



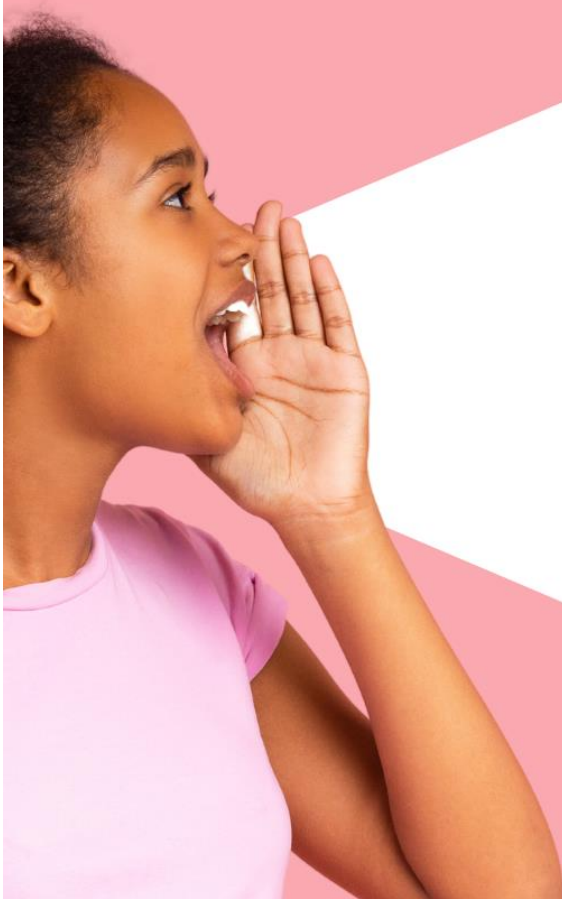
Speak out to break down the wall that makes underage prostitution invisible

D2.5 Policy Paper

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Introduction

Prostitution of minors remains a serious and widespread issue, impacting hundreds of thousands of children across Europe. Despite the cooperation between relevant public stakeholders on a European level and all the efforts to harmonise penal codes on a national level for EU member states, the lack of effective prevention and combat, along with the sensitive nature of this topic and its' underreporting, has made it hard to understand and address the problem effectively.

Aim of this report

This policy paper aims to provide insights into the national situations of sexual exploitation of children in France, Italy and Greece, as depicted by the "Jericho" project research results. It also reviews the existing legal frameworks in these countries. Based on the research findings and the national reports conducted for France, Italy and Greece, the paper introduces recommendations for EU and national policy reforms. Input from professionals working in related fields and a literature review allow for a cohesive mapping of the national situations. Their perspectives help shape the recommendations for policy reform, offering diverse viewpoints.

Research methodology in France, Italy & Greece

Methodology: Desk research & Interviews

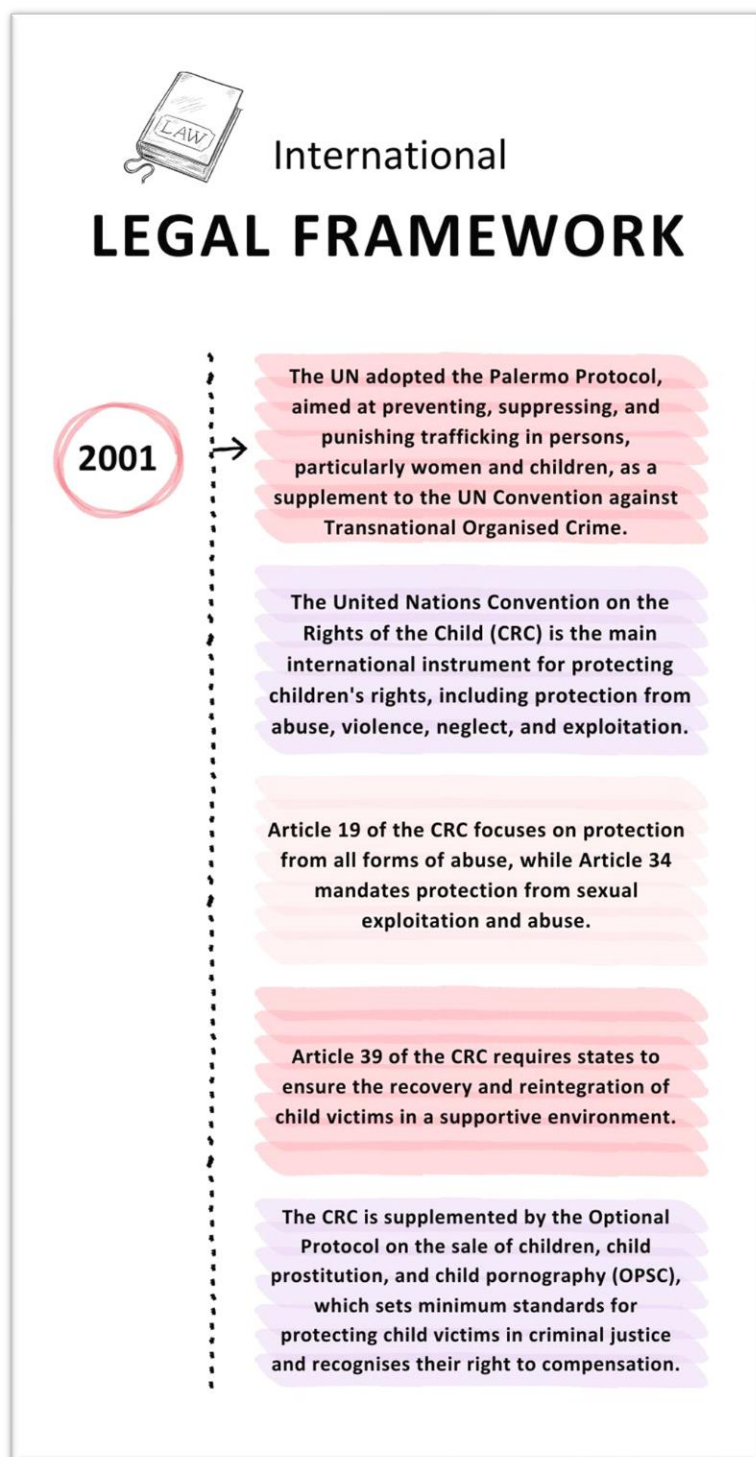
Period: Apr-Jul 2023

Aim of the project

The "Jericho" project aims to increase public awareness of the issue of child prostitution by bringing it into the spotlight and encouraging open discussion about it. The initiative seeks to prevent and address this serious issue by raising awareness and dialogue, as well as providing support and protection to both direct and indirect victims in France, Italy, and Greece. More specifically, the project has the following objectives:

- To gather and expand knowledge about the prostitution of minors, engage with a community of stakeholders, and create informative content across various media for different audiences.
- To initiate an awareness and prevention campaign targeting young people, their families, and institutions, with the primary objective of raising awareness and prompting action from the authorities.

Legal framework on prostitution of minors at national, European and international levels



The legal framework on minor prostitution covers prevention, intervention, prosecution, and victim protection, but penalties often don't match the severity of the crimes. Mitigating circumstances can lead to the early release of offenders. Effective implementation is hindered by underreporting, insufficiently trained personnel, and delays in fulfilling commitments, as well as the lack of effective networking between institutions, the law enforcement sector, justice, the health sector and professionals such as social workers, psychologists and educators.

At the European and international levels, various directives and conventions have been adopted aiming at addressing all manifestations of child sexual abuse, including the prostitution of minors, while simultaneously offering comprehensive support to the victims.



National LEGAL FRAMEWORK FRANCE

2002

Prostitution of minors is prohibited across France. Any minor engaged in prostitution is deemed in danger and placed under juvenile protection.

2011

Procuring (assisting, profiting from, or pressuring someone into prostitution) is punishable by 10 years' imprisonment and a €150,000 fine, especially when involving a minor.

2016

New law criminalizes clients of prostitutes, recognizes prostitutes as victims, and repeals the offense of soliciting. It also mandates prevention and awareness campaigns against body commodification.

2018

Extends the statute of limitations for sexual crimes against minors to 30 years after the victim's majority.

2021

Law creates new sexual offenses to protect minors. Sexual consent cannot be invoked if the child is under 15 (or under 18 in incest cases). Introduces an offense for adults inciting minors to engage in sexual practices online ("sextortion").

2021

The use of prostitution by a minor is punishable by 5 years' imprisonment and a €75,000 fine; it is a crime punishable by 20 years' imprisonment if the victim is under 15.

2022

Child social assistance is required to provide material, educational, and psychological support to minors engaged in prostitution, even occasionally.



European LEGAL FRAMEWORK

2011

Child Sexual Abuse Directive: Criminalises possession and acquisition of child sexual abuse material, mandates removal or blocking of such websites, and requires effective tools for law enforcement to investigate and identify victims early.

2011

Anti-Trafficking Directive: Establishes minimum standards for combating trafficking, including increased penalties, non-prosecution of victims, and the appointment of national rapporteurs to monitor anti-trafficking policies.

2012

Victims' Rights Directive: Sets minimum standards for the rights, support, and protection of crime victims, ensuring they receive information, support, and participation in criminal proceedings, with rights extended to family members as indirect victims.

2012

Lanzarote Convention: Requires criminalisation of all sexual offenses against children, including sexual abuse, child prostitution, and pornography. Includes measures for prevention, such as screening, training, child awareness, offender monitoring, victim support programs, and reporting mechanisms.

Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings: Covers all forms of trafficking and provides rights for victims, including identification, protection, assistance, a 30-day recovery period, renewable residence permits, and compensation.



National LEGAL FRAMEWORK GREECE

2019

Article 351A GPC ("Sexual act with a minor for a fee"): Punishes sexual acts with minors by adults, with increasing severity based on the minor's age (under 12: minimum 10 years incarceration, 12-15: incarceration, 15-18: minimum 3 years imprisonment).

2019

Article 349 GPC (Juvenile pimping): Criminalises promoting or facilitating a minor's prostitution, punishable by up to 10 years incarceration and a penalty fee.

2019

Article 323A GPC ("Human trafficking"): Punishes child trafficking for sexual exploitation with at least 10 years incarceration and a penalty fee.

2019

Article 348A GPC (Child pornography): Criminalises the production, distribution, sale, and possession of child pornography, punishable by at least one year imprisonment and a penalty fee.

2019

Article 352B GPC: Protects child victims by prohibiting the publication of information that could reveal their identity, preventing secondary victimisation.

2019

Articles 336-353 GPC: Criminalise various forms of child sexual abuse.



National LEGAL FRAMEWORK ITALY

1998

Criminalises child prostitution and exploitation of minors under 18, punishing those who recruit, facilitate, or engage in sexual acts with minors in exchange for money or benefits.

2002

Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography (OPSC): It mandates national laws criminalising the sale of minors, child prostitution, and pornography, and ensures the protection of child victims' rights.

2008

Budapest Convention: It addresses internet and computer network crimes, including child pornography, and enhances international cooperation.

2010

Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings: -it focuses on preventing and combating trafficking, protecting victims, and ensuring their recovery, particularly for children.

2012

Lanzarote Convention: It mandates preventive measures, victim support programs, and criminalises sexual activities with children, child prostitution, pornography, grooming, and sex tourism.

2022

Senator Serafini appointed as Italy's national coordinator for the Child Guarantee.

2022

National Plan of Action against Trafficking in Human Beings 2022-2025: Aims to consolidate government efforts to prevent and combat trafficking and protect victims, aligned with the 2008 ratified Convention.

All the above tables indicate that there is an ongoing effort both on national and international levels from the responsible public authorities to address the phenomenon of sexual exploitation of children in prostitution. However, in practice, we see that professionals from various respective fields such as the justice and health sectors indicate otherwise. The issue of penalties for the sexual exploitation of minors not corresponding to the severity of the crime is a concern raised in various EU member states, including France, Italy, and Greece. While all three countries have legislation in place to combat the sexual exploitation of minors, criticism has been directed at the disparities in sentencing, perceived leniency, and gaps in enforcement.

More into detail, **France** has laws in place to address child sexual exploitation, but the effectiveness of these laws, especially in terms of penalties, has been criticized. Recently has made efforts to strengthen its legal framework regarding child sexual exploitation and abuse. For instance, in April 2021, France passed a law setting the age of sexual consent at 15 years (18 for incest), which helped clarify legal ambiguity in child sexual abuse cases. This was a significant improvement, as previously, cases could involve a consideration of whether the child "consented."

Sentences for sexual crimes against minors can range from several years to life imprisonment, depending on the severity of the crime. However, criticism arises due to inconsistencies in how sentences are applied, and some judges have handed down what is seen as relatively lenient sentences, especially for non-violent crimes like online exploitation or possession of child pornography. Many professionals argue that penalties don't always reflect the long-term damage inflicted on victims, particularly when perpetrators receive lighter sentences through plea bargains or suspended sentences, which reduces the time served in prison.

Italy has made notable steps in its legal response to child sexual exploitation, but similar concerns exist regarding the proportionality of penalties. It has several laws targeting child sexual exploitation, including grooming, child pornography, and trafficking. The Italian Penal Code prescribes severe penalties for sexual crimes involving minors, ranging from 5 to 12 years for aggravated cases, and even higher for involvement in trafficking or organised exploitation into prostitution.

Despite these laws, there have been cases where sentences for sexual exploitation or abuse were reduced on appeal or where offenders received parole or reduced sentences. For example, judges sometimes apply mitigating circumstances, such as claims of remorse or previous good behaviour, to minimise penalties. This has led to public criticism, as victims' advocates argue that such leniency fails to reflect the seriousness of the crime. Moreover, Italy's criminal justice system is often slow, leading to delays in bringing offenders to justice, and some offenders may receive reduced sentences due to plea bargains or procedural technicalities.

The case of **Greece** is not different. The justice system has faced significant criticism regarding both its handling of child sexual exploitation cases and the leniency of penalties imposed. Greek Penal Code provides for significant penalties for child sexual abuse and exploitation into prostitution, including child pornography and trafficking. However, cases involving the sexual abuse of minors often see lighter sentences than expected. It allows for prison sentences ranging from 10 to 20 years for serious crimes involving sexual exploitation of minors. However, sentences are often reduced due to mitigating circumstances, or offenders are eligible for parole after serving only part of their sentence, which contributes to perceptions of leniency.

During the research phase of the project, professionals indicated cases in Greece where perpetrators convicted of sexual abuse or exploitation of children have received what are seen as disproportionately light sentences or early releases. Public outrage has focused on the lack of severity in sentencing for crimes involving sexual abuse of minors and the difficulty of victims accessing justice, especially in cases involving powerful or influential individuals.

Common Challenges in France, Italy and Greece:

- The justice system sometimes leaves room for mitigating factors such as remorse, and no prior criminal record which can reduce sentences, even in severe cases that often lead to perceptions of leniency in the sexual exploitation of minors in prostitution.
- In some cases, offenders receive lighter sentences due to plea bargains, which, while intended to expedite justice, can result in sentences that are perceived as too lenient for the severity of the crime.
- Slow judicial processes, especially in countries with overburdened legal systems like Italy and Greece, can result in long delays between the crime and sentencing, leading to reduced penalties or parole as time progresses.
- Some legal systems, particularly in Western Europe, tend to emphasize rehabilitation over lengthy incarceration, which can result in shorter prison terms even for serious crimes like sexual exploitation of minors.

On the **European level**, the European Parliament and Council of Europe have taken note of these issues and called for more harmonisation across member states. The Lanzarote Convention, for example, emphasizes the need for appropriate penalties that reflect the severity of crimes against children. Similarly, the EU Strategy for a More Effective Fight Against Child Sexual Abuse (2020-2025) stresses the importance of enforcing strong deterrent penalties and ensuring that legal loopholes and judicial practices do not allow for disproportionate sentencing.

Victim profiles in France, Italy and Greece

Greece

- ✚ Minors living in low-income socio-economic households.
- ✚ Children living in child protection units or other institutional settings.
- ✚ Children who have experienced sexual abuse or violence within the family.
- ✚ Children who do not attend school.
- ✚ Unaccompanied minors.
- ✚ Roma children and children who are pressured by their families to send money
- ✚ Most victims of child prostitution fall within the age group of 12-16 years old.

France

- ✚ Girls of French nationality, aged 13-17.
- ✚ In vulnerable situations and from all social backgrounds.
- ✚ Often have been victims of or exposed to violence, particularly within the family, before entering the prostitution system.
- ✚ Often minor victims are put in touch with their future pimps via the Internet and social networks.
- ✚ Minors often downplay their actions, valuing perceived benefits like financial autonomy, attention, control, and group belonging.
- ✚ Experience emotional and relational difficulties, along with poor mental health.

Italy

- ✚ The exploitation of children in prostitution is often triggered by poverty and gaps in the welfare system.
- ✚ Minors from privileged socio-economic backgrounds can also be involved in sexual exploitation, driven by consumerism, peer pressure, and weak parental support (such as in the case of the "baby squillo" scandal in Rome).
- ✚ Victims often do not recognise themselves as such, believing they have control over their situation.

Contrary to popular belief, while dissocialised minors are particularly vulnerable, those from more privileged backgrounds are not exempt from this reality. Research has shown that these minors are often connected with their future pimp via the internet and social networks. These young people are then manipulated and subjected to a form of "brainwashing," becoming part of a group. Remarkably, 90% of these young people report agreeing with their prostitution situations (Observatoire des violences envers les femmes Seine-Saint-Denis, 2021). Two main techniques for approaching young people have been identified: seduction via a "lover boy" and grooming through gift exchanges.

Data on the prostitution of minors-statistics and profile of victims

Difficulties in Data Collection and reporting

Many European countries face significant challenges in accurately collecting and reporting data on the prostitution of minors. This crime predominantly affects teenage girls aged 14 to 17. Data from 2017-2018 reveal that nearly one in four trafficking victims in the EU is a child. Of these child victims, 78% are girls, and 60% are trafficked for sexual exploitation. However, the true scale of this issue is likely underreported, leading to a substantial "dark figure" of unaccounted victims. Furthermore, ECPAT International (2014) highlights the lack of a gender perspective in addressing this issue, noting that there is a tendency to overlook male victims of prostitution due to the stigma which associates male prostitution with homosexuality.

In **Greece**, the situation is particularly concerning as there is no dedicated agency for gathering data on child sexual exploitation.

However, the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) reported 177 child trafficking victims between 2020 and 2022, with 20 of these children trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Italy also struggles with the hidden nature of prostitution and the complex interplay of trafficking and child sexual abuse, which complicates data collection. In 2012, there were 174 registered criminal proceedings related to the exploitation of children in prostitution. By 2014, there were 221 offenses committed by minors related to child prostitution, child pornography, and the possession of pornographic material. In 2021, among the 757 new trafficking victims identified in Italy, more than half were women, and 35% were children. In 2022, 850 people received support through anti-trafficking projects, 14 of whom were minors. Of these cases, 38% were involved in sexual exploitation. The majority of victims were young women of Nigerian origin, often from vulnerable economic and family backgrounds.

In **France**, estimates suggest that between 7,000 and 10,000 minors are involved in prostitution, though this is likely an underestimate (Centre de victimologie pour mineurs, 2021). Research by Aziz Essadek indicates that the number of minors involved in prostitution under Child Social Assistance could be as high as 15,000. Moreover, the perpetrators involved in pimping and those purchasing sex are predominantly men. From 2016 to 2020, cases of minor prostitution reported to the police, gendarmerie, and prosecutors' offices increased by 68%. In 2020, among victims of trafficking who held French nationality, one in two was a minor.

Reason for under-reporting in Greece

- ✚ *As highlighted by all the interviewees, the majority of victims do not identify themselves as such.*
- ✚ *They may believe they have some level of control over their situation.*
- ✚ *Victims may actively avoid engaging with law enforcement authorities, choosing not to respond to police calls and remaining hidden, which makes it difficult to identify and assist them.*
- ✚ *Victims often experience feelings of shame and stigma.*
- ✚ *Most victims do not report their cases due to fear.*
- ✚ *There is a general lack of trust in state authorities regarding their effectiveness, response time, and ability to address such issues.*
- ✚ *Victims, particularly minors who are refugees, migrants, or unaccompanied, may also fear of being accused. This fear is exacerbated by their uncertain or undetermined legal status in the country, as they may lack proper identification or residency permits.*

According to the interviewees, the situation deteriorated and became more visible to authorities during the significant influx of migrants and refugees in 2015-2016, before subsiding somewhat. However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation worsened again.

Categorisation of the exploitation of minors in Italy

According to the Parliamentary Commission on Childhood and Adolescence:

- ✚ *Prostitution of minors resulting from trafficking.*
- ✚ *Minors living in low-income socio-economic households.*
- ✚ *Prostitution originating in other family contexts with deficiencies that are affective, cultural, or psychological.*
- ✚ *Minors with early exposure to traumatic experiences.*

Research indicates an increase in underage perpetrators, who are mostly young men of Italian nationality. When the perpetrator is a family member, cases of prostitution and abuse rarely come to light, as families may be aware of or complicit in the exploitation, fearing exposure. The phenomenon of underage prostitution is highly complex and interconnected with:

- ✚ *Online crimes, including child pornography, virtual pornography, and child grooming.*

- ✚ *Criminal networks and organisations that often recruit minors to commit crimes of sexual exploitation against other minors.*
- ✚ *Drug addiction.*

Prostitution of minors in France: a protean phenomenon

The situations in which minors find themselves in prostitution are numerous and sometimes very different, which can make the study of the phenomenon even more complex.

This is reflected in:

- ✚ The connection between customers and pimps, which can take place on social networks, on specialized sites etc.
- ✚ The different behaviours between pimps and victims: affection, psychological, physical and/or sexual violence.
- ✚ The diversity of places of prostitution: temporary rentals via online platforms, hotels, clients' homes, and private apartments.
- ✚ The duration of prostitution: from one day to more than a year
- ✚ Frequency
- ✚ The different rates
- ✚ School bullying and disabilities

Although there is still little research in the field of prostitution of minors, the issue is taken seriously in France, at various levels, to take care of young victims of prostitution and to act in the field of prevention. However, as Marie Rabatel, President of AFFA, emphasised, the issue of disability also is not taken seriously enough. Young people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to prostitution as they face five times more risk of sexual violence.

Responsible agencies/authorities to tackle the prostitution of minors

European and International Organisations Fighting Child Trafficking:

- + *Key organisations include EASO, Europol, eu-LISA, EMCDDA, Eurojust, EIGE, FRONTEX, EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, CEPOL, and Eurofound. These organisations are dedicated in reducing perpetrators' impunity, strengthening preventative initiatives, and implementing child- and gender-sensitive approaches. They also prioritise to address the vulnerabilities of victims, to improve investigations and prosecutions, encourage international collaboration, and exchange best practices.*
- + *EU anti-trafficking coordinator: Based in the European Commission, this role focuses on improving coordination and coherence among EU institutions, agencies, member states, and international actors to combat trafficking.*
- + *ECPAT international: The only global NGO network dedicated solely to fighting child sexual exploitation. It consists of 124 civil society organisations in 103 countries, and focuses on research, advocacy, and action.*




Greece

In Greece the qualified authorities that are responsible for addressing the issue of prostitution of minors are:

- + *General Police Directorate of Attica (GADA): Subdirectorates of minors protection and the juvenile prosecutor coordinate actions to protect minors, including child removal from harmful environments.*
- + *Child protection unit/Accommodation facility for unaccompanied minors: Minors are taken to these facilities with a professional and psychologist to provide a testimony. These facilities are not specialised in child sexual exploitation.*
- + *"Children's house": It is located in major Greek cities, based on the Barnahus model, and provides centralised, child-friendly protection for victims of sexual abuse and exploitation.*
- + *NGOs that are specialised in combating minor prostitution: Organisations like Network of children's rights, Arsis, Praxis, and the Smile of child offer shelter, counselling, medical assistance, legal aid, and educational support to child victims.*
- + *Greek national referral mechanism (NRM): Manages protection referrals for trafficking victims, monitors cases, and records protection requests.*








Italy

Additionally, in Italy, the management of legal cases is the responsibility of the Juvenile Court based on a system of reports that incorporates the Public Prosecutor's Office for Minors responsible for the protection of minors' rights, which:

-  *Receives reports from the educational institution, the local authority, the police authority, Social Services, Health Services, Family Consultants, Child Neuropsychiatry Services, S.E.R.T. and other subjects including private citizens.*
-  *Evaluates the reported facts for legal importance, collect additional information as necessary to decide whether the child could benefit from judicial intervention and whether there is a possibility of harm.*
-  *Decides whether to file a complaint with the Juvenile Court to start the process.*

France

Public authorities engaged in the fight against the prostitution of minors:

-  *Ministry of Solidarity, Autonomy and Gender Equality*
-  *Ministry of Health and Access to Care*
-  *Education Nationale*
-  *The ministry of justice*
-  *Ministry of the interior and decentralised departments via the prefects*
-  *The police and gendarmerie services (Judicial police, Judicial protection of youth, vice brigade, juvenile brigade, Border police)*
-  *Departments, in charge of child social assistance:*






Local Victim Support Committees (CLAV): Co-chaired by the prefect and public prosecutor in each department, these committees include representatives from state services, justice, local authorities, and victim support associations. They coordinate victim assistance and access to services.

Departmental Commissions (CDLP): Chaired by the department's prefect, these commissions monitor, coordinate, and exchange information to combat prostitution and trafficking. They also manage exit routes for adult victims leaving prostitution.

Measures against prostitution of minors in EU, Greece, Italy and France

EU

EU Level

-  *In July 2020, the European Commission adopted a comprehensive strategy to combat child sexual abuse, both offline and online.*
-  *Key objectives include enhancing existing EU measures to safeguard children from sexual exploitation and addressing challenges in the digital media context.*
-  *Focuses on verifying compliance with EU regulations and developing sector-specific rules for law enforcement and the private sector to detect and report online child sexual abuse.*
-  *Plans to establish an EU centre for preventing and combating child sexual abuse, aimed at transferring knowledge and networking within the EU.*
-  *Seeks to improve child protection against sexual violence by connecting different actors in global alliances.*




Greece

Sexual education program in schools in 2022: Introduced as a mandatory course in third and sixth grades of Elementary School and second grade of High School. Curriculum focuses on age-appropriate knowledge of sexuality, relationships, and personal boundaries, using various resources rather than a specific textbook. However, as the research revealed, teachers feel inadequately trained to handle sensitive topics and respond to students' questions.

Combating Child Prostitution and Human Trafficking

Office of the National Rapporteur: Monitors and reports on human trafficking cases, coordinates stakeholders, and provides policy recommendations.

National Reporting Mechanism: Makes sure that victims of human trafficking are identified and provided with necessary protection and support services.

-  *Helplines for Reporting Child Abuse*
-  *Children's House Initiative: Provides specialised care and support for victims of child sexual abuse.*
-  *National Action Plan (2022-2027): Focuses on developing services for child victims of sexual abuse and exploitation. The plan emphasises the need for well-defined protocols for agency coordination and strengthening the legal framework for child protection.*

Measures for support and training of the victims

Professional Training: Educational trainings have been organised by National Centre for Social Solidarity, National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government, A21, and Arsis. With main focus to educate professionals in police departments and NGOs to handle child sexual abuse cases sensitively and in a child-friendly manner.

Awareness-Raising Campaigns by A21: Target groups for these campaigns are children, teachers, and parents. These campaigns provide to children age-appropriate information on rights, safety, and how to seek help. Additionally for parents they include topics such as how to approach their child, understand social media, recognise working signs of exploitation and maintain an open communication. Finally campaigns for teachers offer educational materials and training on how to address sexual education and related sensitive issues, to break the taboo in school settings.




Italy

Preventive actions in Italy

- Schools, with support from third sector organisations and activist groups, provide education on topics like consent, abuse, and self-determined sexuality with mutual respect.
- Postal and communication police handle cases of online exploitation and abuse, and educates on responsible technology use and online risks.
- SOS telefono azzurro: Offers training and informative sessions on children's rights and technology use for children, families, and schools.
- STOP sexual tourism campaign which launched by NGOs in 2018 to raise awareness on sexual tourism through posters in Italian airports.

Protective actions in Italy

- Public service number 114: Managed by telefono azzurro, it provides advice and referrals for child protection and support services.
- Save the children - "Vie d'Uscita": Supports victims of trafficking with legal counseling, mediation, and referrals to services.
- Minors office: A dedicated unit for child abuse, sexual abuse, and related matters is located in every region police office, providing assistance to victims and their families.
- Anti-trafficking hotline (800 290 290): A free, anonymous service operating 24/7, that provides information and connect potential victims with support services.
- Local street units: Work directly with child victims of exploitation in prostitution, offering initial contact, support, and connection to health and social services.

-  *The department for family policies of the council of ministers is responsible for strategies to prevent and combat child sexual exploitation.*
-  *The observatory for the fight against paedophilia and child pornography, managed by this department and led by the ministry, monitors data and activities across public administrations to prevent and repress child sexual abuse and exploitation. It also creates a database and produces an annual report.*
-  *The national plan for the prevention and combating of sexual abuse and exploitation of children is the primary strategy against child sexual exploitation, including in prostitution.*

France

France

✚ The **National Plan to Combat Prostitution of Minors (2021–2022)** focused on the following areas: identifying, supporting, and raising awareness of minors and undertaking legal action against clients/pimps. A communication campaign aimed at the general public was launched in 2022, and the 119 telephone number was opened to report situations of sexual exploitation.

✚ The **second National Plan for 2024-2027** has 4 objectives:

- ✓ Raising awareness of sexual exploitation of minors, particularly among the educational community through education on emotional and sexual life,
- ✓ Support and guidance for young minors who are victims, by reinforcing the 119 helpline and improving care for runaway minors,
- ✓ Better local coordination and reception facilities. Coordination by the Prefect through the CDLP (national commission to combat prostitution, pimping and trafficking of human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation),
- ✓ Improving knowledge of the phenomenon through research.

The Independent Commission on incest and sexual violence against children (**CIIVISE**) was established in 2021 after the #MeToo incest movement. It published a 2023 report estimating €10 billion annual cost of sexual violence against minors. Followingly, the **PARÉ Project** was funded by the general directorate of social cohesion to improve identification, guidance, and support for minors who are involved in prostitution. This project also created an online resource center for underage prostitution in 2023 which includes:

- ✚ Telephone services
- ✚ S.T.O.P service for those attracted to children, to prevent criminal acts
- ✚ Web platform
- ✚ Social Media Campaign: This initiative was designed to raise national awareness, engaging numerous influencers to help amplify the message across a broad audience.

Recommendations

As seen in the previous pages, it is very difficult to know the extent and realities of the phenomenon of sexual exploitation of minors into prostitution, since there is no scientific data regularly collected and analyzed. All stakeholders that were contacted during the research phase in France, Italy and Greece are convinced that the phenomenon remains underestimated for the time being and efforts need to be strengthened, especially nowadays in the digital age, where it is even more complex to access information.

The problem of prostitution of minors must be addressed at all levels: prevention, identification of young people at risk or in prostitution, judicial treatment, care and support for victims but also the training of professionals. The Jericho project thus proposes a number of recommendations at both national and European level, as those identified during the research and interviews that were carried out.

1) LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- Adoption of a broader definition of sexual exploitation and prostitution of minors is needed
- The penalties for the crime of prostitution of minors, as well as all other forms of child sexual abuse must increased
- The implementation of already existing penalties must be strengthened following the severity of the crime
- Strengthen penal policy and judicial treatment of sexual exploitation, clearly identifying young people in prostitution as victims
- Criminal courts should have specialized sections dealing with cases related to the sexual exploitation of children.
- Accelerate links between networks: inter-ministerial, judicial, departmental and law enforcement mobilization.
- States need to work on the societal causes that enhance the organisation of pimping
- The establishment of a reporting mechanism dedicated to all cases of sexual exploitation of minors is of paramount importance

2) TRAINING, PREVENTION, EDUCATION

- Research on the topic of sexual exploitation of minors into prostitution needs more support
- Intensify initial and ongoing training for justice, FDO, educational community and social workers (knowledge, detection, action).
- Comprehensive sexual education for children and teenagers in schools should be mandatory
- Teachers should be trained on how to deliver sexual education including the healthy use of the web by addressing topics like pornography and sexting

- Schools should offer specialized support teams composed of experts - psychologists, psychiatrists, paediatricians - who can offer support to victims and their families
- States must work more closely with professionals such as the hotel industry on reporting suspicious cases that might indicate prostitution of a minor
- Implement awareness-raising programs for parents, parenting support, discussion groups, etc. on how to approach their child, understanding the role of social media, identifying potential exploiters and signs of exploitation, knowing the appropriate course of action in such cases, the significance of developmentally appropriate supervision and maintaining open communication with challenging adolescents
- States must launch a prevention campaign on the media and social networks

3) EXPERIMENTATION

- Experiment with innovative systems that take into account repeated runaways, refusal of support, the influence of pimp networks, psychological trauma, and social and professional integration.
- Guarantee unconditional shelter by setting up small reception centers offering legal, social, educational and medical support.
- Develop peer support and knowledge sharing
- Facilitate the removal of pimp networks from their territory of influence.

4) STATES AND EU

- Is of paramount importance to ensure the commitment to further reinforce and implement measures to prevent and combat all forms of sexual exploitation of minors
- European authorities need to closely monitor the respective national authorities, and foster the exchange of best practices among states
- Additionally, involving young persons in decision-making processes is crucial to ensure their perspectives and needs are taken into account

Conclusion

Sexual exploitation of minors into prostitution is a complex phenomenon that involves various victim profiles, criminal networks, and socioeconomic conditions in several countries. A common difficulty is a lack of reliable data due to the crime's invisible nature, underreporting, and insufficiently trained employees. Even with current legislative frameworks and action plans, monitoring and controlling how they are applied is still challenging. Coordinated efforts in victim care, law enforcement, and prevention are necessary for effective solutions. However, there is a notable gap in the coordination and availability of specific services among those involved. In order to solve this issue, child victims must be acknowledged as abuse victims, even in cases where there appears to be consent.

In France, Italy, and Greece, while there are strong laws on paper to punish the sexual exploitation of minors, the application of these laws is sometimes inconsistent, and penalties don't always reflect the severity of the crimes. This disconnect often results in public outcry and demands for reform. There is ongoing pressure from both national and European stakeholders to ensure that penalties are proportionate and that the legal systems fully support victims while holding offenders accountable.

For more information on France, Italy and Greece and an extra bibliography, you can find our national reports on our website: <https://childrensaf.eu/know/>

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