



Coimisiún na Meán

Information Pack

Guidelines for candidates
on keeping safe online
during elections



In collaboration with An Garda Síochána

Coimisiún na Meán is Ireland's agency for developing and regulating a thriving, diverse, creative, safe and trusted media landscape.



Our Online Safety Framework aims to drive behavioural changes from the platforms. The Framework is supported by the ability to impose strong sanctions, including significant fines, when rules are broken. One of our key priorities this year is **Electoral and Information Integrity**.

www.cnam.ie



This pack aims to provide information for candidates standing for election in Ireland. We know it can be difficult for candidates and you may experience harm online.



This pack offers a reminder of what you might do when you are faced with harmful and/or illegal content online, and the role Coimisiún na Meán and An Garda Síochána can play in supporting you with this.



It also looks at your rights when your post is removed by a platform, for example, for allegedly going against their community standards.

What is Ireland's Online Safety Framework?

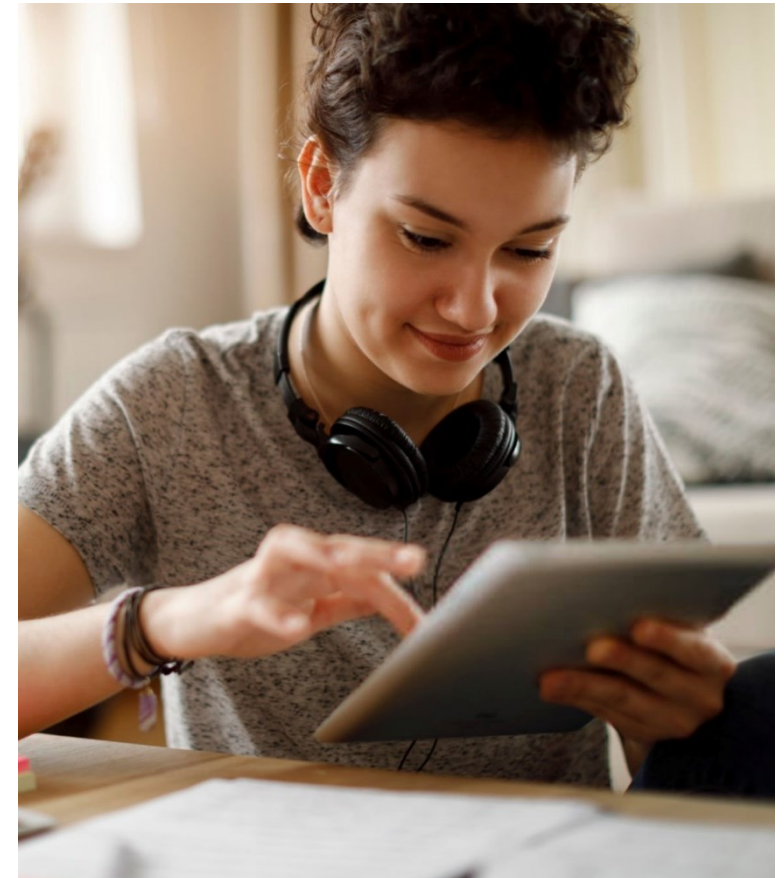
Ireland's Online Safety Framework makes providers of digital services accountable for how they protect people from potential harm or exposure to illegal content online.

You might find it helpful to know that there are a number of pieces of legislation protecting you from harmful or illegal content or behaviours. It is Coimisiún na Meán's role to enforce these rules.

Three different pieces of legislation form the Framework:

- The EU Digital Services Act (DSA)
- The EU Terrorist Content Online Regulation
- The Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022

You can find more detailed information about the Online Safety Framework at www.cnam.ie/online-safety.



Summary of what to do when faced with illegal/harmful content



If you are faced with **illegal** content online, you should **report** it on the platform. To understand some examples of what might be illegal in Ireland, see slide 16. To understand how to report illegal content, see slide 16 or 18.



If something is harmful, but not illegal, it may be in breach of the **platform's rules** or community standards. You can also report it on the platform (see slide 16).



As an electoral candidate, some of the large platforms have information and support for you around their efforts to maintain electoral integrity (see slide 25).



Once you've reported harmful or illegal content, the platform must provide you with a **decision** on how it has dealt with your report, setting out reasons for its decision. The decision should be timely.



The platform must also let you know if **they restrict your content** (e.g. remove, disable or demote your content).



If you are unhappy with their decision following a report or restriction of content, you can **appeal** that decision on the platform. It should be made clear to you how to do this, and this appeal mechanism should be easy to find.

If you fear for your immediate safety, you should contact An Garda Síochána on 999 or 112



If you think the platform has failed to provide these steps, you can **complain** to Coimisiún na Meán (slide 21). If you have a query and need to contact us during the election period, we have created a dedicated email address: politicalrep@cnam.ie. We will prioritise responses to this email address (slide 20).

Scenarios

What can I do next?

Scenarios

1

During canvassing, angry individuals threatened my safety, and when online later, I noticed there were threatening posts, saying ‘I know where you live’, and I would ‘regret it’ if I continued my campaign. I believe these threats are real. What should I do?

If you fear for your **immediate** safety, you should contact An Garda Síochána on 999 or 112.

Please note that a threat to life invokes a response under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights ‘Right to Life’, placing an obligation on authorities to take reasonable steps to protect a person whose life is in danger.

Secondly, even where posts may not have a threat to life, some of these online messages could be illegal.

Before you contact Coimisiún na Meán, you should report these messages to the platform as illegal content, if you suspect they are illegal and they should remove it.

If you do not agree with the response of the platform, you should then complain/appeal to them. If the platform doesn’t reply to you, or allow you to appeal, you can contact Coimisiún na Meán as this is potentially against the rules.

2

A video of a speech I gave was taken down online and I wasn’t given any reason for this. I wasn’t happy with the platform’s decision and I wasn’t given any way to appeal this. Can I report to Coimisiún na Meán?

Yes, in this instance, you can report to Coimisiún na Meán. The Online Safety Framework says that a platform must give you a statement of reasons for certain restrictions placed on your account, and also an appeals process if you are not happy with their decisions.

If they don’t, or they don’t give clear and specific reasons, they are breaking the rules and Coimisiún na Meán would like to know about it.

When you email Coimisiún na Meán, it would be helpful to have screenshots or URLs to show any correspondence you received from the platform, and any evidence to show you were not offered an appeal.

3

I saw a manipulated image of me online (i.e. a ‘deepfake’). This photo shows me at a public event I didn’t attend. I’m worried people won’t know this is fake and it will harm my chances of being elected. Can I report to Coimisiún na Meán?

If you see a ‘deepfake’ online, it should be clearly labelled or have appropriate markings to indicate that it is a deepfake. Under the DSA, there are specific guidelines that certain very large online platforms and search engines are recommended to follow, to mitigate risks to elections. It’s recommended in these guidelines that deepfakes be labelled in this way.

If you come across a deepfake online, you should always report it to the platform where you first saw it. Some platforms do not allow disinformation, for example, and deepfakes would fall within this.

If you do not like the response of the platform, you should then complain/appeal to them. If the platform doesn’t reply to you, or allow you to appeal, you can contact Coimisiún na Meán, as we want to understand if platforms are following these rules.

4

I’m getting horrible messages under my videos and posts online, telling me to ‘go home’ and making racist comments. Can I report to Coimisiún na Meán?

It can be very upsetting to receive harmful comments like this. We understand sometimes it isn’t the severity of the racist message, it’s the volume.

In terms of reporting to Coimisiún na Meán, you will **first** need to report these posts to the platform. Such posts may constitute illegal content, or be contrary to the platform’s terms and conditions, or both.

Under the Online Safety Framework, platforms required to have a mechanism through which you can report illegal content, and some platforms also have a separate mechanism through which breaches of terms and conditions can be reported. Whatever mechanism you choose to report the content, if you do not like the response of the platform to your report, you should then complain/appeal to them. If the platform doesn’t reply to you, or allow you to appeal, you can contact Coimisiún na Meán as this is potentially against the rules.

5

I noticed other candidates had political advertisements on their social media. I didn't see any label on them to make it clear they were ads. I thought this wasn't allowed. Can I report to Coimisiún na Meán?

In general, it is best to always report to the platform first. Under the DSA, there are requirements for ad transparency. It should be clear, for example, that the information displayed is an ad, on whose behalf the ad is presented, and who paid for the ad.

Under the DSA Election Guidelines, if a very large online platform or search engine has the possibility to place political advertising, these ads should be clearly labelled so that users can understand that the content contains political advertising.

If ads aren't labelled with this information, Coimisiún na Meán would like to know. Our role is to make sure platforms are following these rules.

6

Someone took a photo of my house and shared it online. Then an angry group of people came to protest in front of my house. My children were inside and were afraid. Surely this is against the law? Can I report to Coimisiún na Meán?

If you fear for your **immediate** safety, you should contact An Garda Síochána on 999 or 112. You should report the person who shared the image of your house to An Garda Síochána and report the posts to the platform as illegal content, as it could be considered harassment.

If you do not like the response of the platform to your report, you should then complain/appeal to them. If the platform doesn't reply to you, or allow you to appeal, you can contact Coimisiún na Meán as this is potentially against the rules. When you email politicalrep@cnam.ie, it would be helpful to have screenshots or URLs to show any correspondence you received from the platform, and any evidence to show you were not offered an appeal.

How to report

How do I contact An Garda Síochána?

How do I report an emergency?

If you fear for your immediate safety, you should contact An Garda Síochána on 999 or 112.

An emergency is any incident which requires an immediate Garda response, for example:

- A danger to life
- Risk of serious injury
- Crime in progress or about to happen
- Offender still at scene or has just left.

How do I report other crimes?

To report a non-emergency crime, you can attend your local or any Garda Station.

A Garda can take a report of a crime from you in person in any station.

You can find details on your local Garda Station [here](#).

If you have queries, or you would like to inform Gardaí of an incident or would like further assistance, contact your [Divisional Liaison Inspector](#). There are Divisional Liaison Inspectors in each division who specifically deal with election candidates. See next slide for a full list.

How do I report a hate crime?

Click [here](#) to report a hate crime online to An Garda Síochána.

Always report any incident you perceive as motivated by hate to An Garda Síochána.

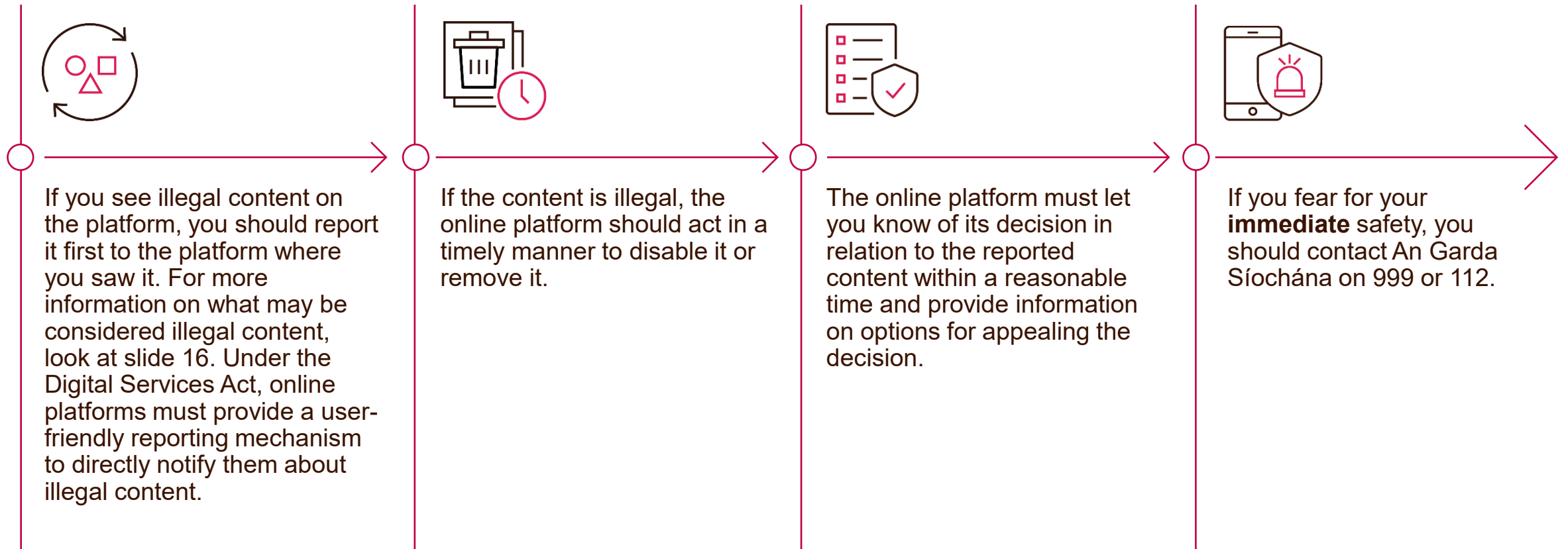
If you fear for your immediate safety, you should contact An Garda Síochána on 999 or 112.

List of Liaison Inspectors in An Garda Síochána

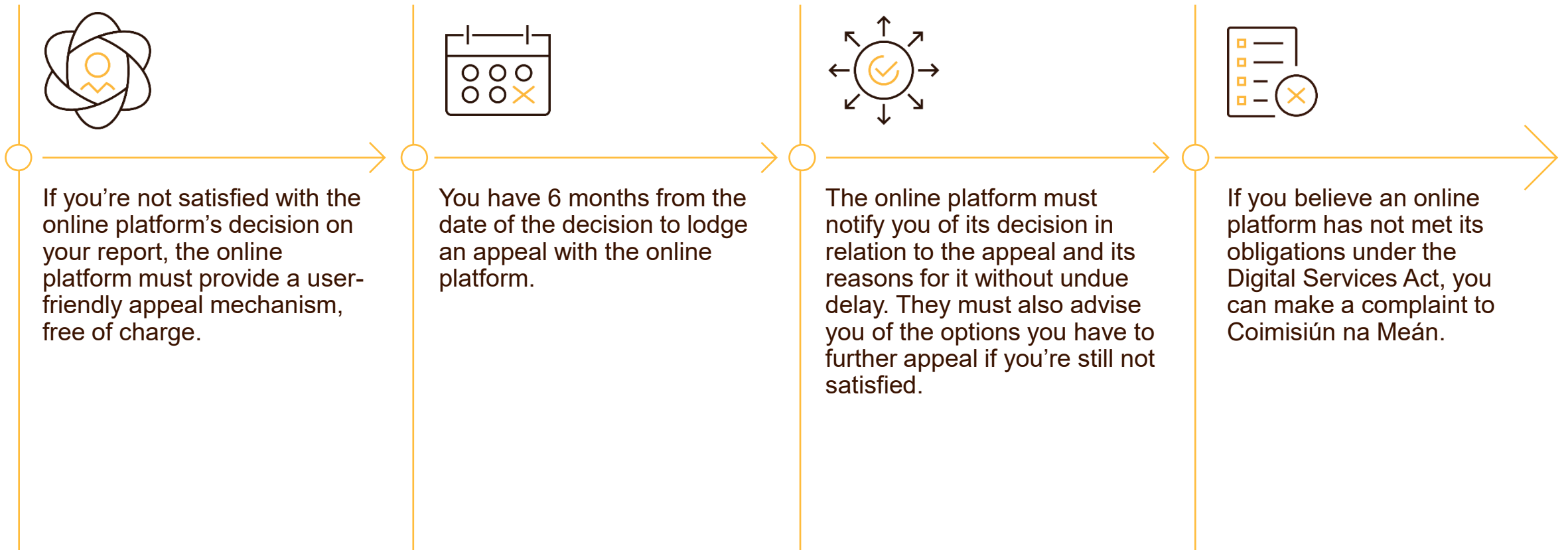


Division	Inspector	Email
DMR South Central	Inspector Aidan Murphy	Aidan.P.Murphy@garda.ie
DMR North Central	Inspector Ken Hoare	Kenneth.a.hoare@garda.ie
DMR SOUTH	Inspector Nigel McInaw	Nigel.m.mcinaw@garda.ie
DMR NORTH	Inspector Sean Earley	Sean.p.earley@garda.ie
DMR EAST	Inspector Francis Gormley	Gareth.f.gormley@garda.ie
DMR WEST	Inspector Martin Geraghty	Martin.g.geraghty@garda.ie
Carlow	Inspector Conor Nolan	conor.p.nolan@garda.ie
Kilkenny	Inspector Alma Molloy	alma.j.molloy@garda.ie
Cavan/Monaghan/ Louth	Inspector Ciarán Clancy	brian.c.clancy@garda.ie
Clare	Inspector Andrew Lyons	andrew.p.lyons@garda.ie
Cork City	Inspector James Hallahan	james.a.hallahan@garda.ie
Cork County	D/ Inspector Eamonn Brady	eamonn.j.brady@garda.ie
Cork County	Inspector John O' Connell	john.ma.oconnell@garda.ie
Donegal	D/Inspector David Durkin	david.f.durkin@garda.ie
Galway	D/Inspector Brendan Carroll	Brendan.carroll@garda.ie
Galway County	D/Inspector Gary McEntee	Gerard.P.McEntee@garda.ie
Kerry	D/Inspector Liam McGraynor	liam.p.mcgraynor@garda.ie
Kildare	Inspector Gavin Dunphy	Gavin.m.dunphy@garda.ie
Laois/Offaly	Inspector Joe Culliton	Joseph.p.culliton@garda.ie
Limerick	Inspector Martyn Wallace	martyn.g.wallace@garda.ie
Mayo/Roscommon/Longford	Inspector David Jordan	david.f.jordan@garda.ie
Meath	Inspector Alan Roughneen	alan.t.roughneen@garda.ie
Sligo/Leitrim	D/Inspector Ray Mulderrig	Raymond.Mulderrig@Garda.ie
Tipperary	Inspector Andrew Lyons	andrew.p.lyons@garda.ie
Waterford	D/Inspector Donal Donohue	Donal.j.donohue@garda.ie
Westmeath	D/Inspector Tom Quinn	thomas.f.quinn@garda.ie
Wicklow	D/Inspector Seamus Ryan	Seamus.m.ryan@garda.ie
Wexford	D/Inspector Padhraic Roberts	Paraic.w.roberts@garda.ie

Reporting illegal content online under the Digital Services Act (DSA)



Under the DSA, you have the right to appeal/complain



Reporting content users have concerns about



Some social media platforms allow you to report misinformation or disinformation as a breach of their terms and conditions. Please note, misinformation or **disinformation is not necessarily illegal**.









You may see content online that you do not approve of, or think should not be online. This does not necessarily mean that the content is illegal. **You should always report content to the platform where you saw it if you have concerns**, but outside of what is illegal, platforms are free to set their own rules for what content is permissible.

The **DSA election guidelines**, for example, include recommendations for platforms to demonetise disinformation content, to have and enforce rules to prevent the impersonation of candidates as well as for manipulated content such as deepfakes, to be distinguishable for users. See reporting options on slide 15, and information on reporting to Coimisiún na Meán on slide 20.

Platforms have a legal obligation under the Digital Services Act (DSA) to have rules about acceptable content and **to outline any restrictions on content** in their terms and conditions, or community rules. They also have to enforce these rules **in a diligent and proportionate manner**. They must provide mechanisms for users to report content they consider is in breach of the rules.

Neither Coimisiún na Meán nor any other public body has the authority to require content to be taken down, solely on the basis that the content represents misinformation or disinformation.

How to report harmful content or illegal content on the platforms

	Normal procedures for reporting content that goes against the community rules/terms and conditions	Procedures for reporting illegal content
	How to report on Facebook	How to report on Facebook
	How to report on Instagram	How to report on Instagram
	How to report on X	How to report on X
	How to report on TikTok	How to report on TikTok
	How to report on LinkedIn	How to report on YouTube
	How to report on YouTube	How to report on Google
	How to report on Google	How to report on Bing
	How to report on Bing	
	Other platforms: see link here for further information	

What is illegal content?

If the content is:	It <u>may be</u> illegal under:
A credible threat of violence	Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997
- Part of a campaign of harassment (such as cyberbullying) - Threatening or grossly offensive communication that causes you alarm or distress	Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997 Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act, 2020
Threatening, abusive or insulting and intended or likely to stir up hatred against a group of people on account of their race, colour, nationality, religion, ethnic or national origins, membership of the Travelling Community or sexual orientation	Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act, 1989
An unsolicited image of someone's genitals that cause distress, fear or alarm	Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2017
An intimate image shared without consent	Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act, 2020
Encouragement of terrorist activity or a threat to commit an act of terrorism	Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Act, 2005

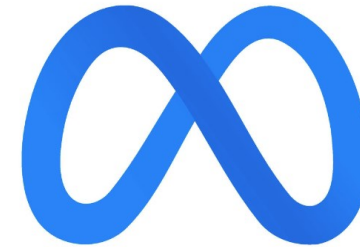
This table is a high-level summary. It does not constitute legal advice, nor does it represent the position that Coimisiún na Meán may take in the context of any regulatory proceeding in which the meaning of the provisions concerned is in issue.

How to report illegal and harmful content on the platforms

Click on the text below for step-by-step guides (with pictures) on how to report harmful and illegal content.



[X \(Twitter\)](#)



[Meta \(Facebook\)](#)



[Instagram](#)



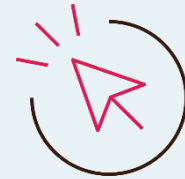
[TikTok](#)

What you need in order to report illegal content online

When reporting illegal content on the platform where you found it, you may need:



An explanation of the reasons why you believe the content is illegal



The location of the content, such as the exact URL(s)



Your name and email address



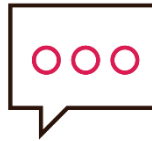
A statement confirming your honest belief that the information and allegations contained in the notice are accurate and complete

Please note that, depending on the platform, reporting illegal content may start from normal reporting procedures. However, as you deem the content illegal, a separate form may need to be used, whereby you will be required to give your email and the exact URL to the content which you deem illegal. These forms can vary across platforms.



Information on what you can complain about, and the complaints process, can be found here:

www.cnam.ie/onlinecomplaints/



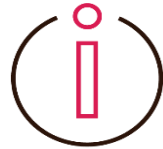
Support & Report – An initiative to provide election candidates with assistance during the election period. The aim is to encourage the reporting of this behaviour.



Email us: politicalrep@cnam.ie

We understand that time is of the essence during election periods. If you have a query, we will prioritise responses to the above email address.

Please note: While it is within Coimisiún na Meán's remit to assess if providers of an online service are doing what they are obliged to do under the Online Safety Framework, **it is not part of Coimisiún na Meán's remit to carry out a content moderation role**, to act as an appeal body from decisions of providers of online services in relation to illegal content, or to act as a judge in disputes between different parties or different users about illegal content. This also means **we cannot rapidly or directly remove content**, and the quickest way to have your issue addressed is by engaging with the platform itself. Our role is to ensure platforms have complaint mechanisms in place and are operating them diligently.



Support

Signposting to relevant resources:

- www.womenforelection.ie
- [National Cyber Security Centre](#)
- www.electoralcommission.ie/framework
- [European Commission: Guidelines](#)
- www.bemediasmart.ie
- www.factchecking.ie
- [Coimisiún na Meán infographic](#)



If you fear for your **immediate** safety, you should contact An Garda Síochána on 999 or 112



Report

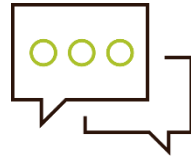
The reporting mechanism provides a structured process for candidates to report incidents of online threats and harassment.

Advice Centre: Available Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Email: politicalrep@cnam.ie.

The centre is staffed with people who can signpost relevant support services and structures for your needs.

An Garda Síochána can also utilise this email to inform Coimisiún na Meán of any incidents occurring during the election period.

What you can do/How you can help



If you're reporting illegal content, you will be asked to give an email address, so it is better if this comes from the individual affected, and not a third party.



Report harmful content to the platform. You can do this on behalf of your colleague.



Support your colleagues, listen to them and be there for them. Encourage them to contact An Garda Síochána, if appropriate. Look at your party's support pack, if you have one.



What you can do to help others online

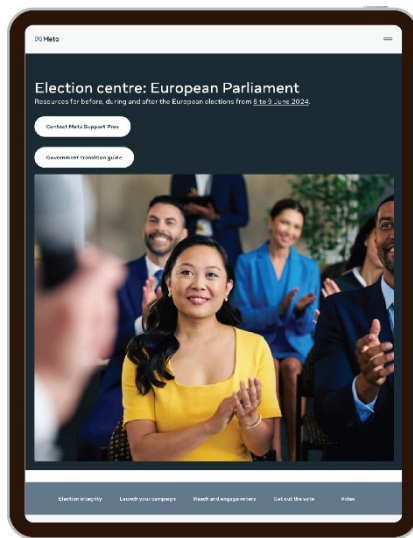
Coimisiún na Meán and An Garda Síochána recognise **that the election period is a busy time for candidates, and they are reminded that they can also report threats, harassment or any other potential criminal activity to An Garda Síochána post-election.** Securing and retaining evidence such as screen grabs, etc. is important in this regard.

Information should include:

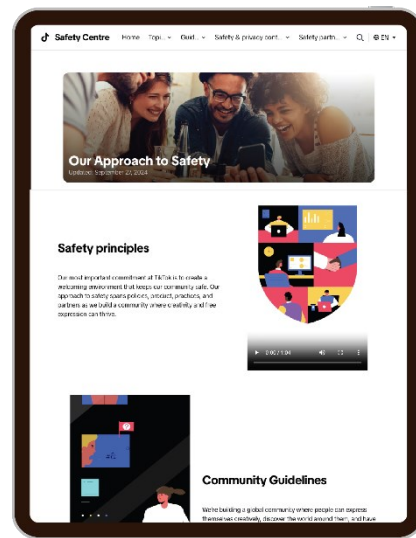
- the specific threats made
- their identities (if known)
- the time the threats were made
- the location of the content, such as the exact URL(s)
- relevant screenshots
- details of engagement with the platform(s).

Other supports for you

Available information and support for candidates around elections from platforms



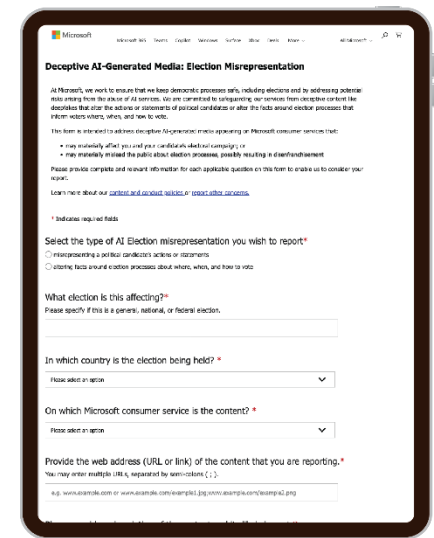
Support hub on [Meta](#)
(Facebook/Instagram -
Contact: Meta Support Pro)



Election integrity
on [TikTok](#)



Policies for election
misinformation
on [YouTube](#)



To report deceptive AI-
generated media
affecting your election
campaign on [Bing](#)

Appendix

What is Ireland's Online Safety Framework?

The Online Safety Framework

Digital Services Act (DSA)

EU regulation that aims to build a safe, fair and trusted online environment

By law, platforms must:

- have easy to use and easy to find reporting mechanisms (including providing the decision made on the content reported)
- set out in their terms and conditions how their algorithms work
- clearly label advertisements

Larger platforms must carry out external audits on risk mitigation measures (e.g. how they are working to ensure their platforms are safe).

Online Safety and Media Regulation Act (OSMR)

Online Safety Code (OSC)

Irish code that applies to providers of video-sharing platform services (VSPs) based in Ireland.

VSPs must state in their terms and conditions that illegal and harmful content is not allowed.

VSPs must allow users to report content and tell them how they acted on their report (e.g. removing the content).

VSPs are obliged (as appropriate):

- to have effective media literacy measures and tools
- to raise users' awareness of those measures and tools.

Terrorist Content Online Regulation (TCOR)

EU regulation that aims to stop the sharing of terrorist content online and allows for its speedy removal from platforms.

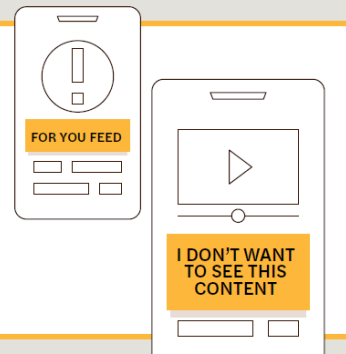
Terrorist content includes the promotion, glorification and encouragement of terrorist activity, as well as calls to action for others to engage in such acts.

As the competent authority in Ireland under the Regulation, An Garda Síochána is the only organisation that can force a platform to remove terrorist content. The platform has one hour to remove the content when An Garda Síochána issue a notice.

Your Rights under the Online Safety Framework

Your Rights under the Online Safety Framework

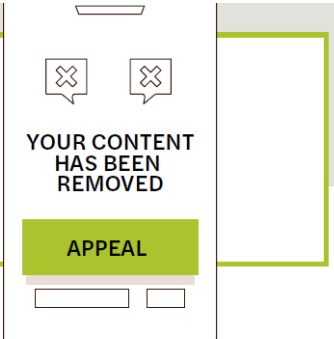
The right to be protected from harm
The way online platforms use recommender systems ('for you' feeds) must be set out in their Terms and Conditions.
Users should be easily able to modify or select their preferred options and have more control over what they see in their feed.



The right to report
It is important to report harmful and illegal content to the platform where you saw it first.
There should be an easy to find and easy to use reporting mechanism.



The right to express yourself
If a platform removes your content, you have the right to know why and the right to appeal this decision.



How to help improve the internet for everyone

Spot It, Flag It, Stop It

Your voice and participation can make the internet a better place.

 SPOT IT	See illegal content online?
 FLAG IT	You should always report it to the online platform where you saw it.
 STOP IT	Online platforms must remove illegal content.

Coimisiún na Meán's public awareness campaign, *Spot It, Flag It, Stop It*.



Play your part – report illegal and harmful content to the platforms!



If you're not sure how to report, get in touch with Coimisiún na Meán's advice centre at politicalrep@cnam.ie



If you have a problem online, always report the issue to the platform first.



The more queries and information Coimisiún na Meán receive from the public, the better it can do its job of making sure the platforms are following the rules.



Coimisiún
na Meán

www.cnam.ie