

REPORT CENTRE

against
Child Sexual Abuse Material
and National Socialism



ANNUAL REPORT
2021

www.stopline.at

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FOREWORD

Normality will return in 2021 - this was a hope that was not fulfilled in any respect. After the „Corona year“ of 2020 we are still confronted with home office, online meetings and social distancing in certain areas - and unfortunately also with exceptionally high number of reports received by Stopline. Corona also dominated in 2021 and the sad trend continued: more child sexual abuse material than ever was reported to Stopline, as well as to the other hotlines that belong to the world-wide INHOPE network.

Stopline received almost 43,500 reports in 2021. This corresponds to an increase of approximately 60 % compared to 2020.

A big thank you to the Internet users who report to Stopline! Additionally, a special mention should be made of the Stopline employees, who process every single report and ensure that the illegal content is immediately removed from the Internet, in cooperation with law enforcement and host providers. A big thank you to everyone involved.

Dr. Barbara Schlossbauer, Stopline project manager

Reports received

Statistics for the last 20 years Stopline: 2001 - 2021



STOPLINE REPORT CENTRE

Stopline is the online reporting centre for people who encounter child sexual abuse material and National Socialist content on the internet. Stopline's overarching goal is to work with host providers to remove illegal content, with a particular focus on material published in Austria.

Stopline was established in 1998 and is an officially authorised and recognised report centre. It works in close cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry for the Interior and domestic internet service providers. To help it successfully combat illegal internet content at an international level, Stopline is part of the global INHOPE hotline network.

HOW STOPLINE WORKS

Stopline employees do not actively seek out illegal material, instead they focus on processing incoming reports. These are submitted by vigilant internet users and INHOPE partner hotlines.

Which content can you report?

Stopline is responsible for processing reports regarding:

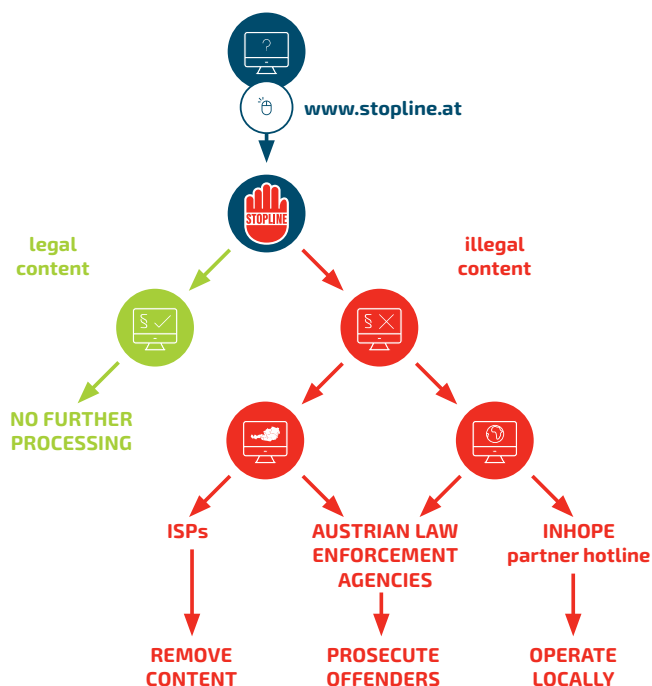
- Child sexual abuse material pursuant to section 207a Austrian Criminal Code (Strafgesetzbuch, StGB) and
- National Socialism in accordance with the National Socialism Prohibition Act 1947 (Verbotsgesetz) and the 1960 Austrian Abzeichengesetz* which prohibits National Socialist regalia and symbols.

How can you report?

You can notify Stopline of illegal content online – anonymously if you wish – in the following ways:

- using the online form at www.stopline.at
- or by sending an e-mail to office@stopline.at

* The full German-language text of the Criminal Code can be found at www.ris.bka.gv.at.



IMPORTANT!

You must not actively embark on a search for illegal content and do not send any images to Stopline! This could be interpreted as an illegal act in itself. All it takes for Stopline to follow up a report is an accurate as possible indication of the source of the suspicious material.



KEY DETAILS AT A GLANCE

Incoming reports again at a record high

Compared to 2020 (26,992 reports), the total number of reports received increased significantly again in 2021. A total of 43,496 reports were submitted to Stopline - this corresponds to an increase of almost 60 % compared to 2020, which was also a “record year” – well above the long-term 20-year average.

About 20 percent valid reports

The percentage of reports that were actually classified as valid – i.e. sexual abuse depictions of minors or National Socialist engagement – was slightly lower compared to the last few years, but in absolute numbers 8,156 reports were deemed accurate. This number has increased continuously and significantly in recent years (2018: 2,867, 2019: 2,697 and 2020: 7,731).

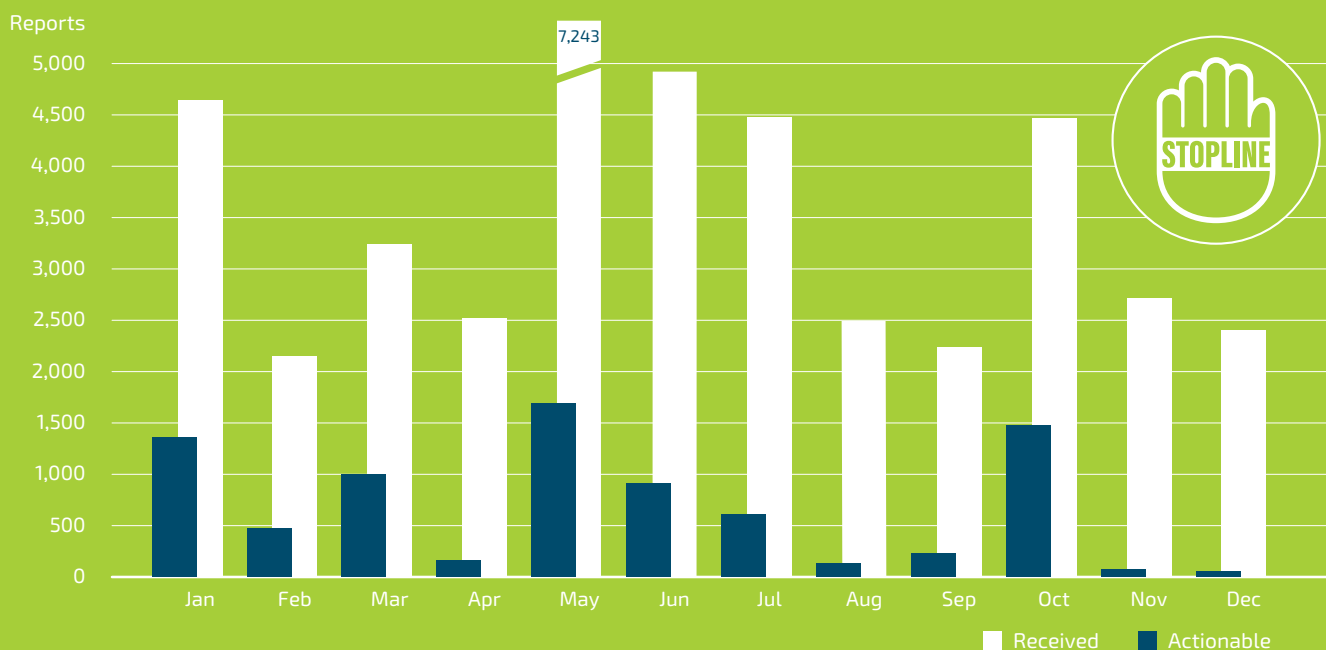
Regarding the content that was categorized as actually unlawful by Stopline, a clear 99.7 % (8,132 in absolute numbers), fell into the category of child sexual abuse material in 2021, only 0.3 % concerned National Socialist content. This ratio is identical to the figures for 2020.

Austria still an unattractive hosting location for illegal content

Despite the high number of cases of illegal content reported to Stopline, only one of these reports related to content hosted in Austria. This corresponds to around 0.01 % of all illegal content processed by Stopline in 2021 and represents a significant decrease in comparison to 2020 (53 reports). In an international context, Austria is still classified as a country with a small amount of illegal content.

The single case of content hosted in Austria fell into the category of child sexual abuse material. With the help of the relevant Austrian host provider, the material was removed from the internet quickly in order to make it impossible for internet users to access it again.

Reports received vs actionable reports in 2021

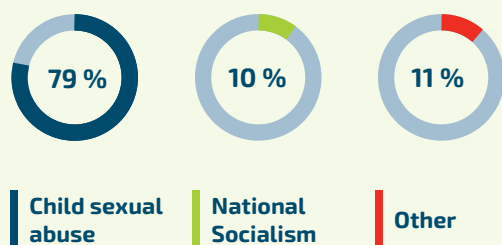




PROFILE OF REPORTS IN 2021

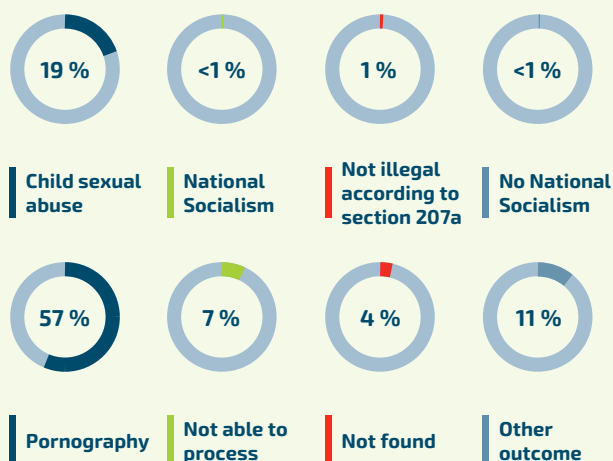
Categorisation of reports by reporters in 2021

On average, about 3,600 cases per month were reported to Stopline in 2021. This indicates a considerable increase compared to previous years. 79 % (34,379 in absolute numbers) of the total of 43,496 reports sent were defined as sexual abuse of minors by the reporters. Just under 10 % (4,385 reports) were categorised as National Socialist content. In the remaining 11 % (4,732 reports labelled as „other“), users referenced content that they could not clearly categorise.



Categorisation of reports by Stopline in 2021

Stopline checks all incoming reports and determines whether there is criminal content. About 19 % of the reported cases, namely 8,156, were actually classified as unlawful. Although this represents a decrease in relation to the significantly higher percentage in 2020 (29 %), in absolute figures the amount of illegal content was again very high at over 8,000 confirmed reports. If one contrasts the categorisation of the reporter with that of Stopline, about 24 % of the cases reported as child sexual abuse were actually illegal, while for National Socialist re-activation it was less than 1 %.



57 % of the reports featured pornography depicting persons of legal age. In about 1 % of the cases regarding child sexual abuse material or National Socialist content, Stopline came to the conclusion that, while perhaps appearing illegal to laypeople, the reported material was not in contravention of section 207a of the Austrian Criminal Code or the National Socialism Prohibition Act 1947 (Verbotsgesetz) or the Abzeichen-gesetz outlawing National Socialist regalia and symbols.

Of the remaining 23 % of reports, either they could not be processed (e.g. incorrectly transmitted data), the content could not be found (e.g. access barriers due to passwords or removed content), or it fell under the category „Other outcome“, which are either legally harmless or concern topics that could theoretically be illegal, but are beyond Stopline’s responsibility - such as online fraud.

Reports received vs actionable reports in 2021

Reports received by Stopline / categorised as actionable – by content:

	Received	Actionable
Child sexual abuse	34,379	8,132
National Socialism	4,385	24
Other	4,732	-
Total	43,496	8,156

Reports received by Stopline / categorised as actionable – by online service:

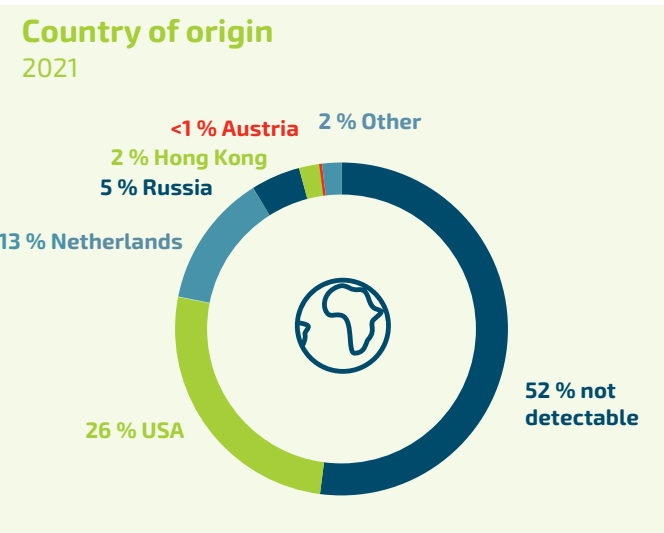
	Received	Actionable
World wide web	38,054	3,919
Social media	689	20
YouTube	40	1
TOR network	4,670	4,216
File sharing	8	0
Other	35	0
Total	43,496	8,156

ORIGIN OF ILLEGAL CONTENT IN 2021

Most common hosting locations

Illegal content is often hosted in location where unregulated and cheap IT infrastructure (server, web space, connectivity) is available, or where the legal system allows the publication of such content. However, this does not mean that the illegal material, especially the depiction of sexual abuse of minors, was produced in these countries. It is merely the place where the content was published on the internet. In terms of content reported to Stopline, the USA has led the hosting country statistics for illegal material in recent years. However, a new trend was noted in 2021. For the first time, the country of origin could no longer be determined for more than 50 % of the reported content - a statistic that can be attributed in particular to the use of TOR networks (the so-called „dark web“). Around 26 % (2020: 35 %) of illegal content was hosted in the USA in 2021. The Netherlands hosted 12 % (2020: 16 %), followed by Russia with around 5 %.

Despite the high number of reports, Stopline registered only one case of illegal content originating in Austria in 2021. On a long-term average, this proportion remains minimal in relation to the total number of reports. Austria therefore remains unattractive as a hosting location, partly due to the swift intervention of all parties involved, especially the relevant host providers.



International partnerships

The majority of reports that were classified as illegal by Stopline were hosted on foreign servers. This shows the importance of international cooperation to remove illegal content from the internet. Therefore, one of Stopline’s primary activities is to immediately inform its partner hotlines in the respective host countries.

In 2021, Stopline was able to directly inform a competent hotline in almost 46 % of all cases of sexual abuse depictions of minors hosted abroad. The number was lower than in previous years (2020: 60 %), because, as described above, more than half of the reports could not be traced back to a specific country of origin.

National partnerships

Even if the illegal material is hosted on a foreign server, Stopline also reports the content to Austrian prosecutors.

If the content is hosted by an Austrian internet service provider, Stopline notifies the relevant executive agencies. To ensure an immediate reaction, Stopline has been working closely with the government departments at the Federal Ministry of Internal Affairs for many years: the Report Centre for Child Pornography and Child Sex Tourism on the Internet at the Federal Criminal Police Office (BK) and the Report Centre for National Socialism at the Directorate for State Security and Intelligence (DSN).

Stopline also contacts the host provider, asking them to remove the content from the internet so that it can no longer be accessed online. Stopline does not delete or censor any allegedly illegal material itself. Instead, it gives providers recommendations on how to proceed if any is discovered. It is down to the provider to decide how to react. In Austria, all the providers are very aware of their responsibilities, meaning that any illegal content is rapidly removed from the internet.

Content categorised by Stopline as illegal (excluding duplicate reports) was forwarded to:

	Reports
Executive agencies (BK and DSN)	6,409
Austrian providers	1
INHOPE Partner Hotlines	3,719



SAFER INTERNET CENTRE AUSTRIA

Together with Saferinternet.at, Rat auf Draht and ISPA, Stoplevel makes up Safer Internet Centre Austria, which is the Austrian partner in the European Union's Internet Network (www.betterinternetforkids.eu), which provides a range of measures designed to raise awareness of safe internet use.

A highlight of the Safer Internet Centre Austria's activities is the annual Safer Internet Day, which took place on February 9th, 2021 with the theme „Together for a better internet“.

Saferinternet.at

Das Internet sicher nutzen!

www.saferinternet.at



www.rataufdraht.at



www.ispa.at

NATIONAL PARTNERS

Child Pornography and Child Sex Tourism Report Centre

The Federal Criminal Police Office (BK) operates the Police Report Centre for Child Pornography and Child Sex Tourism on the Internet.

www.bmi.gv.at/meldestellen

Report Centre for National Socialism

The Report Centre for National Socialism is part of the Directorate for State Security and Intelligence (DSN).

www.bmi.gv.at/meldestellen

nic.at GmbH



nic.at is the registry for .at, .co.at and .or.at domains and has provided financial support to Stoplevel since the beginning.

www.nic.at

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INTERNET HOTLINES

INHOPE

Report centres worldwide cooperate quickly, efficiently and with minimal bureaucracy via the INHOPE global hotline network. INHOPE was founded in 1999 as an international association and had 50 members in 46 countries worldwide at the end of 2021.

www.inhope.org

Stopline info material

is available for download at www.stopline.at

A print version of our leaflet is also available to order.

Stopline at events

The Stopline experts talk about the work they do at their report centre at various events. Interested in a Stopline talk? Write to us at office@stopline.at and let us know about the event you are planning.

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