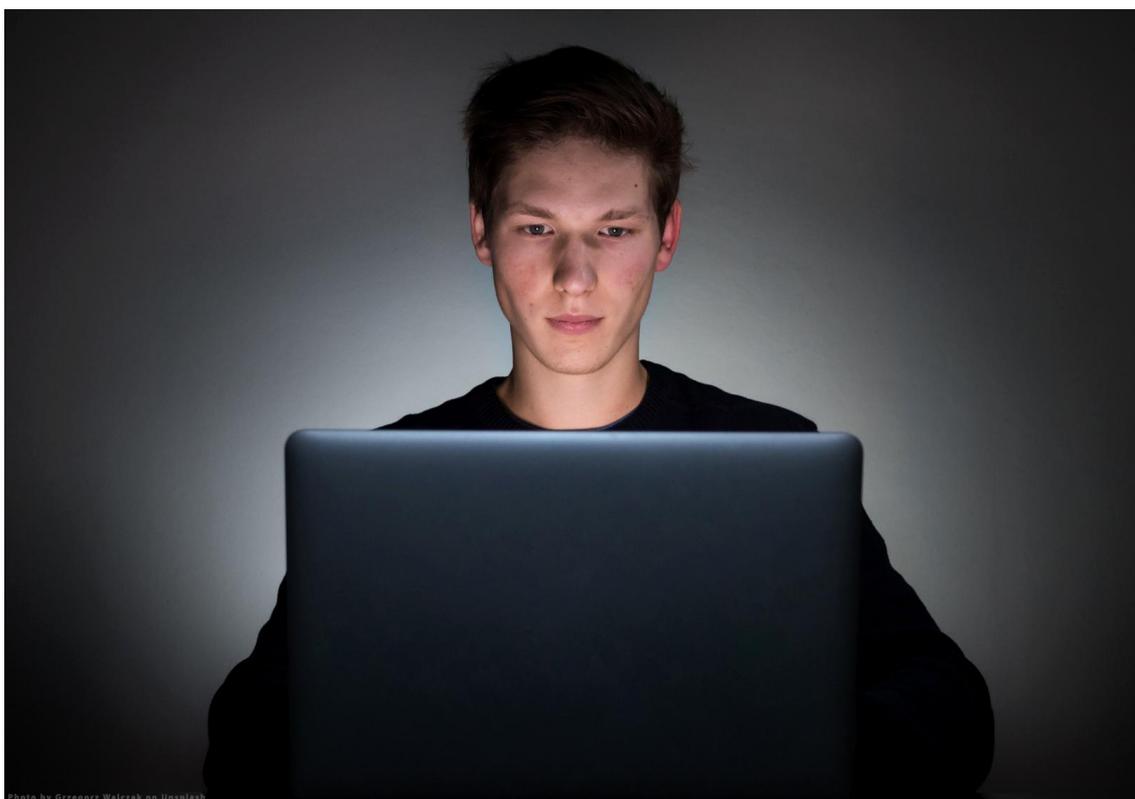## MEPs want internet firms to remove content promoting terrorism within an hour

Terrorist content online should be removed within an hour. Photo by Grzegorz Walczak on Unsplash

MEPs could soon start negotiations with EU countries on rules that could force internet companies to remove content promoting terrorism within an hour of being informed.

On 24 September, Parliament's civil liberties committee backed the position agreed by the Parliament before May's European elections on new EU rules to tackle the dissemination of online content promoting terrorism and approved the mandate to begin discussions with EU ministers.

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Directorate General for Communication
European Parliament - Spokesperson: Jaume Duch Guillot
Contact: webmaster@europarl.eu

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Parliament's priorities

In a move aimed at combatting radicalisation online, Parliament wants internet companies to remove online content promoting terrorism within an hour of receiving an order from national authorities. It is crucial to remove this content within hours of being published because of how fast it spreads. Companies that systematically and persistently fail to abide by the law could be fined up to 4% of their global turnover.

While MEPs would like to boost public security, they are also keen to protect **free speech and press freedom**. MEPs made it clear that the expression of polemic or controversial views on sensitive political questions should not be considered terrorist content. They also underline that hosting service providers should establish user-friendly complaint mechanisms and ensure that complaints are dealt with promptly and in full transparency.

MEPs also insist that internet companies hosting content uploaded by users, such as Facebook or YouTube, shouldn´t be obliged to proactively identify terrorist content, something that these platforms claim would be a heavy burden for them. Monitoring the information or actively seeking facts indicating illegal activity should be the responsibility of the competent national authority.

Parliament also believes that there should be **no compulsory use of filters nor automated tools** as this could lead to inaccuracies and innocuous content being tagged as "terrorist" .

How it would work

EU countries would have to designate a competent authority and communicate it to the European Commission, which should then publish a list with all the relevant bodies.

Once the national authorities flag terrorist content, a removal order would be sent to the internet platforms, which would have one hour to delete it or disable access to it in all EU member states.

To help smaller platforms, MEPs propose a sort of prior notice: companies that have never received a removal order should be contacted 12 hours before the first order to remove content is issued and be given information on procedures and deadlines from the competent authority.

Background

The proposal for this regulation was first presented by the European Commission in September 2018, following a call by EU leaders in June. The Council reached a political agreement on this issue in December 2018. MEPs backed the draft regulation in April 2019.

Next steps

The committee decision to start negotiations with the Council of the EU will be announced in the next plenary session. If there is no request for a vote in Parliament, the mandate would be deemed confirmed and negotiations could start at any time, most likely in October.

More on terrorism and the EU

Check out the following articles:

- Terrorism in the EU: terror attacks, deaths and arrests
- How to stop terrorism: EU measures explained (infographic)

Find out more

Terrorist content online: MEPs agree to start negotiations with EU countries
Terrorist content online should be removed within one hour, says Parliament
Procedure file
European Commission: regulation proposal
Check progress on the legislative proposal

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