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# Public consultation on measures to further improve the effectiveness of the fight against illegal content online

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#### Introduction

The availability and proliferation of illegal content online remains an important public policy and security concern in the EU, notably with regards to the dissemination of terrorist content, as well as of illegal hate speech, child sexual abuse material, or illegal commercial practices and infringements of intellectual property rights, selling of illicit drugs, counterfeits or other illicit goods.

The Commission adopted on 28 September 2017 a <u>Communication</u> with guidance on the responsibilities of online service providers in respect of illegal content online and a <u>Recommendation</u> on measures to effectively tackle illegal content online on 1 March 2018.

The Commission is collecting evidence on the effectiveness of measures and the scale of the problem, and will explore, by the end of 2018, further measures to improve the effectiveness of combating illegal content online.

In particular, through the present public consultation the Commission seeks to gather views from all relevant stakeholders. The questionnaire is targeted to the general public, hosting service providers such as online platforms, organisations reporting the presence of illegal content online, competent authorities and law enforcement bodies, and academia, civil societies and other organisations.

#### About you

k) other

## Section for other organisations, civil society, academia or other businesses and associations

Replying to the questionnaire is estimated to take 20 to 30 minutes and may require documenting answers with specific data.

#### General information about your organisation

*Nan	ne of the organisation
<i>50 d</i>	character(s) maximum
I	Prostasia Foundation
If your	our organisation is included in the Transparency Register, please indicate your ID number.  To organisation is not registered, we invite you to register here, although it is not compulsory to be registered to reply to this consultation.  The transparency register?  The character (s) maximum
	976361831490-07
conta	ould the European Commission need further details in relation to your answers, would you agree to be acted by the Commission?  Yes  No
*Ema	ail address:
j	eremy@prost.asia
*In w	hat country does your organisation have its headquarters?
L	Inited States of America
* Is yo	our organisation established in a/several EU Member State(s)?  a) Yes  b) No
	ase briefly describe your organisation and/or provide a public URL.
,	We are a child protection organization whose mission is to mission is to ensure that the elimination of child

sexual abuse is achieved consistently with the highest values of the society that we would like our children to grow up in. We do this by compiling, funding, and disseminating the results of research on the prevention of

child sexual abuse, which can be used in advocacy for child protection laws, corporate policies, and

enforcement procedures that are constitutional and evidence-based.

<ul> <li>e) File sharing</li> <li>f) News and media</li> <li>g) App distribution</li> <li>h) Rating and reviews</li> <li>g) Other</li> </ul> our experience: encountering illegal contents	t online				
While using the services mentioned here-above, did you cor		the followi	na types of co	ntent?	
	Never	Once	Between 2 and 5 times	More than 5 times	l don't know
Child sexual abuse material	0	•	0	0	0
Terrorist content	•	0	0	0	0
Pirated content (e.g. music, films, books) or other audiovisual content	0	0	•	0	0
Counterfeit goods (e.g. fake perfume, fake designer brands) or other types of intellectual property infringements	•	0	0	0	0
Illegal hate speech (public incitement to violence or hatred directed against a group of persons or a member of such a group defined on the basis of race, colour, descent, religion or belief, or national or ethnic origin)	0	0	•	0	0
Scams, frauds, subscription traps or other illegal commercial practices)	0	0	•	0	0
Content I deemed illegal for other reasons than the above.	•	0	0	0	0
f you have encountered content you deemed illegal for othe 300 character(s) maximum	r reasons t	han the al	pove, please s	specify	

Please indicate if you are a user of the following types of online hosting services.

a) E-commerce market placeb) Collaborative economy

d) Video or audio streaming

c) Social networking

What action did you take after encountering the content referred to above? (Multiple options possible, should you
have encountered different situations on different occasions.)
a) No action
b) I informed the platform hosting the content
c) I contacted directly the person/organisation who had uploaded the content
d) I alerted the police/relevant enforcement authorities
e) Other action
Did you receive further information from the hosting service provider on what they intended to do as a follow-up of
your notification?
✓ a) No
b) Yes, general information on the process
c) Yes, information about the final decision on taking the content down or keeping it online
d) Other
What happened to the content you had reported? (Multiple options possible)
☑ a) It was taken-down
b) It was kept online
c) I do not know
d) Other
How fast was the content taken down?
a)Within minutes
b) Within hours
C) Within days
O d) Within a longer period of time
e) I do not know
Your experience: removal of content online
*Have you tried to upload or post online content which was blocked or removed by a hosting service provider?
a) No, never
<ul><li>b) Yes, once</li></ul>
c) Yes, several times
Od) I don't know
On what grounds was your content blocked or removed? (multiple answers possible)
a) Incitement to terrorism
b) Child sexual abuse
c) Illegal hate speech
d) Copyright infringement
e) Infringement of other intellectual property rights (e.g. counterfeit, design infringements)
f) Illegal commercial practice (e.g. scam, fraud, subscription trap)
g) Infringement to other community standards or terms of service
h) I was not informed

	i) Other
Have	e you taken any action?
	a) I contacted the hosting service and argued that the content was not illegal or against community
	standards or terms of service

b) I uploaded the content again on the same or a different hosting service

© c) I did not react

Od) Other action

Have you incurred sanctions for repeated infringements, in addition to the specific content being removed /blocked?

a) No

b) Yes, my account was suspended

C) Yes, my account was terminated

d) Yes, other sanctions

e) I do not know

Please explain how the take-down or blocking of your content and potential follow-up actions have affected you.

1000 character(s) maximum

The algorithmic flagging and blocking of a short interview clip on YouTube has resulted in the infringement of the subject's "fair use" rights under U.S. copyright law. It is impossible for algorithms to make nuanced determinations about the legality of content, and there should never be a legal compulsion for platforms to use such algorithms to take down or block content without human review. The only exception is in the case of hash-based filtering of known content that has been previously found to be illegal to possess.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements in relation to the process of removing of your allegedly illegal content and follow-up actions?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	l don't know
It was clear to me from the terms of service or community standards of the platform that the content I uploaded was not accepted on the hosting service.	©	•	0	©	0	0
Overall, I find the process for removing content sufficiently transparent.	©	0	0	•	0	0
I disagree that my content should be banned by the community standards or terms of service.	0	0	<ul><li>O</li><li>O</li><li>O</li></ul>	0	0	
I was able to contest the removal decision.	0	0	0	•	0	0

It was clear what dispute settlement mechanisms or external bodies I could use to escalate the dispute.	•	0	•	•	•	0
After repeated removals of my content, I was informed clearly about the sanctions which would be taken against me.	0	0	•	0	•	•
Overall, I find the process for disputing content removal decisions sufficiently transparent.	0	0	0	•	0	0

#### Illegal content online

Please describe the challenges, obstacles and risks you are facing in tackling illegal content.

1000 character(s) maximum

One of the challenges in tackling the availability of sexual images and videos of children online is that such material is constantly being created and shared by children themselves, who do not have the emotional competence to make a sound judgment about the consequences of their actions. There may never be a way for algorithms to detect this material when it first appears, and we should therefore not be asking the impossible of the platforms on which they are shared. The existing notice and action regime, although imperfect, is the most appropriate way to deal with this problem while preserving the benefits of an open and free Internet.

### Further measures for detecting, removing and preventing reappearance of illegal content

What features of notice systems and further measures do you consider to be most effective for enabling hosting service providers to make diligent decisions on the content notified? Please score the features on a scale from 1 (very effective) to 5 (not effective).

	1	2	3	4	5	l don't know
Standardised, accessible and user-friendly online interface for reporting content	•	0	0	0	0	0
Identification of content with unique identifiers (e.g. URLs)	•	0	0	0	0	0
Possibility to file multiple notices	•	0	0	0	0	0
Explanation of reasons and grounds of illegality	•	0	0	0	0	0
Allowing for anonymous notices	•	0	0	0	0	0
Standardised, binding notice and action procedures	0	0	•	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0

Please score the effectiveness of the following measures to support the cooperation between platforms and competent authorities/law enforcement bodies. Please use a scale from 1 (very effective) to 5 (not effective).

	1	2	3	4	5	l don't know
Enhanced cooperation and exchanges between hosting service providers and competent authorities	•	0	0	0	0	0
Enhanced capabilities and training for national authorities and courts	•	0	0	0	0	0
Appointment of points of contact amongst hosting service providers within EU Member States for cooperation with competent authorities	•	0	0	0	0	0
Appointment of points of contact amongst law enforcement or other competent authorities for cooperating with hosting service providers	•	0	0	0	0	0
Technical interfaces between platforms and law enforcement or other competent authorities	0	0	0	•	0	0
Obligation to report illegal content to competent authorities for analysis and investigation	0	0	0	0	•	0
Setting time-limits to processing referrals and notifications from law enforcement or other competent authorities (such as internet referral units)	0	0	0	0	•	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0

What further mechanisms would best support the cooperation between hosting services and trusted flaggers? Please score the mechanisms below on a scale from 1 (very effective) to 5 (not effective).

	1	2	3	4	5	l don't know
Agreement between the platform and the trusted flaggers	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trusted status agreed by a group of platforms	0	0	0	0	0	0
Certification of the trusted flaggers by national authorities	0	0	0	0	0	0
Certification of trusted flaggers at EU level	0	0	•	0	0	0
Possibility to submit data feeding the hosting service provider's automated moderation tools	0	0	0	0	•	0
Financial support to trusted flaggers by public authorities	0	0	•	0	0	0
Financial support to trusted flaggers by private entities on a voluntary basis	0	0	0	0	•	0

Setting time-limits to processing referrals and notifications from trusted flaggers	0				•	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0

What criteria should organisations fulfil to gain a privileged status ('trusted flaggers') when reporting content for removal?

1000 character(s) maximum

The trusted flagger model has its weaknesses. In particular, privileged trusted flagger status will attract special interest groups and lobbyists with designs to influence content moderation decisions in their own favor. For example, in the case of child sexual abuse imagery, there are special interest groups that wish to abolish legal adult pornography, who may misuse trusted flagger status in an attempt to achieve that aim. If an organisation is to be given trusted flagger status, it would be important for it to be multi-stakeholder and for its processes to be transparent (for example, publishing regular transparency reports) and accountable (for example, having mechanisms of audit and review).

What are the specific privileges (e.g. fast-track/immediate removal of content notified), and responsibilities such trusted flaggers should have, in your opinion, when flagging the different types of illegal content?

1000 character(s) maximum

In the case of child sexual abuse material, organisations with access to hash databases of images or videos that have been verified as illegal (for example because they have been the subject of successful prosecutions for the possession of those images) ought to be able to submit those hashes to platforms with the expectation that the corresponding material will be immediately removed if the platform has the technical capability to do so. For material that has not been verified as illegal or which has been flagged algorithmically rather than based on a known hash, the platform should not be expected to remove it without having the opportunity for its own further independent human review.

Please score the following measures to support the uptake and deployment of automated tools for removal of illegal content. Please score the measures below on a scale from 1 (very useful) to 5 (not useful).

	1	2	3	4	5	l don't know
Sharing of best practices between industry players	0	0	0	0	0	0
Industry-governed sharing of software solutions	•	0	0	0	0	0
Industry shared governance of databases supporting filtering technology	•	0	0	0	0	0
Industry shared governance of databases of training data for detection algorithms	•	0	0	0	0	0
Publicly supported databases for filtering content, training data, and/or technical tools	•	0	0	0	0	0
Public investment in research and development	•	0	0	0	0	0
Private investment in research and development	•	0	0	0	0	0
I .	1	1				

Requirements to deploy automated tools for detecting and/or blocking content	0	0	0	0	•	0
Requirements to use shared databases for blocking content	0	0	0	0	•	©
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0

What safeguards should be put in place when using automated tools for the detection and removal of illegal content online? Please score the measures below on a scale from 1 (very useful) to 5 (not useful).

	1	2	3	4	5	l don't know
Transparency, in simple, clear language, of the general principles for the algorithmic decision-making	•	0	0	0	0	0
Transparent reporting on the accuracy indicators for the automated tools used	•	0	0	0	0	0
Audits and error-detection tests for algorithmic filtering and algorithmic detection of illegal content	•	0	0	0	0	0
'Human in the loop' principle: include human review in the processes leading to removal of content	•	0	0	0	0	0
Counter-notice procedures also when content removal /blocking is decided through automated means	•	0	0	0	0	0
Other	•	0	0	0	0	0

If other, please specify

Algorithms cannot be used to accurately detect previously unknown child abuse imagery.

What are the most effective safeguards to counter erroneous removal of legal content? Please score the measures below on a scale from 1 (very effective) to 5 (not effective).

1	2	3	4	5	l don't know
0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0
•	0	0	0	0	0
•	0	0	0	0	0
	•	<ul><li>O</li><li>O</li><li>O</li><li>O</li></ul>			

Encourage the use of out-of-court dispute settlement	•	0	0	0	0	0
Cooperation with third-parties such as self-regulatory bodies or competent authorities, for consultation in difficult cases	•	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0

Please describe the challenges, obstacles and risks you are facing in tackling illegal content.

1000 character(s) maximum

Our organization, Prostasia Foundation, aims to provide a service of consultation with platforms about the criteria they should apply in difficult cases. We have a zero tolerance approach for child sexual abuse and child sexual abuse imagery (child pornography). At the same time, we also support the free and open Internet and are against censorship of lawful speech. We bring together mental health professionals, child protection workers, human rights activists, sex industry experts, and CSA survivors, to develop standards for child protection laws and policies that are balanced and evidence-based.

### Your opinion

In your opinion, who has an important role to play in tackling illegal content online?

	Main role	Important role	Marginal role	l don't know	No answer
Internet users	•	0	0	0	0
Hosting service providers	0	•	0	0	0
Public and other competent authorities and law enforcement bodies	0	•	0	0	0
Private entities affected by the spread of illegal content (e.g. rights holders)	0	0	•	0	0
Individual victims affected by illegal content	0	0	•	0	0
Civil society and other organisations with expertise who flag illegal content	0	•	0	0	0
Other	0	•	0	0	0

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	l don't know	No answer
*The Internet is safe for its users.	0	0	•	0	0	0	0
* It is important that there are arrangements in place so that no illegal content is spread on the Internet.	•	0	0	•	•	0	©
* It is important that freedom of expression is protected online.	•	0	0	0	0	0	0
*Hosting service providers should process all notifications they receive and assess the legality of the content notified.	•	•	0	•	•	0	©
*When content is flagged as illegal by private organisations with proven expertise, hosting services should speed up the process for removing the content.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

*When content is flagged as illegal by competent authorities or law enforcement bodies, platforms should speed up the process for removing the content	•	•	©	©	©	©	•
*When online hosting services remove content, users should be able to contest this decision by contacting the service (counternotice).	•	•	•	•	©	•	©
*The regulatory framework is effective against illegal content.	0	•	0	•	0	0	0
*Hosting service providers are effective in tackling illegal content.	0	•	0	0	0	0	0

In your opinion, is there a need for further measures to tackle illegal content online?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	l don't know	No answer
Through proactive measures taken by hosting service providers and other relevant actors.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Via legislative measures.	0	0	0	0	•	0	0
Actions should be taken at EU level to put appropriate measures in place.	0	0	•	0	•	0	0
Different types of illegal content should be dealt with in different legal frameworks, to take into account specificities.	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Are there additional comments you would like to make? Please detail, in particular, if your answers refer to different experiences, different types of illegal content, etc.

500 character(s) maximum

It is impossible to put arrangements in place that would ensure that no illegal content is ever spread online, without infringing the European Convention on Human Rights and destroying the freedom and openness of the Internet. We should not aspire to that impossible standard, and neither should we expect Internet platforms to meet it. There are however measures that can be taken to reduce the demand for illegal content online, which include education, and peer and professional support.

Please feel free to upload a concise document, such as a position paper of relevance to this public consultation. Please note that the uploaded document will be published alongside your response to the questionnaire which is the essential input to this open public consultation.

The maximum file size is 1 MB

#### Your contribution

Note that, whatever option chosen, your answers may be subject to a request for public access to documents under Regulation (EC) N°1049/2001

- can be published with your organisation's information (I consent the publication of all information in my contribution in whole or in part including the name of my organisation, and I declare that nothing within my response is unlawful or would infringe the rights of any third party in a manner that would prevent publication)
- can be published provided that your organisation remains anonymous (I consent to the publication of any information in my contribution in whole or in part (which may include quotes or opinions I express) provided that it is done anonymously. I declare that nothing within my response is unlawful or would infringe the rights of any third party in a manner that would prevent the publication.

#### Contact

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