A Europe that protects: Commission reinforces EU response to illegal content online

In its Communication of September 2017 on **tackling illegal content online**, the European Commission promised to monitor progress in tackling illegal content online and assess whether additional measures are needed to ensure the swift and proactive detection and removal of illegal content online, including possible legislative measures to complement the existing regulatory framework.

As a follow-up, the Commission is today recommending **a set of operational measures** – accompanied by the necessary safeguards – to be taken by companies and Member States to further step up this work before it determines whether it will be necessary to propose legislation. These recommendations apply to all forms of illegal content ranging from terrorist content, incitement to hatred and violence, child sexual abuse material, counterfeit products and copyright infringement.

The Recommendation builds on the on-going work with the industry through various voluntary initiatives to ensure that the internet is free of illegal content and reinforces actions taken under different initiatives.

Vice-President for the Digital Single Market Andrus **Ansip** said: *"Online platforms are becoming people's main gateway to information, so they have a responsibility to provide a secure environment for their users. What is illegal offline is also illegal online. While several platforms have been removing more illegal content than ever before – showing that self-regulation can work – we still need to react faster against terrorist propaganda and other illegal content which is a serious threat to our citizens' security, safety and fundamental rights."*

The spread of illegal content online undermines the trust of citizens in the Internet and poses security threats. While progress has been made in protecting Europeans online, platforms need to redouble their efforts to take illegal content off the web more quickly and efficiently. Voluntary industry measures encouraged by the Commission through the EU Internet Forum on terrorist content online, the Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online and the Memorandum of Understanding on the Sale of Counterfeit Goods have achieved results. There is however significant scope for more effective action, particularly on the most urgent issue of terrorist content, which presents serious security risks.

Stronger procedures for more efficient removal of illegal content

Today's Recommendation sets out **operational measures** to ensure faster detection and removal of illegal content online, to reinforce the cooperation between companies, trusted flaggers and law enforcement authorities, and to

increase transparency and safeguards for citizens:

- **Clearer 'notice and action' procedures:** Companies should set out easy
  and transparent rules for notifying illegal content, including fast-
  track procedures for 'trusted flaggers'. To avoid the unintended removal
  of content which is not illegal, content providers should be informed
  about such decisions and have the opportunity to contest them.

- **More efficient tools and proactive technologies:** Companies should set
  out clear notification systems for users. They should have proactive
  tools to detect and remove illegal content, in particular for terrorism
  content and for content which does not need contextualisation to be
  deemed illegal, such as child sexual abuse material or counterfeited
  goods.

- **Stronger safeguards to ensure fundamental rights:** To ensure that
  decisions to remove content are accurate and well-founded, especially
  when automated tools are used, companies should put in place effective
  and appropriate safeguards, including human oversight and verification,
  in full respect of fundamental rights, freedom of expression and data
  protection rules.

- **Special attention to small companies:** Theindustry should, through
  voluntary arrangements, cooperate and share experiences, best practices
  and technological solutions, including tools allowing for automatic
  detection.This shared responsibility should particularly benefit smaller
  platforms with more limited resources and expertise.

- **Closer cooperation with authorities:** If there is evidence of a serious
  criminal offence or a suspicion that illegal content is posing a threat
  to life or safety, companies should promptly inform law enforcement
  authorities. Member States are encouraged to establish the appropriate
  legal obligations.

These measures may differ according to the nature of the illegal content, and
the Recommendation encourages companies to follow the principle of
proportionality when removing illegal content.

Increased protection against terrorist content online

Terrorist content online poses a particularly grave risk to the security of
Europeans, and its proliferation must be treated as a matter of the utmost
urgency. This is why the Commission is today additionally recommending more
specific provisions to further **curb terrorist content online**:

- **One-hour rule**: Considering that terrorist content is most harmful in the

first hours of its appearance online, all companies should remove such content within one hour from its referral as a general rule.

- **Faster detection and effective removal**: In addition to referrals, internet companies should implement proactive measures, including automated detection, to effectively and swiftly remove or disable terrorist content and stop it from reappearing once it has been removed. To assist smaller platforms, companies should share and optimise appropriate technological tools and put in place working arrangements for better cooperation with the relevant authorities, including Europol.

- **Improved referral system:** Fast-track procedures should be put in place to process referrals as quickly as possible, while Member States need to ensure they have the necessary capabilities and resources to detect, identify and refer terrorist content.

- **Regular reporting**: Member States should on a regular basis, preferably every three months, report to the Commission on referrals and their follow-up as well as on overall cooperation with companies to curb terrorist online content.

Next steps

The Commission will monitor the actions taken in response to this Recommendation and determine whether additional steps, including, if necessary legislation, are required.

The Commission will also continue its analytical work, working closely with stakeholders, and in this context will launch a public consultation on this matter in the coming weeks.

In order to allow for the monitoring of the effects of the Recommendation, Member States and companies will be required to submit relevant information on terrorist content within **three months**, and other illegal content within **six months**.

Background

The European Union has responded to the challenge of illegal content online through both binding and non-binding measures, in sectoral and horizontal initiatives. Ongoing work under sectorial dialogues with companies shows positive results. For instance, under the Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online, internet companies now remove on average 70% of illegal hate speech notified to them and in more than 80% of these cases, the removals took place within 24 hours. However, illegal content online remains a serious problem with great consequences for the security and safety of citizens and companies, undermining the trust in the digital economy.

Following the [European Council conclusions](#) of June 2017 and building on the

various dialogues with industry, in September 2017, the Commission provided guidance and outlined common tools to swiftly and proactively detect, remove and prevent the reappearance of illegal content inciting hatred, violence and terrorism online. The Commission also indicated that other measures may be needed to take illegal content off the web, including legislative measures. Since then, the Commission has been urging online platforms to step up and speed up their efforts to prevent, detect and remove illegal online content, in particular terrorist related, as quickly as possible.

For More Information

[Memo](): Frequently asked questions: Commission Recommendation on measures to effectively tackle illegal content online

[Factsheet]() on Illegal Content Online

[Press release](): Security Union: Commission follows up on terrorist radicalisation

[Statement](): Removing illegal content online: Commission calls for more efforts and faster progress from all sides

[Press release]():Security Union: Commission steps up efforts to tackle illegal content online

[Communication](): Tackling illegal content online – towards an enhanced responsibility of online platforms

[Press release](): Social media companies need to do more to fully comply with EU consumer rules

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[News story: All offices closed]()

Updated: Updated to include press contact details.

Due to the bad weather, all our offices are closed on Thursday 1 March and Friday 2 March 2018.

All our online services are available to [search]() and [file your documents]().

You won't be able to use any 'same day' services during this time.

The contact centre is closed, and we won't be able to answer any phone calls or emails.

All press queries must be sent to [press@companieshouse.gov.uk]().

Sorry for the inconvenience.

[News story: Christine Middlemiss begins as UK Chief Veterinary Officer](#)

Christine Middlemiss [has today](#) taken up post as UK Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) taking over from Nigel Gibbens who has stepped down after 10 successful years in the role.

[Watch Christine's message on her first day at Defra](#)

Christine has a wealth of experience and joins Defra after serving as the CVO for New South Wales, Australia. She took up that role in August 2016 and during her tenure she led major improvements to biosecurity across many farming sectors including implementation of new outcome focused and risk based biosecurity legislation; online animal certification processes and improving evidence and risk based disease control approaches.

She comes from a farming family in the south of Scotland, with a background in beef cattle and sheep. Prior to moving to Australia Christine was an experienced veterinarian who worked for a number of years in private practice in Scotland and the north of England with specific interest in research, meat processing and livestock genetics. She then joined the Animal Health agency (now part of the Animal and Plant Health Agency) in 2008 as a Divisional Veterinary Manager in Scotland. She also led Defra's Animal Traceability and Public Health policy team detecting and responding to new and emerging diseases such as Schmallenberg and Porcine Epidemic Diarrhoea.

She re-joins the department at a time when animal welfare is a top priority for the Government, demonstrated by a number of recent announcements including legislation making CCTV cameras mandatory in slaughterhouses, the call for evidence on a ban on third party puppy sales and the draft animal welfare bill. The Government is also committed to the very highest standards on animal welfare. As the prime Minister has set out, we will make the United Kingdom a world leader in the care and protection of animals as we leave the EU.

Speaking about her appointment, Christine Middlemiss said:

> I am delighted to have been appointed. It is a privilege to take over from Nigel and lead my veterinary colleagues to support our farming and food industry on the UK reputation for high health and welfare of our animals.
>
> I am very much looking forward to working again with the team at

Defra, its agencies, the devolved administrations and all the individuals and groups who will contribute to meet future challenges.

Our Secretary of State has confirmed he wants to cement the UK's place as a world-leader on animal health and welfare as the UK leaves the European Union, and I'm delighted to have an opportunity to play a part in that.

News story: Lift-off: Satellite launched into space on RAF mission

The RAF has been working with the MOD's Chief Scientific Advisor, Defence Science and Technology Laboratory and UK industry on the programme to deliver high-quality imagery and 3D video footage from space. The first satellite of its kind, the Carbonite-2 has completed its initial checks and is now supplying detailed imagery and footage.

The ambitious programme could eventually see high-tech satellites beaming video directly into the cockpit of fighter jets, improving the situational awareness of UK pilots by giving them the very best imagery and information anywhere on Earth in real-time.

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier made the announcement at Surrey Satellite Technology Limited in Guildford, the company behind the technology, to mark the successful launch and operation of the satellite.

Speaking at the launch event, Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier said:

It's entirely fitting that we have launched this highly capable satellite in the centenary year of the Royal Air Force. We have always been at the leading edge of technology, constantly innovating and expanding our horizons. This satellite will not only expand further the RAF's growing Air and Space capabilities, it will I hope also be an inspiration to those young people looking towards technology as a way to realise their potential.

The Chief of the Air Staff today announced the RAF's role in the launch and operation of a demonstrator satellite. Crown copyright.

Welcoming the news, Defence Minister Guto Bebb said:

> The success of this satellite shows we are looking far beyond the skies when it comes to defending our country. We live in an increasingly dangerous world and satellite technology like this give our Armed Forces the extra advantage of quick video surveillance to keep us safe from a range of future threats, whether that's an airborne terror attack or a troop of tanks closing in on a foreign border. Investing millions into Britain's most innovative companies is helping us propel the UK forward in the space domain.

The Carbonite-2 will play a crucial role in the MOD's understanding the potential for and shaping the RAF's vision of an international constellation for the future. This could unlock new opportunities using a range of sensors and ground stations, which has the potential to support emerging crises and combat intensifying threats, giving the UK the opportunity to lead in the area with several close allies having already shown interest in the concept.

The MOD invested £4.5m into the programme with Surrey Satellite Technology just eight months ago, and the satellite was successfully launched from Sriharikhota in India. The 100kg spacecraft, roughly the size of an average household washing machine, carries an off-the-shelf telescope and HD video camera, both of which have been adapted for a space environment and

integrated into a custom-built framework. The imaging system is designed to deliver high-resolution images and colour HD video clips with a swath width of 5km.

MOD's Chief Scientific Advisor, Professor Hugh Durrant-Whyte said:

> MOD's science community is one of the driving forces of the UK's space revolution; and this is an excellent example of defence science and technology working with industry and the Royal Air Force to deliver affordable and pioneering space technology quickly for our Armed Forces.

The historic moment comes as the RAF celebrates 100 years since its formation, and demonstrates how the service is not only commemorating its history but also celebrating current success and looking forward to inspire future generations. To maximise the benefit of the experience and build expertise the RAF has placed a secondee with SSTL.

As set out in the Government's Industrial Strategy, the UK Space Agency is also working together with industry to capture a 10% share of the global space market.

The UK Space Agency's Director of Growth, Catherine Mealing-Jones said:

> Space has applications across every part of our economy and is a vital part of our national capability. British companies like SSTL are the best in the world at what they do, making them a fitting partner for the RAF.

The MOD already has a world-leading role in satellite technology, with Skynet 5 delivering a resilient, sovereign capability until 2025, supporting secure communications for troops, command centres and cutting-edge unmanned vehicles. Beyond that, the MOD is fully committed to launching Skynet 6a and is looking to change defence structures to bring better operational coherence to activities for the future.

[News story: Learner drivers on motorways from 4 June 2018](#)

Updated: Added the date (Monday 4 June 2018) that the law will change, advice about driving near learner drivers on the motorway, and added a Welsh translation of the news story.

From Monday 4 June 2018, learner drivers will be able to take driving lessons on motorways in England, Scotland and Wales.

This will help to make sure more drivers know how to use motorways safely.

At the moment, you can only have motorway lessons after you've passed your driving test. Some newly-qualified drivers take lessons through the voluntary [Pass Plus](#) scheme.

How the change will work

Learner drivers will need to be:

- accompanied by an approved driving instructor
- driving a car fitted with dual controls

Any motorways lessons will be voluntary. It will be up to the driving instructor to decide when the learner driver is competent enough for them.

Until the law changes, it's still illegal for a learner driver to drive on a motorway.

The change only applies to learner drivers of cars. Learner motorcyclists won't be allowed on motorways.

Trainee driving instructors won't be allowed to take learner drivers on the motorway.

Motorway driving isn't being introduced to the driving test as part of this change.

Making sure road users are ready for the change

The change is being well-publicised so that:

- driving instructors and learner drivers are prepared
- other road users know what to expect

[The Highway Code rules on motorways](#) will be updated.

Driving near learner drivers on the motorway

As with any vehicle on the motorway, keep a safe distance from a learner driver in front of you. Increase the gap on wet or icy roads, or in fog.

You should always be patient with learner drivers. They may not be so skilful at anticipating and responding to events.

Driving instructor vehicles and training

Driving instructors can decide if they want to use a driving school rooftop box during motorway lessons, based on its instructions.

The car will need to [display L plates](#) on the front and rear if the rooftop box is removed.

It will be up to the instructor whether or not they keep their driving school rooftop box on the car.

Guidance for driving instructors

[Learning materials](#) and the [syllabus for learning to drive a car](#) are being updated to include motorway lessons.

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency won't give driving instructors extra training on providing motorway lessons.

The driving instructor's National Associations Strategic Partnership has produced best practice guidance to help instructors.

[Download 'Motorway tuition guidelines' (PDF. 116KB)](#)

Preparing drivers for a lifetime of safe driving

The changes are being made to allow learner drivers to:

- get broader driving experience before taking their driving test
- get training on how to join and leave the motorway, overtake and use lanes correctly
- practise driving at higher speeds
- understand motorway specific traffic signs
- understand what to do if a vehicle breaks down on a motorway
- improve their confidence to drive on the motorway unsupervised after passing their driving test