

# PROTECTING CHILDREN OUTSIDE THE EU

## Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (OCSAE) is often a borderless crime

The internet is **not confined to our national borders**. Online child sexual abuse and exploitation (OCSAE) crimes are typically **borderless**, and perpetrators may be located in different countries to their victims. This means that OCSAE is a **global issue, requiring a global response**.

In 2022, **almost 3 in every 5 (59%)** child sexual abuse reports were traced to hosting services **located in the EU** (IWF 2022). However, this **does not mean that all victims are from the EU country where child sexual abuse material (CSAM) is being hosted**.

A study conducted by INTERPOL and ECPAT International (2018) recorded that only 10.7%, or 65,606 images and videos depicting **unidentified victims** located a 'suspected country of abuse'. In total, 72 countries were recorded in the database as the suspected abuse location.



**Countries confirmed more often as abuse locations are not necessarily those with a higher rate of OCSAE**

The study notes countries tagged more frequently as a suspected abuse location in unidentified victim cases, are not necessarily those with higher rates of OCSAE. These countries might be recognised more often because they are more **familiar to experts trying to identify victims** or are commonly **associated with a particular language or region**.

Similarly, in cases where victims have been identified in the database, the abuse location was determined about half the time. Countries with a **strong track record for victim identification and actively upload data to the International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) database** make it easier for experts to localise the abuse, while countries with weaker victim identification capacities results in less ability to localise abuse and identify victims. Therefore, victims in those countries are less likely to be rescued.

**Countries recorded less often as abuse locations should not be considered to have lower rates of OCSAE, because...**

- They may be countries **not yet connected to OCSAE/CSAM databases**, including to INTERPOL's International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) database;
- They may be countries that are **not actively uploading and/or updating their cases** in databases;
- They may be **countries without a programme to identify victims**.



## FOR A BORDERLESS CRIME, WE NEED A BORDERLESS RESPONSE



**A global response is one necessary for victims everywhere, including those outside the EU**

An image of a child being sexually abused and/or exploited in one location **can be produced, uploaded and shared online all over the world**. Offenders are also purchasing Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) from different countries, including from other countries outside of the EU. Victim identification without a global network of different countries means that victims from more vulnerable countries are **not getting the protection and justice they need and deserve**.

### Perpetrators are using borders to their advantage

The cross-border nature of OCSAE means that **perpetrators can use borders to their advantage**. They can move their operations to evade investigations, or find legal contexts that suit their criminal intent.

### Coordinated international efforts are also more efficient

A **global effort** to international investigative coordination contributes to more efficient operational activities leading to both increased opportunities to **identify and rescue more victims globally**, as well as to the **arrest and prosecution of more perpetrators** across multiple jurisdictions. Such mechanisms do already exist.

**INTERPOL's International Child Sexual Exploitation (ICSE) database** enables specialised investigators from over 68 countries to share and exchange data and information on OCSAE globally. Similarly, the **INHOPE** network of hotlines from across the world coordinates to combat CSAM by notifying internet service providers for the swift removal of CSAM they identify, and reports cases to law enforcement.

While these mechanisms are crucial, they are just one pillar of comprehensive global effort. Given the scale that OCSAE proliferates, a global effort requires engagement and coordination **from all stakeholders**, including **private actors** like internet service providers.



## THE EU HAS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACT

**Victims have the right to know when, where and how their images are shared and what action has been taken**. The proposed EU CSAM Regulation helps facilitate this; increasing opportunities for child victims in the EU to receive support and redress via the help of a new **EU Centre**.

However, as OCSAE is a borderless crime, **EU policymakers should also ensure that the proposed CSA Regulation grants similar rights to non-EU victims** who have their abuse disseminated and hosted by online services in the EU. Victims outside the EU should also be entitled to information about their material hosted in the EU and be able to access support to remove it. These aspects are already governed by the **EU's Victims' Rights Directive 2012/29/EU**, applying to all crimes committed in the EU **irrespective of the nationality or residing status of the victim**. EU policymakers have the opportunity to uphold this in the CSAM Regulation.