

Into the Light: The Netherlands as a hosting hotspot for online Child Sexual Abuse Material

New research by the Childlight Global Child Safety Institute calculates the rate of online Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) reports/notices per 10,000 people within 33 Western European countries. In 2024, **the Netherlands had the highest rate, with an overall CSAM rate of 880.9 reports/notices per 10,000 people.** This is several times higher than the regional rate. For comparison, Germany has a rate of 29.3, and Belgium has a rate of 22.9 per 10,000 people.¹

Not only does the Netherlands have the highest rate of CSAM reports in Western Europe, but the research also highlights the country's significant role in hosting CSAM content. Based on data from INHOPE and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), **the Netherlands is responsible for hosting the majority (60%) of Europe's CSAM and 30% of the world in 2024, making it a global hotspot.**²

Several factors may contribute to the problem, and further research is needed to pinpoint the root causes. These factors could include the Netherlands' position as a global hub for data centres and internet exchange points, the size and openness of its hosting market, and possible differences in hosting business models or content takedown procedures. Legal and regulatory frameworks may also influence both how quickly harmful content is removed and how visible CSAM is in monitoring data. Additionally, strong detection partnerships may lead to higher reporting rates compared to countries with weaker monitoring capabilities.

Behind every sexually explicit photo or video of a child lies abuse, rape, assault, and even systematic exploitation. The creation of this material means that the child's suffering is captured in lasting evidence, which can be shared repeatedly - retraumatising the victim each time. The continued availability of CSAM on servers within Dutch borders is unacceptable. These figures show that current regulation and enforcement are falling short. Perpetrators actively exploit weak regulation and oversight, seeking out safe havens to distribute this material. While steps have been taken in recent years through European and national initiatives, the hard data shows these efforts have not had sufficient impact yet.

¹ The CSAM rate is a measure that looks at CSAM availability for countries by its population. 'Availability' refers to CSAM that has been reported from this country and CSAM that is being hosted within the country. In 2024, rates in Western Europe ranged from 5.4 (San Marino) to 880.9 per 10,000 people (Netherlands), up from 172 the year before.

² Reports refer to NCMEC reports which are primarily received from tech companies who are mandated to report concerns relating to CSAM on their platforms. A small percentage stem from public reporting to NCMEC of concerning material online.

Every day we fail to act, new material is produced and uploaded, and the lives of new (and increasingly younger) children around the world are being destroyed.

The Time to Act Is Now: End Hosting of CSAM in the Netherlands

The Netherlands has a unique opportunity, and responsibility, to lead the fight against online child sexual abuse. As the country hosting the majority of known child sexual abuse material (CSAM) in Europe, and a significant portion globally, it is at the center of the problem. And so it must also be at the center of the solution.

We recommend that Dutch policymakers close any loopholes and enforce swift takedown of reported CSAM to protect children in the Netherlands and around the world.

Additionally, it is time to set boundaries by requiring all hosting providers and tech companies in Europe to proactively detect and remove abuse. This would create a level playing field across Europe. The EU Child Sexual Abuse Regulation (CSAR), in particular the proposal put forward by the Danish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, offers a chance to require proactive detection and removal. It offers the tools to structurally tackle this horrific abuse and place real child protection at the heart of digital policy. The Netherlands bears a particular responsibility in this regard, precisely because the country hosts the majority of the material. The Netherlands has a legal obligation to take decisive action, improve enforcement, and use technology to protect children.

We urge tech companies and policymakers: choose safety over permissiveness. Children cannot wait.

The time to act is not tomorrow - it is *now*.

Further background

Recent changes in legislation in both the European Union (Digital Services Act) and in the Netherlands (Administrative Law Approach to Online Child Pornography Material Act), which specifically target the removal of CSAM, provide the backing for greater safeguarding efforts in the country. The impact of this legislation will need to be monitored moving forward. This is further bolstered by the recent addition of a Netherlands regulator to the Global Online Safety Regulatory Network, a group which looks to ensure that online safety is achieved globally. These elements, specific legislation and a regulatory body, are present in countries which are known to purposefully address the matter of online child safety, such as the United Kingdom and Australia.