

# Addressing the Escalation in Child Sexual Abuse for Child Pornography Production: Prague to Host Global Experts' Meeting on Prevention

*KLEČANY, CZECHIA – Prague is set to host a pivotal working meeting gathering leading global experts in child abuse prevention. The conference, titled "Sparks in the Dark: United for Child Safety," will provide a platform for professionals and the public to delve into the latest international prevention initiatives and engage with distinguished experts from various nations. Organized by the Center for Sexual Health and Interventions at the National Institute of Mental Health (NUDZ) in Czechia, this event underscores a concerted effort to combat the rising exploitation of children for the production of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). During the conference, the "Sparks in the Dark" initiative, which brings together European activities in the field of child abuse prevention, will be officially presented and publicly launched for the first time.*

The alarming surge in the exploitation of children for the production of child sexual abuse material (CSAM), commonly known as child pornography, is a global concern. According to Statista.com, there are over 255,000 documented instances of such websites, with each site potentially containing dozens to hundreds of materials depicting child sexual abuse. In the Czech Republic, police statistics for 2023 reveal nearly 5,000 registered crimes related to "child pornography and child abuse (§§ 192, 193)", with a clearance rate of only 44%. However, experts suggest that the actual magnitude of the issue could be significantly higher.

## Addressing the Limitations of Repression Alone

In addition to prevention and awareness-raising efforts targeting potential victims, it is imperative to engage in interventions with potential perpetrators or users of CSAM. Merely resorting to repression proves ineffective. Dominik Jozefík, coordinator and researcher of the BRIDGE project, highlights findings from a recent anonymous global survey indicating that viewing CSAM materials detrimentally impacts users' lives, mental health, and relationships. Despite this, a majority of respondents either refrain from seeking assistance or fear doing so. "Only 13% reported receiving necessary treatment. Moreover, some respondents confessed to not only viewing such material but also engaging in contact with minors, expressing apprehension about committing sexually motivated crimes. Consequently, the use of CSAM materials serves as a precursor to other grave offenses, underscoring the critical need for early intervention and professional support," Jozefík says.

The event is organized by experts from the Center for Sexual Health and Interventions at NUDZ, who boast extensive experience in international collaboration to assist individuals with paraphilic tendencies and challenging sexual behaviors in the Czech Republic. Presently, they are actively involved in three significant European projects dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse crimes: BRIDGE, STOP-CSAM, and Prevent & Protect Through Support (2PS).

## Embracing Comprehensive Prevention

Ongoing initiatives in the Czech Republic, including the Parafilik program ([www.parafilik.cz](http://www.parafilik.cz)), complement one another to offer a comprehensive approach in assisting individuals at heightened risk of problematic sexual behavior towards children. Projects like 2PS, STOP-CSAM, and BRIDGE focus on formulating cohesive strategies, developing online resources, and enhancing the preparedness of professionals engaged in prevention efforts. While 2PS (<https://2ps-project.eu/2ps-project/>) concentrates on these aspects, STOP-CSAM ([---

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desire.com/cs/svepomoc) and BRIDGE (<https://www.iterapi.se/sites/bridge/lang/cs>) provide anonymous online assistance directly to clients grappling with CSAM material use, offering a secure environment and guidance to explore available treatment options. The initiatives have already garnered interest from thousands of individuals worldwide, including Czech-speaking participants, who seek assistance through these channels.

A press conference is scheduled for Tuesday, March 19th, from 4 to 7 pm at the Don Giovanni Hotel, where the aforementioned projects will be publicly presented. "Additionally, the event will showcase the latest outcomes of the PARAFILIK program and other relevant projects, even those not directly implemented in the Czech Republic. Noteworthy experts from Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Finland, Germany, Poland, the USA, Slovakia, Canada, and various other nations will be in attendance, further highlighting the global collaboration in combatting child sexual abuse," concludes Kateřina Klapilová, Head of the Center for Sexual Health and Interventions at NUDZ and BRIDGE project guarantor. The new "Sparks in the Dark" initiative, which aims to streamline and integrate activities in this area, will also be presented. The new platform showcases individual EU-funded projects and other initiatives aimed at preventing, detecting and supporting victims of child sexual abuse and exploitation. It is aimed at researchers, policy makers and practitioners.