

Date: 10 June 2015

JOUR FIXE MEETING DG HOME AFFAIRS

AGENDA ITEM :

EU IT Forum

CHEF DE FILE : HOME/D1

Objective

The **European Agenda on Security** announced the launch of an EU-level Forum with IT companies to counter terrorism online.

The purpose of this note is to explain the overall **context of the initiative** (cf. section 1), to provide further details about the proposed **remit of the EU IT Forum** (cf. section 2), to outline **organisational aspects as well as a series of actions and first initiatives** (cf. section 3) and to identify a number of **challenges** (cf. section 4).

The Commissioner is invited to endorse the proposal and provide further guidance.

Issue description

1. Background and context

During the Informal European Council on 12 February 2015, HOSG highlighted that adequate measures should be taken to detect and remove internet content promoting terrorism or extremism, including through greater cooperation between public authorities and the private sector at EU level and also working with Europol to establish internet referral capabilities.

The European Agenda on Security announced the launch of "*an EU-level Forum with IT companies to bring them together with law enforcement authorities and civil society. Building upon the preparatory meetings organised in 2014, the Forum will focus on deploying the best tools to counter terrorist propaganda on the internet and in social media. In cooperation with IT companies, the Forum will also explore the concerns of law enforcement authorities on new encryption technologies.*"

There are a number of *EU initiatives directly relevant for the development of counter narratives and the removal of terrorist content online*:

- The RAN working group on Internet and Social Media (**RAN @**), explores and researches the role of Internet and social media in relation to radicalisation and to counter-messaging. It brings together practitioners from the public and private sectors to explore how best to challenge extremist narratives online, with a view to empowering practitioners to deliver effective counter narratives.
- The Syria Strategic Communications Advisory Team (**SSCAT**) assists Member States in developing strategic communication campaigns to address the threat from Foreign Terrorist Fighters. The internet will provide a key means of promoting these campaigns.

- In responding to Ministers' calls and the European Agenda on Security, Europol is in the process of creating the EU Internet Referral Unit (**EU IRU**) by 1 July 2015. The EU IRU will scan the internet for terrorist material as well as receive content from MS. Where Europol assesses that the material is in breach of the companies' terms and conditions, Europol will pass the URL to the relevant ISP, with a view to securing its swift removal.

There are other relevant *initiatives pursued by Member States at national level* [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] where closer coordination with the work of the Internet Forum would be desirable.

2. Remit of the IT Forum:

The remit of the IT Forum shall be aligned to policy objectives and priorities while remaining **open and sufficiently flexible** to host new topics and issues when they arise.

The Internet Forum shall serve as a *platform for the relevant stakeholders* to discuss issues of relevance for tackling the use of the internet and social media for terrorist purposes. The Forum's purpose should first and foremost be to identify common tools, best practices, innovative and new solutions to tackle all IT related issues of terrorism. It should also serve as a *hub which links to a number of other relevant initiatives*.

In line with the *policy objectives and priorities* set out in the **European Agenda on Security**, the Commission's *Communication on Prevention* as well as the *Revised EU Strategy on Radicalisation and Recruitment*, the **IT Forum** shall focus on :

- **reducing accessibility to terrorist material online** [REDACTED] and
- **making better use of the internet to challenge the terrorist narrative** ([REDACTED]).
- Exploring the concerns of law enforcement on new **encryption** technologies.

While work in the two first mentioned areas is taking concrete shape, further exploratory work needs to be carried out before being able to determine more specifically what the Commission can helpfully do in the area of encryption.

A *first exploratory meeting with industry representatives* of Google, Facebook, Twitter, Ask.fm and a representative of the Counter-Terrorism Coordinator's Office has taken place on 7th May to define scope and organisation of a more structured dialogue. These discussions have revealed that the industry is both active and engaged in tackling terrorist content online. The industry sees the Internet Forum as an effective tool to showcase what they do, co-ordinate engagement with law enforcement at EU level whilst improving mutual understanding across the Union.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

3. Organisational aspects and first initiatives

It is proposed that the Forum acts on three levels:

1. **High level:** It is proposed to organise an annual High level event to be convened by Commissioner Avramopoulos bringing together EU Ministers of Interiors and representatives of the internet industry and possibly other stakeholders. This High Level event would take stock of actions undertaken so far, highlight challenges and emerging issues and provide strategic guidance for further work.

[Redacted]

2. **Intermediate level:** It is proposed to organise a series of events with different stakeholders drawing in particular on other works streams and initiatives (hub function) – this is where the substantial work of the Forum will be done. These events shall take the form of **trainings, workshops and awareness raising events**. This would include:

➤ [Redacted]

➤ participation of IT companies to selected RAN@ events (starting by July 2015);

➤ first meeting between with EU Member States representatives (Ministries of Interior, Justice, Law enforcement) and Europol with IT Industry to "take stock" of respective, existing practices, to enhance Member States' understanding and establish a more collaborative working relationship (24 July 2015);

➤ [Redacted]

3. **Governance level:** Representatives of the internet companies and the Commission will meet at expert level (DG HOME) to follow-up and report from the events undertaken so far and prepare for future meetings and deliverables. Such meetings shall take place at regular intervals.

4. Challenges

[Redacted text block]

[Redacted text block]

- [Redacted list item]

- [Redacted list item]

[Redacted text block]

- [Redacted list item]

- [Redacted list item]

Issues on which the Jour Fixe needs to take a decision

To endorse the proposed set up and envisaged work streams of the IT Forum as outlined above, notably

- The organisation, planning and timing of the High Level event end of 2015;
- The envisaged approach and work streams related to the various priority areas
- The role and form of engagement of civil society and private sector;
- The envisaged approach to ensure adequate transparency of activities as well as communications.