Voices of Children and Young People in Europe

LOOKING BACK
TEN YEARS OF 116 111
It is now ten years since the European Commission decided to reserve a range of numbers for services of social value and assigned the 116 111 number to child helplines. Since then, Child Helpline International has strived to ensure that every call is answered. They, together with their child helpline members, have forged alliances with the mobile industry and children’s rights organisations. And they are committed to staying relevant in the face of emerging challenges.

Some new challenges relate to children’s online lives. And in this area Telenor Group and Child Helpline International have come together in an effort to develop e-learning tools to improve the skill sets of child helpline staff.

While we remain confident that access to connectivity enriches children’s lives, there are situations where using technology causes trouble for them. And when that happens, someone needs to be there for the children. We can proactively provide information and support to children and young people about staying safe online.

But we also know that children will explore and make mistakes, even as they become more resilient. As part of our global commitment to SDG 10 Reduced Inequalities, every Telenor Group company is reaching out to children regarding safety online. We aim to reach four million children by 2020.

In 2016 Child Helpline International registered a significant increase in contacts related to child safety in the online environment. But the data also reveals that children face a wide range of challenges they want to discuss. Psychosocial and mental issues top the list along with relations with families and peers. In 2016 these three issues accounted for 48 percent of all reasons for children making contact. Even as new sophisticated platforms emerge, phone calls and chats are still the most common methods of contacting the child helplines.

The work of Child Helpline International is important. In 2016 alone, more than 3.6 million contacts were made from children and youth across 25 EU Member States. But many children are still not aware of these services. On that note we all share a responsibility to let the world around us know what helplines can do.

At Telenor we are proud to have supported Child Helpline International’s efforts. I congratulate you on the ten-year anniversary and look forward to following your progress in the years ahead.

Sigve Brekke
CEO of Telenor Group
116 111 SIX DIGITS WORTH REMEMBERING!

2017 marks the ten-year anniversary since the introduction of the European Directive3 reserving the “116” range of numbers to services of public interest in Europe and, specifically, the 116 111 number to child helplines.

Through the support and hard work of national governments, child helplines, telecommunications providers and other stakeholders, the allocation and operationalisation of the 116 111 number throughout the European region has been a great success. Today, 24 European Union (EU) Member States7 and five non-EU countries, Albania, Georgia, Norway, Serbia and Ukraine, run the 116 111 number to listen to children, provide unbiased support and empower them to fulfil their potential.

At Child Helpline International we have been instrumental in the design and implementation of the 116 111 number over these last ten years. We will continue to work towards raising awareness and supporting child helplines to improve the quality of services for children and young people.

116 111 A brief history

In 2007 the European Commission (EC)3 reserved the national numbering range beginning with “116” with the intent that EU citizens would have access to certain social services by using the same recognisable numbers in all EU Member States. This included the number 116 111 that was reserved for child helplines to provide social services to children and youth.

The decision to reserve the 116 111 number for child helplines re-emphasised the EU’s long-term commitment to children’s rights in respect to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The convention calls for protecting children and youth against all forms of discrimination and violence and stresses the importance of assuring them the opportunity to express their views and concerns.

As a result of our advocacy efforts, in 2008 the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) encouraged all countries worldwide to implement the number 116 111 for child helplines. The number was later shortened to 116 in the African region.

By the end of 2008, the 116 111 number was fully operational in 15 countries7 and today, in 2017, 24 Member States plus five non-EU States operate the 116 111 number.

The assignment procedure of the 116 111 number was different for each EU Member State. While the EC directive reserved the number and bound national governments to it, the assignment conditions depended on national legislation. This gave each National Regulatory Authority (NRA) a certain liberty to apply additional conditions. It also implied that unless the NRAs received an application from an organisation that met their ad hoc requisites, the number could remain unassigned.

National procedures have affected our child helpline members in different ways. From a chronological point of view, the “Mannerheim League of Child Welfare” in Finland was the forerunner, obtaining the number in 2007. The following year twelve more child helplines were assigned the 116 111 number and in 2009 four more joined the group. By the end of 2016, 24 child helplines were accessible via 116 111. While our members in Austria and Belgium never applied for the number, France and Italy are still under negotiations. In Spain the Spanish Regional Governments control the assignment of the number. So far, most, but not all of them have assigned the 116 111 number to the national child helpline, and our member, Fundación Anar.7
The role of child helplines in Europe

Child helplines and the 116 111 number play an instrumental role in child protection systems. The European Commission identified them as services of social value and noted that 116 111 should be a part of the reporting system for the abuse and exploitation of children. The Council of Europe has included child helplines in integrated national strategies to protect children from violence.

Child helplines represent a safe place where children and young people can speak out and ask for help; they can guide children through child protection systems, which may be complex for them to navigate on their own; and they can refer them to other specialist support. They can also inform children of their rights and link them to the resources they need.

Because they listen to children’s issues and concerns, child helplines are uniquely able to identify gaps in child protection systems and advocate for new services to further protect children and youth. Child helplines also support policymaking by providing important data on children’s needs and acting as centres of expertise.

Partnering with telecommunications

Besides implementing a short, recognisable telephone number, it is vital to remove the cost of telephone bills from child helplines that could redirect these funds to other activities, such as increasing hours of service or hiring more counsellors.

Telecom providers and regulators are instrumental by providing adequate technical infrastructure and raising awareness of the number. (see Serbia’s example)

Where local market conditions allow, telecom operators may be able to eliminate all call costs and ease the financial strain on child helplines. A growing number of child helplines already be able to eliminate all call costs and ease the financial strain on child helplines and communicating it to their customers in various ways (see Czech Republic’s example).

The recognition, at the European level, of child helplines’ work has had a significant impact on the operation of child helplines:

- It is easier for child helplines to advocate for a more defined position in the legal framework of their national child protection system;
- Telecommunications providers have started to acknowledge the relevance of child helplines. In some cases they have supported them in the 116 111 assignment application and guaranteed technical infrastructure for updating child helplines services;
- The directive has been an initial step towards standardisation and quality assurance of child helpline services across the region;
- The harmonisation of child helpline numbers across the region is also a strategy to support children and young people moving across borders.

Telecom operators and the wider Information and Communications Technology (ICT) industry can help raise awareness of the 116 111 number by constantly promoting it and communicating it to their customers in various ways (see Czech Republic’s example). The industry could also lobby for implementing ICT products that could enable children to easily access the 116 111 number.

Operators may be able to deploy their customer contact and marketing channels creatively to help raise the profile of the national child helpline and the 116 111 number. For example, mobile operators could embed the 116 111 number into all SIM cards so the number is available in every customer’s default phonebook.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Spotlight on Linka bezpečí and O2

Linka Bezpečí is the national child helpline in the Czech Republic. It was founded in 1994 and since then, O2 has been its strategic partner. This strong partnership was essential in obtaining the 116 111 telephone number.

O2 facilitated the entire re-numbering process with the Czech Telecommunication Office and assisted in negotiations with the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Additionally, O2 implemented a comprehensive nationwide media information campaign to expand awareness of the new number. The campaign made use of radio, television, banners, outdoor advertisement and printed media.

SERBIA

Spotlight on Nacionalna Dečija Linija and TELEKOM Serbia

Nacionalna Dečija Linija (NADEL) was founded in 2005. Originally called SOS Child Line Serbia, it was the first 24/7 counselling service for children and youth in the country. NADEL works to prevent and protect children from abuse, neglect and violence. In addition to providing anonymous counselling services for children and youth, it also provides guidance for adults concerned about children.

Thanks to TELEKOM Serbia, NADEL has always been able to provide toll free calling from landlines and telephone booths. In 2015, TELEKOM Serbia played a significant role in the implementation of the 116 111 number and in 2016 helped establish a new sister service “PARENT LINE Serbia”.

GERMANY

Spotlight on Nummer gegen Kummer and Deutsche Telekom

<< Deutsche Telekom and Nummer gegen Kummer have been in partnership for more than 25 years. Over this period, the two organisations have worked continuously to build a strong relationship based on mutual respect for the benefits each party brings to the other. [...] Deutsche Telekom provides Nummer gegen Kummer with technical support (technical expertise, provision and maintenance of phone numbers), financial support (bears all call costs, additional ad hoc donations), employee support (provision of human resources for volunteer work) and project specific support, such as developing a tool for email counselling. In return, Nummer gegen Kummer supports Deutsche Telekom by embedding its brand into external communications (advertisements, press releases, etc.) and providing educational and training courses (vocational training of Deutsche Telekom’s employees for volunteer work at Nummer gegen Kummer). >>

What is yet to be done?

The implementation of this regionally harmonised number is an incredible accomplishment that has involved a wide range of key actors, all committed to improving the well-being of children and youth in the European region. However, there is always room for improvement and challenges to face.

Sustainability of child helplines

The challenge of securing sufficient and sustainable funding continues to be a major obstacle for many child helplines. The majority of them receive project-based funding from their national governments through which they support some of their activities, but the core operational costs of running and maintaining the child helpline is often not covered.

When relevant, this challenge should be met with the responsibility of national governments to provide long-term funds to allow child helplines to operate sustainably.

As described by a European policymaker, “it is close to impossible for a child helpline to become self-sufficient in terms of financing, so governments should ensure that child helplines can operate without having to constantly invent new projects and use human resources to obtain funding just to provide core services.”

Raising awareness of 116 111

Ensuring that children and young people are aware of the 116 111 number and understand they can contact the helpline for confidential support and advice is of utmost importance. This year, we conducted a study in collaboration with the University of Suffolk to understand people’s awareness of child helplines’ existence and the 116 111 number. The study investigated the awareness of the 116 111 child helpline number in five European countries: Greece, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden over a twelve-week period. The evaluation used online surveys in each country to ascertain the awareness of the 116 111 child helpline number amongst children and young people, adults and national stakeholders. It also used an online survey for European stakeholders. The results of the online survey showed that 23 percent of the 706 young people up to 25 years old who responded to our questionnaire were aware of the existence of the 116 111 child helpline number stood for. 52 percent were aware of the existence of child helplines, even if they did not recognise the 116 111 number. 20 percent of the 1,781 adults who responded to the survey reported that they recognised and knew what the 116 111 child helpline number represented. All 15 European stakeholders were aware of child helplines, with 60 percent of them recognising the 116 111 number. Of the 38 national stakeholders who agreed to participate, only two (5 percent) were not aware of child helplines in their countries, while 14 (37 percent) were aware of the 116 111 number.

Children and young people must be aware that a child helpline exists, how to make contact and how the child helpline can help and support them. Awareness-raising and publicity efforts have to continue at national and regional levels.

Quality of services

While efforts to develop and sustain quality standards for services to children through the 116 111 number continue, national authorities in charge of assigning the number to an organisation are not bound to these standards. This leads to obstacles in the provision of the “same number – same service” objective set in the 2007 directive.

Knowledge sharing, data collection, and learning modules on children’s issues in various contexts are vital to improve quality service standards for child helplines across Europe and the rest of the world.

We at Child Helpline International work to build bridges between child helplines and facilitate joint learning. Together with other organisations, we create important links for European child helplines and present structural solutions to challenges of protecting children in Europe. This, of course, includes continued promotion of the 116 111 number, its confidentiality and safety.

Additionally, we have continued our advocacy efforts with the European Union and the Council of Europe by coordinating with them the Regional Consultations of Child Helplines in 2013 and 2015. The events allowed child helplines to meet, network and share resources and experiences on a regional level.

We will also improve services by setting minimum quality standards for child helplines through the Quality Assessment for the Child Helplines Advisory Council (QACHAC) to be launched in late 2017.

What are our recommendations for the future?

Although initiating the 116 111 number for child helplines hasn’t been without challenges, the last ten years have proven the value of operating the number, working with telecom operators to lift costs, and guaranteeing strong professional services. But it has also shown what needs to be done in the future to improve the quality and sustainability of the 116 111 number within the EU and beyond. Here are some recommendations:

• Governments should continue to support child helplines through sustained funding for service delivery, operational costs, and awareness-raising activities for child helplines and the 116 111 number.

• An increase in awareness-raising activities and campaigns is needed from child helplines, civil society organisations, governments, EU policymakers and stakeholders, and telecom operators.

• National Governments, local social services, child helplines and European stakeholders should maximise expertise and knowledge sharing in order to raise awareness and inspire the best practices and challenges to run the service.

• Telecom operators and the wider ICT industry should collaborate with child helplines to provide financial support by waiving costs for incoming calls and to build capacity on telecommunication systems through trainings for child helplines.

• When assigning the 116 111 number at the national level, governments should identify a professional, well-known and expert organisation to run the service.

• Telecom providers should support child helplines in identifying and developing new functionalities to increase accessibility, such as a ringing system that would allow a child seeking support from abroad to be routed to his/her country of origin through the 116 111.

2 Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.
3 http://www.itu.int/en/Pages/default.aspx
**4,297,867** is the number of times children and youth contacted us in 2016.

Our members in the EU answered **3,683,380 contacts**.

Our members in Europe answered **614,487 contacts**.

Top reasons of contacts in Europe:

- Psychosocial, mental health
- Peer relationships
- Family relationships
- Sexuality and sexual awareness
- Abuse and violence

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**This infographic depicts how many contacts our members have received, including silent calls. It does not indicate the national location of our member offices.**

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**No data available.**
Voices of Children and Young People in Europe
LOOKING FORWARD
LISTENING TO THE #YOUTH
On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the 116 111 number, I warmly welcome Child Helpline International’s keenly awaited “Voices of Children and Young People in Europe.”

Children and young people are at the centre of Child Helpline International’s policies and programmes. In the “Looking forward” section of this publication, members of its European Youth Council have written movingly about the landmark issues facing youth today: children on the move, gender equality and abuse and violence, and how child helplines can actively support young people.

In 2016, in 25 EU Member States, child helplines answered more than three and a half million contacts (telephone calls and online chats being the preferred means of contact) from children and young people. Every child should know about and have access to the 116 111 dedicated child helplines and their specialist staff who are trained to work with children.

Child helplines are a valuable and integral part of our national child protection systems. They are there to support, protect and empower children over worries and questions, both big and small. Child helplines allow children to raise any concern they have in a safe, non-judgemental environment and to get more help if needed. Sometimes that help is urgent.

Child helplines have diversified in recent years to ensure children can reach them in the way that suits them best – not only by phone, but also online, and they continuously strive to ensure they are available when children need them.

As well as directly helping children, child helplines log contacts and work hard to collect data and map trends in issues raised. Their data tell us what issues are most on children’s minds and reflect what’s going on in the world around them. Data from child helplines help to inform policy design and implementation and remind all of us, if a reminder is still needed, of the need to prioritise care and support to children and young people as well as child and adolescent mental health services.

Child helplines listen – now so must we.

Margaret Tuite
European Commission Coordinator for the Rights of the Child
In line with Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we consider it essential to hear children and youth’s opinions on all matters affecting them. Our Youth Advisory Council has been instrumental in achieving this goal. Ever since its launch at the International Consultation of Child Helplines in 2014, the Youth has been an integral part of our organisation and all our activities. Young people can and want to speak on their own behalf and we give them the space to do it, amplifying their messages through our global network!

In this chapter our European #Youth members use the data received from child helplines to support their views on three essential topics: gender equality, the environment, and inclusive societies. These issues are of key relevance not only to our members but also to the discussions around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Our #Youth members – Sara, Lucija and Heba – share their ideas, suggest possible solutions, and advocate for the inclusion of youth in organisations that have children’s wellbeing at heart.

We have titled this chapter ‘Looking forward’ for a reason. We envision a world where children and youth’s opinions are always heard and acted upon; a global network of child helplines that values and promotes youth’s participation in their daily tasks. We still have a lot more to learn and a lot more to accomplish. This is a start. We hope you will appreciate it. Happy reading!

How can we end violence against children?

Before I became member of the Brave Phone family, the Croatian child helpline, I thought child maltreatment happens in rare, unfortunate occasions. It was only after learning what child maltreatment really means that I discovered that at least one person in every house in my neighbourhood had been maltreated.

When someone says “child abuse”, “violence”, or “maltreatment”, people might imagine a beaten-up kid sitting in a dark corner. While this is the sad reality for children suffering severe physical abuse, it is not the prototype of what child abuse looks like. A fist is not the only way to hurt people. Sometimes ignorance and lack of interest or constant exposure to aggression, insults and threats can hurt much more.

Abuse and violence against children are constantly present in most societies in different degrees. In Europe, while certain types of abuse and violence are less prominent, others are on the rise. It is all situational and dependent on the environment in which children grow up. Our data tells us that between 2014 and 2016, around 12 percent of all calls to child helplines in Europe have been on abuse and violence.

But a question comes to mind: even if by 2030 we fulfil all the SDGs relating to child rights, have we taken into account all forms of abuse and violence? What about emotional neglect? Or what about the recent but extremely relevant forms of abuse and violence occurring through technology? The graph below shows the increase in such cases reported to European child helplines over the past three years. Perhaps we wouldn’t have been aware of the issue if it weren’t for the voices of children who shout louder and louder that they do not always feel safe online.

We need to try and be ready for modern types of child abuse and violence because they are appearing quicker than we can imagine! If we think about it, the day before yesterday abuse was taking place on a playground; yesterday it was on a computer. Today it is on a mobile phone that is always with us, allowing easy access for negative feedback by pretty much anyone.

We need to be ready for whatever is coming tomorrow!

Online Abuse and Violence

In 2013 emotional abuse was more common than physical abuse (29.1 percent to 22.9 percent), according to the World Health Organisation. However, in 2016 we reported a change in trends – around 28 percent of abuse and violence contacts were about physical abuse, while around 22 percent were for emotional abuse. We need to keep in mind that a cruel word doesn’t leave a mark on your skin but it does make it harder to tell where “tough love” ends and maltreatment begins. What is more, it is difficult for children in such environments to know what a normal parent-child relationship is, so they do not seek help.

Thankfully, children’s rights in Europe are at a higher standard now than ever before. Most European countries have or are in the process of completely forbidding corporal punishment, and the attitude of people is changing accordingly. International developments support the urgency for these changes as well. The Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) and target 16.2 in particular show how “ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children” can be achieved only if we take into serious account the various forms of child maltreatment – emotional, physical or sexual.

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We need to be ready for whatever is coming tomorrow!
Did you know that the individuals who most often report sexual abuse and sexual exploitation are girls? This trend extends to a number of other reasons as well (see in graph below). It seems that girls are sometimes seen as “easy prey” for abuse, both online and offline. Whether young girls are forced to marry against their will or deprived of education so they do chores at home instead, it seems stereotypes accompany the female gender.

Even though girls are sadly overrepresented in most categories, boys are far from exempt from abuse and neglect. As the graph below shows, there are types of abuse where boys are just as much at risk. These numbers point to worrying trends in many European countries. We need to address these concerns!

We, young people, have an important role to play in changing the world for the better. Reading the data received from child helplines in 2016, all I could think was that our societies need to be more empathic. Working towards an improved concept of respecting and valuing both boys and girls equally, should be our common priority. Surely, some time will pass before a change in behaviour begins to take hold.

But it is still completely achievable by the next leaders of society, that is, by us, the youth. Together, being persistent and clear on what we want to achieve after us, we can increase gender equality and have girls equal to boys and vice versa. With all of us together, WE CAN!

Education and awareness raising are always good first steps. We need to teach both boys and girls the consequences of abuse and introduce them to good ways of preventing it. Child helplines play a major role in achieving this goal. The counsellors are a source of correct information that builds mutual respect. Maybe we will reach a day when there are almost no calls on gender inequality and instead children call to share something positive they did for the opposite gender.

WE REALIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR VOICE WHEN WE ARE SILENCED

MALALA YOUSAFZAI

But there is good news! The process towards gender equality has begun already. Our societies know the term but are still looking for the exact definition. As a young person, I dream we will be able to shape that definition, not through words but through our actions. I would love to see this as our common goal. We can work towards offering all children an environment of rights and equality!
The unknown journey: a young refugee’s story

Europe is my new home. My other home is where the war is – a war that robbed us of our safety, family and friends, education and daily lives. Day and night we were living through gunshots and things far worse. So we decided to move towards safety and hopefully a better future. These are the things I have come to appreciate so much in my new home, but the refugee crisis is ongoing and posing challenges for us all.

Ever since my arrival in the Netherlands, I have seen Europe’s efforts to manage the growing number of refugees, and refugee children in particular. According to UNICEF, nearly one in two hundred children in the world today is a refugee.

Of the over 100,000 children who arrived in Greece, Italy, Bulgaria and Spain in 2016, more than 34 percent have been unaccompanied or separated. The dangerous journeys they sometimes take on their own or with unrelated adults expose them to high risks of severe abuse and violence. Many of the children are unable to afford the fees charged by smugglers. As a result, sexual exploitation has become one of the most commonly detected forms of exploitation, followed by forced labour, accounting for 54 percent and 38 percent respectively.

War has forced children to grow up far faster than they should. Most of us have memories of bombs and sniper bullets, and we dream of leaving homes and friends behind in the attempt to escape. In many cases these traumas lead to psychological scars, depression and serious developmental issues that remain forever.

But even though we had to leave everything behind, we still have dreams and plans for a good future! With enough encouragement and opportunities for improved employability and self-sustainability, refugees can not only thrive but also enrich their host country through genuine work and dedication!

Since coming to the Netherlands, my experiences have helped me realise the real power and importance of my voice. My voice is the weapon for a better future and the opportunity to tell people that peace is the solution. As young people, we all have a role to play in restoring the voices of displaced children and defending their human rights. Even the simple things count – sign a petition, speak up and share everything good with the world! Forcibly displaced children need us all if they are to know a brighter future!

Child helplines in Europe are an important part of the solution. Refugee children should be able to speak up, share their worries and seek support. If they travel unaccompanied, talking to the counselor might be the only safe option to be heard and feel supported. Since 2014, members at Child Helpline International have been receiving an increasing number of calls relating to child migration issues. The most common reasons for calling within Europe in 2016 are shown above.

These numbers show that through child helplines, we are already taking steps to solve the issues. But we need to keep up the hard work and make the services of child helplines even more available to refugee children – in all camps and throughout Europe. Together, with enough support from our governments, we have the power to make a difference!

CHILDREN ON THE MOVE IN 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems with adjusting to a new environment</th>
<th>TOTAL CONTACTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refugee child (cross-border)</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internally displaced child (domestic)</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child trafficking</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child without status / undocumented</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary child migration</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,145</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender Equality

There is still a big need for raising awareness of gender equality. Even though girls are most often the victims of gender abuse and violence, boys are far from exempt. Young people should be at the forefront of fighting for equal societies for all children. How can youth participation help solve the issue, one might ask.

Starting at early ages, children should be educated and brought up in the spirit of gender equality. Such education is often better accepted if it comes from a peer – from someone who knows how children feel and what they are going through. We can promote gender equality in every society simply through leading by example: respecting everyone, regardless of background; allowing everyone to think, contribute and shine; and avoiding stereotyping our peers.

Youth can also organise “informal learning sessions” to discuss issues and solutions with peers. This would be a stimulating, safe environment to share that we can overcome anything, even if we sometimes feel down. Encouraging children and youth to call child helplines and seek support anonymously will be the best solution for children who do not want to share their issues openly. With such protection and efficiency, child helplines are great tools!

These are just some possible ways to show that when there is a will, there is a way! Big prerequisites or huge efforts are unnecessary because leading by example is all it takes!

Abuse and Violence

We have been witnessing a moderate increase of calls on online abuse and violence. Young people are more familiar with the online world – we are trend makers, knowing what appeals to us and what social norms are at play in various networks. So how about setting up Youth Advisory Councils with the power to give “approved by youth” awards to apps and new social networks? In this way we can guide our peers to the safe spaces of the online world.

Technology is one of the main platforms where we learn about the world and about right and wrong. Education through technology is increasing. It would be great if youth could connect with movie and ad companies and TV and radio broadcasters to influence them to include topics such as abuse and violence in their programmes!

In addition, children should be the first to know about laws concerning their rights. If a government bans corporal punishment, for example, children should be involved in creating the implementation agenda, informing their peers about the change, and educating and raising awareness in their communities.

It is okay to recognise that there are areas with room for improvement. Change doesn’t happen quickly but there is already so much for us to be proud of! We can easily see how many children dare to pick up the phone, dial 1116111 and report the abuse they are experiencing. The next step is to focus on the children we haven’t reached and promote child helplines to those who are not aware of their existence.

The importance of children’s voices cannot be overemphasised. Children perceive the world differently than grown-ups. The thirst for knowledge and desire to improve the world makes us, as young people, question social norms and redefine rules. Adults might sometimes be convinced that a change is impossible, while we always have an alternative path and inner strength to solve issues. Children and adults have different approaches, but the same goal – to create and live in happy and safe environments.

In order to achieve that, we need to work together. We mustn’t take the role of grown-ups – we have neither the skills nor the capacity to do that. And adults don’t know what it is like to be a young person in today’s world – the optimism, enthusiasm and faith that children inherently carry. While we cannot solve all challenges alone, we are certainly part of the solution! We should always be included and allowed to participate in topics that concern us.

The chapters we wrote on gender equality, abuse and violence, and child migration are examples of such inclusion that made us think, reflect and dream bigger! Below are some of the ideas we came up with. We hope they will encourage other young people to think out of the box and become active leaders in their communities.

Some ideas from Our #Youth

- Child helplines are a way for children to talk about issues they may feel uncomfortable sharing with others.
- Educating and involving children in creating the implementation agenda can help ensure that they are informed and engaged in the change process.
- Technology is a powerful tool for education and awareness-raising, and can be used to promote safe spaces online.
- Youth participation is crucial in achieving equal societies for all children, as young people are often the most knowledgeable about the world and its norms.
- It is important to recognize the areas where improvement is needed, as change may not happen quickly, but progress is being made.

Children on the move

Wars have been going on for years. A whole generation of children has grown up and lived most of their lives in a culture of violence. For them violence is life as usual. All over Europe local child helplines try to address this shock. They are safe spaces for children to talk through their experiences and start the process of reconciliation.

Providing refugee children with resources, support and education is essential for giving them a brighter future. Imagine the effects on a child when entering a new country unwillingly, without friends, family and their usual support. It is a shocking, long-lasting experience in anyone’s life! So young people play an important role in the social integration of these children. We can make them feel safe again through integration programmes, teaching them new skills and languages, or simply spending time with them. Rebuilding their self-esteem and exposing them to community events and educational classes are important things we can do.

But the reason refugees exist to begin with is a political and socio-economic one. So if young people want to make the problem disappear, we need to be proactive in changing public attitudes and demanding the same rights for every child.

Our voices can and do make a difference! This is a shared problem so the solution must come through our joint efforts. That is why we must seek equality in providing safe living conditions for each child in every country. We need to make sure there will be no war so children will not have to flee. This should be our priority!
DISCLAIMER

Child Helpline International’s work is firmly grounded in the principles and values enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including children’s right to privacy and protection from harm. To preserve the trust and confidence children and young people place in child helplines every day, any personal detail cited in case summaries has been altered and the child helpline name replaced with a more generic ‘child helpline’.

The regional overview in this publication, the foldable map and the country-specific data - accessible online - are based on the analysis of information received from 40 child helplines in the European region. These pieces of information are collected through Child Helpline International’s annual data questionnaire and point to the number and reason of contacts that child helplines received in 2016. The data presented and statements made do not capture the full scope of practices and policies of all countries and cases handled by child helplines and other child protection organisations at the national level. The exact data can be requested from Child Helpline International.

Some specifications on the data in this publication:

- Unless otherwise specified, the total number of answered/received/listened to contacts always include where the child helpline provided direct assistance or active listening, as well as silent, test, abusive and other non-counselling calls.

- Percentages have been rounded off to whole numbers and therefore do not always add up to hundred percent.

- Where the distribution of contacts per reason, sex of the child or communication method was not available, we substituted this information with data specific to the child helpline.

- Child helplines do not always report on the distribution of contacts per sex of the child. Among other reasons, this can be due to the fact that the child helpline does not collect this information or cannot share this confidential data. In both cases, we have highlighted where the information is missing.
We are the international network of child helplines.

A global collective impact organisation of 181 members from 147 countries (May 2017).

Every year child helplines around the world field millions of individual cries for help. Until our founding in 2003, these organisations did their great work in isolation, and with no access to one another. Now, we are working together every day to bring children’s voices to policy makers and influencers: we make sure the world listens to these voices.

And we listen to the listeners, our members, and help them to support one another.

**Every child has a voice.**
**No child should be left unheard.**

Scan the QR code to access the child helpline data of your country!