



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Webinar on Terrorist Use of the Internet: Designation of Illicit Content Online and Gaps in Regulatory Frameworks

12 March 2021

Introduction

The OSCE Transnational Threat Department's Action against Terrorism Unit (TNTD/ATU) is the focal point and a resource hub for the OSCE's 57 participating States (pS), field operations and independent institutions, and helps support and implement the OSCE's counter-terrorism commitments. One of the key OSCE counter-terrorism commitments is the addressing terrorist use of the Internet. To that end, TNTD/ATU and the OSCE External Co-operation Section are organizing a webinar on *Terrorist Use of the Internet: Designation of Illicit Content Online and Gaps in Regulatory Frameworks*, with the support of the Albanian Chair of the OSCE Asian Partners for Co-operation Group. The event will take place online on 12 March 2021, at 11:00–13:00 (CET).

The webinar will build upon the key findings of the OSCE roundtable on *Leveraging Innovation and Technology to Address 21st Century Security Challenges and Crises across the OSCE and Asian Partners for Co-operation*, which was held on 9-10 November 2020.

Background

Online platforms have enabled unprecedented market opportunities, and are important drivers of innovation and growth in today's economy. They also provide extraordinary access to information and communication, be it through search engines, social networks, micro-blogging sites, or video-sharing platforms. These platforms connect billions of users, contain vast amount of content and information, and provide innovative services to citizens and businesses.

However, online platforms are also misused to spread xenophobic and racist ideas that can incite hatred and violence, and enable terrorist goals. Violent extremist groups and movements are taking advantage of modern communication technologies to spread their messages more effectively than ever, targeting vulnerable Internet users, in order to get support, publicity, recognition and legitimacy for their cause. This dynamics is even more heightened by the lockdown restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The increasing availability of such material online poses a serious threat to security and safety as well as to the dignity of victims. Many states have been facing substantial challenges in designating illicit online content and in developing regulatory frameworks to address terrorist abuse of the Internet while protecting the freedom of expression and other fundamental human rights. This exercise is becoming even more complex with the growing tendency to shift responsibility and liability to private commercial actors.

OSCE pS identified countering the use of the Internet for terrorist purposes as one of the strategic focus areas of OSCE counter-terrorism efforts. Specifically, pS committed themselves to further disseminate lessons learned and exchange relevant information and national best practices at the national and regional levels and to identify possible strategies to combat this threat, while ensuring respect for relevant international human rights obligations and standards (MC.DEC/10/08, 2008).

Within this mandate and the guiding principles that direct the OSCE's work in addressing transnational threats, while recognizing the challenging regulatory context and the goal of using legal tools and accountable measures to prevent the misuse of the Internet in the context of terrorism, the TNTD/ATU is organizing a webinar with the following objectives:

- to further the international discussions on the challenges of designation of illicit content online and on the gaps in the regulatory framework to address terrorist use of the Internet;
- to help OSCE pS better understand how initiatives that claim to address various forms of violent extremist and terrorist content online may negatively impact fundamental human rights;
- to underline that the successful tackling of the use of the Internet platforms for terrorist purposes requires integrating strong transparency, remedy and accountability measures into any pertinent legal and regulatory frameworks in line with the international human rights standards.

The key findings of this event will be published as an outcome document, further supported by a commissioned reflection paper on good practices and challenges regarding the designation of illicit/terrorist content online.

Webinar Structure

A two-hour online event will focus on the challenges related to the designation and identification of illicit content online, and its removal, as well as the gaps in regulatory frameworks. The webinar will also discuss the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in multi-stakeholder initiatives that deal with restricting the availability and accessibility of illicit content.

Four expert speakers will be invited to provide 10-minute presentations and participate in a facilitated questions-and-discussion session.

The webinar discussions will be scoped to support the development of an outcome document to be published on the OSCE website. Target audience includes policy experts and decision-makers from relevant national authorities dealing with counter-terrorism and regulation of online content, as well as representatives of the private sector, think tanks, academia and civil society.

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

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Organizational Modalities

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and taking into account the restrictions related to travelling and in-person participation, the webinar will be delivered fully online through Zoom communication platform.

Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in all six OSCE official languages: English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish.

Please note: This event will be recorded for publishing on the OSCE website. All audience members agree to the possibility of appearing on these recordings by virtue of attending the event or participating in the event.

Registration

Participants are invited to register online by 10 March 2021 via the following link:

https://osce-org.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJwpc-uvrT0oGdGtrWmyEZDsTmQbg_kKtJHe

or visit www.zoom.us/join and enter the following Meeting ID: 984 4273 6235

or scan the QR code below by hovering mobile phone's camera over it:



The link and password to access the webinar will be sent to registered participants after the registration deadline on 10 March 2021.

Participating in the discussion:

The organizers strongly encourage the participants to actively engage in the discussions and address their questions during the moderated discussion session by using Zoom “raise your hand” or chat functions.