
Counter-terrorism specialists team up to take down online terrorist propaganda

1 677 media content and social media accounts in 6 languages containing terrorist and violent extremist propaganda have been processed for the purpose of referral. The content was hosted by 35 social media and online service providers.

This is the result of a Europol coordinated international action involving Internet Referral Units (IRUs) from France, Germany, Slovenia and the United Kingdom.

For the first time since its launch, Europol's Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU) organised and joined forces with the IRUs on a 48-hour joint action to secure the removal of the material as quickly as possible. The teams jointly targeted accounts used by terrorist groups to radicalise, recruit, direct terrorist activity and glorify their atrocities.

The Europol team, which was composed of specialists, analysts, translators and counter-terrorism experts, was supported by British, French, German and Slovenian colleagues throughout the operation from the Agency's headquarters in The Hague.

The decision and removal of the referred terrorist and extremist online content was a voluntary activity by the concerned service providers, taken in reference to their own terms and conditions.

The EU IRU was launched in July 2015 to combat terrorist propaganda and related violent extremist activities on the internet e.g. terrorist propaganda videos, pictures of beheadings, bomb-making instructions and speeches calling for racial or religious violence.

A key capability of Europol's Counter Terrorism Centre ECTC, the EU IRU performs the following core tasks:

- Coordinates and shares the identification tasks (flagging) of terrorist and violent extremist online content with relevant partners;
- Carries out and supports referrals quickly, efficiently and effectively, in close cooperation with the industry;
- Supports competent authorities, by providing strategic analysis and operational analysis;
- Acts as a European Centre of Excellence for the above tasks.

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