

The Petition No One Would Sign

As EU negotiations on the Child Sexual Abuse Regulation resume in Brussels, the Internet Watch Foundation places a critical choice before the public and policymakers – to either push for legislation that protects children online or make it easier for child sexual abuse content to spread.

Brussels, 14 September 2026: Global child protection NGO the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) has launched a deliberately provocative public petition* calling for less protection for children from sexual abuse online, designed to expose what it says would be the harmful consequences of a weak or further delayed Child Sexual Abuse Regulation (CSAR).

“The Petition No One Would Sign” is at the heart of a new European campaign to get a strong CSAR over the line, one that upholds the rights of Europe’s children and protects them from sexual abuse online.

Launched physically across Brussels and digitally across Europe, the campaign comes as EU negotiators return to the table this autumn to try to reach agreement on the proposed legislation. Campaign visuals will appear at Schuman Metro station and on street screens near the European Parliament, alongside a Europe-wide digital campaign.

The proposed CSAR aims to establish a clear, permanent legal framework for tackling child sexual abuse online, including the detection, reporting and removal of child sexual abuse material on services in Europe. The legislation has been under negotiation for four years as policymakers have struggled to uphold the rights of Europe’s children.

As negotiations stalled, child sexual abuse online has only grown in scale and changed in nature. In 2025 alone, the IWF documented a 260-fold increase in AI-generated child sexual abuse videos, with cases surging from 13 to more than 3,000. What lawmakers will now decide this autumn will determine whether the proposed legal basis becomes law, or whether Europe will continue to rely on a temporary exemption that is set to lapse in 2028.

Kerry Smith, CEO of the Internet Watch Foundation said: “Today in Brussels and online, we’re placing a petition before thousands of people, asking them to sign their name in support of more online child sexual abuse in Europe. This is deliberately provocative and, of course, not a single person would sign it, because no one actually believes this should be the case.

“So, the real question for MEPs and Council representatives this autumn is: why hasn’t the law caught up with common sense? We have tools that work to keep our children safe online. We have a proposal on the table. What is missing is the political will needed to finish the job. People across EU member states should know what their representatives are doing in their name in Brussels. Doing nothing is not the sensible choice – it’s one that leaves children exposed to harm.”

A weaker or further-delayed law will have consequences. It will leave platforms without a clear legal duty to keep users safe. It will create legal uncertainty for the companies that run the services where this material is shared and it risks a gap in protection for users if current rules expire before a permanent framework is in place.

Kerry Smith continued: “Technology companies operate the services on or through which abuse materials circulate but they need to be able to respond robustly to address the challenge. Uncertain legal conditions will only weaken the response. The EU has the responsibility to agree on a clear, enforceable and rights-respecting framework – where all rights, including the right to be free from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment count. These choices are made in citizens’ names and representatives must be able to stand behind the decision – not hide behind procedure.”

The IWF is calling on the European Parliament and the Council to back a robust framework, one that gives providers a clear legal duty to find, report and remove child sexual abuse material online, with clear limits, proper checks and independent oversight built in from the start. The public agrees with this approach: a recent [Eurobarometer survey](#) reveals that protecting children online is a top priority for Europeans.

This autumn, the campaign will encourage citizens across the member states to contact their representatives in Brussels to demand support for a comprehensive and permanent legal framework. As the petition clearly demonstrates: no European citizens would agree that this material should be online. It's high time that European law caught up.

ENDS

Notes to editor

***The Petition No One Would Sign** is symbolic only and not real. No signatures are collected.

Background on the current legal basis: detection currently operates under a temporary ePrivacy derogation, first introduced in 2021 by Regulation (EU) 2021/1232. That interim regime was extended to 3 April 2026 by Regulation (EU) 2024/1307. The extension lapsed on that date (3 April) after a vote in the EU Parliament on 26 March 2026 not to prolong it, closing its first reading. The Council decided to send the proposal back for a second reading. The Parliament considered the measure again on 9 July 2026. At this second reading, the Parliament adopted amendments to the Council's proposal, most notably excluding communications where end-to-end encryption is or will be applied from the scope of the derogation. The Council accepted these amendments on 23 July 2026, reinstating the temporary derogation until 3 April 2028. [Sources: [Voluntary detection measures will not be extended](#) / [Support for more limited ePrivacy derogation](#) / [Interim measure protecting children now reinstated](#)]

Background on the negotiating positions: the Council reached its common position under the Danish presidency on 26 November 2025, following failed attempts under the Belgian, Hungarian and Polish presidencies; it keeps detection voluntary while adding mandatory risk-assessment and mitigation duties. The European Parliament's position, adopted in November 2023, is narrower still, limiting detection orders and excluding end-to-end encrypted communications. The interinstitutional negotiations (also known as trilogues) started on 9 December 2025 and are still ongoing. At the last trilogue on 29 June, (under the Cyprus Presidency), co-legislators reportedly reached a provisional agreement on several elements, including risk assessment and mitigation measures, provisions on removal and blocking orders, and the exclusion of audio communications from scope. The main outstanding issues that will be discussed under the next trilogue on 29 September are detection orders and own-initiative searches. [Source: [Council reaches position on law protecting children from online abuse](#) / [Public note from the Council of the European Union](#)]

Spokespeople are available for interviews.

There's #NoSuchThing as 'child pornography'

It's child sexual abuse images and videos. The IWF encourages you to use the term 'child (sexual) abuse material' and not 'child pornography' in your reporting. 'Child pornography' implies consent, yet children cannot be complicit in their own abuse. The use of inappropriate and inaccurate language to describe the images associated with the crime of child sexual abuse dilutes the impact of these horrific crimes and minimises perpetrator accountability. The correct terminology: 'child sexual abuse images' or 'child sexual abuse videos', accurately reflects the gravity of the material and clearly identifies the crimes committed and the victims affected. Help us by ensuring that this terminology is not used in any of your own communications.

Contact

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What we do

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) is an international not-for-profit organisation working closely with the global technology sector to disrupt, prevent and remove images and videos that show the sexual abuse and exploitation of children.

Operating Europe's largest centre for assessing, grading and securing the removal of child sexual abuse material online, the IWF provides trusted services, intelligence and datasets used by technology companies, platforms, financial and other industries, and law enforcement worldwide.

These capabilities support safety-by-design approaches that help protect victims and survivors, prevent the spread of criminal content, and strengthen the global investigation and disruption of abuse networks.

For more information please visit www.iwf.org.uk

If you ever stumble across a sexual image or video of someone you think is under 18, please report to the IWF. Reporting can be done anonymously and confidentially – we don't need your details, just your help.