New Report Shows Child Pornography Still a Real Problem Online

Hotline.ie, the service where the public can anonymously report illegal material encountered on the Internet, today released its annual report for 2007. Formally launched by Mr. Dermot Ahern T.D., Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, it details the Hotline's activities and reporting trends observed over the last year.

Hotline.ie, which is run by the Internet Service Providers Association of Ireland (ISPAI), received 2,590 reports of suspected illegal material on the Internet in 2007. The figures show that the number of reports confirmed as child pornography and similar material has risen by nearly 62% on 2006.

The report goes on to show that the type of child pornography that the Hotline encounters is increasing in severity. Hotline Analysts confirm that they are seeing extremely explicit photos and videos of the rape and sexual abuse of children far more frequently than in previous years.

The report stresses that Hotline management is worried by the lack of complaints from the public regarding illegal content on Peer to Peer (P2P) file-sharing services. "Some of the most disturbing material the analysts saw last year was found on P2P services," said Mr Paul Durrant, General Manager of ISPAI. "Many children use file-sharing and I appeal to the public to help rid P2P of such material by reporting suspiciously named files when they come across them".

The good news though is that, once again, Ireland has achieved a clean record, with no illegal child pornography being found to have been hosted in this country. This is due in great part to the concerted actions of ISPAI member companies and the Gardaí, supported by Government, which has deterred criminals and paedophiles from using Irish based Internet facilities to harbour illegal content.

However, the Internet is a global phenomenon and Irish users are reporting illegal content that is hosted in other countries. This is not ignored. Hotline.ie supports the International fight, particularly against child pornography, by passing illegal content

information via the INHOPE hotline network, or An Garda Síochána who act through Interpol, to the appropriate authorities in the identified source country.

The report also expresses serious concern in relation to many Irish Internet service providers who resist joining the ISPAI. This means that they are neither formally committing to the ISPAI Code of Practice and Ethics nor financially contributing to the work carried out by the Hotline.

If Ireland wants to hold onto its clean record when it comes to the fight to keep child pornography off Irish servers then one important element in this battle is the combined and cohesive effort of all those in the Internet provider industry. Anything less is nothing short of irresponsible.

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Editorial notes.
- The publication of the 5th Report of the ISPAI Hotline.ie service is being announced by the Minister for Justice after 1 p.m. on Tuesday 22nd July 2008.
- The event is being held at Buswells Hotel, Georgian Suite, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2.
- The ISPAI is the industry association of companies providing Internet access, email or hosting services to the public and businesses.
- Current ISPAI membership: Irish Domains; Vodafone; eircom.net; EuroKom; Irish Broadband; HEAnet; Bitbuzz; Blacknight Solutions; Myhost.ie; Perlico; Meteor; Strencom; O2; Hosting Ireland; NTL/Chorus; UTV Internet; Verizon Business; BT Ireland; Google and Clearwire.
- After the Minister has announced it, the report will be available on the Internet at http://www.hotline.ie/5threport
- INHOPE is the continually enlarging International network of Internet Hotlines, now comprising of 33 hotlines in 30 countries worldwide. INHOPE was established and continues to be largely funded through the European Commission's Safer Internet Programme.
- In 2007, Hotline.ie received 50% funding of operational costs from the European Commission's Safer Internet Programme.