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ICTs and Sexual Exploitation of Children in Europe

INTRODUCTION

'Child pornography' is a negative social phenomenon directed against children who are a more vulnerable group of society due to their age, as they are still undergoing intellectual and moral development. It is also a global phenomenon just like cybercrime where the created material can be distributed anywhere in the world.

- With the advance of information technology, new methods of creating, acquiring and distributing child sexual exploitation material have begun to surface. The newest manifestation of this trend is the emergence of the so-called 'virtual pornography'.
- The technology is relatively cheap, easy to access and portable. It allows for storage of large amounts of material, which would be conspicuous if stored in hard copy.
- Cyberspace provides an inexpensive and anonymous arena for offering, procuring, distributing, transmitting and sharing indecent pictures and videos, and represents an easy and very cheap way to access or obtain child pornography.
- As a result of advances in digital technology and the proliferation of information and communi cation technologies (ICTs), new forms of crime have emerged, many of which, like "outing and trickery sharing", "repeated cyberstalking" or "snuff videos", may overlap with child pornography offenses (Váradi-Csema, 2013, pp. 14-16).

The aim of this chapter is to outline the characteristics of child pornography, including the proper definition of the phenomenon. Then the next chapter discusses how ICTs transformed the production and distribution of child pornographic materials and how modern technology can help in covering the tracks of perpetrators. The chapter also addresses the new phenomenon of 'virtual child pornography'. The last chapter is about the EU's response to these criminal behaviors and new developments. The chapter mainly focuses on addressing European answers and regional level supranational legislation. National regulations may appear as examples in the text but not in-depth, taking the limited space of this chapter into consideration.