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The Hague, 21/07/2016

# Terms of reference and mandate of the Advisory Group on Online Terrorist Propaganda

## 1. Status

The Advisory Group on Online Terrorist Propaganda (hereafter 'the Group') is an advisory group to the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC), coordinated by the EU Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU) and reporting to the Head of the ECTC.

The Group is set up for an initial period of three years. Its work is subject to periodic review by the Head of the ECTC, who may decide to extend its term.

The Advisory Group will report its progress and findings in writing twice a year to the Head of the EU IRU. The EU IRU Community Manager will act as the Secretariat to the Group.

## 2. Tasks and role

The Advisory Group will be tasked with providing support to the ECTC with the aim of maintaining an optimal level of expertise in the field of online terrorist propaganda and extremism. The establishment of this Advisory Group within the ECTC, coordinated by the EU IRU, serves to achieve one of the ECTC strategic goals, which is to become a centre of expertise in the realm of online terrorist propaganda and extremism. In addition, its activities will be aligned with the EU Internet Forum roadmap of actions. The Advisory Group will be in charge of:

* Establishing an academic advisory network of experts – the ECTC Academic Advisory Network on online terrorist propaganda – to ensure that the EU IRU keeps pace with the latest developments in its field of expertise by sharing knowledge and best practices with academics and researchers; the network is conceptualised as a working advisory ‘think tank’ comprised of nominated trans-disciplinary subject-matter experts, tasked with informing on problems posed to security by terrorists and their exploitation of online communication.
* Being in line with the ECTC strategy and the EU Internet Forum roadmap of actions, producing deliveries of a strategic nature (papers and reports) on key issues identified within the Academic Advisory Network, with a view to publication.
* Launching a yearly conference on topics related to terrorist ideology, online recruitment and law enforcement responses; the conference proceedings will be published online as a dedicated series on Europol’s website.
* Providing input to the work of the EU IRU by contributing to the dedicated IRU platform of experts (IRU EPE[[1]](#footnote-1)) on online terrorist propaganda and extremism, which will structure and facilitate contacts with the academia and research centres, as well as manage the communication between stakeholders.

The Head of the ECTC has the option to suggest topics of research and propose subjects for reports to the Group.

## 3. Membership

In principle, the group shall be composed of up to 15 members representing a wide-range of expertise in all aspects of online propaganda, recruitment and online radicalisation related to the fight against terrorism and also a balanced representation in terms of background and geographic regions. The EU IRU will determine the exact number of members, taking into account the need to ensure balanced representation of the various groups and fields of expertise while ensuring that the Group can function in an effective manner.

Members shall be appointed by the EU IRU from among those who have responded to the call for applications. The EU IRU will accept applications for membership from different stakeholders, among which industry partners and academic communities.

Candidates will be required to demonstrate their suitability by completing an application form, to be evaluated by the EU IRU. Upon evaluation of applications, the Heads of the ECTC and the EU IRU will identify suitable candidates for the Advisory Group on the basis of competence, integrity, significant experience in the field and capacity to make a tangible contribution.

On the basis of the call for applications, applicants who were deemed suitable candidates for Group membership but were not appointed shall be placed on a reserve list, with their consent. The EU IRU shall use this list for the appointment of replacements for members, if needed. If the Head of the ECTC considers the reserve list insufficient, it may re-publish the call for applications in order to constitute a new list.

Members of Advisory Group will serve for a maximum of 3 years, with membership subject to annual review. The tasks of the group members will be:

• Participation in the preparation and attendance of Advisory Group meetings twice a year.

• Participation in the preparation and organisation of the yearly conference at Europol, including the publication of the conference proceedings.

• Providing ad-hoc expertise to Europol on request.

• Active participation in discussions in areas of their expertise, including on the IRU EPE.

They shall contribute to enhancing the cooperation between ECTC and their sector using their expertise in the general interest and not to the benefit of their specific corporate interest. They shall remain in office until replaced or until their term of office ends. Their term of office may be renewed.

The Head of the ECTC may decide to spread the starting date of the term of office of members to enhance the continuity of the work of the group over time. This means that new members can accede prior to the expiration of the term of office of other members.

The Head of the ECTC reserves the right to remove nominated members due to failure to participate at meetings of the Group or any other reason, such as incompetence in the performance of their role as member, conflict of interest or malpractice. In case of dismissal the Head of the ECTC will inform the member of the reasons for which his or her services are not anymore required.

Each year the Head of the ECTC will make an annual review to determine the renewal or otherwise of existing members and to possibly nominate new members as long as they fulfil the criteria mentioned. Adding members to the Advisory Group during the year should be avoided unless absolutely necessary in view of an unforeseen need.

The names of the Group’s members shall be published on Europol’s website.

To ensure proper alignment with the ECTC strategy and the EU Internet Forum roadmap of actions, the EU IRU shall also be represented in the Advisory Group.

## 4. Meetings

Advisory Group members in 2016 will convene twice, either virtually or offline. The number of meetings in subsequent years will be subject to review by the Group. Participation at meetings will be restricted to nominated persons. As much as possible, offline meetings of the Group should be scheduled back-to-back with other meetings on related topics or in which several members of the Group are expected to participate. Additional meetings may also be organised on an *ad hoc* basis when necessary. The Head of the ECTC will chair the Advisory Group meetings. Given the focus on online terrorist propaganda, the Head of the EU IRU will act as Deputy. In his absence, he will be replaced by the EU IRU Team Leader.

The EU IRU Community manager will ensure a constant exchange of information between Advisory Group members through the IRU EPE. The EU IRU Community manager will be responsible for invitation, agendas, proposals, minutes and drafting a yearly activity report to the Head of the ECTC. The reports on the activities of the Group will be submitted to the Head of the ECTC. The Head of the EU IRU will also provide oral reports to the Head of the ECTC drawn from the minutes of the Group’s meetings. A draft agenda will be circulated at least two weeks in advance of the meetings of the group in order to allow Members to suggest changes and additions.

Participants in the activities of the group shall not be remunerated for the services they render.

## 5. Costs

Advisory group: Financial support for travel expenses in connection to meetings may be granted. Financial support for accommodation expenses will be subject to the arrangement and planning of the meetings. Wherever possible, meetings of Advisory Group should be scheduled to coincide with existing meetings of subject matter experts, to facilitate optimum participation and minimise unnecessary expenditure on the part of group members. The IRU EPE will also be used for communicating the invitation and organisational details.

Yearly Conference: Members of the academic advisory network will participate on a *pro bono* basis and not receive any financial compensation for their work. However, in the case of travel to The Hague, The Netherlands, for the purpose of attending the annual conference, the EU IRU shall refund any travel by flight or train and accommodation expenses of speakers provided that the expenses are reasonable and documented.

## 6. Areas of work for 2016-2017

In 2016 and 2017, the activity of the Group will focus on the following sub-areas:

• Narratives used by terrorist groups to attract recruits and incite lone actor attacks

• Strategies used by terrorist groups to disseminate terrorist propaganda online

• Effects of terrorist propaganda on vulnerable individuals

• Hacking activities linked to terrorism

The Group may contribute to the definition of their areas of work by providing the Head of the ECTC with suggestions on topics on which the Group may provide useful guidance or expertise.

## 7. Documents

The EU IRU Community Manager will make documents available to the members via a dedicated page on the IRU EPE and through e-mail communication as appropriate. The Advisory Group members will have access to Group’s documents.

The Community Manager encourages the use of the virtual platform IRU EPE to ensure a constant exchange of information between EU IRU and the Advisory Group members.

The Community Manager can authorise public access to a document of the Group, after the document has been discussed by the Group and if no member has explicitly requested confidentiality; requests for confidentiality will be included into the minutes of the meetings.

## 8. Confidentiality

Members of the Advisory Group are free to refer to their membership in the public domain, but must treat the content of meetings, the groups’ activities and related documentation as confidential. The Head of the ECTC reserves the right to dismiss any member of an Advisory Groups who is identified as using his or her membership for undue influence, including commercial advantage.

No exchange of data containing crime related personal information other than what is available in the public domain will take place during the meetings of the Advisory Group.

## 9. Review of the Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference will be presented to the Head of the ECTC for review whenever the need arises.

# ANNEX

**Call for applications for the selection of the Members of Advisory Group on Online Terrorist Propaganda of the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC) appointed in a personal capacity.**

Recent terrorist attacks and attempted attacks have brought into sharper focus how terrorist groups are using the Internet to radicalise, recruit and direct terrorist activity and glorify their atrocities.

In order to address the activities brought forward in the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council Conclusions of 20 November 2015, Europol established on 1 January 2016 the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC), with the aim to enhance cooperation with the Member States (MS) in the area of counterterrorism and provide the most effective operational support and expertise to MS investigations.

The EU Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU) is a key capability of the ECTC and has been mandated to perform the following core tasks:

• To coordinate and share the identification tasks (flagging) of terrorist and violent extremist online content with relevant partners.

• To carry out and support referrals quickly, efficiently and effectively, in close cooperation with the industry.

• To support competent authorities, by providing strategic analysis and operational analysis.

• To act as a European Centre of Excellence for the above tasks.

Within the newly established ECTC, the EU IRU is envisaged to establish an active engagement with relevant industry partners and academic communities in order to ensure that it continuously develops and uses technologies, tools and methodologies that are at par with the developments of social media and digital communication.

To this end, the EU IRU, being the ECTC capability dealing with countering terrorism online, has identified a need to establish, within the wider context of the ECTC’s activities, an **Advisory Group** on the abuse of online communication by terrorist groups for propaganda purposes and online recruitment. The establishment of this Advisory Group within the ECTC, coordinated by the EU IRU, serves to achieve one of the ECTC strategic goals, which is to become a centre of expertise in the realm of online terrorist propaganda and extremism. In addition, its activities will be aligned with the EU Internet Forum roadmap of actions.

The tasks of the Advisory Group are:

* Establishing an academic advisory network of experts – the ECTC Academic Advisory Network on online terrorist propaganda – to ensure that the EU IRU keeps pace with the latest developments in its field of expertise by sharing knowledge and best practices with academics and researchers; the network is conceptualised as a working advisory ‘think tank’ comprised of nominated trans-disciplinary subject-matter experts, tasked with informing on problems posed to security by terrorists and their exploitation of online communication.
* Being in line with the ECTC strategy and the EU Internet Forum roadmap of actions, producing deliveries of a strategic nature (papers and reports) on key issues identified within the Academic Advisory Network, with a view to publication.
* Launching a yearly conference on topics related to terrorist ideology, online recruitment and law enforcement responses; the conference proceedings will be published online as a dedicated series on Europol’s website.
* Providing input to the work of the EU IRU by contributing to the dedicated IRU platform of experts (IRU EPE[[2]](#footnote-2)) on online terrorist propaganda and extremism, which will structure and facilitate contacts with the academia and research centres, as well as manage the communication between stakeholders.

The EU IRU is tasked with establishing the Advisory Group and is therefore calling for applications with a view to selecting members of the Advisory Group.

The Group shall consist of up to 15 non-remunerated members appointed in their personal capacity. They shall be individuals of proven expertise and professional experience in online propaganda, recruitment and radicalisation, which is relevant to the fight against terrorism. The tasks of the group members will be:

• Participation in the preparation and attendance of Advisory Group meetings twice a year.

• Participation in the preparation and organisation of the yearly conference at Europol.

• Providing *ad hoc* expertise to Europol on request.

• Active participation in discussions in areas of their expertise, including on the IRU EPE.

The members shall be appointed for a maximum **three-year** renewable period. They shall give the Advisory Group an independent opinion, free from outside influence and respect the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Advisory Group’s terms of reference. They shall undertake to act independently and in the public interest.

The ECTC may also consult the group on any matter relating to online propaganda developments with regards to the fight against terrorist and violent extremist online content. The Head of the ECTC has the option to suggest topics of research and propose subjects for reports to the Group.

The following criteria will be taken into account when assessing applications:

(a) Proven competence, and a high level of professional achievement and experience (at least five years), including at European and/or international level, in activities concerned with online terrorist/extreme violent propaganda;

(b) Demonstrated ability to work in English;

(c) The need to strike a balance within the group of experts in terms of institutional and professional background, gender and geographical origin;

(d) The need to ensure the required balance of expertise on online terrorist propaganda and the various aspects involved, such as—but not limited to—the development of projects and products, supervision or contribution to the research activities of public or private entities, assessment of use and needs for new products and services by the law enforcement community.

The above will be assessed on the basis of the completed curriculum vitae (CV) and the application form.

Applications may only be submitted using the model application form and should be accompanied by a CV. Applicants are asked to state clearly in their application the professional/research area in which they possess particular expertise.

The applications must be sent in by Friday, **12 August 2016**, either by e-mail to: O47@europol.europa.eu or by post to:

Europol  
EU Internet Referral Unit (O47 – EU IRU)  
P.O. Box 908 50  
2509 LW - The Hague  
The Netherlands

Where applications are sent by e-mail, the date of e-mail will be the date of sending. Where applications are sent by post, the postmark will be considered the date of sending.

Personal data will be processed in accordance with the principles of Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data. These principles of Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 are laid down in the relevant decision of the Europol Director.

The application form and the Terms of Reference for the Advisory Groups are available on the Europol website. For any further information please contact the EU IRU e-mail: O47@europol.europa.eu.

Information on the results of the call for applications will be published on the IRU EPE and on the Europol website.

1. The Europol Platform for Experts (EPE) is a secure collaboration web platform for experts, which facilitates the sharing of best practices, documentation, innovation, knowledge and non-personal data on crime. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Europol Platform for Experts (EPE) is a secure collaboration web platform for experts, which facilitates the sharing of best practices, documentation, innovation, knowledge and non-personal data on crime. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)