European Parliament
2014-2019

Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality

2015/2129(INI)

4.7.2017

OPINION

of the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality

for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs


Rapporteur: Clare Moody
SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality calls on the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

A. whereas research indicates that child sexual abuse affects girls more than boys (prevalence rates are 13.4% for girls and 5.7% for boys) and is predominantly perpetrated by men; whereas the gender aspect must be reflected in the prevention of and protection against child sexual abuse;

B. whereas exposure to pornography may increase children and young people’s vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation; whereas statistics show that 12% of websites are pornographic sites, on which pornographic videos involving children can also sometimes be hidden; whereas anyone, regardless of age, can have free access to these sites and download all the videos they want;

C. whereas victims of sexual abuse are confronted with serious physical and psychological risks that can affect their private and social lives;

D. whereas girls fleeing conflict and persecution are at a heightened risk of rape, sexual abuse and exploitation, and whereas research indicates that language barriers, cultural taboos, fear of not reaching their final destinations and other factors mean that some child refugee victims do not report cases to the authorities;

1. Is concerned that the non-consensual distribution of erotic or pornographic material, including online and through social media, such as the phenomenon of so-called ‘revenge porn’—a rapidly increasing form of abuse and persecution—overwhelmingly affects women and girls, some of whom are under the legal age of consent; calls on the Member States to monitor the internet in order to curb ‘revenge porn’ promptly and effectively, and to introduce a range of legislative policies to prevent and sanction this new form of crime; calls on the internet industry to take shared responsibility for this phenomenon; emphasises the need for education and awareness-raising for everyone, especially girls and boys, with regard to the possible consequences of recording intimate images, such as photographs and videos of themselves, and making them available to others; highlights the need for awareness-raising and training on the issue for education, youth and community workers and volunteers, as well as for the strengthening of the capacity of law enforcement agencies to tackle these risks in a gender-sensitive manner;

2. Encourages the competent authorities in the Member States to include the education of girls and boys about relationships based on consent, respect and reciprocity in their comprehensive sex and relationship education (SRE) programmes, given that research has shown that rights-based comprehensive SRE is an appropriate and effective way to protect children and young people against the risks of abuse and sexual exploitation;

3. Calls on those Member States that do not have mandatory SRE (Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Spain) to introduce it; calls on all Member States to require an emphasis on sexual consent and respect in SRE;

4. Underlines the importance in schools of digital literacy and online safety programmes,
which are indispensable for children, but also for parents and those in contact with children; encourages the Member States to launch information campaigns on cyber safety and the principles of ethical behaviour on the internet with regard to personal privacy and the privacy of others; notes that education programmes and content tackling these issues must also focus on men and boys, breaking down gender stereotypes and combating sexism and behaviour leading to online harassment;

5. Calls on the Member States, in cooperation with the judicial and police authorities, to improve parental control systems through the use of new technologies, including smartphone apps, in order to protect children more effectively;

6. Emphasises the need to raise awareness at an early stage among all girls and boys about staying safe online and about the importance of respecting the dignity and privacy of others in the digital era; encourages Member States to share best practices on education material and training programmes on grooming and other forms of threats to the online safety of children, girls in particular, among all actors involved, including teachers, educators and law enforcement authorities; recalls that raising awareness among parents and other relatives is just as important as raising awareness among the children themselves;

7. Considers that removal of content must remain a priority, but acknowledges that this can be a lengthy procedure; believes, therefore, that rapid take-down mechanisms should be put in place and removal procedures sped up;

8. Asks the Member States to take into account the strong gender dimension of disclosure rates, with boys and men reporting abuse less frequently than girls and women, who for their part often delay self-reporting;

9. Recommends that when transposing Article 15 or amending the legislative provisions on the statute of limitations on the self-reporting of sexual crimes committed against minors, any statute of limitations should run from the date of majority instead of the date on which the offence was committed;

10. Urges the nine Member States that have not yet transposed Article 15(4) on victim identification to do so without delay and to implement it by, for example, establishing specialised investigative teams, investing in forensic tools and participating in cross-border investigations;

11. Calls on the Member States to step up cooperation and to exchange data to identify child victims of sexual abuse, including missing children, and especially girls, who are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and sexual exploitation;

12. Invites the Commission to invest in continuous transnational child victim identification programmes by assisting the Member States in their forensic capacities and cooperating in this area, including in the development of specialised human resources and equipment;

13. Calls on the Member States when identifying potential victims to devote closer attention to vulnerable groups of children, such as Roma children, children with mental disabilities and refugee children, especially unaccompanied minors and child asylum seekers in detention who are at risk of sexual abuse and exploitation in institutions, refugee camps or
asylum centres; emphasises the importance, therefore, of measures such as performing background checks on staff, social workers and volunteers who are in contact with children, establishing reporting systems and providing assistance to victims; reiterates, in this regard, that support measures for victims are important not only during the investigation of sexual abuse or exploitation, but also at a later stage, in order to help them overcome post-traumatic stress and receive appropriate medical and psychological advice and legal aid; calls on the Member States to improve the communication capability of judges, public prosecutors and police officers when investigating the sexual abuse or exploitation of children, with a focus on communication with children with special needs, and to promote other measures focused on the prevention of secondary victimisation;

14. Calls on the Member States to step up measures to protect victims of child sexual abuse and to improve the role of national helplines, pursuing a gender-sensitive approach;

15. Insists on the importance of the proper transposition of Article 20(3)(a), and urges Member States to interpret the phrase ‘unjustified delay’ conservatively when conducting interviews with child victims; acknowledges the good practice in Sweden of hearing children within two weeks of the crime being reported; asks the Member States, furthermore, to put in place the necessary measures to properly transpose the provision setting out the procedural conditions required to protect children against secondary victimisation;

16. Notes with concern that the human trafficking and sex tourism industry affects significant numbers of underage girls; encourages the Commission and the Member States to intensify their efforts to combat child sex tourism and human trafficking and to focus on travel organisations and authorities with a view to raising awareness of the gravity of these crimes among travellers;

17. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to enact legislation which will enable the conviction of travellers found guilty of going to a third country for sexual purposes involving minors and then returning to the EU;

18. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to enact legislation which will enable the conviction of tour operators found guilty of promoting sex tourism involving minors;

19. Calls on the Member States to increase the provision of resources for educating children about how to seek help and recognise predators, while also educating adults about how to spot abuse and support children in individual services, as well as resources for investigative experts, who should be aware of how gender differences affect the ways in which girls and boys respond to sexual abuse; underlines, furthermore, the need to combat persistent gender stereotypes and the increased sexualisation of children in the media;

20. Underlines the fact that preventative action is weak throughout the EU, and calls on the Member States to implement Article 22 of the Directive by setting up intervention programmes for those who fear that they might commit offences; urges the Commission to establish regular cross-border good practice exchanges on preventive programmes; invites the Member States, in accordance with Article 24(1), to establish compulsory intervention programmes for all convicted offenders in order to prevent recidivism;

21. Encourages the exchange of views between child protection officers, paediatricians,
educational institutions and youth and children’s organisations in the investigation of cases of child abuse so as to enable them to play an active role in raising awareness of this issue;

22. Recognises the achievements of INHOPE, a collaborative network of 46 hotlines committed to eliminating child sexual abuse from the internet; calls on the Commission to assist Member States in ensuring the existence of such a hotline in each Member State and in harmonising relevant protocols;

23. Encourages the Commission and the Member States to use gender mainstreaming research and statistics on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children to promote the exchange of good practices in policymaking and programme implementation;

24. Notes the lack of research into abuse experienced by young LGBTI people; emphasises the need for further research in this area that takes into account the sexual violence and harassment experienced by LGBTI people and the vulnerability of young homeless people, many of whom are LGBTI people who have run away from home.
### INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

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<th>Date adopted</th>
<th>26.6.2017</th>
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<td><strong>Result of final vote</strong></td>
<td>&lt;br&gt;:+: 18  &lt;br&gt;−: 0  &lt;br&gt;0: 5</td>
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<td><strong>Members present for the final vote</strong></td>
<td>Maria Arena, Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Mary Honeyball, Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Florent Marcellesi, Maria Noichl, Marijana Petir, João Pimenta Lopes, Ernest Urtasun, Jana Žitňanská</td>
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<td><strong>Substitutes present for the final vote</strong></td>
<td>Catherine Bearder, Stefan Eck, Eleonora Forenza, Edouard Martin, Clare Moody, Mylène Troszczynski, Julie Ward, Marco Zullo</td>
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<td><strong>Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote</strong></td>
<td>James Carver, Claudia Schmidt, Molly Scott Cato, Axel Voss, Branislav Škripek</td>
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Key to symbols:
+ : in favour
- : against
0 : abstention