



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS
Directorate D: Security

LAUNCH OF EU INTERNET FORUM

SUMMARY OF MEETING

Commissioner Avramopoulos opened the event, welcoming the internet companies, ministers, the CTC and Europol to the launch of the EU Internet Forum. He set out concerns over terrorists' increasing use of the internet, particularly in relation to recent attacks. Whilst the internet could not be held responsible for radicalising individuals online, it certainly appeared to be intensifying and accelerating the radicalisation process.

A two-pronged approach was required. Firstly to empower civil society partners to challenge the extremist narrative online and secondly to reduce the amount of terrorist material online. With regards to the latter, all participants were urged to support the EU Internet Referral Unit in reaching its full potential. The Commissioner also stressed the importance of enabling the public to report material of concern.

Just as ministers must protect the public, so the industry must protect their users. The Commissioner thereby called upon participants to use the Forum to strengthen the relationship. He also wanted consideration to be given as to how the Forum could be used to address other areas of online concern.

Commissioner Jourova spoke about the surge in hate speech inciting violence online. The Commissioner highlighted the vital role civil society partners play in challenging hate speech and urged the internet companies to provide support to civil society in challenging such online hatred. The Commissioner explained how the EU Framework Decision on racism and xenophobia had introduced an obligation on MSs to criminalise hate speech, including online. The Commissioner urged companies to commit to removing hate speech which is hosted on their platforms and called for closer alignment with counter terrorism efforts under the EU Internet Forum.

Europol gave a detailed overview on the scale to which terrorists were using the internet. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Europol explained how it had set up the EU IRU in response to the call from JHA Ministers in March. In its first six months of operations, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

The internet companies welcomed the initiative and many shared Commissioner Avramopoulos' concerns over the problem. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Member States then intervened. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] thought more could be done to share best practices on flagging material of concern.

The Netherlands attached great importance to this initiative and offered its support as the forthcoming Presidency.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Finland and Malta both welcomed the initiative and called for greater co-operation.

The EU CTC urged all participants to prioritise the implementation of the conclusions. He welcomed the inclusion of hate speech. He asked MSs to support the EU IRU and highlighted the importance of training. He also thought further consideration should be given to the issue of e-evidence.

Belgium introduced the Syria Strategic Communications Advisory Team who set out the challenges faced by civil society partners in addressing terrorist propaganda online. More urgently had to be done to equip civil society partners with the necessary resource and training.

The companies responded, with some offering support and further training.

In summing up, the Commissioner thanked participants for their contribution and commitment to the Forum. The conclusions would form the strategic steer for actions over the coming year and he urged all to commit to these as far as they practicably could. He highlighted how this Forum would feed into the wider debate relating to the Single Market Strategy. The Commissioner closed, saying he looked forward to working with all participants in the course of the following year.