Resolution on the recruitment of children by organised crime

2026/2725(RSP) - 18/06/2026 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the recruitment of children by organised crime.

The text adopted in plenary was tabbed by the EPP, S&D, Renew, Greens/EFA and The Left groups.

Parliament strongly condemned the recruitment and exploitation of children by organised criminal and terrorist groups in all forms, both online and offline. It stressed that child recruitment constitutes a serious crime against children and a serious human rights violation. It is an evolving internal-external security threat for the European Union, requiring a comprehensive response that focuses on protection, early prevention, access to rights and educational continuity, integrating internal security, justice, social and education systems, and strategies and measures aimed at strengthening the protective environment framework for children, both offline and online.

Action plan

The Commission and the Member States are called on to explicitly recognise prevention and responses to child recruitment by organised criminal and terrorist groups as a priority area within the forthcoming EU action plan on the protection of children against crime. This action plan should include a **dedicated prevention pillar with early-warning mechanisms** involving schools, social services and families, and a youth-centred approach focused on developing life skills through direct community engagement.

The Commission is also called on to:

- address the recruitment of children by organised criminal groups also in the upcoming legislative proposal for modernised rules on organised crime;

- publish as soon as possible a legislative proposal for the revision of the directive on pyrotechnic articles, in order to combat the use of fireworks as weapons.

Online dimension

Parliament stressed that the online dimension of child recruitment is now central to the operational models of organised criminal and terrorist groups, which systematically exploit digital services to identify, target, groom, manipulate and coerce children. Online recruitment of children by organised criminal networks creates a significant enforcement gap due to limited cooperation by platforms. The Commission and the Member States are called on to ensure that current obligations for platforms are enforced.

The resolution stressed the growing threat of crime-as-a-service, including violence-as-a-service, through which young people are recruited online to undertake violent tasks. In this regard, Members welcomed Europol’s Operational Taskforce GRIMM and called on the Member States, Europol and Eurojust to strengthen joint investigations targeting recruiters, instigators and high-level actors, rather than limiting enforcement action to the minors carrying out the offences.

Protection and data sharing

Parliament also called for child-friendly, gender-responsive and trauma-informed justice systems and tailored cross-sectoral, trauma-informed reintegration programmes, including access to education, mental health and psychosocial support and recovery and rehabilitation services, protection from retaliation, including for the families, pathways to decent employment and measures to prevent stigmatisation and repeated recruitment.

Member States are urged to improve interoperable, cross-sectoral data collection and sharing on the recruitment of children into organised criminal and terrorist groups, including disaggregated and harmonised EU-wide data, to better understand trends and risk factors. Stronger international cooperation with partner countries is called for to address cross-border recruitment networks and prevent the externalisation of criminal exploitation.

Financial support

Stressing the importance of addressing root causes, including poverty, inequality, exclusion, lack of education and exposure to violence and underinvestment in public services, the Commission and the Member States are called on to increase financial support for civil society organisations, community-based initiatives, sports associations and educational programmes in areas most exposed to organised crime recruitment, offering credible alternatives to criminal pathways.

Parliament called on the Commission and the Member States to allocate adequate funding under relevant EU programmes to prevent and effectively respond to the recruitment of children by organised criminal and terrorist groups, and in particular to support the **116 000 missing children hotline** network as key multi-agency partners in identifying children at risk.