

GIRLS' RIGHTS HAVE NO PRICE: TRAFFICKING OF GIRLS FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN EUROPE

Trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children, in particular girls, continues to be on the rise despite growing efforts to fight it. During the pandemic we have seen that social media and other online platforms are increasingly being used to exploit girls online. The exploitation is either taking place on the platforms themselves, or they are being used as a place of recruitment for exploitation taking place in person. Although the recruitment of children to trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation is still more prevalent in challenging social economic areas and amongst vulnerable groups, many girls who become victims of exploitation do not particularly belong to any risk group. Peer exploitation amongst school children is also increasingly being reported across Europe.

To address this concerning trend, increased efforts focusing on prevention and addressing root causes of commercial sexual exploitation of children are therefore urgently needed. An important step of such prevention efforts is to ensure that all countries across Europe increase protection and empowerment of girls by ensuring that their education systems for children include modules on trafficking and sexual exploitation of children online and offline, as well as on healthy relationships, children's understanding of sexual consent and equality between genders.

Child10 and the Child10 Awarded Member Organizations for 2021 are working across Europe to prevent and protect children from trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children. Our collective experience has shown that European countries and governments differ widely in both the understanding of the need for such educational modules, and in how to effectively integrate such models in the various educational systems.

On the EU Anti-Trafficking Day, Child10 and the 2021 Awarded Members jointly call for the urgent need to implement compulsory educational modules for all children on trafficking and sexual exploitation of children online and offline, as well as on healthy relationships, children's understanding of sexual consent and equality between genders in all countries across Europe.

We collectively call on the EU, as the most influential regional actor in this field, to ensure that all Member States and EU candidates as well as potential candidate countries implement such compulsory modules in their educational systems in accordance with their commitments to protect children from violence and to combat child trafficking and exploitation. We also call upon the EU to support European countries to work together and share best practices on how to develop and implement such educational modules in line with a child-rights based approach and in collaboration with civil society organizations who have invaluable knowledge and experience in this field. Only by working together can we eradicate trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children.

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