ms Ana Balcells Cartagena, Legal and Policy Officer, CNECT.F.2 – Digital Services (Programme Office & Societal aspects), European Commission

Ms Balcells Cartagena provided an overview of internet use around the world and the need for digital platform regulation. At EU level, the Digital Services Act (DSA) had come into force on 16 November 2022 and would apply from 17 February 2024. It aimed to provide a harmonised legal framework for online services, focusing on illegal content moderation and the transparency of services. Its main goal was to create a safer and more trustworthy online environment, including provisions to protect minors. The need to protect minors online was a major issue that had been factored in during the drafting process, while bearing in mind that the DSA was a horizontal instrument applying to all types of illegal content and to all providers of intermediary services.

The rules and obligations for online platform providers had been significantly reinforced by introducing Article 28 on the online protection of minors. The entire DSA followed the same logic, i.e., targeted rules where necessary. This was why there were several levels of action, arranged in concentric circles: firstly, Article 14 provided that where an intermediary service was primarily directed at minors, the provider must explain the conditions for, and any restrictions on, its use in a way that minors could understand. Secondly, Article 28, which had a broad scope, applied to all providers of online platforms accessible to minors, who must ensure a high level of privacy, safety and security of minors. Articles 34 and 35 required providers of very large online platforms and of very large online search engines to assess risks to minors and put in place mitigation measures, including targeted measures to protect the rights of the child, in particular age verification and parental control tools, and tools to help minors report abuse or obtain support, as appropriate.

In 2022, the Commission had also adopted the new EU strategy for a Better Internet for Kids (BIK+), inviting member states and the technology industry to get involved in the implementation of the three pillars, which were: 1) safe digital experiences to protect children, 2) digital empowerment of children and 3) active participation of children. The Commission was currently working on a code of conduct on age-appropriate internet design.

Discussion

Ms Sayek Böke asked about the key recommendations and co-operation with non-EU countries. **Ms Balcells Cartagena** said that the DSA applied to all intermediation services across the EU and responded to the need to strike a balance between privacy and protection. This implied that all the service providers operating in EU should have a representative office. The existing rules were enforced through cooperation with the national authorities. Asymmetric obligations were imposed where necessary. Platforms targeted at children should have user safety built in by design. **Ms Akritidiou** noted that age verification systems were necessary to compensate for the ineffectiveness of parental controls. The Commission was funding a pilot project which had found that some systems were effective, as well as the development of a trusted age verification system.

Mr Moutquin expressed concern over the use of darknet by criminals and remarked that 18 000 migrant children had gone missing in Europe; some of them were being exploited in child pornography. Police officers had been stationed outside Belgian centres for Ukrainian refugees in response to the risk of such exploitation. He asked whether child victims of child pornography belonged to a particular category and if there was any profiling of vulnerable Children by INTERPOL. **Mr Sadeh** replied that there was no specific profile for that matter because the internet was available in all countries and to all social classes around the world. Migrants were not necessarily more affected online.

Asked by **Ms Sayek Böke** and **Ms Jazłowiecka** about children's increased exposure during lockdowns and the role of education, respectively, **Mr Sadeh** said that criminals swiftly adapted to new developments (for example, they switched platforms if one was known to report abuse) and children were quick to sign up for the next popular app. There was a continuous need to adapt tools available at the disposal of authorities. INTERPOL was involved with organisations working on prevention and training, but this was not a key part of its remit.

Ms Hart said that technology companies needed to be held accountable.

The Chairperson thanked the experts and declared the discussion closed.

Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development
Commission des questions sociales, de la santé et du développement durable

Members / Membres	Country / Pays	Alternates / Remplaçant(e)s
Ms Jorida Tabaku	Albania / Albanie	Zz...
M. Pere López	Andorra / Andorre	Mme Mònica Bonell
Mr Armen Gevorgyan	Armenia / Arménie	Ms Hripsime Grigoryan
Mr Franz Leonhard Essl	Austria / Autriche	Mr Michel Reimon
Mr Stefan Schennach	Austria / Autriche	Ms Doris Bures
Ms Nigar Arpadarai	Azerbaijan / Azerbaïdjan	Ms Parvin Karimzada
Ms Sevinj Fataliyeva	Azerbaijan / Azerbaïdjan	Ms Konul Nurullayeva
Mr Bob De Brabandere	Belgium / Belgique	Ms Els Van Hoof
M. Simon Moutquin	Belgium / Belgique	Mme Latifa Gahouchi
Zz...	Bosnia and Herzegovina / Bosnie-Herzégovine	Zz...
Mr Kostadin Angelov	Bulgaria / Bulgarie	Zz...
Ms Denitsa Sacheva	Bulgaria / Bulgarie	Mr Vasil Pandov
Ms Zdravka Bušić	Croatia / Croatie	Ms Ivana Kekin
Ms Christiana Erotokritou	Cyprus / Chypre	Mr Constantinos Efstathiou
Mr Aleš Juchelka	Czech Republic / République tchèque	Mr Ondřej Šimetka
Ms Michaela Šebelová	Czech Republic / République tchèque	Mr Jiří Strýček
Ms Camilla Fabricius	Denmark / Danemark	Ms Karin Liltorp
Mr Urmas Reitelmann	Estonia / Estonie	Ms Maria Jufereva-Skuratovski
Ms Minna Reijonen	Finland / Finlande	Ms Tarja Filatov
M. Alain Milon	France	M. Christian Klinger
Mme Isabelle Santiago	France	Mme Liliana Tanguy
Mme Anne Stambach-Terreoir	France	Mme Mireille Clapot
M. Philippe Vigier	France	Mme Nathalie Serre
Ms Eka Sepashvili	Georgia / Géorgie	Mr Levan Ioseliani
Ms Heike Engelhardt	Germany / Allemagne	Ms Franziska Kersten
Mr Andrej Hunko	Germany / Allemagne	Ms Catarina Dos Santos-Wintz
Mr Christian Petry	Germany / Allemagne	Ms Martina Stamm-Fibich
Mr Harald Weyel	Germany / Allemagne	Ms Katrin Staffler
Ms Nina Kasimati	Greece / Grèce	Ms Foteini Pipili
Ms Theodora Tzakri	Greece / Grèce	Mr Kyriakos Velopoulos
Ms Mónika Bartos	Hungary / Hongrie	Mme Katalin Csöbör
Ms Boglárka Illés	Hungary / Hongrie	Ms Zita Gurmai
Mr Bjarni Jónsson	Iceland / Islande	Ms Jódís Skúladóttir
Mr Joseph O'Reilly	Ireland / Irlande	Ms Reada Cronin
Zz...	Italy / Italie	Zz...
Zz...	Italy / Italie	Zz...

Zz...	Italy / <i>Italie</i>	Zz...
Zz...	Italy / <i>Italie</i>	Zz...
M. Andris Bērziņš	Latvia / <i>Lettonie</i>	Mr Edmunds Cepurītis
Ms Franziska Hoop	Liechtenstein	Mr Peter Frick
Mr Kęstutis Masiulis	Lithuania / <i>Lituanie</i>	Ms Rasa Budbergytė
M. Max Hengel	Luxembourg	M. Paul Galles
Ms Romilda Baldacchino Zarb	Malta / <i>Malte</i>	Mr Joseph Beppe Fenech Adami
Mr Ion Groza	Republic of Moldova / <i>République de Moldova</i>	Ms Reghina Ȃpostolova
M. José Badia	Monaco	Mme Béatrice Fresko-Rolfo
Mr Miloš Konatar	Montenegro / <i>Monténégro</i>	Zz...
Ms Reina De Bruijn-Wezeman	Netherlands / <i>Pays-Bas</i>	Mr Bob Van Pareren
Ms Ria Oomen-Ruijten	Netherlands / <i>Pays-Bas</i>	Ms Agnes Mulder
Ms Artina Qazimi	North Macedonia / <i>Macédoine du Nord</i>	Mr Vlado Misajlovski
Ms Lisa Marie Ness Klungland	Norway / <i>Norvège</i>	Ms Linda Hofstad Helleland
Ms Danuta Jazłowiecka	Poland / <i>Pologne</i>	Mr Tomasz Latos
Mr Bolesław Piecha	Poland / <i>Pologne</i>	Ms Marta Kubiak
Mr Andrzej Szejna	Poland / <i>Pologne</i>	Ms Mirosława Nykiel
Mr Nuno Carvalho	Portugal	Ms Mónica Quintela
Mr Pedro Cegonho	Portugal	Ms Jamila Madeira
Mr Andi-Lucian Cristea	Romania / <i>Roumanie</i>	M. Ion Prioteasa
Ms Alina-Ştefania Gorghiu	Romania / <i>Roumanie</i>	Mr Cristian-Augustin Niculescu-Țăgârlaş
Ms Diana Stoica	Romania / <i>Roumanie</i>	Ms Daniela Oteşanu
Ms Marica Montemaggi	San Marino / <i>Saint-Marin</i>	Mr Marco Nicolini
Ms Tatjana Pašić	Serbia / <i>Serbie</i>	Ms Jelena Milošević
Ms Dunja Simonović Bratić	Serbia / <i>Serbie</i>	Mr Uglješa Marković
Mme Anna Záborská	Slovak Republic / <i>République Slovaque</i>	Mr Juraj Šeliga
Mr Dean Premik	Slovenia / <i>Slovénie</i>	Ms Iva Dimic
Ms María Fernández	Spain / <i>Espagne</i>	Ms Susana Sumelzo
Mr Antón Gómez-Reino	Spain / <i>Espagne</i>	Ms Belén Hoyo
Ms Carmen Leyte	Spain / <i>Espagne</i>	Mr Salvador Vidal
Mr Mattias Jonsson	Sweden / <i>Suède</i>	Ms Yasmine Bladelius
Ms Beatrice Timgren	Sweden / <i>Suède</i>	Ms Boriana Åberg
Ms Sibel Arslan	Switzerland / <i>Suisse</i>	M. Pierre-Alain Fridez
M. Jean-Pierre Grin	Switzerland / <i>Suisse</i>	Mme Ada Marra
Ms Emine Nur Günay	Türkiye	Mr Mehmet Mehdi Eker
Mr Halil Özşavli	Türkiye	Ms Sena Nur Çelik
Mr Hişyar Özsoy	Türkiye	Ms Feleknaş Uca
Ms Selin Sayek Böke	Türkiye	M. Haluk Koç
Mr Artem Dubnov	Ukraine	Ms Lesia Zaburanna

Ms Olena Khomenko	Ukraine	Ms Larysa Bilozir
Ms Yuliia Ovchynnykova	Ukraine	Mr Andrii Lopushanskyi
Mr Geraint Davies	United Kingdom / <i>Royaume-Uni</i>	Ms Kate Osamor
Ms Sally-Ann Hart	United Kingdom / <i>Royaume-Uni</i>	Mr Richard Bacon
Baroness Doreen E. Massey	United Kingdom / <i>Royaume-Uni</i>	Ms Ruth Jones
Mr David Morris	United Kingdom / <i>Royaume-Uni</i>	Ms Sheryll Murray

Other Parliamentarians present / Autres Parlementaires present.e.s

Ms / *Mme* Aurora Floridia Italy / *Italie*
 Mr / *M.* Enis Kervan Kosovo*
 Mr / *M.* Besnik Tahiri Kosovo*

Partners for Democracy / Partenaires pour la Démocratie

Ms / *Mme* Reema Abu-Alees Jordan / *Jordanie*
 Ms / *Mme* Dina Albashir Jordan / *Jordanie*
 Mr / *M.* Allal Amraoui Morocco / *Maroc*
 Mr / *M.* Hassan Arif Morocco / *Maroc*

Embassies / Permanent Representations and Delegations
Ambassades / Représentations permanentes et Delegations

Ms / *Mme* Arpine Fedoseeva, Chief specialist Department of External Relations, Government of Armenia /
Spécialiste en chef, Département des relations extérieures, Gouvernement d'Arménie
 Mr / *M.* Tale Aliyev, Deputy to the Permanent Representative, Permanent Representation of Azerbaijan to the
 Council of Europe / *Adjoint au Représentant permanent, Représentation permanente d'Azerbaïdjan auprès du*
Conseil de l'Europe
 Mr / *M.* Fatih Gündoğdu, Deputy to the Permanent Representative, Permanent Representation of Türkiye to
 the Council of Europe / *Adjoint au Représentant permanent, Représentation permanente de Türkiye auprès*
du Conseil de l'Europe

Secretariat of Delegation or of Political Group / Secrétariat de Delegation ou de Groupe politique

Ms / *Mme* Panagiota Micha, Greek delegation to PACE / *Délégation grecque auprès de l'APCE*
 Mr / *M.* Răzvan Tanase, Delegation Secretary, Romanian delegation to PACE / *Secrétaire de délégation,*
délégation de la Roumanie auprès de l'APCE
 Ms / *Mme* Handan Karakaş Demir, Delegation Secretary, Turkish delegation to PACE / *Secrétaire de*
délégation, délégation turque auprès de l'APCE

Experts / Expert.e.s

Ms / *Mme* Ana Balcells Cartagena, Legal and Policy Officer, DG CNECT.F.2 – Digital Services (Programme
 Office and Societal aspects), European Commission / *Chargée des affaires juridiques et politiques, CNECT.F.2*
– Services numériques (cellule de coordination et aspects sociétaux), Commission européenne
 Mr / *M.* Uri Sadeh, Co-ordinator – Crimes against Children Unit, INTERPOL / *Coordinateur – Unité des crimes*
contre les enfants, INTERPOL

* All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo. / *Toute référence au Kosovo, que ce soit à son territoire, à ses institutions ou à sa population, doit se comprendre en pleine conformité avec la Résolution 1244 du Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies et sans préjuger du statut du Kosovo.*

Others / Autres

Ms / Mme Bénédicte Colin, Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe / *Fédération des associations familiales catholiques*

Council of Europe staff / Secrétariat du Conseil de l'Europe

Ms / Mme Joanne Hunting, Secretary to the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) / *Secrétaire du Conseil consultatif sur la jeunesse (CCJ)*

Ms / Mme Faustine Labbadi, Secretariat of the Lanzarote Committee / *Secrétariat du Comité de Lanzarote*

Ms / Mme Ekaterina Malareva, Children's Rights Division / *Division des droits de l'enfant*

Ms / Mme Zeynep Usal-Kanzler, Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) Secretariat / *Secrétariat, Comité Directeur pour les Droits de l'Enfant (CDENF)*

Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly / Secrétariat de l'Assemblée Parlementaire

Ms / Mme Despina Chatzivassiliou-Tsovilis, Secretary General of the Assembly / *Secrétaire générale de l'Assemblée*

Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development /
Commission des questions sociales, de la santé et du développement durable

Ms / Mme Tanja Kleinsorge Head of the Secretariat / *Cheffe du Secrétariat*

Ms / Mme Aiste Ramanauskaite Secretary to the Committee / *Secrétaire de la commission*

Ms / Mme Jannick Devaux..... Secretary to the Committee / *Secrétaire de la commission*

Ms / Mme Anita Gholami Co-Secretary/ *Co-Secrétaire*

Mr / M. Guillaume Parent..... Co-Secretary/ *Co-Secrétaire*

Ms / Mme Sylvie Elter Assistant / *Assistante*

Ms / Mme Claire Fabre Trainee / *Stagiaire*

Ms / Mme Teresa Andreani Trainee / *Stagiaire*

Ms / Mme Federica Peseri..... Trainee / *Stagiaire*