



Daphne Booklets: Issues and experiences in combating violence
against children, young people and women

Preventing sexual abuse and exploitation of children

Dr June Kane
August 2006



ISSN number

Language of publication:

Available in other EU languages at:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/daphne/funding_daphne_en.htm

European Commission

DG Justice, Freedom and Security

Daphne Programme

B-1049 Brussels, Belgium

First printing: XX XXXXXX 2006]

Introduction

In 2007, the European Commission's Daphne Programme marks a decade of work to prevent violence against children, young people and women in Europe, and to support victims of such violence.

'Daphne' grew out of growing concern about one particular form of violence that hit the headlines in 1996: sexual violence against children. The abduction, sexual violation and subsequent death of two little girls horrified the people of Europe and continue to mobilise our commitment today. The events of 1996 are never far from our minds as we continue our work to ensure that the children of Europe receive all the protection we can give them, not only from sexual abuse and exploitation but from all forms of violence.

Since taking up the Vice-Presidency of the European Commission and in particular taking on responsibility for the Directorate-General of Justice, Freedom and Security, I have made the protection of children's rights a priority. On 4 July 2006, the Commission issued a communication that is a first step in developing a wide-ranging EU strategy on the rights of the child that aims at promoting and safeguarding children's rights in all the Commission's internal and external actions and that will support the efforts of the Member States in this field. The communication, *Towards an EU strategy on the rights of the child*, calls on Member States, the European institutions and other stakeholders to take an active part in developing the strategy and so to contribute to its success.

I am personally committed to following through the groundwork laid by the communication and to supporting and promoting EC programmes that will turn strategy into positive outcomes for children, both at policy and programme levels. I am pleased that the Daphne Programme has been able to play such an important role in building a critical mass so vital to making a real difference for children.

Ten years after it began, the Daphne Programme continues to be a positive example of what can be done to make things better for the children of Europe, day by day, while at the same time improving our understanding and how we work.

Since it began in early 1997, Daphne has supported NGOs, public authorities and research institutions running transnational 'Daphne projects' in all the Member States of the European Union. These projects have involved more than 1,000 different organisations, working together in actions covering research and surveys, training and educational materials, targeted awareness raising, networking and exchange of experience, identification and sharing of

good practices, and a range of direct actions with immediate impact on victims of violence and those at risk. Year by year, the knowledge and experience that have come out of Daphne-supported projects have spread across the world, shared in meetings, conferences, through publications and exchange of personnel and, of course, on-line.

Now, I am very pleased to be able to launch this series of Daphne Booklets, which aims to bring together some of the experiences and conclusions of these projects. Each paper gives an overview of the issue, the legal and policy framework in Europe and the outcomes of the Daphne experience. In the first series, the following papers are available or in preparation:

1. Preventing the sexual abuse and exploitation of children
2. Trafficking and labour exploitation
3. Cultural and ethnic violence
4. Violence in the home and family

It is appropriate that the very first title should be on the very subject that gave birth to Daphne in the first place and that it should focus on preventing such horrors from occurring again. I hope the Daphne Booklets will play a part in our continuing efforts to make sure that the children of Europe enjoy their rights and remain safe from the violence that is too often a part of their lives.

Franco Frattini
Vice President of the European Commission,
in charge of Justice, Freedom and Security

Foreword

Since the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, appointed me to lead the Study on Violence against Children, which is to be presented to the General Assembly in October 2006, I have learned a great deal about violence in all its forms. It is distressing in the extreme to document the many ways in which violence occurs in the lives of children and young people all over the world, but one purpose of the study is to draw attention to the violent reality of children's lives in the 21st century and to call for action to change it. Despite this, I have stressed that the study is not an exercise in compiling shocking stories of violence from around the world but the first step in a concerted effort to find ways to stop it.

It is, nevertheless, a fact that sexual violence against children – in its most extreme forms: sexual abuse and commercial sexual exploitation – is both shocking and horrific. It pierces to the heart of a child's innermost being. It can destroy their trust in adults, the very people who have a duty of care towards them. And it can have serious consequences on their physical and psychological health. Article 34 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been ratified by all the countries of the European Union, calls upon state parties to “undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse”. The Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography further reinforces this commitment. A number of other United Nations instruments add to the international legal protections for children, including the International Labour Organisation's Convention No.182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, which treats commercial sexual exploitation and the abuse of children in pornography as the worst forms of child labour; and the Supplementary Protocol to the UN Trafficking Convention, known as the Palermo Protocol, which states clearly that no person below the age of 18 can ever be considered to have willingly consented to being trafficked, for whatever purpose. The truth is, however, that these international treaties offer most protection to children when they are comprehensively and effectively translated into national laws and rigorously enforced, but that is sadly not always the case.

Governments in Europe have been at the forefront of legal revision to take into account the rights of children to be protected from sexual abuse and exploitation. Law enforcement efforts have given examples, especially in cross-border co-operation, that are being shared throughout the world. Individual countries' police forces regularly exchange expertise and personnel, and bodies such as Europol take individual countries' experiences and use it for regional impact.

NGOs in this region continue to work on the ground, alongside children and young people, to find new ways to protect children from sexual violence and support those who have fallen victim to it. This region has provided some exceptional examples of how organisations can also work across national borders – just as the perpetrators of sexual violence often do – so that the children of Europe do not fall through the cracks that sometimes open up between national efforts. The methodologies, training programmes, guidelines and other tools that have been developed have relevance, not only in this region and beyond but also in efforts to confront other forms of violence.

The first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation in 1996 was held in the wake of terrible events in Europe that brought the problem of sexual violence against children to the attention of the whole world. The death of two little girls in Belgium focused everyone's attention on this particularly horrendous form of violence – the violence that eats away at the heart of childhood, damaging a child's sense of self-worth and making them question their relationships with others. This has lasting repercussions into adulthood and family life.

We knew then that we could not let such violence continue. Difficult as it is, we have to go on looking for ways to end sexual violence against children and, indeed, other forms of violence that show all too clearly that we are letting our children down.

Key to this is gathering new knowledge, testing innovative methodologies, analysing the results of pilot actions and sharing this with others in a spirit of learning and capacity building. In recent years we have learned much about the sexual abuse and exploitation of children, and about the programmes and practices that help ensure that children enjoy their right to protection. There is still much to learn, however. Work must continue until no child suffers the terrible trauma of sexual violence and we must be serious about translating our promises into action. In the course of preparing the Violence Study, I have spoken to many children all over the world. It is clear that they are tired of words and declarations without implementation. Children cannot wait any longer.

Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro
Independent Expert
UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children

The problem

The use of children (under the age of 18) for the sexual gratification of others is not a new phenomenon. For as long as people have been writing and recording human life, there have been accounts of how adults – usually men but sometimes women – have preyed upon children for pleasure, in the name of religion, to fulfil pathological urges, in an attempt to enforce a relationship of power, or just because they think it is acceptable to do so.

It was not until 1996, however, that the use of children for sexual purposes came to broad public attention in Europe. The outcry and widespread condemnation with which it was met put the topic firmly on the political agenda in all the countries of Europe and, indeed, the world.

In 1996, the coincidence of two quite separate events brought into the open these subjects which had for so long gone unspoken, except in a generally romanticised form in literature and art.

On 15 August 1996, police in Marcinelles, a suburb of Charleroi, Belgium, rescued two young girls from sexual captivity. Laetitia Delhez, then 14, had disappeared on 9 August between the local swimming pool and her home. Twelve-year-old Sabine Dardenne had been missing since 29 May when she did not arrive at school. The rescue followed police requests for a media 'blackout' on the story of the missing girls and possible links with the disappearances of four more girls: Eefje Lambrechts, 19, and An Marchal, 17, both from a town in eastern Belgium, and two eight year-olds, Julie Lejeune and Mélissa Russo, missing since 24 June 1995 from their homes near Liège. The bodies of these four girls were unearthed in the investigation following the rescue of Laetitia and Sabine.

All six had been abducted by Marc Dutroux, a convicted rapist and petty criminal who imprisoned the girls in a roughly built dungeon in one of his homes where he had repeatedly drugged and raped them. Why he did this has been the topic of much speculation. Although the popular press commonly brands him as a paedophile, there are signs that this is not in fact the case¹. Paedophiles display consistent behaviours that Dutroux did not. At his trial, Dutroux claimed that he had been asked to 'acquire' young girls for unspecified abusers who had loosely formed what is commonly called a 'ring'. This has never been proven but it is consistent with Dutroux's involvement in other forms of trafficking – he was investigated for selling stolen cars into Eastern Europe, for example, and was subsequently shown to engage in other forms of criminal activity. Investigations turned up more of Dutroux's illicit activities, including the production of pornographic videos involving children, both boys and girls, which he attempted to sell for profit. However, it is certain that Dutroux did sexually abuse the girls while he held them and he drugged them to keep them compliant.

1. J. Kane, *Chasse à l'enfant*, Editions Ramsay, Paris 1997, p.53. Published in English as *Sold for Sex*, Arena, London 1998, p.35.

Whatever the motivations of Dutroux, the case prompted public discussion of many of the elements that are generally included under the heading 'sexual abuse and exploitation of children': the capturing of images of children being sexually abused in order to produce child pornography; the rape of a minor for personal sexual gratification; the acquiring of a child to be sold for profit (to paedophiles who prefer children under the age of puberty, or child sex abusers who generally prefer older children in their teens). If the abducted children had been moved to another town or country – perhaps along the routes Dutroux reportedly used to traffic stolen cars – then they would have been considered to have been trafficked.

By sheer historical coincidence, as people were trying to come to terms with the horrific news coming out of Belgium, hundreds of government representatives, United Nations agency delegates, children's rights activists, researchers and journalists were making their way to Stockholm, Sweden, for the first ever World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children². A delegation of children and young people were similarly preparing to meet and then report their conclusions to the Stockholm Congress delegates. The first World Congress was co-sponsored by the Government of Sweden, the United Nations' children's agency UNICEF, the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and ECPAT, a global campaign against child prostitution that had begun in Bangkok in the mid-1990s³.

Because ECPAT had first called for an international meeting of this nature, the title reflected the organisation's major area of activity: the commercial sexual exploitation of children. This includes the prostitution of children, trafficking for sexual purposes, the production, sale, distribution and use of child pornography, and child sex tourism, a specific area of activity in which child sex abusers travel alone or in groups on 'package holidays' specifically to seek out children for sex.

The first World Congress, however, despite its title, did not confine its coverage to commercial sexual exploitation. Papers and discussions covered all aspects of child sex abuse and exploitation. It threw light on many areas of confusion, including, for example, the important difference between paedophiles whose abuse of children arises from a recognised sexual deviance that can be treated (although with varying degrees of success), and child sex abusers whose motivations are multiple and who fall into many different categories.

These men (and sometimes women) are often forgotten in discussions of child sex abuse and exploitation. They have no condition that can be treated and rarely display any 'symptoms' that mark them as predatory. They may abuse just once or regularly. Often the men are regular adult prostitute users but they may also be young men travelling together on holiday who are looking for a 'good time', or older men and women looking to dominate more vulnerable sex partners they can identify as weak, 'unworthy' or 'different'. One specific sub-group of sex abusers comprises the men (and sometimes women) who sexually abuse their own children. This is also known as incest. At the Europe/Central Asia regional meeting preparing input to the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children in 2005, the working group looking at violence in the home and family noted that sexual abuse in the family has been the 'poor cousin' to concerns about the commercial sexual exploitation of children⁴. Children are most at risk, in fact, of sexual abuse by family members, relatives or other adults known to them.

2. For documents from both the first and second World Congresses, see www.csecworldcongress.org

3. ECPAT (End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism) began with a group of campaigners who wanted to draw the attention of policy-makers and those who influence them, including the general public, to the prostitution of young children in the countries of South-East Asia. ECPAT's remit soon grew to cover the commercial sexual exploitation of children all over the world and, following the first World Congress, it became a global network of NGOs implementing programmes at many different levels in this area. In recognition of its new role and status, ECPAT retained its acronym but changed the name behind it, to End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking.

4. Violence against children in Europe and Central Asia: The problem, actions taken and challenges outstanding. Summary report of the Europe/Central Asia regional consultation for the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children, 2006. See www.violencestudy.org

The events of 1996 opened up a whole new can of worms that Europe, and indeed the rest of the world, was hardly ready to deal with. The delegates meeting in Stockholm began to put in place some first attempts at strategy in the form of the 'Stockholm Agenda for Action' and supported this with a clear condemnation of child sexual abuse and exploitation and a call to arms: the 'Stockholm Declaration' (1996)⁵.

When they returned to their countries, governments began the long task of fulfilling the commitments they had made in Stockholm. The European Commission delegation, led by the-then Commissioner, Anita Gradin, who had been a keynote speaker in Stockholm, called an urgent hearing of European NGOs, law enforcement specialists, members of the Commission and European Parliament (MEPs), and others in relevant areas. The aim of the hearing was to explore what practical actions could be initiated to implement the policies that the European Parliament had already begun putting in place.

Out of this hearing emerged two new Commission action programmes. The STOP Programme focused on promoting law enforcement and professional exchange, and training in the field of sexual abuse and exploitation of children, which later came to focus more specifically on trafficking. The Daphne Initiative was created as a one-year budget line to support NGO projects in the areas of research, networking, direct action, and training and tools production in the area of violence against children, young people and women, including sexual violence. After its initial success, the Daphne Initiative was renewed for one more year, then another, and in 2000 was given a legal base and became a multi-year Commission programme which, in 2007, enters its third phase.

5. The 2nd World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children was held in Yokohama, Japan, in December 2001. At this global meeting, governments reported on progress made and a wide range of workshops promoted the exchange of experience at a number of levels. The papers from Yokohama are also available on the World Congress website. Delegates at Yokohama endorsed the Yokohama Global Commitment (2001), a reiteration of the Stockholm Declaration and a widening of the agenda to cover non-commercial abuse. Both before and after 2001, regular review meetings have been held in many regions to develop and monitor regional action plans. The Europe action plan, known as the Budapest Commitment, is monitored through a logframe-based tool called REACT. It was administered across the region in 2005. The results are available on the Council of Europe website: www.coe.int

Some facts and figures

A number of studies in the region indicate that sexual abuse is prevalent and that girls in particular are at risk. Very few cases are reported, however. This is often the result of the complex inter-play of adult/child relationships in the family. Where a father, another adult member of the family (older brother, uncle or cousin) or a close family friend abuses a child, it is not uncommon for family members to be aware of it but to reject the possibility that it can be true. Sexual violence, in comparison to physical and psychological violence, is universally condemned and yet, perhaps even more than non-sexual physical violence, it remains hidden behind a wall of silence. This silence results from disbelief, anger, fear or shame that can be so overwhelming that the person who should speak out comes to believe that the abuse is not, in fact, happening.

And yet sexual violence against children in the family occurs much more often than has been previously recognised. An analysis of prevalence studies of sexual abuse both inside and outside the family in 14 European countries suggests rates varying from 9 to 33% for girls and from 3 to 15% for boys⁶. In the Czech Republic, for example, a 1995 Pink Line retrospective study found that 30% of all girls or women and 20 to 25% of all men had been confronted with sexual abuse⁷. Two-thirds of them reported contact sexual abuse, about half of which included intercourse. In the case of sexual abuse of girls, the perpetrator was a man from within the family in 50% of the cases; in 25% of cases it was a stranger and in the remaining cases it was someone known to the child, for example a teacher. In the case of sexual abuse of boys, half of the perpetrators were strangers.

Moreover, confidential retrospective interviews with young adults carried out across Europe and Central Asia suggest that official figures far underestimate the problem. Most data collected relate to reported cases and those that lead to a conviction, but it is clear that most incidences, in fact, are never brought to the attention of the authorities. Definitions used are also inconsistent and result not only in data that are not comparable but also in some cases of information 'disappearing', hidden behind classifications such as 'indecent exposure' or unspecified 'assault'.

The key difference between sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children is generally considered to be the commercial transaction/motive. People who sexually abuse children do not normally make a financial profit from it. Often they are known to the child – relatives other than parents make up the highest percentage of child sex abusers in the countries of North America, for example, although parents and step-parents also figure among those convicted of child sex offences. Friends of the family and others with ties to the child or family are also among the most frequent perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Child sex abusers prey upon children for pleasure or control but rarely for profit.

The people who sexually exploit children for profit are a very diverse group. They include pimps and brothel owners, intermediaries such as those working in the entertainment and tourism industries as hotel clerks, tour operators, or bar and restaurant operators. They also include those, often women, who recruit desperate or deceived youngsters into prostitution with the promise of work and a better life who then sell or traffic them into sexual slavery. Clients who purchase sex from minors are often included in this group although they do not make a commercial profit as

6. Violence against children in Europe and Central Asia.

7. E. Vaničková, Pink Line, 1995.

such but do enter into a commercial transaction. Then there are the taxi drivers, transport operators, corrupt law enforcement and migration officials, and even those who produce or provide forged or altered documents (for example false or stolen birth certificates to 'prove' that a child is older than she is). A veritable army of people profit in one way or another from the sexual exploitation of a child⁸.

It is clear that sexual abuse and sexual exploitation work in very different ways and involve quite different motivations, modus operandi and profiles. Understanding these differences is key to acting to prevent abuse and exploitation.

The actual scope of both sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children remains unknown. Figures are regularly quoted: one recurrent figure that appears in literature is that 'one million children worldwide enter the sex trade each year', but there is no statistical basis for this figure and it has been quoted for more than a decade without supporting data. The fact is that sexual violence against children is generally hidden and thus impossible to quantify.

It is relatively easy to acquire data on criminal convictions of sex abusers and those facilitating the prostitution of children, but these give an indication only of those cases brought to court and successfully prosecuted. Some countries make statistics available that relate to reported cases, whether or not they have resulted in legal action. The Danish police, for example, received 2 701 reports of 'sexual crimes' in 2003. Of these, 450 of the victims were children under the age of nine and 1 333 were between 10 and 19 years of age. While useful for identifying possible trends, however, such data do not accurately describe the scope of the problem.

Firstly, they relate only to those cases that are reported. Secondly, they do not specify the nature of the 'sexual crimes' committed, nor the person who committed them. Thirdly, they do not disaggregate information on the victims, relating the age of the victim to the age of sexual majority in law, for example, or specifying the sex of the child or other important characteristics, such as disability or ethnicity. The same is true of data collected through medical facilities at which children and young people may present themselves with symptoms or injuries linked to sexual violence. Often the source of the injury is not recorded and in many cases the links are not even made between, for example, the self-harm that a child may inflict as a result of trauma and the sexual abuse that is the origin of that trauma.

Other EU countries also attempt to provide data but not only are these similarly compromised by the data collection issues noted above, they are also not even collected through similar processes or within comparable frameworks. In 2005, for example, Finland provided a figure of 500-600 cases of sexual abuse/exploitation of children per year. Germany reported 'about 23 000 cases' in that same round of reporting. In 2001, France documented 5 900 cases of sexual abuse. Portugal does collect data by age range, albeit minimally, categorising victims of sexual abuse or exploitation as 'up to the age of 14' and 'from 15 to 19'. In 2002, Portugal reported 154 "crimes against the liberty and sexual auto-determination of minors up to the age of 14" and 49 in the 15-19 age bracket. Sweden reported in 2005 that no national statistics existed, and most other Member States of the European Union do not make figures public even where they are available. Given the wide discrepancy, even in the few figures quoted here, it is unlikely that any of the figures are truly reliable indicators of the scope of the problem. Mapping the extent of sexual abuse and exploitation of children in Europe remains an unmet challenge.

8. Much is written about the concept of 'demand' for child sex. In reality, 'demand' is a complex issue and includes a variety of motives, modus operandi and actors. For more on this, see J. Kane, Understanding demand for children in the sex trade: an outstanding challenge, a workshop paper for the European regional review meeting of the World Congress, Ljubljana, July 2005 (www.coe.int). See also J. O'Connell Davidson, *The sex exploiter*, ECPAT 1996, and other works by the same author.

National and European legislative frameworks

In the years since 1996, governments in the European Union have made great strides in reviewing and revising national legislation to give children greater protection from sexual abuse and exploitation. A review of just some of the legal frameworks in place, however, shows that, despite major efforts to address the protection of children in law, there are wide discrepancies in the nature and scope of these laws and great inconsistencies.

There have been some positive trends in the way governments have approached legislation relating to the sexual abuse and exploitation of children⁹. Increasingly, legal revisions have taken much more account of the nature of the perpetrator, and the relationship between the perpetrator and the child. Many legal revisions since 1996, for example, have introduced stiffer penalties for sexual abuse committed by someone in a position of care or responsibility towards the child. The abuse of parental or carer authority reflects greater understanding of the prevalence of sexual abuse within the family or the child's social circle. In 2004, for example, Austria introduced the concept of "abuse of a position of authority" into its criminal law and since 2000 the Belgian Penal Code has allowed for more severe punishments for those who abuse a child within the family.

Danish law is expansive on the nature of the relationship between the child and the abuser. The Criminal Code states that any person who has sexual intercourse with a relative below him in lineal descent shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six years. Step-parents, adoptive and foster parents, and those responsible for a child's education are specifically dealt with in the law, as are brothers and sisters who abuse siblings. Hungary considers the fact that an abuser in charge of the victim's education, supervision, care or medical treatment is an aggravating circumstance, and Lithuania, Portugal and Slovenia also have provisions in law that take account of the relationship between the abuser and victim.

Despite an increased focus on the specific nature of the offender (rather than the offence), most countries have not yet gone beyond legal revision and reformed their approach to implementation of the law. Few countries, for example, have introduced sanctions such as the tracking of convicted sex offenders, treatment (so-called 'chemical castration' or a combination of counselling and medical intervention) or sex offenders' registers. France and the United Kingdom are among the countries in the European Union to have introduced these surveillance/treatment approaches.

The majority of EU countries have attempted to enhance protection against sexual abuse and exploitation through legal provisions. Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovenia and Sweden have all reviewed legislation from a protection point of view. Lithuania, for example, adopted a National Programme against Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of Children in January 2000 and, in August 2001, a Supplement to the Lithuania Law on the Fundamentals of Protection of the Rights of the Child. Among other things, this empowers the Child Rights Protection Agency, alone or with the police, to remove a child from the parents or legal representatives and transfer the child to guardianship if she/he is considered at risk.

9. Most of the information in this section is taken from government responses to the REACT questionnaire or to the questionnaire developed for reporting to the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children. See references elsewhere in these notes.

Those who act as intermediaries in the sexual abuse and exploitation of children are also increasingly the focus of revised and reinforced laws. In Spain the Penal Code has been updated to include sexual abuse of minors whether there is commercial profit or not, and also (Article 189.4) includes the crime of "corruption of minors" and inaction on the part of those responsible for the child if that child is encouraged to engage in prostitution or corrupt acts. Legal reform in Austria in 2004 introduced provisions dealing with those who "encourage the prostitution of minors and the involvement of minors in the production of pornographic materials". Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovenia and Sweden also specify sanctions for those who are considered 'intermediaries' between the child and the 'client'. The German Criminal Code has been expanded to punish the "rewarding and approval" of sexual abuse, sexual coercion, rape and dissemination of child pornography on the Internet.

New technologies understandably feature in a number of new laws and legal reforms across Europe. The production and distribution of child pornography, including using the Internet, is prohibited in all Member States, but not all have yet criminalised the 'mere possession' of child pornography, whether downloaded or otherwise acquired. In 2004, Sweden drafted a bill that greatly reinforced legislation in the area of child pornography. Virtually all association with child pornography images, including possession, constitutes a criminal offence. The legislation moreover applies to all kinds of media and therefore also to the electronic environment. The import and export of child pornography are also prohibited.

The process of legal reform has also taken other distinct directions. Since 1996, many countries have reviewed legislation relating to sex tourism and to offences committed by their own nationals in other countries. Portugal's Criminal Code, for example, stipulates punishment for any person who, while abroad, makes a child under the age of 16 practice prostitution or significant sexual acts. Most countries in Europe now have extraterritorial provisions in their laws, allowing them to convict nationals and sometimes permanent residents for abuse and exploitation committed in a third country, even where that country may not criminalise such acts. In practice, however, few such cases are brought to court.

In recent years, some countries have also taken steps to enshrine in law the protection of children who have been sexually abused or exploited and who either find themselves in conflict with the law or involved in legal proceedings. France, for example, has amended its laws to recognise the child as a victim and provides support to these children. Since January 2002, the Czech Republic's Code of Criminal Procedure has included faster and simpler criminal procedures to ease the burden on the child victim and reduce the risk of secondary victimisation. This is an important area of law reform because, too often, children who have found themselves in prostitution, for example, have been treated as the criminals while those attempting to purchase sex from them have been let off with a warning. In that regard, Sweden is one of the first countries not only to have paid serious attention to the 'johns' who buy sex from minors but also to have introduced legislation and enhanced enforcement to target these men, in addition to the pimps and intermediaries who make a profit from the commercial transactions involved in prostitution of the child.

Finally, in recent years a number of countries have introduced legislation relating to the trafficking of human beings for labour and/or sexual exploitation. The German Criminal Code, for example, has specific provisions to protect children from trafficking and Portugal's Penal Code lists the trafficking of minors as a criminal act, whether or not the agent or the victim are Portuguese. Very few countries, however, have to date amended their legislation to adequately cover the trafficking of children for sexual exploitation, and in too many countries children who have been moved across national borders are still seen as 'illegal migrants' rather than victims.

It is clear from this brief review of the major elements of law covering sexual abuse and exploitation of children in some European countries that there is very little harmonisation or consistency in the legal frameworks that purport to protect the children of Europe from sexual violence.

The different categorisation of sexual violence against children remains a major issue. Different 'labels' are attached to child sexual abuse and exploitation, and make comparability and consistency unachievable. Child sexual abuse is variously covered under legislation relating to rape, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, endangering a minor, seduction, sexual coercion, molestation, attacks on decency and outrage to public morals.

'Children' and 'minors' are defined differently, with some countries setting the age of majority at 14, some at 16, and others at 18. There are variations, too, in the age of sexual consent. Given the open borders in Europe and easy movement across them, this means that children and those who seek to abuse or exploit them may move from one judicial regime to another, and that the level of protection provided to children differs across jurisdictions. And yet, as early as 1997, the European Council of Ministers had adopted a Joint Action calling for the criminalisation of all forms of sexual exploitation of children and efforts to harmonise laws, and for the extraterritorial application of all relevant legislation. While most countries in Europe do now apply the principle of extraterritoriality to laws relating to child sexual abuse and exploitation, there has been no major move towards harmonised laws.

The European Commission has, since 1996, regularly reviewed progress in efforts to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation and to prevent it occurring. A number of decisions have been taken that act as frameworks within which Member States of the European Union can plan national initiatives, share information and expertise, and co-operate at a regional level. In December 2000, the European Commission issued a Communication on combating trafficking in human beings and the sexual exploitation of children, which resulted in the Council of the EU adopting a Framework Decision on combating sexual exploitation of children and child pornography (22 December 2003)¹⁰, and on combating trafficking in human beings (19 July 2002)¹¹. These both aimed to address "discrepancies and divergences" and to develop "efficient judicial and law enforcement co-operation" in the areas of sexual exploitation of children, child pornography and trafficking.

The Framework Decision covering sexual exploitation and child pornography obliges Member States of the EU to ensure that intentional acts concerned with child pornography are punishable in law. Despite some lingering inconsistencies relating to treatment of the notion of 'child' – for example must the child depicted be a 'real' child, or does the law cover 'computer-generated' children¹² – there has been considerable progress in making not only the production and distribution but also the possession of child pornography illegal. This is particularly important because often law enforcement bodies are able to trace producers or distributors of child pornography through their 'clients'. There have consequently been a number of very successful 'stings' on child pornography users and distributors in recent years.

This same Decision also contains considerable directive detail on elements of law that will protect children from sexual exploitation. It obliges Member States, for example, to ensure that those who facilitate the sexual exploitation of children (for example, brothel owners or pimps) are punishable in law, and covers such issues as penalties and aggravating circumstances. At European level, in fact, there is a solid basis for further harmonisation of national laws.

In 2005, the Commission issued a new Communication on fighting trafficking in human beings¹³ that focused on concrete measures in this area and this was accompanied by a detailed Action Plan¹⁴. This Communication takes a clear rights-based approach to the subject of human trafficking (while not neglecting the law enforcement and organised crime/financial aspects of both trafficking and facilitation of illegal migration). It is quite clear on the need to identify victims of trafficking as such and not to pursue them as criminals, and calls on Member States to provide security and support to those who have been trafficked, including protection if they are to give evidence against their traffickers. Concerning children, the Communication calls for more attention and research on trafficking in children for "forced child labour" which includes sexual exploitation and notes the links between such exploitation and "the failure to secure birth registration and the lack of access to basic education". The Action Plan calls for measures to identify promptly potential victims of trafficking at the EU's borders and for policies to be reviewed to protect unaccompanied migrant minors who are a particularly vulnerable group.

Most recently, in July 2006, the European Commission announced, in a Communication on the Rights of the Child¹⁵, a range of measures to better protect children, including plans for one single Europe-wide telephone number for child helplines and one for hotlines dedicated to missing and sexually exploited children in the EU Member States. This recognises the fact that helplines and hotlines have been very successful in many countries of the EU and have filled a documented need for children (in the case of helplines) and children, families and the reporting public

10. OJ L 13, 20.01.2004, p. 44.

11. OJ L 203, 01.08.2002, p. 1.

12. The Framework Decision in fact covers "pornography where there is no actual sexual exploitation behind the depiction".

13. Communication 'Fighting Trafficking in Human Beings – An Integrated Approach and Proposals for an Action Plan', COM(2005) 514 final.

14. OJ C311, 09.12.2005, p.1.

15. Communication 'Towards an EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child', COM(2006)367 final, with an inventory of EC actions affecting children's rights in annex, SEC(2006)889.

(in the case of hotlines). A single number for people to use to access these different services also reflects the increasingly 'seamless' nature of Europe and growing mobility of people. Keeping abreast of new technologies, the Commission also called upon the banking sector and credit card companies to take action to prevent the use of credit cards to buy child pornography on-line.

The Council of Europe has also introduced several instruments that cover areas specifically related to the sexual abuse and exploitation of children, including the Convention on Cybercrime (2001) and Recommendation Rec (2001) 16 on the protection of children against sexual exploitation. From 2002 to 2005, the Council of Europe, through its Group of Specialists on the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation (PC-S-ES), undertook a range of specific actions called for in the Budapest Commitment, which is the region-specific action plan that was drawn up as part of the World Congress process. The first World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in 1996 called for all countries to develop National Plans of Action (NPAs) against sexual abuse and exploitation of children and, in preparation of the second World Congress, regional action plans were drawn up too.

Not all countries of the EU have yet developed national plans. Many countries instead have integrated elements that would be included in an NPA into other work plans, and yet experience has shown how important NPAs are as rallying points for all the different sectors involved in the area of sexual abuse and exploitation of children. Consultations organised to prepare an NPA can themselves bring different sectors together to debate and agree on ways forward and relative responsibilities, and are crucial to mapping out what needs to be done, what is already in place and how different sectors' strengths can be harnessed to fill in identified gaps.

In addition to national plans, the Stockholm Agenda for Action also called on each country to nominate a 'focal point' on sexual abuse and exploitation. This recognised the fact that data, information, knowledge, experiences and actions need to pass through and be collected by some sort of 'clearing house', so that information is easily shared and accessible to all. Very few countries have done this. By the mid-term review of the Budapest undertakings in 2005, only Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain and Sweden had nominated 'focal points' although, in reality, many other countries have ministries or bureaux that fulfil this role without specifically carrying the title. A number of EU countries have also appointed Ombudsmen for Children, and the ombudsmen's offices often act as focal points on child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Within these many frameworks, actions to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation have multiplied since 1996. Since its first Call for Proposals in 1997, the European Commission's Daphne Programme has supported a large number of protection projects.

Experiences from the Daphne Programme

Since its inception, the Daphne Programme has attempted to be truly 'European'. Projects supported by Daphne go beyond national borders and attempt to create new knowledge, form partnerships and networks, test methodologies and develop tools, and have a direct impact on children and young people on a European scale. Although many projects focus at first on two or three EU countries, all have the potential to be scaled up. Those running the projects are encouraged and helped to identify in their project activities and outcomes the potential they hold for the entire EU.

In the field of sexual abuse and exploitation of children, Daphne has supported research, studies and surveys that provide important insights into the nature and scope of the problem of sexual violence against children in Europe. As early as 1997, Daphne supported a research project on sexual violence in higher education institutes¹⁶. The National Union of Students in Europe's study documented the very different attitudes of male and female students towards sexual behaviour. What many of the male interviewees believed was "just fun" was in fact seen as threatening and inappropriate by the female students. The study called for raising more awareness and debate on the nature of appropriate/inappropriate sexual behaviour in tertiary educational institutions, and gave an outline policy paper on sexual harassment and violence in universities. This area of enquiry was quite new and opened up discussion on the issue of sexual violence in the much-neglected 'adolescent/young adult' age group.

Another important study¹⁷ took as its starting point the observation that, although there has been quite a lot of work done on vulnerability to violence itself, not enough work has been done on indicators of vulnerability (i.e. what makes one child a likely subject of violence as opposed to another, and how signs can be recognised by others). This Daphne project therefore aimed to study and identify vulnerability indicators in schoolchildren aged 6 to 13. Using this information, the project aimed to promote protection of children through their carers, by producing usable materials that would help such carers to understand and use vulnerability analysis. The project resulted in a short guide and general recommendations, translating the results of the research into practical tools. This 'bridging' of research and practical actions/tools is a hallmark of Daphne-supported actions.

A number of studies have focused on male violence and programmes to deal with this¹⁸. A comparative study of services in five countries, which deal with men who have been violent towards their domestic partners, found a very varied set of approaches and attempted to evaluate the most effective. The project concluded that the trend towards 'treatment' of the violent man, alongside the woman and often children that he has victimised, does not take sufficiently into account the guilt and responsibility that the other family members often feel, which can lead to their looking upon themselves as 'equally responsible' for the violence. This is very often the case in domestic sexual abuse, and indeed is often used by abusers to encourage children and spouses to remain silent about the abuse. A second project built upon comparative analysis of the motivations of violent men in order to develop training modules for social services staff, teachers and others who have a responsibility of care to children, young people and women.

16. Daphne project 97-233-WC.

17. Daphne project 99-025-C.

18. For example Daphne project 98-211-W

One important study looked at the effectiveness of collecting and using personal information on child sex offenders as a means of protecting children from possible re-offences. The study concluded that at European level this could only be effective if there was a harmonised system across Europe that allowed police forces in the various countries to share information and co-operate. At the time of the report, Europol had not yet become active in this area but subsequently such co-operation has been facilitated through Europol and sex offender registers are becoming more common. It is important to remember, though, that this improves protection for children from those who already have convictions for child sex offences; there is a need for continued vigilance given that many abusers never come to court.

A multi-country survey of the risks of violence children face in families where one or more of the parents has a mental illness found that such families have “common, unmet needs across all EU Member States”¹⁹. Children in such families face a heightened risk of violence when the family’s needs are not identified, the risks acknowledged and support services provided. Often the silence that surrounds mental illness means that the family is left to cope on its own – services to this distinct group are regularly under-funded compared to other public healthcare. The conclusions of the project stressed the need for early intervention to support children in families facing the challenges of mental disability, and better training and preparation of those who are responsible for the children’s welfare.

The police, social workers and others with a duty of care were fully involved in the analysis undertaken by another Daphne project²⁰ to map out the kinds of violence that occur within the home and family, and to propose ways to prevent it from occurring. The results emphasised again the need for better and ongoing training of all the various sectors that need to engage in preventing violence and protecting children from it, and underlined the advisability of forming multi-disciplinary teams at different levels to make sure that there is coordinated, comprehensive action.

A project run in Italy, Spain and Portugal in 2001 set out to document the situation of migrant children arriving in these countries who survive through casual or regular prostitution, or who are coerced into providing sex by others. The project²¹ was able to illustrate with specific examples what had hitherto remained largely anecdotal: the movement of children, mostly young boys, into Italy and Spain from Morocco, Albania, Romania and Latin America for the purposes, primarily, of labour exploitation. Often the person who encourages the child to relocate is a family member and very often the child working on the streets – selling paper handkerchiefs to passing cars at traffic intersections, for example – is propositioned by men seeking sexual services. A follow-up project delved further into the mechanisms of relocating these children and recommended the kinds of services that should be in place to help them in the countries in which they end up. Other projects, which have studied the situation of ‘unaccompanied migrant minors’ on the streets of Europe and have mapped out the causes of social violence against migrant children²², have emphasised the need for common definitions of ‘unaccompanied migrant minors’ across European legislations/policies, and the urgent necessity of affording to these children the same rights and protections as indigenous children.

The reinforcing of the ability of different groups and individuals to contribute to protecting children from sexual (and indeed other forms of) violence is an important outcome of many Daphne projects. Between 1997 and 2003, NGOs and other project organisers across Europe ran awareness-raising and education programmes²³ targeting parents, the media, trade unions, teacher trainees, MEPs and other political players, and children and adolescents themselves. The aim of all these projects was to promote better understanding of the nature of violence against children but, more specifically, the role that different parts of society play in protecting them from it. Some projects looked at these questions in relation to particular groups of vulnerable children – for example those living on the streets or Roma children²⁴ – and some projects involved children themselves as the main implementers²⁵. Many of the projects found that, although the sexual abuse and exploitation of children are topics regularly featured in the news, most people find these are difficult subjects to discuss and think about. As a result, they often feel helpless and question whether they have a role to play in combating the problem. These projects were all able to emphasise that every member of society can contribute by taking the importance of protecting children seriously and ensuring their well-being. An important starting point is listening to children and letting them know that they are being heard. Too often the perpetrators of sexual abuse and exploitation hide behind a wall of silence built of fear and isolation. Breaking down that wall is a vital step towards addressing the problems.

19. Daphne project 00-241-WC.

20. Daphne project 00-129-WC.

21. Daphne project 01-016-YC. Follow-up project: 02-188-Y.

22. Daphne projects 02-065-YC and 03-125-Y.

23. Daphne projects 98-065-C, 99-027-WC, 03-070-W, 03-126-W.

24. Daphne project 01-006-C.

Other forms of action are also aimed to empower people across Europe to protect children from sexual and other forms of violence. These often focus on specific groups of children who may be at particular risk or neglected in protection actions. They include girls (and women) with disabilities, children in residential institutions, adolescents in training institutes, those from socially disadvantaged groups and children with learning disabilities²⁶. They also include children who are vulnerable because their family is breaking up, and unaccompanied minor migrants²⁷. What these projects all stressed is the importance of taking into account the specific needs of these groups of children and not “painting them all with the same broad brush”. The key to effective action, they conclude, is in understanding the detail and programming responses that are custom-designed to deal with this difference.

Among other direct action projects in the field of protection from child sexual abuse and exploitation²⁸, the Daphne Programme has supported the creation of networks and exchange of experience, peer education projects, the development of training and educational modules, and meetings and conferences to bring together hundreds of individuals and groups to share the experiences of different Member States. These, too, have aimed to build up expertise in child protection but they have also afforded the opportunity to bring many groups out of the isolation in which they normally work so that they can both learn from and contribute to the work of other groups throughout Europe.

Across the board, the projects came to similar conclusions on the essential elements of protection of children from sexual abuse and exploitation: understanding the risks and levels of risk that different children face; empowering those in contact with children to identify these risks and to know how to respond to them; putting in place social and community services that can be mobilised to provide specialist support; and ensuring ongoing monitoring and vigilance. The ‘trigger’ factors that are often involved in prompting a violent act are also extremely important. A project that was developing a European network of organisations involved in dealing with violence against children within the family setting²⁹, for example, stressed the fact that, “in everyday life, psychological and sexual abuse are not the acts of a pathological violent personality but social phenomena existing in normal families under certain circumstances (such as economic crisis, excessive stress or ‘trigger’ events that destabilise the family)”. They gave the example of the birth of a child to the family, especially the first-born, which brings about a vast number of changes. These changes affect the family’s financial situation and the couple’s relationship, and the time available in the day to accomplish daily tasks. Each family member has to redefine and adapt her/his role to the new family structure. At the same time, parents rarely receive positive feedback for their parental duties and more often than not are picked out for their failures and shortcomings. This makes them insecure. And yet families render a good many services to society. The project suggested that the welfare state for its part should be made responsible for providing security and for giving individuals their place in the community; for example, for ensuring continued access to support systems such as social services, counselling and psychotherapy.

In addition to the direct actions supported, the Daphne Programme has also supported a number of projects that set out to review the kinds of actions being undertaken in Europe with a view to identifying good (and bad) practice and recommending improvements³⁰. One particularly important issue to be addressed here was the approaches that organisations and, indeed, social services, schools and others working with children take to ‘screening’. The alarm was raised that many organisations and bodies across Europe still do not systematically check those who come into contact with children for evidence of previous convictions for child sexual abuse or a history of violence. This is particularly true of those who volunteer their services and results not only from a lack of awareness of the potential risks but also from a reluctance to ‘check up’ on adults who seem to be operating from a desire to help.

Another important observation was that many programmes and projects aimed at protecting children are not adequately evaluated. Resources are used up and efforts misdirected in programmes that, in fact, have never been shown to be effective.

25. Daphne projects 97-132-C, 00-287-WC and 01-189-YC.

26. Daphne projects 97-182-WC, 98-028-C, 98-159-C and 01-074-WYC.

27. Daphne projects 01-159-YC and 01-161-YC.

28. Daphne projects 97-197-WC, 97-417-C, 98-130-WC, 98-146-WC, 98-249-C, 00-051-C, 01-111-C, 03-008-W, 03-175-W, 03-215-C, 04-2-007-YC and 04-1-061-WYC. In addition to these direct action projects, there have been several projects that have set out to develop ‘tools’ that can be used by those working to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation. These include the development and testing of guidelines for media coverage of violence against children (99-101-C), a video resource pack on sexual violence (01-125-YC), a directory of organisations working in the field of disappearance and sexual exploitation of children (02-037-YC and follow-up). Disseminating and promoting wide use of these products is of course a key to ensuring that they are used and have a European impact.

29. Daphne project 01-111-C.

30. Daphne projects 97-028-C, 97-120-WC, 99-175-C, 00-309-C, 02-055-YC, 03-007-YC, 04-1-157-WYC and 04-2-003-YC.

Ensuring that children are protected from sexual predators who use modern technological means to access children has been a growing concern in Europe as more children have access to the Internet through computers (often not in the safety of their homes and schools but in Cyber cafes or indeed on laptops that can be moved from place to place) and across mobile telephone networks³¹. There is now an active and growing network of Internet Service Providers, national watchdogs, police forces and children's organisations co-operating on these issues: the Inhope forum. This grew out of an early Daphne project³² that focused not only on creating the network but on exploring the sorts of issues that make cross-border co-operation challenging. Some of the challenges are obvious and relate to police jurisdiction versus the no-boundaries nature of the Internet, the technical and legal issues involved when an abuser is identified in Cyberspace, and the importance of making sure that the child being targeted is protected while action is taken. With the growth of mobile phone use in Europe, many of these issues have become even more complex. Children using mobile phones are invariably isolated from family and even friends while they are using the phone, and yet they can be linked to a world of people and resources through the on-line services the mobile phone companies provide. They can access pornography, dating sites and chat groups without anyone knowing they are doing this and, as technology advances, they can also be reached by those who have the technological know-how. Early attempts to protect children by installing GPS systems in their mobile phones so that parents can locate them easily, for example, have been questioned because potential abusers are also able to use these same systems to find out where children are. This is an area where much work remains to be done but where organisations in Europe are building expertise and learning some valuable lessons.

Among other outcomes from Daphne projects working in the area of on-line abuse, the series of projects run by the Copine Project of the University of Cork³³, Ireland, has gained particular attention. The project made the important link between 'unhealthy' or compulsive downloading of child pornography from the Internet and the risk that the person concerned might move on to abuse a child. From this a cognitive behaviour therapy module was developed with adolescents who download images of child abuse, and an on-line resource was created to allow those who find themselves compulsively accessing child pornography to assess their behaviour and seek support. The CROGA website was subsequently evaluated and translation began to make it accessible to more users in Europe. These actions are particularly important in light of research that shows that more young people now figure among those who download child pornography.

The Victim Identification Project (VIP)³⁴ also broke new ground in protecting children from on-line sexual violence. VIP was an innovative and unique project that aimed to assess the process of identification of children in child pornographic images, and the issues that arise for the child in relation to the process of police investigation. It also surveyed existing systems of support and counselling. The project worked first with recent cases where children had been identified. This involved, as a preliminary task, mapping where such identification takes place – for example at desk officer level in a police unit, in which areas/countries/institutional units, and possibly by other agents. Clearly the co-operation of police forces in each partner country and at several different levels is vital; this was a major challenge in the first few months of the project. Relationship building and engagement of the police took longer than anticipated but was successful. In a follow-up project, VIP drew from the findings of the first two years to develop recommended guidelines and good practice before disseminating these to relevant professionals across Europe. The partners aimed to reach a number of key people in Europe who work in relevant fields to share the findings of the research, and by doing this contribute to a greater understanding of child abuse images on the Internet, including a greater awareness of the different successful identification techniques and an understanding of the impact on the child from appearing on the Internet in such images. VIP was important in not only re-establishing a 'victim focus' to actions against child pornography on the Internet but also in making the important programmatic link between the images of abuse and the children who are being or have been abused, and who have a right to protection.

31. A number of early Daphne projects also developed materials for parents and teachers to help them to promote safe use of the Internet by children (97-038-C, 01-097-C). A project run in the UK and Denmark developed an on-line resource for children: <http://www.chatdanger.com> and <http://www.sikkerchat.dk>

32. Daphne project 98-045-C. This project was led by Childnet International: www.childnet-int.org

33. Daphne projects 02-004-YC, 03-017-YC and 04-2-042-YC.

34. Daphne project 00-067-C. Follow-up project: 02-079-C..

While the advances of technology pose ever-evolving challenges to child protection, 'old technology' continues to provide an important avenue for support to children at risk. Telephone helplines are not new in Europe. Successful services have existed in the United Kingdom, Italy and France (among others) for a number of years. There have been crucial moves in recent years, however, to deal with the reality of today's Europe in which children move (and are moved) across the open borders of the EU and may find themselves in a country where they do not know how to access the help they need. A Europe-wide helpline number, and the connected/coordinated services to which it gives access, is a complex undertaking. It involves not only harmonised standards – of personnel training, systems and resources – but also effective mechanisms to let children know that the line exists and how they can access it. In this area, Daphne has supported a number of projects that focused on understanding the issues involved and exploring ways to make a Europe-wide service possible³⁵, and that has promoted the creation of new helpline services (particularly in new Member States) that could learn from the experience of existing European helplines and be ready to join a Europe-wide service. Telephone helplines remain one of the most widely used avenues of support to children who need help.

Despite the lessons that have undoubtedly been learned since 1996, however, there are still gaps that need to be filled and challenges that remain.

35. Daphne projects 97-011-WC, 97-021-C, 98-118-C and 04-1-070-YC

Gaps and challenges

The overwhelming challenge in protecting children from sexual abuse and exploitation remains the collection and analysis of data, not only on children who have already been victimised and who may need ongoing protection but also, importantly, on vulnerability patterns with a view to identifying children at high risk.

Beyond just the collection of data, there is a need to ensure that data is collected and categorised in such a way that it allows trends to be identified. In short, data should be usable as a basis for understanding the issues better and acting more effectively to protect children. At the very least this presupposes some agreement on working definitions and harmonised parameters for the data. Transposing these same definitions and parameters into laws relating to sexual violence against children would also mean that children across the 25 Member States of the EU receive equal protection under the law, regardless of where they live.

Despite enormous strides in law enforcement in Europe, there is still work to be done to help law enforcement officers to understand the gravity of the offence of sexual exploitation of children. Too often, police are reported to turn a blind eye to under-age prostitution and to the men who, whatever their motive, purchase sex from minors. It is true that policing this area of exploitation is difficult because the scope of the problem is significant and it is understandable that law enforcers may be reluctant to arrest every man they find soliciting young women in prostitution. However, the exploitation of minors for sex is a crime and should be treated as such if the message is going to be heard loud and clear that it has to stop.

Ongoing training of law enforcement personnel – not just the specialised forces dealing with sexual abuse and exploitation but across the board – is important. Government employees, teachers, medical staff and others who come into contact with children and have a duty of care to them also need to be targeted regularly with awareness-raising actions, especially where there are regular staff rotations or changes.

The same is true of the journalists and broadcasters who cover issues about children and who provide a vital link to the public. These are also areas where staff change and where knowledge is lost. Working through journalism schools, training institutions and umbrella bodies like the International Federation of Journalists is one way to ensure that child rights issues are mainstreamed into media training,

Keeping those who influence public opinion and understanding updated and informed is particularly important because of highly charged social attitudes to sexual abuse and exploitation of children. There is a great deal of fear that sexual predators are 'lying in wait' for children and that children should be locked away to be kept safe. To a large extent this results from a lack of understanding of the nature of sexual abuse, exploitation and paedophilia. As a result there are regular outcries about "paedophiles being let loose in the community" while much less attention is paid to the risk of sexual abuse and exploitation by non-paedophiles who have easy access to children.

One important lesson that has been learned in this regard is that broad-brush awareness campaigns do not help understanding. They may in fact create fear or conversely a false sense of security and do not lead to informed

protection actions. Targeted campaigns with clear messages are more likely to enhance the understanding of different groups of people who can act directly to protect children, including teachers, parents and of course children and young people themselves.

Protecting children from sexual abuse and exploitation also needs to be accompanied by effective prevention programmes. These target the offence itself and those who perpetrate it. One worrying statistic in relation to this is that, in the decade since 1996, the average age of users of child pornography – that is, (usually) men who have an unhealthy sexual interest in children and who are at high risk of playing this out with a real child – has decreased from the mid-40s to the mid-20s. The reasons for this are not clear. It may be that social acceptance of early sexual activity has increased or that bringing the subject of child sexual abuse/exploitation into the open has increased tolerance or curiosity about it. Whatever the reason, there is clearly an urgent need for actions to stop offenders and those who fall into the category of potential offenders. Prevention is the ‘other side’ of protection: the former targets the offender, the latter targets the child. Offender treatment programmes include medical/therapeutic interventions, profiling, education programmes – starting early in schools – and early intervention. Innovative programmes like the CROGA project, which give people an opportunity to seek help when they find themselves becoming interested in child pornography, are also important and should be tested.

There are still gaps in research and research is not necessarily equivalent across the 25 Member States of the EU. There is still no satisfactory analysis of all the different forms of motivation that comprise so-called ‘demand’ for child sex. There are gaps in the research and analysis of ‘markets’ for under-age prostitution, including in countries that receive trafficked minors. In general, much research has been done in recent years on the countries of origin of trafficked children but much less on the so-called ‘receiving’ countries.

The mapping of vulnerability – that is, identifying those children who are most at risk of abuse and exploitation – allows programmes to be diverted to crisis areas. Protection actions need to be targeted as a priority to the most vulnerable groups of children: children from dysfunctional families, children with disability, minority ethnic groups, unaccompanied children and those who for whatever reason do not have access to regular care – for example, children living on the streets of Europe and those in institutions of various kinds.

Finally, there is a great deal of untapped potential in children and young people themselves. Much is said about ‘child participation’ but much more can be done to recognise and exploit the unique understanding, access and energy of children and young people. They understand the daily realities of life for young people in Europe: their fragilities, their strengths, their attitudes to sex, relationships, strangers, risk and so forth. They are thus uniquely placed to help adults to design the kinds of programme that will protect children within the context of the realities of their lives.

Selected on-line resources

- The Daphne Programme website can be accessed through the European Commission site: http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/funding/daphne/funding_daphne_en.htm
- The Daphne Toolkit, which includes descriptions, lessons and comments on all completed Daphne projects as well as useful links, 'tools and tips' and multimedia materials from the projects, is at www.daphne-toolkit.org (Please note that the toolkit will be under reconstruction in 2007, resulting in a new address to which a link will be provided on the Daphne Programme website.)
- The European Commission (DG INFSO) initiative to contribute to protecting children from on-line abuse through promotion of safe use of the Internet – 'Safer Internet plus' can be accessed through the European Commission site: http://www.europa.eu.int/information_society/activities/sip/programme/index_en.htm
- Materials from the first and second World Congresses against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, as well as documents from the regional consultations held to monitor progress against regional commitments, are archived at www.csecworldcongress.org
- The United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children website includes, among other documents and information, copies of the completed questionnaires received from governments around the world reporting on the status of violence, including sexual violence, against children in their countries: www.violencestudy.org
- The website of the Council of Europe's three-year programme 'Building a Europe for and with children' can be consulted at www.coe.int/T/TransversalProjects/Children/default_EN.asp The REACT tool, developed by the Council of Europe's Group of Specialists, containing summary details of progress reported by countries against a number of international and regional commitments on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children, is at www.coe.int/childprotection/
- The ECPAT website contains, in addition to information on the organisation and its activities, the annual report that ECPAT produces on the Stockholm Agenda for Action and the Yokohama Global Commitment: www.ecpat.net
- The European Federation for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children, led by the Belgian NGO Child Focus, has a website at www.childfocus.org
- A number of NGOs in Europe have worked together since the late 1980s as members of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This group has a sub-group working to exchange information and promote co-operation on the issue of child sexual abuse and exploitation. Some members include the International Save the Children Alliance: www.savethechildren.net and World Vision International:

www.worldvision.org The NGO Group has a focal point programme on sexual exploitation, abuse and violence (FPP) that facilitates the coordination of global action to combat child sexual abuse, exploitation and violence. More information is available from the Child Rights Information Network: **www.crin.org/NGOGroupforCRC**

- Other active groups in Europe include the NGO coalition Euronet: **www.europeanchildrensnetwork.org** and the Child Rights Information Network, CRIN: **www.crin.org**, which has a thematic 'desk' on sexual exploitation.
- Among the United Nations agencies working in the general field of sexual violence against children, UNICEF focuses particularly on sexual abuse and exploitation, including trafficking, as part of its work in the area of child protection: **www.unicef.org**
- The World Health Organisation has a dedicated programme on violence prevention and has focused at a number of levels on the prevention and health impacts of sexual violence on children: **www.who.org**
- The actions of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography are administered through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Special Rapporteur submits an annual report to the UN General Assembly: **www.ohchr.org** and **www.un.org**

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Daphne-supported projects in the area of sexual abuse and exploitation of children (prevention)

Laws and law enforcement

- 97-012-C Comparative legal review in the field of missing and sexually exploited minors
- 97-013-C The collection and use of personal information on child sex offenders (CUPISCO)

Scope and nature of sexual violence

- 97-233-WC Conference and research on sexual violence in higher education institutes
- 98-211-W Violent men involved in domestic and sexual violence
- 99-025-C Vulnerability study as a basis for prevention of violence
- 00-241-WC Mapping of types of violence in families with parental mental illness
- 00-129-WC Analysis of violence in the family
- 01-016-YC KIRIADE – The exploitation of under-age migrants
- 02-188-Y Investigating continuous and occasional prostitution of minors and young foreign adults
- 02-065-YC The causes of social violence against migrant children
- 03-125-Y Unaccompanied minor migrants on the streets of Europe

Awareness raising and education

- 97-132-C Young people's campaign on commercial sexual exploitation of children
- 98-065-C Raising the awareness of parents on child abuse
- 99-027-WC Awareness raising among the media, trade unions, MEPs and political players on issues related to violence against women and children
- 00-287-WC ATAV – Action Teenagers against Violence
- 01-006-C CIRCE – Coalition for Integration of Roma Children in Europe
- 01-189-YC Understanding and preventing violence and child abuse through education and an awareness campaign involving children
- 03-070-W Radio series to raise understanding of violence against women and children

Direct action

- 97-182-WC Prevention of sexual violence against disabled girls and women
- 97-197-WC Networks and exchange for the prevention of violence against women and children
- 97-417-C Innovative actions to prevent violence in educational centres
- 98-028-C Combating and preventing sexual abuse of young people in residential institutions
- 98-130-WC Preventing alcohol-related violence
- 98-146-WC Primary prevention of sexual violence by 12-16 year-old male students
- 98-159-C Preventing sexual violence against adolescents and women in training and education
- 98-249-C Capacity building for teachers, social workers and parents to protect children against sexual abuse
- 99-035-C Training of trainers to prevent violence against children from socially disadvantaged groups
- 00-051-C QUATRE ATOUTS – Establishing a European network for inter-disciplinary training and participation in the field of violence prevention
- 01-074-WYC User-led training project to protect children, young people and women with learning disabilities from sexual abuse

- 01-111-C Transnational support programme to prevent violence and abuse of children in families
- 01-159-YC ANCORA MATILDE – programmes to protect children at times of family break-up
- 01-161-YC Transnational exchange of experiences and further development of protection measures for the risk group of unaccompanied minor migrants
- 03-008-W Development of a user-led pilot sex education/peer education project
- 03-126-W Increasing teacher trainees' awareness of sexualised and gendered violence
- 03-175-W Multidisciplinary network to tackle violence against women and children
- 03-215-C Empowering disability organisations to develop prevention strategies
- 04-2-007-YC Non-formal education and teacher networks to support children on the streets of Poland
- 04-1-061-WYC Safeguarding people with learning disabilities against sexual violence, with particular reference to the experiences of families

Identification of good practice

- 97-028-C Vision and reality: promoting good practice in the EU in the field of child sexual abuse
- 97-120-WC Means to measure the effectiveness of experiences in preventing violence
- 99-175-C Evaluation of prevention tools and methodologies for the prevention of sexual abuse
- 00-309-C PROTINTER II – pilot project for the integration of services in child protection systems in the countries of the European Union
- 02-055-YC What works in child sexual exploitation
- 03-007-YC Comparison of models of integrated risk assessment with a view to reducing recidivism by better risk assessment of young sex offenders
- 04-1-157-WYC Models of co-operation among women's NGOs and state authorities to prevent violence against women and children
- 04-2-003-YC Good practice in the new Member States: exchange and networking

Tools

- 99-101-C Development and testing of guidelines for media coverage of violence
- 01-125-YC Believe Me – a video resource pack on sexual violence against children
- 02-037-YC Directory of organisations working in the field of disappearance and sexual exploitation of children
- 03-108-W Europe-wide training courses on violence-conditioned symptoms
- 04-2-008-YC Dissemination of the SCEP Statement of Good Practice to prevent sexual abuse

Protection from on-line abuse

- 97-038-C Internet action: making the Internet a safer place for children
- 98-045-C Combating child pornography on the Internet
- 01-097-C Child pornography on the Internet: evaluating preventive measures in order to improve their effectiveness in the EU Member States
- 00-067-C Child pornographic images on the Internet: the VIP project
- 02-004-YC Development of a tele-health resource to support young people and adults who compulsively access Internet child pornography
- 02-079-C Child pornographic images on the Internet: the VIP project (guidelines and good practice)
- 03-017-YC Evaluation of a cognitive behaviour therapy module with adolescents who sexually offend through downloading child abuse images
- 03-104-YC Child protection in interactive Net services
- 04-2-042-YC Pro-active intervention with people who victimise through Internet child pornography: dissemination of the CROGA website

Telephone helplines

- 97-011-WC Promoting co-operation among telephone helplines for children and young people
- 97-021-C Establishing a European network of helplines for the prevention of child abuse
- 98-118-C Managing emergency situations concerning children and young people
- 04-1-070-YC 24-hour children's helpline for abused and missing children

Note: Full details of these projects and the organisations involved are available from the on-line resource: www.daphne-toolkit.org Projects supported through the 2005 Call for Proposals (05-) run through 2006 and complete reporting in 2007. They are outlined in the Daphne Toolkit project listing.

European Commission

Daphne Booklets: Issues and experiences in combating violence against children, young people and women
Preventing sexual abuse and exploitation of children

Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities

2006 – 27 pp. – 21.0 x 29.7 cm

ISBN

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Printed in Belgium, October 2006

PRINTED ON WHITE CHLORINE-FREE PAPER

