

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



REPORT CENTRE
against Child Sexual Abuse Material
and National Socialism

FOREWORD

When presenting our work, I am often asked, „Does your work really make a difference? Isn't the removal of individual images negligible considering the sheer volume of content on the internet? It's just a drop in the ocean!“

My unequivocal response is yes! Indeed, our work is a critical and valuable task within a vast, international network striving to eradicate illegal content from the internet. Alongside the accessibility for consumers of illegal content, one crucial factor must not be overlooked: Each image that we deem illegal under § 207a StGB depicts the sexual abuse of a child. This abuse has occurred, and it continues to haunt the victim for their entire life, particularly if photos or videos of it are circulating online. There's always the anxiety of being identified, and the knowledge that offenders continue to derive pleasure from it online, often making substantial profits. Also, the propagation of content that glorifies the Nazi era or promotes National Socialist ideologies should be combated by all possible means.

As such, we, the Stoplevel team, will persist in our relentless effort and we will never cease in our endeavors. This is our pledge, our commitment to a safer internet!

Dr. Barbara Schloßbauer
Stoplevel Project Manager



„The success of Stoplevel is largely attributed to the vigilance of many internet users, as well as collaborations and networks both domestically and internationally.“

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ABOUT STOPLINE



190.000

REPORTS RECEIVED

Stopleveline serves as an online reporting platform for individuals who encounter depictions of sexual abuse involving minors (often colloquially referred to as child pornography), or content promoting National Socialist resurgence on the internet.

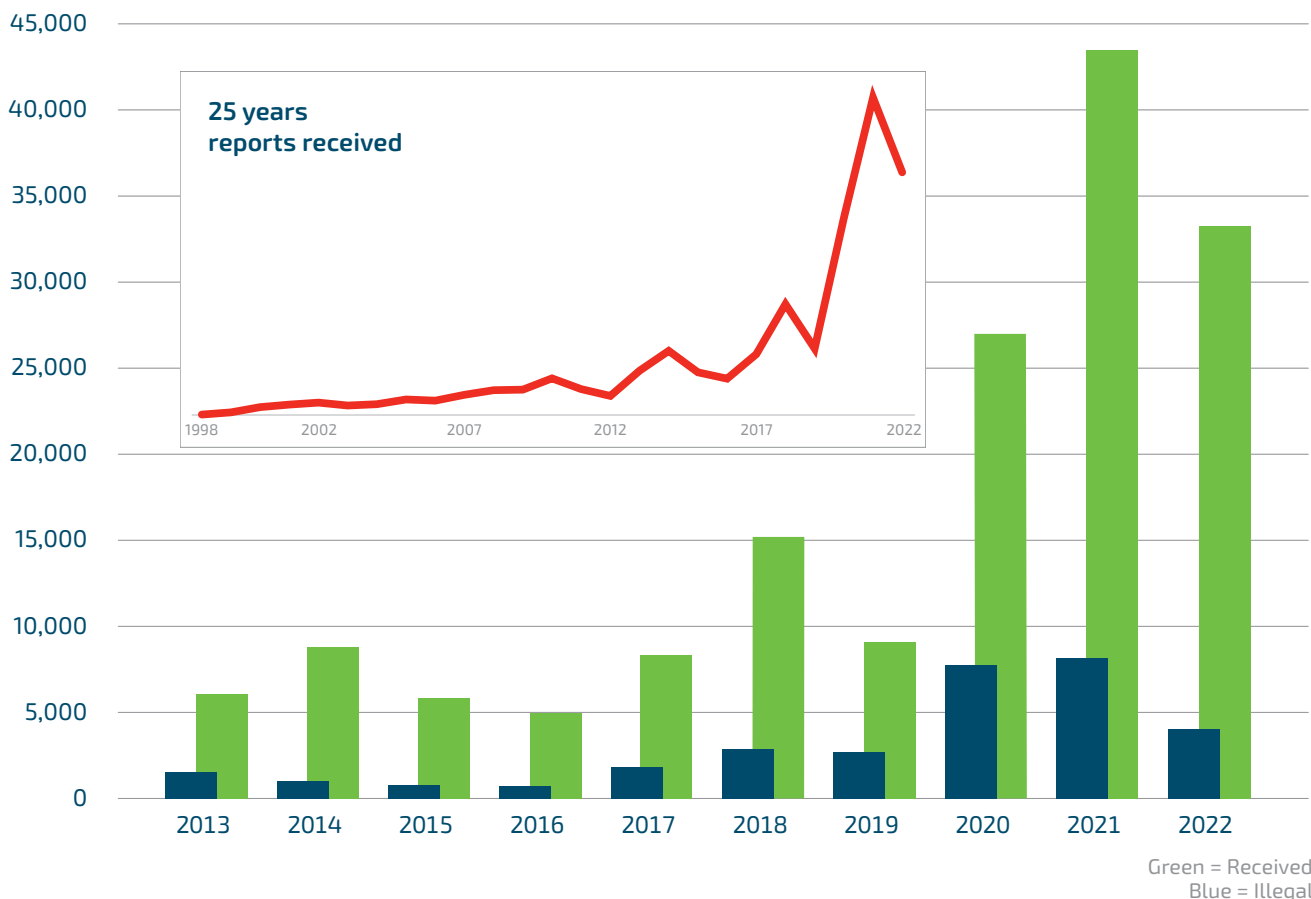
40.000

ILLEGAL REPORTS

The primary objective of Stopleveline is the prompt and straightforward removal of such content from the internet, especially when it is hosted in Austria.

This reporting center was established in 1998 by the Association of Austrian Internet Service Providers (ISPA). Over the course of its 25-year existence, Stopleveline has processed more than 190,000 reports. Approximately 20% of these were actually classified as illegal material, predominantly images of sexual abuse involving minors, a majority of which were hosted on servers overseas.

Reports received vs actionable reports for the last 10 years (2013 - 2022)



HOW TO REPORT: SIMPLE & ANONYMOUS



Which content can you report?

Stoplevelne 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 Stoplevelne of illegal content online – anonymously if you wish – in the following ways:

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

No matter where on the internet you come across illegal content, do not hesitate to report it to Stoplevelne!



Illegal content?



www.stoplevelne.at



STOPLINE REPORTING PROCESS

... HOWEVER, DO NOT ACTIVELY SEEK OUT ILLEGAL MATERIAL!

Under no circumstances should you track any leads on the Internet on your own, nor should you send any images or screenshots to Stopleveline. Doing so could potentially constitute a criminal offense. For Stopleveline, providing as detailed source information as possible (including passwords, if applicable) of the suspicious material is sufficient for them to investigate the report.

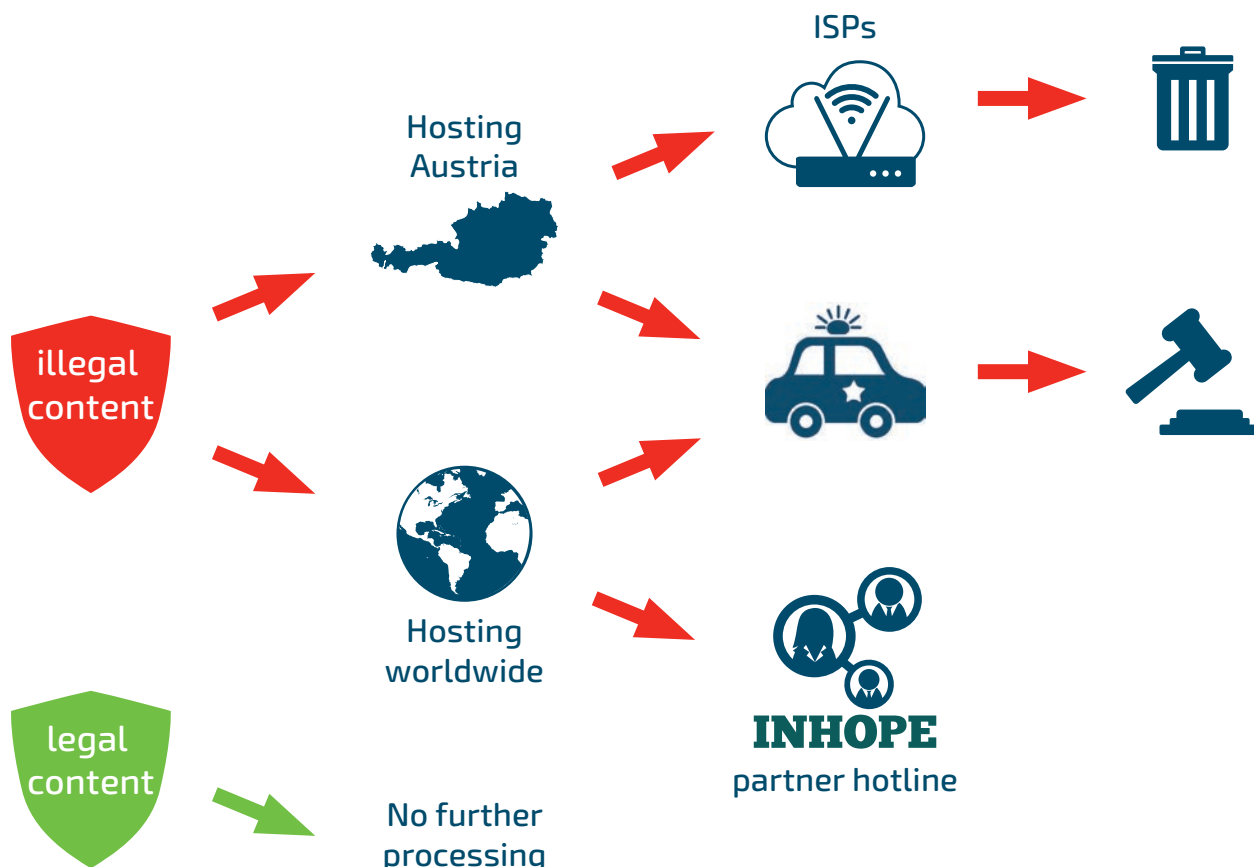
HOW DOES STOPLINE OPERATE?

The Stopleveline team members do not actively search for illegal content. Instead, they exclusively process incoming reports. These reports are submitted by vigilant internet users and INHOPE partner hotlines. For each reported content, Stopleveline verifies whether it contravenes the legal regulations concerning depictions of minor sexual abuse or National Socialist resurgence.

Dealing with illegal content

As soon as Stopleveline categorizes content as illegal, it notifies the relevant law enforcement agency in Austria. For content featuring depictions of minor sexual abuse, the Federal Criminal Police Office (child pornography and child sex tourism reporting office) is responsible, while the Directorate of State Protection and Intelligence (DSN) handles National Socialist material. These agencies then initiate further measures to investigate the perpetrators and, if necessary, the victims.

Simultaneously, an examination is conducted to determine which country is hosting the material, as the provider's country of origin is crucial for further processing (for details, see pages 8 - 9). If the content deemed illegal by Stopleveline is hosted in Austria, the reporting office informs the responsible Austrian host provider, ensuring that the content is promptly removed from the internet. Illegal content hosted abroad is forwarded by Stopleveline to the INHOPE partner hotline in the respective country.



REPORTS 2022 IN DETAIL

Significant increase in reports

The number of reports received has significantly escalated in recent years. Many external factors such as the COVID-19-related restrictions and the ease of access to digital media have contributed to this, along with heightened public awareness that such illegal content on the Internet should not be tolerated.

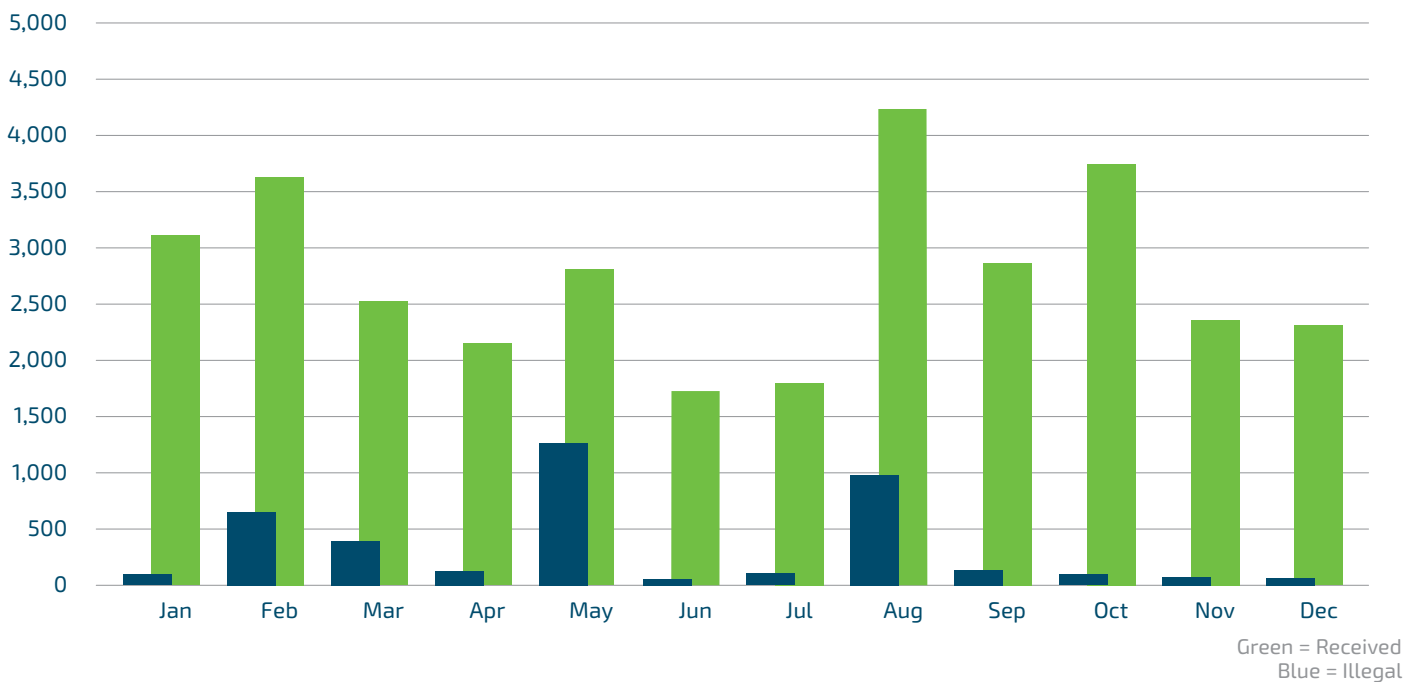
Reports received in 2022

In 2022, Stoptline received 33,257 reports. Although this represents a decrease compared to 2021, the average number of incoming reports remains notably high. Reporters used the online form on the website www.stoptline.at for submitting their reports almost exclusively, with only a few reports being sent via email.

33.257

REPORTS RECEIVED

Reports received vs actionable reports in 2022

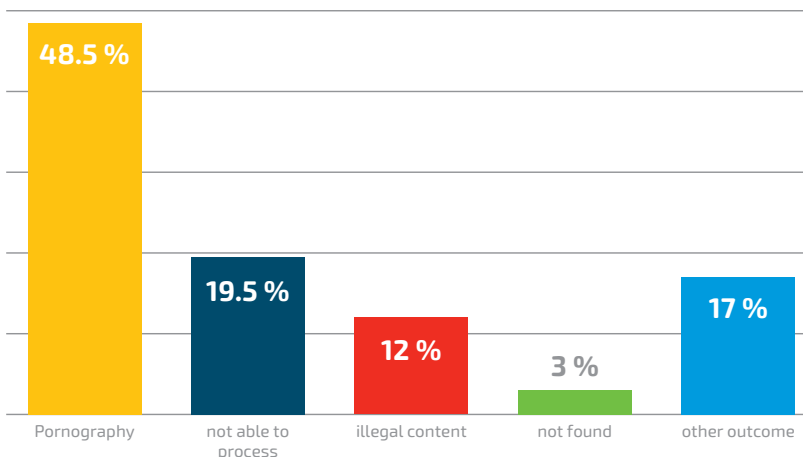


Green = Received
Blue = Illegal

Classification of 2022 reports by Stopline

Stopline reviews all incoming reports, determining whether the content pertains to criminal activities. Approximately 12% of the reported content, totaling 4,048 instances, were indeed classified as illegal. Although this percentage represents a decline compared to the considerably higher percentage in 2021 (19%), the absolute number of illegal content remains alarmingly high, exceeding 4,000.

As in previous years, the proportion of reports concerning sexual abuse of minors significantly outweighs other categories with 4,021 instances; only in 27 cases did Stopline staff detect violations related to National Socialist resurgence.

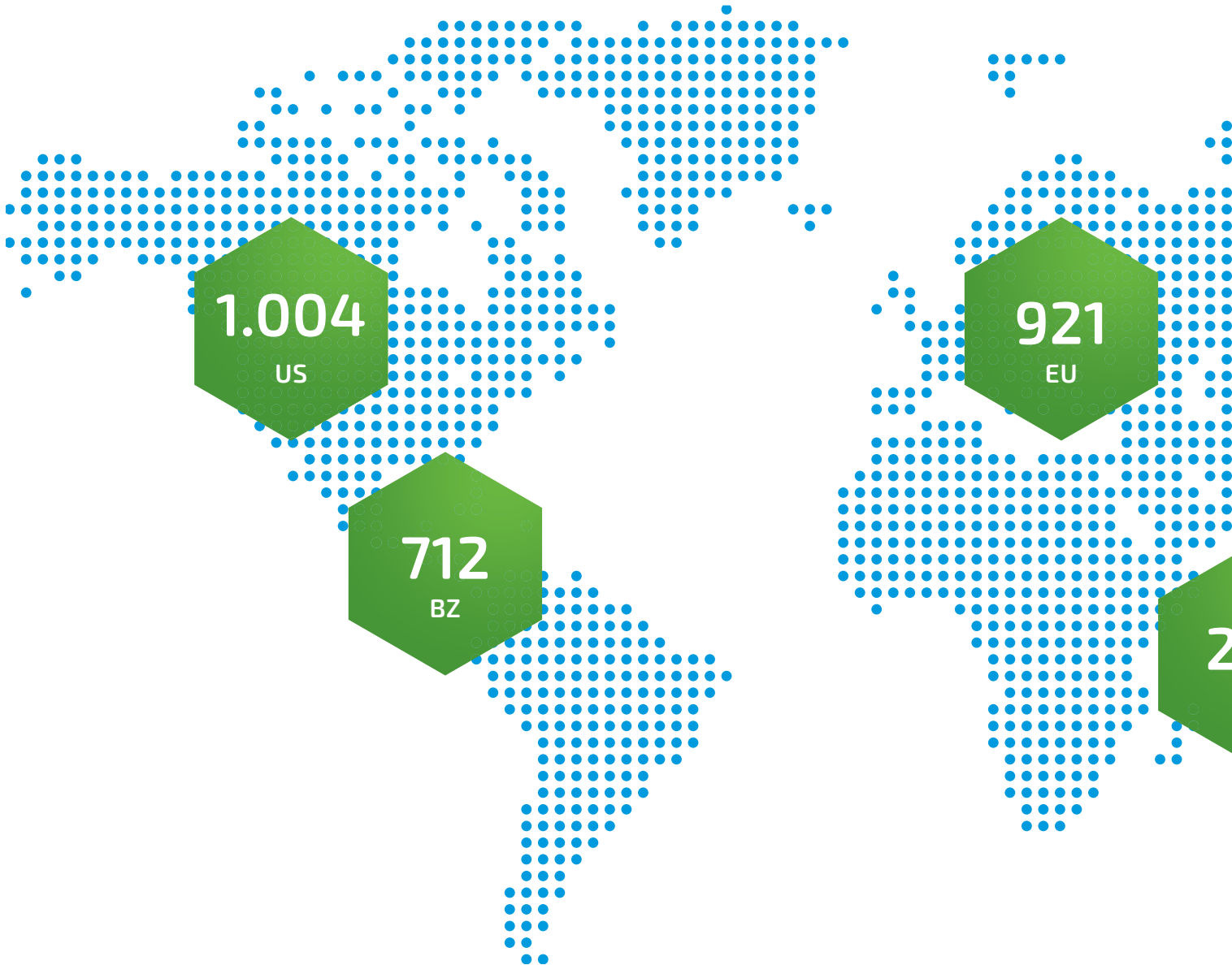


Categorisation of reports by Stopline in 2022

Technical analysis and hosting

If the Stopline staff classify the content of a reported website as illegal, a technical analysis is undertaken to ascertain the country where these contents were published online and the host provider utilized by the offender. This enables attempts to directly address the source to remove the content entirely, thereby making it inaccessible to internet users. The vast majority of all reports deemed relevant by Stopline were hosted on foreign servers.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN 2022

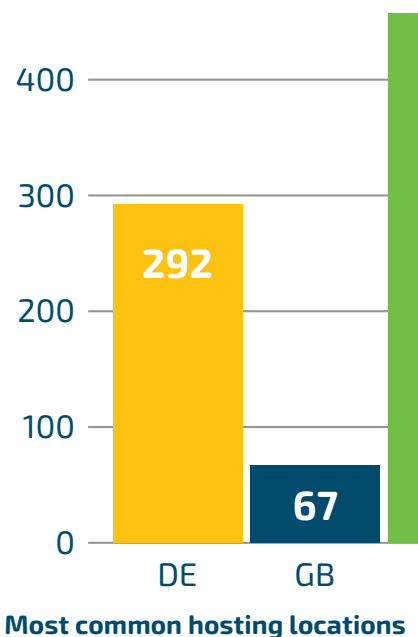


Origin of illegal content

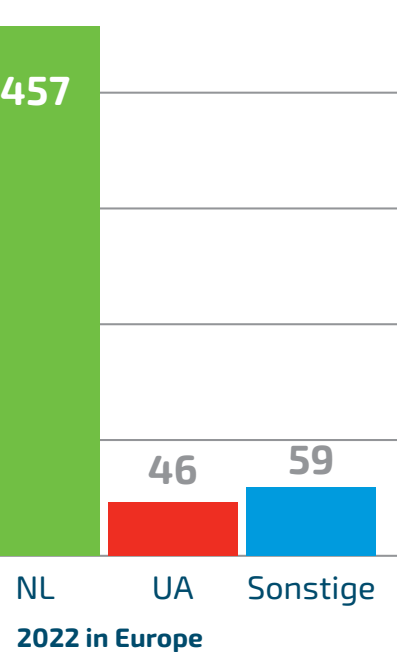
Illegal content is often hosted in locations offering straightforward, inexpensive IT infrastructure (servers, web space, connectivity), or in places where the law allows for the publication of such content.

However, this doesn't imply that the illegal material, particularly depictions of minor sexual abuse, was produced in these countries. Rather, it indicates the location where the content was posted on the Internet.

The majority of all verified reports from Stoptline were hosted on foreign servers. As in previous years, the USA was the predominant country hosting this illegal material. A trend observed in 2021 persisted in 2022: For a significant portion of the illegal content (around 25%), the country of origin couldn't be technically identified. This is largely attributed to the usage of TOR browsers, leading to the so-called „dark web.“



Most common hosting locations



Handling illegal content in Austria

The provider's country of origin is crucial for dealing with illegal content. If the content is hosted online by an Austrian internet service provider, Stoplevelne reaches out to the respective host provider. They are then requested to technically remove the content from the internet, thereby rendering it inaccessible to internet users.

Stoplevelne itself does not delete or block purportedly illegal content, but rather offers recommendations to the providers on how to proceed.

In Austria, the host providers acknowledge their responsibility, ensuring that illegal content is immediately removed from the network. The prompt response from all parties involved, especially the concerned providers, has made Austria an unattractive hosting location for several years.

AT - Austria, BZ - Belize, EU - Europe, DE - Germany, GB - United Kingdom, HK - Hong Kong, NL - Netherlands, RU - Russia, SC - Seychelles, UA - Ukraine, US - United States of America

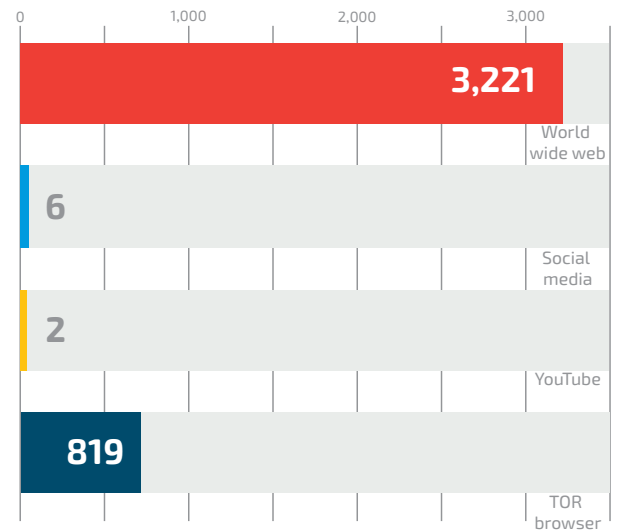
ILLEGAL REPORTS 2022

Where did reporters discover the illegal content?

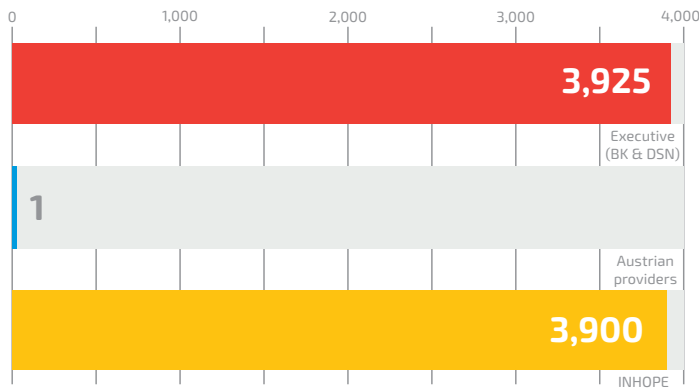
Internet users have the option to report various sources where they discovered illegal content at www.stopline.at, such as the World Wide Web (e.g., Internet browsers), social media channels, newsgroups, and file sharing services.

In 2022, no illegal content was reported via newsgroups and file sharing services. However, one source increasingly prevalent in Stopline's statistics is the so-called Dark Web, which can be accessed using a TOR browser.

This poses significant challenges for the Stopline staff, their international partner hotlines, and also for the police: it's becoming increasingly difficult to trace the origin of the illegal content and thereby contribute to its successful removal.



Reports categorised as actionable – by online service



Content categorised as illegal was forwarded to

Who does Stopline inform about illegal content?

For transparency's sake, Stopline notifies the Austrian police about all reported illegal content.

In 2022, websites with illegal content hosted in Austria were reported to Stopline twice. Both reports were hosted by the same Austrian provider simultaneously. After being notified by Stopline, the provider was able to successfully remove the content within the same working day.

Since more than 99% of the illegal content was hosted abroad, Stopline notified the partner hotlines in the respective host country in these cases. Consequently, about 50% of the reports could be directly processed onsite. In the other cases, Stopline informed the responsible reporting office in the Federal Criminal Police Office or the Directorate for State Security and Intelligence, so that the reports could be followed up through international police cooperation such as Interpol.

WARNING: DON'T BECOME AN OFFENDER!

Material involving sexual abuse depictions of minors is criminal, with its prosecution reserved for the police and public prosecutor's office. Stopline strongly advises against users performing targeted searches on the internet. Even those acting with the best intentions may face legal repercussions.

STOPLINE ACTIVITIES

The primary objective of Stopleveline is the swift and efficient removal of illegal content from the internet. This isn't only achievable due to the rapid and professional efforts of the Stopleveline team. The goal is accomplished year after year, thanks to strong partnerships, regular exchanges in various committees, and continuous press and public relations work.



NATIONAL COOPERATION

Stopleveline regularly organizes meetings of the Stopleveline advisory board and participates in the Saferinternet.at advisory board. Additionally, Stopleveline is a member of the National Forum against Anti-Semitism.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Within the framework of several INHOPE member and working group meetings, as well as numerous online INHOPE webinars each year, an intensive exchange of experiences with worldwide partner hotlines takes place. Moreover, Stopleveline is a significant participant at meetings of the Meta - Safety Roundtable and at the annual EU Safer Internet Forum in Brussels.

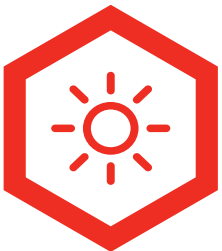


PRESS ACTIVITIES

The customary annual press conference of Stopleveline and ISPA, accompanied by the relevant press release, leads to extensive media coverage online, in print, and on the radio and TV. Interviews with journalists occur regularly throughout the year.

RAISING AWARENESS

Every year, Stopleveline participates in Safer Internet Day. To reach the widest possible audience, Stopleveline regularly posts articles on Facebook and Twitter, where they explain the nature of illegal content and various internet hazards.



EMPLOYEE WELFARE

The work at Stopleveline, especially handling the consistently high volume of reports, is demanding. Hence, the Stopleveline staff members regularly partake in coaching and discussions with psychologists. Emphasis is also placed on fostering mutual support within the team, which is facilitated through collective activities.

MONTH WITH MOST REPORTS

In August 2022, Stopleveline received more than 4,200 reports from vigilant internet users. Nearly 1,000 of these referred to actual illegal content.





CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

What is illegal in Austria?

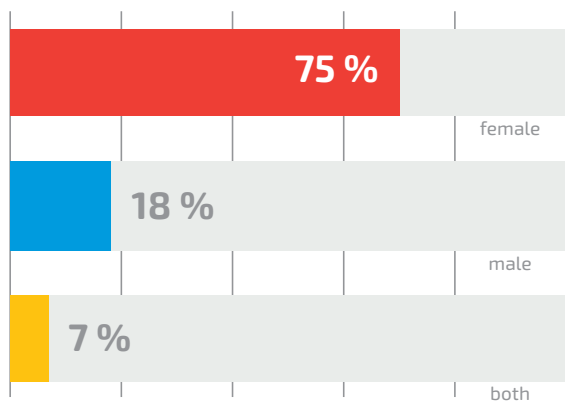
Pornographic depictions of minors as defined in Section 207a of the Criminal Code means depictions of sexual acts or images focusing on the genitals of persons under the age of 18. In Austria, any act related to this is prohibited: Knowingly accessing, producing, offering, procuring, providing, showing, possessing or otherwise making available. The spectrum ranges from images of unclothed children with a focus on their genitals to severe sexual violence.

A problematic development in this context does not stop Stopline's work: More and more minors photograph or film themselves performing sexual acts and publish these images online (sexting). With this self-portrayal, they not only make themselves liable to prosecution, but also unintentionally make this material available to consumers of pedophilic content.

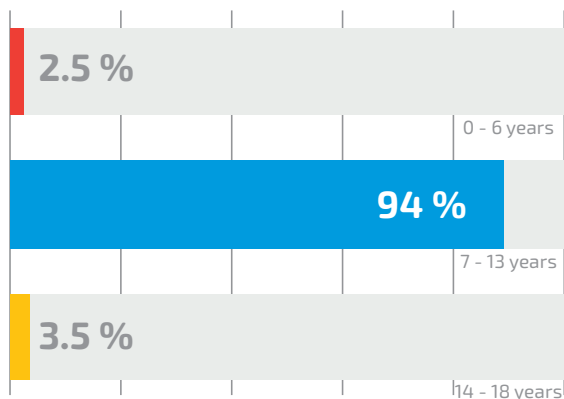
Grooming", i.e. the initiation of sexual contacts with minors via the Internet as well as the „viewing of pornographic presentations of minors“ is also punishable.

If you are not sure whether it is an illegal presentation, please let us know anyway. The Stopline staff members check for reported contents, if the depiction

- shows an underage person
- depicts sexual acts or
- focuses on sexual parts.



Sexual abuse by sex in 2022



Sexual abuse by age in 2022

REMINDER:
Be wary of posting pictures of your children, no matter how innocuous. You do not know on which websites on the Internet these pictures will be found.

NATIONAL SOCIALISM

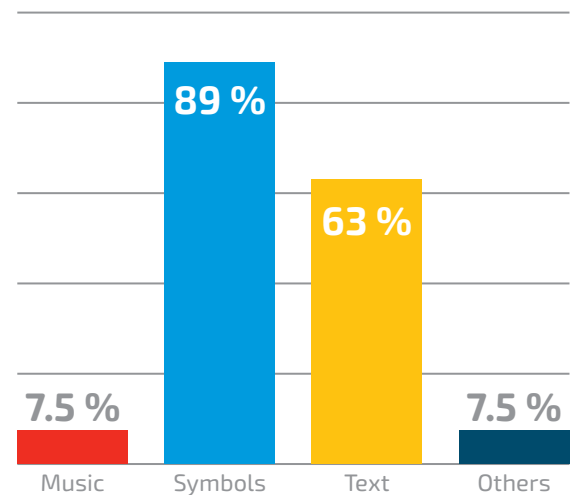
National Socialist reaffirmation has many facets, but not every racist or inflammatory statement is automatically an endorsement of National Socialist ideas. In Austria, the denial of National Socialist crimes as well as the dissemination and glorification of National Socialist content count as re-activation and are punishable.

This also includes activities such as the dissemination of speeches by National Socialist functionaries, the heroicizing portrayal of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP), Schutzstaffel (SS) or Sturmabteilung (SA), the founding of National Socialist associations, the recruitment of members for such an association or even mere participation in it.

In combating National Socialist content on the Internet, the legal provisions according to the Prohibition and Badge Act are used as a basis in particular. Both provisions clearly state that it is not the critical discussion of the National Socialist past per se that is prohibited, but rather the endorsement of these activities, measures and ideas.



As a rule, the use of National Socialist images and texts is not punishable if it is clear from the depiction that it opposes National Socialism and its ideology. For example, a crossed-out swastika or above a trash can.



National Socialism: Type of offence 2022

Prohibition and insignia law as a basis

If you are not sure whether the content is illegal national socialistic content, please contact Stopleveline. The employees check if it is one of the following contents:

- the denial of NS crimes
- the glorification of NS ideas or
- the representation of forbidden badges and uniforms



STOPLINE AND ITS PARTNERS

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INTERNET HOTLINES

INHOPE

50 MEMBERS

46 COUNTRIES

INHOPE (International Association of Internet Hotlines) is an organization of global hotlines aimed at combating illegal content on the Internet.

The collective aim of the 50 INHOPE hotlines, now present in 46 countries, is to eradicate depictions of minor sexual abuse from the internet and to shield young individuals from harmful and illegal internet usage.

Except for a few exceptions, INHOPE partner hotlines exist in the most frequently reported origin countries (see chart on pages 8 and 9) from which Stopleveline receives reports.

Moreover, INHOPE is consistently committed to establishing new hotlines worldwide, ensuring the continuous growth of the network. The rapid and secure exchange of information between INHOPE partners enables, among other things, the swift and non-bureaucratic removal of illegal content from the internet.

Exchange of reports and experiences

Learning from other organisations' experiences and working together to improve overall efficiency – this is what makes INHOPE such a valuable platform for its members.

New hotlines in particular benefit from the years of practical experience built up by established report centres such as Stopleveline. And, in turn, Stopleveline can put its expertise in the global fight against child sexual abuse material to good use worldwide and make the most of the technologies it co-develops with its partners.

See www.inhope.org for further information.

4.021

CHILD SEXUAL
ABUSE MATERIAL

3.900

REPORTS TO
INHOPE HOTLINES



SAFER INTERNET CENTRE AUSTRIA

In collaboration with Saferinternet.at, Rat auf Draht, and the ISPA, Stopleveline comprises the „Safer Internet Centre Austria“. As the Austrian partner in the Safer Internet Network of the European Union (www.betterinternetforkids.eu), it offers comprehensive awareness-raising efforts for safe internet usage. The focus is on education and guidance in handling digital media.

www.saferinternet.at
www.rataufdraht.at
www.ispa.at

Saferinternet.at
Das Internet sicher nutzen!

ispa
Internet Service Providers Austria

147 **RAT**
auf Draht
von SOS-Kinderdorf



nic.at

 **Bundesministerium Inneres**
Bundeskriminalamt

 **Bundesministerium Inneres**
Direktion Staatsschutz und Nachrichtendienst

Meldestellen des Bundesministeriums

Reporting offices of the Federal Ministry include the Federal Criminal Police Office (BK), which runs the police hotline for child pornography and child sex tourism on the internet.

The reporting office for National Socialist re-enactment within the executive branch is situated within the Directorate of State Protection and Intelligence (DSN).

www.bmi.gv.at/meldestellen

nic.at GmbH

nic.at serves as the registry for domains under .at, .co.at, and .or.at. Since its foundation by ISPA, Stopleveline has received financial support from nic.at.

www.nic.at

Stopline info material

is available for download at www.stopline.at
A print version of our brochure is also available
to order.

Sprechen Sie Deutsch?

Mehr Information über Stopline, die Österreichische Meldestelle gegen sexuelle Missbrauchsdarstellungen Minderjähriger und nationalsozialistische Wiederbetätigung im Internet, finden Sie hier: www.stopline.at

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