



**Annual Report 2019**

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## Dear Members of the eco Complaints Office, Dear Readers,

The Internet and social media, as sources of information and platforms for communication, have become an integral part of our daily existence, and imagining life without them would be virtually impossible. The tempo of their development has been so rapid that society as a whole has not always managed to keep up the pace in making necessary adjustments. This in turn has unfortunately led to certain developments that we now must carefully monitor and which cannot simply be accepted. As advantageous as today's technical possibilities are, they also offer the opportunity for a small number to use them in an abusive fashion.

We need to tackle such tendencies in a variety of ways: On the one hand, we must create clear rules which are tailored to the different technological possibilities. It must be clear to every single user that there are consequences to the violation of legal regulations. Above

all, we must ensure that children and especially young people are effectively protected from harmful content. But hate crime and incitement to hatred must also be effectively countered by an appropriate legal framework. While a suitable legal framework is one important factor, it alone will not suffice. Users, especially the youngest among them, must also be enabled to move around the digital world without being in any way imperiled. Strengthening the media skills – not only of children and young people, but also of people in their family environment and in schools – is therefore of enormous importance.

And ultimately, a culture must also be established on the Internet that is focused on respecting and protecting the rights of the people interacting there. Every user can and should contribute to ensuring that there is no place in our society for inappropriate or indeed criminal

behavior on the Internet. Just as is the case in "real life," there must also be no looking away on the Internet and in social media.

It is good to know that, with the eco Complaints Office, there is a contact point for users where matters can be reported and then classified legally by qualified parties and, if necessary, where further steps can be taken. The current annual report with its impressive figures shows just how much sense having such an office makes.

I would like to thank all the personnel for this essential work and wish them every success for the future!

Your

**Dorothee Bär**

Minister of State in the Federal Chancellery and  
Federal Government Commissioner for Digitalization



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## Dear Members, Partners, and Friends of the eco Complaints Office, Dear Readers,

The Internet offers boundless possibilities for expressing our opinions, for getting informed, and for getting in contact with others. It offers the space to broaden our horizons, to learn about other points of view, and to exchange ideas.

Today, the Internet is so strongly integrated into our daily professional and private routines that it has become a part of our everyday existence. It has come to a point where we seldom think about what a great tool it is and about how its potential is far from exhausted. Instead, the focus of public debate has sadly gravitated towards the issues of “fake news,” “hate on the Internet,” and other abuses of the Internet. Unfortunately, we are often confronted with the unfounded accusation that the Internet exists as a legal vacuum. Which is anything but the case.

The Internet industry is fully aware of the possibility of abuse, which is why a number of provider associations set up reporting and complaints offices more than 20 years ago, enabling the rapid removal of illegal content and the prosecution of offenders. The national and international cooperation between these offices and the

law enforcement agencies under the guiding principle of “take-down instead of blocking” is the key to success. The fact that illegal material is reacted to quickly and that crimes can be actively prevented is due in no small part to the specially trained staff of the eco Complaints Office and other hotlines.

In contemplating in particular the simplistic notion that filters can deal with the aforementioned problems, it must be pointed out that no automaton is capable of evaluating speech in all of its subtleties. The consequence of such an approach is a blocking of legally-acceptable comments, which means a considerable curtailment of freedom of expression. The real solution lies far more in adopting a whole-society approach in facing up to the challenges, and in intensively addressing and promoting media skills, particularly of children and young people – within the family, at school, at work, or during leisure time.

At this point, I would like to thank the entire eco Complaints Office team under the leadership of Alexandra Koch-Skiba, and congratulate them for the excellent reputation that the eco Complaints Office enjoys

throughout Europe; their work is frequently held up as an example of best practice for the highly professional and transparent work of hotlines. The eco Complaints Office demonstrates how seriously the Internet takes its responsibility and makes an essential contribution to ensuring that people get to benefit from the advantages offered by the Internet.

As a founding member of EuroISPA, eco has been active since 1997 in shaping European Internet policy and therefore also in the handling of illegal content. This engagement is deeply appreciated in the context of the EuroISPA Safer Internet Committee, and is indispensable for further improving cross-border cooperation between providers and the authorities.

On behalf of EuroISPA, I would like to congratulate eco on its 25th anniversary and wish it every success for the future!

Your

**Dr. Maximilian Schubert**  
President EuroISPA



## Preface

With this annual report, the eco Complaints Office looks back on a record year: With 4,654 cases, we've registered the highest number of justified complaints in the history of the Complaints Office. This is an increase of over 50% compared to the previous year. We were able to successfully take action against prohibited content in around 95% of cases – and we achieved this worldwide, despite having our home turf in Germany. In the year under review, a large proportion of justified complaints once again concerned depictions of the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of minors, with the number of reports rising by around 75% in 2019. This clearly highlights just how relevant the Complaints Office is.

For more than 20 years, the eco Complaints Office has been effectively combatting illegal online content. In doing so, we have cooperated with law enforcement agencies from the very outset –because ultimately, statutory criminal prosecution is an essential part of the effective fight against illegal Internet content. This is why it was important to us to become part of the initiative "Prosecute, don't just delete" in 2019, a project which is committed to the rigorous criminal prosecution of illegal hate speech. The close contact to the Central Bureau and Contact Office for Cybercrime North-Rhine Westphalia (ZAC NRW) not only helps the practice of the daily processing of complaints, but also enables ongoing quality assurance in the application of the law through the professional exchange with the Public Prosecutor's Office.

What holds equal weight is the cooperation with partner hotlines in other countries. eco is one of the founding members of INHOPE, the international umbrella association of hotlines. We were delighted to take part in the celebration of INHOPE's 20th anniversary in 2019. It is heartening to see that an initial alliance of 8 partners has grown into a major network comprising of hotlines from over 40 countries.

In the political context, the amendment of the German youth media protection legislation and the Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) were again important topics for the eco Complaints Office.

The amendment of the youth media protection legislation, in particular the Youth Protection Act, is intended above all to take account of the changing behavior of minors when it comes to media use, and to enable their untroubled participation in relevant media in safe interaction spaces. The Complaints Office accompanied this amendment process in a variety of ways, including through participation in the Future Workshop of the German Federal Review Board for Media Harmful to Minors (BPJM); the amendment is also at the top of the Complaints Office's agenda for 2020. Here, telemedia providers must continue to have legal certainty with regard to provisions for dealing with Internet content with relevance for youth protection. The diversity of providers must be taken into account here – with all of their many facets, they have very different options for action when it

comes to combatting illegal content and youth protection. A one-size-fits-all solution therefore cannot be the solution in practice.

With a view to revising the German NetzDG, a draft "Law to Combat Right-wing Extremism and Hate Crime" was published at the end of 2019, which went far beyond merely modifying the NetzDG. This was followed shortly afterwards by an additional draft bill to amend the NetzDG. Although there is all-round consensus that rigorous action must be taken to combat crimes on the Internet, these amendments mean that the obligations of companies are to be expanded on a critical scale and at a rapid pace – with the result that constitutional principles are repeatedly being put to the test. At this point I would like to refer back to the start of this preface: Criminal prosecution is an essential element in effectively combatting illegal Internet content. Which is why, since the beginning of the NetzDG deliberations, we have expressed how important it is for the investigating and prosecuting authorities to have the necessary personnel skills and technical capacities. Otherwise, the proposed extended obligations for social network operators, such as the obligation to report certain crimes, will not meet the given objectives.

I am pleased to be able to present the fourth edition of the annual report of the eco Complaints Office, with numerous details on our work and statistics for the year 2019. Let's continue this year with our lively discourse.



Cordially yours

**Alexandra Koch-Skiba**

Attorney-at-Law, Head of eco Complaints Office

# 1. eco Complaints Office: Who we are and what we do

## Dedicated to combatting illegal content on the Internet

The eco Complaints Office ([international.eco.de/eco-complaints-office](https://international.eco.de/eco-complaints-office)) has been fighting illegal content on the Internet for over 20 years. It is embedded in the system of regulated self-regulation and has, in particular, the task of improving and promoting youth protection on the Internet.

Currently, seven staff members with a legal background work in the eco Complaints Office team: the Head of the Complaints Office, three Complaints Office Consultants, and three Content Analysts.

Internet users can make a free and anonymous report on youth-endangering and prohibited content at [international.eco.de/eco-complaints-office](https://international.eco.de/eco-complaints-office) or [www.internet-beschwerdestelle.de/en/index.html](https://www.internet-beschwerdestelle.de/en/index.html) (a joint portal operated by eco and FSM), or can contact the eco Complaints Office via email at [hotline@eco.de](mailto:hotline@eco.de).

In addition, the eco Complaints Office is a partner of the information platform for young people, [jugend.support](https://jugend.support), and processes reports submitted there together with the FSM and jugendschutz.net network of complaints offices (on an international level also known as hotlines).

In order to effectively fight illegal online content, co-operation with other relevant players is essential. eco therefore cooperates with, among others, providers, partner hotlines, and law enforcement agencies. eco is also a founding member of the International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE), an international network that supports complaints offices worldwide. eco is also part of the German Safer Internet Centre.

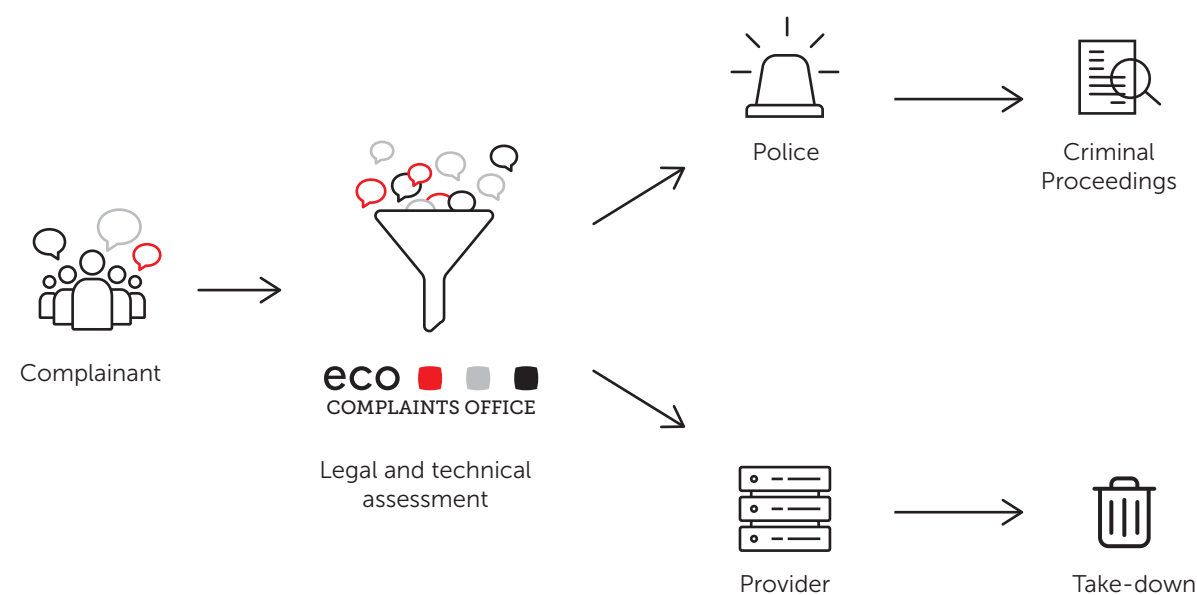
In all of this, the eco Complaints Office serves as a model for neutral and transparent processes and acts as the contact partner for members, the state, society, and politics.

## 1.1 Simply and anonymously: Submitting a complaint

The eco Complaints Office accepts complaints regarding all Internet services: the world wide web, emails, file-sharing, chats, newsgroups, discussion forums, and mobile content. The content can be hosted on servers either within or outside of Germany (the home country

of the eco Complaints Office), and can be reported by any Internet user. The provision of personal data is optional, which also allows the report to be made anonymously.

### Report illegal Internet content to the eco Complaints Office\*



\* This infographic gives a simplified representation of the processing of German cases

## 1.2 What kind of illegal content does the eco Complaints Office deal with?

Incoming complaints initially undergo a comprehensive legal assessment. The eco Complaints Office's assessment standard concentrates on youth media protection and related criminal offenses. In particular, in the course of this, the eco Complaints Office handles complaints related to the following illegal Internet content:

on the unsolicited sending of marketing emails and newsletters.

You can find further information and definitions of the various offenses at:

<https://go.eco.de/eco-Complaints-Office-Legal-Basis>

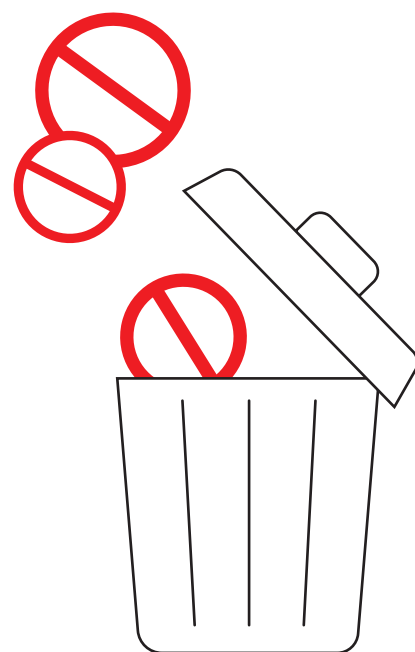
- §§ 4, 5 German Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Minors in the Media (JMStV), youth-endangering and development-impairing content as well as the corresponding criminal regulations:
  - §§ 184 et seq. German Criminal Code (StGB), freely accessible adult pornography, pornography depicting violence, animals, children, or juveniles
  - §§ 86, 86a StGB, dissemination of symbols and propaganda material of unconstitutional organizations
  - § 130 StGB, incitement of the masses
  - § 130a StGB, attempting to cause the commission of offenses
  - § 131 StGB, depictions of extreme violence
- § 176 StGB, grooming
- § 201a StGB, dissemination of naked images of minors for profit
- § 111 StGB, public incitement to crime

In addition, the eco Complaints Office handles reports

### 1.3 “Take-down instead of blocking”: Self-regulation rather than Internet censorship

In the fight against prohibited web content, complete “take-down” of content from the Internet is the core and most effective approach. The method is not only fast, but also effective and long-lasting. This is why the eco Complaints Office has pursued this approach from the very beginning.

The Internet industry’s self-regulation mechanisms for the fight against unlawful online content work very well at both the national and international levels.



### 1.4 Measures taken by the eco Complaints Office

After a thorough assessment of the content, action is taken depending on the severity of the offense and the location of the server (in Germany or in other countries):

**Punishable content** hosted in Germany is always reported to the authorities. In addition, the Complaints Office asks that the hosting provider makes the relevant data available to the law enforcement agency on request and takes appropriate measures to prevent further access to the illegal content.

Should **absolutely prohibited Internet content** be hosted in Germany, the eco Complaints Office asks the hosting provider to take the content down (disconnect). For other **youth-endangering or developmentally-impairing content**, the provider will be required to ensure that the content is made legally compliant (for example, through implementation of an age verification system).

**Content hosted abroad** is initially forwarded to the appropriate INHOPE partner hotline. This hotline then takes over the further processing of the complaint, with the objective of removal or legalization of the content, and

also works “locally” with the responsible law enforcement agency. If there is no INHOPE member in the country where the server is located, or if the content reported does not fall within the mandate of the INHOPE partner hotline, eco will contact the hosting provider directly.

In addition to this, criminal content hosted abroad is also reported to the authorities, if the given content is punishable internationally or is subject to universal jurisdiction as foreseen in the German Criminal Code. According to this principle, German criminal law is applicable in certain cases where the respective offense has no direct connection to Germany. However, in such cases the offense must be committed against internationally protected legal interests, for example cases of Child Pornography\* content or violations of international law.

On each working day, the eco Complaints Office monitors any continued availability of the reported content. If necessary, the provider will be asked again to remove or legalize the reported content. Complainants who have provided a return address will be briefly informed of the outcome of the legal assessment.

\* The terms Child and Youth Pornography are used in this report specifically with relation to offences under the German Criminal Code and other German law. In other more general contexts, the terms Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) or “depictions of the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of minors” are used.



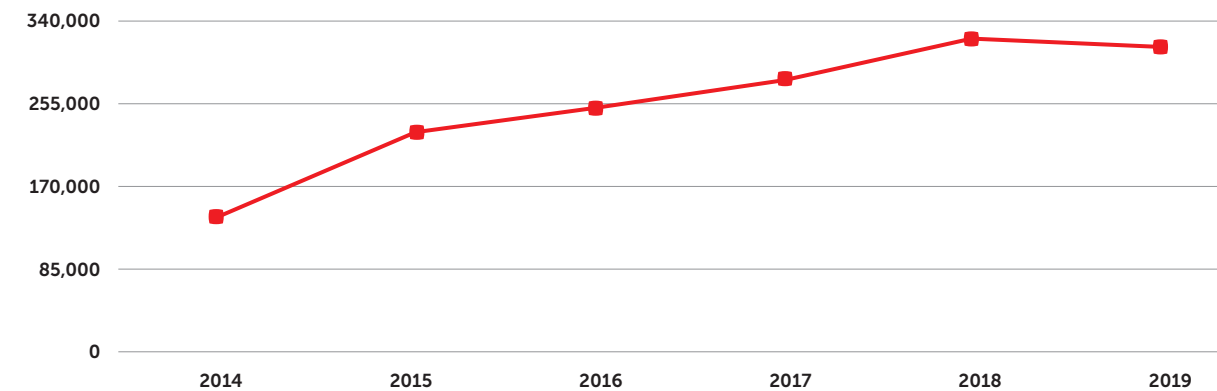
## 2. Complaints 2019: Facts and Figures

### 2.1 Number of complaints and measures taken in 2019

In 2019, the eco Complaints Office received a total of 311,238 complaints concerning potentially illegal Internet content. The number of complaints was thus slightly below the level of the previous year. This is due

in particular to the decline in the number of complaints regarding Usenet content. At the same time, the number of reports of URL-based content more than tripled.

Total Development in Number of Complaints



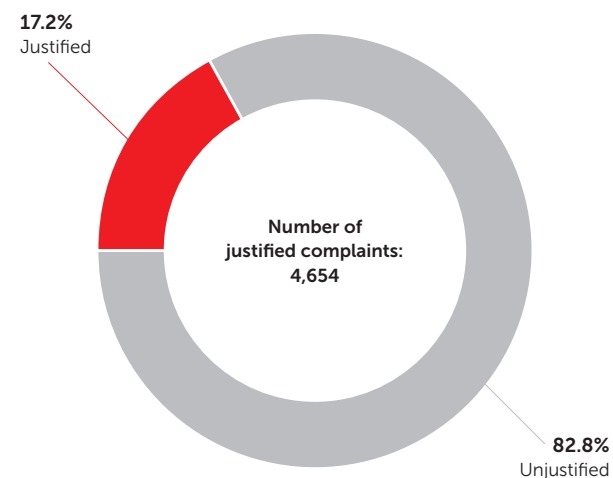
Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020

As in previous years, a large proportion of the complaints received concerned the unsolicited sending of marketing emails ("spam") and depictions of the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of minors. What is particularly striking is that complaints of anti-constitutional content have newly increased by around 25% and that complaints concerning depictions of extreme violence have doubled. At the same time, there was a significant decrease in the number of complaints received on freely-accessible adult pornography.

Taking complaints on unsolicited sending of marketing emails out of the equation, less than one fifth of the complaints received in the reporting year were actionable by the eco Complaints Office ("justified complaints"). A complaint is considered as justified if a violation of the law is detected, and measures are taken subsequent to such an assessment. As a matter of principle, measures are taken for every violation of the law unless the eco Complaints Office is reasonably confident that the necessary measures have already been taken (e.g. reporting to the police and to the Complaints Office in one email, knowledge of measures taken by partner hotlines, duplicate reports, etc.).

This means that the gap between the number of complaints received and justified complaints has widened by about 18 percentage points compared to the previous year.

**Proportion of Justified Complaints 2019  
(Excluding Spam)**

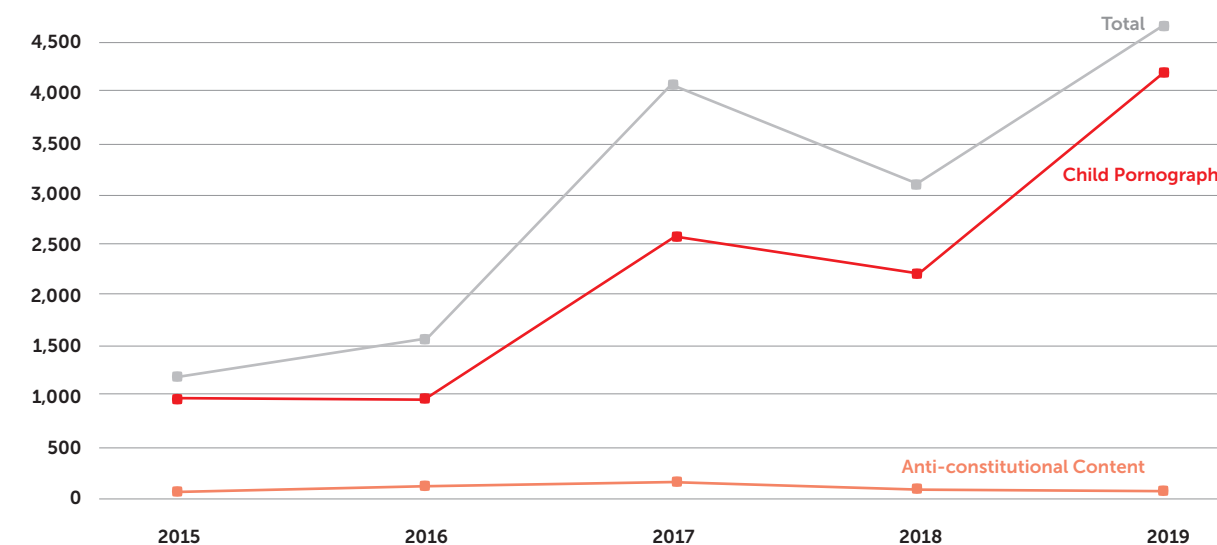


Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020

With 4,654 cases in 2019, the eco Complaints Office registered the highest number of justified complaints in its history. Compared to the previous year (2018: 3,097 cases), the number of justified complaints increased by 50.3% (excluding complaints concerning marketing emails).

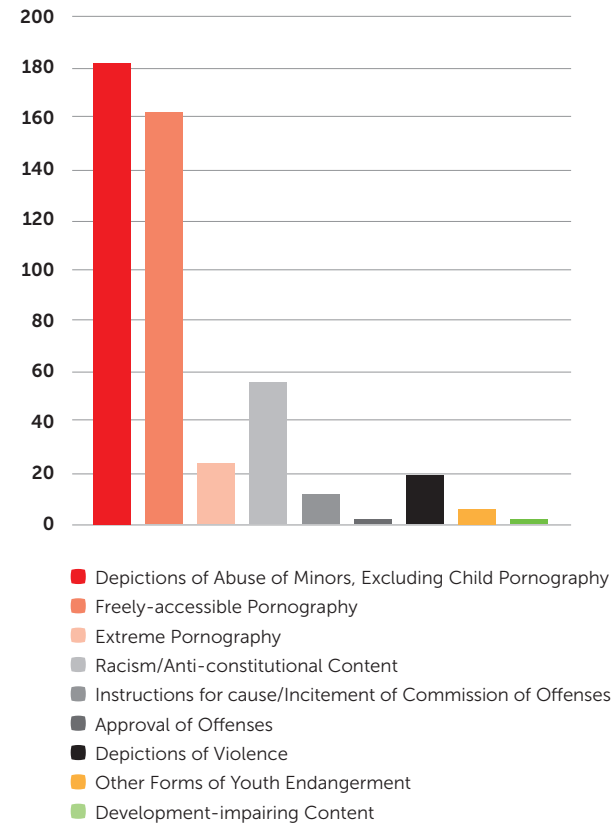
As in previous years, a large proportion of the justified complaints concerned content that is accessible via websites of all kinds (web-based content).

**Development of Justified Complaints**

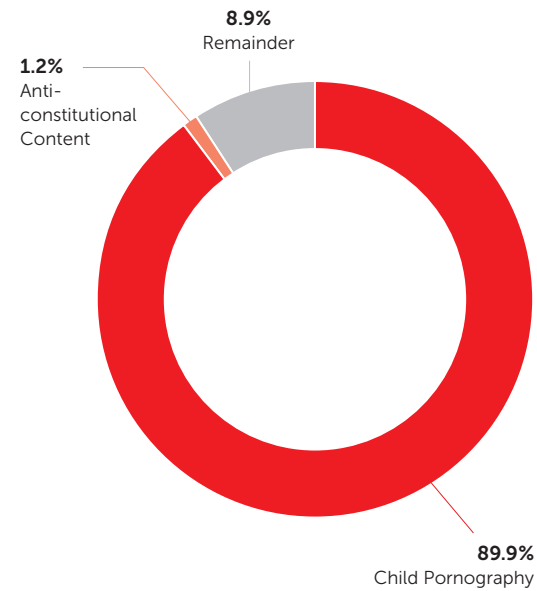


Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020

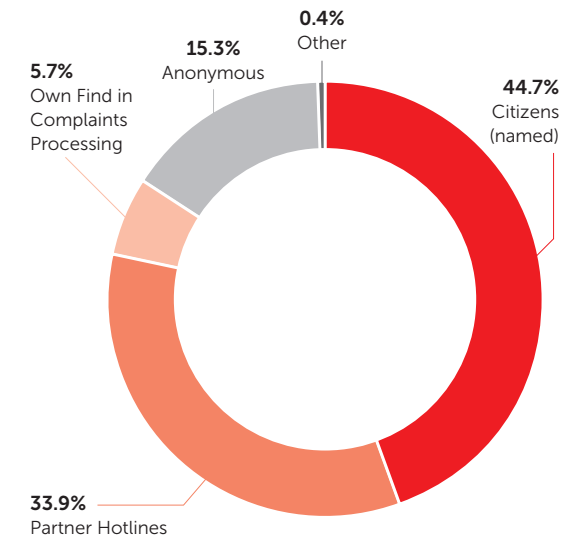
### Justified Complaints 2019 (Excluding Spam, Excluding Child Pornography)



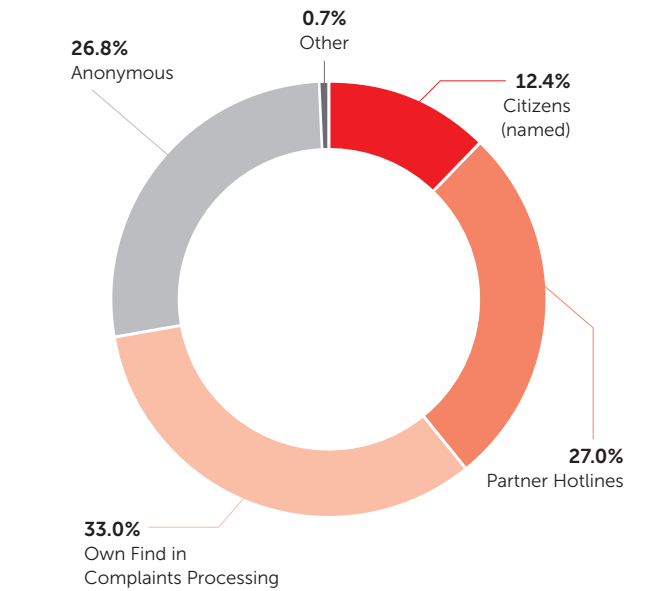
### Justified Complaints 2019 (Excluding Spam)



### Reporters of the Received Complaints (2019)

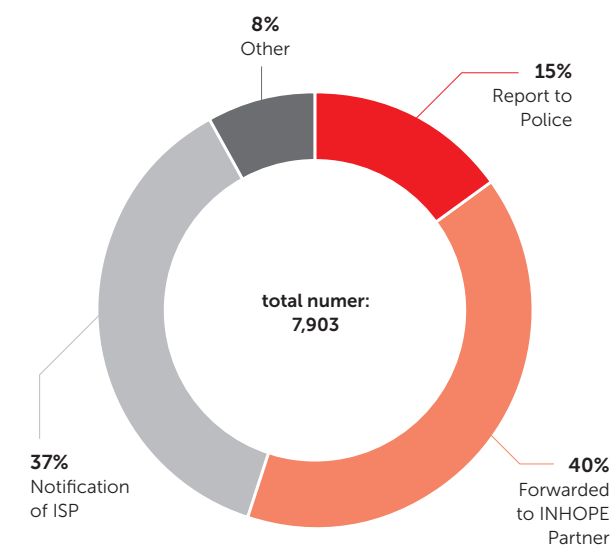


### Reporters of the Justified Complaints (2019)



Last year, the eco Complaints Office sent a total of 7,903 notifications (in particular to the police, INHOPE partner hotlines, and/or ISPs – not including reminders). In so doing, the relatively low proportion of reports sent to the police is due to the fact that, in cases of depictions of abuse of children on content hosted abroad, a report is generally only made to the German Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) if no INHOPE partner hotline exists. If, on the other hand, an INHOPE member can be contacted who in turn informs the law enforcement agencies, no report is generally made to the German Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) in order to avoid duplication of work.

**Measures Taken 2019**



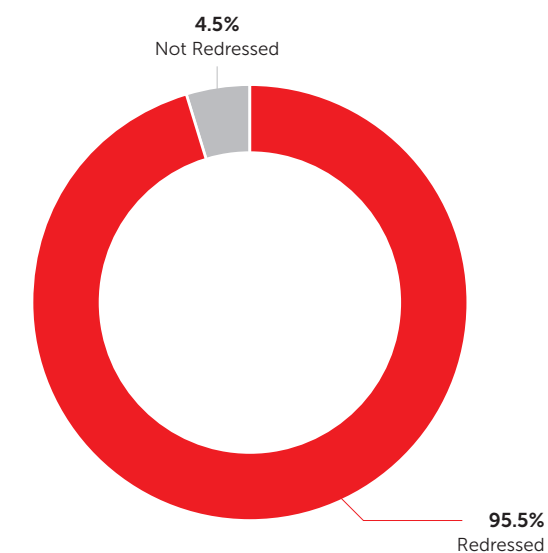
Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020

## 2.2 Success rate for web-based content

The success rate for web-based content has remained largely unchanged compared to the previous year: 95.5% of the content reported upon by the Complaints Office was taken down or otherwise legalized (e.g. through the implementation of an age verification system); in around 31% of these cases, the reported URL was initially moved to another provider (so-called "moved cases").

This demonstrates that self-regulation works, also internationally, given that only around one fifth of the reported URLs (20.4%) were hosted in Germany.

**Total Success Rate for Web-based Content 2019**



Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020

## 2.3 Complaints about depictions of the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of minors in detail

The number of justified complaints regarding depictions of the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of minors increased by around 75% in 2019. Of the total of 4,371 cases from this area of offense, the majority, as in previous years, were regarding content that qualified as Child Pornography\* as defined in Section 184b of the German Criminal Code.

Since January 2015, the offense of Child Pornography makes provision for three different variants: depictions of sexual abuse of children, images of partially or completely naked children in an unnatural sexualized pose, and the sexually provocative reproduction of the naked buttocks or genitalia of children. 64.9% of justified Child Pornography complaints in 2019 concerned the first variant (depictions of the sexual abuse of children). This is an increase of around 15 percentage points compared to previous years.

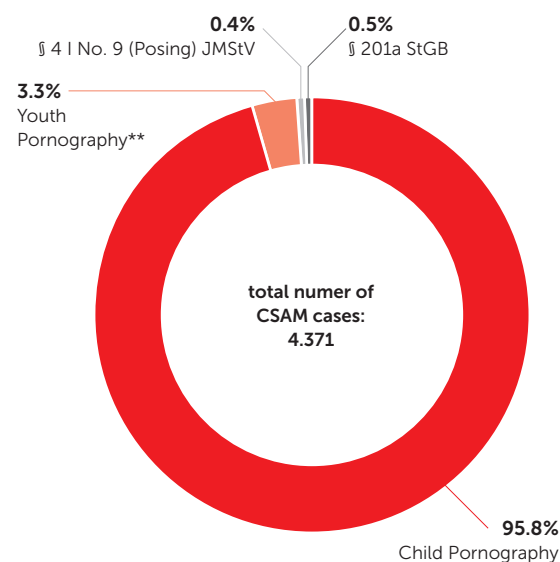
\* When we refer to "Child Pornography", we are referring to a specific offense, defined in Section 184b of the German Criminal Code (StGB).

\*\* When we refer to "Youth Pornography", we are referring to youth pornography as defined in Section 184c of the German Criminal Code (StGB).

\*\*\* Capitalized terms such as Posing are terms derived directly from German law.

There was consequently a difference compared with previous years with regard to Posing\*\*\*. Posing is defined as images of minors in an unnatural sexualized pose. According to German law, such content must not be disseminated online. Depending on the age of the person shown and the kind of depiction, Posing may

**Justified Complaints of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) in Detail (2019)**



Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020

represent purely an infringement of media law (Section 4 (1) 9, German Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Minors in the Media (JMStV)) or is punishable as Child Pornography or Youth Pornography (Section 184b (1) 1b and Section 184c (1) 1b, German Criminal Code).

In 2019, about one fifth of the justified complaints regarding depictions of the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of minors concerned Posing, which constituted a significant decrease from previous years, when such depictions accounted for around one third of justified complaints.

### 2.3.1 Notable Challenges in 2019

From a technical viewpoint, referrer cases and the use of Content Delivery Networks (CDNs) are particularly noteworthy:

Depictions of the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of minors are not infrequently only accessible with a so-called referrer. Here, the user must come from a specific "source" site, which refers across through a link. The "destination" site registers where the user has come from and shows different content depending on the request. Technically, this process can be simulated using particular tools. A more complex, but comparable, method

triggers this technical path-setting through the use of cookies. In both cases, different content will be shown depending on the digital path followed or simulated.

The involvement of so-called Content Delivery Networks (CDNs) also makes it more difficult to process cases – for example, in instances where there is a delay in reporting back to the actual host provider, or when the take-down check before a reminder is sent requires a renewed response from the CDN to identify the actual host provider. Occasionally, explanations to the recipient also require a notification that a CDN is involved.

It is also worth drawing attention to tracing peculiarities that emerged in relation to a platform abused for the distribution of illegal content. In this respect, the staff of the eco Complaints Office had to deal with the phenomenon that the particular tracing result was location-dependent. For example, when tracing out of Germany, Russia was used as the server location and vice versa. Within the INHOPE network, this also led to increased communication outlay. In the end, in these cases, the illegal content could be taken down through direct contact with the platform provider.

Legally, the boundary between the different varieties of offense in relation to Child Pornography as defined

in Section 184b of the German Criminal Code and the boundary between Child Pornography and other relevant regulations in the area of images of the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of minors frequently poses challenges, especially with regard to statistical recording. Particular examples which should be mentioned here relate to an assessment of the age of a child, and the distinction between images of children in an unnatural sexualized pose and the sexually provocative reproduction of the unclothed genitalia or the naked buttocks of a child.

A further challenge is presented by the different legal situations of countries, particularly in the area of Posing, virtual Child Pornography, and links to Child Pornography.

Unfortunately, contrary to the norm, in the case of two providers with German server locations, an increased degree of communication effort was required before the reported content was removed. In addition, one hosting provider from abroad consistently ignored every notice from us (and from other hotlines), as well as the request for the take-down of content, regardless of the content involved.

The receipt of mass reports, i.e. the notification of a large number of URLs in one report, also poses a particular challenge. In the instance of a mass report, the otherwise usual distribution of received reports is not possible, as reported content must be reviewed and classified within a very short time. This means that mass reports require considerable human and technical resources, which means that other complaints received can only subsequently be processed.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that certain content was only accessible with a so-called premium account. The platform operators concerned did not always provide us with a corresponding account free of charge. In some such situations, the cooperation within the INHOPE network made it possible to review the reported content.

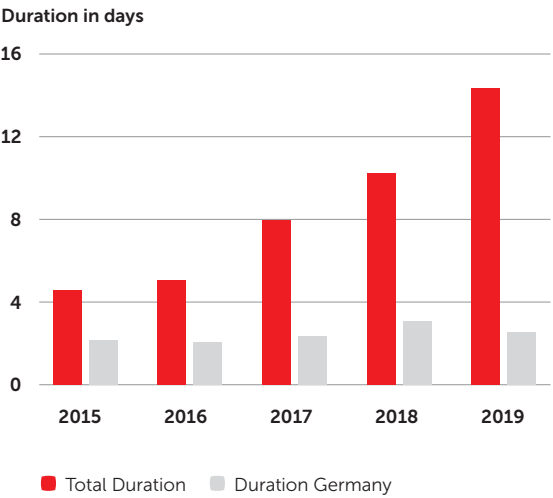
2.3.2 Overview of reaction times for web-based Child Pornography cases

It should be borne in mind when considering the following figures and graphs on reaction times for CSAM-related web content, as well as for Posing cases, that these do not necessarily represent the effective or actual reaction time of the Internet service provider, but rather the time from eco receiving the report until verification by eco of take-down. Here, the frequency of checks

to ascertain take-down also influences the reaction times. The more often checks are made to see whether the content has been taken offline, the more exact and conclusive statements regarding reaction time are. eco

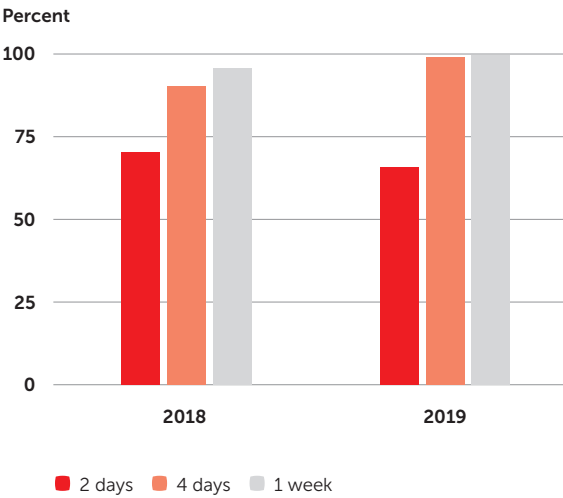
checks for take-down as a rule on week days, and does not remove weekends and public holidays on which eco does not work from the calculation of the accessibility and success rates.

Average Duration until Take-Down in Annual Comparison (Child Pornography)



Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020

Take-Down Rates Child Pornography (German Cases)

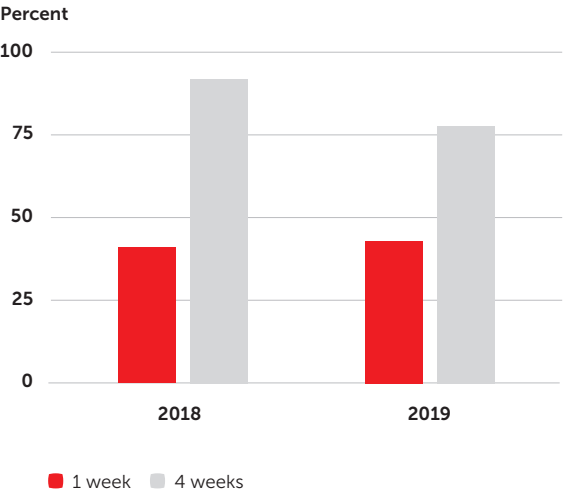


Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020

The processing of reports of depictions of the sexual abuse of children is accorded top priority by the eco Complaints Office. However, the strong rise in the number of complaints in this area of offense inevitably had an impact on take-down times in 2019. In comparison to

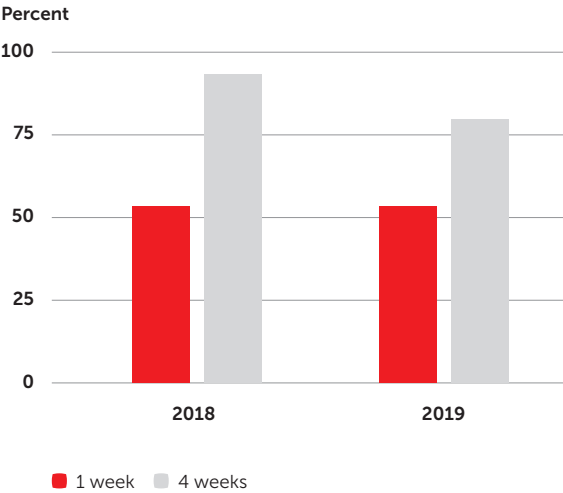
previous years, longer take-down times could therefore be ascertained for Child Pornography content hosted abroad. Websites with Child Pornography hosted in Germany were offline (“taken down”) within 2.58 days on average, whereas globally it took 14.3 days.

Take-Down Rates Child Pornography  
(Outside of Germany)



Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020

Take-Down Rates Child Pornography  
(All Cases)



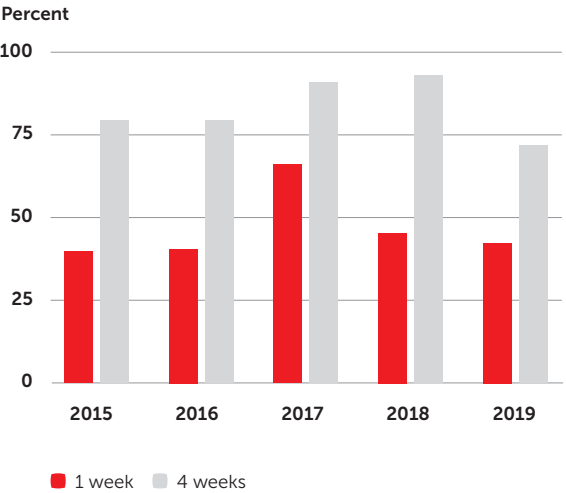
Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020

2.3.3 Overview of reaction times for web-based  
Posing cases

As in the previous year, the take-down times of so-called Posing of minors did not differ significantly from the take-down times for images of the sexual abuse of

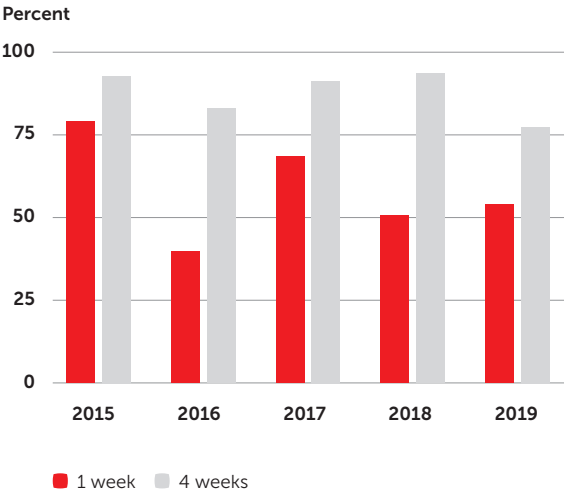
children. Worldwide, it took on average 13.69 days from the report being submitted to eco until the content had disappeared. Content hosted in Germany was no longer available on average after 2.65 days. (These figures also include public holidays and weekends.)

Take-Down Rates Depictions of Posing  
(Outside of Germany)



Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020

Take-Down Rates Depictions of Posing  
(All Cases)



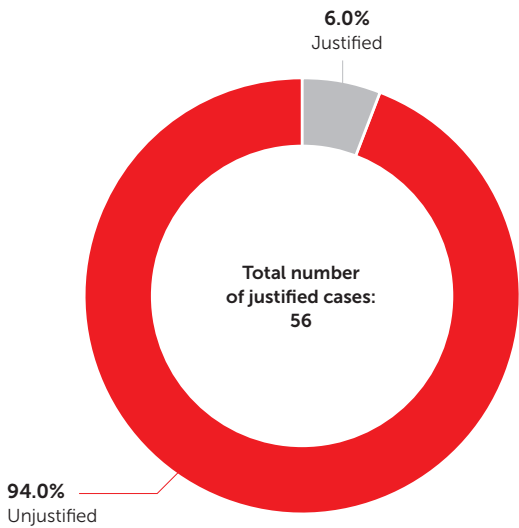
Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020

2.4 Cases of anti-constitutional content in detail

In 2019, the gap between received and justified complaints in this offense sector continued to widen. In the end, just 6.0% of the potentially anti-constitutional

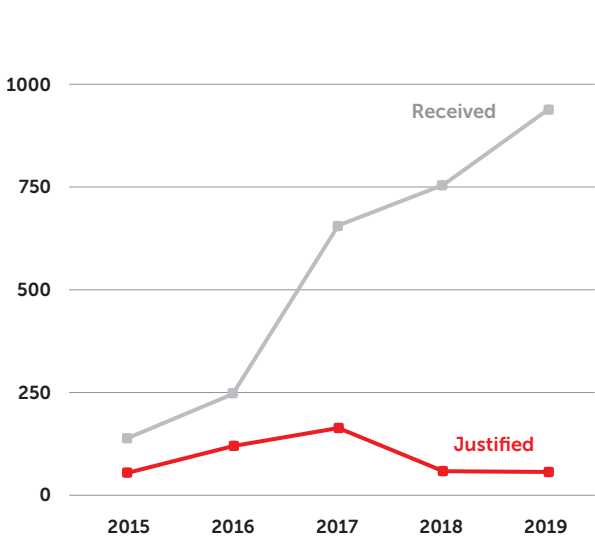
content reported to the eco Complaints Office had to be or could be classified as illegal content.

Proportion of justified complaints on anti-constitutional content 2019



Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020

Proportion of justified complaints on anti-constitutional content (Comparison 2015–2019)



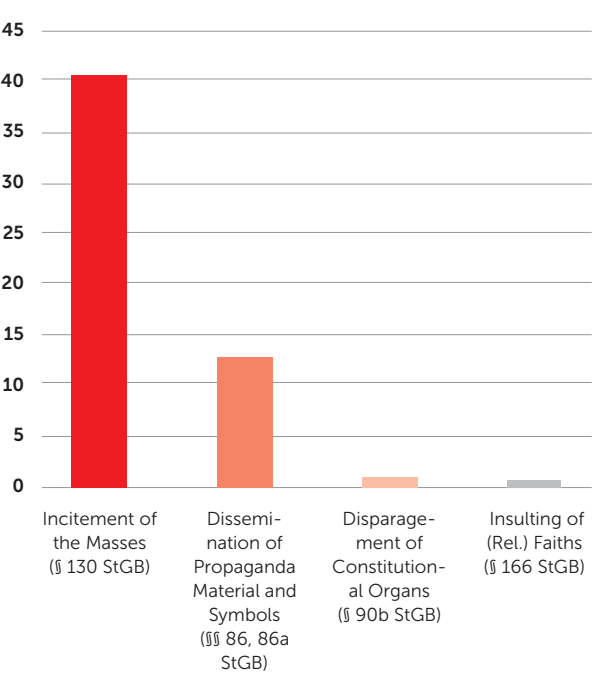
Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020

The conspicuously low proportion of justified complaints in this offense sector makes it clear that complainants are extremely sensitized to possible legal infringements. At the same time, it is clear that the legal hurdles for actual violations are high, especially as a result of freedom of expression. This again serves to prove how important a thorough – and at times also a time-consuming – assessment of the content is, so that freedom of expression can be ensured within the framework of existing law, and that permissible statements are not simply deleted as undesirable.

In 2019, 1.2% of the justified complaints (56 cases) could be categorized within the sector of “anti-constitutional content” (in the broad sense): incitement of the masses (Section 130 StGB), dissemination of propaganda material of unconstitutional organizations (Section 86 StGB), use of symbols of unconstitutional organizations (Section 86a StGB), disparagement of the constitutional organs (Section 90a StGB), and insulting of faiths (Section 166 StGB). The relevant cases reported to us concerned a wide range of services. Around three quarters of the complaints were attributed to the area of incitement of the masses.

Two thirds of the actionable cases were clear violations, while in the other cases an intensive legal assessment was required.

Justified Complaints on Anti-Constitutional Content in Detail 2019 (total)



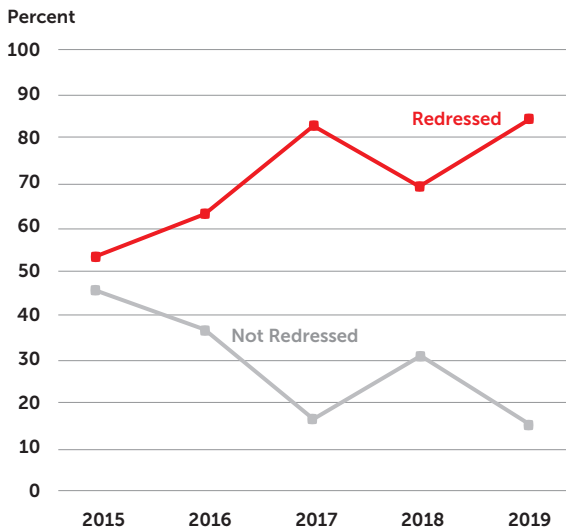
Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020



2.4.1 Overview of the reaction times for web-based anti-constitutional content

In total, 83.9% of the anti-constitutional content reported by the Complaints Office was taken down in the year under review. Compared to the previous year, this represents an increase of around 15 percentage points.

Success Rates for Anti-Constitutional Content 2015–2019



Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020

At this point, it should also be emphasized that only around 4% of the cases of reported content were hosted in Germany. In contrast to depictions of the sexual abuse of children, incitement of the masses and other racist content is not equally prohibited around the world. Despite this, in a good four fifths of cases, success (=redress) could be achieved, because the hosting provider mostly took measures on the basis of prevailing law or the company’s own T&Cs.

In comparison to depictions of the sexual abuse of children, the take-down times for anti-constitutional content are relatively long. In the year under review, it took an average of 9.86 days (9 days for content hosted in Germany) from the time of the report being made to the ISP until the content in question was no longer available (including weekends and public holidays). One reason for this is the different legal situations in the various countries, which result in a greater need for coordination, and which can thus have an influence on the take-down times.

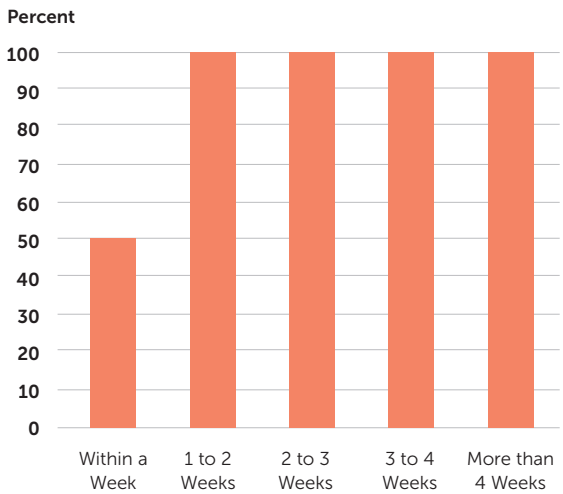
Overall, the fact that the eco Complaints Office must take account of a longer waiting period between the report being made to the police and the ISP (3 working days instead of 6 hours) also has an impact. The legal assessment is not always a simple matter – complex cases

require a thorough and therefore a more time-consuming legal examination.

Especially in 2019, the increase in the number of reports received on the sexual abuse of minors had an impact on processing times in other offense sectors. Com-

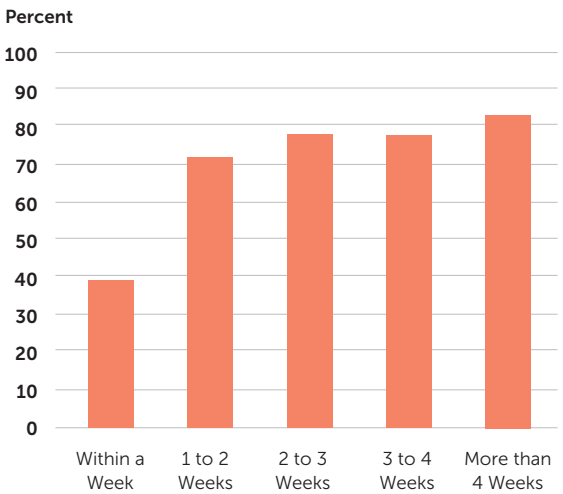
plaints about depictions of the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of minors are accorded priority, given that the possibility is always present of the law enforcement agencies identifying the victim or perpetrator, which means that further abuse can be prevented.

Success Rates for Anti-Constitutional Content from Time of Notification 2019 (German Cases)



Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020

Success Rates for Anti-Constitutional Content from Time of Notification 2019 (All Cases)



Source: eco Complaints Office, 2020

2.5 Processing of complaints of spam

The eco Complaints Office also follows a self-regulatory approach when it comes to the processing of complaints about the impermissible sending of marketing emails and newsletters. The senders of such emails are informed of the legal requirements for permissible email marketing – with a request for compliance. If required, addressing the provider used for the sending of emails can be a sensible measure, in which case the provider can take further measures, e.g. in the case of spam being sent via a botnet or by senders who do not immediately respond appropriately.

In the case of complaints about the impermissible sending of marketing emails and newsletters that pertain to one of the senders participating in the whitelisting project of the Certified Senders Alliance (CSA), there is more intensive processing of the complaint. If the complainant mandates this, a comprehensive consideration of the facts takes place (in particular regarding data collection), and in the case of non-compliance with the CSA regulations, measures will be taken to ensure compliant sending in future.

## 3. Our Network

### Nationally and internationally connected: Together for a safe Internet

The Internet knows no state borders. For hotlines to work effectively, it is therefore important for them to be well connected worldwide. As such, the eco Complaints Office works at both the national and international levels

together with a large number of parties, promotes cooperation, and engages in committees and initiatives. The following chapter provides an overview of our network.

### 3.1 INHOPE ([www.inhope.org](http://www.inhope.org))

Effectively fighting illegal Internet content can only be achieved through international cooperation. For this reason, in November 1999, eco – alongside seven other organizations and with support from the European Commission’s “Action Plan on promoting safer use of the Internet” – founded the International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE). For 20 years now, the international network has been successfully working to effectively combat depictions of the abuse of minors.

INHOPE is the international umbrella association of Internet hotlines which operate worldwide and accept complaints about illegal online content, with a particular focus on child sexual abuse material (CSAM). The network now consists of more than 45 hotlines in over 40 countries. Complaints concerning illegal Internet content can thus be forwarded to the relevant responsible partner. In this way, the illegal content is investigated in its respective country of origin, which is also advantageous for criminal prosecution. Complaints about illegal online content that is not located on a server in Germany are therefore forwarded by the eco Complaints Office to the respective INHOPE member in the particular case involved.

This cooperation has proven its worth: Through its members, the INHOPE network covers many countries where depictions of the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of minors are hosted. The rapid and secure exchange of information across national borders has also led to the breaking up of numerous child sexual abuse rings.

INHOPE itself is not a hotline, but supports the cooperation of the member hotlines in the individual countries. The umbrella organization sets minimum standards for the processing of complaints and the exchange of reports on the depictions of the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of minors within the INHOPE network, and offers regular training for the staff of the affiliated hotlines, among other things.

Since June 2018, Peter-Paul Urlaub, eco Complaints Office Consultant, has been a member of the INHOPE executive board.

## INHOPE

### 3.2 German Safer Internet Centre ([saferinternet.de](http://saferinternet.de))

Since 2004, the eco Complaints Office and the German Association for Voluntary Self-Regulation of Digital Media Service Providers (FSM e.V.) have jointly operated the portal [www.internet-beschwerdestelle.de/en](http://www.internet-beschwerdestelle.de/en), in order to offer users a joint point of contact for reports of illegal Internet content, as well as to provide further information and links to further advice. Since 2008, the portal has been part of the German Safer Internet Centre ([saferinternet.de](http://saferinternet.de)) – together with the additional partners, klicksafe, jugendschutz.net, and “Nummer gegen Kummer”. In 2019, the German Safer Internet Centre was once again co-funded by the European Union as part of the “Connecting Europe Facility”.

Within the scope of this cooperation, the eco Complaints Office participated in the international conference “Keeping Children and Young People Safe Online” in 2019, where it delivered a talk concerning the legal perspective on “Sexting, Pornography, and Minors”. In addition, on the occasion of the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (18 November 2019), the eco and FSM complaints offices reported on the subject of sexting. They have also placed a German-language guide on how to deal with sexting online on the joint portal [www.internet-beschwerdestelle.de/en](http://www.internet-beschwerdestelle.de/en).



### 3.3 fragFINN.de

fragFINN e. V., of which eco is also a founding member, has been offering a protected surfing space for children for over ten years. This is based on a so-called whitelist for Internet sites suitable for children. This whitelist has been developed by fragFINN and is regularly checked by experienced media pedagogues. In the portal “[fragFINN.de](https://www.fragfinn.de),” children are provided with, among other things, a search engine which simplifies access for them to Internet sites which are designed to be safe for children.

## fragFINN.de

eco supports fragFINN through participation in its Criteria Working Group, among other things. Participation in the working group enables the members of fragFINN to play an active role in shaping the whitelist specifications, as well as facilitating a regular information exchange on developments and trends. Here, too, fragFINN benefits from its membership structure, as the various fields of expertise and competencies guarantee a three-dimensional protected space in the Internet, one that can respond immediately to new developments.

### 3.4 Network “No Grey Areas on the Internet”

In November 2014, the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth launched the network “No Grey Areas on the Internet” against the abuse and sexual exploitation of children. The network works to combat the proliferation of images of children and young people in an unnatural sexualized pose (frequently also referred to as Posing) or in a sexualized context, and to have this prohibited internationally. In the focus of the network is a competence center which sheds light on the grey zones in sexual exploitation on the Internet.

The comprehensive processing of complaints concerning depictions of Posing of minors on the Internet, as well as their statistical recording and evaluation, is an area in which the eco Complaints Office has now been actively supporting the work of the network for the past five years. In 2019, the exchange of experience with the competence center regarding the handling of complaints about depictions of Posing of minors was continued.

This work is supported by the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth (BMFSFJ).

### 3.5 Cooperation with law enforcement agencies

From the very outset of the Complaints Office's work, eco has been committed to ensuring that illegal material is deleted and that punishable offenses are reported to the authorities. The eco Complaints Office therefore cooperates with law enforcement agencies at both the German federal and state levels.

Particularly in the area of combatting images of the sexual abuse of children, close and effective cooperation with the German Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) has existed for many years, with this also reflected in the German Federal Government's report on the success in deleting Child Pornographic web content. This report has been published by the German Federal Government since 2013 and shows that the principle of "take-down instead of blocking" and the cooperation of the complaints offices, the BKA, and the Federal Review Board for Media Harmful to Minors (BPjM) are very effective means for combatting illegal Internet content. Aside from the regular exchange of information in the area of combatting images of the sexual abuse of children, the collaboration with the BKA has, for more than ten years, included a written cooperation agreement between the complaints offices (eco, FSM, jugendschutz.net), the BKA, and the BPjM. This agreement has been adapted several times to reflect the most current developments, most recently in 2017.

In the sector of state security offenses, the eco Complaints Office cooperates with police authorities and public prosecutor offices at both the federal and state levels. For example, since 2019 eco has been a member of the North Rhine-Westphalian initiative "Prosecute, don't just delete". Here, it has joined forces with media supervisory authorities, law enforcement agencies, and media companies in order to ensure the protection of freedom and democracy by supporting not only the rapid take-down of hate speech on the Internet, but also its rigorous criminal prosecution. In addition to the regular exchange on hate speech content and its legal assessment, the initiative involves in particular a coordinated and optimized procedure for transferring criminal charges filed by participants to the Central Bureau and Contact Office for Cybercrime North Rhine-Westphalia (ZAC NRW) of the Cologne Public Prosecutor's Office, which specializes in this area.

In addition, the collaborative work between the eco Complaints Office and the police at state level is part of a cooperation agreement between eco, Networker NRW, and the North Rhine-Westphalia Criminal Police Office.

The eco Complaints Office is also active at the local level – one example is "SUSII" (Safe-and-Secure-on-the-Internet), a safety and security project that eco established

together with the Cologne Police Headquarters in 2016. SUSII ([susii.nrw](https://susii.nrw)) is a free and non-commercial Internet safety and security portal, targeted initially at citizens (of Cologne), as well as at small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), and in the meantime extended to cover the districts of Leverkusen and Rhine-Erft. As part of the

Cyber Security Month 2019, the eco Complaints Office, together with the Cologne Police and the Rhine-Erft district, informed citizens and representatives of SMEs about Internet security topics at various lectures and information stands in the city centers, and was available to answer questions from the public.

### 3.6 Exchange with other relevant parties in the field of youth media protection

In 2019, the eco Complaints Office continued to intensify its exchange with other relevant state actors in the field of youth media protection. Several meetings were held with the Commission for the Protection of Minors in the Media (KJM) and the State Media Authority NRW (LFM NRW). In the course of an on-site visit, the focus was placed on the exchange of experience related to the handling of complaints and the application of the relevant provisions of youth media protection law. In addition, future cooperation possibilities were explored.

The Federal Review Board for Media Harmful to Minors (BPjM) is responsible not only for indexing content harmful to young people, but also for the further devel-

opment of youth media protection. This being the case, the eco Complaints Office was in continuous exchange with the BPjM and was able to contribute its expertise in particular through its participation in the expert forums of the Future Workshop ("Digital welfare – from the child's perspective"), organized by the BPjM.

In addition, the eco Complaints Office took part in the BPjM conference, "Age assessment and legal challenges in offenses against sexual self-determination," which served as a forum for the exchange of expertise between the relevant players and organizations in the field of youth media protection.

### 3.7 HateAid

Dealing with illegal hate speech sometimes requires more than bringing criminal charges and taking down the associated content. Since autumn 2019, the eco Complaints Office has therefore been cooperating with HateAid ([hateaid.org](https://hateaid.org)): For people who have experienced

hatred and violence on the Internet, eco provides a direct link to the organization's contact persons. In this way, those affected can receive comprehensive advice or financial assistance in enforcing civil law claims relating to hate speech.

### 3.8 Imparting media skills

Media education is a major challenge and responsibility. The adults responsible for this often come up against their own limits. Due to the fast-moving pace of the social networks and messenger services popular with children and young people, knowing how to use and handle these is not always easy.

This is why the Complaints Office makes itself available, among other things, for parents' evenings and teacher training courses, in order to sensitize people to legal risks and thus promote the positive use of all online services. In 2019, for example, the eco Complaints Office delivered a specialist presentation at a meeting of the

"Education in Schools Network (NEIS)" project of the City of Cologne.

Since December 2018, the eco Complaints Office has also been a network partner of the "s.i.n.us" project, "Safely underway with the Internet". This is an association of institutions in the Rhine Neuss district involving schools, parents, police, youth welfare, and addiction support services. The aim of the joint project is to promote the media skills of pupils, teachers, and parents – for example, on the basis of further training opportunities.

## 4. Online Youth Protection for Companies

### Extra benefits for member companies

From the very outset, youth protection has been an important part of the eco Complaints Office's assessment standard. The eco Complaints Office was established on the initiative of our member companies in 1996 and can now look back on more than 20 years of expertise in this field.

#### ■ Legal expertise

The eco Complaints Office offers a considerable alleviation to the day-to-day work of eco member companies, e.g. through initial legal assessments of reports concerning illegal content. This allows unjustified complaints to be filtered out so that providers do not have to deal with them.

#### ■ Close to politics

As part of eco's Policy, Law & Regulations division, the eco Complaints Office accompanies and monitors political issues and legislative processes at national and international levels and actively brings its expertise and many years of experience to bear on these processes. The hotline work at international level means that we are always very much in tune with world political events – here we closely monitor processes and can thus immediately recognize and react to new developments.

#### ■ Network of experts and committee work at national and international levels

The eco Complaints Office as your voice: Years of successful cooperation with law enforcement agencies and other hotlines, as well as the active support of national and international committees and initiatives, make the eco Complaints Office the ideal mediator between the industry and state bodies.

#### ■ Lasting offers in the field of youth media protection

In addition to the full legal qualifications of our staff, who assess online content and any measures to be taken, member companies profit from over 20 years of expertise in the field of youth media protection. A particular contribution is made by separate services of the eco Complaints Office, which are offered independently of the general complaint work service.



## Youth Media Protection Expert Lunch

With the "Youth Media Protection Expert Lunch," the eco Complaints Office offers an open forum targeted exclusively at association members who are active in the field of youth media protection, with the aims of enhancing exchange of experiences, gathering information, and allowing dialogue to be initiated with us and among members. The in-person meetings take place two to three times a year, with additional relevant parties and external experts sometimes also invited to contribute. In addition, teleconferences and online meetings are offered on specific occasions when information or coordination is required in the short-term between meetings.

The following are the focal topics of the Youth Media Protection Expert Lunch:

- The application of the German Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Minors in the Media (JMStV) and the corresponding regulations in the German Criminal Code (StGB);
- Legal developments in youth media protection in its broadest sense;
- "Digital trends"; and
- The activities of the eco Complaints Office.

In 2019, two in-person meetings and two teleconferences were held. The further development of youth media protection continued to be an important topic in the past year. At the second meeting in May 2019, representatives of the German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth (BMFSFJ) also provided information on the plans to amend the Youth Protection Act. The meetings also addressed the experiences of the eco Complaints Office in combatting illegal content, as well as discussing new political endeavors.

A total of three in-person meetings are planned for the year 2020.



## eco Youth Protection Officer Service

The functions of the youth protection officer:

- Advisory service for the provider
- Contact person for users
- Point of contact for official oversight

Youth protection on the Internet is a task for society as a whole. With the eco Youth Protection Officer Service, both association members and external companies have the opportunity to make their contribution to this cause. Certain telemedia providers with content that is developmentally-impairing or youth-endangering, as well as providers of search engines, may also be obliged to appoint a Youth Protection Officer in accordance with Section 7 of the German Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Minors in the Media (JMStV).



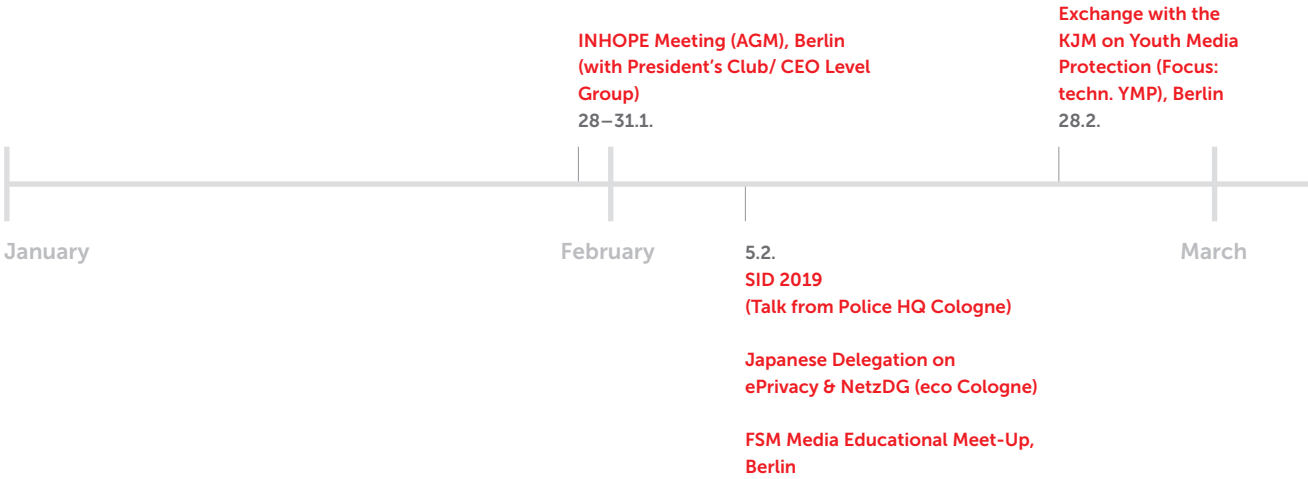
With the eco Youth Protection Officer Service, the Complaints Office provides comprehensive support to telemedia providers in fulfilling this obligation or in the voluntary appointment of a Youth Protection Officer. It offers the following functions and benefits:

- Comprehensive consultation on matters relating to youth protection
- A neutral point of contact between telemedia providers and their users
- A minimization of liability risk
- Prevention of official fines and written warnings
- An increase in user trust through effective youth protection
- Current information and updates on developments and legal changes in the area of youth media protection
- A service tailored to the type of provider
- A seal of quality/logo for websites

If you are interested in availing of or finding out more about this service, we'd be happy to hear from you at the following email address:

[jugendschutzbeauftragte@eco.de](mailto:jugendschutzbeauftragte@eco.de)

# 5. Events, Representation, and Political Work 2019

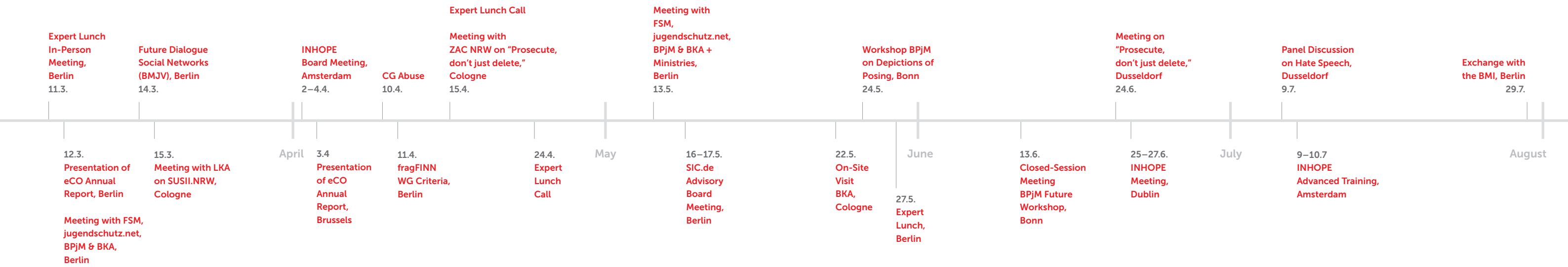


In 2019, the eco Complaints Office continued to report on its work and the associated successes and challenges at a wide range of events and within the sphere of various committees at national and international level. The following chapter provides a sample of these activities.

05.02.2019  
**Safer Internet Day 2019 “Together for a better Internet”**  
The Safer Internet Day (SID) was held last year under the banner of “Together for a better Internet”. The eco Complaints Office took part in the international campaign day to raise awareness of the risks on the Internet. On the occasion of SID 2019, Kira Peek, eco Complaints Office Consultant, gave a talk on cyber bullying at an event organized for teachers by the Cologne Police, where she shed light on various offenses and legal violations.

12.03.2019  
**Presentation of the eco Complaints Office’s 2018 annual report in Berlin and Brussels**  
On 12 March, the World Day Against Cyber Censorship, the eco Complaints Office presented its third independent annual report over the course of a political breakfast at eco’s Capital Office in Berlin. In 2018, a total of 8,671 complaints (disregarding spam and Usenet content) were registered. Of these, 3,097 cases were found to be justified, with almost three quarters concerning depictions of the abuse of children and minors.

The report for 2018 once again highlighted that, despite a substantial number of complaints, the principle of



take-down instead of blocking works and yields success. For example, 96.33 percent of all content reported by the eco Complaints Office worldwide could be taken down in 2018 or removed through some other means, such as that of implementing age verification systems.

At the presentation of the annual report, Alexandra Koch-Skiba, Head of the eco Complaints Office, also pointed out that the upload filters being called for by politicians would not serve to counter the causes of illegal content on the Internet. Instead, she emphasized that rigorous criminal prosecution and publicly promoted media competence are the essential approaches to dealing with illegal content. On the occasion of these presentations, the eco Complaints Office had the pleasure of hosting two fellow speakers: Dr. Tobias Schmid, Director of the State Media Authority of North Rhine-Westphalia, spoke in Berlin, while on 3 April, Tiemo Wölken, Member

of the European Parliament, spoke at the launch of the annual report in Brussels.

09.07.2019

Panel discussion on the topic of hate speech

In July 2019, the Central Bureau and Contact Office for Cybercrime in Cologne (ZAC) and the "Digital City Dusseldorf" network hosted a panel discussion on the topic of "Hate Speech, Fake News and Co. – Criminal Prosecution vs. Hate on the Internet". Alexandra Koch-Skiba, Head of the eco Complaints Office, took part as a panel guest, where she reported on the experiences of the eco Complaints Office in combating anti-constitutional content. The participants also shared the view that, in dealing with the issues of hate and incitement to hatred on the Internet, no new state regulation is required; instead, existing law must be rigorously applied.

14.10.–17.10.2019

M3AAWG

The eco Complaints Office was also represented at the meeting of the international network M3AAWG (the Messaging, Malware, and Mobile Anti-Abuse Working Group) in Montreal, Canada. Peter-Paul Urlaub, eco Complaints Office Consultant, spoke in a panel on the topic of "Abusive Material Takedown". The catalyst for this topic was the Call to Action following the March 2019 attack on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. The terror attack was streamed live on social networks and was also subsequently further disseminated. The timing of the network meeting also came just one week after the attack on a synagogue in Halle, Germany.

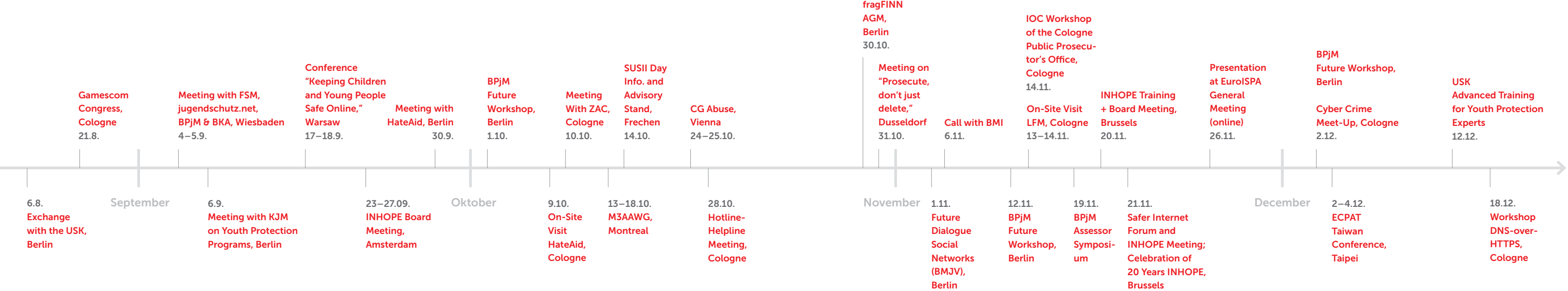
In the panel, Peter-Paul Urlaub reported on the experiences of the eco Complaints Office and emphasized the need for a holistic approach involving law enforcement

and the take-down of illegal Internet content at source. In addition, the conference participants initiated the development of a best practice paper on how to quickly take down such content. Going forward, a catalogue of legal situations and possible measures is to be compiled on this basis.

14.03.2019, 01.11.2019

Future Dialogue on Social Networks

The Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection (BMJV) once again hosted the Future Dialogue on Social Networks last year. In 2018, the new meeting format became the successor to the BMJV-founded Task Force on Hate Speech. Last year's sessions of the Future Dialogue, which took place in March and November 2019, focused on the protection and support of those affected, as well as on the origins and impact of hate and incitement to



hatred in social networks. Within the scope of an ideas workshop, the participants developed proposals for possible measures against hate on the Internet.

**21.11.2019**  
**Safer Internet Forum/INHOPE 20th anniversary**  
The Safer Internet Forum in Brussels last year was dedicated to the topic of "respect online". The #DigitalRespect4Her campaign launched by the European Commission in early 2019 was also a focus of the international conference, with this campaign calling for an inclusive and respectful Internet culture, especially for girls and young women.

As part of the Safer Internet Forum, INHOPE also celebrated its 20th anniversary as the international umbrella association of Internet hotlines. The eco Complaints

Office, as a founding member of INHOPE, was affirmed in its view that the establishment of INHOPE was more than justified, given that the network has grown considerably in recent years and has developed from its initial role as an email exchange into becoming a system in its own right: a system hosted by Interpol which supports hotlines worldwide in passing on information about sexual abuse of minors.

**01.10.2019, 12.11.2019, 02.12.2019**  
**BPjM Future Workshop**  
The Future Workshop organized by the German Federal Review Board for Media Harmful to Minors (BPjM) pursues the guiding principle that lasting child and youth media protection must be considered from the perspective of the child, and not from that of the medium or its distribution channel. Its first output is what is called

the "Hazard Atlas," which aims to provide an overview of possible dangers and developmental risks for children and young people. In the third quarter of 2019, the Future Workshop held three forums in which the eco Complaints Office participated. At these forums, the focus was on an initial practice-based check of the Hazard Atlas.

**04.12.–06.12.2019**  
**ECPAT International Conference on Child Online Safety & ECPAT Regional Consultation East and Southeast Asia**  
In December 2019, the eco Complaints Office attended a multi-day conference of the international network ECPAT in Taiwan. The focal point of the conference was the online safety of children, while a regional focus was placed on East and Southeast Asia. Peter-Paul Urlaub, eco Complaints Office Consultant, delivered talks both

on the legal situation in Germany concerning the protection of children and young people, and on the topic of "Best Practices in Hotline Development". This provided an opportunity to also present the working approach and success rate of the eco Complaints Office on an international level.

In addition, the conference provided an in-depth insight into the challenges and problems facing the Asian region in the fight against illegal content. For example, due to high levels of poverty, some parents might make their children available for online sexual services. In this context, both Australian and US security authorities reported on how they are tackling such cases. The conference also enabled an exchange with the Taiwanese hotline and ECPAT International.

## 6. Public Relations Work

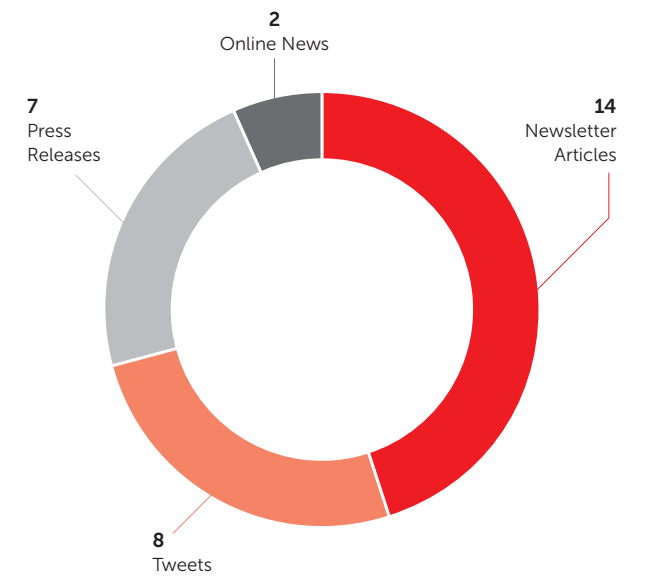
The working approach and achievements of the eco Complaints Office could once again be successfully presented to politicians and the press in the year under review. An important milestone was the publication of the 2018 annual report in Brussels and Berlin. In addition, numerous leading media reported on the take-down successes documented in the annual report.

In parallel, the online portal was cited in the context of the German Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) regarding the fight against hate crime on the Internet. The eco Complaints Office was also featured in connection with a public debate on the regulation of algorithms and the ethical handling of data.

Additionally, in 2019 the eco Complaints Office highlighted existing cooperation with network partners such as klicksafe, fragfinn.de, jugend.support, and FSM in the context of public relations work. Occasions for this were, for example, the "Safer Internet Day" on 11 February 2019, an international campaign day spearheaded by the European Commission to raise awareness worldwide of risks on the Internet, and the "European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse" on 18 November 2019.

The prevention platform susii.nrw, which was jointly instigated by the eco Complaints Office and the Cologne Police, also featured prominently in 2019's public relations work. All activities of the eco Complaints Office also effectively gained public attention via accompanying social media and newsletters.

PR Activities Complaints Office 2019





## Complaints Office Media Resonance 2019

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eco Comments on Final Report of German Data Ethics Commission: "Regulatory fantasies will put the brakes on digitalization"

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Press release: German Federal Government Publishes Take-Down Successes: Complaint Offices Are Indispensable

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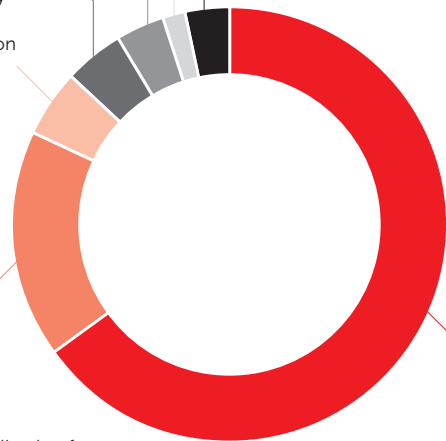
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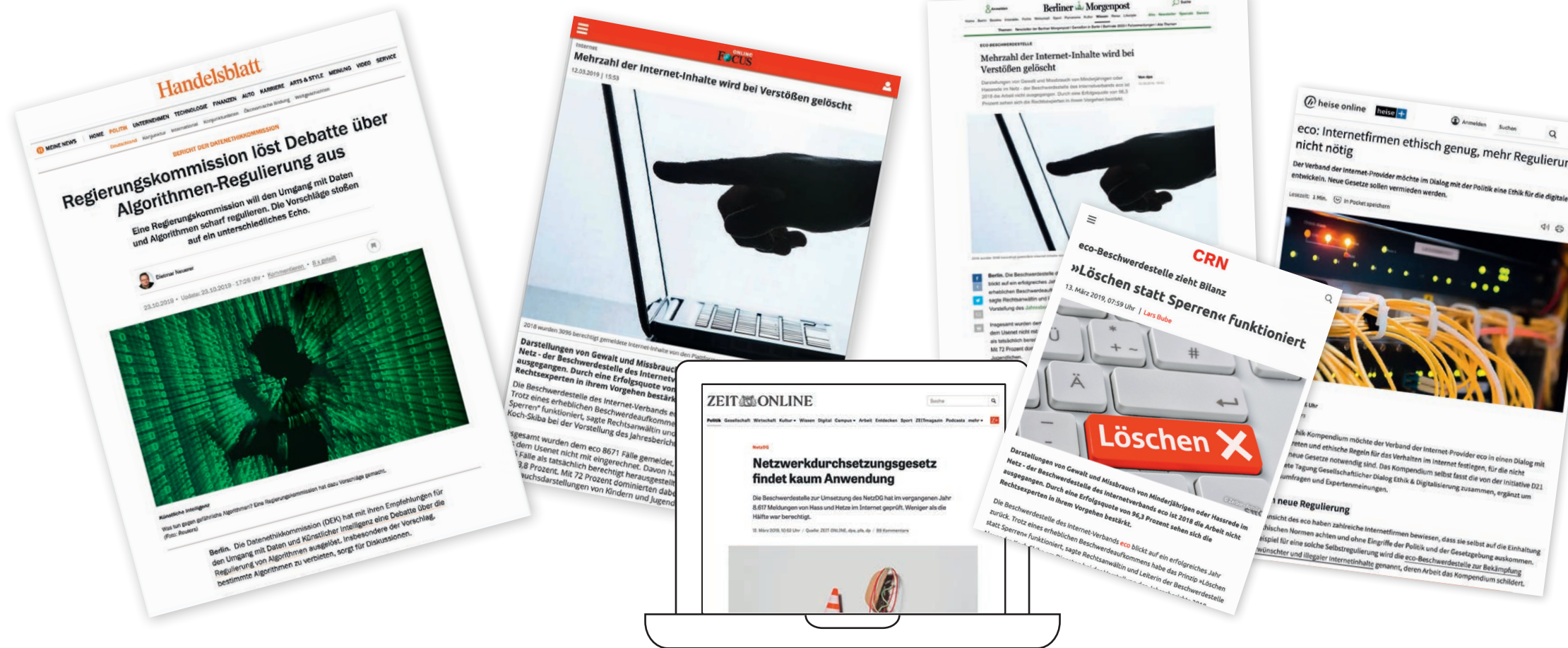
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Press release: eco Complaints Office Annual Report 2018: "Principle of Take-down Instead of Blocking Works"



## Topic highlights

eco Complaints Office Annual Report 2018: "Principle of Take-down Instead of Blocking Works"



## Selection of Complaints Office tweets





## 25 Years of Internet with Responsibility

Dear Members of the eco Complaints Office,  
Dear Readers,

2020 marks eco's anniversary year: 25 years ago, visionaries and digital pioneers got together in Cologne and founded a joint association to actively shape the Internet of the future. Then, as now, eco's goal was to promote new technologies, infrastructures, and markets, and to represent the interests of the Internet industry in dealings with politics and in international bodies. For 25 years, eco has advocated and promoted the responsible use of the Internet and digital technologies. Above all, the fight against illegal and youth-endangering Internet content has always been a priority for eco. In keeping with the current anniversary motto, "Internet

with Responsibility," the foundation stone for the eco Complaints Office was laid in 1996 with the establishment of the working group then known as the Internet Content Task Force (ICTF).

Since that time, working primarily on a self-financed basis, we have been successfully fighting against illegal content on the Internet and, as such, have expertise based on over 20 years of hotline work. As an association of the Internet industry, this self-regulatory commitment is crucial for us in order to strengthen trust in digital technologies in the long-term and to thus make a responsible contribution to our society. Because ultimately, the goals we have set ourselves have not lost any of their relevance. On the contrary: Due to



the plethora of negative debates over the past few years, the Internet industry today is facing completely new challenges. If the digital industry is to remain the largest growth and innovation branch in the future, we must come to an agreement on values and develop ethical standards. Only in this way can we create/build a lasting basis of trust for technologies of the future.

On that note, we would like to warmly thank all members, partners, and friends for their close and trustful cooperation with eco over the past 25 years!

Your

**Prof. Michael Rotert**  
eco Honorary President

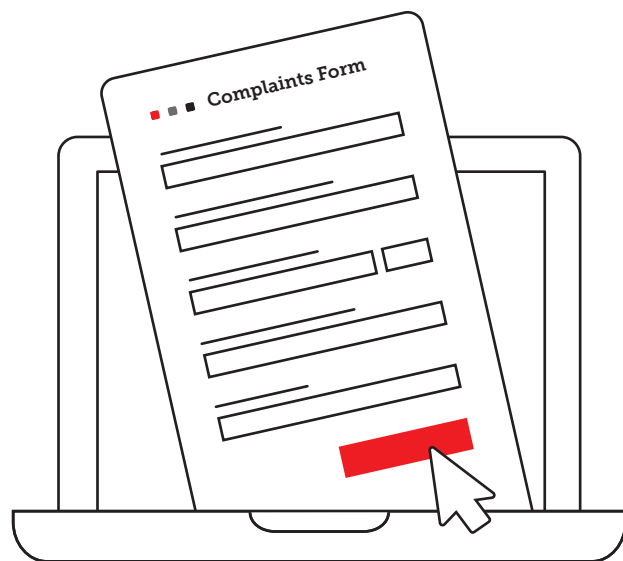




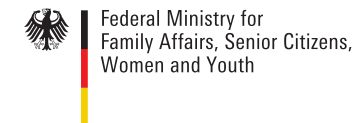
## What can you do?

Every report counts in the fight against illegal content! If you come across content online that you believe is illegal, don't hesitate: Report it to the eco Complaints Office – simply and anonymously at

**[international.eco.de/eco-complaints-office](https://international.eco.de/eco-complaints-office)**



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## Legal Notice

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