

STOP

Sensitize and Train Organisations to fight against the Prostitution of minors

International Report



Co-funded by
the European Union



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1. Introduction

The issue of sexual exploitation of minors in prostitution (SEMP) is a concern in our society, affecting the lives of the most vulnerable among us. This report presents a comprehensive examination of the phenomenon of SEMP within our European context, specifically in [Spain](#), [France](#), Greece and [Italy](#).

This initiative is part of a STOP Erasmus + project (KA220-VET-000088336) where different European partners (UPV/EHU, Pistes Solidaires, MEITIS, CESIE, and Four Elements) want to tackle a complex and sometimes hidden phenomenon.

Through this research, and the collaboration of various stakeholders, this report aims to shed light on the complexities of SEMP in our context.

2. Methodology

The methodology used for this international report combines a comprehensive analysis of documentary and academic literature with direct interaction through interviews and surveys. This reflects a mixed approach, encompassing qualitative and quantitative analyses. It also entails a practical commitment to professionals and the general population.

2.1. Instruments and Procedure

Documental and Bibliographic searches

A primary systematic search was conducted in databases such as Web of Science and Scopus using terms like “prostitution” and “minors”. Following the selection, 33 from WOS and 34 from Scopus were included in this report. An additional systematic search in Web of Science with terms like “child sexual exploitation” and “prevention” added 14 new documents. A manual search was performed online of which only 12 relevant ones were integrated.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with academic and professionals in the field from the four involved countries (N = 38), including profiles such as social workers or educators, public policy managers, professionals from relevant NGOs, academic experts in the field, and professionals from social work and youth training centres.

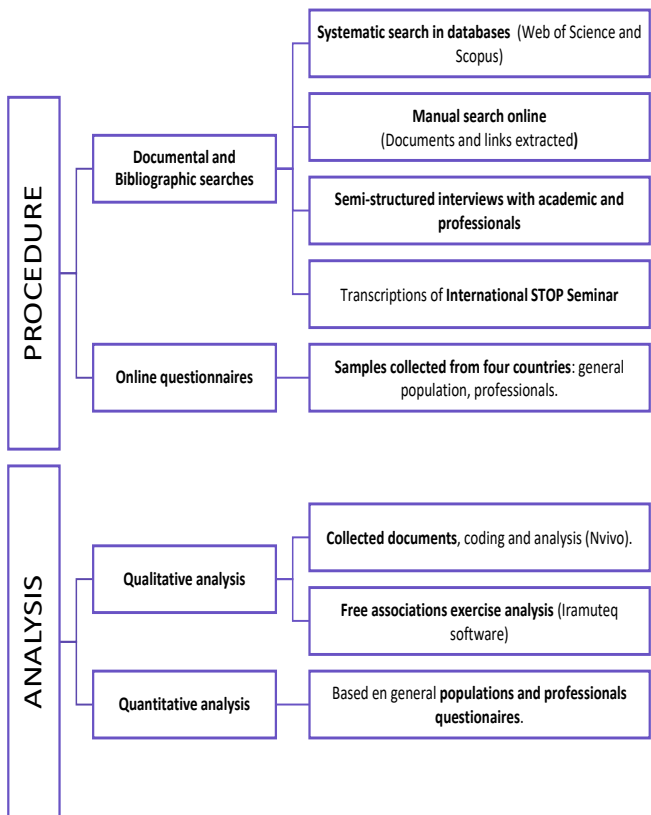


Figure 1. Methodology international report.

International STOP Seminar

Transcriptions of academic and professional presentations from the international seminar ‘STOP Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents: Unveiling a Hidden Reality, for Training in Prevention and Intervention,’ held in Bilbao on September 29, 2023.

<https://kideon.eus/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/STOP-program-en-z.pdf>

Online questionnaires

Three online questionnaires developed for the general population, professionals, and a third profile related to victims (though data from victims were not obtained). The surveys were available in English, French, Italian, and Spanish. Targeting individuals over 18 years old. The estimated completion time for each questionnaire was 20 minutes.

2.2. Analytical Strategy

Qualitative analysis

The responses from the free association exercises in the online questionnaires were scrutinized using Iramuteq® software. A similarity analysis was performed to pinpoint key words associated with abuse and reasons for concerns about child prostitution in both samples (general population and professionals).

Quantitative analysis

The statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS® 28 software. Frequencies and percentages were calculated by country, and the similarity or differences between samples and countries were analysed, specifically regarding the level of concern about child prostitution.

3. What Do We Know about the Phenomenon?

3.1. Concepts and Terms Used

Sexual exploitation of minors is defined as a form of sexual violence in which an adult commits sexual acts against a minor in exchange for some form of compensation, for either the victim, third parties or the exploiter (Pereda et al., 2022). This implies that the victim is not only sexually abused, as in other forms of sexual violence, but is also used for commercial purposes. That is, it is a severe form of sexual victimization where sexual abuse and assault coexist alongside the economic exploitation of children (Estes and Weiner, 2002). Where a person or group takes advantage of a situation of power imbalance to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or adolescent in exchange for something the victim may want or need, or in exchange for an increase in status or position in the social group (Beckett et al., 2017).

It has been reported that children and adolescents in child protection services are sexually exploited. This is a serious violation of national and international laws, such as the ONU Convention on the Rights of the Child. This problem is not only a breach of legal standards but also a serious violation of human rights and the ethical standards of institutions that should protect and safeguard children and adolescents who are in distress or situations of greater vulnerability than other children are and adolescents (Essadek, 2023). The victimization of children in sexual contexts underlines the urgent need for protective measures, policy formulation with preventive strategies and legal interventions.

3.2. Magnitude of the Phenomenon

All countries unanimously agree that it is complicated to give exact figures, given that many situations of sexual exploitation don't come to light. The complexity arises from factors such as invisibility, social stigma and the trauma experienced by victims, who often remain unaware of their situation. So far, no country has been able to provide

a true estimate of the extent of the phenomenon; however the **Sexual exploitation of minors in prostitution (SEMP) appears to be a significant and growing problem.**

In **France**, there are no official statistical data available. Most of the data have been collected by researchers in child welfare services or officially based on the recorded procedures by the judicial services. The civil society organizations give an estimation between 7,000 and 10,000 minors in situations of prostitution. Dr Aziz Essadek (Essadek, 2023), estimates that there would be around 15,000 victims of underage prostitution in the child welfare service, which would increase the total of victims.

In **Greece**, the estimates from an NGO worker indicate that around 3000 children were trafficked from Albania to Greece for profit. Official records show 52 SEMP of sexual exploitation, 28 of begging, and 12 of forced labour from January to June 2019 alone. Additionally, in 2019, 49 child victims of trafficking were identified. In Greece, the data shows an increase in the number of presumed victims, growing from 59 in 2017 to 157 in 2021.

Regarding **Italy**, the latest and most comprehensive investigation highlights the alarming growth of SEMP. In 2017, the Department for Equal Opportunities reported that 200 minor trafficking and exploitation victims (196 girls and 4 boys) were placed under protection as part of the National Anti-Trafficking Plan. According to official data from the same Department, processed as part of the Computerized System for the Collection of Information on Trafficking (SIRIT), in 2019 there were 2,033 victims in charge of the anti-trafficking system. From that figure as many as 161 were minors, representing 7.9% of the total number of victims taken into charge by the anti-trafficking system.

In **Spain**, new studies are expected soon, since there is currently only an approximation of these minors within the protection system in the community of Cantabria. This pioneering study (Benavente et al., 2022) revealed that, a worrying 17.4% (12.7% of boys and 22.4% of girls) of

minors inside the protection system between 14 and 17 years of age reported having sexual relations in exchange for some type of reward in the last year (Cantabria report, 2023). If 56,902 minors were in this situation in 2021 (Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030, 2022), we can talk about almost 10,000 children who may be in SEMP situation. To this figure must be added the minors outside the protection system who are also suffering from SEMP.

3.3. Social Perception of the Phenomenon (Comparative Analysis of Survey Results in Each Country)

To analyse the social perception of the phenomenon, research based on free word association and open-ended questions was carried out in two exercises. In the first, following the Elaboration method grid (Joffe & Elsey, 2014), previously used to analyse community social representations, participants were asked to state the first 4 words that came to their mind when they heard “underage prostitution”.

Two distinct samples from 4 countries took part in this research. Firstly, the general population sample consisted of 19 people from Greece, 16 people from **Italy**, 39 people from **France** and 42 people from **Spain**, 116 people in total. Secondly, the sample of professionals consisted of 13 professionals from Greece, 10 professionals from **Italy**, 27 professionals from **France** and 9 professionals from **Spain**, 59 professionals in total.

General population

Responses to the free association exercise in each country were analysed using Iramuteq lexical analysis software. Specifically, a similarity analysis was performed for each country (see Figure 2).

In **France**, responses revolved around the word drug, linking it to violence and lack of resources, to suffering and abuse, and finally to money and how vulnerability and lack of a network creates danger. Danger, network and vulnerability were the words most often mentioned by professionals. Finally, in **Spain**, the two central words

linked to abuse were injustice and disgust. The emotion of disgust was associated with fear, shame, pain or sorrow. Injustice was associated with unprotectedness, vulnerability, rage, evil or crime.

In Greece, the central words associated with child prostitution are two. On the one hand, exploitation is linked to life, abuse, violence and psychological discomfort. The two more highlighted words are innocent minors and trafficking of children, with exploited victims, which creates a future with trauma and anger. In **Italy**, the central word is exploitation linked with anger at the situation of the children and sadness, poverty and pain and suffering. In **Italy**, this issue is also related to the phenomenon of migrant children from Africa.

In sum, we can see that in all countries children are seen as innocent victims of exploitation and this creates, for example in Greece and **Italy**, anger, but in **Spain** it is also associated with disgust, fear, shame, pain or sorrow. Regarding the population of minors, in **Italy**, it is associated with migrant minors coming from Africa and in **France** with those involved in drug use.

The Professionals

The professionals' responses were also analysed using Iramuteq lexical analysis software in each country (see Table 1). In **France**, responses revolved around the word drug, linking it to violence and lack of resources, to suffering and abuse, and finally to money and how vulnerability and lack of a network create danger. Danger, network and vulnerability were the words most often mentioned by professionals. In this SEMP, in Greece, the responses were articulated in terms of child sexual exploitation, forcible abuse, child and human trafficking and the experiences of victims. In **Italy**, responses revolved around the word violence, defining it as a social phenomenon related to violence against children that arouses a lot of anger. Finally, in the SEMP of **Spain**, abused young children were linked to poverty, exploitation, lack of rights and social violence, putting the focus of risk on child unprotectedness and vulnerability and linking abuse with

money and harm. Finally, the professionals also mentioned that it is a situation that makes them feel disgusted. In short, it is a phenomenon linked to the trafficking of people but also linked to the trafficking and consumption of drugs which also produces anger and disgust among professionals in [Spain](#).

	General Population	Professionals
Greece	Exploitation (abuse, violence, psychological discomfort) Innocent minor Trafficking of children (trauma)	Child sexual exploitation Forbidden abuse, child and human trafficking
Italy	Exploitation (anger, sadness, poverty, pain) Migrant from Africa	Violence (anger)
France	Drug (violence, lack of resources, suffering abuse, money, lack on network) Vulnerability (danger, network)	Drug (violence, lack of resources, abuse, money) Lack of net
Spain	Injustice (unprotectedness, vulnerability, rage, evil, crime) Disgust (fear, shame, pain, sorrow)	

Table 1. Similarity analysis of free association of professionals from Greece, Italy, France, and Spain.

Concern among participants regarding the CSECA

An inquiry was conducted about the level of concern among participants regarding the sexual exploitation of minors in prostitution (SEMP), using a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 represented no concern and 10 represented a high level of concern. Responses were collected from both the general population and professionals in different countries.

Responses were collected in the general population and professional population by country. Specifically, 25% indicated that they were quite concerned (7-8), and 68% were extremely concerned (9-10). When asked about the main reasons associated with this concern, phrases related to the consequences for the child and adolescent victims, the vulnerability of these children and adolescents, and the recognition of this as a significant social problem were highlighted.

In the general population, 68% of participants expressed a high level of concern (9-10), 29% reported moderate concern, and 3% indicated low concern about the issue of child prostitution. Among professionals, 82% stated they were very concerned, 16% reported moderate concern, and 2% indicated low concern.

Due to the non-normal distribution of the data, a comparison between the two samples (general population vs. professionals). The results showed no significant differences between the samples regarding concern about child prostitution ($W = 1716$; $p = .102$). Examining the scores of each sample revealed a very high level of concern in both groups (general population $M = 9.24$; $SD = 2.06$ and professionals $M = 9.80$; $SD = 1.83$). Possibly, a “ceiling effect” occurs regarding concern about child prostitution, complicating the comparison between the samples. Therefore, subsequent analyses were conducted using the total sample.

The results of the comparison between countries based on online questionnaires indicated that the average level of concern among participants showed statistically significant differences of medium magnitude among the countries. It is noteworthy that the levels of concern reported were consistently high, considering the response range of 1 to 10.

The comparisons ($F(3) = 6.357$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = 0.13$) revealed that the overall group of participants (including the general population and professionals) from **Italy** ($M = 10.35$; $SD = 1.42$), **Greece** ($M = 9.92$; $SD = 1.69$), and **Spain** ($M = 9.65$; $SD = 2.13$) did not show significant differences

among them (see Figure 2). Additionally, these three countries exhibited a higher average level of concern compared to the sample collected in France (M = 8.40; SD = 2.04; $p < 0.05$). However, it is important to note that concern was high in all four countries, exceeding 84%.

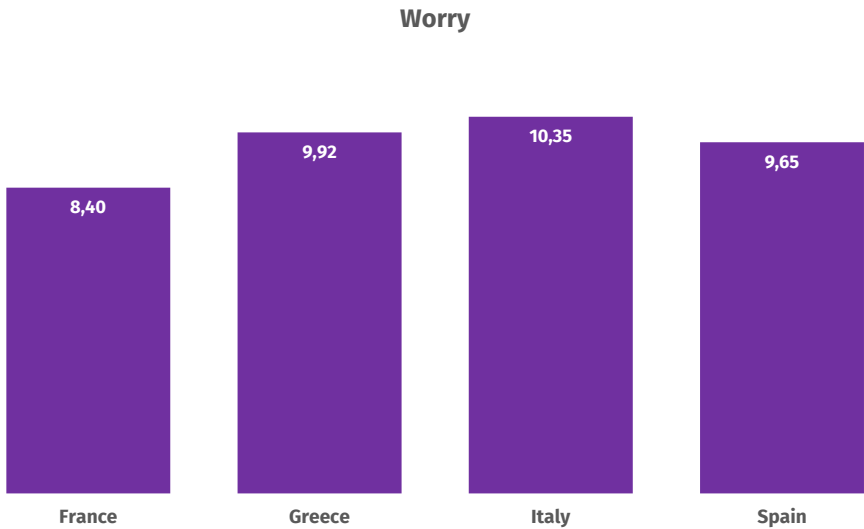


Figure 2. Average level of concern by country.

3.4. Typologies of prostitution and sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

The typologies of SEMP are complex and diverse according to integrated reports and consulted studies. Although the terminologies are influenced by specific legal definitions, these phenomena is common throughout Europe. These highlights the importance of achieving consensus among European countries to protect children at-risk.

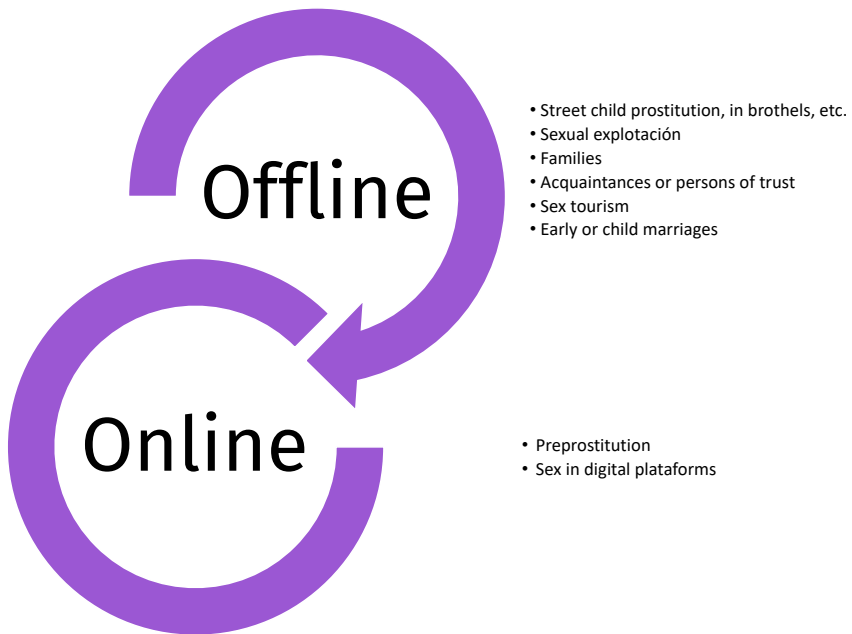


Figure 3. Typologies of prostitution and sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

The typologies of SEMP are divided into two main contexts: (a) Offline: This includes sexual exploitation in identifiable places such as streets, apartments, brothels, and the recording and production of child pornography. It also occurs within households, foster care settings, and through trusted adults, encompassing manipulative romantic relationships, forced marriages, sex tourism, and trafficking of minors for sexual exploitation. (b) Online: Involves SEMP using digital technologies and the internet, including preprostitution and sex in digital platforms (see Figure 3).

Some of these practices may present “grey areas” depending on the country or the legislative recognition of SEMP. These include sexting or exchanges in romantic or “transactional” relationships, and the recording of pornography with the use of minors’ bodies. A commonality among all countries indicates that the platforming of SEMP exacerbates the inherent invisibility of this deeply submerged phenomenon, further enabling its concealment and the development of new strategies of sexual exploitation of minors in prostitution.

“And in fact I don’t think I make too much of a distinction any more, for me prostitution is a service ...a sexual service that you have with another person...”[1. Social Worker France Interview]

“Prostitution is on the internet. The issue is that, really, I repeat, it is a very new problem, and public policies are not yet aware of the characteristics of this phenomenon...” (8. Social Worker Spain Interview).

3.5. Legal and Penal Situation.

3.5.1. *International Comparative Situation*

In 1989, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasized the need to combat sexual exploitation in prostitution and pornography. In 1996, at the First World Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held in Stockholm, it was

stated the urge to criminalize all forms of commercial exploitation of children and to review and implement laws, policies, and programs to eradicate this issue (Alexander et al. 2000: 483). In the year 2000, the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, defined the 'sexual trafficking' of minors as 'trafficking in persons.' This protocol was integrated into the domestic legislation of most countries worldwide within a few years, emphasizing the inability of minors to consent and defining all forms of juvenile sexual commerce as sexual abuse, even if the minor gives consent. However, it is based on a criminal justice model where the defence of national security through the prosecution of perpetrators (organized crime) takes precedence over the protection of victims. International law does not compel states to provide material, medical, or other assistance to victims (Gallagher 2010: 83).

There are currently three tools to attack this crime at the international level: (1) the Council of the European Convention on Cybercrime, (2) the Council of the European Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and, (3) Abuse and the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on children's rights relating to the sale of children.

There are different laws in European countries that condemn the sexual exploitation of children. However, the observations of experts and the documentary references provided highlight certain deficiencies and challenges in this area.

3.5.2. Comparison of Data from Each National Report

Different countries agree that there is no effective legislation on the problem. It can be improved. Furthermore, professionals are not prepared or trained to work with these SEMPs:

France took the first step towards the criminalization of clients on 2002, by passing a law that penalizes clients engaging in sexual activities with underage prostitutes (aged 15 to 18) with a prison. In 2013, the Law for the Reinforcement of the Fight against Prostitution and Human Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation specifically addresses the sexual

exploitation of minors, imposing stricter measures for those involving minors in prostitution. Subsequently, the new Law 2016-444 represents a comprehensive approach to addressing the issue of prostitution in [France](#). It, recognizing them as victims. Harsher penalties, including a 5-year prison sentence and a fine of 75,000 euros, are stipulated if the offense involves a minor. Despite a challenge in December 2019, the French Constitutional Court confirmed the constitutionality of Law 2016-444. Compared to other countries, the concept of prostitution is well defined and concrete. However, some voices point out the need to broaden the conceptualisation to commercial sexual exploitation of minors ([France](#)).

According to the current Greek legislation, as outlined in Law No. 4267/2014 (Articles 9, 10, 11), which focuses on combating sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children, child pornography, and additional related provisions...

SEMPs of child trafficking are dealt through a multi-faceted approach. The Greek National Referral Mechanism for the Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking outlines several key interventions, including family tracing/repatriation, safe housing, psychological support, access to medical care, education, and foster care and adoption. Political leaders, resources, and professionals face various challenges in intervening in these SEMPs, such as the hidden nature of the crime, lack of resources, and the complex needs of the victims

(02.Human Rights Project Officer. Greece)

In [Italy](#), the reporting process entails informing various services about harm to a minor, aiming to notify the Judicial Authority. Typical cases are reported to the Prosecutor's Office for Minors, responsible for safeguarding minors' rights. However, resources are not sufficient to deal with the phenomenon, primarily because it is very difficult to detect and fully comprehend.

It is crucial to prioritize the well-being of individuals who exist outside established socio-cultural structures, with a specific emphasis on implementing preventive measures for minors. Regrettably, there is a lack of adequate legislation in place to offer protection against this phenomenon ([Italy](#))

In [Spain](#), it was recently approved the Organic Law 8/2021 (protection against violence towards minors) & the Organic Law 10/2022 (sexual freedom). Even more significant is the National Strategic Plan against Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation (PENTRA 2021-2023): a comprehensive initiative coordinated by the Ministries, encompassing various actions to combat these issues.

4. Good Practices in the Prevention and Care of Prostituted Minors

4.1. Summary table with the compilation of good practices from each country

In the following table, there are listed the three major practices selected by each country (see Table 2). “Good practices” refers to methods, plans, interventions, approaches, or actions that are considered effective, ethical, and beneficial in the fight against SEMP and in the protection of minors at risk. These practices have been identified by experts in each country as role models, from which to learn given their approach and positive results.

France	Greece	Italy	Spain
<p>SNATED. Service national d'accueil téléphonique de l'enfance en danger - National helpline for children in danger.</p> <p>This is a public service of the Child Welfare Service as part of the national care for children in danger within the National Plan to Combat Child Prostitution created by the French Government in 2021. The telephone number 119 serves as a national hotline to act when a child is in a dangerous situation. A team of professionals answers phone calls and chats, offering listening, legal, psychological, and educational support. The hotline was created in 1989, and the part dedicated to child prostitution was launched in April 2023.</p>	<p>Become Safe Project 2020-2023 is coordinated by the International NGO. The general objective is to enhance the protection of migrant children and youth who are victims or at risk of violence and to advocate for their rights in the European Union.</p> <p>The beneficiaries of the Project are migrant children and youth who are victims or at risk of violence, who are without their families, and who face multiple vulnerabilities in asylum and reception procedures. The project offers training tools for professionals working with migrant children and youth who are victims or at risk of violence.</p>	<p>The 114 Childhood Emergency (Italy), promoted by the Service of the Department for Family Policies-Presidency of the Council of Ministers, is an emergency service created in 2003 and aimed at anyone wishing to report a situation of danger and emergency, including children and adolescents. The service has also expanded to chat, WhatsApp, and email. Based on a multi-institutional model, the service offers networking with relevant institutions and structures in the social, judicial, and public security fields.</p>	<p>EDR-ESIA Tool for early identification and intervention with children and adolescents at risk of SEMP.</p> <p>This tool has proven to be an effective screening instrument for its application in educational services, primary healthcare, and social services</p>

France	Greece	Italy	Spain
<p>PARÉ project (France) is driven by the "Droit d'Enfance" Foundation aiming to lead and coordinate a network to combat child prostitution.</p> <p>As part of the project, nearly 250 tools (articles, films, books, reports, etc.) have been compiled on a platform to fight against child prostitution; webinars are organized; a bulletin is published every 3 months.</p>	<p>A21 Greece Initiative</p> <p>This is a global organization in over 15 countries combating human trafficking.</p> <p>The beneficiaries of the project are victims and survivors of human trafficking, especially children, women, and men. The project provides victims or survivors holistic care and support such as accommodation, education, vocational training, employment opportunities, etc.</p>	<p>Be Happy, be Safe! (Italy), promoted by ECPAT Italy since 2006 to the present, is a training course aimed at individuals under 18, families, and schoolteachers with the aim of achieving control over Internet usage and recognizing the hidden dangers of the Web.</p>	<p>REDCECA</p> <p>Spanish Network against the sexual exploitation of childhood and adolescence and promotion of children's rights.</p> <p>Within the IV Action Plan against Child and Adolescent Sexual Exploitation of FAPMI-ECPAT Spain, there appears the need to promote alliances through networking and interinstitutional coordination.</p>
<p>Entreaetes en mode mineur. "Itinéraires" is aimed at minors and young adults in prostitution.</p> <p>The practice involves direct engagement in the field to establish trust and rapport between the youth and supportive individuals. Additionally, the program offers counseling, assistance, and resources to help participants exit prostitution safely. By providing holistic support and fostering meaningful connections, this initiative aims to empower vulnerable individuals and facilitate their transition out of exploitation.</p>	<p>Smile of the Child- NGO</p> <p>Develops programs and activities against child trafficking</p> <p>This organization provides vital support and protection to children vulnerable to or victimized by trafficking, exploitation, abuse, or neglect. They report cases, manage shelters, and conduct awareness campaigns. Their objectives include identifying victims, preventing trafficking through education, enhancing cooperation among stakeholders, prosecuting perpetrators, safeguarding witnesses, and advocating for policy changes both nationally and internationally.</p>	<p>Tiger Heart (Italy), promoted by ECPAT, is aimed at children of all ages. Since 2017, ECPAT has been conducting silent reading workshops. "Silent Book" consists of images that encourage children to reflect on their own negative emotions.</p> <p>It promotes emotional awareness with images that encourage reflection on negative emotions, the program helps children develop emotional self-awareness skills. By better understanding and managing their own emotions, children can be more resilient to situations of emotional exploitation often used by traffickers.</p>	<p>IV Action plans against child and adolescent exploitation in Spain.</p> <p>Specifically, as an established good practice in the III Plan (2017-2020), the code of conduct targeting the tourism sector is highlighted.</p> <p>Each plan builds upon objectives and results obtained from previous plans. Currently, in Spain, the IV Action Plan against Child and Adolescent Sexual Exploitation (2021-2024) is in force. Specifically, as an established good practice in the III Plan (2017-2020), the code of conduct targeting the tourism sector is highlighted.</p>

Table 2. The list of the three major practices selected by each country.

4.2. Analysis of these good practices and their potential for intervention in this field

The good practices in **Spain**, **Italy**, Greece, and **France** share a common focus on child and adolescent protection, addressing prevention and detection of issues like child exploitation, trafficking, and assistance to at-risk or vulnerable minors. Each has incorporated an educational aspect for children, their families, or affiliated professionals into

their good practices. Besides plans and programs driven and sustained by different social entities (ECPAT, Foundations, NGOs, Government Departments, etc.), have also established immediate response services such as telephone helplines, support networks, and professional training programs. These efforts aim to identify, support, and protect children and youth in vulnerable situations, offering legal, psychological, and educational assistance.

However, differences are observed in the specific strategies adopted by each country. Each country has a different focal point or intervenes at a different level of prevention. For instance, **Spain** has focused on early identification tools and inter-institutional coordination to address child sexual exploitation. **France**, on the other hand, has developed direct helplines and specific projects to combat child prostitution. **Italy** focuses on digital education as a preventive tool with “Be Happy, be Safe!”. Meanwhile, Greece prioritizes the protection of young migrants with the “Become Safe Project”. Moreover, differences are seen in these good practices, displaying diversity within the same country, ranging from emergency services like the 114 Childhood Emergency in **Italy** to educational programs like Tiger Heart in **Italy**. Each country approaches child protection from different angles and with specific tools. There are also differences in the emphasis given in the selected good practices for international collaboration and network formation. Greece, with the “Become Safe Project,” involves organizations from various European countries, while others have more nationally focused practices.

4.3. Contributions of these good practices in the training of professional agents

The contributions of these good practices in training professional agents are substantial and varied. These practices equip professionals with essential tools, knowledge, and skills necessary to effectively safeguard and support children in vulnerable situations. In **France**, practices such as SNATED and the PARÉ project provide direct resources and helplines for endangered children and combat the prostitution of

minors. In Greece, projects like the Become Safe Project and Smile of the Child-NGO offer training programs and tools for professionals working with these vulnerable populations and skills to provide support and protection to children and young people in risky situations. In **Italy**, initiatives such as The 114 Childhood Emergency and Be Happy, Be Safe! focus on raising awareness and training minors, families, and teachers about online dangers and how to stay safe. In **Spain**, EDR-CSECA and the Spanish Network against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents (RedCSECA-**Spain**) offer specific tools for the early identification of children and adolescents at risk. Each country has implemented some good practices that can make significant contributions to professional training by providing them with specific tools, knowledge, and practical experiences to address child protection in various risk situations.

However, good practice areas do not offer structured training but serve as supplementary learning to formal education. They heavily rely on individual professional initiative. In order to address sexual exploitation, abuse, and childhood vulnerability effectively, professionals in this field need structured training supplemented by practical experiences and insights gained from exemplary practices.

5. Proposals for Intervention, Prevention and Training

5.1. How are these SEMP cases confronted, and what responses are being provided?

5.1.1 How are such cases being dealt with and what response is being given?"

1. Policies and programs identified as successful

In the fight against child sexual exploitation, these SEMP cases are being addressed through various strategies. In the studied countries, national reference mechanisms and specific protocols for detecting and addressing SEMP cases of child sexual abuse and exploitation have been implemented. For instance, the Department of Family Policies in [Spain](#) coordinates the Observatory against Pedophilia and Child Pornography, participates in international bodies, and promotes projects to protect underage victims of abuse.

In the realm of intervention, the importance of collaboration among various entities such as law enforcement, social workers, educators, and psychologists is emphasized. Furthermore, the complexity of working with victims, especially when the family does not cooperate, is addressed, highlighting the need to prevent recidivism when returning to protective centres through specific intervention guidelines. Regarding prevention, mechanisms for early counselling and intervention for at-risk youth are proposed. Education plays a crucial role, emphasizing the necessity of effective tools for early detection.

2. Difficulties faced by policymakers, resources, or professionals to intervene in these cases

Political leaders, resources, and professionals face challenges in intervening in cases of child and adolescent sexual exploitation.

The response tends to be limited, relying more on reactive measures than preventive actions. Lack of preparedness among professionals and family resistance hinders early detection. Scarce resources, inadequate staffing, and complexity in professional coordination add to the challenges.

Interviews highlight the complexity faced by political leaders, the resource constraints, and the need for enhanced professional coordination. Emphasis is placed on clear protocols, effective networks, prevention, and media engagement to counteract the trivialization and hypersexualization seen in social media. There's a call for comprehensive education to address sexual exploitation within educational settings and to change the culture surrounding of these cases, with a focus on safeguarding children.

At the European level, Greece, **Italy**, and **Spain** grapple with intervention challenges due to resource scarcity, the complexity of the crime, and the varied needs of victims. The lack of legal knowledge emphasizes the necessity for more information and awareness. Prevention has evolved, stressing the importance of maintaining connections with young individuals to prevent their recruitment into exploitation networks.

3. Identified initiatives and programmes that are being implemented for the:

a. Identification of cases in this situation

In **Italy**, the fight against child sexual exploitation is hindered by a lack of understanding of the laws governing this issue. In Greece, a multifaceted approach is being implemented to address this problem, despite facing challenges stemming from a shortage of resources and the inherent complexity of the crime. Meanwhile, in **Spain**, the

intervention strategy has evolved, currently prioritizing attention to runaway youth and preventing their involvement in exploitation networks.

There's a pressing need for training professionals involved in identifying cases of child prostitution and sexual abuse, highlighting deficiencies in both preparation and resources, especially when the exploiters are family members. Emphasis is placed on the absence of protocols and the urgent need for an organizational structure to handle cases of child prostitution and abuse, with a particular focus on having local-level information and implementing specific protocols for each province. Consequently, significant difficulties arise in case identification, a lack of specialized training for professionals, and an inadequacy of resources, both public and private.

b. Intervention with victims (survivors) of these situations and their families

Italy stands out for its coordination with the Observatory Against Pedophilia and Child Pornography and its involvement in international organizations. In Greece, the lack of training in educational settings and the need for comprehensive guidance to address sexual exploitation are crucial aspects. In **Spain**, prevention focuses on building a bond with young individuals to provide them with identity and belonging in the protection system.

Reference is made to the importance of prevention and having trained personnel in educational settings to detect abuse situations. Additionally, the role of the welfare coordinator in schools is mentioned, emphasizing the need to address not only sexual exploitation of minors in prostitution (SEMP) but also other forms of violence.

c. Inclusion and support of these cases following the identification of a situation of prostitution or abuse

Italy established guidelines in 2020 for intervention in protection centres, focusing on preventing victims from returning to exploitation networks and addressing runaway minors. In Greece, there is an emphasis on the need to change the system and culture surrounding these cases, particularly focusing on the protection of boys and girls.

Addressing the complexity of working with victims, especially when the family does not cooperate, is crucial. The lack of family collaboration complicates effective intervention. Furthermore, there is an emphasis on the importance of preventing victims from relapsing when returning to protection centres by implementing specific intervention guidelines.

d. Prevention in this field

The need for comprehensive prevention in the educational sphere is highlighted, focusing on a cross-disciplinary approach that trains all professionals in detecting and preventing abuse. However, specific information about preventive programs or initiatives is not provided.

5.2. Needs to be addressed with individuals who have suffered or are experiencing this situation. Problems or difficulties encountered (Comparison of the Four Countries). Main conclusions-needs.

All nations acknowledge diverse needs—legal, psychological, medical, social, and educational—when addressing child victims of exploitation. A comprehensive, global approach is crucial due to the complex nature of the issues involved. To provide effective support for victims, interventions must be multifaceted. Legally, it is imperative to

have state-backed advocacy that guides victims through the process, ensuring cognitive and psychological assistance for their liberation and vindication. On the psychological front, specialized professionals should offer support, recognizing the necessity for comprehensive intervention programs to facilitate a smooth transition into a healthier environment. Additionally, addressing issues of guilt and recognition is vital. Facilitating a return to normal life involves encouraging victims to attend school, engage in hobbies, and make friends, with tailored educational programs and gradual reintroduction. Education is pivotal, encompassing skills development, social reintegration, and decision-making involvement, overcoming language barriers, and creating safe school spaces. Overall, there is a significant need for professional training to address the underestimated prevalence of SEMP and its severe consequences. Participants emphasize the importance of comprehensive training for professionals working with children to meet diverse needs effectively.

5.3. Coordination work and networking among different agencies for their management (Family, social services, health, police, justice, ...)

The sexual exploitation of children and adolescents is a complex field involving various stakeholders, as outlined throughout the report. Therefore, it is evident that a crucial aspect in this realm is the coordination and collaboration among all these agents and professionals, to prevent, diagnose, and support these cases. In all the countries studied, there is a consensus on the need to establish networks and enhance coordination, with specificities that can be observed in the following table (see Table 3).

France	Greece	Italy	Spain
Absence of a network, working in isolation	Lack of a comprehensive and integrated child protection system	Difficulties in working in a coordinated manner	There are networks, but none are specific to address these issues

Table 3. Coordination networks.

The work of coordination and networking in this field should:

Be implemented at all levels: structural changes, improvements in the judicial system, prevention programs, and comprehensive care for victims.

Favor multidisciplinary and personalized interventions focused on the well-being of minors. A systematization of intervention should be generated, where the most trusted or closest person to the minor can act as the reference in the process, avoiding the re-victimization of these individuals, preventing an array of professionals from whom they have to seek help or express themselves, potentially jeopardizing the necessary bond for their well-being and effective intervention.

Help to establish clear protocols and guidelines. There is a need for macro-level improvements due to the rigidity of state administrative structures, bureaucracy, and procedural slowness, hindering collaborative work and efficient care.

Ensure that no case goes unnoticed due to lack of training or absence of necessary coordination channels when suspicions arise. Many times, we face complex and unclear situations. Ensure that while reporting is necessary, it should not be a condition to initiate coordinated work. Promote specific training programs on the subject to aid in understanding victims' situations and offering strategies for professionals.

5.4. The potential, development, and limitations of existing legislation and policies to address this phenomenon

Identification of changes and gaps in these areas

The assessment of legislation and existing policies to address SEMP, in the countries where the analysis has been conducted, reveals a widespread concern over the scarcity of means and resources to implement current policies and legislation, which in many cases proves insufficient to adequately protect children and adolescents. In addition to these findings, per country:

In **France**, a fundamental change in legal approach is required, shifting from the term 'prostitution' to 'sexual exploitation of minors,' necessitating the renewal of legislation, which provides slow and unsatisfactory responses. Additionally, the critical importance of media intervention is emphasized as an effective means to raise awareness, and social support, and sensitize the seriousness of this issue.

In Greece, there is concern about the effectiveness of current laws, calling for a more rigorous and less bureaucratic implementation. The need for more specialized laws to tackle the complexity of child trafficking is highlighted. Furthermore, urgency is placed on protecting victims and conducting more active detection, especially in vulnerable areas like border points, prioritizing protective action over evidence gathering.

In **Italy**, there is a lack of preventive measures and an adequate legal framework to protect minors against SEMP. The Juvenile Court has authority in these cases, but it's inadequate. There is no proper legislation to protect against this phenomenon. Scarce resources and a lack of defined structures represent significant obstacles in the fight against this issue.

In **Spain**, shortcomings in the more effective enforcement of the current legislation are noted. The need for specialized teams to address digital crimes and increased international collaboration in investigations to combat access to internet pornography is highlighted. Stigmatizing clinical evaluations of legitimate victims as confused or malicious; two out of three cases do not go to trial due to insufficient supporting evidence. A demand is made for a nationally agreed-upon plan to address SEMP.

Overall, the evaluated countries confront a shared more absence of preventive measures, difficulties in enforcing legislation, and the pressing need for enhanced coordination, both domestically or nationally and internationally, to effectively tackle the serious issue of SEMP. They also share a significant challenge: regulating platforms and social networks to prevent the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. Content control policies and tools are still not entirely effective; they are barely in place and lag behind in detecting, stopping, and eliminating practices related to the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents and the production of content associated with the trafficking of children and adolescents.

And then, that those policies become a reality, because if we have certain laws, like the Child Protection Law, but then there are no resources to implement them, it's not useful to me. This is like always. We apply... I mean, we create the law, but we don't create regulations, we don't create... investment to make it happen, so it doesn't make sense. It doesn't matter if there are laws if there are no resources to support them.

(04.woman.professional.Spain).

5.5. The role of the media in addressing and disseminating information about the phenomenon.

The role of the media in SEMP was jointly analysed by voices from different countries. Beyond the usual criticisms directed at the media for contributing to the sexualisation of the bodies of children and adolescents and not leveraging their great influence to promote awareness and preventive measures. Also, add the criticism of the sensationalism tendency when covering stories of SEMP and trafficking. This can lead to the re-victimization of those affected by these crimes and hindering the protection and recovery of victims and the public and social understanding of the complexity of SEMP and its effects. Additionally, some of these practices, or trivialization of certain events, may provide key information to perpetrators or even detailed information about investigations or police methods.

“it’s important that media coverage is sensitive to the experiences of victims and does not contribute to their stigmatization”

(01.woman. social worker. Greece).

Moreover, another influential force that necessitates consideration is the ‘fourth power’: the online realm. Social networks and online media wield substantial influence over Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEMP). The phenomenon of ‘platformisation’ has evolved into a tool for SEMP, frequently exploited to reach out to vulnerable individuals, especially youth and minors, with the aim of manipulating and recruiting them for sexual exploitation. These platforms also facilitate the sale and dissemination of explicit content, presenting an alluring yet deceptive portrayal of activities associated with SEMP, including pornography, etc.

“In recent years, child prostitution has seen the proliferation of many new figures, primarily due to the increased use of social media”

(01.men. lawyer. Italy).

On the other hand, both the media and social networks have great potential to educate and raise awareness. They can be valuable tools to raise awareness about SEMP and human trafficking, disseminate educational information, and alerts about cases, and shares resources for prevention and victim assistance. However, social media still lacks sufficient educational programs to inform users, especially young people, about the dangers and warning signs. It is evident that in the fight against SEMP, the media must take on a conscious perspective and social responsibility, leveraging their powerful influence to contribute positively to the social perception and understanding of this issue.

Training by Country

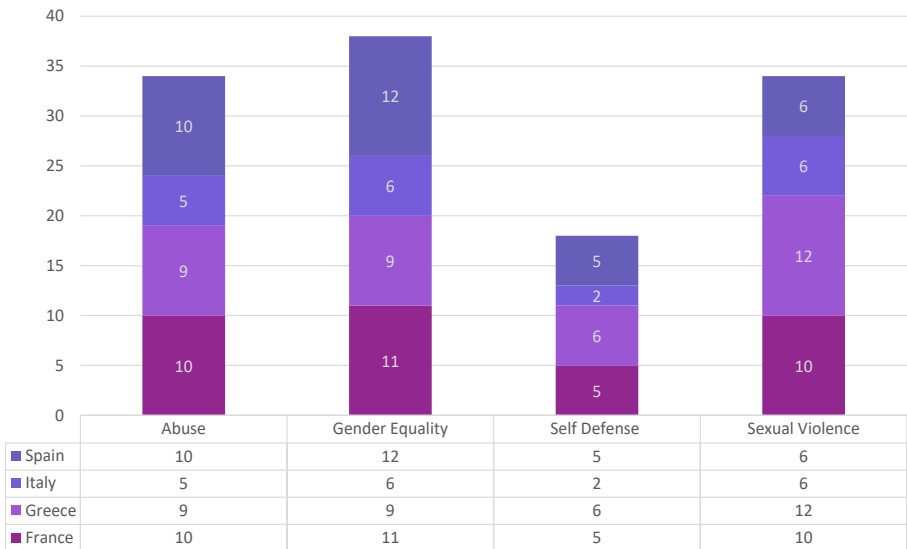


Figure 4. Training needs of the general population: What type of training would you like to receive?

6. Training

The insights gathered from research participants and documented experiences highlight the absence of a formalized training program of SEMP catering to the needs identified. Current training initiatives, including courses, congresses, and seminars, attempt to address this gap in educators' continuous development, yet they lack official regulation and standardization among the consortium's member countries. Regarding the content of these programs, the majority do not directly target SEMP but rather emphasize gender equity and self-defence with few master's programs offering limited coverage of SEMP-related subjects. The absence of a unified European training strategy is evident. Therefore, there's a pressing demand for a systematic, specialized, and officially endorsed training framework.

6.1. Educational Needs of Different Agents

In general, terms, there's an urgent need for formal, comprehensive and specialized training with a more systematic structure that encompasses both initial and postgraduate levels. Broadening the sectors involved in training. It should be tailored and designed for various professional groups working with children and adolescents who might play a significant role in preventing and intervening in SEMP.

For instance, medical professors, police officers sensitized to child protection, judges and lawyers, or psychologists better equipped to recognize signs of trauma, aiding in victim identification or providing emotional support to victims (see Figure 4).

Training in this field is crucial because the majority of professionals are completely unaware of the dynamics and risk factors for domestic sexual exploitation...

(01. Woman. Academic. Spain).

The training needs indicated a formal training strategy that includes intervention at all problematic levels (a) training for prevention, starting from the grassroots level encompassing education in schools and family training, (b) improving the identification of the population that may be victim of abuse and (c) enhancing victim care. In addition, there is a call for more awareness-raising campaigns, with a special focus on schools. This represents a crucial starting point, intending to raise awareness and stimulate action, integrating the training and prevention efforts in schools. The objective is to intervene preventively with minors, addressing issues related to psychosocial well-being, consent and various forms of exploitation.

Furthermore, it's crucial to train professionals to understand and detect the risk factors leading to SEMP, recognize early warning signs, and ethically respond to trauma while maintaining confidentiality. Those in proximity to SEMP must acquire a solid knowledge of national and international protection laws and protocols. Additionally, there should be the development of an interdisciplinary individual and group approach to create effective and measurable diagnostics and follow-ups for at-risk children and victims. This approach aims to foster collaboration networks for effective and continuous educational support.

“It's this identification, this support... Which means that sometimes we have doubts, but we don't ask the right questions or we don't intervene.”

(08. Youth Worker - Social Worker 2. France)

6.2. Themes to Develop in Training Processes

Based on personal interviews, questionnaires, and consulted publications, several fundamental themes have been identified for inclusion in training programs related to SEMP (see Table 4).

Cross-cutting Aspects of SEMP Prevention	Intervention, support, and victim treatment in SEMP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dispelling false myths and beliefs Awareness and prevention strategies Communication with children and adolescents Social networks as recruitment channels Education on socio-affective relationships SEMP prevention and training in signal detection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding the phenomenon by exploring psychological, sociological aspects, etc. Knowledge of current legislation Access to resources and support networks Sensitive interview skills Intervention in SEMPs of sexual exploitation Specific training for SEMPs of child prostitution Culture and cultural differences, immigration, and gender.

Table 4. Key themes to incorporate in professional training.

The challenges to implementing formal, comprehensive and specialized training in SEMP are noticeable across various levels. At an individual level, professionals and families encounter difficulties concerning time management and the costs associated with training. Institutionally, there's a need to prioritize these topics in regulations and budgets by allocating adequate resources. Coordinating a broad spectrum of professionals and interdisciplinary knowledge is pivotal. Overcoming these challenges involves developing diverse and adaptable training programs, spanning from early identification to ethical responses, and adjusting to the changing realities of situations, professions, and contexts.

6.3. Training Experiences in this Field

When asked in the questionnaire to professionals whether they had received any specific gender training, only 53% of those who responded to the questionnaires (N = 45) affirmed having received such training. Nearly half of the professionals lacked training in this general aspect and even fewer in SEMP. Analysing the responses to the open-ended question about the type of training they had received, 29% indicated not having received sufficient or any training on the matter, 24% mentioned professional experiences and training through workshops, seminars, and short courses, while 47% cited specific gender-focused training provided by professionals within formal educational contexts.

7. Comparison of the SWOT analyses conducted in each country and development of an approach to a SWOT at the European level

Below is the comparative SWOT analysis, incorporating the common aspects shared by the four countries (highlighted in black) and the highlighted differences specific to each country, with blue representing Greece, orange for Italy, green for France, and red for Spain.

STRENGTHS	
Each Country: Differences	Four countries: Similarities
<p>Work from the agency of the survivors and the reinforcement of the positive characteristics or strengths of the child or adolescent, thus promoting protection and resilience factors (S)</p> <p>Potential networking between organizations (G)</p>	<p>A large number of professionals and agents are sensitive to the issue and have the necessary general training to deal with this problem.</p> <p>A strong child protection structure, which, despite its weaknesses, works and when SEMP are detected, coordinated action is taken.</p> <p>Legislative support, child protection laws.</p> <p>Effective relationship between school, families and community on prevention issues</p>
WEAKNESS	
<p>Lack of a consensual theoretical basis which generates a diversity of opinions without having a common objective. Accentuated by a lack of research on the subject.(F)</p> <p>Existing terminological difficulties (S)</p> <p>Lack of time dedicated to care in these SEMPs (S).</p> <p>Lack of pro-activity on the part of the administration in approaching the SEMPs of possible survivors (S); as well as a lack of support for professionals (F)</p> <p>deinstitutionalization of children in residential care; need to improve care for children living in residential care (S)</p> <p>Limited resources and lack of continuity of professionals (F)</p> <p>Contextual constraints that hinder networking (I)</p>	<p>Social networks make it difficult to get in touch with people in SEMP situations.</p> <p>Lack of training of professionals</p> <p>Need for structural changes in increasing community care and deinstitutionalization of children in residential care; need to improve care for children living in residential care; need for improvements in information systems to help understand the magnitude of all forms of violence against children, with special emphasis on sexual violence.</p>

OPPORTUNITIES

Legislative development.

Strength of the feminist movement and its influence in different areas, also in this one, with emphasis on the protection of minors (S).

Availability of funding for anti-trafficking initiatives and increasing public awareness (G).

The implementation of awareness-raising programs in schools (I).

Establishment of territorial structures to improve capacity to combat sexual exploitation by providing information and support (I).

Greater social and professional awareness of the issue.

Greater coordination and collaboration in SEMP.

Knowledge and expertise in the field of research and professional work on strategies, tools and competencies to work effectively in this field.

THREATS

Consumerist and patriarchal society, social values mean that there is no awareness of this problem among the adolescents who are involved in it (S).

Big external powers behind the abuse and exploitation of children (S).

From a local administration the competencies are very limited in a much more global world, especially in the field of prevention (S).

Inadequate institutional support, which compromises the ability to prevent and combat child exploitation (I).

Lack of opportunities and future for children who are exploited by exploiters to indicate that commercial sex is one of them (S).

Clandestinity of the phenomenon

Risk of being persecuted or having consequences from the administration when denouncing SEMP or from the families or exploiters themselves Pornography industry and criminal structures behind exploitation.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

The sexual exploitation of children and adolescents is a complex issue that transcends borders and challenges common perceptions. The tendency to render this reality invisible is evident across all countries, with data indicating merely the “tip of the iceberg”. One primary challenge is the marked differences in the terminology used. While **Spain** eschews the term child prostitution and adopts SEMP, **France** employs the terms “pre-prostitution” and “prostitution”. This discrepancy reflects diverse approaches to conceptualize and define a multidimensional problem requiring urgent attention, with the establishment of robust networks and improved coordination among stakeholders involved in prevention, detection, and intervention.

Overall, societal perceptions of the victims recognize children and adolescents as innocent in their sexual exploitation and the use of their bodies for profit. This engenders a range of emotions, from anger in some countries like Greece and **Italy** to feelings of pain, sadness, fear, or shame in **Spain**.

Moreover, concerning the most vulnerable minor populations in countries sharing southern borders with Africa (Greece and **Italy**), migrant children are linked, while in **France**, immigrant minors involved in drug consumption are associated. The general perception underscores its link with drug trafficking and consumption, raising concerns among professionals.

There has been a certain consensus regarding the alarming rate of SEMP, particularly among children in institutions meant for their protection. Vulnerable families and immigrant minors are especially susceptible to this issue. Poverty, social factors, and the family environment frequently are identified as significant contributing risk factors to SEMP, painting a complex and multifaceted landscape that demands urgent and coordinated attention.

A global, multidisciplinary, and international approach is required involving the development of active networks with interaction among all social agents. This approach must address the constant evolution of methods and means used by child and adolescent sexual exploitation structures, both in traditional physical contexts and in new online environments. These structures are taking advantage of weak national and European legislation, the lack of economic means and resources available, the absence of joint strategies to reduce crime and its devastating effects, family complicity and denial, and the lack of specific training for professionals, politicians, media, lawyers, judges, etc.

Therefore, it is also essential to focus on Education. Training needed across all sectors of society and among society as whole, from education and social aspects to health, justice, security, and politics. Schools should become safe spaces, offering comprehensive education on sexual and emotional safety. Clear guidelines with agreed-upon definitions and updated protocols that enhance identification are necessary. This approach must prioritize the victim's well-being, understanding human dignity, providing key tools for interpretation, promoting emotional well-being, and offering socio-emotional support to victims. Psychological aspects such as trauma should also be considered, offering robust emotional support and addressing prevention, intervention, and comprehensive reparations.

STOP

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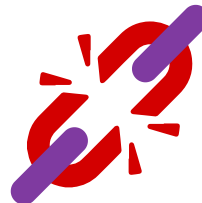
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