HOTLINE.IE

ANNUAL REPORT 2011

Covering Jan - 31st Dec 2010

hotline.ie

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INTRODUCTION

This Annual Report of ISPAI Hotline.ie outlines the activities of the Irish Internet Hotline during 2010. It is now over ten years since the inception of the service. Its necessity and the contribution it makes to combating illegal content online is evident from the figures.

PREFACE BY ALAN SHATTER, T.D. MINISTER FOR JUSTICE

The Internet has become a fundamental feature in society worldwide with increasing usage both at work and in people's social lives. Major changes are taking place in how we access the Internet and how we make use of it. New online technologies are now becoming a normal feature in everyday life, for children, young people and their families. Social networking sites and user active services offer many positive opportunities for children and young people to communicate, interact and share content and interests. However, children and young people may also be vulnerable to harmful or inappropriate content through these services. Vigilance is required in tackling Internet downside issues, such as the proliferation of child sexual abuse images. It is a complex business and we are continuously faced with new challenges and the need for constant review of the commitments for all those charged with protecting against these issues.

In this regard, the role of Hotline.ie as part of the international network of internet hotlines (INHOPE) is particularly important. Established in 1999, the Irish Hotline provides a secure and confidential service for the public to anonymously report content they encounter on the Internet that they suspect may be illegal. Once reported, the material is assessed by Hotline Staff and, if considered to be probably illegal, steps are taken to instigate its removal from the internet. Hotline.ie is funded by the Internet Service Providers' Association of Ireland (ISPAI) with support from the EU Safer Internet Programme. Ireland's participation in the EU Safer Internet Programme is coordinated by the Office for Internet Safety in my Department.

It is regrettable that in 2010 there was a case of 'mirroring' of illegal content in Ireland. A report referred to Hotline.ie related to websites which were hosted on a cloud service which contained several illegal images and was 'mirrored' in Ireland. I was impressed to see that procedures with the Garda Síochána and Hotline.ie worked effectively and swift action resulted in the content being removed from public access within 24 hours of the report being opened by the Hotline.

However, we must never become complacent. In particular, the development and growth of Ireland as a technology hub, means that an ever increasing amount of large data centres and cloud services are based here which potentially opens the jurisdiction up to an increase in the amount of cases where illegal content is 'mirrored'. I would urge anyone finding any trace of suspect activities when browsing the internet, chat rooms, web forums, newsgroups or on file sharing programmes to report it to the Hotline immediately.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Paul Durrant, General Manager of Hotline.ie and his staff for all their dedicated work. Collaboration between the Hotline, ISPAI members, the Garda Siochána and government is important in working to reduce the availability of illegal content online to make the internet a safer environment for all our citizens.

FOREWORD BY PAUL DURRANT, ISPAI GENERAL MANAGER

It is encouraging that for the third year running ISPAI Hotline.ie figures show that the number of cases received by the service where the reported content was verified by our Analysts as illegal child abuse content (CSAC) has dropped very significantly – despite the number of all reports received annually being much the same over the last six years. Given the vast growth in Internet usage over those years, this strongly suggests that Internet users going about normal web browsing are not encountering illegal material to the degree that we saw in the past. Such encounters were always a very tiny proportion of all web use but now it appears to be much less – about 70% down on the 2007 peak!

While that has got to be good for ordinary users, adults as well as children, those of us who work in this field can not become complacent. The problem has not gone away – it is in transition, with criminals evolving new techniques and moving illegal content from the Web to other places on the Internet. ISPAI members absolutely do not want any part of our Internet facilities to be misused to store and distribute this abhorrent content. I appeal to those increasingly using non-web services on the Internet, such as P2P, to remain civil-minded and report suspicious file descriptions that suggest CSAC available for downloading. The Hotline report forms are anonymous by default, exist purely to allow you to provide the suspect filename, etc. that you choose to

enter on the form and can not reveal anything else about you or what you might be doing on the Internet.

The work of the Hotline.ie Analyst is often an unrewarding task as despite identifying, tracing and sending notification to authorities for action, the vast majority are to other jurisdictions and there is very rarely any feedback as to the consequences. There have been very few cases over the years where Hotline reports led to content distributed from Ireland. However, due to internationalisation of our hosting services, there were two cases in 2010. I have to compliment the Garda units involved for the swiftness with which they have acted on both reports from the Hotline and the willingness of Irish ISPs to respond by rapidly removing the offending material from public access. Not only was the material inaccessible in less than a working day but we have learned that in one case the evidence gathered from the servers has led to arrests in Spain.

Please help us act against child sexual abuse content on the Internet by reporting suspect content, not just on the Web, but wherever you may encounter it on the Internet. Where content is assessed as illegal Hotline.ie will do its utmost to find the source jurisdiction and have action taken.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SIGNIFICANT DROP IN CONTENT ASSESSED AS ILLEGAL

In 2010, reports received by the Hotline where the content was assessed to be probably illegal under Irish law fell by 28.2% on the previous year. There were **204** such reports in 2010 compared with 2009 when the figure was 284. Given that overall reporting to the Hotline increased slightly in the year, this outcome is to be welcomed as hopefully it indicates that the average Internet user is not encountering content they suspect to be illegal as frequently as occurred in the past.

This encouraging trend is tempered by the fact that criminals are now using more sophisticated methods to market, exchange or collect child sexual abuse images. One such method is to misuse "cyber-locker" services to store the illegal content.

SUMMARY OF HOTLINE REPORTING FIGURES FOR 2010

In brief, the statistics relating to reports received by the Hotline in 2010 are:

- **2,646** reports processed by the Hotline.

- **87** duplicate reports (of which 18 related to occurrences of illegal content resources)

- **186** reports which referred to unique occurrences of illegal content resources

- **3** reports were issues such as racism, threats of violence against individuals or financial scams that had an Irish connection.

- **183** were assessed as child sexual abuse and were forwarded for action through INHOPE or law enforcement channels (via An Garda Síochána).

- **2** of the above **183** were forwarded to An Garda Síochána for national investigation as the content was determined by Hotline.ie Analysts to be hosted in Ireland. In all other cases the source location proved to be outside the jurisdiction.

- The remaining **2,442** were assessed as not illegal or, could not be found or assessed for a variety of reasons, were queries or were simply outside the Hotline's remit.

ISPAI members promote and financially support the Hotline service as part of their actions to help protect their services and customers from exposure to illegal content.

The Hotline also receives part-funding from the European Commission. For more information on how the Hotline works, please visit www.hotline.ie.

TRENDS AND CONCLUSION

While having processed 2,646 incoming reports in 2010 compared to 2,117 in 2009, far fewer proved to refer to illegal child sexual abuse content than the 274 so assessed in 2009. In fact, at 183, the number of unique reports confirmed as referring to illegal child sexual abuse content (CSAC), are at their lowest since 2004 despite massive growth in Internet usage over those seven years.

Ireland's clean record in relation to CSAC, that is, no report received by the Hotline which was assessed as referring to illegal content traced to a source in Ireland, was broken in late 2009 and there were two further occurrences in 2010. This must be kept in proportion; three cases of CSAC in over ten years is an outstanding record but the cases (cloud, etc.) show the challenges posed by the evolving Internet environment.

Illegal content makes up only a very minute percentage of all material available on the Internet; however, to-date most reports received by the Hotline refer to content encountered on the World Wide Web. So regrettably, the Hotline figures can not indicate that the overall amount of child sexual abuse material on the Internet has fallen; only that such material is less often encountered by typical users of the Internet in Ireland especially when browsing the Web. A trend which must be highlighted is the growth of "peer to peer" (P2P) network usage. Recent research shows that distributors of child pornography have moved from primarily using the Web to using P2P networks – where files can be shared between users directly rather than accessed from a particular website. To combat this developing P2P problem, the role of INHOPE hotlines and international notice and takedown procedures requires further refinement.

Executive Summary

The Hotline figures, which mainly refer to the Web, demonstrate the significant impact cooperative activities of law enforcement, INHOPE members and industry have had in tackling CSAC on the Web. It also suggests that the exchange of CSAC has had to become more covert and less visible to the public and Hotline.ie has seen increased misuse of web facilities such as cyber-lockers.

It is important that the general public who encounter P2P files containing child pornography or other types of illegal content should report them anonymously in the same way they report content encountered on the World Wide Web. Public reporting is an essential element in making the Internet a safer environment for all users, particularly children, not just here in Ireland but around the world.

If you suspect something you encounter on the Internet (the World Wide Web, a peer to peer network, or other services) may be illegal, or appears to point to where child pornography may be located, please do not ignore it - report it using the forms at www.hotline.ie.

REPORT INPUTS

EXTERNAL AND DERIVED REPORTS

In the period from 1st January 2010 to 31st December 2010, Hotline.ie processed 2,646 reports of suspected illegal content. This comprises reports received directly from the public ("External Reports") and reports derived directly from these by the Hotline Analysts ("Derived Reports").

Under the procedures agreed with Government, the Hotline is not permitted to proactively search for illegal content. Therefore, to carry out its function, the Hotline relies totally on the public to initiate reports.

As can be seen in the graph below, the number of reports received each month can be highly variable. On average just over 220 reports per month were processed by Hotline.ie during 2010.

January 2010, with 113 reports, had the lowest reporting level of the year while July, with 504, had the highest. This variation in reports per month is in stark contrast to 2009. That year, January with 372 reports was actually the highest month but in contrast the lowest month was December having just 98 reports.

Quite remarkably the range of reports increased to 391 in 2010 as compared to the 2009 range of 273 reports. 2009 had almost been identical to the range in 2008 of 274 reports. This is a dramatic increase in the range for the past year.

These reports of course represent suspicions about possible illegal content expressed by the members of the public who reported them. On assessment by the analysts the majority do not translate into cases where illegal content is actually found.

NUMBER OF REPORTS PROCESSED PER MONTH 2010
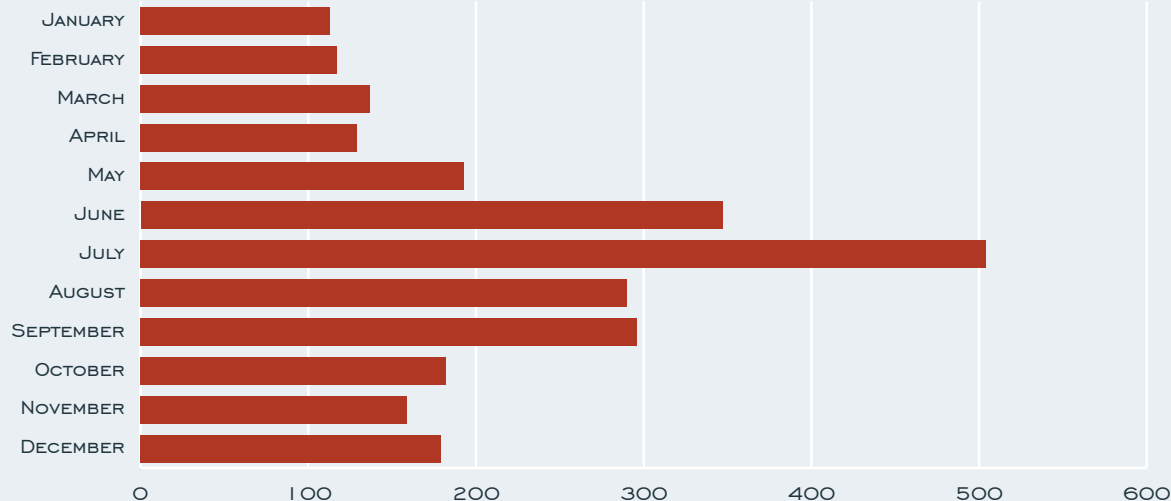
REPORT SOURCE

In 2010 the Hotline processed 2,646 reports. These were made up of 2,576 external reports and 70 derived reports. The reports received from the public are referred to as "External Reports". On assessment, these may or may not prove to be probably illegal under Irish law.

"Derived Reports" always refer to illegal content as they are created and logged when the Hotline Analyst, in examining the content at the location referred to in an external report, finds links to other resources hosted at a different location (IP or domain) which are also assessed as probably illegal content. This is not proactive searching as it is derived in the course of processing a report initiated by the public in line with the procedures agreed with Government. For more information on the different types of reports, please see www.hotline.ie.
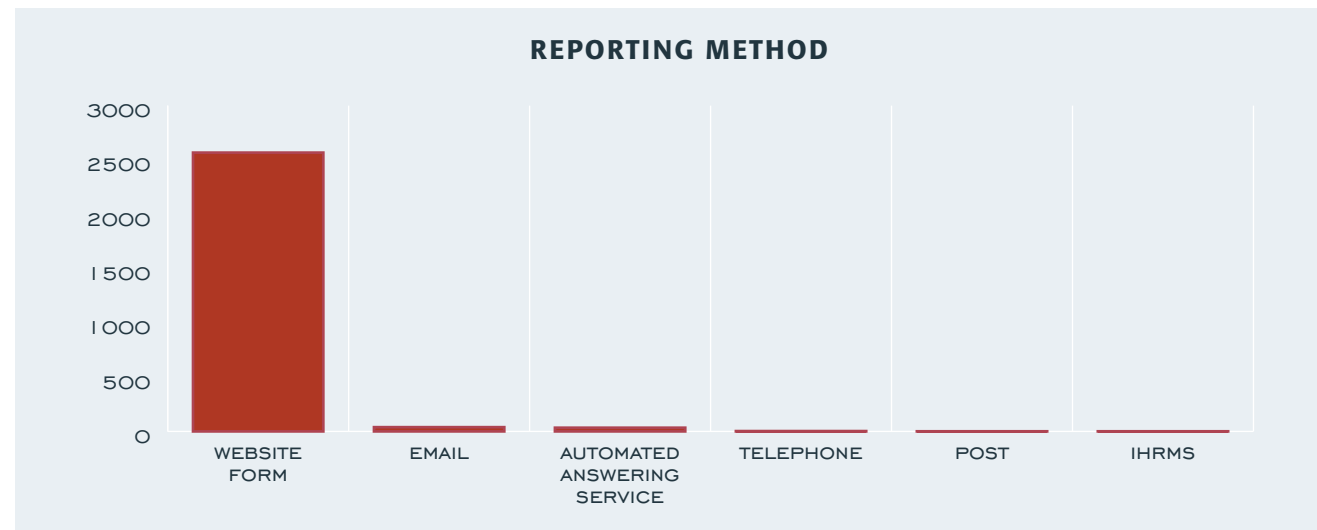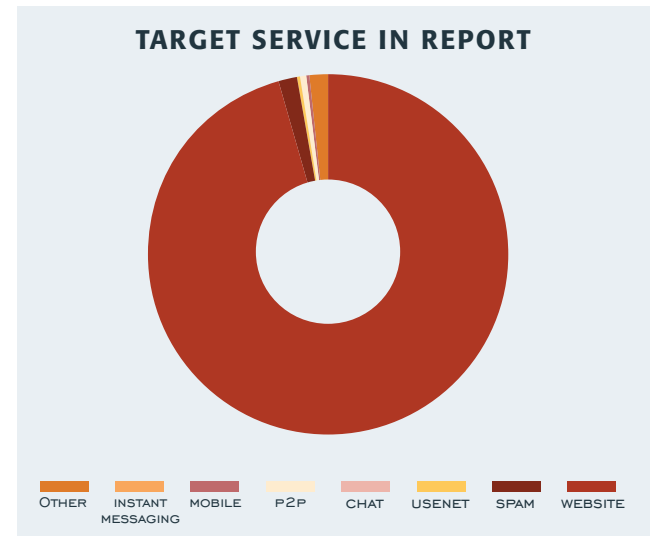
Hotline.ie prefers to receive reports from the public through the web forms provided on the Hotline.ie website. These are accessed by clicking the large button "Make a Report" which can be found prominently positioned on the Home Page (and all pages) of the www.hotline.ie website. Reports may also be submitted by e-mail, telephone, letter and the automated "Lo-Call" answering service at 1890 610710. The proportion of reports submitted in 2010 through each channel is displayed in the graph (right).

IHRMS is the acronym for the INHOPE Report Management System. This is a new facility provided by INHOPE to all it's members for the secure forwarding of notices of illegal content between Hotlines. This centralised system is designed to provide improved statistics on the exchange of reports and also to track how quickly reported content is removed from the Internet.

SUSPECTED CONTENT REPORTED

The following ring chart shows the suspicion given by reporters on reports. Where the Hotline.ie web forms are used this must be selected from a drop down menu. Where other methods are used and no reason is given, the suspicion is set to "other". The figures include derived reports where this year all cases were child pornography.

TARGET SERVICE IN REPORT

Other | Instant Messaging | Mobile | P2P | Chat | Usenet | Spam | Website

REPORTING METHOD

REPORT PROCESSING

ACTIONABLE AND INACTIONABLE REPORTS

Of the 2,646 reports processed during 2010 there were 1,852 reports that could enter into the full content assessment process, leaving 794 reports which could not. Of these 794 reports, 351 were issues or queries on matters which were outside the Hotline's remit. Such reports have risen dramatically from the 2009 figure of 97. In these cases, where contact information is provided by the reporter, a Hotline Analyst will try to get in touch with the reporter. Such reports can take up a considerable amount of the analysts' time as, where possible, the analyst will provide an explanatory response as to why the report is outside remit, and where possible, will suggest the appropriate body to deal with the reporter's concern. The report is then closed as "Outside Hotline Remit".

Only 8 of the 794 were purely queries that actually related to matters with which the Hotline deals. Surprisingly, some reporters make the mistake of asking a question but then submit it anonymously. This happens on both the Automated Telephone Answering Service and on the Web forms. Members of the public wishing to submit a question which is within the Hotline's remit or require a response on a report should ensure to include contact details so that the Content Analyst can respond.
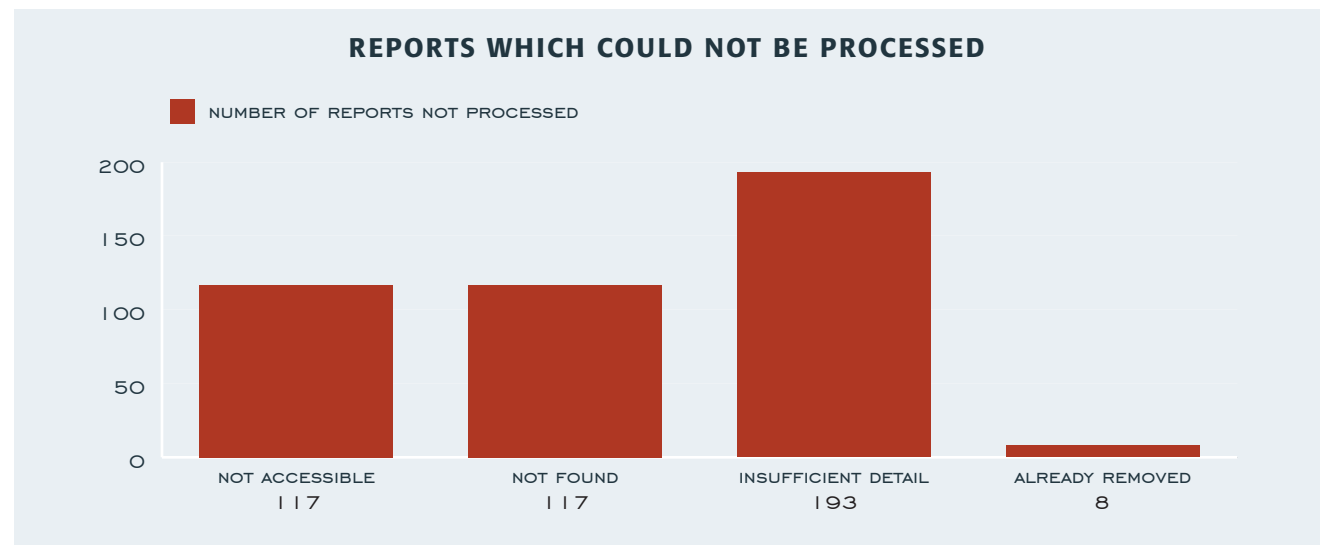
Where the report is a query and the reporter has

provided contact information, the Analysts do their best to respond helpfully. However, Hotline.ie cannot offer legal advice and often we must refer people to other agencies. In many cases, the query actually progresses into a report about content which may or may not be assessed as illegal. These are converted to a full report and not counted as a query. The remaining 435 of these 794 were cases where the content could not be assessed for various reasons discussed below.

REPORTS WHICH COULD NOT BE PROCESSED

These 435 reports break down as shown in the graph below and are described in more detail in this section.

Of great concern were the 193 reports where insufficient detail was given to allow the Hotline Analysts begin to try and find the content that prompted the reporter to make the complaint. In many cases the Analyst believes from the description given that what was seen by he reporter merits attention but there is simply no clue as to where to start looking. If contact details are given the Analyst will contact the reporter and try to obtain the necessary information to proceed with processing of the report but in the majority of cases the report is anonymous, so regrettably it must simply be closed without further action.

REPORTS WHICH COULD NOT BE PROCESSED

■ NUMBER OF REPORTS NOT PROCESSED

NOT ACCESSIBLE 117	NOT FOUND 117	INSUFFICIENT DETAIL 193	ALREADY REMOVED 8

Report Processing

ACCESS FAILED

There were also many cases where the access process to the reported content failed. This can be for a variety of reasons.

In 117 cases, the content was not accessible. Taking a web report as an example, this generally means the server is functioning but the page doesn't exist anymore; or the pages have been made password protected; or the server returns a "forbidden" error. In the case of P2P it might be that a file is no longer being shared, or other similar issues. In all cases the analyst cannot access the content in order to make an assessment. The report is closed as "not accessible".

In a further 117 cases, the reported content simply could not be found by the Analyst. That is an operating server can be accessed but the content viewable at the location does not appear to contain the material indicated by the reporter. Another example is where a reporter gives a search term used rather than the direct URL of the content in question. However, when the Analyst attempts the search the results do not present what the reporter appears to describe. In the case of P2P, it can occur when a library of images is downloaded but the file to which the reporter referred is not present.

In just 8 cases there was a notice stating that the content had already been removed by the ISP due to it having breached the ISP's acceptable usage policy. This means the reporter probably did encounter illegal content but the Hotline could not verify this directly. As it is already removed the goal of Hotline work has already been achieved and the report is simply closed. In many cases the ISP would also have provided data to law enforcement for investigation.

Report Assessment

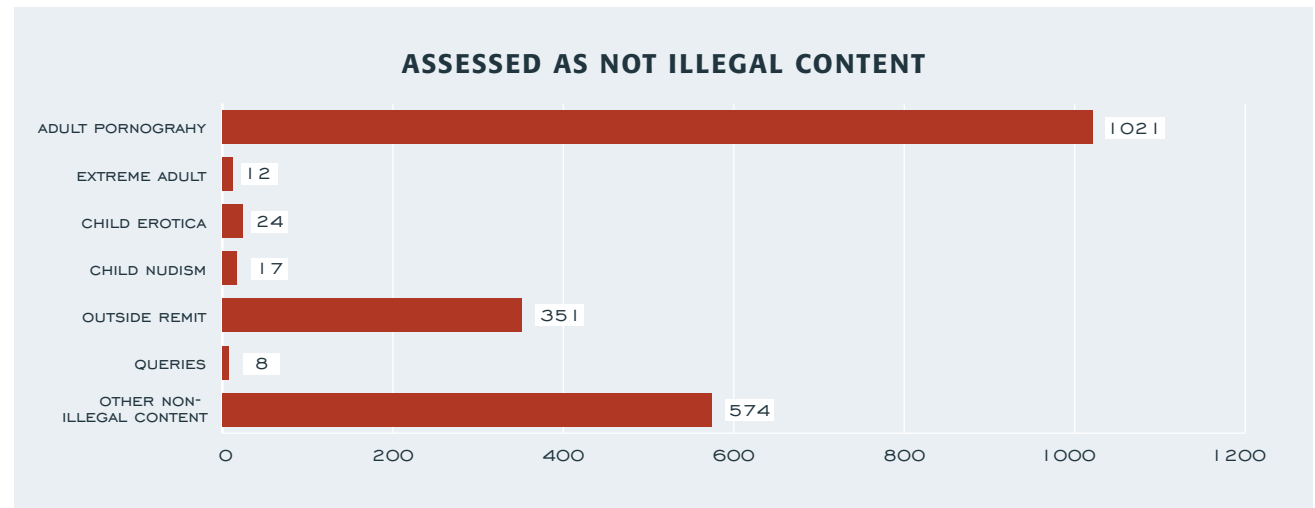## ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

ASSESSMENT

Of the 1,852 reports which entered the assessment phase, 1,648 were assessed as referring to content that was legal (or not specifically illegal) under Irish law and 204 were found to be "probably illegal" under Irish law. Of these 70 were reports that were derived from the external reports. This means that only 134 external reports were themselves directly assessed as probably illegal.

ASSESSED AS NOT ILLEGAL

As can be seen from the graph of these "non-illegal" assessments, the majority of reports suspected to be child pornography actually proved to be adult pornography.

Some reports of adult pornography are categorised as extreme where they involve portrayals of activities which may be considered illegal (e.g. rape, bestiality) if the act was not a staged consensual performance but a real case that was proven to be a crime before a court.

Child nudism refers to images where the children may be naked but they were not produced for pornographic purposes. Examples include pictures of naked children in famine or war zone situations, naturist sites where pictures are taken in family contexts, or images taken for diagnostic reasons which are presented in a medical context.

ASSESSED AS NOT ILLEGAL CONTENT

Category	Value
ADULT PORNOGRAHY	1021
EXTREME ADULT	12
CHILD EROTICA	24
CHILD NUDISM	17
OUTSIDE REMIT	351
QUERIES	8
OTHER NON-ILLEGAL CONTENT	574

Child erotica are images judged to have been taken of children posed in an inappropriately sexual manner but are not illegal as they do not meet the criteria set in law. In all cases these were hosted abroad and Hotline.ie cannot forward a report for action unless the material is assessed as probably illegal. (If they were found to be hosted in Ireland on an ISPAI member's facilities, though to-date this has never happened, Hotline.ie would notify the ISP to consider removing the content under the ISPAI Code of Practice.)

Relative to previous years, 2010 recorded an increase in the number of reports which the Hotline Analysts assessed as not being "probably illegal" under Irish

law. (Only a Court of Law can make a judgement as to whether something is definitively illegal under the law. However, under the transposition of the EU e-Commerce Directive, ISPs must take action within a reasonable time where illegal material is brought to their attention, hence ISPAI Hotline Analysts who are acting on behalf of the ISPAI membership, make a best assessment on whether content is probably illegal and if so, take appropriate action).

During the year Hotline.ie has received a significant number of reports which allege child pornography but are assessed as "not illegal other content". For example, reports have been received about articles on discussion

boards or online encyclopaedias which are merely discussing the dangers of child pornography or defining what constitutes child pornography under various jurisdictions. These are not forwarded by the Analysts, as they do not breach the legislation. The Hotline's role is to give notice about material which the Analysts deem likely to be illegal. While the Hotline would stress that members of the public should not be deterred from reporting anything which they even suspect could possibly be illegal, it is important to note the distinction between actual illegal content and content which merely provides information on the problem or content which is not outlawed by the legislation, such as adult pornography.

The Child Trafficking and Pornography Act, 1998 defines child pornography as:

"any visual representation

(i) that shows or, in the case of a document, relates to a person who is or is depicted as being a child and who is engaged in or is depicted as being engaged in explicit sexual activity

(ii) that shows or, in the case of a document, relates to a person who is or is depicted as being a child and who is or is depicted as witnessing any such activity by any person or persons, or

(iii) whose dominant characteristic is the depiction, for a sexual purpose, of the genital or anal region of a child…"

A child is someone under the age of 17 for the purposes of the Act.

ILLEGAL CONTENT

Of the 204 reports referring to content that was assessed as probably illegal there were 18 duplicate reports, leaving 186 unique illegal reports. The breakdown of these is shown in the table below.

ASSESSED AS ILLEGAL CONTENT

	ALL REPORTS	DUPLICATE REPORTS	UNIQUE ILLEGAL REPORTS
CHILD PORNOGRAPHY	201	18	183
FINANCIAL SCAM	2	0	2
RACIST MATERIAL	1	0	1

Surprisingly few financial scams were reported despite the level of phishing and other e-mail scams that prevails on the Internet. It may be considered that the Internet population has become so inundated and annoyed by these scams that they simply ignore and delete them. The Hotline only deals with those that might be hosted in Ireland through our membership. However, where they are assessed as purporting to be a legitimate company in Ireland we attempt to directly notify the ISP in the jurisdiction where it is hosted so they may remove it but we can not state that action will always be taken. This is because there is no international

network equivalent to INHOPE (where all members must deal with child sexual abuse content) which deals with financial scams. Other reported scams, for example emails claiming you have won an online lottery draw, or can have inherited a deceased foreign banker's estate, etc. that do not have any connection with Ireland, are categorised as "Outside Hotline Remit".

Racist material, which in Ireland equates to content that is illegal under the "Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989" is very rarely reported. In most cases, the material does not constitute illegal content under this Act and more often are defamatory remarks that fall under civil law where the Hotline is unable to take any action. However, it must be said that in most cases material reported has been hosted in the U.S.A. where there is little possibility of having the content removed due to the very wide application of the 1st Amendment upholding freedom of speech.
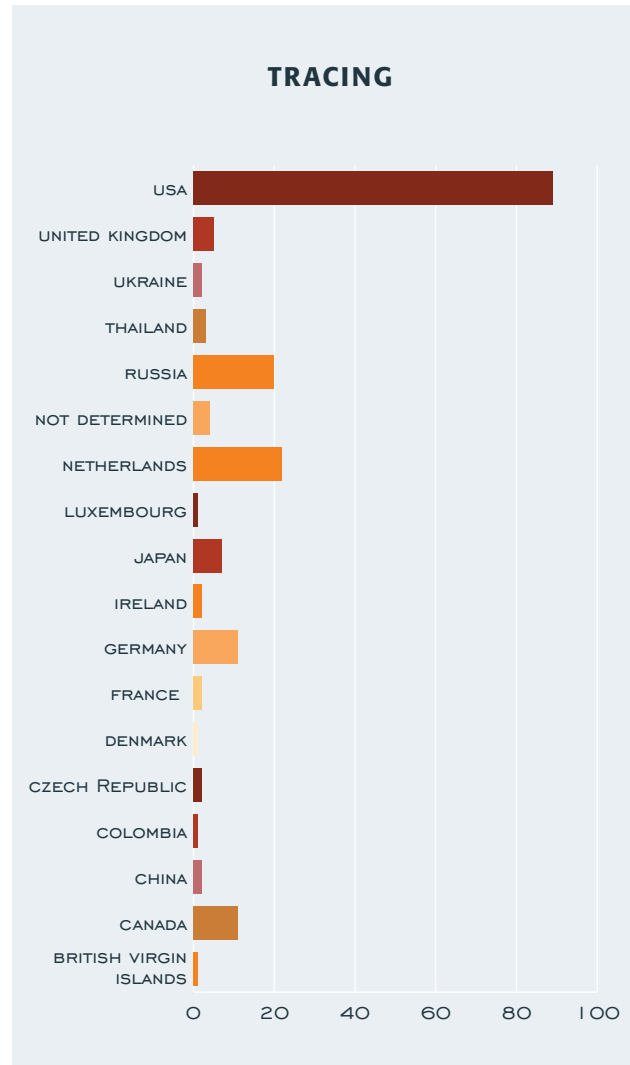
Report Processing

TRACING

Having assessed a report as probably illegal, the Analyst then uses a suite of tools and services to trace the apparent location of the content. Only material that is assessed as "probably illegal" is traced – no tracing is done on any other category of content. In the case of a website, a trace includes finding its IP address, identifying the hosting ISP and establishing the applicable jurisdiction. For e-mail it consists of identifying the IP address which was allocated to the sender of the e-mail, the ISP who provided that account connection and the applicable jurisdiction. Similarly for peer-to-peer file-sharing and other services the objective is to trace the ISP who provided the account connection.

In 2010 the results of tracing the 186 unique illegal reports are shown in the graph on the right.

Apparently duplicate reports (i.e. the having the same URL) when received some time apart are traced again because it is possible the content has been moved to a different IP address. Only where both the URL and the IP are the same is the report accepted as being a duplicate.

Unfortunately tracing is not always successful and in some cases the analysts cannot always tell with any degree of certainty which jurisdiction was the source. Also some ISPs' networks straddle borders so the best estimate is used. This is why Hotline.ie always uses the term "apparent location".

TRACING

Country	Value
USA	~88
UNITED KINGDOM	
UKRAINE	
THAILAND	
RUSSIA	
NOT DETERMINED	
NETHERLANDS	
LUXEMBOURG	
JAPAN	
IRELAND	
GERMANY	
FRANCE	
DENMARK	
CZECH REPUBLIC	
COLOMBIA	
CHINA	
CANADA	
BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS	

0   20   40   60   80   100

FORWARDING

The next stage in the process is to make a "forwarding report" to notify authorities in the apparent location. Hotline.ie tries to avoid multiple reports being sent about illegal content. Therefore only unique illegal reports are forwarded (i.e. duplicates have been removed). As mentioned previously, in 2010 there were 186 "unique illegal reports" which could potentially be forwarded.

Where an INHOPE hotline exists in the country to which the apparent location was traced, the report is forwarded to that hotline. If there is no INHOPE hotline in the jurisdiction, it is forwarded to An Garda Síochána so they can send it through police channels to Interpol, who in turn passes this to police in the jurisdiction of the apparent location.

If illegal content is traced to Ireland, it is forwarded to An Garda Síochána and the ISPAI member and there is close cooperation to speedily act on the report.

Hotline.ie only forwards details about content which is at the target of a report. The details forwarded along with a unique case reference number are as follows:

- The date and time the report was made to the Hotline and, where it is provided, the date and time the reporter encountered the illegal material.

- The URL or other identifier where the content reported may be accessed.

Report Processing

- A very brief description of what was observed that resulted in the assessment that the content was probably illegal under Irish law.

- Up to three unique identifiers (e.g. URLs) of specific illegal images at, or referenced in, the location reported and a terse description of the image or video, etc. at these locations.

- The technical tracing information obtained by the analysts that shows the apparent location of the content.

The actual illegal images or files are never forwarded. The Hotline does not retain any illegal images, etc. once the report is closed. If downloading of files was necessary to assess content, on closing the report the downloaded files are securely deleted. Under the terms of operation agreed with the Government, Hotline.ie does not hold a database of illegal content.

Information about the reporter (if it has been supplied) is never passed on. If law enforcement investigations in the other jurisdiction can be assisted by the reporter and that jurisdiction requests to make contact, the Hotline will only provide the reporter's details having first contacted them to obtain their express permission. If the reporter refuses or they cannot be contacted their details will not be provided.

It is significant that as more hotlines have been established worldwide and joined INHOPE, the proportion of reports having to be forwarded via law enforcement has dropped from 37% of all reports in 2007 to just 8% in 2010. The proportion of reports sent via INHOPE hotlines in that three year period has increased from 57% in 2007 to a massive 89% in 2010. This shows how development of the INHOPE network can save considerable amounts of police time, not just in An Garda Síochána but also at Interpol, as in the absence of an INHOPE Hotline in a recipient country they would have the burden of routing these reports to the appropriate jurisdiction.

INTRODUCTION TO TRENDS

The number of reports received per year grew from establishment of Hotline.ie until 2006 and this was assumed to be due to the increasing population of Internet users in Ireland. However, as can be seen in the graph below, since 2005 the level of reporting appears to be tending around 2,400 per year.

ILLEGAL CONTENT BEING ACCESSED LESS OFTEN

ComReg's Quarterly Key Data Report in December showed that in 2010 broadband subscriptions rose by 7.5% over the previous year's figures, and in 2010 there were over 1.61 million active Internet subscriptions in Ireland. Consequently, the increase of 348 reports

in 2010 over the 2009 figure is still slight when the increased number of Internet subscribers — about 116,714 — is taken into account. It would have been reasonable to expect a far more substantial level of reports particularly in view of the fact that each broadband connection is typically used for longer periods of time and by multiple users who access far greater volumes of data than users on a dial-up connection.

When the above subscriber data is also taken into account for those reports that were assessed as probably illegal, assuming a constant level of illegal content dispersed around the world's servers, statistically one would expect a larger number of people to happen upon that content more often. However, the reverse appears to be true if Hotline's figures can be taken as a representative sample.

As can be seen from the graph on the following page, the number of unique illegal reports forwarded by Hotline.ie has dropped from the high of 684 in 2007, to 497 in 2008 then to 275 in 2009 and has dropped again to 186 in 2010. Unless the Irish Internet using population has suddenly become unwilling to report illegal content, which the authors believe to be extremely unlikely, the only reasonable conclusion to be drawn is that Internet users are encountering illegal content on the Internet less often than in the previous three years.

ILLEGAL CONTENT HOSTED ON LARGE CLOUD SERVICE

In October 2009, for the first time in the Hotline's ten year history, a report was received where the assessment confirmed illegal child sexual abuse images were present and that the location of this content was on web server hosted in Ireland. In December 2010, another report of illegal content hosted in Ireland was submitted to the Hotline and confirmed as illegal by the analysts. This related to a website which was hosted on a cloud service and contained several illegal images.

The case was reported to Hotline.ie by Meldpunt, the INHOPE member Hotline in the Netherlands. On receipt, Hotline.ie Analysts immediately set about verifying the location and the probable illegality of the content under Irish law. The details were then sent to the Gardaí who worked with the ISP involved which resulted in the content being taken down within 24 hours of the

NUMBER OF REPORTS PER YEAR
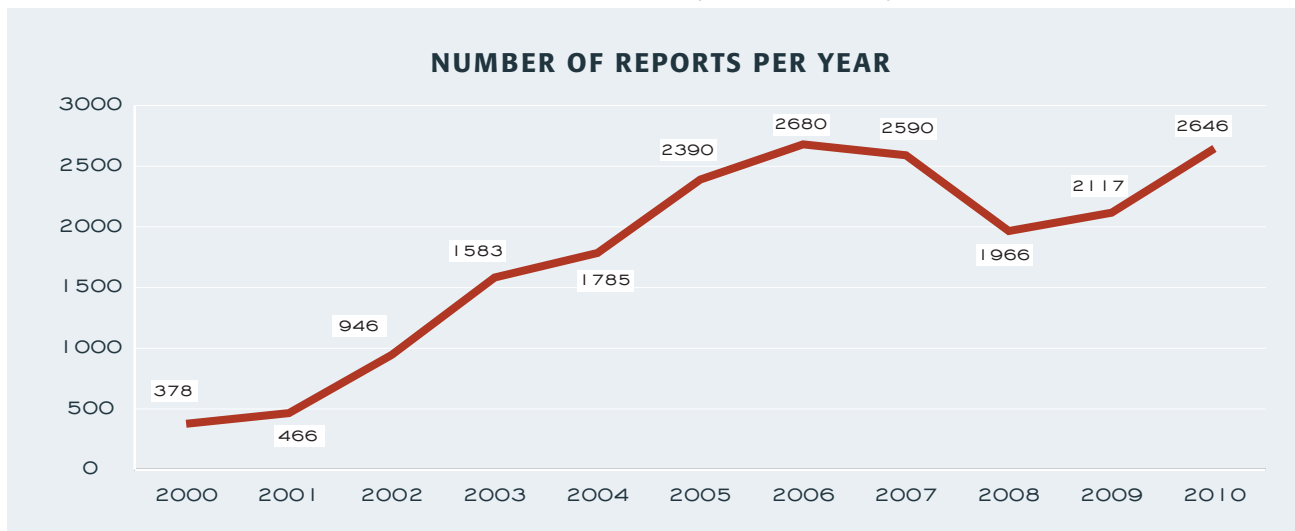
original report being picked up in the Netherlands. Subsequently, the Gardaí collaborated with international law enforcement agencies to further the investigations and, Hotline.ie has been informed that as a direct result, two people have recently been arrested in Spain in connection with distribution of child pornography.

It should be noted that in this specific case, the intention may not have been to intentionally host the content in but occurred due to the way cloud services can propagate information across data centres. The case illustrates the trend which has been observed over the

last few years which indicates that criminals are moving to more sophisticated techniques to place their illegal content online. In a similar case in 2009 (discussed in last year's annual report), illegal content was traced by Hotline.ie to a server in Ireland but found that the source was actually in the USA but the content was being mirrored in Ireland. This anomalous situation occurred due to the presence in Ireland of a large international operation that provides mirroring services for high volume websites. Their customers are web-based services, such as social networking, software

downloading, photo-sharing, etc., that need to distribute load to ensure that their users throughout the world receive reasonable response times. Illegal content was placed on a client site in the USA and was immediately copied to all the mirror locations worldwide and one of these was in Ireland.

In total, there were two cases of mirroring in Ireland in 2010 and no actual cases where the illegal content appears to have originally been placed on hosting services here. This encouraging statistic should be read cautiously however, and in the context that evolving technologies present a real threat to Ireland's excellent record. In particular, the development and growth of Ireland as a base for tech companies, or a "technology hub", means that an ever-increasing amount of large data centres and cloud services are being located here which opens the jurisdiction up to an increase in the amount of cases where illegal content may be mirrored here in a similar fashion to the above cases.

UNIQUE OCCURRENCES
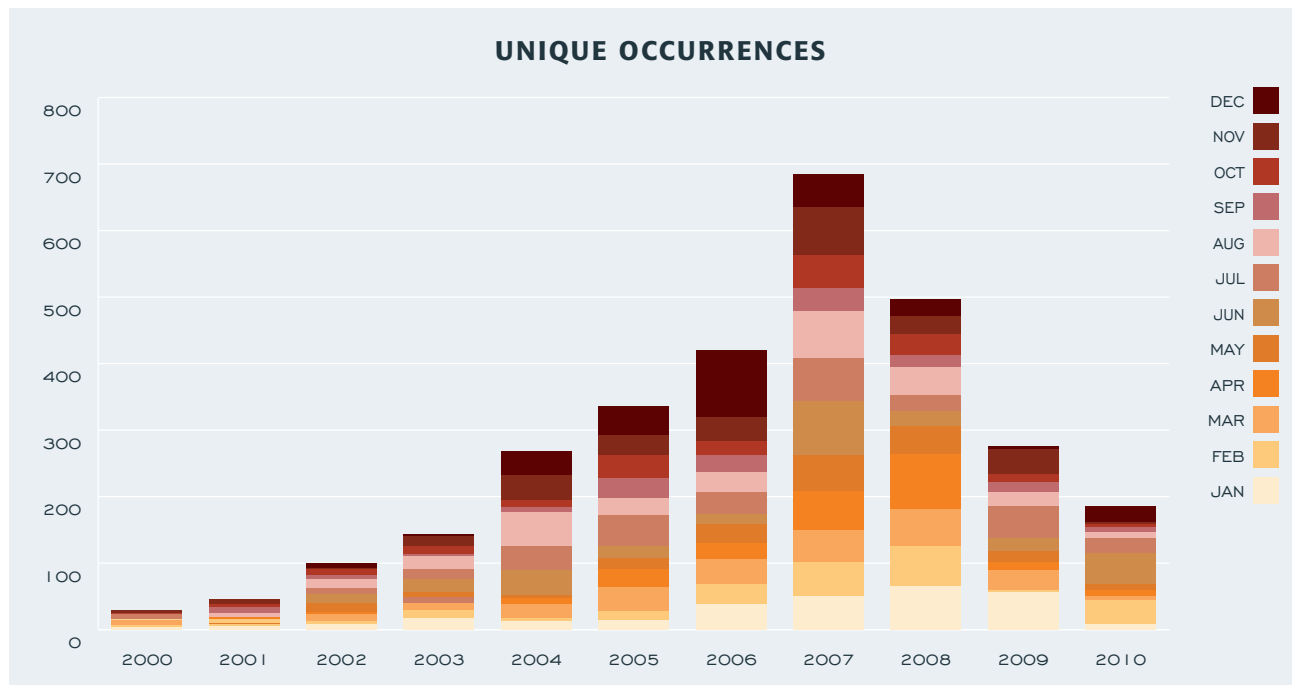
Trends Observations and Case Studies

REPORTS TO HOTLINE.IE LEAD TO ARRESTS IN CALIFORNIA AND BULGARIA

A report received by the Hotline in 2008 led to an arrest in the US during 2010. The Hotline Content Analyst investigated the report in July 2008, and forwarded the results to the relevant parties for investigation. This resulted in the information being passed to the Los Angeles Police Department. The offender was arrested in August 2010 and pleaded guilty to the charges. He was sentenced in October 2010 to six years in prison and was registered as a sex offender.

In a separate incident in early 2011, a school teacher was arrested by Bulgarian police for possession and distribution of child pornography thanks in a large part to an anonymous report submitted to Hotline.ie of a suspicious file which was being shared on a P2P network. More information is available on the website and will be included in next year's report.

These cases show how effective international cooperation between INHOPE Hotlines, Police and ISPs can be in tackling online distribution of child sexual abuse content.

WORLDWIDE ACTION ON ILLEGAL CONTENT

As previously stated, in 2010 there were 186 unique illegal reports generated by Hotline.ie. Only two of these referred to content which could be acted on nationally, all others were forwarded to other jurisdictions. This demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of Hotline.ie's efforts go toward the worldwide efforts to combat child sexual abuse content (CSAC) online.

The majority of these reports were forwarded via INHOPE of which Hotline.ie is a long standing member. Over 2010, INHOPE has introduced a new centralised report forwarding system called IHRMS (described earlier in this report). This is improving international report tracking within the INHOPE network and providing enhanced statistics. INHOPE's 2010 Annual Report presents data from the first year of IHRMS operation. It demonstrates the scale of the collective effort with some 24,047 reports being input in 2010. It must be remembered that this only represents a fraction of the reports forwarded within the network during the year as many Hotlines were still not using the system for large parts of the year. On receiving Government and Garda approval for the new IHRMS procedures, Hotline.ie started contributing in December 2010. Some other Hotlines are still in the process of adapting to IHRMS over 2011.

Nevertheless some very encouraging statistics are emerging from that system. Of particular note is that at a global level, reports initiated in one country and often acted upon in another, are achieving take down of the offending content within just two days of it being first processed by the initiating Hotline. The majority of illegal content is shown to be taken down within 7 days. For further detail see the full report on www.inhope.org.

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CONCLUSION

The aim of the Hotline is to have reported illegal content removed from the Internet as quickly as possible, not only to assist ISPAI members comply with legislation when CSAC is found on their servers, but as corporate citizens to do our part in protecting children by curbing the market of this abhorrent content on the Internet. To that end, the contribution of the public in making reports is central to the success of the service.

For the third year running, the amount of illegal material being encountered by the public under normal use decreased in 2010, and this highlights the success story of Hotline.ie. Due to the work of the INHOPE members, the ISP industry and law enforcement agencies worldwide, criminals who possess and distribute this material have had to change tactics resulting in significant curtailment of their activities on the World Wide Web. This is demonstrated by the fact that "spam" advertising commercial child pornography websites has been virtually eradicated. This is undoubtedly a contributory factor in the decline in reports assessed as probably illegal since 2007.

The two cases of illegal content being hosted in Ireland during 2010 highlight the changing risks posed by evolving Internet technologies (both being cases of relatively new cloud and mirroring services in Ireland). Procedures must continuously be improved to keep pace with the rapid technological evolution of services on the Internet and Hotline.ie remains at the forefront in addressing this challenge.

It is essential that the ongoing collaboration between the Hotline, ISPAI members, the Garda Síochána and the Government is maintained in order to ensure that Internet hosting services in Ireland continue to be avoided by those who might attempt to use them for the distribution of illegal content on the Internet. However, the global nature of the Internet means that Ireland can not operate in isolation and we must continue to contribute by working closely with our European and International counterparts. The achievements seen in 2010 must continue if the Internet is to be made a safer place for users and the ongoing support and cooperation of the public in reporting suspected illegal content is vital in this respect.

ISPAI INDUSTRY MEMBERS SUPPORTING THE HOTLINE