Fighting child sexual abuse: Commission proposes interim legislation to enable communications services to continue detecting child sexual abuse online

The Commission has proposed an interim Regulation to ensure that providers of online communications services can continue detecting and reporting child sexual abuse online and removing child sexual abuse material.

This interim measure is necessary because with the full application of the European Electronic Communications Code as from 21 December 2020, certain online communication services, like webmail or messaging services, will fall under the scope of the e-Privacy Directive. This Directive does not contain an explicit legal basis for voluntary processing of content or traffic data for the purpose of detecting child sexual abuse online and providers would have to discontinue their activities unless Member States adopted specific national measures. Today's proposal will enable online communication services to continue their activities to detect child sexual abuse online.

The proposed Regulation provides guarantees to safeguard privacy and protection of personal data. It has a narrow scope limited to allowing current voluntary activities to continue, subject to the General Data Protection Regulation, and data processing will be limited to what is necessary to detect and report suspicious cases.

**Margaritis Schinas**, Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life, said:
Today's legislation is an example of how our Security Union Strategy links the online and offline realms to protect Europeans from crime. Protecting our children against such crimes is a priority for this Strategy.

Commissioner for Internal Market, Thierry Breton, said:

Just as we would not leave children alone in dark alleys, we cannot leave them exposed to predators online. We need a proportionate legal framework and reliable technologies to fight against child sexual abuse online effectively, in keeping with our values.

Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson, added:

Online exchange of material depicting child abuse starts a vicious chain of criminal acts. Today's proposal ensures that the current voluntary efforts of online communication providers to responsibly report can continue.

These voluntary activities play an important role in enabling the identification and rescue of victims, reducing the further dissemination of child sexual abuse material, and contributing to the identification and investigation of offenders, as well as the prevention of offences.

It is now for the European Parliament and the Council to adopt this proposal. It will remain in force until 31 December 2025.

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