



ANNUAL REPORT 2024



REPORT CENTRE
against
Child Sexual Abuse Material
and National Socialism

FOREWORD

2024 will be different! We first sensed this in February when we received, completely unexpectedly, around 2,500 reports of child sexual abuse material, distributed on the Internet from Austria: Suddenly, Austria came into focus and became the number one hosting country for illegal content – and remained so throughout the year. You can read more about this on page 13.

And once again, it took us by surprise! In December, shortly before the holidays, we were hit by another ‘wave of reports’ that pushed us to our administrative limits: almost 66,000 reports, which finally proved impossible to process. To be honest, this was frustrating because we work tirelessly to combat illegal content, but in such cases we unfortunately reach our limits. Read more about this on page 7.

Finally, the end of the year confirmed the long-standing trend: a new record high in the number of and valid reports received.

Nevertheless, or perhaps because of this, we continue our work every day and face the challenge of removing as much illegal content as possible from the Internet so that it can no longer be accessed.

Please help us in the coming year to make the Internet a safe place for us and our children. Thank you very much for your support!

Dr. Barbara Schloßbauer
Stopline Project Manager



“Our goal: a safe internet.
That’s why: don’t downplay it,
don’t deny it, don’t ignore it –
report it!
Every single person can make a
valuable contribution.”

CONTENT

About Stopline	3
How to report	4
How does Stopline operate	5
Reports 2024 in detail	6
Country of origin 2024.....	8
Reported illegal content 2024	10
Activities 2024	11
Child sexual abuse	12
National socialism	13
Partners	14

ABOUT STOPLINE



Stopline is an online reporting center for people who come across sexual abuse depictions of minors (defined in the law as “pictorial sexual child abuse material”, often still referred to as child pornography) or content relating to National Socialism on the Internet.

The primary objective of Stopline 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 26-year existence, Stopline has processed more than 317,000 reports. Approximately 20% of these were actually classified as illegal material, predominantly depictions of sexual abuse involving minors, the majority of which were hosted on servers overseas.

317,607

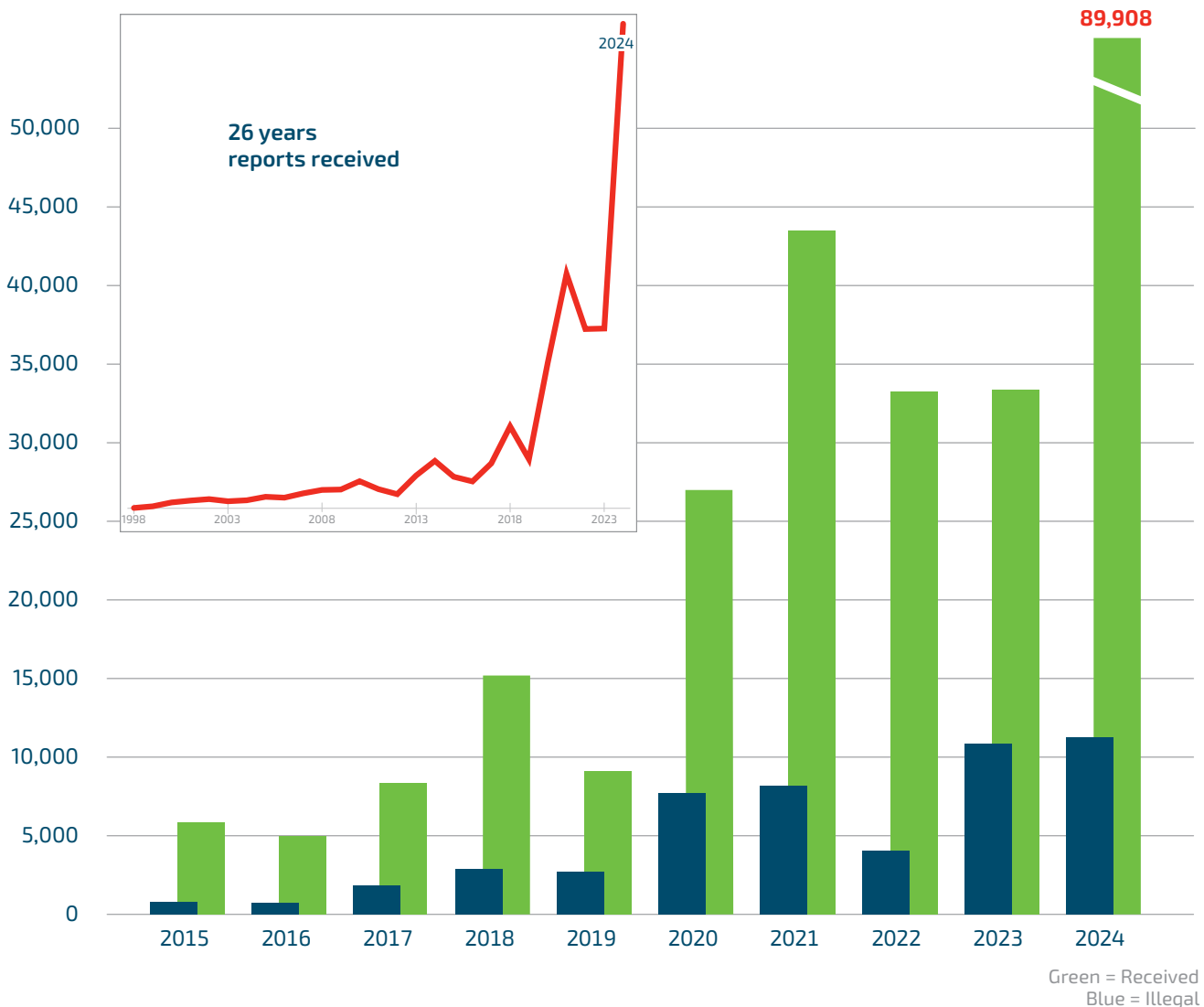
REPORTS
RECEIVED

62,284

ILLEGAL
REPORTS

Reports 1998 - 2024

Reports received vs actionable reports for the last 10 years (2015 – 2024)



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

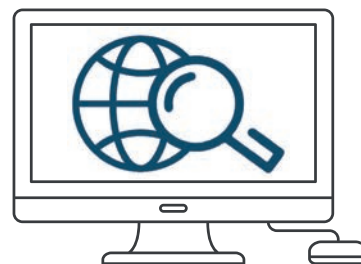
No matter where on the internet you come across illegal content, do not hesitate to report it to Stoplevelne!



Illegal content?



www.stoplevelne.at



STOPLINE REPORTING PROCESS

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 Stopline. Doing so could potentially constitute a criminal offense. For Stopline, providing as detailed a source of information as possible (including passwords, if applicable) is sufficient for the report to be investigated.

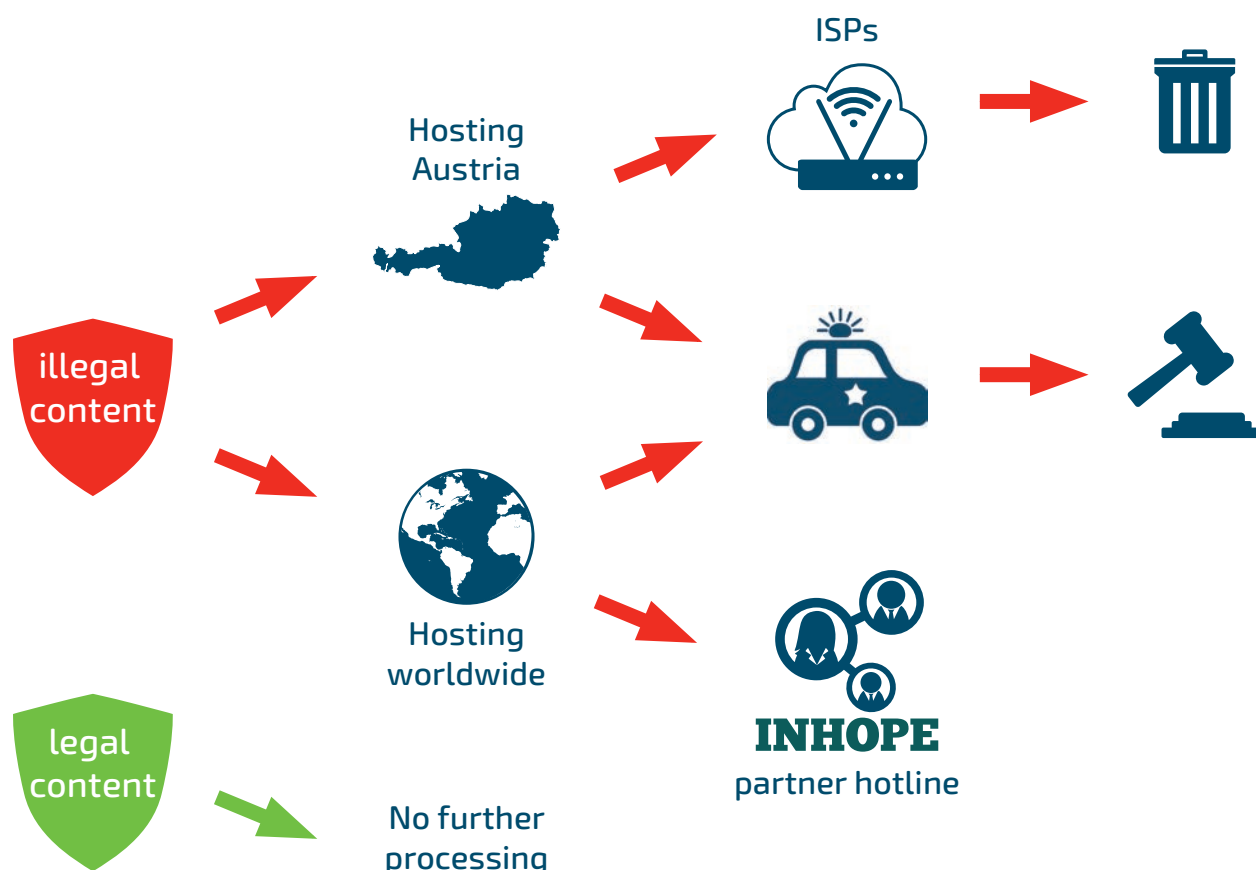
HOW DOES STOPLINE OPERATE?

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

Dealing with illegal content

As soon as Stopline 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 possible, the victims.

Simultaneously Stopline, 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 10 - 11). If the content deemed illegal by Stopline 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 Stopline to the INHOPE partner hotline in the respective country (for details, see page 18).



REPORTS 2024 IN DETAIL

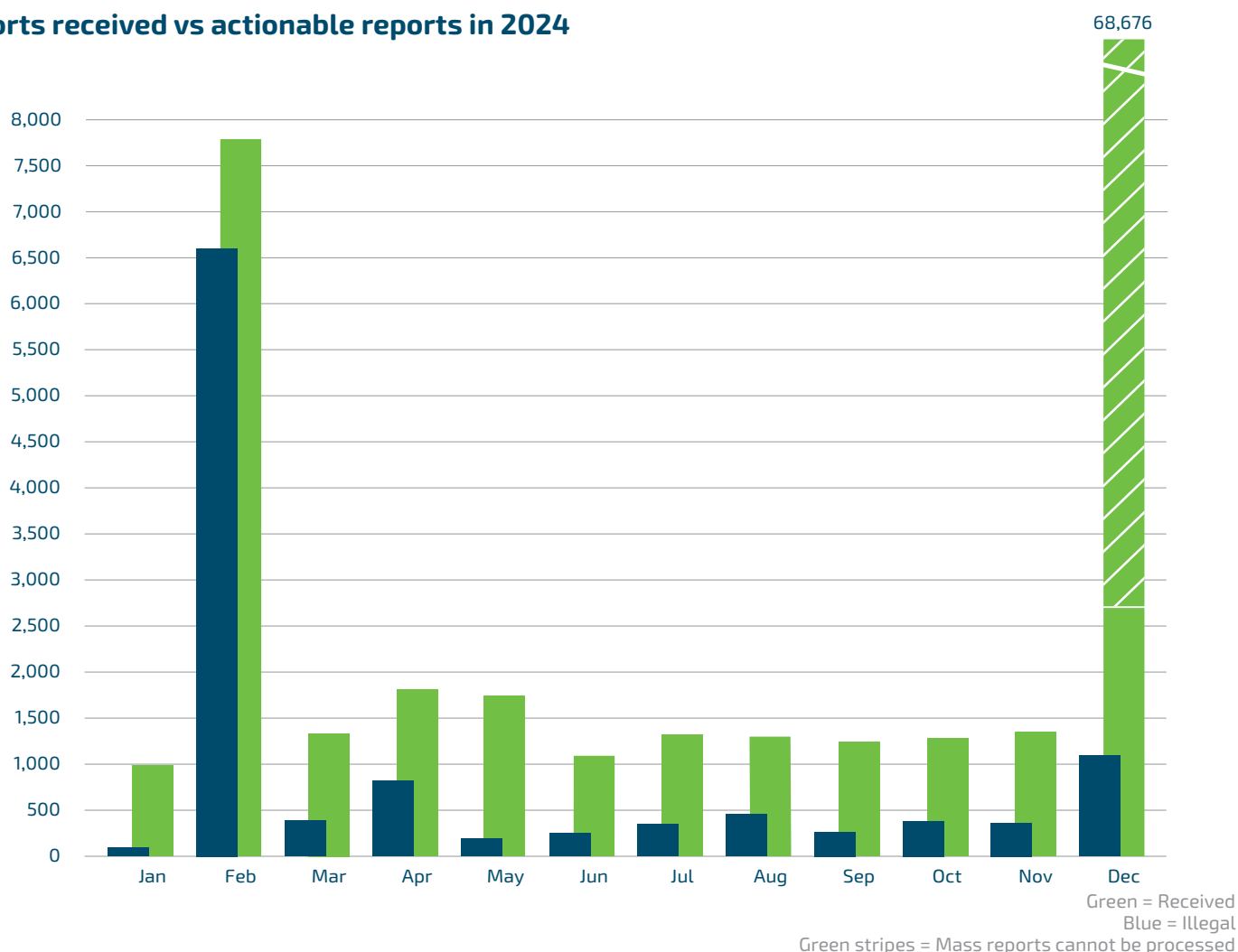
Record number of reports in 2024: Challenges and limitations

89,908 reports from vigilant Internet users were received by Stopline in 2024 – many times more than in previous years. However, 65,980 reports could not be processed, because the content of the websites could not be accessed (see page 7). The enormous workload remained, however, as these reports had to be processed manually by Stopline employees to ensure that no reports that could be processed were overlooked.

Of the reports received, 11,262 were classified as illegal, again exceeding the figures for previous years.

Looking at 2024 as a whole, the proportion of valid reports is 'only' 12% due to the large number of cases reported. However, if only the approximately 24,000 reports that could actually be processed are taken as a basis, around 47% of these violated Austrian law and were followed up by Stopline accordingly. This not only represents a significant increase compared to previous years, but also leads to the highest rate of valid reports since the reporting center was established.

Reports received vs actionable reports in 2024





Not all reports can be processed

In December 2024, we received almost 66,000 reports about content on file hosting platforms to which we had no access. This is due to the fact that access to the reported content would require (in some cases paid) membership of the platform, which Stopline, as a private hotline, is not able to use. Unfortunately, our attempts to contact the platform to request special access for Stopline remained unanswered.

Regrettably, INHOPE partner hotlines were also unable to help us, as they also had no access to the content.

Reasons for the sharp increase in reports

A key question is why so many reports are suddenly coming in. Our guess is that particularly committed Internet users are actively searching for potentially illegal content using technical tools and then reporting all the URLs they find to us. The URLs often refer to the same platform, with each image or video being submitted as a separate link. This poses enormous challenges. On the one hand, the sheer volume of such reports exceeds our personnel capacity, and on the other hand, our tools are not designed to handle such large quantities, which means that processing takes significantly longer. We are currently working on improving our processes and tools to cope with the increased workload. We are also working closely with our partners to ensure that reports are processed as quickly as possible.

PLEASE NOTE:

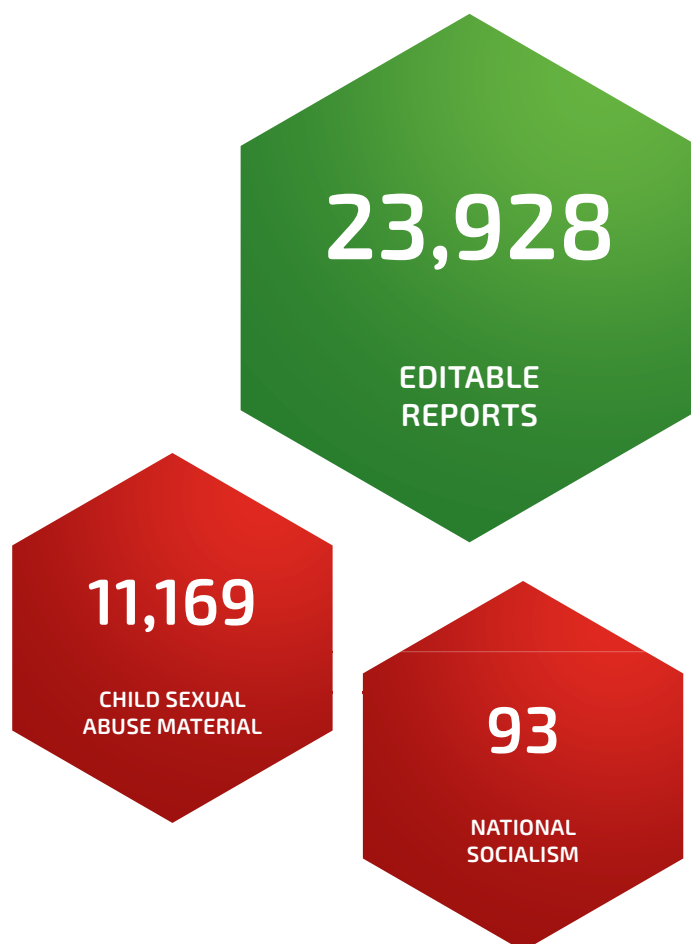
The figures in this annual report refer exclusively to reports received by Stopline. They do not allow any conclusions to be drawn about the actual production or general distribution of illegal content in the respective countries.

Categorisation of reports in 2024 by Stopline

Stopline staff visually review each report they get to see if it has any criminal content. Based on the adjusted stats (see page 7), the 11,262 illegal reports make up about 47% of all reports they got that could be processed.

This is a significant increase compared to previous years (e.g. from 33% in 2023 to 47% in 2024), which is also clearly reflected in the amount of work required to process these reports.

As in previous years, the majority, namely 11,169 cases, related to depictions of sexual abuse of minors. In 93 cases, the Stopline staff were able to identify a violation of the law in connection with National Socialism. Although this number is low compared to the reported depictions of abuse, it is significantly higher than in previous years (e.g. 22 cases in 2023).



Self-generated content: When minors produce their own content

Not everything that is reported to Stopline as criminally relevant under Section 207a StGB (Austrian Criminal Code) and classified as illegal by Stopline staff actually constitutes sexual abuse of a minor by an (usually adult) perpetrator. Increasingly, the content is clearly produced and distributed by the minors depicted minors themselves and distributed. The amendment to Section 207a StGB, which came into force in December 2023, takes this circumstance into account by significantly changing the criminal liability of minors who produce such content. In the best case, this will prevent young people from being convicted as sex offenders for self-produced content if they have created the images solely for themselves or their partners.

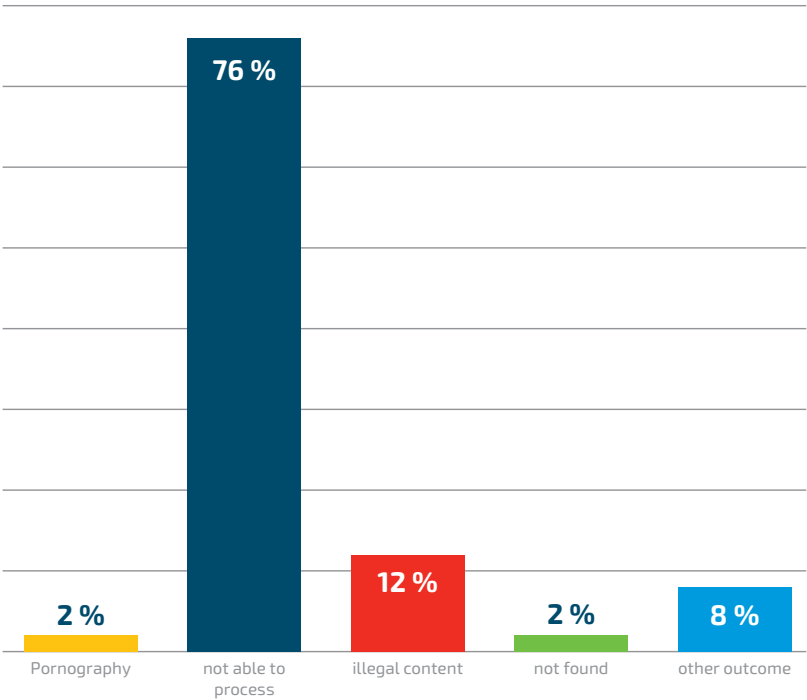
Many young people are however unaware that their behaviour is in any case against the law as soon as they share images of themselves or third parties that the legislator defines as 'pictorial sexual representations of minors' with several people, even if they are acting for completely different motives than paedophile sex offenders. The publication of such images on the Internet or in other media that are accessible to a large number of people remains a criminal offence. Stopline naturally treats reports of this kind as a high priority so that the images or videos in question can be removed as quickly as possible and cannot be consumed or shared by third parties.

However, such transgressions by minors cannot be resolved by criminal law alone. Above all, there is a need for extensive education, including information about the fact that once images have been distributed on the internet (e.g. in social media, chats, messenger services such as WhatsApp, etc.), they are almost impossible to delete and can be viewed by anyone. We would like to refer you in particular to our partners Saferinternet.at and Rat auf Draht (see page 19).

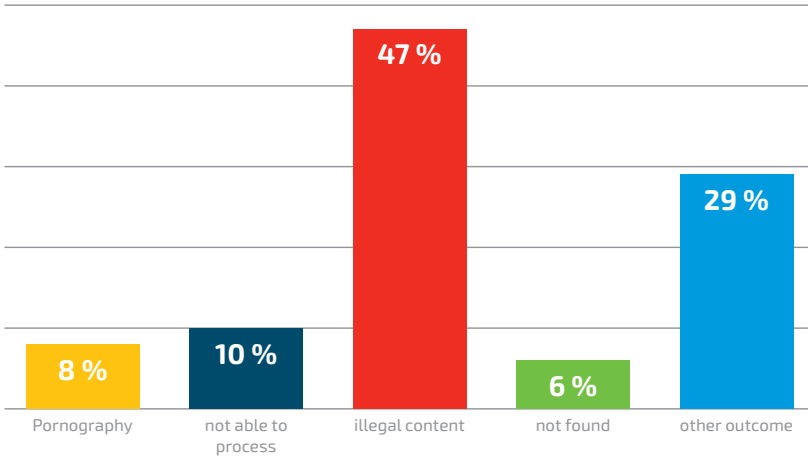
What content is reported?

Even though the proportion of reports containing actually illegal content is steadily increasing, countless websites are still being reported to Stopline that have no criminal relevance whatsoever. To a certain extent, these are depictions of legal adult pornography, but they also include other completely harmless content.

Unfortunately, it also happens again and again that it is not possible to process the report received. As described on page 7, this may be because the content is only accessible within the context of an account or after payment, or because the URL submitted is incorrect. Reported content may also no longer be available if another hotline, police or the hosting provider has already processed or removed the obviously illegal content.



Categorisation of reports by Stopline in 2024



Categorisation of reports by Stopline in 2024, adjusted for the mass report that cannot be processed in December 2024

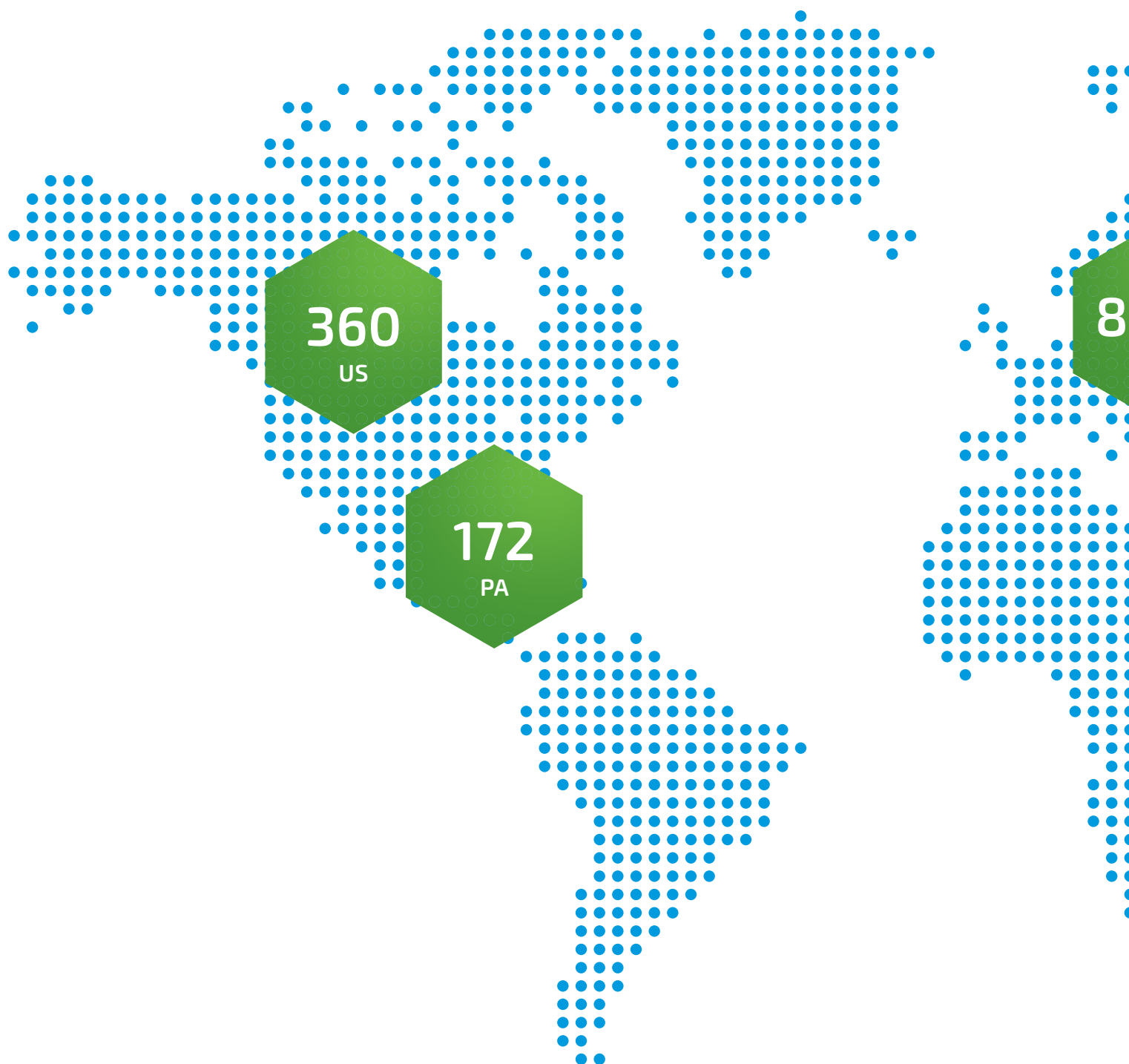
When processing the reported websites, Stopline employees also repeatedly encounter content that is borderline illegal. Very often, this involves images of naked children playing, often at a very young age (e.g. children playing on the beach).

This is why we urge you not to post photos of your children that you would not show to strangers on the street! Remember: such photos can hardly be removed from the Internet and it cannot be ruled out that they could be misused by criminals for sexual purposes!

Determining the country of origin

If the content of a reported website is classified as illegal by Stopline staff, the first step is to conduct a detailed technical analysis to determine in which country the content is actually hosted and which hosting provider is used. The aim is always to have the content removed directly at the source so that it can no longer be accessed by Internet users.

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN 2024



Origin of illegal content

Illegal content is often hosted where cheap and unbureaucratic IT infrastructure (servers, web space, connectivity) is available, where the legal situation allows such content to be published or where law enforcement cannot work efficiently enough – for example, because of a lack of sufficient resources. However, this does not mean that the illegal material, in particular depictions of sexual abuse of minors, was also produced in the same countries. It is only the place where the prohibited content was published on the Internet.



Consistent follow-up of reported content until it is deleted

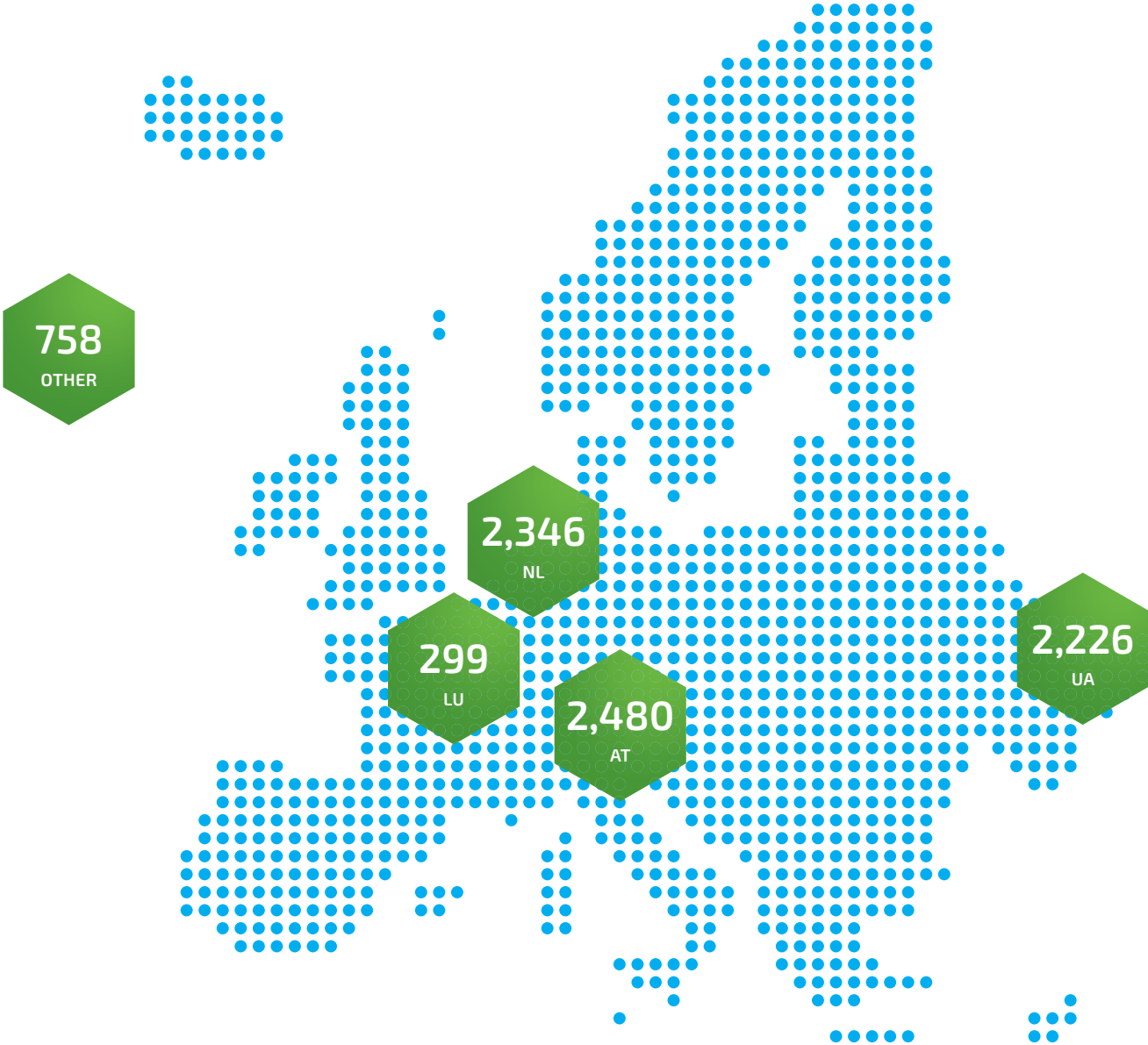
The country of origin of the hosting provider is crucial for the rapid processing of illegal content. Stopline employees therefore try to determine the technical origin as accurately as possible. If this is outside Austria, Stopline forwards the report to the relevant partner hotline, which is usually directly connected to a shared global database as part of the INHOPE network. A trend that has been evident for some time is continuing in 2024: in a total of 578 cases of illegal content, it was technically impossible to determine the country of origin. In many cases, this is due to the use of so-called 'dark web' services, which are accessible via TOR browsers and therefore do not leave any digital traces traceable.

FOCUS EUROPE 2024

Consistent follow-up of reported content until its deletion

As in previous years, in 2024, the majority of content classified as illegal was hosted by European hosting providers, namely 72% of all reports. While in previous years, servers in the USA and Russia were the main hosts of child sexual abuse material, in recent years servers in the Netherlands and Ukraine have come to the fore in terms of numbers.

Most common hosting locations 2024 in Europe



Cooperation with national and international partners plays an important role in removing illegal content from the Internet. If a hosting provider is based in Austria, Stopline can contact them directly to initiate the removal of the content. If servers are located in other countries, Stopline draws on an international network of partner hotlines and authorities to take swift and effective action against illegal content.

Austria takes centre stage in 2024

Since Stopline was founded, there has always been a very clear message: Austria is not a hosting country for online depictions of child sexual abuse! Rarely have there been years with more than two or three reports of illegal content published on the platform of an Austrian provider. In 2024, however, Austria suddenly appears as the leading country of origin in Stopline's statistics. The reason for this are 2,480 reports of sexual abuse images of minors that were forwarded to Stopline in February 2024 by the British partner hotline (IWF - Internet Watch Foundation).

All of these reports concerned the same hosting provider and the same Internet address. Since the IWF counts each individual image or video as a separate report and Stopline also processes each report separately, these nearly 2,500 pieces of content were included in the Austrian statistics, causing a sharp increase. In summary, however, this was a single case, i.e. a platform hosted in Austria.



How does Stopline process reports from Austria?

If illegal content is provided via an Austrian Internet service provider, Stopline contacts the hosting provider directly. The provider is requested to remove the content from the Internet so that it can no longer be accessed by Internet users. Stopline itself does not delete or block any content, but can only recommend action.

Austrian providers are aware of their responsibility, so illegal content is usually deleted immediately. Thanks to the rapid intervention of all parties involved – in particular the hosting providers – Austria has remained an unattractive location for posting illegal content online for years. This was also confirmed in the case of the numerous reports in February 2024: The hosting provider reacted in an extremely cooperative manner and removed the illegal content from the internet immediately.

How attractive is Austria as a hosting location?

Despite this unique statistical outlier, it is unlikely that Austria will play a greater role in hosting illegal content in the future. In recent years, the number of reports relating to Austria rarely exceeded five cases per year. The nearly 2,500 cases from February 2024 therefore do not reflect the actual hosting trend, but are primarily based on the reporting practices of the British partner hotline.

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.

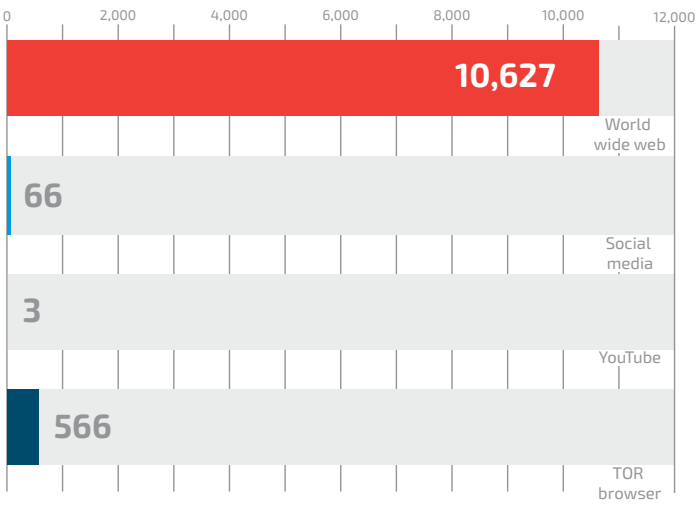
ILLEGAL REPORTS 2024

Where did reporters discover the illegal content?

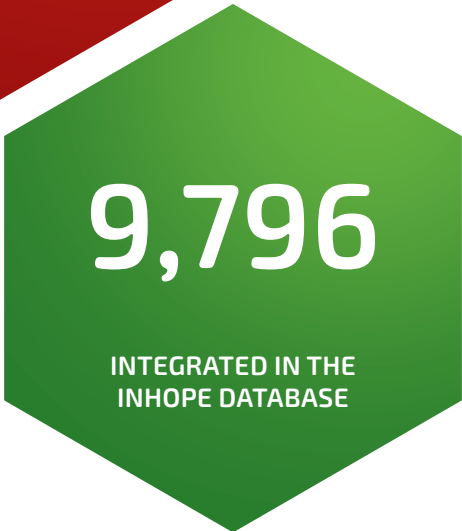
Internet users have the option to report various sources where they discovered illegal content to www.stopline.at, such as the World Wide Web (e.g., Internet browsers), social media channels, newsgroups, and file sharing services.

In 2024, 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



Who does Stopline inform about illegal content?

For transparency's sake, Stopline notifies the Austrian police about all reported illegal content. If illegal content is hosted in Austria, Stopline will also contact the responsible provider after consulting with the police so that they can take immediate action.

Stopline informs the INHOPE partner hotline in the respective country about illegal content hosted abroad. As a result almost 75 % (8,247) of the reports could be directly processed onsite. In the remaining cases, Stopline informed the responsible reporting office in the Federal Criminal Police Office (BK) or the Directorate for State Security and Intelligence (DSN), so that the reports can be followed up within the framework of international police cooperation such as Interpol.

STOPLINE ACTIVITIES

The primary objective of Stopline 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 Stopline 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

Stopline regularly organizes meetings of the Stopline advisory board and participates in the Saferinternet.at advisory board. Additionally, Stopline 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, Stopline is a significant participant at meetings of the Meta - Safety Roundtable and at the annual EU Safer Internet Forum in Brussels.

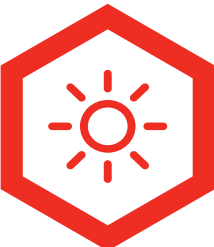


PRESS ACTIVITIES

The customary annual press conference of Stopline 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, Stopline participates in Safer Internet Day. To reach the widest possible audience, Stopline regularly posts articles on Facebook and X (former Twitter), where they explain the nature of illegal content and various internet hazards.



EMPLOYEE WELFARE

The work at Stopline, especially handling the consistently high volume of reports, is demanding. Hence, the Stopline staff members regularly partake in coaching and discussions with psychologists. Emphasis is also placed on cohesion within the team, which is promoted through joint activities.

MONTH WITH MOST REPORTS

In December 2024, Stopline reached a previously unthinkable number of 68,676 reports. Unfortunately, almost 66,000 of these reports could not be followed up (see pages 6 - 7).





CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

What is illegal in Austria?

Since December 1, 2023, Section 207a of the Austrian Criminal Code has been called „Pictorial sexual child abuse material and pictorial sexual depictions of minors“. This refers to the depiction of sexual acts or images focusing on the genitals of persons under the age of 18. In Austria, any action in connection with 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.

Underestimated risk: sexting and grooming

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.

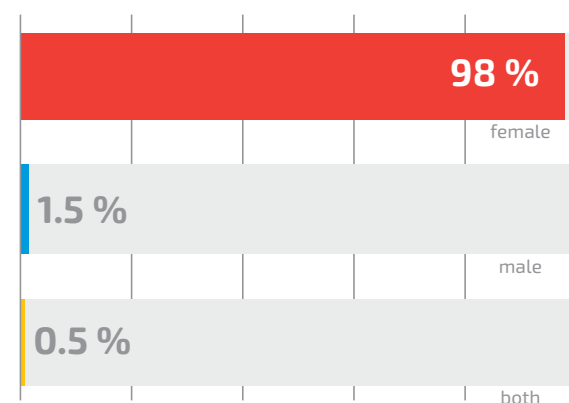
Grooming“, i.e. the initiation of sexual contacts with minors via the Internet is also punishable.

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

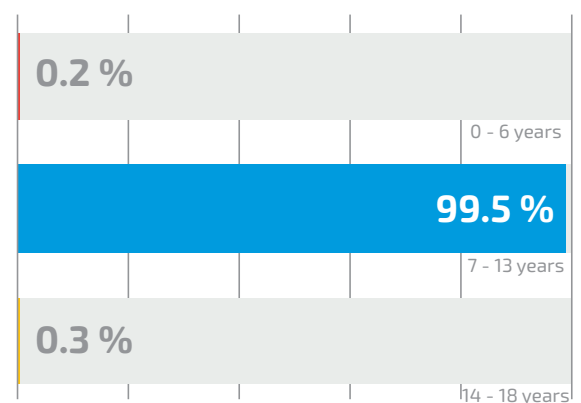
- shows an underage person
- depicts sexual acts or
- focuses on sexual parts.

REMINDER:

Be wary of posting pictures of your children - even seemingly harmless photos can be shared without your permission. You have no control over which websites they end up on.



Sexual abuse by sex in 2024



Sexual abuse by age in 2024

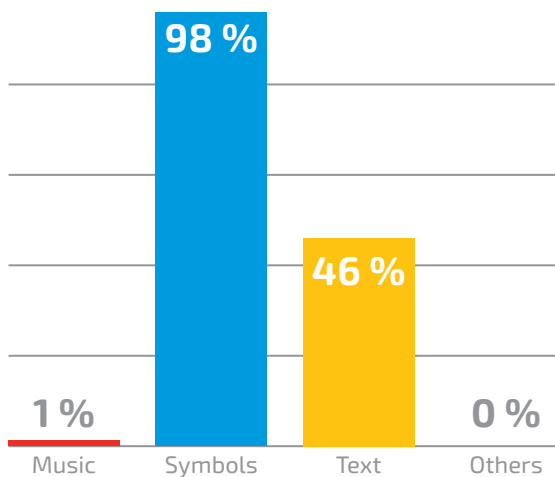
NATIONAL SOCIALISM

What actions are punishable by law?

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.

ATTENTION:
Critical discussion of the subject is permitted.



National Socialism: Type of offence 2024

Historical reappraisal or criminal offense?

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 a swastika above a trash can.

Prohibition and insignia law as a basis

If you are not sure whether the content is illegal national socialistic content, please contact Stoplevel. 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



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 55 INHOPE hotlines, now present in 51 countries, is to eradicate depictions of minor sexual abuse from the internet and to shield young individuals from harmful and illegal internet usage.

With a few exceptions INHOPE partner hotlines exist in the most frequently reported origin countries (see chart on pages 10 and 13) from which Stopleveline receives reports.

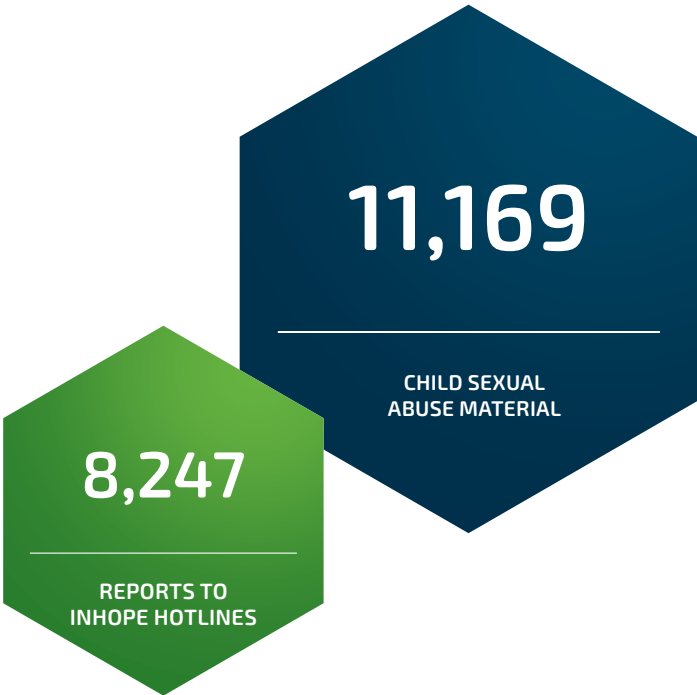
Moreover, INHOPE is consistently committed to establishing new hotlines worldwide, ensuring the continued growth of the network. The rapid and secure exchange of information between INHOPE partners enables, among other things, the swift and non-bureaucratic removal of illegal content from the internet.

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.



SMALL HOTLINE – BIG IMPACT!

Stopleveline is one of the smaller hotlines in the international INHOPE network with over 50 partner hotlines. However, due to the large number of accurate reports, Stopleveline was one of those hotlines that entered most reports of illegal content into the joint INHOPE database in 2024.

Safer Internet Centre Austria

In collaboration with Saferinternet.at (realized by ÖIAT and ISPA), Rat auf Draht, Stopline 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.n.

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

Reporting offices of the Federal Ministry

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, Stopline 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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