

Press Release - For immediate release

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Economic crisis exacerbates abuse and violence against children

Abuse and violence against children and young people in Europe has doubled during the economic crisis, according to the latest publication released by Child Helpline International at the European Parliament in Brussels yesterday.

European child helplines received almost 58 million calls in ten years, with reports of abuse, domestic violence, family break-up and child maintenance conflict doubling in the first three years of the economic crisis and remaining high.

The publication, *Voices of Young Europe*, shows that calls regarding every form of abuse have risen since 2009, totalling 2.1 million in ten years. Children and young people in Europe suffer significant problems with peer relationships (2.8 million contacts), psycho-social mental health issues (2.3 million contacts) and family relationships (1.7 million contacts). They also increasingly contact child helplines about food and basic needs, sexual exploitation, begging and domestic labour.

'It would be useful that child helplines are recognised as a key tool in the European Union's child protection systems. The provision of specific operational support in the new 2014-2020 budget should be considered in order to ensure that financing these vital services is a priority,' said Mr. Antonio López-Istúriz, Member of the European Parliament from Spain.

Child Helpline International presented the alarming insights that these 10 years of child helpline data revealed at the event attended by Ms. Frances Fitzgerald, the Irish minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Mr Alejo Vidal- Quadra, Vice President of the European Parliament, Mr Pablo Arias, MEP, Mr. Salvador Garriga, MEP, Mr. Cancian Antonio, MEP and Ms Emer Castello, MEP.

Representatives of the European Commission were also present at the event. *"The data presented here today is necessary for us to build policies,"* said Ms Fitzgerald, adding that the statistics in the publication are a strong indicator of the issues children were faced with. *'I want to endorse the point that childlines are a very important part of our child protection initiatives and we must build inter-agency cooperation to make sure that we make the best use of the sort of data that we see in this report today'.*

Voices of Young Europe is the first of six regional publications planned for the 10th anniversary year of Child Helpline International, drawing on data from 126 million contacts with children and young people worldwide.

"The lasting effects of abuse and violence, commercial and sexual exploitation or a lack of basic needs will hamper the development of children and young people into productive citizens, imposing a huge financial burden on countries to provide for them in the years to come". Said Nenita la Rose, Executive Director of Child Helpline International, at the publication's launch.

Child Helpline International (CHI) is the global network of child helplines, working to protect the rights of children. CHI was founded in 2003 and celebrated its 10th anniversary this year. CHI's network consists of 173 members in 142 countries.

Child Helplines are often a young person's first contact with any kind of child protection service, a channel for and into child protection services. Child helplines allow children to reach out when they need support or to speak to someone in a safe and trustworthy environment. Toll-free lines, online chat rooms, SMS text messaging and, drop in services, and letters provide children with accessible, confidential means to reach out for help.

- **Voices of Young Europe** is available to download [here](#) or at www.childhelplineinternational.org.