
Council of Europe: automated technologies to detect child abuse material must respect human rights. Recommendations to States

“There has been a sharp rise in the exchange of online child abuse material during the Covid-19 pandemic”, said Council of Europe Secretary-General Marija Pejčinović Burić, with a “devastating and lasting impact on the children involved”, through the abuse itself and through the “continued circulation of images online”. To investigate and stop the circulation of this material, Pejčinović Burić explained, it is crucial not to violate human rights “and, above all, children’s right to privacy”. For this reason, a group of experts, led by former European Court of Human Rights President Lino-Alexandre Sicilianos, prepared a report that will help policymakers to “develop a comprehensive and balanced approach to the use of automated technologies to detect child sexual abuse material”. Besides assessing automated technologies to detect child abuse and current privacy regulations, the 64-page report includes recommendations enabling service providers to “automatically detect, remove and report relevant content in line with data protection and privacy safeguards”. To show the seriousness of the problem, the Report also provides data for 2020 from CyberTipline, the US hotline for reporting child abuse: 33.6 million images were reported, of which 10.4 million were unique, and 31.6 million videos, of which 3.7 million were unique; 21.7 million reports were received, which represents an increase of 28% from 2019.

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