

PRESS RELEASE

Hotline.ie 2012 report shows Ireland's Internet hosting sector not immune to misuse for child pornography distribution

Minister for Justice Alan Shatter T.D. to launch Annual Report of Hotline.ie on Monday 29th April

Hotline.ie, the service that takes complaints from the public about suspected illegal content on the Internet, publishes its annual report on Monday 29th April. From almost 3,000 reports received in 2012, only 96 were assessed as illegal child pornography under Irish law. However, four cases were traced to servers here in Ireland, the highest number recorded in one year since the Hotline was established in 1999. While this is extremely low by international standards, it brings into sharp focus that Ireland's Internet infrastructure is not immune to the activities of paedophile rings and organised criminals distributing child pornography around the world.

Commenting on these figures, Paul Durrant, CEO of the Internet Service Providers Association that runs the Hotline, stressed that while four cases were four too many, by international standards Ireland's Internet hosting services are viewed by these criminals as an environment hostile to storing of child pornography. "When notified by Hotline.ie, ISPAI members act swiftly to take down such content and work closely with An Garda Síochána to uncover the evidence left by the criminals on our servers". He went on to say, "as Ireland positions itself to attract international digital business and benefit from the jobs created, internationally available cloud services will increasingly be located here. ISPAI is committed to keep up the pressure and ensure that these new services are not exploited by criminals. Hotline.ie acting on public reports and our international cooperation with 43 similar "INHOPE" Hotlines around the world is our main line of defence."

In most previous years, Ireland's hosting servers have apparently been child pornography free – a claim backed by the fact that no other INHOPE Hotline around the world had reports in those years that they traced to an ISP in Ireland. (Editor's note: From 1999 through 2011 there were in total 3 verified incidents where illegal content reported through the INHOPE network was traced to Ireland.)

The 2012 Report shows that the source of the illegal child sexual abuse content in 78 of the reports was traced by Hotline.ie to countries having an INHOPE hotline and so forwarded swiftly to them for action with their police and deletion from the servers. (Other countries are reached by passing the content source details to An Garda Síochána). In 2012, INHOPE has shown that 90% of all illegal content hosted in Europe and reported through the INHOPE hotlines is removed within 72 hours. INHOPE hotlines in 37 countries worldwide exchanged 37,400 cases of confirmed illegal child abuse content uncovered by members of the public.

The number of reports received by Hotline.ie confirmed to be child pornography has plummeted from a high of 684 reports in 2007 to 96 in 2012. Other countries have noted declines but not as sharp a drop. Durrant believes there are other factors at play in Ireland and suggests the popularity of social networking, which presents a more controlled environment, may be a factor in the Irish public not stumbling across child sexual abuse material on the web as frequently as in the past.

The full report will be published online at: www.hotline.ie/rep2013.pdf after it has been announced by the Minister shortly after 11:30 a.m. on Monday 29th April, 2013

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REPORT LAUNCH

WHERE: Yeats Room, Mont Clare Hotel, 1-4 Merrion Street Lr, Dublin 2

WHEN: 11:00 a.m., Monday 29th April 2013

PRESS ENQUIRIES: 01-2945280