



Federal Ministry for  
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,  
Women and Youth

# Protecting Children and Young People from Sexual Violence with a Focus on the New Media: Perspectives for Europe

## Workshops

Protecting Children and Young People from  
Sexual Violence with a Focus on the New Media:  
Perspectives for Europe

**Berlin, 30 June 2009**



**Workshop I: Sexualisation of Children Through the New Media:  
“How Many Ways Can You Hurt Me?”**

**Moderation: ECPAT**

Workshop 1 began by examining the latest findings concerning the sexualisation of children in the media, whereby explicit reference was made to the failure of society to condemn sexually coercive behaviour. Increasingly more sexually motivated contact is made on the Internet (‘online grooming’), particularly with a view to subsequent offline offences. The workshop participants determined and discussed the main causes for the increasing sexualisation of juveniles and formulated possible measures for counteracting this development in society. This led to the main recommendation to improve the possibilities for providing peer-to-peer education in relation to personal sexuality in combination with a more secure use of (new) media. It was felt that the financial and personnel prerequisites for implementing already existing best practice examples should also be secured.

**Workshop II: New Media Education – Web 2.0 for Children and Families**

**Moderation: UNICEF**

In Workshop II the enormous opportunities presented by the Internet were discussed. However, although the Internet provides children and young people with an unprecedented chance to access a diverse range of information and participate in society, they are simultaneously faced with enormous challenges. It was discussed whether the real and virtual worlds pose different risks and the extent to which online safety can be viewed in isolation from an educational approach. Teaching media skills was seen as the most important task. Teachers must be informed about the essential requirements for using the Internet safely and apply these in lessons. Based on the peer-to-peer principle, young peers should be recruited as contact partners to promote online safety. By way of conclusion, the recommendations aimed at increasing media literacy of children, juveniles and adults in order to improve the protection of children when using the Internet.

### **Workshop III: Victim Identification and Child Protection Services for Sexually Abused Children**

**Moderation: Save the Children Denmark**

Workshop III was prefaced with the question which measures, financial and personnel resources are necessary in order to identify more victims of child abuse. Also debated was the existing discrepancy between combating child abuse online and offline. There is considerable need for further training measures. It needs to be clearly understood that the abuse is not exclusively represented in the virtual world but depicts the actual abuse of a child. It is frequently forgotten that the perpetrators behind the images are real people. The police must learn to understand how the offenders think in order to improve their investigations. Each country needs specialised police units that collaborate closely together with child protection organisations. Children and their guardians must be informed about their rights. They need drop-in centres where they can turn to in cases of abuse. Therapeutic services must be developed and improved. This should happen in close cooperation with existing social services.

### **Workshop IV: Young (Sexual) Offenders – What now?**

**Moderation: Innocence in Danger**

In Workshop IV the age of criminal responsibility was discussed, which differs in the various European countries. This led to the question as to the advantages of harmonising the age of criminal responsibility within Europe. It was noted, however, that therapeutic services, well-trained therapists and social workers as well as appropriately services are more important than a uniform age for criminal responsibility.

It was felt that it was very important to expand counselling services and therapeutic services, since there are insufficient special therapeutic services available for juvenile offenders. It was also felt that prevention work should be fostered. The best possible prevention work is deemed to be the prevention of violence, in which the involvement of the parents is ensured. It is important, for example, to talk to juveniles about how they feel when watching violent videos. It was suggested that the topic of prevention should be included in teaching curricula and issues such as 'sexual identity' and 'sexual abuse' should be integrated in it. Such topics should also be addressed at preschool level. This would presuppose, however, that teachers and educators receive training on prevention and intervention, which would in turn require an interdisciplinary approach.