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## DC on Children's Rights in the Digital Environment Annual Report 2021

**Reporting period:** 1 January to 31 December 2021

**Compiler:** ECPAT International (DC Chair)

### Background info about the DC

- The DC-COS was established in 2006 at the 2nd IGF in Rio de Janeiro by organisations working with and for children and youth. Its aim was to establish a dialogue and address fundamental and practical issues impacting on child safety in the online environment.
- Since 2006, there have been significant evolutions in the scale and nature of opportunity, risk and harm to which children are exposed in digital environments, and the relevance of the group continues to expand and grow.

### Activities conducted in the past year

#### *Activities within the IGF*

- Exchange with the DC Core Internet Values regarding controls of the Internet, including in relation to the encryption and the NIS2 Directive. The DC children's rights in the digital environment stated its position and participated in a DC-CIV panel discussion on Friday, 10 December 2021, represented by Jutta Croll. Development of the DC session at the 2021 IGF in Katowice. Preparation included an online survey of members, speaker identification, session design and planning, and session reporting.

#### *DC session at the 2021 IGF in Katowice*

#### [IGF 2021 DCCOS Regulate or prevent to protect children – a false dichotomy?](#)

15:00 to 16:30 CET 7 December 2021

### Overarching questions for the session

- Is the emphasis on regulation and technical solutions obscuring larger challenges in terms of addressing online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA)?
- How do we align the principles of regulation of digital environments and prevention strategies to protect children?

### Background to the discussion

- Internet Governance is experiencing a transition from self-regulatory to regulatory environments for online service providers, highlighting the complexities and lack of consensus between different issue groups.
- Arguments for and against regulation often default to binary or seemingly mutually exclusive positions, missing the nuance and compromise needed to identify sustainable, cross-sector solutions to violence against children in real-life and in digital environments.

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## Speakers

1. Patrick Burton – Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention
2. Michael Tunks – Internet Watch Foundation
3. Andreas Hautz – Jugendschutz.net
4. Thiago Tavares – SaferNet Brasil
5. Prof. Sonia Livingstone – London School of Economics and Political Science

Onsite Moderator: Jutta Croll (Stiftung Digitale-Chancen)

Online Moderator: Doro Czarnecki (ECPAT International)

Rapporteur: Amy Crocker (ECPAT International)

## Key Session Takeaways

- Regulation and prevention do not exist in a dichotomy but are too often framed in that way – it is possible and essential to have both.
- Regulation is often politically expedient and based on the values, priorities, and political interests of a country. Therefore, lessons must be learnt from public health messaging and other approaches to social problems, with attention given to disparities between Global North and Global South countries that are often missed in general regulation proposals for the internet.

### *Activities beyond the IGF*

Many members of the DC are active beyond the IGF on the themes and questions addressed by the DC. While these are not specifically coordinated by or through the DC, they nevertheless contribute to the knowledge base upon which the DC operates. Examples include:

- In March 2021, the Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted its [General Comment No. 25 \(2021\)](#) on children's rights in relation to the digital. Members of the DC playing a particularly active role include ECPAT International – John Carr, Stiftung Digitale Chancen- Jutta Croll, London School of Economics and Political Science - Sonia Livingstone.
- Throughout 2021, ECPAT International was implementing [Project Beacon](#), a programme of activities to build awareness and influence change in the EU policies in relation to children's rights, privacy and technology.
- ECPAT International also cooperated with the WePROTECT Global Alliance to host an [expert roundtable and outcomes briefing](#) in April 2021 on technology, privacy and child rights.
- Members of the DC met with providers of online platforms (i.E. Facebook / Meta, TikTok, etc.) in order to discuss precautionary measures to keep children safe.

### *Outputs*

In relation to the above activities, outputs of relevance to but not directly resulting from the DC include:

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- As part of Project Beacon, ECPAT International and its partner in the Netherlands conducted a [public survey](#) in 8 EU Member States on public attitudes towards online privacy and child protection.

### **Updates on internal processes**

The DC Child Online Safety (COS) voted to change its name to the Dynamic Coalition on children's rights in the digital environment, delivering on an objective stated in the DC's 2020 Annual Report. For technical reasons, the distribution list remains DC-COS.

### **Priorities/objectives for the following year**

- The DC Coordination Team will proactively seek new expert members for the DC.
- The DC will take steps to streamline its membership to increase the percentage of members that actively participate in the DC. Actions are likely to include:
  - Introducing a minimum commitment that all members must adhere to, as stated in a Code of Conduct or Terms of Engagement. Each member will be asked to report annually in a short email message.
  - Giving inactive members one month to state their intention to remain in the DC. Inactive members will be defined as those who have not responded to messages or otherwise communicated with the group for more than 12 months up to 1 January 2022.
- For 2022, the DC is planning to discuss with the members whether a shift of the focus of the DC's work is advisable in order to emphasise besides protection also provision and participation of children, as specified by the UN-CRC.
- The DC will actively seek collaboration with other DCs to address key policy issues including: Encryption and child rights; Safety by Design; Core Internet Values; cybersecurity and child protection; digital inclusion and child rights; digital development and child rights.

Report finalised on 26 January 2022 by the Coordination Team of the Dynamic Coalition on children's rights in the digital environment:

- Amy Crocker – ECPAT International – [amyc@ecpat.org](mailto:amyc@ecpat.org)
- John Carr – Independent Expert - [john@johncarr.eu](mailto:john@johncarr.eu)
- Jutta Croll - Stiftung Digitale Chancen - [jcroll@digitale-chancen.de](mailto:jcroll@digitale-chancen.de)