

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

pedophilia and child pornography

An omitted phenomenon and unquantifiable numbers



PRESS RELEASE

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PAEDOPHILIA/ METER REPORT 2022: CHILD ABUSE IS AN OMITTED PHENOMENON AND UNQUANTIFIABLE NUMBERS: QUANTITY OF REPORTED LINKS RISES; COMPRESSED FOLDERS ALMOST DOUBLE; ISSUES FOLLOWED BY OUR LISTENING CENTER INCREASE. (1)

Avola (SR), 28 March 2023 – According to what emerges from the monitoring work carried out by *Meter* Association, methods of exchanging child pornography material are changing: now pedophiles prefer to share and sell compressed folders shared in maximum privacy within file hosting platforms on the *Deep Web*; amount of material contained in them is unquantifiable. Pedophilia is an organized crime that profits from the skin and pain of all the victims. Many cases followed by the Listening Center. These are the data that emerged from the analysis of the Report presented by Don Fortunato Di Noto's Meter Association (www.associazionemeter.org) today, March 28, 2023, in Pachino (SR), at the Association's Training and Educational Center

THE NUMBER OF COMPRESSED FOLDERS AND LINKS IS GOING UP. CASES FOLLOWED AND TELEPHONE REQUESTS INCREASE – Looking at the numbers in detail, 2022 has reaffirmed the new exchange method: it is more convenient and convenient to share compressed folders for a fee (1,734 in 2022, 637 in 2021). The OS.MO.CO.P. by Meter (World Observatory Against Pedophilia) recorded an increase in both official protocols sent to the Italian Police (1,766 in 2022, 1,402 in 2021), and reported links (in 2022 15,660, in 2021 14,679). Pictures (from 3,479,052 to the current 1,983,679) and videos (from 1,029,170 to 921,382) recorded decreased, but unfortunately this decrease does not equate to a lower circulation of material on the Net. Let us point out that paedophiles are using social networks than during last years, so that the number of reports has halved (from 316 in 2021 to 146 in 2022). On the other hand, the cases followed by *Meter* increased (from 167 to 194) as for phone requests to our toll-free number 800 455 270 (from 406 to 527). Please keep in mind that behind each of those pictures or videos there is a victim.

TWENTY YEARS OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE – Since 2002 to today, Meter has sent 66,856 official protocols to the Italian Postal Police and to various international police forces (French Police, New Zealand Police, Spanish Police, etc.) with 219,571 links being reported (a cooperation protocol has been signed in 2008 with the Italian Postal Police and in 2017 with the Polish Police in order to certify the trustability of our reporting methods and activity). From 2002 to today 2,193 cases have been followed by the listening center; we picked up 31,213 phone requests. Since 2007, Meter has been collecting user reports using a form available on the website www.associazionemeter.org; they amount to 18,130. From 2008 to today, social networks have given

us 9,123 references to chat rooms used by pedophiles to share child pornography material. From 2012 to today, 47,801 links have been identified in the deep web and in the dark web, the dark face of the Net, free space in which criminal associations from all over the world expand their traffic because of the ability to offer anonymity and privacy. *Meter* has been continuously monitoring images, videos and mega archives since 2014: there are 25,233,802 photos reported, 7,452,304 videos and 15,437 mega archives. All complaints are sent to the competent authorities and in many cases also to the administrators who manage the platforms in which this material is conveyed and sold. This fact remains that among the incomplete legislative meanders, between the rebound of responsibility and the ineffectiveness of the repression, innocent children are drowning in every part of the world. *Meter* has been documenting this massacre for over 20 years: 24 police operations against the phenomenon have been launched thanks to reports from the Association.

PRIVACY: AN OBSTACLE TO INVESTIGATIONS – Even in 2022, online child pornography is a global phenomenon that affects the entire planet. America (12,771 links out of 15,660 reports) and Europe (1,299 links) are the cradle of most of the companies that manage the servers hosting sites and platforms where child pornography is disclosed. An accurate analysis of the geolocation of the servers confirms that the opulent Western countries appear to be the “masters of the web,” service providers accessible from all over the world, fast, anonymous and in complete safety. And privacy laws, which protect everyone’s confidentiality, are sometimes an additional wall in defense of pedophiles who can act undisturbed. On this topic, *Meter* Association has intervened several times before the European Parliament to propose an adequate solution to protect children.

Each State should adopt specific rules against online pedophilia. Furthermore, greater international cooperation and coordination between police forces around the world is needed.

PEDOMAMA, ANIMALS AND CHILD ABUSE – From the analysis of the material, presence of Pedomamas is still highlighted. We are talking about women who sexually abuse minors. Furthermore, movies of child pornography with the presence of animals who perform sexual acts on minors are arousing. And we have to testify that often this material is handcrafted in the family. The presence of infant abuse and child abuse of minors is disturbing.

ONLINE GAMES AND PRIMAGEMENT – As if that were not enough, continuous and systematic use of video games during leisure time, as a substitute for alternative relational activities, generates in our children a tendency towards isolation and favors the risk of solicitation.

THE .COM DOMAIN PREVAILS IN THE REPORTING ANALYSIS – Examining the national and generic domains, ie the “license plates” of Internet sites, it was found that, like last year, the majority of the reported links are marked with the .com suffix (13,977 in 2022, 8,972 in 2021). Out of a total of 15,660 reported links, 14,233 have generic domain (11,488 in 2021). This highlights a change in the methods of exchanging child sexual abuse material.

Among the national domains reported (total 1,439) the following stand out: Africa with Libya (.ly, 1,091 links); United States (.us, 84 links); Montenegro (.me, 41 links).

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CONTINENTS SHAME PARADE – If we look at the continents from whom all the domains come, we see this shameful world parade: Africa (1,097 reports) ranks #1, Europe #2 (120), America #3 (113), Asia #4 (71), Oceania #5 (38). For details of the national domains, consult pages 42-43 of the Report which can be downloaded from the website www.associazionemeter.org

AMERICA AND EUROPE HEADQUARTERS OF THE SERVERS – Geolocation graphs of servers show that America (12,771 links) - particularly highlighted this year - and Europe (1,299 links) are the cradle of most of the companies that manage the servers that allow the of many sites or platforms where child pornography is disseminated. This data is interesting because it makes us understand the underlying economic mechanism: the richest continents appear to be the “masters of the web,” service providers that cyberpedophiles use for their own criminal trafficking.

THE VICTIMS. THE 8/12 YEAR OLD AGE RANGE (PHOTOS AND VIDEOS) ARE MOST AT RISK, FOLLOWED BY THE 3/7 YEARS OLD – Links monitored by age group indicate that the preference for both pictures and videos is for the 8/12 age range, which reports 1,667,559 images and 718,615 videos. The 3/7 range follows with 312,748 photos and 201,975 videos, and closes the 0/2 year range with 1,542 photos and 648 videos, the so-called infantophilia.

METER LISTENING CENTER: 194 CASES FOLLOWED IN 2022, 2,193 IN 20 YEARS - *Meter* has always tried to give hope to young victims of abuse by offering services to families who ask for our intervention: among our facilities there is the Listening and First Reception Center which is - in fact – the heart of *Meter*. Our commitment can be translated into these numbers: in 2022 194 requests for protection of children were followed, problems faced mainly concerning: dysfunctional family relationships (45 cases), 41 online risks, 29 abuse issues and 60 psychopathologies. Among victims of online risks, we report 32 cases of solicitation from an online gaming platform.

PHONE HELP REQUESTS – In 2022, 527 calls were received by our toll-free number and the headquarter number from various Italian cities. *Meter* responded to phone requests of various types. Let us highlight that we paid particular attention to calls related to psychological consultancy (170) and IT consultancy (23).

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TRAINING MEETINGS – In 2022 *Meter* attended to 154 meetings, 134 of which held in presence and 20 online. Our professionals met over 22,448, specifically 7,974 students, teachers and families and provided 970 hours of internship. In the twenty-year period 2002-2022 *Meter* held 2,829 meetings.

The main topic that *Meter* professionals have dealt with, also in 2022, concerns pedophilia and the pitfalls of the Net: analysis of the profiles of pedophiles and victims, dynamics of the phenomenon, psychological aspects of the pedophile and consequences on victims, risks that hide on the Internet and technology use.

METER AND THE CHURCH: TRAINING COURSES FOR PRIESTS – *Meter* was born as a Catholic reality that lives in the Church and collaborates with it. In fact, we participate in important technical and working tables with the Italian Episcopal Conference (C.E.I.) with the Sicilian Episcopal Conference (C.E.Si). Speaking of the CESi, in 2021 Father Fortunato Di Noto was conferred the role of Contact Person for the Diocese of Noto (SR) within the Regional Service for the Protection of Minors of the Sicilian Episcopal Conference, furthermore the same C.E.Si. appointed him Head of the Regional Listening Center.

As regards the training sphere, in 2022 *Meter* met with 17 dioceses, trained 430 priests and religious, met 2,430 people in the parishes.

THE MULTIFUNCTIONAL CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENCE – In 2022, 3,840 hours were dedicated to children and teenagers. In 2016, based on the need of the territory, *Meter* activated the Multipurpose Center for childhood and adolescence: sensitivity, hospitality, professionalism put children and their families at the center of attention, protagonists and an active part of the intervention. Children followed are between the ages of 2 and 10, boys between 11 and 17 years old. In 2022 we dedicated 3,840 hours to these children and teenagers through the family room for special educational needs, the Snoezelen room which, with particular lights, colours, music, scents, landscapes, relaxes and specifically stimulates children with special needs. Also this year we have been a bridge between school and family by helping these children integrate better into institutions thanks to meetings and interventions on the class group and the use of special tools to educate classmates and schoolmates of children with special needs.

There was no shortage of psycho educational activities through workshops, the Summer Campus to encourage aggregation among young people and give concrete answers to the educational needs of the area, of minors and their families to promote and protect their rights, offering conditions for a better quality of life through the prevention and/or overcoming of conditions of hardship by supporting family responsibilities and skills thanks to socialization as well as educational interventions.

AWARENESS-RAISING INITIATIVES – Also in 2022 there were a lot of activities promoted by *Meter* Association to raise awareness of culture and the protection of children. Among these we remember the XXVI Day of Children Victims of violence, exploitation and indifference, against pedophilia (GBV) and the *Addèvu* (*children* in Sicilian slang) exhibition. The child in photography and poetry, in dialogue with *Meter* and the works of the Regional Gallery of Palazzo Bellomo organized at the Regional Gallery of Palazzo Bellomo in Syracuse on the occasion of the World Day of Children and Adolescents on November 20th, 2022.

FR. DI NOTO: REACTION TO UNQUANTIFIABLE NUMBERS, COMMITMENT AND PREVENTION – According to Fr. Fortunato Di Noto, founder and president of *Meter*: “Data, numbers, charts, even if gruesome, do not allow us to photograph the real condition of the abuses, above all sex, against child victims” This happens because, for the Sicilian priest: “It is not possible to quantify the huge amount of child pornography that surfs the Internet, just as it is not possible to stop an advancing phenomenon” As if that were not enough: “This impotence represents the most shocking and disturbing aspect of the problem. Let us continue, together, to work for the protection of children”, he concludes.