

## ECLAG Briefing on Child Sexual Abuse Regulation

September 2026

### Europe is facing an alarming child sexual abuse crisis.

Europe is in the midst of an unprecedented Child Sexual Abuse Crisis. [1 in 5 children](#) in Europe are subject to sexual violence and abuse. [Every second, at least 2 images or videos of child sexual abuse are shared online](#) (see [live what this represents](#)). Behind each of these images is a child who has to live with the long-term trauma of their abuse, the horrendous violation of their rights, and the continued circulation of evidence of the sexual violence they experienced abuse online. As the [host of 63%](#) of the reported child sexual abuse material webpages in the world, the EU has a specific responsibility to end this scourge.

**To tackle the millions of illegal child sexual abuse images and videos spread online, platforms have proactively, voluntarily and successfully used detection technologies for over 10 years.** Detection enables platforms to report abuse to law enforcement, triggering investigations that [identify victims and bring perpetrators to justice](#). It also allows tech companies to remove illegal material and prevent its redistribution. Through these efforts, thousands of victims are identified globally and millions of abuse files are removed from circulation. *To find out more, you can read about [these cases from](#) across the EU, where detection led to the rescue of child victims and the arrest of offenders [CONTENT WARNING: the documents contain descriptions of abuse and may prove distressing; reader caution advised].*

### The proposed Child Sexual Abuse Regulation

**In May 2022, the European Commission presented [its proposal](#) for a permanent Regulation to prevent and combat child sexual abuse online.** The proposed Regulation seeks to establish binding obligations for online service providers to assess and mitigate risks related to child sexual abuse material and grooming on their services. It also aims to strengthen detection, reporting, removal, and cooperation mechanisms across Europe. The [European Parliament](#) adopted its position in November 2023, while the Council adopted its [General Approach](#) in November 2025. **Interinstitutional negotiations (trilogues) started in December 2025.**

**Pending the adoption of a permanent EU legal framework, the EU adopted an [Interim Regulation in 2021](#)** to provide legal certainty around the detection of child sexual abuse content in private communications services such as chats and cloud storage systems. Following a political deadlock on its extension, this Interim Regulation [expired on 3 April 2026](#). Agreement was finally reached on a new Interim Regulation [last July](#). However, this current legal framework is temporary and relies only on voluntary action from platforms.

### ECLAG's Asks

**The EU urgently needs a comprehensive and permanent legal framework to tackle the current Child Sexual Abuse Crisis online.** Protection of children is not optional, it is a duty grounded in EU

and international frameworks. [In poll](#) after [poll](#) over the past five years, EU citizens have consistently supported detection measures.

**We call on EU policymakers to deliver on this mandate and adopt without delay an ambitious and permanent legal framework that:**

1. **Mandates technology providers to establish child safety by design** (i.e. to design their services with children's rights and needs at the forefront), to assess the risk of child sexual abuse on their services and to adopt risk mitigation measures to prevent it.
2. **Covers all forms of child sexual abuse**, i.e. child sexual abuse material already identified by law enforcement and trusted authorities ('known CSAM'), new or previously unidentified material ('unknown CSAM'), including material created with AI, and grooming. Databases of known CSAM only exist because unknown CSAM can be detected and added to existing databases. In addition, the detection of grooming behaviour is key to prevent abuse before it occurs. The [technologies](#) to detect these different crimes already exist and platforms can set thresholds for escalation to high confidence levels to [avoid false positives](#).
3. **Covers all online spaces where children are present and where there is a risk of CSAM being shared**. Private messaging is the [most common way](#) to share child sexual abuse material and excluding these services will mean millions of images continue to circulate.
4. **Establishes a permanent legal basis for own-initiative searches by providers of all forms of child sexual abuse in both public and private environments**. Over the past decade, proactive detection has been instrumental in protecting children online. The EU cannot diminish the current level of protection.
5. **Orders providers at high risk of CSAM dissemination to detect, report, and remove** all forms of child sexual abuse in both public and private environments.
6. **Prevent images and videos already confirmed as child sexual abuse ('known CSAM') to be uploaded** and shared again and again. [Upload prevention](#) is highly effective, prevents re-victimisation, and eases the burden on platforms and authorities who otherwise see the same material resurfacing time and time again.
7. **Does not limit detection to specific users**. Detecting the sharing of illegal material by suspects can already be authorised by an investigating judge. The scale of the issue requires automated technology to be used widely across platforms' systems. [61.8 million of CSA files were reported in 2025 - 99% of these files were reported](#) by platforms using detection technology, a volume of identification that public reporting could simply never achieve. In a month, Meta disabled more than [490,000](#) accounts for violating its child safety policies. Each month, Whatsapp detects and bans [300,000](#) accounts for suspected sharing of CSAM. This is only the tip of the iceberg.
8. Implements **strong safeguards** to avoid any misuse of any detection technology and to ensure the fundamental rights of adult and child users are respected, including their right to privacy and protection.

\* This document was drafted by ECLAG Steering Group. The [European Child sexual abuse Legislation Advocacy Group \(ECLAG\)](#) is a coalition of over 80 child rights NGOs joining forces to fight to protect children from sexual violence and abuse. ECLAG Steering Group is formed by [Brave Movement](#), [ECPAT International](#), [Eurochild](#), [Missing Children Europe](#), [Internet Watch Foundation](#), [Terre des Hommes Netherlands](#) and [Thorn](#).

9. Is **technology neutral and future-proof** to ensure children will always be protected in all spaces on the internet and to enable the development and deployment of technical solutions in the rapidly evolving digital environment.
10. Creates a strong, properly funded **EU Centre** to coordinate action across Europe and support victims and survivors.

\* This document was drafted by ECLAG Steering Group. The [European Child sexual abuse Legislation Advocacy Group \(ECLAG\)](#) is a coalition of over 80 child rights NGOs joining forces to fight to protect children from sexual violence and abuse. ECLAG Steering Group is formed by [Brave Movement](#), [ECPAT International](#), [Eurochild](#), [Missing Children Europe](#), [Internet Watch Foundation](#), [Terre des Hommes Netherlands](#) and [Thorn](#).