

Global Threat: How to improve cooperation at a global level.

Delivered by Michael Moran to the EPP group meeting on

Combatting the sexual abuse of children and the internet, Brussels 29th June 2016.

I must say that the title says that we have to improve cooperation at a global level as there are already very many examples of excellent cooperation. Even the fact that we are sitting here shows that law enforcement, government, industry and NGOs can sit together, discuss these issues and work to improve the environment within which we work. You have already heard from Fernando how INTERPOL and Europol work together in online child exploitation and I can assure you that this is replicated between the two organisations on a regular basis in many other areas.

There is no doubt that the threat is global. It's important to remember that there are no borders and very few constraints on people who want to exploit children online. On the other hand Law Enforcement and government actors are constrained, and rightly so, by laws and procedures. Balance is difficult to find and sometimes this is to the detriment of investigations and therefore the safety and welfare of people. In these types of cases, the most vulnerable communities are the ones to pay the price. Issues like privacy, data retention, commercial advantage and profit and indeed the primacy of arrest and prosecution by investigators of individuals sometimes result in allowing the abuse of children to go ahead unchecked even though, with little effort, we the authorities; could put a stop to it. I doubt sincerely that the drafters of law and procedures of this nature or indeed Police Management intend to protect the rights of the criminal over those of an innocent child but that in reality is what happens on occasion.

When we look at the global nature of online child exploitation we can see clearly that it takes cooperation to fight it. As Colm Gannon from the Dept. of Internal affairs in New Zealand is fond of saying, "it takes a network to defeat a network" and make no mistake, the internet facilitates and encourages those who have a sexual interest in children to an enormous degree allowing networks of offenders and the curious to congregate, chat and exchange in nebulous groups and chatrooms. When we look at Finkelhor's four pre-condition model of offending, we can see clearly that the ICT shortens the path from motivation to offending at every point. This is not a concern for law enforcement or prosecution alone but evidenced by the fact that we are here today, for society in general.

The diagram below is an attempt at simplification of a very complex issue by creating a Venn diagram and it attempts to show the elements that must be in place if we are to holistically deal with the issue. Each individual circle affects the others to a certain degree and to really be efficient we must try to have elements of all three in any project, initiative or work we do in this area.

Prevention: This must have primacy. Your grandmother was not wrong when she told you that a stich in time saves nine. I can assure you that it also saves a lot of money and other scare resources. The Lanzarote convention and the EU directive acknowledge this and the WeProtect Global Alliance rightly pushes it to the forefront.



More obvious examples of prevention are to be found in the schools programs and child outreach that are ongoing throughout the world. In Europe they are popular and there is significant investment by the EU and Governments in these programs. They need to be expanded though to target younger and younger children, in an age appropriate way of course, and good examples are to be found in most countries. We teach children to be responsible when using the road after all. It is right and proper that we have solid prevention aimed at making children think more critically about their use of ICT. This means less victims, less investigation and a safer experience online for all concerned.

We must, though, also consider the offenders to prevent them becoming offenders in the first place. We must have the difficult discussions around those within our societies who have a sexual interest in children. We must invest strongly in prevention strategies such as those nascent initiatives like Project Dunkelfeld or StopItNow. These aim to stop people being sucked into a vortex of offending.

NetClean, a Swedish company specialising in helping network administrators to keep their systems clear of CAM report that their experience is that 1 in 1000 personnel use corporate networks to access, download and view Child Abuse Material.

We should also mention prevention strategies deployed by online service providers such as Facebook. They battle every day to keep their platform free from exploitation and abuse and theirs is a good example of work that contains all the elements in the VENN displayed. Once they find something illegal on their systems they are obliged by law to report it to the excellent people at NCMEC. Once there it is sent to law enforcement for investigation and the material found is analysed for clues that might help in the identification of the child victim within a short space of time and after being uploaded and checked against the ICSE database. Prevention is further augmented by ensuring that the signature of the files is added to a black list and can never be uploaded to FB platform again. These file signatures are also shared through the technology coalition run by the Thorn foundation ensuring that other companies can also prevent the material being shared again. This is one decision with many scalable outcomes.

Investigation is sometimes seen as the sole responsibility of law enforcement but I disagree. As in the example of Facebook everyone who has a network has a responsibility to keep it free from child exploitation and when they find it report it (investigation and victim identification) while at the same time ensuring, through the use of file signatures, user bans and other methods that their systems will not be abused in the same way again.

Perhaps mandatory reporting, like in the USA, might assist companies in doing the necessary?

Investigation by law enforcement is hampered in many ways. In some countries it is a lack of law, the volume of offending or even a lack of operational capacity. But in some others it is a concentration on the investigation element and a lack of understanding or effort around the other two elements that is engendering inefficiencies. Lack of communications data or access to communications data is still a big issue and I know there is a great deal of work being done to find balance but its taking too long. This data is the lifeblood of online offending investigations and it is hurting the most innocent and vulnerable in our communities while pitching cooperation partners in law enforcement and industry against each other in a totally unnecessary polarised way.

Law Enforcement acknowledges the need for data privacy and data restrictions but we also ask that people see the clear need for appropriate access with appropriate oversight.

Another area where international cooperation is stymied is the MLAT process. It is just too slow and cumbersome and there needs to be an increased use of technology to speed up the process. Faxing or sending requests by post is just not acceptable in the 21st century.

Working in partnership is essential. Nowhere is this demonstrated more than in Victim Identification. There are currently 49 countries and Europol connected to the International Child Sexual Exploitation database. CAM fed in by members of the db are compared to other material already in there with obvious benefits to investigations and a reduction in duplication of effort. Material found in one country is matched with material found in others resulting in synergies that would be unheard of without it. The expert network connected in those countries and Europol communicate in an unfettered way across the police channel ensuring that every child who can be rescued is rescued. Thousands of messages are exchanged and thousands of files uploaded and compared every week and the result is that we are currently averaging 6 children identified a day.

When you imagine that the average time from abuse to disclosure is 21 years and that abuse often continues over many years, this work is invaluable in identifying these kids as quickly as possible, removing them from harm and ensuring they get the aftercare and intervention that will help them deal with issues that often go unchecked and fester ensuring that people who have been abused as children often go on to inhabit the lists of mentally ill, addiction and suicide within our communities. Incidentally the development of ICSE is funded by the EU Commission, first by DG Information and Media and now by DG Home. V1 got countries connected, V2 got them talking, V3 launched recently got them categorizing as baseline and allowed the use of video while V4, also called ICARE will connect national databases on a b2b basis and in cooperation with ECPAT will measure the problem in a public way that will allow us to measure the size of the issue.

Currently we have nearly 6,000 identified victims uploaded by 49 countries and EUROPOL and I am pleased to inform you that all EU countries are connected with one exception that we are working to connect. Their level of usage though is another matter entirely.

Another very good and related example of how law enforcement and civil society work together to complete the Venn is INTERPOL and InHope. Again through DG Information and Media, InHope has closed a major gap in the victim identification. You will hear from Veronica next about the work we do, with their partners ZiuZ to train together, leveraging their hotline analysts to save children using ICCAM.

Our partnership with InHope is deeper than just this of course and we encourage all member countries of INTERPOL to ensure that they have a hotline in place and that they work together with Law Enforcement, legislators, industry and the public to ensure that we are all working together. This is a mainstay of the WeProtect Global Alliance Model National Response document to be launched shortly.

I want to bring you now to the need for standards. Working together is absolutely necessary but must be backed up by standards and clear understanding of roles. Demarcation between parties is important and a clear understanding of roles is paramount. Agreed standards too can help and a good example of that is the emerging international category of CAM called Baseline.

Baseline is a standard aimed at ensuring that any image or movie categorised as such will be illegal wherever there is law. It could be called the "worst of the worst" and is the material that features real prepubescent children where there is a sex act or a concentration on the anal or genital region of the child. INTERPOL and its member countries connected to ICSE already produces a Baseline list of file signatures when uploading to the ICSE db and this list can be made available to companies and other

organisations running networks to scan for CAM in the same way they do for SPAM or Malware. We encourage our member countries to adopt the category within national systems and

Funding and resources is also a huge issue. Fernando from EUROPOL made the argument clearly not just for them but also their member countries but there is another dimension. INTERPOL operates globally and is funded from police budgets and operates in a constant deficit. We need to be supported by independently by private foundations and governments in order to do the work for countries that are not members of the EU. Countries in Africa, South America and Asia have zero operational capacity, no understanding of the issue but high speed internet connections. Issues we are discussing here today are already being seen in these countries and that is unlikely to go away. We need to engage those countries urgently to ensure that they learn from our mistakes.

Finally I would like to talk about the challenge of big data. There are enormous banks of data everywhere but no central place to manage it. The result is that high quality cases are difficult to make. While ICSE serves as a central point for CAM we do also need a central point for intelligence. Countries are swamped with large amounts of data from many different sources and it's difficult to prioritize. Pulling the data into one central location, linking it to other databases and mining it efficiently will improve safety and allow us to measure the efficiency of the Venn!

Thank you.