



# Awareness of the 116 111 child helpline number

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A report on the findings of an evaluation in five  
European countries

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## Executive summary

- ◆ This report presents the findings of an evaluation, investigating the awareness of the child helpline number 116 111 and the existence of child helpline services in five European countries: Greece, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden. The evaluation, commissioned by Child Helpline International, was undertaken by the University of Suffolk between May and July 2017.
- ◆ According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), children have the right to an adequate standard of living (Article 27), to health and healthcare (Article 24) and to education (Article 28); that governments must do all that they can to make sure that children can enjoy their rights (Article 4), without discrimination (Article 2); that they be protected from violence abuse and neglect (Article 19) and from sexual exploitation (Article 34) and other forms of exploitation (Article 36); that they have a right to juvenile justice and the right to legal assistance (Article 40); to information from the media (article 17) and that they have a right to be listened to and that their views should be respected (Article 12).
- ◆ The EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child, presented in 2011, reaffirms the strong commitment of all EU institutions, and of all EU member states, to promoting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of the child in all relevant EU policies. In 2007, The European Commission Decision 2007/116/EC established the 116 111 European harmonised number for child helplines. The assignment and activation of this number is now established in the majority of EU member states.
- ◆ Child helplines provide a valuable and much needed service to children around the world. In 2016, the five helplines who participated in this evaluation had responded to 117,615 children and young people.
- ◆ The aim of the evaluation was to explore how aware people were of child helpline services' existence, specifically, the awareness of the regionally harmonised number 116 111 in five European countries: Greece, Portugal, Sweden, Romania and Slovakia. 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 adopted the use of an online survey for European stakeholders.
- ◆ As of May 2017 there are currently 35 members of Child Helpline International in 28 EU member states of which 24 operate the 116 111 number. The five countries who participated in the evaluation volunteered to take part and were chosen for diversity of maturity, size and geographic location in Europe. This report additionally outlines the key characteristics of each helpline through an analysis of the operational data provided by the helplines to inform the evaluation.
- ◆ The results of the online survey found that 23% of the 706 young people aged up to 25 years who responded to our questionnaire reported that they recognised and knew what the 116 111 child helpline number stood for and 52% were aware of the existence of child helplines, even if they did not recognise the 116 111 number. 20% of the 1,781 adults who responded to the survey reported that they recognised and knew what the 116 111 child helpline number stood for. All European 15 stakeholders were aware of child helplines, with 60% of them recognising the 116 111 number. Of the 38 national stakeholders who agreed to participate only 2 (5%)

were not aware of child helplines operation in their countries, while 14 (37%) were aware of the 116 111 number.

- ◆ 16% of the young people who took part in the survey and eight per cent of adults responded that they had become aware within the last year of the 116 111 number and the services they provide. Six of the 15 European stakeholders (40%) and six of the 38 national stakeholders (16%) who took part in the survey reported that their awareness of the services provided by 116 111 child helplines had also increased in the last year.
- ◆ The reasons for children and young people contacting child helplines varies considerably from country to country, but the main reason for contacting the helplines in 2016 was mental health (24,405 records). Other main reasons were family relationships (15,040 records); peer relationships (10,526 records); school related issues (6,838 records); bullying (5,192 records) as well as sexuality and sexual awareness (5,069 records).
- ◆ Ensuring that children are aware of the 116 111 number and know that they can contact the helpline for confidential support and advice is essential.

## Introduction

### 1.1. Context

Children all over the world seek support on child helplines for the serious and often pressing matters they face. Abuse and violence, mental health issues, peer relations, sexuality and family matters are all subjects that are frequently discussed on child helplines. Staff at child helplines frequently discuss children's matters concerning physical health, substance use and, albeit less frequently, commercial exploitation, HIV/AIDS and discrimination. A number of the different problems, as distinguished by child helplines, are encountered by these psychological services for youth in every part of the world. (Fukkink et al., 2016: 514).

Child Helpline International was formed in 2003 when the first global meeting of child helplines was held in The Netherlands. 49 child helplines initially combined to form Child Helpline International. The promotion and protection of children's rights are at the centre of their work.

The European Union (EU) in its founding Treaty (Art.3) commits to promoting and protecting the rights of the child. All EU internal policies, and its external relations, are based on the full respect and promotion of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 12 of the UNCRC lays out the child's right to be heard. Child helplines fulfil this right by giving children a voice, involving them in decision-making, empowering them to develop their own solutions to their problems, as well as being aware of their rights and actively shaping their own lives. Accordingly, Child Helpline International refers to the UNCRC in its founding document.

The EU Agenda on the Rights of the Child COM[2011]60, defines a comprehensive framework to support child rights in and outside Europe, seeking a comprehensive and multi-stakeholder approach and for stronger children participation. By strengthening child helplines and their role in child protection systems and by stimulating new partnerships with international and national actors, Child Helpline International contributes to building a safer environment for children where their needs are respected and fulfilled.

Following the Lisbon Treaty coming into force in 2009, the fundamental rights charter has had the same legal value as the European Union treaties. Hence, the charter forms part of the EU's constitutional basis, and gives the EU its own tool to promote children's rights. Article 24 of the charter spells out the rights of the child with specific mention of the child's best interests and their right to freedom of expression.

Article 3 of the UNCRC maintains that:

States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative matters.

Child helplines provide valuable support and advice to children and young people across the globe and are part of a system to protect children from harm. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a child protection system is "the set of laws, policies, regulations and services needed across all sectors – especially social welfare, education, health, security and justice – to support prevention and response to protection-related

risks” (UNICEF, 2008). The UNCRC, as well as enshrining children’s rights to protection, also emphasise children’s rights for participation, to be listened to and to be heard.

The European Forum on the Rights of the Child looked at the role of integrated child protection systems with a view to developing EU guidance for member states. Accordingly, the Reflection Paper of the 9th Forum on the Rights of the Child, identifying the 10 common principles of national protection systems in EU member states, explicitly mentions child helplines as child-sensitive and accessible complaint and reporting mechanisms that should be integrated in national child protection systems.

Regulation (EU) No 1381/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union sets out clear goals for protecting child’s rights in the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme for the period 2014 to 2020, focusing on promoting the rights of the child and protecting children from harm and violence. By supporting the work of child helplines in Europe, Child Helpline International supports the advancement of children’s rights by providing an anonymous, unbiased, professional and accessible service to children seeking any kind of assistance.

Child Helpline International (Online) now has a worldwide network of more than 180 child helplines and is part of an international collective of civil society and governmental organisations that listen to children every day. Child helplines in 24 European Union (EU) member states, two EU Candidate States and two non-EU member states are using the regionally-harmonised number 116 111.

116 is a range of easy-to-remember and free-of-charge phone numbers to assist children and adults in need across Europe. The European Commission reserved five short numbers with single format 116 + 3 digits for helplines that should be accessible to everyone in Europe. The number 116 111 is specifically for children who seek assistance and need someone to talk to. The service helps children in need of care and protection and links them to the appropriate services and resources, providing children with an opportunity to express their concerns and talk about issues directly affecting them<sup>1</sup>.

Based on a study developed by Child Helpline International, *“(t)he importance of child helplines has been recognised in a number of European policy documents and measures. For instance, the European Commission identified child helplines as services of social value and reserved the regionally harmonised number 116 111 for child helplines, and the council of Europe emphasised the role of child helplines in protecting children from violence”* (Child Helpline International, 2015:2).

In 2015, Child Helpline International was identified as a strategic partner in strengthening the role of child helplines in EU member states and this entered into a three-year Framework Partnership Agreement with DG Justice of the European Commission. The Framework Partnership Agreement 2015-2017 focused on three main objectives:

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/116-helplines>

1. to raise awareness of the 116 111 regionally-harmonised number in all EU member states;
2. to strengthen child protection systems in EU member states;
3. and to strengthen child helplines in EU member states.

In order for the helplines to provide help, advice and support to children and young people effectively, it is essential that children and young people are actually aware of the 116 111 number and the services that the helplines can offer. Child Helpline International, therefore, commissioned an evaluation of the awareness of child helplines – especially the awareness of the 116 111 number (as outlined in Objective 1 above) – in April 2017.

The University of Suffolk undertook this evaluation over a twelve-week period to explore the awareness of child helplines in five European countries – Romania, Portugal, Sweden, Slovakia and Greece. In order to ascertain the level of public and stakeholder awareness in each participating country, the evaluation adopted the use of anonymous online surveys in each nation and, as helplines collect monitoring data on who used their services (Hepburn *et al.*, 2014) the operational data supplied by the helplines provided contextual information on each participating country's helpline.

This research provides evidence of the awareness that children and young people have of the helpline and the harmonised 116 111 number, and the public's awareness in general, as well as that of national and European stakeholders. It also, drawing on data supplied by the five helplines, outlines the numbers of contacts the five participating countries had from children and young people in 2016 and the reasons why children and young people contacted the helplines.

## 1.2. This report

This report presents the main findings of the evaluation undertaken in June – July 2017 by the University of Suffolk, UK. The report is structured into four sections:

*Section 1* – outlines the evaluation itself, the aims and objectives of the evaluation, the methodological approach adopted, and some of the study's limitations.

*Section 2* – provides a contextual background to the evaluation. It considers previous research on helplines, focusing specifically on child helplines. An outline of the purpose, use and services offered by the helplines is also provided in this section, to highlight the work that the helplines do and Child Helpline International's specific role in supporting their work.

*Section 3* – presents the main findings of the evaluation overall. It considers the awareness of the helplines in relation to the four different stakeholder groups who reported to the online questionnaire from the five participating countries (Greece, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden) and from four groups of stakeholders (European stakeholders, national stakeholders, the young people under the age of 25, and adults over the age of 25). It is important to note that the 116 111 number is promoted and used in Europe only. The findings of the evaluation are presented overall, but additionally an



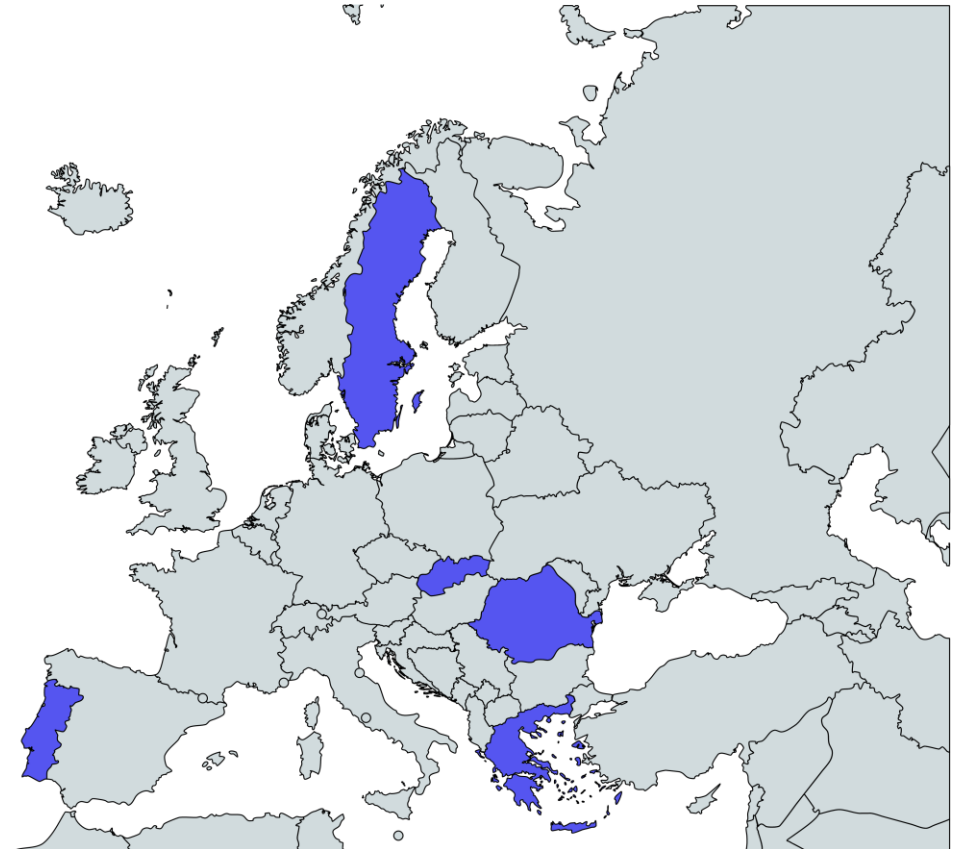
analysis of the operational data provided by the helplines is presented specifically in relation to each participating helpline.

*Section 4* – draws together the conclusions of the evaluation and makes some recommendations for increasing awareness of the 116 111 child helpline number in order to support the valuable work that the helplines do across the globe.

### **1.3. Research focus**

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the public's awareness of the 116 111 number and their understanding of what the number stands for. 116 111 is the European harmonised number dedicated to child helplines. There are currently 28 member states of the European Union operating a child helpline, 24 of which are using the regionally harmonised number 116 111. Working in close collaboration with Child Helpline International and the participating helplines, the evaluation focused on five countries with child helplines operating and promoting the regionally-harmonised 116 111 number. These countries were selected to cover a wide geographic reach across Europe. The child helplines all volunteered to take part in the evaluation and were also selected to offer a broad range of maturity, size and service delivery.

1. Greece
2. Portugal
3. Romania
4. Slovakia
5. Sweden



Furthermore, the evaluation focused, as requested by Child Helpline International, on two different target groups:

1. decision/policy makers and national governments in European Union member states; for example, Ministries of Social Welfare, Children Ombudsmen, MEP's, regulatory authorities and telecom operators
2. young people and adults in European Union member states.

The research was funded by DG Justice, European Commission.

**Specifically, the evaluation set out to investigate:**

*RQ1:* What proportion of young people and the adults recognise and know what the 116 111 number stands for?

*RQ2:* What proportion of young people and the adults report that they have heard about the 116 111 child helpline in the last year?

*RQ3:* What proportions of decision makers and national governments have heard about the 116 111 child helpline in the last year?

*RQ4:* How many and what types of contacts from children and young people were responded to by each of the five helplines in 2016?

*RQ5:* What reason do children and young people have for contacting each of the five helplines in 2016?

The answers to these questions and the conclusions drawn from these answers are presented in Section 4, page 30.

#### **1.4. Methodology**

The evaluation used anonymous surveys online in each of the five participating countries and to European stakeholders generally. The five countries were chosen by Child Helpline International on the basis that:

- they volunteered to take part in the evaluation
- they were located within the EU
- they represented a range of child helplines of different sizes
- they offered a range service delivery (for example, when they were available) and different length of times that they had been established, ranging from 1971 (Sweden) to 2001 (Romania).

The questions were initially developed in English in close consultation with the Child Helpline International team. The questions were then piloted with different stakeholder groups, including children and young people of various age groups. Once finalised, the questions and agreed time scales were then translated into each nation's main language and sent to the helplines in each participating country for final checking. The survey was launched on 5th June and remained open until 8th July 2017. The survey was promoted through child helpline networks, professional and personal networks; the child helpline network and through social media, namely Facebook. Furthermore, a data sharing agreement between the participating helplines and the University of Suffolk enabled the operational data from each participating helpline to be analysed and included as part of the evaluation. The operational data from each participating country was not used to assess each nation's awareness of the 116 111 number, but rather to set the stage and provide the context of service delivery in each county.

Child Helpline International provided additional support for the evaluation, too. They liaised initially with all their member helplines, hosted the 'kick off' meeting in Amsterdam, selected the final five helplines, coordinated the launch of the survey, as well as promoted it. They also provided the research team with previous evaluations, related research reports and annual statistical data.

## 1.5. Limitations

Like all research methods, online survey research has benefits and drawbacks. It can be challenging to ensure that the study adequately address its objectives while balancing time and cost constraints (Sue and Ritter, 2007). With this in mind, this report presents the findings of the evaluation, but it should also be noted that the evaluation, like most studies, has a number of limitations.

Firstly, only five countries (out of the 35 member helplines of Child Helpline International in the 28 EU member states) were included in the evaluation and, as such, generalisations as to the extent of public awareness in other member countries or across Europe cannot be induced from this study. Secondly, the numbers of responses from some stakeholder groups (for example, European stakeholders) was low (n=15) making it difficult to draw robust conclusions from this group. Thirdly, internet surveys require that target respondents have access to the internet (Sue and Ritter, 2007) thus potentially excluding responses from those who do not; in addition the campaign through social media cannot reach children younger than 13 years, since they are not supposed to be using social media networks. We were also anxious not to overburden the participants with too many demographic questions, just as the data collected routinely by the helplines does not reflect diversity in terms of ethnic minorities, disability and sexuality. Fourthly, comparisons between the participating countries should be made cautiously, as the operational data provided by the helplines highlights the very different nature and characteristics of each helpline. Finally, it should be noted that this evaluation focuses only on the awareness of the 116 111 child helpline number and does not consider the effectiveness of the helplines themselves in supporting children and young people from their perspective.

## 1.6. Acknowledgments

**The University of Suffolk would like to express their gratitude and appreciation to both Child Helpline International and the five helplines who took part in the evaluation, for their willingness to work collaboratively throughout the evaluation process: Child Helpline (National Helpline for Children SOS 1056/European Helpline for Children and Adolescents 116 111 – The Smile of the Child) in Greece; SOS Criança - Instituto de Apoio à Criança in Portugal; Telefonul Copilului in Romania; Linka Detskej Istoty in Slovakia, and BRIS in Sweden. This participatory approach was key to the success of the study overall.**

## 2. Background

### 2.1. Helplines for children

“The idea of a helpline builds on a concept firmly established in other fields of social care and describes a service that provides listening and emotional support, as well as information to assist users with issues they may encounter in their lives” (Dihn *et al.*, 2016: 2). Potter

and Hepburn (2003) argue that helplines are an important area for academic study. However, little academic research has been undertaken to date. The studies published so far demonstrate the very important and valuable work that helplines do. Ben-Ari and Azaiza's (2003) study, for example, found that callers perceive a significant improvement in the severity of the problem following the help line conversation.

Child helplines around the world offer a sympathetic ear to children seeking advice and support. The helplines offer easy access to an anonymous and confidential medium, often as a national telephone counselling service with a toll-free or lo-cost number. The various child helplines offer social support, solutions to problems and referrals for emergency situations to a heterogeneous population with different questions and needs (Fukkink et al., 2016: 510).

Research currently being finalised by van Dolen and Sindahl (forthcoming)<sup>2</sup> considers the impact of child helplines in five countries and, although the final results were not available at the time of writing this report, the impact report from Belgium evidences excellent results. van Dolen and Sindahl's study found that 72% of children reported being immediately helped after contacting Belgium's child helpline, Awel. 60% of children reported that their contact still had had a positive impact two weeks after their engagement with Awel, and 89% reported feeling that they felt that they had been listened to and felt heard by the child helpline. It is also interesting to note that in the forthcoming study, 78% of the children reported an immediate improvement in wellbeing and 90% of the children reported being satisfied with the service.

## 2.2. Child Helpline International

Child Helpline International is the global network of 181 child helplines in 147 countries. Together, this network receives over 14 million of contacts a year from children and young people in need of care and protection. Child Helpline International supports the creation and strengthening of national toll-free child helplines worldwide, and by aggregating and interpreting the data coming in from child helplines, they use the child helpline data and knowledge to highlight gaps in child protection systems and advocate for the rights of children. Millions of individual stories and reports come into Child Helpline International to form a detailed picture of how and where in the world children and young people are suffering injustice, abuse and dangers. Child Helpline International present this data, illustrated by real life case studies, to influence policy makers, to significantly impact the changes that improve understanding and the conditions for children in meaningful ways globally, regionally and locally.

Article 12 UNCRC emphasises the importance of children's participation, and Child Helpline International listens to the listeners and helps them help each other. This rich tapestry of children's lived experiences informs how society can make a difference in troubled young lives as Child Helpline International collects and shares the best practices from child helplines around the world – from how to counsel an abused child, to how best to staff a call centre and provide up-to-date training. Child Helpline International also supports individual child helplines by sharing information and knowledge from the best of them with all of them, so they can do their critically important work even better.

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<sup>2</sup> Currently unpublished research report provided by Child Helpline International to the evaluation team.

As noted above, for the period 2015-2017, Child Helpline International entered into a three-year Framework Partnership Agreement with DG Justice of the European Commission as a strategic partner in strengthening the role of child helplines in European member states. In 2007, the European Commission decided to reserve the national numbering range beginning with '116' for harmonised services of social value so that citizens of the European Union member states, including travellers and disabled users, would be able to access certain services that have a social value by using the same recognisable numbers in all member states. The idea was that the combination 'same number – same service' ensures that a specific service in whichever member state it is provided is always associated with a specific number within the European Community. This provides the service with a pan-European identity to the benefit of the European citizen who will know that the same number dialled will give access to the same type of service in different member states. This measure encourages pan-European services to develop. Thereby, the number 116 111 was reserved for child helplines to provide social services to children in need.

Dihn *et al.*, (2016: 10) helpfully summarise the characteristics of helplines as:

- ◆ anonymity reduces the psychological barrier that prevents many from seeking help
- ◆ callers have more control since they can terminate the interaction whenever they choose
- ◆ accepting calls from anyone on any topic may ease the decision to seek help
- ◆ child helplines are staffed by volunteers or professionals, who have proven their effectiveness in helping people in crisis due to their spontaneity, warmth and authenticity
- ◆ in many cases, assistance is available at the callers' convenience, 24 hours a day
- ◆ geographical barriers are easily bridged since callers may receive help or support wherever their location.

The number 116 111 is currently operational in 24 European Union (EU) member states, two EU candidate states and two non-EU member states. Children seeking for help through the 116 111 number are helped by professionally trained staff. 116 111 is operated by national child helplines, which can be non-profit organisations, governmental institutions or social enterprises. The website [www.116111.eu](http://www.116111.eu) provides an overview of all child helplines operating the 116 111 number. The confidential nature of such services is highly valued (Danby *et al.*, 2011 and Fukkink *et al.*, 2016). The services provided by child helplines were originally based on confidential one-to-one telephone interaction but have now, in many countries, been extended to one-to-one web-based online chat (Fukkink and Hermanns, 2009) and in some countries app-based communication is also offered (for example, Childline<sup>3</sup> in the UK).

Child helplines across Europe use a variety of different methods to ensure that children can access help, find someone to talk to and get the information they need. To ensure that children can find support in various ways, alternatives include: telephone services; mobile phone; text messaging; apps; online via email; one-to-one-chat and online forums; drop-

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.childline.org.uk/toolbox/for-me/>

boxes in schools and community centres; postal services; or radio and mobile outreach units. It is important to note that child helplines also reach out to those who may not be able to access their services, including ‘street’ children, children with disabilities and children in marginalised areas or communities.<sup>4</sup>

As evidenced in the data from each of the five participating countries, child helplines comprise a variety of different types (see section 3.1). However, as Dihn *et al.* (2016: 130) suggest, all have in common the provision of a confidential service that offers information, support, guidance and referral. Children and young people contact the child helpline seeking answers to diverse, often urgent questions concerning different subjects, including “abuse and violence, discrimination, family matters, homelessness, physical or mental health, peer problems and sexuality” (Fukkink *et al.*, 2016: 510) and ways young people seek help vary and are influenced by gender, age, culture, ethnicity and sexuality (Franks and Medforth, 2005).

Many helplines carefully evaluate the effectiveness of their services, collecting data on characteristics of callers such as age, gender, sexuality and ethnicity, volume of calls, repeat callers and reasons for calling (see, for example, the data from the five helplines in section 3.1 and Child Helpline International publications<sup>5</sup>). Some helplines have also evaluated their service by adopting a child-centred approach through consulting with children and young people (for example, NSPCC in the UK<sup>6</sup> and Kids Help Line in Australia<sup>7</sup>). Such studies are vital in evidencing the positive impact that child helplines can have in children’s lives, especially in relation to how children feel after contacting a helpline. Fukkink and Hermanns’ (2009: 764) study, for example, found that children who contacted a Dutch Helpline reported “an increase in well-being immediately after the call or chat session, and a decrease in the perceived burden or the problem they had sought support for” which further evidences the importance of listening to children as service users. Furthermore, as noted above, in van Dolen and Sindahl’s (forthcoming) research, the vast majority of children positively reported on the emotional and instrumental support they received, and felt both listened to and also empowered, thanks to contacting Belgium’s child helpline, Awel.

In order for children and young people to be able to contact the helpline, they need to be aware that the helpline exists, how to make contact and how the helpline may be able to help and support them. Therefore, “awareness-raising is a significant factor that contributes to the level of publicity of helplines’ work. Awareness-raising activities are recognised as the most efficient and effective means of information communication to the general public” (Dihn *et al.*, 2016: 36). It is the awareness of the helplines and the 116 111 number that is the focus of the evaluation presented here.

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<sup>4</sup> See [http://orgchi-tukhnakal.savviihq.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/eu\\_study\\_-1.pdf](http://orgchi-tukhnakal.savviihq.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/eu_study_-1.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Available from <https://www.childhelplineinternational.org/data-overview/>

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/annual-reports/childline-annual-review-2015-16.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> See <https://kidshelpline.com.au/organisation/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2015/11/Kids-Helpline-2015-Insights-Web.pdf>

## 3. Findings

### 3.1. Overall findings

The five helplines that took part in this evaluation answered 215,445 contacts from children and young people in 2016. Of those contacts, 117,615 received counselling services, support and advice. This section of the report presents the findings from the data provided by the five helplines and then presents the findings from the online survey.

The data from the helplines illustrates differences in delivery across the five countries, including reasons for contacting, ways of contacting the helpline, and when the helplines are available. It is interesting to note from that Sweden recorded 20,568 contacts concerned with mental health issues, but Greece recorded no calls related to mental health, and Portugal only 81. Peer relationship issues also provide an interesting topic for consideration as Slovakia and Sweden recorded 5,019 and 4,720 respectively. However, in Portugal, only one call related to peer relationships was recorded. Cyberbullying is also an interesting category as Beckman et al.'s (2013) study in Sweden found that 8.8% of adolescents had been cyberbullied. And yet, while Slovakia recorded 175 calls related to cyberbullying, Sweden did not record any.

Of the five helplines, the most established is Sweden, which was set up in 1971. Romania represents the newest helpline in the evaluation, set up in 2001. In the other countries, child helplines were established in 1988 in Portugal, in 1996 in Slovakia and the first child helpline in Greece in 1997.

The mechanisms for contacting helplines vary: all helplines offer a telephone service and email, two additionally offer walk in face-to-face help and support (Greece and Portugal) and three (Portugal, Slovakia and Sweden) also offer online chat. Although the Child Helpline International report *The Importance of Child Helplines for Child Protection in Europe* published in 2015 (page 25) states: "A best practice for child helplines is to be fully available for children at all times, commonly referred to as 24/7 access, using all possible channels of communications", it should be noted that access across the five helplines in this evaluation varied considerably in both times and days that the helplines were available and in the channels of communication offered to children and young people, as detailed in Table 1 below.



Table 1: Comparison of helplines; availability and ways of contacting helplines

Country	Helpline	Availability	Ways of contacting the helpline
<b>Greece – established in 1997 and in 2015<sup>8</sup>, respectively</b>	The Smile of the Child helpline (National Helpline for Children SOS 1056/European Helpline for Children and Adolescents 116111)	24 hours a day, seven days a week	Telephone helpline; email and walk-in face to face
<b>Portugal – established in 1988</b>	SOS Criança - Instituto de Apoio à Criança (IAC)	9am – 7pm, Monday to Friday	Telephone helpline; email; online chat and walk-in face to face
<b>Romania – established in 2001</b>	Telefonul Copilului	8am – midnight, seven days a week	Telephone helpline and email
<b>Slovakia – established in 1996</b>	Linka Detskej Istoty	24 hours-a-day, seven days a week	Telephone helpline; email and online chat
<b>Sweden – established in 1971</b>	BRIS	9am – 9pm Monday-Friday and from 2pm – 9pm at the weekend	Telephone helpline; email and online chat

<sup>8</sup> The National Helpline for Children SOS 1056 was established in 1997 and the European Helpline for Children and Adolescents 116 111 was established in 2015.

Table 2: Reasons children and young people had for contacting the helplines in 2016

	Greece	Portugal	Romania	Slovakia	Sweden	TOTAL
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25779</b>	<b>1080</b>	<b>10356</b>	<b>24454</b>	<b>55948</b>	<b>117,617</b>
Physical abuse	773 (3.0%)	148 (13.7%)	800 (7.7%)	226 (0.9%)	1217 (2.2%)	3164 (2.7%)
Sexual abuse	21 (0.1%)	31 (2.9%)	102 (1.0%)	187 (0.8%)	710 (1.3%)	1051 (0.9%)
Emotional abuse	61 (0.2%)	59 (5.5%)	759 (7.3%)	111 (0.5%)	1034 (1.8%)	2024 (1.7%)
Neglect	958 (3.7%)	168 (15.6%)	728 (7.0%)	159 (0.7%)	658 (1.2%)	2671 (2.3%)
Other forms of abuse <sup>9</sup>	773 (3.0%)	27 (2.5%)	366 (3.5%)	147 (0.6%)	209 (0.4%)	1522 (1.3%)
Child sexual exploitation and abuse online	23 (0.1%)	2 (0.2%)	0 (0.0%)	67 (0.3%)	0 (0.0%)	92 (0.1%)
<b>Total abuse</b>	<b>2609 (10.1%)</b>	<b>435 (40.4%)</b>	<b>2755 (26.6%)</b>	<b>897 (3.7%)</b>	<b>3828 (6.8%)</b>	10524 (8.9%)
Addiction	23 (0.1%)	13 (1.2%)	121 (1.2%)	1380 <sup>10</sup> (5.6%)	242 (0.4%)	1779 (1.5%)
Basic needs	4434 (17.2%)	62 (5.8%)	364 (3.5%)	35 (0.1%)	0 (0.0%)	4895 (4.2%)
Bullying	1128 (4.4%)	24 (2.2%)	1545 (14.9%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2697 (2.3%)
Cyberbullying	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	9 (0.1%)	175 (0.7%)	0 (0.0%)	184 (0.2%)
Children on the move/Child migration	216 (0.8%)	2 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	216 (0.2%)
Commercial exploitation <sup>11</sup>	1780 (6.9%)	11 (1.0%)	242 (2.3%)	11 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	2044 (1.7%)
Children in conflict or disaster zones	783 (3.0%)	0 (0.0%)	186 (1.8%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	969 (0.8%)
Discrimination	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.2%)	27 (0.3%)	270 (1.1%)	105 (0.2%)	404 (0.3%)
Family relationships	1867 (7.2%)	147 (13.6%)	616 (5.9%)	4011 (16.4%)	8399 (15.0%)	15040 (12.8%)
Harmful traditional	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	137 (0.2%)	137 (0.1%)

<sup>9</sup> For example: domestic abuse; corporal punishment; or gang-related violence. (It is interesting from the Greek helpline data, there are 773 calls recorded as corporal punishment, 42 in Slovakia, but only seven in Portugal and none in Romania or Sweden.)

<sup>10</sup> predominantly smoking related

<sup>11</sup> for example, being used for begging

	Greece	Portugal	Romania	Slovakia	Sweden	TOTAL
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>25779</b>	<b>1080</b>	<b>10356</b>	<b>24454</b>	<b>55948</b>	<b>117,617</b>
practices						
HIV/AIDS infected/affected children	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Homelessness	373 (1.4%)	0 (0.0%)	89 (0.9%)	111 (0.5%)	0 (0.0%)	573 (0.5%)
Legal matters and juvenile justice	812 (3.1%)	83 (7.7%)	491 (4.7%)	321 (1.3%)	240 (0.4%)	1947 (1.7%)
Parenting and child-rearing	2558 (9.9%)	45 (4.2%)	754 (7.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	3357 (2.9%)
Peer relationships	475 (1.8%)	1 (0.1%)	311 (3.0%)	5019 (20.5%)	4702 (8.4%)	10508 (8.9%)
Physical health and healthcare	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.1%)	0 (0.0%)	707 (2.9%)	618 (1.1%)	1326 (1.1%)
Psychosocial, mental health	0 (0.0%)	81 (7.5%)	2194 (21.2%)	1562 (6.4%)	20568 (36.8%)	24405 (20.7%)
School-related issues and education	226 (0.9%)	28 (2.6%)	37 (0.4%)	2292 (9.4%)	4245 (7.6%)	6828 (5.8%)
Sexuality and sexual awareness	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.2%)	0 (0.0%)	3108 (12.7%)	1959 (3.5%)	5069 (4.3%)
Information/questions about the helpline	8495 (33.0%)	96 (8.9%)	354 (3.4%)	1511 (6.2%)	510 (0.9%)	10966 (9.3%)
Other issues	0 (0.0%)	47 (4.4%)	261 (2.5%)	3044 (12.4%)	10395 (18.6%)	13747 (11.7%)

### 3.2. European Stakeholders

#### Awareness of 116 111

Dihn *et al.* (2016: 46) point out that “helplines work within an environment in which effective partnerships with multiple stakeholders are of great importance”. The online questionnaire was completed by 15 people, representing nine different European-level organisations: Fundamental Rights Agency; the European Parliament; Missing Children Europe; Victim Support Europe; ILGA-Europe; Government child protection agencies; Save the Children International EU Office; Council of Europe; and Child Rights International Network. All participants were aware of national helplines dedicated to supporting children and young people, and nine of them stated that they were aware of the unique 116 111 telephone number. Seven respondents had heard of 116 111 from working directly with Child Helpline International (Missing Children Europe; Victim Support Europe; ILGA-Europe; Save the Children International EU Office; Missing Children Europe; Council of Europe; Child

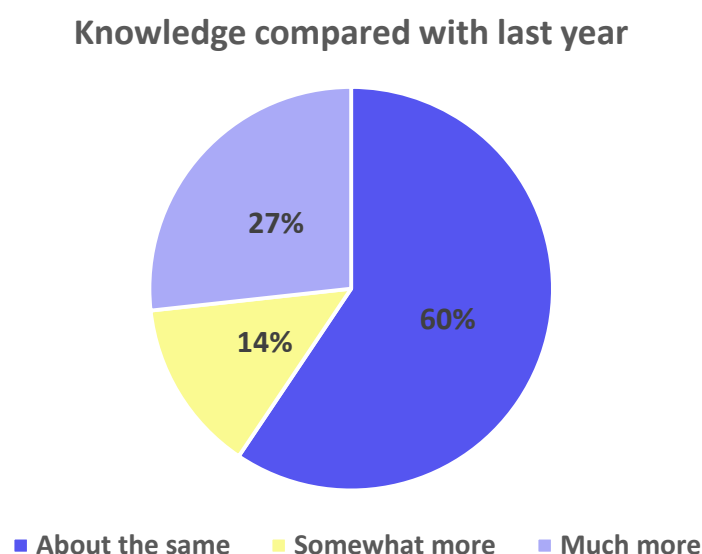
Rights International Network). Five respondents had heard of 116 111 as the result of attending a conference. Four knew of 116 111 from reading about it in a report, and three as a result of social media. Six respondents (40%) declared that they know more about child helplines than they did a year before, while the other nine stated that knew about the same.

This result probably reflects that fact that of the nine respondents who stated that they knew about the same, six of these were from the group of respondents who knew about child helplines from their work with Child Helpline International. This, therefore, probably reflects positively on a sustained close-working relationship and collaboration with Child Helpline International.

Figure 1. European Stakeholders' awareness of child helplines and the 116 111 number



Figure 2. European Stakeholders' knowledge about 116 111, compared with last year



## Promoting 116 111

Most European stakeholder respondents (74%) stated that they actively promote the 116 111 number and that they will continue to promote the 116 111 services within their organisations. The ways in which the 116 111 number is promoted varies from organisation to organisation, as depicted in the examples below:

*“We have made an MoU with the helpline to refer cases to the child protection structures. Since then, we have widely promoted the number with children in schools, with professionals, by placing posters in schools, hospitals, police stations, municipalities and social care centres. In a country-wide campaign, we have called for the public to report cases and the helpline has been promoted throughout” (European Stakeholder).*

*“In as far as complementarity and joint support for 116 000 and 116 111 can be achieved, we have been a keen supporter of mutual support and awareness raising” (European Stakeholder).*

Furthermore, of the European stakeholders who responded to the survey, the majority (70%) stated that they are actively promoting 116 111 outside their organisations, and they proposed a range of activities and ways in which they felt 116 111 could be promoted in the future.

*“We have a page on our website that lists helplines worldwide provided by Child Helpline International. The page needs to be updated and we could include a paragraph on the new page in our weekly English newsletter...” (European Stakeholder)..*

*“[Our organisation] stands ready to work with Child Helpline organisations to promote their work, in particular as it relates to the victimisation of children. [Our organisation] has worked in the past with Missing Children Europe and also works with Amber Alert to support (where there are overlapping objectives) their work. Where the issues arise, we are able to inform others of the existence of the helplines. There may be opportunities to benefit from each others' knowledge on the running of helplines and how to improve their operations. [Our organisation] could support these types of discussions as well” (European Stakeholder).*

There were also some recommendations from European stakeholders as to how the relationship with Child Helpline International could further benefit collaborations with other stakeholders:

*“...many of our members are working independently or with line ministries at the national level on helplines. It would be important to understand the added value of 116 111 and how it interacts with other existing national projects (or eventually replaces them?)” (European Stakeholder).*

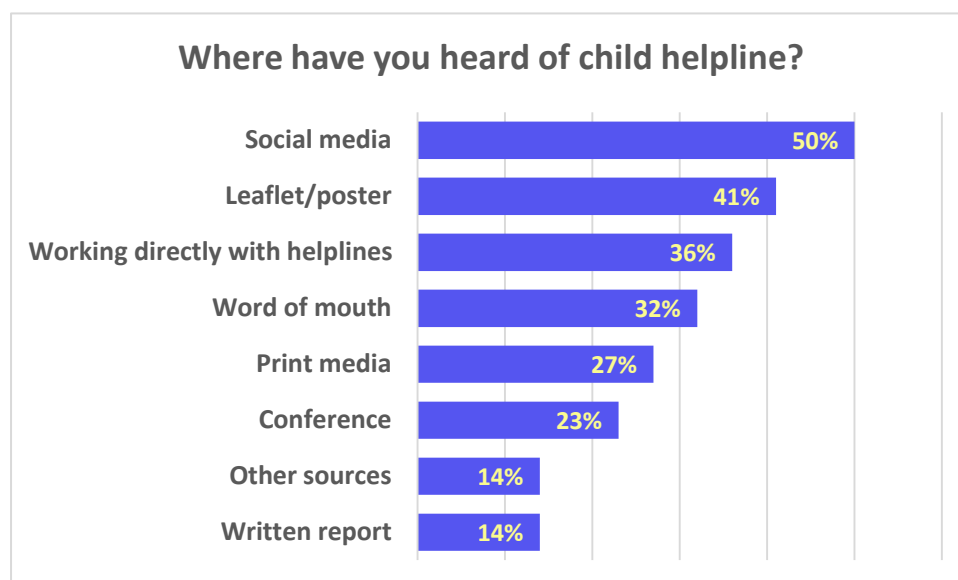
*“A general guideline on how to run and establish a helpline would be useful, together with standards for such a service, as our national legislation now foresees the establishment of such helplines, it would be useful to have a guideline on how this can be done – or enter into partnership with helplines that fulfil such standards” (European Stakeholder).*

### 3.3. National stakeholders

The survey was completed by 38 participants: five from Greece, 11 from Portugal, nine from Romania, four from Slovakia and nine from Sweden. They represented a variety of institutions and organisations, including statutory and third sector organisations. Excepting two respondents from Sweden (both representing a political party at national or local level) all respondents were aware of child helplines, with 14 of them (37%) being aware of the 116 111 number as well.

Three of the respondents who were aware of the services (12%) did not indicate where they heard about child helplines. Half of the 22 respondents who indicated a source of information selected three sources or more; overall, the most common sources were social media, leaflet/posters, followed by working directly with helplines and word of mouth (Figure 3).

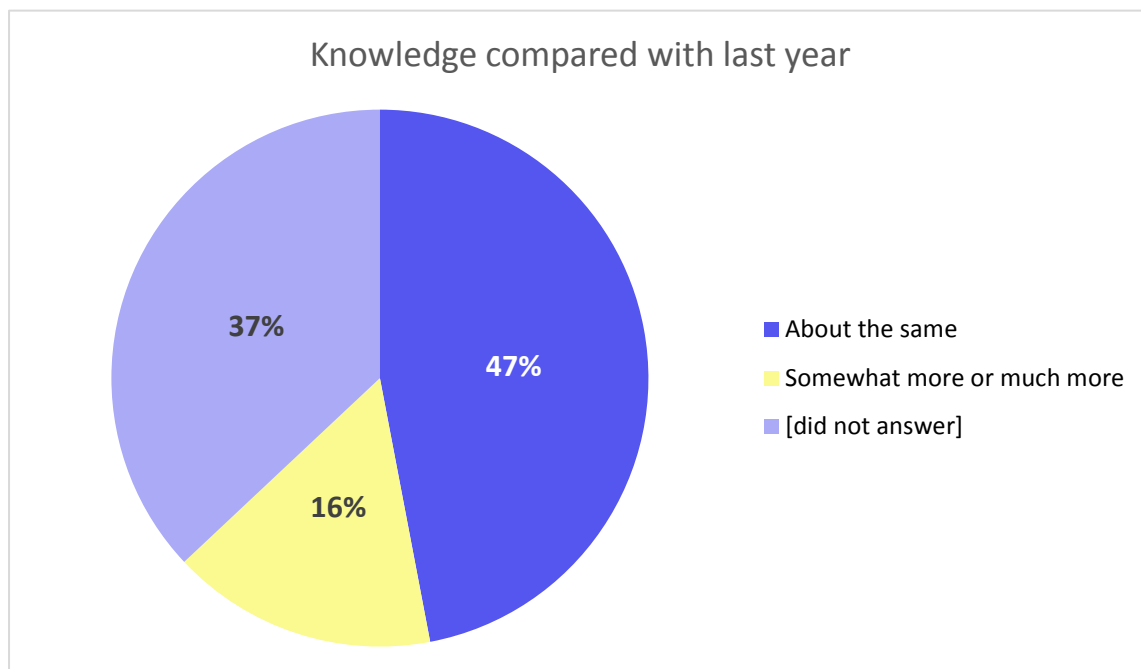
**Figure 3. National stakeholders' sources of information about child helplines**



*Note: % of the 22 stakeholders who were aware of child helplines and indicated a source of information*

Six respondents (16% of all participants) declared that they know more about child helplines now than they did a year ago; eighteen (47%) declared they know about the same and 14 (37%) did not answer the question.

Figure 4. National Stakeholders' knowledge of child helplines and 116 111 compared with last year



When asked to offer their opinion about the most effective ways to increase awareness about child helplines, the approaches most commonly selected were campaigns through social media, campaigns through schools and campaigns through sports centres, each being selected by more than 60% of the participants as being “somewhat effective” or “very effective”. Healthcare settings, TV campaigns and social services were selected by about half of participants (Table 3). Opinions about the relative importance of these types of campaigns in reaching vulnerable children were more diverse, as no strategy was picked as the most important by more than 20% of the respondents (Table 4).

**Table 3. Opinion on the effectiveness of various potential awareness campaigns**

	Not effective at all	Not very effective	Neither effective nor ineffective	Somewhat effective	Very effective	No answer
<b>Campaigns through social media</b>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	7 (18%)	16 (42%)	14 (37%)
<b>Political lobbying</b>	0 (0%)	2 (5%)	4 (11%)	9 (24%)	7 (18%)	16 (42%)
<b>Healthcare settings (for example doctor's surgeries or clinics)</b>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (8%)	9 (24%)	10 (26%)	16 (42%)
<b>Campaigns on TV and radio</b>	0 (0%)	2 (5%)	2 (5%)	6 (16%)	13 (34%)	15 (39%)
<b>Campaigns through schools</b>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (16%)	18 (47%)	14 (37%)
<b>Campaign through NGOs</b>	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	4 (11%)	10 (26%)	8 (21%)	15 (39%)
<b>Campaigns through sport centres for youth</b>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (13%)	18 (47%)	15 (39%)
<b>Social services</b>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (5%)	9 (24%)	11 (29%)	16 (42%)

Note: % of all respondents, including those who did not answer

**Table 4. Ranking of services for reaching vulnerable children**

	First choice	Second choice
<b>Campaigns through social media</b>	3 (14%)	5 (23%)
<b>Political lobbying</b>	3 (14%)	1 (5%)
<b>Healthcare settings (for example doctor's surgeries or clinics)</b>	2 (9%)	4 (18%)
<b>Campaigns on TV and radio</b>	4 (18%)	0 (0%)
<b>Campaigns through schools</b>	4 (18%)	3 (14%)
<b>Campaign through NGOs</b>	4 (18%)	1 (5%)
<b>Campaigns through sport centres for youth</b>	1 (5%)	3 (14%)
<b>Social services</b>	1 (5%)	5 (23%)

Note: % of those who answered to the question

### 3.3.1 Adults and young people

In total 2,487 people participated in the study and 28% of those (n= 706) were between 13 and 25 years of age. The questionnaire was distributed through targeted social media campaigns, as well as via personal and professional networks. Interestingly, over 82% of all participants responded to the survey after being sent a link via social media (namely, through Facebook) but also of note is that the proportion of responses from the Facebook campaign is lower (59%) among young people under 25 years old.



There were also some differences in terms of participation, both by country and by age. Figure 5 shows that, for example, Greece had the highest participation overall, but most of them were adults, while for Sweden the situation was reversed, with more young people than adults responding to the survey. It should be noted that these distributions should not be considered to be representative of the five countries' populations. Throughout the evaluation, the data collection mechanisms adopted a number of promotional strategies that included social media campaigns targeted at specific age groups in specific countries. We are therefore not in a position to speculate as to why we got so many more respondents from adults in Greece.

Interestingly, the majority (83%) of respondents were female (n= 2,064). This distribution did not differ markedly by country, varying between 77% female respondents in Portugal and 92% female respondents in Greece. Among children and young people, 30% lived in a rural area (village or countryside), compared with only 16% adult participants who lived in rural areas (Figure 6). Only 3% of participants declared that they spoke a different language in the families compared to the language of the country targeted in the survey.

Figure 5. Number of participants, by country and age

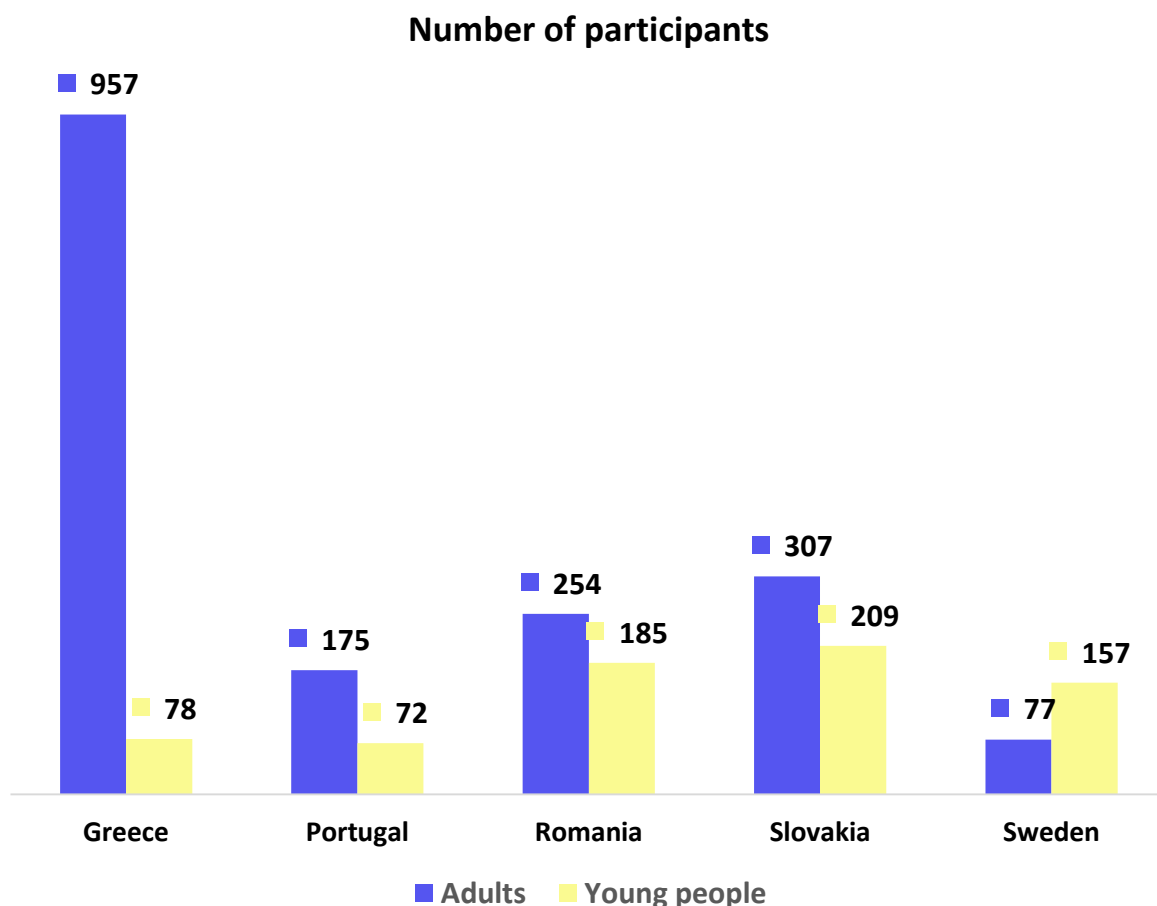
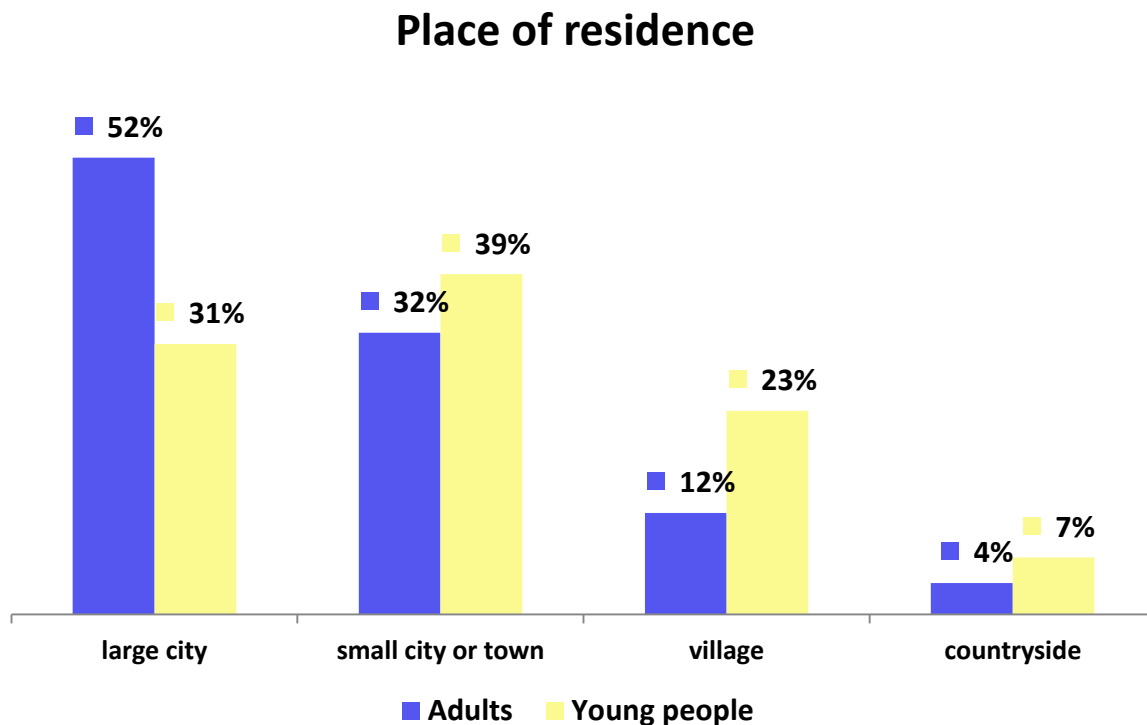


Figure 6. Place of residence by age

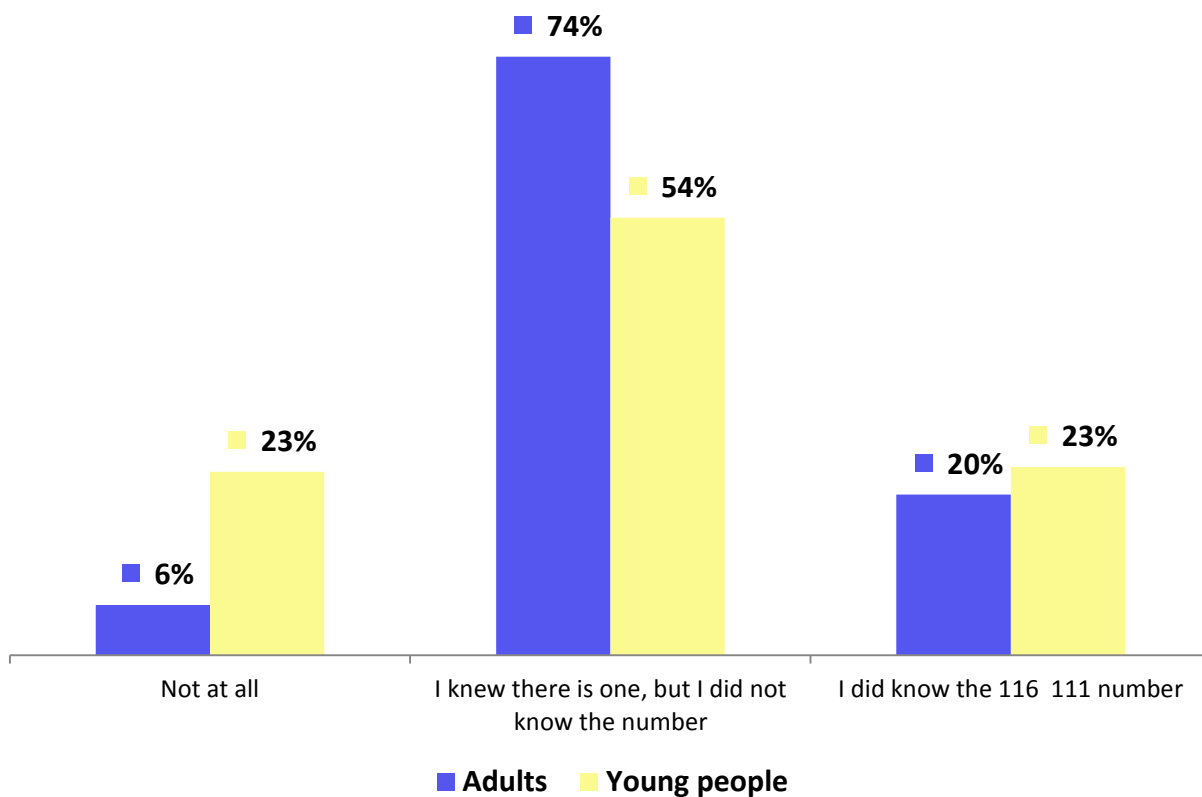


#### Awareness of 116 111

In terms of people’s awareness of child helplines and the 116 111 regionally harmonised number in Europe, 2,114 participants (83%) declared that they were aware of child helplines, of which 494 participants (19%) declared that they also knew the 116 111 number. The difference in awareness by age is significant: while the proportions of people above and below 25 years of age who did know about the 116 111 phone number are similar (around 20%), there is proportionally a significant difference among those who had not heard at all about child helplines: 23% of young people, compared with 6% of adults.

Figure 7: Awareness of child helplines – general public (adults and young people)

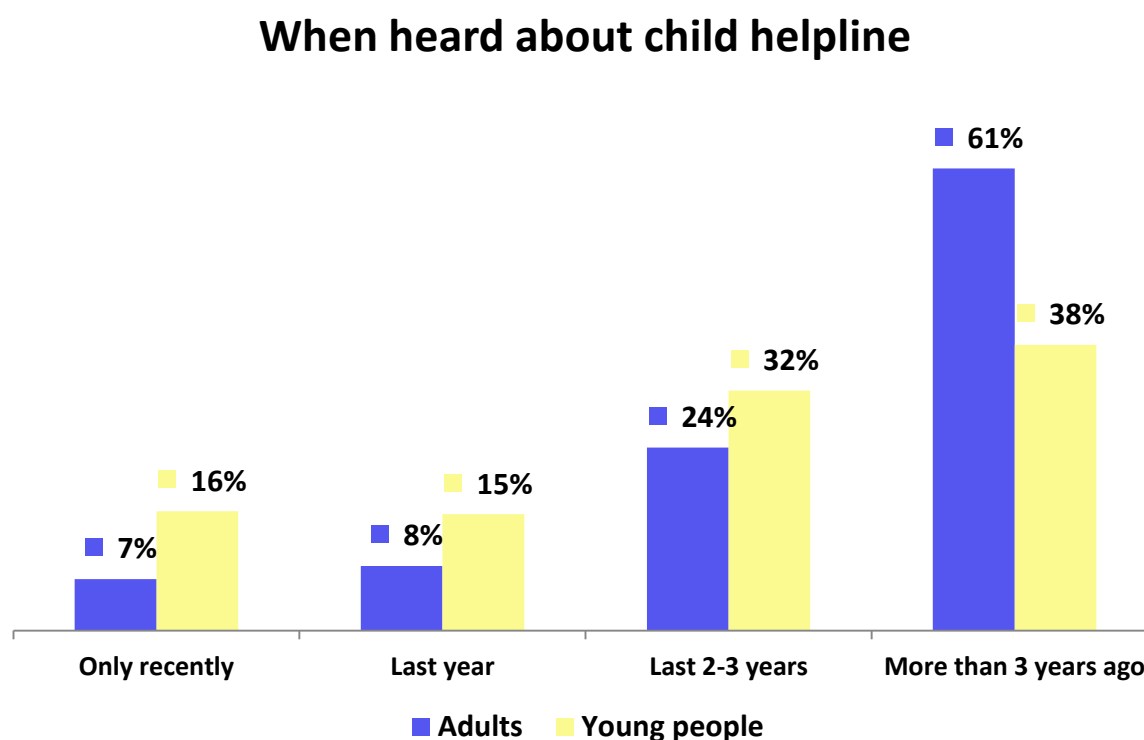
### Awareness about child helplines



Note: % within age group

Overall, the majority (81%) of the participants who were aware of child helpline services, regardless of age, had heard of them in the last 2-3 years or previously, while just 9% had only recently become aware of them. When compared by age, 30% of young people responded that they had heard of child helpline services in the last year or more recently, compared with only 15% of adults. In contrast, 38% of young people had heard about child helplines more than three years ago, compared with 61% of adults.

Figure 8. When did participants hear about child helplines?



#### Knowledge of types of services provided

The questionnaire additionally asked eight questions about the types of services that child helplines might provide. Five of these questions referred to services that child helplines typically offer, such as information about children's rights, advice and support, and child protection. Three optional answers on the questionnaire referred to services that are, in reality, not offered through child helplines, such as financial support or help with homework. For each subset of questions, a single score ('correct score' and 'incorrect score') was created, determining whether the participant selected none, one or two, three or four, or five correct or incorrect answers, respectively.

In the event, there were no differences between young people and adults as to the number of incorrect answers, with almost 90% of respondents in each age group selecting no 'incorrect' answers. However, there was a significant difference between adults and young people in selecting correct answers: proportionally more adults selected three or more types of services that child helplines typically offer, compared with young people (Figure 9).

Overall, it seems that adults are comparably more informed about the types of services these child helplines offer in practice. However, only a few of the services typically offered were selected by more than 65% of the participants, regardless of age.

Figure 9. Number of type of services correctly selected by adults versus children

### Number of correct answers about services

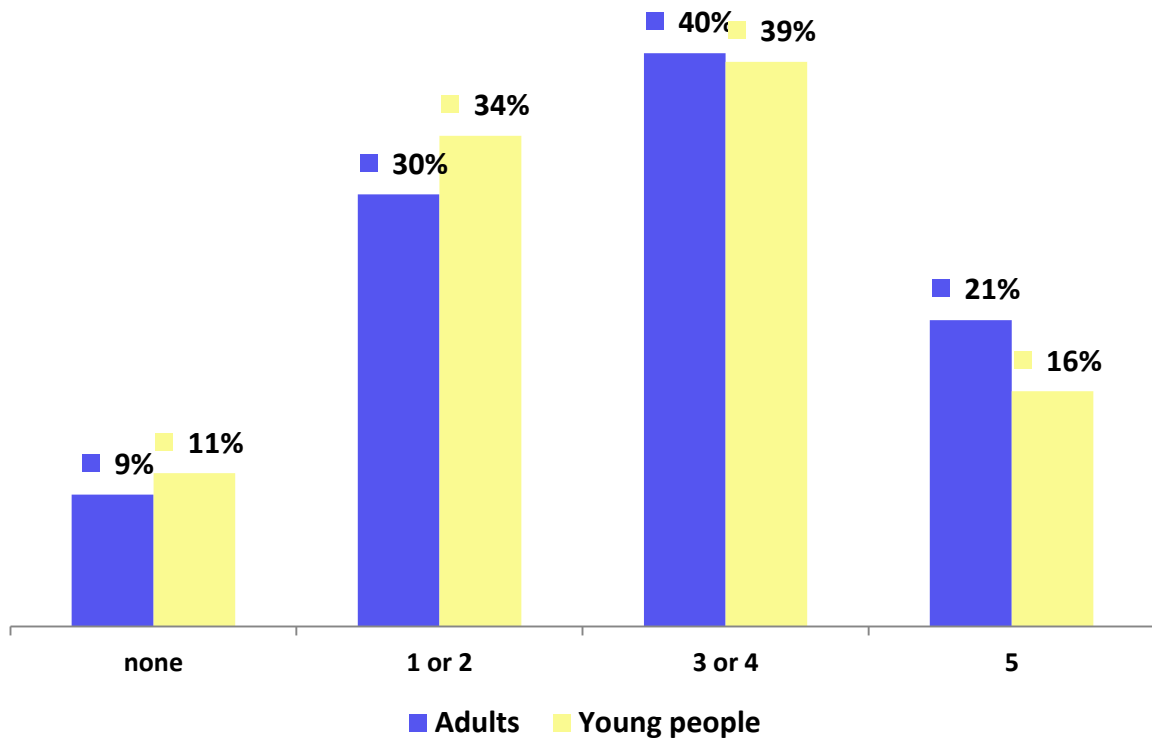
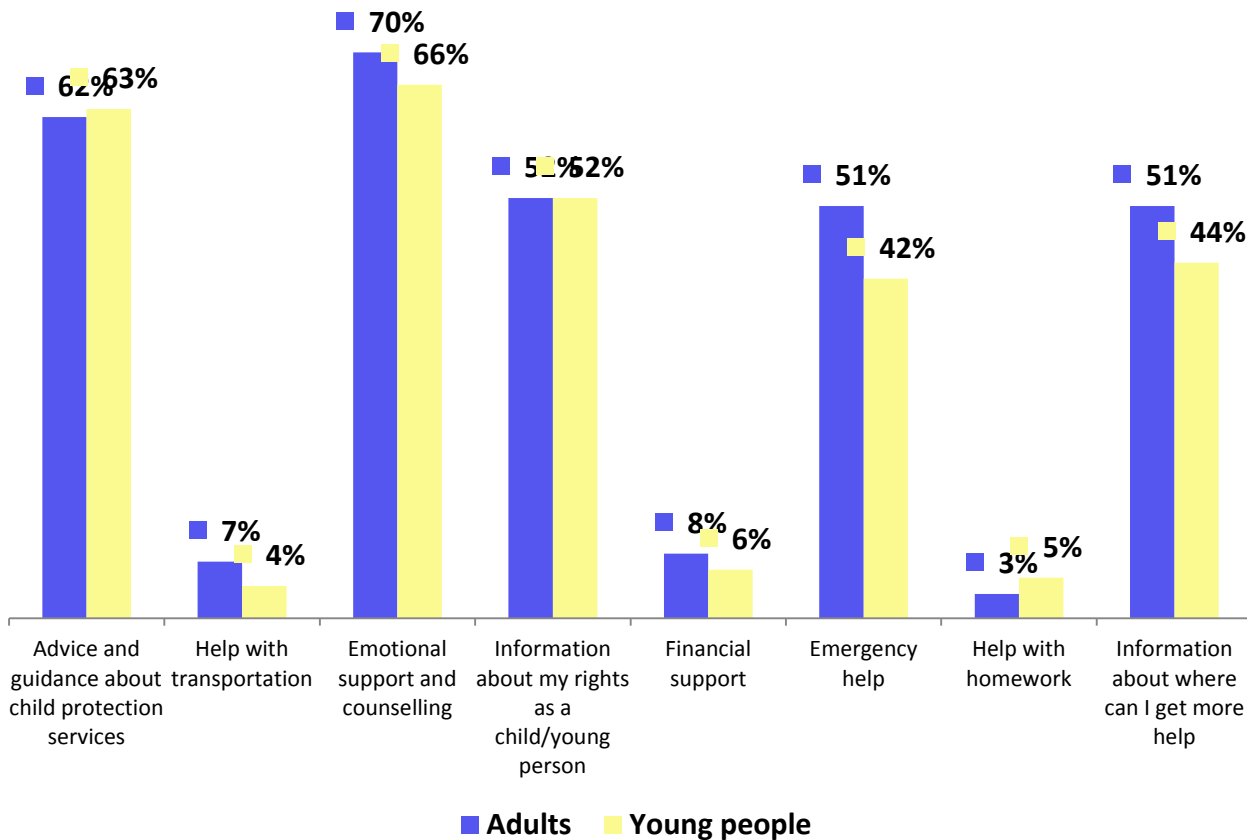


Figure 10. Knowledge of services offered by child helplines – general public (adults and young people)

### Type of services offered by child helplines

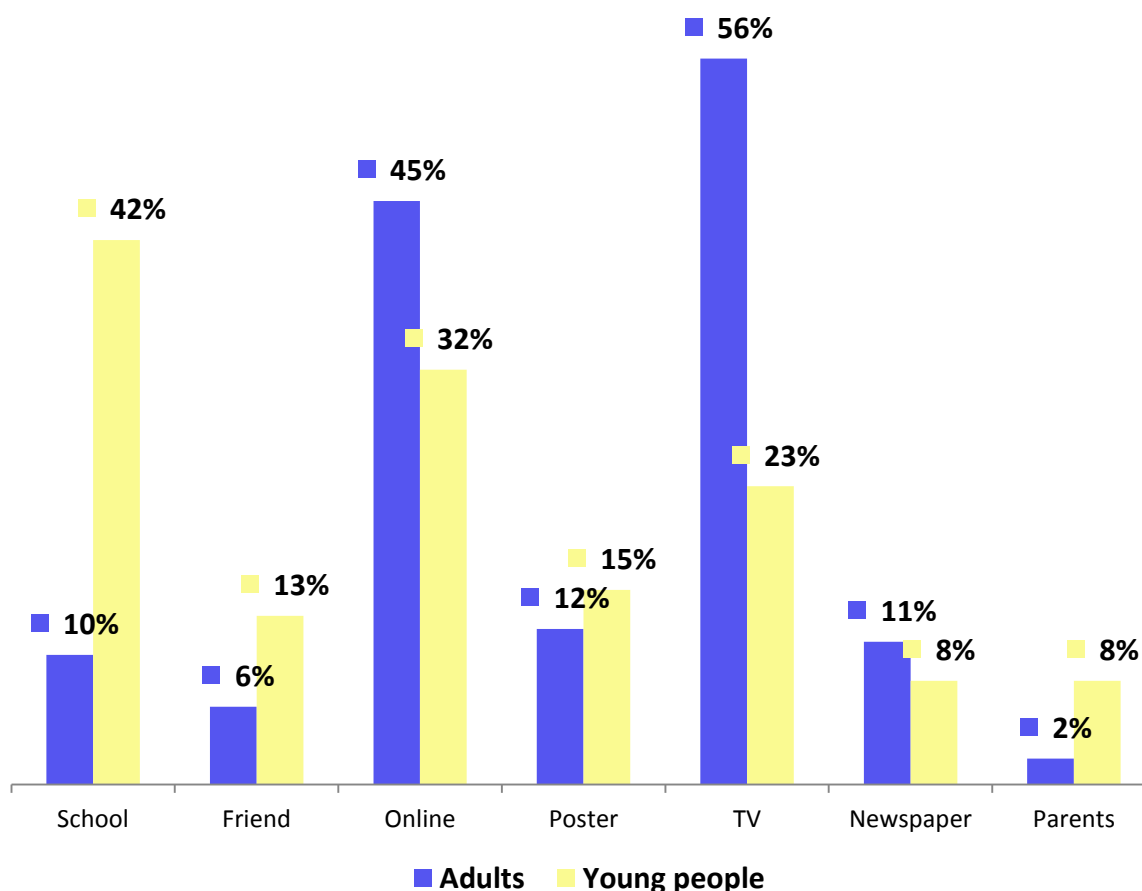


#### Sources of knowledge of 116 111

The most common sources of information about child helplines are TV advertisements (47% of all respondents) and online sources (41% of all respondents). For many young people, school is an additional source of information; with 42% of them reporting that they heard about child helplines from school. There are some other differences between young people and adults in terms of their sources of information: compared to adults, young people are more likely to have heard from a friend (13% vs. 6%) and parents (8% vs. 2%) and less likely to get the information from TV advertising (23% vs. 56%) or online (32% vs. 45%).

Figure 11. Sources of information

## Sources of information about child helplines

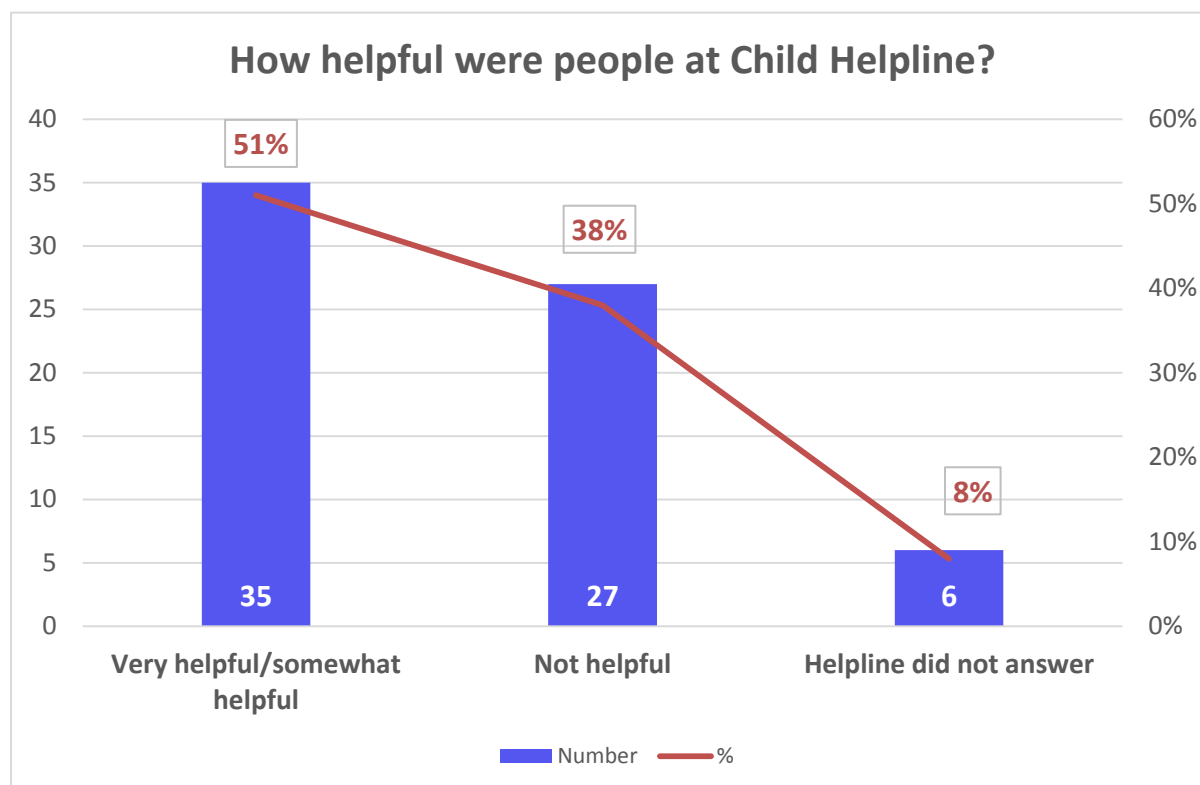


Note: % within age group

### Contact with child helplines

Seventy-two participants, representing a tenth of the young people in the study had contacted a child helpline in the past: four (5% of young people) in Greece, two (3%) in Portugal, five (3%) in Romania, 23 (11%) in Slovakia and 38 (25%) in Sweden. It is very likely that the higher proportion of young people who had contacted child helplines in Slovakia and Sweden was because in these countries many respondents were reached through the website or the social media networks of the local national child helplines. Thirty-five of them (51%) declared that the helpline was very helpful or somewhat helpful; 27 children (38%) declared that the helpline was not helpful, while for six children (8%) the helpline did not answer.

Figure 12. How helpful were people at child helpline?



Nearly all adult participants (over 94%) declared that they believe it is important or extremely important to have helplines dedicated to children and to use a European-wide harmonised phone number.

## 4. Conclusions

This final section of this report draws together the conclusions of the evaluation, summarises the findings in relation to the research questions, and makes some recommendations for increasing awareness of the 116 111 child helpline number to support the valuable work that the helplines do across the globe.

Child Helpline International is the global network of 181 child helplines in 147 countries, which together receive over 14 million contacts a year from children and young people in need of care and protection. Child Helpline International supports the creation and strengthening of national toll-free child helplines worldwide, and by aggregating and interpreting the data coming in from the child helplines in their global network, they use this data and knowledge to highlight gaps in child protection systems, and advocate for the rights of children.

The five helplines that took part in this evaluation answered 215,445 contacts from children and young people in 2016. Of those contacts, 117,615 children and young people received counselling services, support and advice in 2016. This section of the report initially presents the findings from the data provided by the five helplines and then presents the findings from the online survey.



The data from the helplines illustrates differences in delivery across the five countries, including reasons for contacting, ways of contacting the helpline and when the helplines are available. The reasons for children and young people contacting the child helplines varies considerably from country to country but the main reason for contacting the helplines in 2016 was mental health (24,405 records). Other main reasons were family relationships (15,040 records); peer relationships (10,526 records); school related issues (6,838 records); bullying (5,192 records) as well as sexuality and sexual awareness (5,069 records).

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the public's awareness of the 116 111 number and their understanding of what the number stands for. The evaluation used anonymous surveys online in each of the five participating countries and to European stakeholders generally.

#### RQ1: What proportion of young people and adults recognise and know what the 116 111 number stands for?

Of the 706 young people who responded to our survey, 23% reported that they recognised and knew what the 116 111 child helpline number stood for. Of the 1,781 adults who responded to the survey, 20% reported that they recognised and knew what the child helpline number stood for. The correct types of services that are typically offered by child helplines were indicated by up to 66% of young people and up to 70% of adults, while less than 10% of either young people or adults selected types of services that are not offered by child helplines. Overall, it seems that adults are comparably more informed about the types of services these child helplines offer, with proportionally more adults indicating three or more services that are typically offered by child helplines (61% vs. 55%)

#### RQ2: What proportion of young people and adults report to have heard about the 116 111 child helpline in the last year?

Of the 706 of young people who responded to our survey, 30% reported that they had heard about the child helpline number in the last year or more recently, compared with 15% of the adults.

Generally, the most common sources of information about child helplines were TV advertisements (46% of all respondents) and online sources (40% of all respondents). For many young people, school is an additional source of information, with 42% of them reporting that they heard about child helplines from school. There are some other differences between young people and adults in terms of sources of information: compared to adults, young people are more likely to have heard from a friend (13% vs. 6%) and parents (8% vs. 2%) and less likely to get the information from TV advertising (23% vs. 56%) or online (32% vs. 45%).

#### RQ3: What proportion of decision-makers and national governments have heard about the 116 111 child helpline in the last year?

Six respondents (40%) of the European stakeholders reported knowing more about child helplines than they did a year before and six respondents (16%) of the national stakeholders also reported that they knew more about child helplines now than they did a year ago.

#### RQ4: How many and what types of contacts from children and young people were responded to by each of the five helplines in 2016?

“Data from various child helplines analysed in this study do not only provide a window into the hearts and minds of young people, but also underlines the practical importance of child helplines for youth actively seeking help and support” (Fukkink *et al.*, 2016: 517).

In total, the five helplines who took part in this evaluation provided counselling services to a total of 117,617 contacts in 2016: Greece to 25,779 contacts, Portugal to 1,080, Romania to 10,356, Slovakia to 24,454, and Sweden to 55,948.

#### RQ5: What reason do children and young people have for contacting each of the five helplines in 2016?

The reasons for children and young people contacting the helplines in 2016 varies considerably from country to country but the main reason for contacting the helplines was mental health, with 24,405 (21%) records. Other main reasons were family relationships with 15,040 (13%) records; peer relationships, with 10,526 (9%) records; school related issues, with 6,838 (6%) records; bullying, with 5,192 (4%) records, as well as sexuality and sexual awareness, with 5,069 (4%) records.

**Nearly all adult participants (over 94% of participants) declared that they believe it is important or extremely important to have helplines dedicated to children and to use a European-wide harmonised phone number.**

### 4.1. Supporting the work of helplines

#### 4.1.1 Raising public awareness of helplines

Ensuring that children are aware of the 116 111 number and know that they can contact the helpline for confidential support and advice is essential. Dihn *et al.* (2016: 37) suggest that “support from government and from public figures can be a distinct advantage in raising public awareness”.

The five helplines who participated in the evaluation adopt a range of awareness-raising activities, although sometimes this can be limited. The helpline in Portugal, for example, was not able to undertake awareness-raising activities in 2016 due to a lack of resources. In Sweden, the BRIS helpline launched Brisbot, a chatbot that answers children’s questions to common issues and provides support when the helpline is not available. The bot, in both English and Swedish, is available via iMessenger and Kik, with answers written by helpline counsellors.

The BRIS annual campaign ‘Idolkort’ raises awareness of BRIS, using famous Swedish people as role models, who support children by sharing their experiences and letting them know that even their idols have had to overcome setbacks and struggles in their childhood.

In Greece, The Smile of the Child helpline raises awareness of common issues via their website and through social media, and also raises awareness of the helpline, encouraging the public to contact the helpline for further information, advice and

counselling. They have also launched a campaign to raise the helpline's profile, using television and press media, as well as by distributing information leaflets.

The helpline in Greece hosts workshops and school-based activities, while providing children with a safe online platform for entertainment and interaction that also familiarises them with the National Helpline for Children SOS 1056.

In Slovakia, the Linka Detskej Istoty helpline also engages with schools, facilitating workshops for their students and teachers on bullying, safer internet use, and cyberbullying. They hosted an event for friends and supporters to distribute educational and awareness-raising materials. They also initiated a national project for Slovakian students – *Let's read* – which provided materials about the helpline services to more than 41,000 students; Their idea for a fundraising and awareness-raising event for their helpline was a 21km run for children. Plus, they co-organised the International Conference SPAY 2016, which attracted delegates from seven countries and more than 250 participants.

In Romania, the organisation Asociatia Telefonul Copilului mainly promotes 116 111 in school manuals and during face-to-face educational sessions held by the organisation's schools specialists. They aim to tackle the main problems addressed by children at the child helpline, especially bullying, cyberbullying and child trafficking (but not limited to these) using relevant online platforms addressed to children, the pre-paid calling cards, and social media, with the support of relevant stakeholders (both public and private) the Romanian organisation cooperates with. The contribution of mass media is also essential as journalists promote the helpline number and organise debates on the problems raised by children and parents on the child helpline, inviting representatives of the Romanian organisation, other specialists and relevant institutions around the same table. Moreover, the public awareness campaigns developed by the organisation are promoted on TV and radio, with continuous support offered by the relevant channels.

#### *4.1.2 Supporting the work of the helplines – European and National Stakeholders*

Child Helpline International plays a key role in building bridges between child helplines, as well as facilitating joint learning. This enables the network of child helplines to engage in crucial advocacy efforts on a European and national level, which in turn increases the financial and political support for child helplines across Europe, and it continuously stresses the role of child helplines in national child protection systems.

Over the past 10 years, Child Helpline International has been pivotal in implementing 116 111. Since 2005, in a close partnership with the International Telecommunications Union and the European Commission, Child Helpline International has been active in the allocation of the regionally harmonised number 116 111 throughout EU member states, as well as its operationalisation. Region-wide marketing campaigns, led by Child Helpline International in collaboration with all European child helplines, have contributed to an increasing awareness and use of the 116 111 number across the EU. Child Helpline International also manages the 116111.eu website, providing relevant information on the work of child helplines in Europe.

Additionally, Child Helpline International's contribution can be clearly seen in the standardisation of data collection, while setting quality standards for the services offered to children by child helplines in Europe. In collaboration and dialogue with key European and national institutions such as the European Parliament, the Council of Europe, GSMA (the association of mobile operators worldwide), as well as ministries of social welfare and children ombudsmen, Child Helpline International creates important links for European child helplines and presents structural solutions to challenges around protecting children in Europe.

#### 4.2. Recommendations

- ◆ As the comparison across the five countries found that children and young people under the age of 25 were less likely to know about the helpline compared to those over 25, we recommend that activities continue to raise awareness of the helplines and the 116 111 number with young people in Europe
- ◆ In addition to raising awareness of the 116 111 number and the existence of the helpline in Europe, we recommend that campaigns also focus specifically on the type of services that the helpline provide
- ◆ We also suggest that consideration is given to how awareness is raised, as only 41% (less than half) of children and young people reported hearing of the helplines through school
- ◆ Only 32% of children and young people in our survey had heard of child helplines through social media – less than the adults (45%) – which is surprising, given that children use social media more than adults. As such, we therefore suggest a more targeted campaign to raise awareness may be beneficial, using, for example, YouTube and Instagram to reach children over 13 years of age, who are using these social media networks
- ◆ As evidenced in the data provided by the five helplines who participated in the evaluation, there is a considerable disparity between countries in their records of the reasons children contacted the helplines. While this may reflect cultural differences in children's lived experiences in their countries of residence, we recommend that Child Helpline International provide more detailed guidance as to what should be recorded in each category per contact.

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