Voices of Young Europe

RWD

GIVING A VOICE TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WORLDWIDE
Full child helpline members (42 members in 36 countries)

- ALO 116 Albania
- 147 Rat auf Draht Austria
- Awel Belgium
- SOS Telefon 1209 Bosnia and Herzegovina
- National Hotline for Children Bulgaria
- Hrabri Telefon Croatia
- The Safety Line Czech Republic
- Borne telefonen Denmark
- Lapsemure Estonia
- The Children and Youth Helpline Finland
- 119 Allo Enfance En Danger France
- Nummer Gegen Kummer Germany
- S.O.S. 1056 Smile of the Child Greece
- Helpline Connection 116 111 Greece
- Kek Vonal Hungary
- Hjalparsimi RKI 1717 Iceland
- Childline Ireland Ireland
- Natal Israel
- Telefono Il Azzurro Onlus Italy
- CYTP Latvia
- 116 111 Latvia
- Vaiku Linea Lithuania
- 116 111 Kanner- Jugendtelefon Luxembourg
- SOS Helpline for Children and Youth Macedonia
- Childline Montenegro Montenegro
- De Kindertelefoon Netherlands
- Red Cross Helpline for Children and Youth Norway
- Helpline.org.pl Poland
- 116 111 Helpline for Children and Youth Poland
- SOS Crianca Portugal
- Telefonul Copilului Romania
- Russian association for child helplines Russia
- NADEL Serbia
- Linka detskej istory pri SV UNICEF Slovakia
- TOM National Telephone Network Slovenia
- Teléfono ANAR Spain
- BRIS Sweden
- Pro Juventura Beratung Switzerland
- NSPCC Childline UK
- Get Connected UK
- Muslim Youth Helpline UK
- Runaway Helpline UK

Associate members

13 associate member child helplines in 11 countries

- Child Rights Orientation Centre Armenia
- Reliable Future NGO Azerbaijan
- SICCRE Belarus
- Ponimanie Belarus
- Ecoute d’Enfants Belgium
- Animus Association Bulgaria
- Public Health and Medicine Development Fund Georgia
- ERAN Israel
- Sorgentefon Kinder und Jugendliche Liechtenstein
- Support Line 179 Malta
- SOS Malta Malta
- Association for Solidarity with The Freedom Deprived Juvenile Turkey
- La Strada Ukraine
- Child Rights Orientation Centre Armenia
- Reliable Future NGO Azerbaijan
- SICCRE Belarus
- Ponimanie Belarus
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Schuman Declaration</td>
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<tr>
<td>* 1949</td>
<td>Founding of Council of Europe.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) is born.</td>
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<td>1958</td>
<td>Development of the ECSC into the European Economic Community (EEC).</td>
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<td>1971</td>
<td>First dedicated child helpline National Runaway Switchboard becomes operational</td>
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<td>1996</td>
<td>The first international (CHI) meeting of child helplines is held in Pune, India ignites the idea of a Global Network: Child Helpline International (CHI).</td>
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<td>* 2003</td>
<td>Child Helpline International is founded in Amsterdam with 49 child helpline members in 46 countries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>CHI's Mission: to respond to children in need of care and protection and voice their concerns to policy and decision-makers.</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>CHI's Vision: A world where technology allows children to be heard one by one and through their voices shape the world and realize their rights.</td>
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<td>* 2004</td>
<td>The first Regional Consultations are held in Africa, Americas and Caribbean, Asia Pacific and Europe.</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>CHI has grown to 74: 64 full members and 10 associate members by the end of the year; 27 child helplines were from developing countries.</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>CHI submits its first recommendation to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.</td>
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<td>* 2005</td>
<td>The International Telecommunications Union and CHI sign a Memorandum of Understanding.</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>In this year, child helplines in the CHI network received over 10.6 million contacts from children and young people.</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>The Second International Consultation of child helplines is held in Amsterdam, The Netherlands (20-23 March).</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>The CHI network grows to 88 member child helplines in 76 countries (associate and full members) and worked in another 58 countries to establish child helplines.</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>The Third Regional Consultation for Europe is held in Bucharest (Romania), 3 – 5 December.</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>International Child Helpline Day is celebrated for the first time under the theme Towards a Regional and Global Number.</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>The Fourth International Consultation is held in Amman, Jordan (17 – 19 November).</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>The ITU issues a Statement on the allocation of short toll free numbers, preferably 116 111 to child helplines.</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>Nearly 30% of all contacts to child helplines worldwide were about Abuse and violence. Other common issues that children and young people wanted to talk about were Family Relationships and Peer Relationships.</td>
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<tr>
<td>* 2009</td>
<td>CHI starts to implement its three membership criteria in strict fashion.</td>
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</table>
Adoption of the Lanzarote Convention - Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

* 2008
The European Commission reserves the toll free telephone number 116 111 for child helplines.

* 2009
Signing of Treaty of Lisbon.

2008
The Council of Europe follows the example of the European Union and recommends the allocation of the telephone number 116 111 to child helplines.

2009
The Fourth Regional Consultation for Europe is held in Milan (Italy), 5 -7 October.

* 2010
CHI elected to the Advisory Council of the Fundamental Rights Agency.

* 2011
The Fifth Regional Consultation is held in Athens (Greece), 17 - 19 October.

* 2013
24 countries in the European Union have allocated the toll free number 116 111 to child helplines.

2013
The First ever CHI Policy Dialogue is held in Brussels (Belgium), 26 June.

2013
The network of child helplines in Europe has grown to 45 members in 43 countries.

2013
In ten years child helplines in Europe have received over 58 million contacts.

2007
The CHI network grows to 108 full members in 92 countries and 27 associate members in 27 countries.

2009
Child helplines in the CHI network receive 12.6 million contacts from children and young people.

2009
Children and young people most commonly wanted to talk about psycho-social mental health (19%), abuse and violence (19%), peer relationships (18%), sexuality and sexual awareness and family relationships (both 10%).

2009
CHI contributes to the development of the International Telecommunication Union's Global Guidelines on Child Online Protection.

2009
CHI and Relaf (Red Latinoamericana de Acogimiento Familiar or The Latin American Foster Care Network) sign a Memorandum of Understanding.

2009
Plan International and CHI sign a Memorandum of Understanding to start a pilot project on Violence in Schools.

2009
The role of child helplines to fulfill children's Right To be Heard is recognized in the Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment on article 12: “... to establish easy access to individuals or organizations to which they can report in confidence and safety, including through telephone helplines, and to provide places where children can contribute their experience and views on combating violence against children.”

* 2010
The CHI network grows to 109 full member child helplines in 95 countries and 38 associate member child helplines in 38 countries.

2010
The number of contacts received by child helplines tops 13.6 million. The number of visits to web sites increases rapidly to 3.8 million visits in 2010.

2010
Most common reasons for contact were abuse and violence (19%), psycho-social mental health (17%) and peer relationships (15%).

2010
CHI improves its data collection questionnaire to add a gender dimension.

2010
The Fourth International Consultation of Child Helplines is held in Madrid, Spain (25 - 27 October).

2010
The number of contacts received by child helplines continues to grow to 17.3 million. Another 4.3 million visits to child helpline websites are registered.

2011
Abuse and violence was an issue for one in five of the children who contacted child helplines around the world. Other common issues children and young people wanted to discuss were psycho-social mental health (17%), Peer relationships (15%) and Family relationships (11%).

2011
The CHI network starts its third strategic period. Its objectives are to: establish more child helplines, strengthen the network and use child helpline information to strengthen national child protection systems worldwide.

* 2012
CHI publishes its fifth Violence Against Children Report which is launched by Marta Santos Pais, United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative on Violence Against Children in Paris, France (25 January).

2012
CHI network grows to 167 member child helplines in 135 countries.

2012
The Fifth International Consultation of Child Helplines is held in Durban, South Africa (17 – 19 October).

* 2013
In ten years, child helplines received 126 million contacts from children and young people.

2013
In ten years, 118 child helplines in 95 countries have joined the CHI network.

2013
CHI holds its first Policy Dialogues.

2013
The CHI network starts its third strategic period. Its objectives are to: establish more child helplines, strengthen the network and use child helpline information to strengthen national child protection systems worldwide.
Dear readers,

As I look at the trends in the European data, collected and analysed by Child Helpline International over the past ten years, it is evident that there has been a notable shift in the kind of problems faced by children and young people. Our data shows that as of 2008 a large number of calls indicate the need for support to young people and families on issues attributed to the economic and financial crises. Contacts from children about problems in the family home due to unemployment, poverty, neglect, domestic violence and even discrimination continue to ring loud alarm bells. The frequency of calls on every form of abuse has also increased since 2008.

Over the past decade, children and young people have consistently contacted child helplines on issues of abuse and violence, peer relationships, family relationships and psycho-social mental health. Recently the economic crisis has placed a significant additional strain on young people. I strongly believe that child helplines empower children to take their lives into their own hands and resolve problems as much as they can. They also function as an early warning system to politicians and policymakers, a barometer that cannot be ignored and which shines a light on one of society’s most vulnerable groups. We have a duty to the next generation of our society to listen and act on these messages.

European child helplines have always been at the forefront of child protection allowing children and young people to get counselling and assistance when they are in need. Our data shows that over 126 million contacts were made to child helplines worldwide, more than half of these contacts were in Europe. This means that an average child helpline in Europe received more than 490 contacts per day, every day.

This publication of ten year European data is about the voices of children and young people growing up in our societies, encountering joy and problems but also hardship and experiences in their childhood and adolescence that will shape them for the rest of their lives. They are Europe’s future leaders, doctors, craftsmen, entertainers, teachers and they all have the right to be protected and to be heard. They all have, without exception, the right to live a dignified life.

That is why I personally urge you, politicians, policy and decision makers and partners to read this Voices of Young Europe publication with a wealth of information, stories and trends and take it to heart. Please urgently listen to the voices of children and young people in all your work.

Nenita La Rose
Executive Director
Child Helpline International
Europe « rewind »

Executive Summary

Child helplines in Europe and around the world are crucial access points to national child protection services. They are the gateway for children and young people to express themselves and voice their concerns in a secure, confidential, free environment and to obtain help and counsel. Child helplines listen to children, empower them to take control of their lives and when needed, guide children and young people to the appropriate child protection resources. Information collected from child helplines about the contacts they receive over the last decade highlights the troubling reality faced by many children and young people and is a call to action for governments and civil society organisations to align their policies and programmes to respond to fill the gaps.

In the past ten years more than 126 million contacts were made with child helplines around the world using telephone and other forms of technology. Nearly 58 million of these contacts were in Europe alone. Analysis of collated data indicates that some of the issues, problems and fears of children young people in the past decade have remained constant but other more frightening issues have emerged because of the changing economic situation and use of technology. In Europe the highest numbers of calls were about peer relationships (2.8 million), psycho-social mental health (2.3 million), abuse and violence (2.1 million) and family relationships (1.7 million).

The economic crisis has had a massive impact on the lives of children, young people and their families in Europe. Since 2007 onwards, when the financial crisis began unfolding, contacts with child helplines about abuse within the family, domestic violence, family break up and conflict over child maintenance have spiralled.

On average annual contacts received by a child helpline in Europe about physical abuse have increased from 1450 to over 1600 and those on sexual abuse have gone up from 1100 to over 1200. Contacts about domestic violence have increased sharply since the onset of the economic crisis, from an average of 170 to 370 a year, marking a 117% increase. This amounts to more than one contact on domestic violence every day.

The most alarming issues that need immediate and prompt attention relate to children and young people being commercially and sexually exploited by adults taking advantage of their economic hardship. This trend is rising across Europe and as well as in other regions. Children are being forced to beg, are sexually exploited for commercial purposes and employed in domestic labour. Thus, shockingly the number of contacts received in Europe about children being used for begging (12,935), child sexual exploitation (4,504) and domestic labour (1,929) have risen in the last few years.
The number of calls on separation, divorce, neglect and abuse has risen since the onset of the economic crisis. Contacts regarding every form of abuse have risen since 2009.

Children are increasingly calling for food and basic needs.

Commercial exploitation of children is rapidly rising as they are being used for begging and pushed in to sexual exploitation.

Schools are often not the safe and encouraging environment that they should be. Children face peer pressure, academic stress and abuse from teachers.

Reports of bullying have risen significantly, this also includes cyber-bullying and through other technologies such as mobile phones.
More worrisome is the fact that certain children and young people are in dire need of basic essentials, homes and food. Contacts from children and young people asking for food and financial aid have risen since the start of the financial crisis. In Europe, where most countries are high or very high in the Human Development Index and have well developed social protection systems, it is disturbing that children are going hungry, have no home or shelter and as a result have become vulnerable to exploitation.

Reports on bullying made to child helplines in Europe have risen substantially in the last ten years. A child helpline in Europe on average now receives 2,600 contacts annually on bullying. This amounts to seven contacts per day. While technological advances have proved to be of benefit to social development of children and young people, they also have become a risk for many of them. Cyber bullying is rapidly rising and child helplines are receiving more and more contacts every year about online abuse.

It is evident from the trends observed regarding problems by children and young people in the family home, children’s mental well-being, their peer relationships and school issues, that child helplines continue to be an important mechanism to monitor the issues that children are facing and take pulse of the state of a society. In Europe and the rest of the world child helplines are and will continue to be an important access point for children and young people to be heard, empowered and to receive the protection they need.

Failure to act to protect children and young people from many of these threats, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, would have a major impact on the economy of European countries. Lasting effects of abuse and violence, commercial and sexual exploitation or lack of basic needs would hamper their development into productive citizens, while imposing huge financial burden on countries to provide for them in the years to come.

CHILD HELPLINE INTERNATIONAL PAVES THE WAY

After intensive grass roots advocacy by CHI, the EU parliament issued the Written Declaration 0050/2005, on 26 September 2005. In the Declaration the EU Parliament recommends that, the European Union support child helplines as an essential part of the child protection system in member states and allocates a common toll-free telephone number to child helplines. This was the first EU Written Declaration on child helplines, resulting in the EC Decision 2007/116/EC reserving 116 111 for child helplines.

Sheila Donovan
Regional Representative Europe
Teléfono ANAR – Spain
2012 DURBAN RESOLUTIONS ON THE ROLE OF CHILD HELPLINES IN CHILD PROTECTION

Gathered in Durban, South Africa on 20 November, child helplines operating in 136 countries adopted the Durban Resolutions. Child helplines call upon all stakeholders in governments, agencies and the private sector to:

- Recognise child helplines’ unique capacity to bring the voices of children to bear on strengthening child protection;
- Partner with child helplines to ensure that they are sustainable and accessible for all children free of charge; and,
- Ensure that the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include the protection and empowerment of children and young people.
Europe « rewind »

Suicide, self harm and depression

Despite growing up in one of the most developed regions of the world, many children and young people in Europe struggle with psychosocial issues. The economic crisis has exacerbated psychosocial and mental health problems that have always been the main reason for children and young people in Europe to contact child helplines. Alarmingly the data shows that many children and young people suffer from depression and display suicidal tendencies.

In the past ten years child helplines in Europe have collectively received over 2.3 million contacts on psychosocial and mental health issues. Depression, fear and anxiety, and young people contemplating suicide and self harm were significant areas for concern before the onset of the economic crisis. Before 2008 13% of all contacts on psychosocial and mental health were on these issues, but in 2012 they increased to over 22%.

The number of contacts on fear and anxiety (15%), suicidal tendency (9%), self-harm (5%) and depression (5%) is rising. More girls than boys contacted child helplines about these issues.

Contacts about self-worth and self-esteem, previously in decline since 2008 have increased. On average a child helpline in Europe received 975 contacts on these topics in 2008. This number has increased to 1,250 in 2012. RWD1

In addition to these distressing figures, an increasing number of children and young people also spoke to child helplines about a lack of confidence (9%), loneliness (13%) and boredom (18%).

In the past several years we received a growing number of calls related to personal issues like suicidal tendencies, self-harm, self-dissatisfaction, fears, anxiety. « SAFETY LINE - CZECH REPUBLIC »
**Case:** “I don’t know what to do anymore. I don’t know how to handle this.” Michael had called the child helpline to ask for help with his depression. “I’ve been on medication but they don’t make me feel better only eating does….For a while.” Michael said that the eating helped him with his feelings, but afterwards it made him feel even worse. Sick disgusted. Together the counsellor and Michael explored when he was eating, how often and what triggered it. They also looked for other sources of assistance that could help, and person Michael could trust for support.

**WARNING SIGNS**

Contacts on suicidal tendencies and self harm have increased as children and young people struggle to cope with changing realities.

A lack of confidence and low self esteem is an increasing problem amongst children and young people.
Abuse, Violence and Neglect

Abuse, violence and neglect, within and outside the family, constitute the second highest reason for children to make contact with child helplines in Europe. Collectively more than 3 million contacts were received in the past ten years from children and young people affected by these issues.

Child helpline data shows that the majority of children and young people calling child helplines about abuse, violence and neglect (excluding bullying) report family members as the key responsible parties. More than four out of ten abuse cases involved a direct family member, such as a parent or a sibling. Nearly two thirds of reported physical abuse cases in Europe involved a member of the child or young person’s family. Parents and siblings were reported as the perpetrators in 45% of cases of physical abuse. Data shows that peers were also responsible for a significant percentage of these cases.

Sexual abuse has proved to be one of the most prevalent forms of abuse in Europe over the past ten years, making up almost 12% of all contacts on abuse and violence. Perpetrators of sexual abuse in Europe were most commonly related to the victim (43%). Members of immediate and extended family have been responsible for 23% and 11% of reported sexual abuse respectively.

Family members were responsible for 55% of all emotional abuse cases and that in 92% of cases, members of the immediate or extended family were responsible for neglecting children and young people according to child helpline data.

Domestic violence, witness to violence and discord between parents accounted for more than 350,000 contacts with child helplines in Europe.

Case: Eva (11) calls a child helpline “My mother has told me that when I get home this evening I´m going to get it…” - she explains. Eva eventually disclosed a history of severe long term abuse to the councillor. Her parents had repeatedly tied her up and used cables and leashes to beat her. If she screamed they would gag her and put her in a cold shower for hours. Eva’s two younger brothers witness all of the abuse.

"I need to talk about home…our mother does not allow us to see our father since he has a new friend. We do not understand how she is allowed to do this. We miss him. Now there is a court case about it and mother is angry all the time." - HANS, TWELVE YEARS OLD
Case: Luka, 14 years, called 116 111 and said that he felt so overwhelmed that he couldn’t stand it any longer. “I feel so depressed. No one can help me.” Encouraged by the counsellor, Luka explained that his father hated him and his mother. He said: “My father shouts a lot, he beats us every day without any reason. He drinks a lot, too. He screams that it’s because of me and mom. He tells us that we destroyed his life, that he had so many plans...I’m starting to believe him, to think that we’re hopeless and worthless. I cannot stand it anymore...” The counsellor assured Luka that it was a good and brave idea to call the helpline and share his experiences. The counsellor also told him that violence is not normal, that he has the right to get help. During the conversation the Luka’s emotional state changed. He said that he did not feel so lost and that maybe the problems at home could be solved.
Violence in schools

Schools should be an environment free from abuse and violence, but for many children and young people this is not the reality. In fact, schools have become a hot bed of abuse, violence and bullying. Child helplines have received numerous contacts about these issues involving both peers and teachers.

More than 3.6 million contacts were made with child helplines in Europe on peer relations and school related issues in the past ten years. One in three cases of abuse was committed by peers, according to the contacts received by child helplines. As many as 35% of sexual abuse cases and 37% of physical abuse cases were reportedly committed by peers within and outside the school. Also in 45% of emotional abuse reports, peers were mentioned as the perpetrators.

Data shows that in sexual abuse cases nearly all reported peer perpetrators are male (95%), while two thirds of victims are girls (62%). Amongst peers, victims of physical abuse and their perpetrators tend to be of the same gender, while for sexual abuse there is a clear cross-gender relationship.

Bullying is a major problem in Europe. Almost 94% of these cases were reported to have taken place in schools. Nearly 63% of the contacts were about emotional bullying and 24% related to physical bullying. In 10% of the cases theft was involved as a form of bullying. Almost 57% of the contacts on bullying in Europe were made by girls. In most cases girls mentioned emotional bullying, whereas boys appear to suffer more from physical abuse. More than 90% of the victims in Europe mentioned that peers were responsible for the bullying. In these reported cases one in ten involved a friend.

WARNING SIGNS

Schools are not the safest environment for children to grow and develop.

Girls face more sexual violence and emotional bullying than boys, indicating a clear link between the forms of violence experienced by different genders.

Most cases of bullying in schools are committed by peers.

Surprisingly teachers are responsible for high percentage of sexual abuse.
Contacts regarding issues at school reveal that almost 14% of the problems experienced in this area related to teachers. In 4% of the contacts on abuse children and young people mentioned teachers as the perpetrators of abuse and violence. Alarmingly, in 17% of cases of sexual abuse a teacher was reported as the perpetrator.

Child helpline data shows that there is a clear gender dimension to teacher perpetrated violence: female and male teachers usually target students of the opposite gender in the case of both physical and sexual abuse.

Children and young people in Europe also mentioned performance anxiety (6%), academic issues (22%) and home work (3%) as some of the problems they faced in schools.
The rights of the child are a priority for the European Commission. The Lisbon Treaty and the legally binding Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union give us the means to act in this area. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which all EU Member States have ratified, is the key reference point which embodies the international standards and represents important guidance for our work.

To ensure the effectiveness of children's rights and deliver concrete results I presented the EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child in February 2011. The EU Agenda contains concrete actions to make the justice system in the EU more child-friendly, fight violence against children, and protect children when they are vulnerable.

We must provide children with opportunities to signal transgressions of their rights and give them the best possible care and protection from all forms of violence and abuse. Contacting a child helpline may be the only way for some children to reach out for help.

Violence against children is tremendously and notoriously underreported. Therefore I am delighted that Child Helpline International is celebrating its 10th anniversary by releasing the data it has compiled over the past decade from its EU member child helplines, with support from the European Commission. This data highlights the reasons why children and young people contact child helplines and seek support, care and protection.

Governments should pay close attention to alternative sources of data coming from practitioners in contact with children. Child helplines are an excellent source of data as helpline specialists are the ones who talk to children directly and know what their needs are and where the gaps persist in respect of their rights and in national child protection systems.

The data collected by child helplines should be used to improve child-related policies, with a strong focus on prevention measures, and strengthen national child protection systems. I urge EU governments and civil society organisations to implement policies and programmes that take due account of this valuable child helpline data, and ensure that their actions are in the best interests of children.

Viviane Reding,
Vice-President of the European Commission
Children exposed to violence often do not know where to turn to, how to report the abuse they have endured and to seek help and assistance to overcome the trauma they have suffered. For this reason, a priority of my mandate as Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children is to promote in all States the establishment by law of safe, child-sensitive, well-publicized, confidential and accessible mechanisms before whom children can report incidents of violence, and benefit from effective remedies and adequate support to promote healing, recovery and long lasting reintegration. This was also a crucial recommendation made by the UN Study on Violence against Children.

Countries in Europe show an increasingly comprehensive landscape of child helplines to address incidents of violence. This is an important achievement we need to welcome! Child helplines enable children to anonymously seek help from well trained personnel and they can reach out to children and give them the advice and support they need and are entitled to. Moreover, through their numerous contacts with children child helplines generate valuable data and information about manifestations of violence and risk factors aggravating their occurrence. Governments and other stakeholders alike should benefit from these insights when shaping action to prevent and respond to violence against children.

I therefore warmly welcome this valuable new report by Child Helpline International, which provides insightful evidence based on over 58 million stories provided to child helplines by European children over a period of ten years. The report is testimony to the trust children in Europe place in helplines and it is a sound basis to inform policies and interventions to build a region where violence against children has no place.

I urge European governments to further support child helplines in the provision of essential services to children and in their data collection efforts. I encourage European decision makers to take to heart the lessons provided in this report and support further research in order to strengthen national child protection systems and effective responses to violence against children.

Marta Santos Pais
Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children
Challenges Ahead

Over the past decade the environment that children and young people live, socialise and study in has changed dramatically. A rapid advancement in technology has shrunk the world in terms of connectivity and access to information, opening up new avenues for children and young people to develop and blossom into productive citizens. At the same time it has also exposed them to new threats and dangers in the on-line environment. During this period the economic crisis has had a severe impact on their lives. European child helpline data shows there are certain issues which are fast emerging and need to be addressed urgently at all levels. This section highlights these issues, which in the coming year will become increasingly challenging for children and young people to deal with.

Mobile and internet technologies have fundamentally changed society in a way that we could not have imagined ten years ago. The problems and concerns of the virtual world, including social networks and internet usage, have added to the challenges that children and young people already confront within the real world.

These challenges are further compounded by the debilitating consequences of the negative economic developments experienced by both children and their families in recent years. Child helplines in Europe report knock-on impacts of the financial crisis on the well-being of children who are affected by a number of serious problems related to their basic needs, changing family circumstances, abuse and exploitation.

Case: “Please help me! I keep getting horrible messages on my mobile phone and on my email. I don’t know who they’re from. It just doesn’t stop. It’s every day, all the time! I want it to stop! What can I do?” Anna was desperate. “I feel ashamed to talk to my parents about it.” The child helpline counsellor talked to Anna about the messages and worked with her to find a way to stop the messages. Anna was encouraged to talk to her parents about the situation and file a report with the police, as it would allow the police to pursue the case and press charges. Several days later Anna called the child helpline again “Thank you so very much for your help! Talking to my parents really was a relief. They were very worried for me and went to the police with me. We filed a report. We changed my phone number and now the messages have stopped.”
FWD 1. Increase in the use of web-based communication methods to contact child helplines

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Visits to Website</th>
<th>Other Communication Methods</th>
<th>Telephone Based</th>
<th>Chat and Web Forum</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

» We felt the need to expand our services and accessibility due to increased demand in these difficult times, but the economic crisis made this impossible. << SOS CRIANÇA - PORTUGAL
Increase in Basic Needs and Exploitation

An increasing number of contacts on depression, fear, anxiety and suicidal tendencies demonstrate the impact of the economic crisis on children and young people in Europe. Disturbing issues such as child abandonment, calls for food and basic needs, financial assistance and commercial exploitation have emerged since 2007.

Contacts relating to child abandonment have risen rapidly in the past five years. Overall contacts in this category were around 12,000 in the past ten years. The average number of contacts that a child helpline received on abandonment was in decline before 2009. Since then the number has rapidly increased from 78 in 2009 to over 400 in 2012. If the economic crisis persists then child abandonment will emerge as an important issue for policy makers to address.

A further increasing trend is apparent in the number of children and young people seeking resources and financial aid. Since 2007 these calls have remained consistently high. While contacts on this issue were in decline before the economic crisis, they have been increasing in recent years, from 11% in 2008 to over 20% in 2011 and 2012.\(^{ FWD2}\)

It is shocking that requests for food are increasing in a region where most countries have a high or very high Human Development Index level, with strong social protection systems. In 2007 European child helplines in Europe collectively received only 30 contacts for food, but in 2011 this went up to 2249. Similarly contacts from children and young people seeking shelter have spiralled upwards from 1371 in 2007 to over 7000 in 2008-2009, 6000 in 2010 and over 4000 in 2011.
Exploitation of children and young people is on the rise, as they are increasingly being used for begging and forced into sexual exploitation and domestic labour. The number of contacts on children used for begging increased from nearly 900 in 2007 to over 1600 in 2011. The average number of contacts a child helpline received on child sexual exploitation cases has increased from 20 in 2007 to more than 100 in 2010 and 2011. While the number of contacts on children and young people on this issue is not very high, the emerging trend itself is alarming.
Families in Crisis

The worsening economic situation in Europe has affected families and, more importantly, children and young people, who are forced to endure its effects. Families are splitting up, parents separating and children are bearing the brunt of financial hardships in the family.

Contacts on child support and maintenance have shown a marked increased in the last few years. Since 2007 child helplines in Europe have received over 41,000 contacts on this issue. The average number of contacts that a child helpline in Europe received about maintenance and child support jumped from 350 before 2009 to more than 600 in 2010 and 2011, while in 2012 it soared to over 1100 contacts. This emerging trend demonstrates that children are concerned and worried about their parents separating and about their own future in changed circumstances.

Since the start of the economic crisis the number of contacts that child helplines in Europe received on child custody, access and maintenance have increased significantly. Contacts on child custody and access issues increased from 880 in 2008 to more than 5000 in 2011.

The number of questions that child helplines receive from children and young people about relationships with their parents has increased since 2008, before which contacts on this issue were in decline.

Contacts on domestic violence have almost doubled from around 3000 in 2007 to over 7000 in 2011.

Domestic violence and gender based violence, suffered by women inside and outside their homes, has increased. Violence within the family has a lasting impact on children and young people.

Contacts from children and young people, who witness violence, have also increased in the past ten years, indicating a steady rise in violence within European society.

Case: Tristan, 14, called the child helpline explaining that his father had lost his job and seemed to go out more often for a drink even though money was very tight. He said parents would argue a lot over bills. Tristan found it hard to concentrate at school and lost interest in socialising. He felt that he couldn’t talk to his parents about how he was feeling because he knew they were under pressure. Things deteriorated further and his father started hitting him. He wanted to contact the child helpline but he was nervous so used the mobile texting service and received replies that gave him information on his rights and expressing concern about what was happening. With support from counsellors Tristan made a decision that he would stay with his grandmother for a while.

**WARNING SIGNS**

- Families in Europe are increasingly fragmented. As a result children and young people are worried about their future.
- Child custody and access cases have risen and can have a long-term impact on the physical and mental well being of children and young people.
- Children and young people witness more violence in European society than before.

» We have found that many boys who are neglected bond in gangs and start skipping school or drop out altogether. Some neglected girls begin love relationships with elder men, which can lead to dropping out of school, running away from home or pregnancy. << BRAVE PHONE - CROATIA
More and more children and young people in Europe are victims of bullying and discrimination. With increasing use of communication technology by young people, bullying has entered their private space. Cyber-bullying is on the rise in Europe, scarring lives of many children and young people. Discrimination, which often takes the form of bullying, is also increasing, having long term consequences on the private and social lives of children and young people. Both these emerging trends are alarming and need an immediate response at all levels.

In the past decade children and young people have quickly adapted to new means of communication. Now they frequently access the internet to gain knowledge, socialise and to make friends on social networking websites. But this has also made them vulnerable to increased threats in the form of cyber-bullying. Child helplines began collecting specific data on cyber-bullying in 2011. A global comparison shows that the majority of contacts on this issue were received by child helplines in Europe. In the past two years child helplines in Europe received over 6000 contacts about cyber-bullying. Bullying is often used as a tool for discrimination. Children and young people contacting child helplines in Europe report that they were bullied or denied access to services because of their immigration status or their race. More than 46,000 contacts were made in the past ten years in Europe about discrimination. Approximately 10,000 of these were specifically about discrimination based on immigration. However, the most alarming reason for discrimination reported by children and young people was racism. The contacts on racism were particularly high between 2007 and 2009, averaging around 600 a year. This disturbing trend indicates that racism can be a major issue in difficult economic situations and could lead to major social discord.

In 2007 child helplines received nearly 1500 contacts about school dropout, a figure which has more than doubled to over 3900 in 2011. The increasing number of school dropouts, reported more by boys than girls, is alarming especially during these times of financial crisis and could have a significant, long-term social and economic impacts.

>> We receive an increasing amount of calls on bullying, from both boys and girls. Children call us because they are embarrassed to share their experience with their parents or teacher. << SMILE OF THE CHILD - GREECE
Cyber Bullying has become a serious threat to children and young people in Europe.

The economic crisis has fuelled discrimination and children and young people are exposed to immigration and race based discrimination.

Since the economic crisis began, more children and young people have reported a desire to drop out of school.
The importance of child helpline data

Since its foundation, child helplines in the Child Helpline International network have received over 126 million contacts. These numbers clearly demonstrate the need of children and youth to discuss their questions, their need for social support and help.

Child helplines play a unique role in supporting children and young people due to the combination of several characteristics:
1. caller anonymity produces an emotionally secure environment and enhances self-disclosure;
2. mediated communication increases the caller’s perceived control and
3. the elimination of time and distance barriers significantly increases the accessibility of support. Child helplines offer confidentiality and serve vulnerable individuals in crisis, at times when free of costs access to other services is unavailable.

Scientific study of child helplines has shown that child helplines succeed in having confidential conversations with children and young people that empower them (Butler, Potter, Danby, Emmison, & Hepburn, 2003). Staff of child helplines generally succeed in creating a supportive environment that affords the caller emotional safety. Staff are able to establish rapport with the child, focusing the conversation on their problems and managing the conversation while adapting the pace and duration to their needs.

Statistical analysis of data from European child helplines shows that impressive numbers of children were seeking support in the last decade. The data does not show evidence for decreases for either answered or responded calls. The overall picture that emerges from the data is that child helplines continue to fulfill a need for the child population.

The CHI database has, as any database and empirical study, its strengths and weaknesses. The use of data in international comparative research is not without pitfalls (see Hantrais, 2009, for example). The database, even with its limitations, represents a unique collection of international, longitudinal data. The registration of child helpline contacts, which show a wide variety of topics, is structured by a concise set of problem categories, that is used internationally. The extensive collaboration between different child helplines in the CHI network for the past ten years has stimulated the constructive debate and exchange of findings between different members. Seen from this perspective, the CHI database has summarized the stories of children in need of answers, social support and help worldwide for the past ten years.

Prof. dr. Ruben Fukkink
Professor at the Graduate School of Child Development and Education
University of Amsterdam

Our data show that 80% of children who call us have not spoken to anyone else about their problem, or if they have, they have been ignored. <<

TELÉFONO ANAR - SPAIN
Child Helpline International (CHI) is the global network of 173 child helplines in 142 countries (October 2012). In ten years together child helplines in the network received more than 126 million contacts from children and young people in need of care and protection. CHI supports the creation and strengthening of national toll-free child helplines worldwide and uses child helpline data and knowledge to highlight gaps in child protection systems and advocate for the rights of children.

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Disclaimer:
CHI’s work is firmly grounded in the principles and values enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC), including children’s right to privacy and protection from harm. To this end, and to preserve the trust and confidence children place in child helplines worldwide every day, all identifying details and information about individual children cited in this report have been removed or altered. Although cases and quotes are real, the names of children and young people are not.

This publication is based on the analysis of information received from child helplines in the CHI network in Europe and the world through CHI’s data questionnaire. The conclusions and statements are based on this information and they do not capture the full scope of practices and policies of all countries and cases handled by child helplines and other child protection organisations at the national level.

Data has been collected for 11 consecutive years. Some graphs and tables are based on a subset of data, as some information was not collected for all years. The totals of different graphs and tables, are therefore, not always compatible.

www.childhelplineinternational.org
Voices of Young Europe

2003 - 2013
126 million contacts