

NEWSLETTER

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HEROES

Novel Strategies to Fight Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Crimes and Protect their Victims

The number of people, including children, falling victim to human trafficking (THB) and child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSA/CSE) around the world continues to grow, despite increased international attention and resources. In Europe, sexually exploited women and girls make up the majority of human trafficking victims. Moreover, assistance to victims is often limited by the lack of coordination among stakeholders. In this context, the EU-funded HEROES project is exploring how to use the latest technological advances and new strategies to prevent and combat CSA/CSE and human trafficking, investigate the crimes and better protect victims. It is developing an ambitious, interdisciplinary, international, and victim-centered approach. Its aim is to establish a coordinated contribution with law enforcement agencies to address the specific needs of victims and provide protection.

4.99M €
Budget

17
Countries

24
Partners

36
Months



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101021801.

MORE INFO

What is HEROES?

HEROES project's strategies and solutions focus on three fundamental pillars to fight against THB and CSA/CSE crimes

- **Prevention:** HEROES is addressing prevention through a mixed approach of technology and social action. To this end, HEROES will develop free open source applications that will help reduce the risk of becoming victims of THB and increase the security with which children communicate through social networks.
- **Investigation:** The HEROES project is developing technological tools that cover the most important needs of LEAs: data gathering and analysis while embracing the very technical, ethical and legal challenges unique to fighting THB and CSA/CSE crimes.
- **Victim Assistance:** By focusing on prevention and developing technological tools for more effective investigations, HEROES project will positively impact victim assistance at four main levels: Reducing revictimisation, specialised training and support, promoting victim support strategies focused and to promote better procedures and outcomes in victims assistance.



HEROES will develop relevant contributions addressing the challenges of the "SU- FCT01- 2018-2019-2020" call

The three pillars proposed to combat THB, and CSA/CSE is concentrating all efforts to provide solutions that integrate social, ethical, legal and scientific aspects. These efforts are aimed at supporting the victims and their environment but are also relating to specific studies aimed at offenders and underlying problems. LEAs, Multi-Stakeholders and society will benefit from a set of methodological, strategic and technological tools that comply with the European Union guidelines, provide good practices for victim statement taking and support pattern recognition of THB and CSAM/CSEM crimes using artificial intelligence.



HEROES First Promotional Video

Trafficking in human beings (THB) and child sexual abuse and exploitation (CSA/CSE) are execrable crimes that threaten our society. HEROES Project proposes a threefold approach to these threats based on Prevention, Investigation and Victim Assistance. We believe in the combination of Technology with Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) to develop comprehensive solutions that address all the needs of the main actors in the fight against THB and CSA/CSE.

HEROES will deliver tools for automatic identification & classification of CSAM/CSEM, a mobile Anti-Grooming app detecting potential grooming attempts, new OSINT tools to identify and trace CSAM/CSEM in the dark web, AI models that identify fake jobs offers and a file context analysis tool for seized devices.

In terms of SSH, the project expects to contribute with recommendations for the harmonization of the related legal frameworks, a study on the psychological, social and economical factors that may derive into these type of crimes, an integral prevention program aimed at educating potential victims, and finally, the project is analyzing the treatment barriers for THB & CSA/CSE victims proposing guidelines to avoid their re-victimization during the investigation and when testifying in Court.

THB and CSA/CSE are global crimes that have to be globally addressed, in our case with a consortium composed by organizations from Europe, America and Asia.

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HEROES



Project Progress

Manual for Early Identification of Potential Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings, Child Sexual Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation



The Manual has been developed by the project partners and compiled by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), and aims to serve as a practical tool for early identification of potential victims of THB and CSA/E. The Manual aims to support the work of frontline responders and other relevant practitioners (law enforcement agents, labour inspectors, non-governmental organisations, health, and education professionals, etc.), who, during their daily work, might detect potential and actual victims of THB and/or CSA/E, and refer them to the adequate support services.

The Manual provides legal definitions of the THB and CSA/E phenomena, as well as examples of existing tools (indicators) for early identification that exist at the international and national levels.

Furthermore, the Manual contains sets of tailored, sector-specific indicators for early identification of potential THB and CSA/E victims in four selected countries: Bangladesh, Colombia, Spain and the United Kingdom (UK).

Design an online THB and CSA/CSE prevention programs and to provide stakeholders with resources for prevention and response to neglect, CSA/CSE signals in child



This task is led by International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) partners, aims to create an educational Guide to support prevention for CSA / CSE online, focused on the general public, law enforcement, parents and educators. This Guide will build capacity of key stakeholders to better detect and prevent online crimes against children and educate on the appropriate terminology for each type of conduct related to these crimes. The submitted deliverable explains the progress done thus far and presents the Outline and the Creative Brief developed for the Guide.

Design enhanced training curricula on recognizing, intervening, and preventing various forms of THB and sexual violence including abuse, assault, online solicitation, production and distribution of and CSAM/CSEM



The aim of these curricula is to propose courses, e-learning on demand and webinars to strengthen the response capacities of the relevant authorities and to contribute to sustainable training capabilities through ToT. Relevant professionals and stakeholders can reach out to ICMEC to access any of the listed training.

Test Cases Implementation and Validation



APAV is the leader of this work package, for which the main objective is to validate the HEROES tools and outcomes through a number of pilot-cases to be conducted at the level of LEAS from the EU and Latin-America, whom will pilot the technologies developed in real environment. WP9 provides the opportunity for LEAs to obtain practical experience with the tools developed and their ability to use such systems effectively

To achieve this, the validation plan is currently being developed, with considerations about the necessary requirements for the pilot phase and with contributions for their evaluation phase.

This validation plan will be subsequently reviewed by the other consortium partners and should guide the remaining tasks of this workpackage.

Child rights promotion and protection: awareness-raising, education and information



The Centre for Women and Children Studies is the lead of Task 5.6 of the HEROES project which is related to child rights promotion and protection and the most effective way is through awareness raising, educating and engaging civil society, teachers, parents, children and youth groups, social workers, local leaders, police officials and media groups. In this context, awareness-raising campaigns on the promotion and protection of children was launched as the social media campaign online entitled Red Heart Campaign to Promote Child Rights on 30 July 2022 which happened to be the World Day against Trafficking in Persons with four guest speakers and being attended by 59 participants from Bangladesh and abroad.

What Happened in the Past Months?

Review of the first year of the project December 8, 2022

The first annual review of the project was held in Brussels, Belgium, to evaluate the progress made during the first year of implementation and to receive valuable recommendations from the peer reviewers. These recommendations are being considered and the necessary steps are being taken to integrate them into the future development of the project. With a joint approach and continued dedication, the project is well on its way to making a significant difference in the fight against the crimes of child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation and human trafficking.



CERIS FCT Workshop: Europol's new role in Horizon Europe March 14, 2023

Our partners from UCM and KEMEA were representing the HEROES project at the CERIS FCT Workshop focused on the new role of Europol in Horizon Europe, which aimed to bring together representatives from Europol and ongoing EU-funded research projects related to the fight against crime and terrorism.



HEROES in the carnival of Barranquilla February 15, 2023

As part of the HEROES project, the members of the Renacer Foundation were present at the Carnival of Barranquilla 2023, the most important festival in Colombia, with the strategy "Barranquilla, Protective Gate for Children and Adolescents", to prevent human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.

CERIS FCT WORKSHOP: Spotlight on the fight against Child Sexual Abuse February 21, 2023

The UCM, ATHENA Research and Innovation Center, VUB, ICMPD and KEMEA were present at the CERIS FCT workshop which brought together professionals, policy makers and researchers to discuss measures to protect children from child sexual abuse.



CERIS workshop on Artificial Intelligence for security purposes, maximising benefits and reducing risks March 23, 2023

TRILATERAL and UNIKENT partners were at the workshop discussing and exploring how to use AI tools for security purposes, while ensuring that such use remains reliable.

RED HEART CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE AND PROTECT CHILD RIGHTS

Implemented by: Centre for Women and Children Studies (CWCS)



The mission of the campaign is committed to promote child rights and protect children from sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking.

Moreover, the vision is to have a world free from child sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking where children can grow up happy, healthy and safe.

We have developed #SaveFACE4Children to maximize the visibility of Red Heart Campaign to Promote Child Rights to save abused, exploited and trafficked children and badges were printed.

Our campaign news was shared in various seminars, workshops, expert meetings, conferences, events and interaction with civil society, academia, researchers and other relevant persons.

CWCS has called upon the expertise of the Consortium lead and partners for presenting a brief of the HEROES project and issue of child abuse and exploitation in these stakeholder meetings.



To carry forward the campaign, relevant stakeholders for the dissemination of the relevant information were considered with whom meetings will be held to promote child rights of sexually abused, exploited and trafficked children. About six Stakeholder Meetings were held with international NGOs, national NGOs, young men and women, students and faculty members of East West University, social workers, parents and teachers, and lastly with grassroots NGOs and CBOs who are working with child rights issues throughout Bangladesh, especially at the rural areas.



Participants who attended the above meetings shared their experiences, identified issues and challenges related to prevention of child sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking, access to child protection for victims, and reintegration of child victims.



UPCOMING EVENTS



HEROES

CONSORTIUM MEETING

Organiser: APAV.

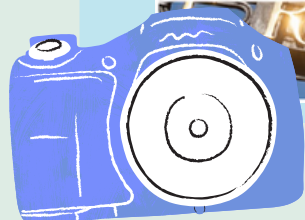
Topic: HEROES consortium meeting to review progress in the development of the work packages.



Lisbon, Portugal



26 - 28 June 2023.



20TH IMISCOE

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Organiser: Centre of Migration Research (CMR), University of Warsaw Centre of Excellence in Social Sciences (CESS), University of Warsaw

Topic: Migrations and Inequalities. In search of answers and solutions.



Warsaw, Poland.



3-6 July 2023

HEROES Consortium



The HEROES consortium consists of 24 partners located in 17 countries (11 EU countries, 1 associated country, and 5 third countries). The consortium is made up of partners with diverse affiliations: 3 universities, 2 small and medium enterprises, 3 research and technology organisations, 6 law enforcement agencies, 1 international organisation, 8 NGOs, and 1 government organisation. The HEROES' consortium combines the expertise of psychologists, sociologists, lawyers, social workers, health workers, computer developers and experts in computer security and forensics, from all over the world with one goal: to fight against the crimes and help victims of human trafficking, child sexual abuse and exploitation.

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Did you know that you can be among the first ones to receive these newsletters?

Sign-up for the Newsletter here:

The sign-up form can be found from the project's official website: <https://heroes-fct.eu>.



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