

CHILD PROTECTION AND FINNISH HOTLINE'S ANNUAL REPORT 2024

In 2024, The Finnish Hotline Nettivihje received 8,615 reports related to child sexual abuse. Additionally, on the topic of child sexual abuse, 1,595 professionals were trained, 1,848 parents were informed at events organised for them, and hundreds of thousands of people were informed through campaigns and marketing. This was the 23rd year Nettivihje worked to prevent and combat child sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse is a massive global problem. In Europe, one in five children are victims of sexual abuse and only one in three of them report it (Council of Europe).

In 2023, the US based hotline called NCMEC received 36

During 2024,
Nettivihje worked
to have more than
490,000 likely illegal
or harmful images
and videos removed
from the internet.

million reports about suspected child sexual abuse or child sexual abuse material. In our report Grooming in the eyes of a child (2021), 62% of children said they had been contacted online by a person they either knew or suspected to be an adult or someone five years older than them. Of these children, 17% received messages with sexual content on a weekly basis, and 13% received nude photos from the perpetrators weekly.

The Finnish Hotline Nettivihje is part of the <u>Finnish Safer Internet Project (FISIC)</u> together with the National Audiovisual Institute and the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare. The FISIC project aims to create a better and safer digital environment for children.

Save the Children Finland is a member of the international network of hotlines, <u>INHOPE</u>, and the national representative of the global network, <u>ECPAT</u>. INHOPE coordinates the work of hotlines that aim to speed up the removal of child sexual abuse material from the internet. ECPAT is an international network that works to combat the sexual exploitation of children.

In 2024 Save the Children Finland started a new partnership with The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. As part of this new partnership, The Finnish Hotline Nettivihje launched a Finnish webpage with guidance for children and young people for the Take it Down service. Take it Down is for children and young people whose nude or other sexual images have either been distributed online or who fear that their images will be distributed online. The service is anonymous and allows users to prevent their sexually explicit images from being distributed. The service works with major technology platforms to search the web for images and remove them as efficiently as possible.

Take it Down takes into account the laws and societal conditions of different countries, which is why children worldwide can use the service. In 2024, Nettivihje created a webpage with an introduction to the service and guidance for its use in Finnish, including step-by-step instructions on how to use the service, an instructional video and a direct link to the service. The webpage in Finnish encourages young people to primarily report sexual abuse to the police or to Nettivihje. However, for many children and young people, making a report does not feel enough, and Take it Down provides children and young people with additional tools to manage what is often a distressing and frightening situation. It is an important tool to prevent sexual abuse for children and young people, and from 2024 it has been more accessible to Finnish-speaking children and young people.

Projects

THE FINNISH SAFER INTERNET PROJECT (FISIC)

The Finnish Safer Internet Project, FISIC, co-funded by the European Union, aims to promote media literacy and inclusion of children and young people and to increase their well-being and safety online. FISIC is a collaboration between three organisations: the National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI) coordinates the project, the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (MLL) runs the helpline and Save the Children Finland runs the hotline. All organisations are working to raise awareness of how to be safe online. Save the Children's Nettivihje raises awareness, in particular, on child sexual abuse and its prevention and combatting.

There are Safer Internet Centre projects all over Europe. The projects work together and share information through the <u>Better Internet for Kids portal</u>.

PROJECT ARACHNID

Project Arachnid is an innovative, victim-centric set of tools to combat the growing proliferation of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) on the internet. It is owned and operated by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection (C3P), which also trains all analysts using the system. Some of the advisors at Nettivihje offer their expertise in the analysis of CSAM in Project Arachnid. In 2024, Nettivihje analysed 617,570 images. Of these, 460,290 images were assessed as likely illegal and 26,947 images were assessed as harmful/abusive to children. This is a 39% increase in analysed images compared to 2023.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION AND EDUCATION PROJECT (CSAPE)

The CSAPE project (Child Sexual Abuse Prevention and Education) was a two-year collaboration among five European countries funded by the EU Internal Security Fund. The project ended at the end of 2024. Save the Children Finland coordinated the project and the other participating countries were Iceland (Barnaheill - Save the Children Island), Albania (Save the Children Albania), Bosnia-Herzegovina (Save the Children International, implementing country office Save the Children North Western Balkan) and Greece (KMOP, Social Action and Innovation Centre). The project produced evidence-based sexual education materials for professionals working with children, mainly focusing on sexual education for young children (5-11 years). Professionals working with young children were trained in sexual education and the prevention of child sexual abuse. In addition, information and a training package on young people who have a sexual interest in young children were produced for professionals

During the project, a total of 1,128 children received sexual education. Additionally, 3,453 professionals working with children and young people participated in the sexual education training sessions and in training dealing with young people who have a sexual interest in children. Once professionals had had time to apply the new knowledge gained from the training in their profession, more than 90% of the respondents to a feedback survey felt that the training had been useful for their work. Additionally, 275 people from around 25 countries attended the project's final seminar in Brussels, organised as a hybrid event.

FINNISH HOTLINE NETTIVIHJE

Nettivihje operates a hotline where anyone can report suspected incidents or material related to child sexual abuse. Trained advisors at Nettivihje will review all reports submitted to the hotline, assess the illegality of the material and activities, and forward the information to the appropriate authorities and other actors. This work is called hotline work.

Nettivihje takes reports on:

1. Anyone

- I. Child sexual abuse material, CSAM (can be reported anonymously).
- II. Grooming of a child for sexual purposes online.
- III. A nude image or video of a child that has been distributed online.
- IV. Child trafficking for sexual purposes.
- V. Sexual harassment of a child online.
- VI. Sexual harassment or sexual violence against a child offline. This can be reported on the form for young people.

Anvone can report suspected illegal activity. 5. Replying to the sender 3. Law enforcement When an email address is A notification of illegal provided, a reply is sent to activity is sent to a the person reporting national law enforcement the issue. agency. 2. Hotline Hotline analysts check the report. 4. Child welfare When the report contains sufficient information, a child welfare notification is submitted.

Image: The processing of a report related to an incident of child sexual abuse.

Nettivihje works in close cooperation with the National Bureau for Investigation (NBI) and the INHOPE network and its members, i.e. other hotlines. INHOPE has 55 member hotlines around the world. Having a comprehensive network means that when a report containing CSAM has been received, Nettivihje can forward the information to the country where the material is located. The hotline in the location country can then work to have the material removed from the internet.

In 2024, Nettivihje has been developing the automatisation of the hotline work with S3Group. Nettivihje aims to implement the new automated report processing system called SCARt in 2025. With the implementation of the system, Nettivihje intends to make the hotline work more efficient by decreasing the amount of manual labour. The aim is to expedite the processing of the reports and thus speed up the removal of child sexual abuse material online. The automatisation of the hotline work allows more time for additional proactive work, which furthers the removal of larger quantities of child sexual abuse material online. (For more information on proactive work, see page 12.)

INFORMATION ON THE REPORTS RECEIVED BY NETTIVIHJE IN 2024

In 2024, Nettivihje received 8,615 reports. One report is one web address or one description of suspected illegal activity. Anyone can send a report to Nettivihje using the online form. The number of reports received also contains reports that were sent to Nettivihje by hotlines in other countries. Other hotlines have assessed these reports to contain illegal material located in Finland, and such reports are sent to Nettivihje for further action.

There is much variation in the number of reports received per year. Before 2022, the yearly average was around 3,000 reports. In the last three years, the number of reports has multiplied compared to previous years.

Number of reports received by Nettivihje from 2015 to 2024

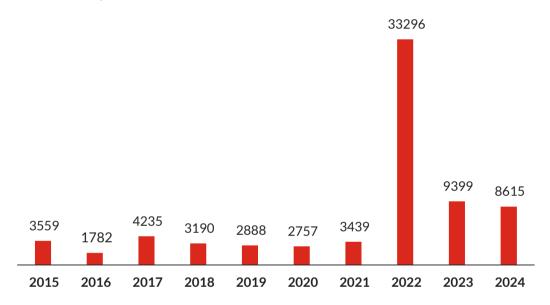


Image: Number of reports received by Nettivihje from 2015 to 2024.

In addition to the year-to-year variation, there are major differences in the number of reports from month to month. In 2024, the highest number of reports, around 60% of the total for the year, was processed in June and July.

Number of reports processed by Nettivihje by month in 2024

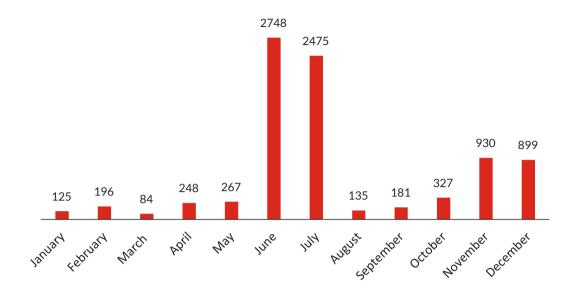


Image: Number of reports processed by Nettivihje by month in 2024.

In 2024, an exceptionally high portion of reports (64%, 5,248) contained child sexual abuse material. In 2023, the corresponding portion was 6% (549). One per cent of the reports contained a description of child sexual abuse activity, such as grooming. The same portion of reports contained material that sexualises a child. This material can be illegal in Finland. Around a quarter of the reports contained other material, such as material where age assessment was not possible or adult pornography. In one tenth of the reports, the material had been removed, the page was inaccessible, or it was spam.

Content of received reports (N=8615, n=8251)



Image: Content of the reports received by Nettivihje in 2024.

The majority of children in the assessed child sexual abuse material (around 85%) were under 14 years old. This is in line with the previous year's statistics. However, the portion of children under 3 years old was lower than in 2023: in 2024, less than 1% of images and videos had children under 3, compared to 7% in 2023. In 15% of the images and videos, the child was aged 14-17 years. This is in line with the 2023 statistics.

Age assessment is based on the physical development of the child in the image, such as signs of puberty. If puberty is advanced, assessing the age is challenging. Therefore, it is likely that the proportion of children aged 14-17 years in the child sexual abuse material may be higher than the statistics presented in this report.

Child sexual abuse material by age (N=5248, n=5235)

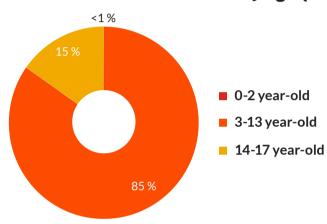


Image: Child sexual abuse material by age group in 2024.

Nettivihje classifies the child sexual abuse material also based on the sex of the child. Sex is defined by the physical characteristics of the child. If this cannot be done, the sex is classified as "not determined". These pictures or videos clearly show a child and sexual abuse against them, but the sex of the child cannot be determined from the material. If the material has both a boy and a girl in it, the sex is classified as 'both'.

In 2024, boys accounted for 7% of the images and videos. In 4% of the material there were only boys, which is a significantly smaller proportion than in 2023 (22%). As in previous years, girls made up a clear majority of the images and videos: 96% included girls and 93% were girls only. The sex could not be classified for less than 1% of the material.



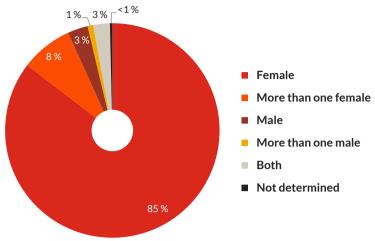


Image: Child sexual abuse material by sex in 2024.

Compared to reports received by Nettivihje in 2023, there has been a clear shift in the forms of abuse in child sexual abuse material in 2024. In 2023, more than half of the material contained penetration, whereas in 2024 this action was only accounted for in one-fifth of the material. In 2024, the most common forms of sexual abuse were a focus on the child's genital or anal area (43%) and sexual activity without an adult (35%). One per cent of the material included sexual activity with an adult and the same amount of material was assessed to have contained sadism or other cruelty. In 2023, 7% of the material contained sadism or other cruelty. However, due to the difference in the number of received reports, a larger quantity of material containing sadism or cruelty was analysed in 2024, than in 2023.

Child sexual abuse material by forms of sexual abuse (N=5248, n=5232)

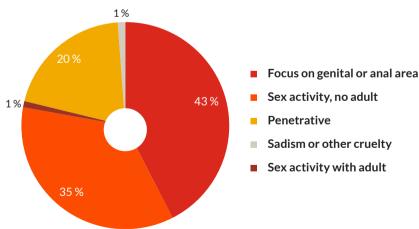


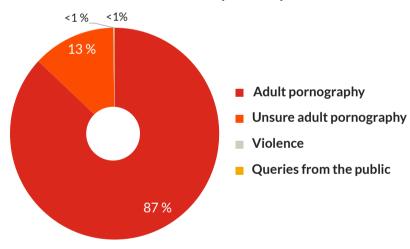
Image: Child sexual abuse material classified by form of sexual abuse in 2024.

Out of the child sexual abuse material analysed in 2024, 94% was so-called self-generated child sexual abuse material. This is, for example, a picture or video of a child doing sexual acts to themselves in front of a camera. The perpetrator is not visible in the picture or video, but they may be present via a phone or other device and directing the child to act in a certain way. The child's action may be driven by coercion, manipulation or extortion. The child may also be offered a reward for images or videos. The perpetrator records the video call (possibly without the child's knowledge) and distributes the material online. Sometimes this type of material is taken in consensual relationships among peers, but the material is accidentally leaked to outsiders or deliberately distributed by the recipient of the image.

Self-generated child sexual abuse material is assessed according to the same criteria as non-self-generated material. For an image or video to be considered child sexual abuse material, it must include a child and either a focus on the child's genital or anal area, sexual activity, penetration, sadism or other

The category "other material" contains reports where age assessment was impossible. In 2023, Nettivihje introduced the category "unsure adult pornography". These are images and videos where there were no sufficient grounds to assess the age of the person as under 18, but it took a long time for the advisor to come to that conclusion. The category is, therefore, intended to highlight the challenge of age assessment, particularly when it comes to older children whose puberty is further along. In the first year, 75 reports were classified to fall into this category. In 2024, there were 237 such reports.

Content of other material (N=1977)



Kuva: Content of the category "other material" in 2024.

In addition to reports containing material, Nettivihje receives reports about suspected illegal activities. These reports include, for example, descriptions of grooming, sextortion and the distribution of a child's nude image. In total, 74 reports in 2024 contained a description of activities that were assessed to be illegal and child sexual abuse. This was a decrease from previous years. Nettivihje aims to raise awareness of the hotline as a reporting tool, particularly among children and young people (for more information on awareness raising, see page 17.)

Reports concerning child sexual abuse activities 2021-2024

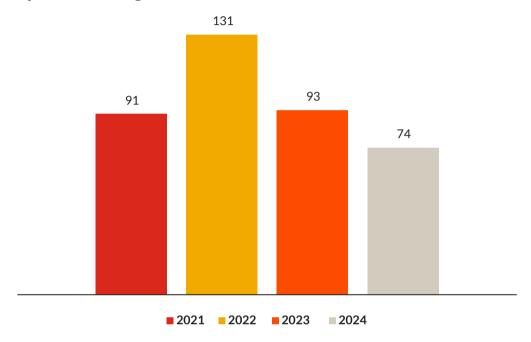


Image: Reports containing descriptions of child sexual abuse activities in 2021-2024.

PROACTIVE WORK IN 2024

Nettivihje does proactive work as part of the hotline work. In proactive work, Nettivihje further processes and assesses web addresses received via the reporting form, which have initially been assessed to contain illegal or potentially illegal material. Proactive work is carried out when there are no new reports waiting to be processed.

Web addresses sent via the reporting form can lead to, for example, hundreds of illegal images and links to other similar websites. Nettivihje can continue to analyse the website until all material on the site or linked to the site has been passed on to the appropriate actors, such as authorities and hotlines in other countries. The aim is to facilitate the rapid removal of more child sexual abuse material from the internet.

Nettivihje began proactive work in 2022. During that year, Nettivihje found 369 web addresses or images that were assessed as illegal. In 2023, the corresponding number was 13,185. In 2024, through proactive work, 4,185 web addresses or images assessed as illegal were found. In proactive work, 75% of the material analysed was child sexual abuse material. Material that sexualises a child and that can be illegal in Finland was 24%. One percent was other material, such as computer-generated child sexual abuse material.

Content of proactive work (N=4185)

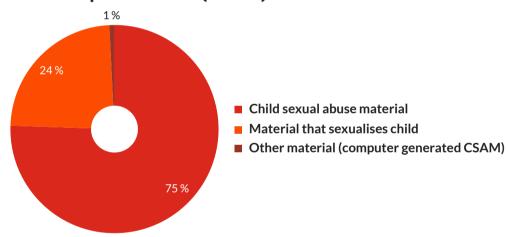


Image: The content of proactive work in 2024.

In the child sexual abuse material analysed through proactive work, children were mostly under 14 years old. 21% of the children were estimated to be between 14 and 17 years old. The majority of children were girls (97% of the pictures or videos had girls). Boys were in just over 4% of the pictures or videos.

Proactive work's child sexual abuse material by age (N=3161, n=3157)

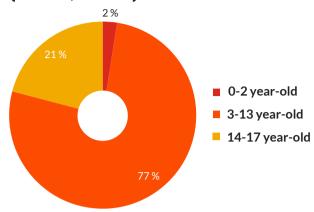


Image: Child sexual abuse material found through proactive work by age group in 2024.

Proactive work's child sexual abuse material by sex (N=3161, n=3137)

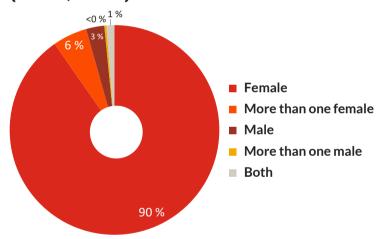


Image: Child sexual abuse material found through proactive work by sex in 2024.

In the child sexual abuse material analysed through proactive work, the most common form of sexual abuse was a focus on the child's genital or anal area (55%). Penetration was present in 23% of the material and sexual activity without an adult was seen in 15%. Sexual activity with an adult was in 5%, and sadism or other cruelty was in 2% of the material. For example, compared to the reports received by Nettivihje in 2024, sexual activity with an adult was in a higher proportion of the material analysed through proactive work, and sexual activity without an adult in a lower proportion.

Proactive work's child sexual abuse material by forms of sexual abuse (N=3161, n=3148)

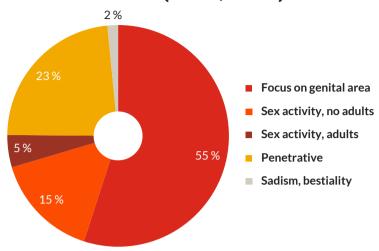


Image: Child sexual abuse material found through proactive work classified by form of sexual abuse in 2024.

Universal Classification Schema

Tackling child sexual abuse material is a demanding task, where cross-border cooperation and information sharing between different sectors and stakeholders is essential to be effective. The development of the Universal Classification Schema to classify child sexual abuse material is an essential step towards a global solution. The Universal Classification Schema will provide experts, law enforcement agencies and content moderators with a useful tool to classify child sexual abuse material in a consistent manner and to share data and intelligence more effectively.

In 2024, the first training on the Universal Classification Schema was held by **Scott Anderson** and **Katarzyna Nyczka**, the creators of the Schema. The first training was attended by around 50 people, including hotline analysts, national law enforcement agencies and INTERPOL criminal intelligence officers. Two analysts from Nettivihje attended the training.

In addition, an international Universal Classification Schema Expert Council has been set up and started its work in July. Nettivihje's analyst **Mikko Ahtila** was elected to join the Council as an expert. The Council's task is to ensure the continued accuracy and relevance of the Schema. One of the tasks of the Council was to create a third version of the Schema, taking into account feedback from the trainings as well as the latest technological advances and legislative changes. The aim of all this is to promote the rapid removal of child sexual abuse material from the internet.

ADVOCACY

Nettivihje advocates to ensure legislation, the implementation of laws, and services better considers child sexual abuse. In 2024, advocacy focused in particular on

- Seeking a clear interpretation of the criminal code as to whether Nettivihje can download
 potentially illegal material temporarily, in order to promote the removal of the material from
 the internet. This was an advocacy success in 2024, as it became possible for Nettivihje to
 download material.
- National legislation on artificial intelligence and the national implementation of EU legislation.
- The proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse (CSA Regulation).

The national implementation of the EU AI Act is taking place in several European countries. Save the Children Finland highlighted in its statement that it is essential that states and national legislators take into account the impact of AI on children when implementing the EU AI Act in national legislation. It is also essential that adequate resources are allocated to the implementation of the legislation. Clear guidance on how to assess and enforce the use of AI from a child rights perspective is needed to ensure children's safety.

Save the Children Finland and Nettivihje have focused their AI-related advocacy on national decision-makers and on influencing the implementation of legislation. The aim has been to start a public discussion through various blogs, opinion pieces and press releases.

Another key objective has been to influence other AI legislation. Save the Children Finland made statements related to two national government legislation proposals concerning AI. The first of these was a draft government proposal on legislation implementing the AI Act. A key point in this statement was that children's rights to privacy and related issues, as well as other child rights, should be taken into account in the new legislation. In the monitoring and risk assessment of AI systems, a key guiding consideration should be the child impact assessment.

The second statement was on AI in early childhood education and education - legislation and recommendations. A key aspect of the statement was that the right of the child to protection should be taken into account. AI systems enable violence against children in a completely new and extensive way. Explosive growth in the amount of AI-generated child sexual abuse material is already seen globally. In Finland, children themselves can be seen to use AI applications in novel ways to bully others. Additionally, children are also particularly vulnerable to propaganda produced with deep-fake technology by radicalised extremist groups. It is important for the recommendations to take into account the safety skill education for children so that they learn to use AI responsibly and safely.

In 2024, the EU was aiming to pass the CSA Regulation. The aim of the legislation is to create a clear legal framework to prevent and combat child sexual abuse online. To promote the adoption of the regulation, Nettivihje, as a representative of Save the Children Finland, participated in several network statements and engaged in direct advocacy towards national committees and members of the European Parliament. Meetings with decision-makers on the Regulation were held both in Finland and in Brussels.



Photo: In October, we met Finnish representatives in the European Parliament to discuss child sexual abuse and combatting it in the digital environment. In the image, Save the Children Finland's Senior Child Rights and Advocacy Advisor Tiina-Maria Levamo (left), Head of Advocacy Veli Liikanen and Nettivihje Advisors Emma Pösö and Maarit Mustonen (right).

Additionally, Save the Children Finland participated in the national public debate on the CSA Regulation, with the aim of raising awareness among stakeholders and citizens alike. Although Finland's final position on the CSA Regulation was negative for privacy-related reasons, Save the Children Finland managed to influence the state's position. Examples of this are that the various parliamentary committees are dedicated to promoting child rights online and to safeguard existing protection measures in the future.

The EU Digital Services Act (DSA) regulates online intermediaries and platforms. Its main objective is to prevent illegal and harmful activities online and to combat the spread of disinformation. It ensures user safety, protects fundamental rights and creates a fair and open online platform environment. The DSA connects integrally to national trusted flaggers.

Nettivihje participated in several national networks and working groups. Nettivihje represented Save the Children Finland in, among others, the NGO working group of the Committee for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (NAPE JÄTY), the Steering Group for the Prevention of Violence against Children (The Non-Violent Childhood), The Finnish Civil Society Platform against Trafficking in Human Beings (IKV Platform), the capital area network SeriE, the national Seri network, the Sexual Rights Network and the Safe Environment Network.

In June, the Finnish Transport and Communications Agency (Traficom) granted Save the Children Finland's Nettivihje the status of a trusted flagger.

Trusted flaggers play an important role in promoting the objectives of the DSA, namely a safer and more trustworthy online environment. They have specific rights and responsibilities on online platforms, such as social media services. Online platforms must give priority to reports from trusted flaggers, which will contribute to a faster and more effective response to illegal content.

AWARENESS RAISING

Nettivihje aims to prevent child sexual abuse by producing information and by training professionals working with children. Information is also produced and disseminated to children and young people, their guardians, and other adults. Raising awareness of child sexual abuse promotes the safer use of the internet and social media. It also accelerates intervening in criminal activities and increases people's understanding of child rights.

In 2024, Nettivihje trained 1,595 professionals and future professionals working with children and young people. Professionals were given information on child sexual abuse, with a focus on online abuse, and on preventing and combating child sexual abuse. The effectiveness of the training sessions was demonstrated by the feedback: more than 80% of the respondents to the feedback survey said that they could use the information from the training in their work.

Parents' evenings were organised throughout the year, with the online parents' evenings attracting a large number of participants. In total, 1,848 parents were reached during the year. In particular, the online parents' evening, organised in partnership with Save the Children Finland's project Kippari, was popular, with 1,224 parents in attendance.

The November seminar "What happens now?" - an open discussion on the work of the authorities in cases of sexual offences against children, was a success both online and in person. In total, there were 331 participants. The seminar gave participants an overview of what different authorities and support providers do in situations of child sexual abuse. The presentations covered topics such as the criminal justice process from the victim's perspective, supporting a child or young person who has experienced abuse, and recovery from abuse. Representatives of the police and child welfare services also spoke at the event.



Image: Nettivihje Development Manager **Tanja Simola** was on Ylen aamu to discuss what children and their parents should know about sexual offences on social media.

In 2024, Nettivihje promoted its hotline to young people and adults. In total, the online campaigns received around 900,000 views. In addition, an estimated 50,000 people in Turku were reached by informative stickers displayed on buses. All this visibility aimed to make sure that children and adults know that they can safely report child sexual abuse to Nettivihje. In September, Nettivihje also took part in a joint campaign, *Identify, learn, report!*, led by the National Police Board of Finland. The objective was to raise awareness, especially among secondary school pupils, of crimes committed online, how to recognise them, how to report them and how to prevent them.



Image: Nettivihje's 2024 bus advertisement.

In 2024, Nettivihje also actively worked with the media on the issue of child sexual abuse, appearing on morning TV shows and giving interviews to newspapers. Topical issues included the dangers children face on digital devices during the holidays and raising the child rights aspects of the CSA Regulation in the public debate.

During Children's Rights Week, Nettivihje published a guide for the media 'WORDS CREATE REALITY - Guidelines for reporting on child sexual abuse' to help journalists be more successful in their work when reporting on child sexual abuse. As the topic is sensitive and contains challenging terms, the guide provides concrete advice on how to discuss child sexual abuse in the media in a way that respects child rights.

To reach its key target groups, throughout the year Nettivihje produced content for its social media channels on Instagram and X, focusing on TikTok content to reach young people. In 2024, Nettivihje also launched a LinkedIn account. A total of around 380 posts were made on these social media channels during the year. In addition, Nettivihje was present on Save the Children Finland's social media channels on Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn, reaching audiences through these channels as well.

In cooperation with:















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LAYOUT: ATTE NYKÄNEN / SAVE THE CHILDREN

Save the Children is the world's leading independent children's organization, creating both immediate and lasting changes in children's lives. Together, we secure every child's right to life, protection, education, and participation in Finland and around the world.

Because children's future starts now.

savethechildren.fi

