



## **Important Research Findings about child safety on the internet, how it intersects with privacy and what the EU should be doing**

AMSTERDAM, 17 November 2021

ECPAT, the world's largest NGO network solely focused on ending the sexual exploitation of children, today released findings from new qualitative and quantitative research which was carried out among adults in eight European Union Member States: France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Sweden.

The research explored public knowledge of and attitudes towards children's safety online, how this intersects with concerns about privacy.

Key findings of the quantitative research included:

- 73% of adults believe children cannot go online without being approached by adults looking to harm them.
- This broke down as 77% among female respondents and 69% among males.
- 76% of respondents are willing to give up some of their personal privacy online to allow for automated technology tools to scan and detect images of child sexual abuse and detect other forms of sexual exploitation of children.
- Nearly 7 out of 10 people feel that there is not much, if any, privacy online anyway. Those who believe online privacy does *not* exist (68%) greatly outnumber those who believe it does (25%).
- 68% of respondents in the eight countries support plans by the European Union to introduce new legislation on the detection of child sexual abuse material by private companies (Italy (75%); Spain (75%); Netherlands (72%)).

### ***The research findings were broadly consistent across all eight countries.***

Noteworthy finding in the qualitative research

- Most respondents in the qualitative research groups did not know that hash detection tools to address online child sexual abuse material existed or that anti-grooming tools had been developed. Once participants learnt about these tools, they were angry that they weren't being used and turned on at all times. Participants in these groups held to this view even when they were told that their data could be scanned to achieve this.

### ***For your further consideration***

- The importance for the EU of ensuring the rights of children in digital environments is clearly reflected in ongoing processes across the EU, including but not limited to the [Digital Services Act, proposal for legislation on the detection, removal and reporting of CSAM](#) as part of the [EU Strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse](#), and the [EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#). However, the Commission itself [points out](#) the need to improve coordination and ensure coherence in the protection and combating of child sexual abuse and exploitation.
- In all these processes, listening to and reflecting public opinion remains central to the work of the EU Institutions. However, the complexity and range of processes may not always be accessible to the public. ECPAT offers this research as a contribution to efforts to build more effective fight against child sexual abuse and exploitation.



### ***Background***

Commissioned by ECPAT International in partnership with Defence for Children – ECPAT Netherlands, the quantitative research was delivered by YouGov, based on representative adult populations (18+) in the countries listed above. Total sample size was 9,410 adults participated in France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, and Spain. Fieldwork was undertaken between 2<sup>nd</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> September 2021. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been given an even weighting for each country to produce an ‘average’ value. The qualitative data was gathered in 7 countries (all the countries above minus Sweden) through online Remesh sessions with 210 people. This was done in the first part of 2021 within 4 months’ time by Outrageous Company.

- ENDS -

For comment or interviews contact:

Celine Verheijen, Project manager, Defence for Children – ECPAT Netherlands

[c.verheijen@defenceforchildren-ecpat.nl](mailto:c.verheijen@defenceforchildren-ecpat.nl)

+31 (0)642053860

Amy Crocker, Interim Programme Advisor Online Child Sexual Exploitation, ECPAT International

[amyc@ecpat.org](mailto:amyc@ecpat.org)

+31 (0)621406200