

11 April 2018

Minister for Justice Mr. Morgan Johansson  
Minister for Housing and Digital Development Mr. Peter Eriksson  
Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation/Ministry of Justice  
SE 103 33 Stockholm

Dear Mr. Johansson,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in a stakeholder dialogue on tackling illegal and harmful content online. To assist preparations for the session on Friday, I wanted to share some details about our approach to tackling such content and to outline our plans going forward.

I understand that the focus of Friday's meeting will be on social media, and so this letter will reflect that. At the meeting we will also endeavour to address any questions raised about the full scope of Google services, and can commit to following up afterwards where necessary.

YouTube is an open platform founded on core values around free expression and access to information. Values which importance does not need to be pointed out in the country with the world's oldest press act. YouTube presents huge opportunities, enabling people to find, create and share information and we are very fortunate to have a vibrant community of Swedish creators and broadcasters on our platform.

Globally, more than one and a half billion people come to YouTube every month, and we see well over 400 hours of video uploaded every minute. We value this openness. It has democratized how stories, and whose stories get told.

In standing up for free expression, people may express or encounter controversial views that others may profoundly disagree with. But it does not mean that anything is allowed to be on YouTube. For Sweden, material on YouTube that violates Swedish law will be removed when we are notified through our legal reporting tools. In addition, YouTube has policies, known as Community Guidelines, which govern what content is allowed on the platform, and in some areas these are stricter than what is required by Swedish law.

In Sweden in recent weeks, we have faced difficult questions about specific channels and activity on YouTube. These included some challenging cases, involving difficult decisions about the line between free expression and harmful content. We assess such situations thoughtfully, reviewing all information that is flagged to us. Where we've found breaches of Swedish law or our policies we have taken action.

The questions raised in Sweden have arisen in other countries. To address this, over the last year, we have intensified our approach to tackling abuse, and to ensure that we have the right policies, people and systems in place to tackle harmful content. Specifically, we have worked to:



- **Address illegal hate speech:** YouTube was an original signatory to the EU Code of Conduct on Illegal Hate Speech, a co-regulatory approach from industry, NGOs, and government to address illegal online hate speech. In its most recent assessment, the EU Commission commended the progress of industry in reviewing and removing notified content.
- **Bring more people to take action on more content:** We plan to bring the total number of people across Google and YouTube working to address content to over 10,000 in 2018. This includes engineers and reviewers who work around the world, 24/7 - including EMEA-based, Swedish-language reviewers.
- **Expand our network of experts:** We are expanding the network of academics, NGOs, and subject-matter experts who we can learn from and support to help us better understand emerging issues. We now have over 100 NGOs in our Trusted Flagger Program, including in Sweden, and have equipped them with a special bulk-flagging tool to alert us to content that may violate our policies. In recent weeks we have reached out to additional NGOs in Sweden that can better help us identify harmful content and new trends.
- **Bringing technology up to the challenge:** In addition to our in-house and outside experts, we have invested in cutting-edge machine learning to allow us to quickly and efficiently remove content that violates our guidelines. Since June, our teams have manually reviewed nearly two million videos for violent extremist content, helping train our machine-learning technology to identify similar videos in the future. Our machine learning tools have helped our human reviewers remove nearly five times as many videos than they were previously, and since June we have removed over 160,000 videos for violent extremism. Because we have seen these positive results, we have begun training machine-learning technology across other challenging content areas, including child safety and hate speech.
- **Greater transparency:** We will soon be releasing a Transparency Report to provide more aggregate data about the flags we receive on YouTube and the actions we take to remove videos and comments that violate our content policies. We are also developing additional tools to help bring even more transparency around flagged content.
- **Working together to counter terrorism:** Google serves as the Chair of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism, an industry-led group that develops solutions to help thwart terrorists' use of our services. The Forum has built on the groundwork laid by the EU Internet Forum, expanding the shared industry hash database and working with smaller tech companies. The database now contains more than 50,000 hashes, or "digital fingerprints" of terrorist content that is shared with participating companies, and we have engaged over 65 companies through workshops around the globe.

In conclusion, I trust that this information will be helpful to you and will serve to underline our firm commitment to tackling illegal and harmful content. Given the nature of our upcoming meeting we will

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not be able to disclose details around recent specific cases  
on YouTube. However we remain available for discussing that in a private meeting with government  
representatives.

I look forward to discussing these issues further on Friday.

Sincerely,

Ben McOwen Wilson  
Director of YouTube, Europe, Middle East, and Africa