

# Europol using everyday objects to trace child sex abusers

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A Europol police agent looks at the onscreen logo of a new website launched by Europol at the Europol headquarters in The Hague on May 31, 2017

A particular shampoo brand, a magazine cover, a shopping bag or even a wallpaper pattern are among the clues Europol posted online Thursday, hoping they may help trace child sex abusers and their victims.

Europe's police agency launched a new website that shows everyday

objects spotted in the background of child sex [abuse](#) images, which they hope will help police around the world to crack the case, leading them to victims and to the arrest of perpetrators.

The 20 images on the site, called "[Stop Child Abuse - Trace an Object](#)" feature "mundane objects... which can sometimes end up being a key lead in an investigation, resulting in the victims' identification and rescue," said Steven Wilson, chief of Europol's EC3 Cybercrime centre.

Europol unveiled the images at its fortress-like headquarters in The Hague on Thursday, where Wilson asked for help from the public to identify the items on the site.

There are even distinctive markings on a victim's clothes—such as a kitten or a unicorn—or a picture of a snow-filled field with homes in the background, believed to have been taken by one victim.

"We're looking to identify particular parts, particular items in there that may be unique to a particular region in the world, a particular country or even a particular town or village," Wilson told AFP.

"From that we can then work very closely with other [law enforcement authorities](#) and actually identify the people responsible for this."

The website found at [europol.europa.eu/stopchildabuse](#) target="\_blank">[www.europol.europa.eu/stopchildabuse](#) is designed to enable anonymous tip-offs, Wilson said.

"Once the origin of an object is identified, Europol will work with the relevant police forces in a country and hopefully that will lead to the identification of the victim and the arrest of the offender," he said.

Europol last year warned that online child pornography including the live-

streaming of [child sexual abuse](#) was on the rise.

In the Netherlands, a newspaper report said Wednesday that Dutch police were for the first time describing child pornography as a "national threat."

Criminals and paedophile networks often use the "Dark Web" and the Tor encryption system to mask their identities and distribute [child sex abuse](#) images online.

"This project seeks to use the global reach of the internet to allow the public to contribute to this investigation and play a real part to prevent global [child](#) abuse," Europol chief Rob Wainwright said.

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