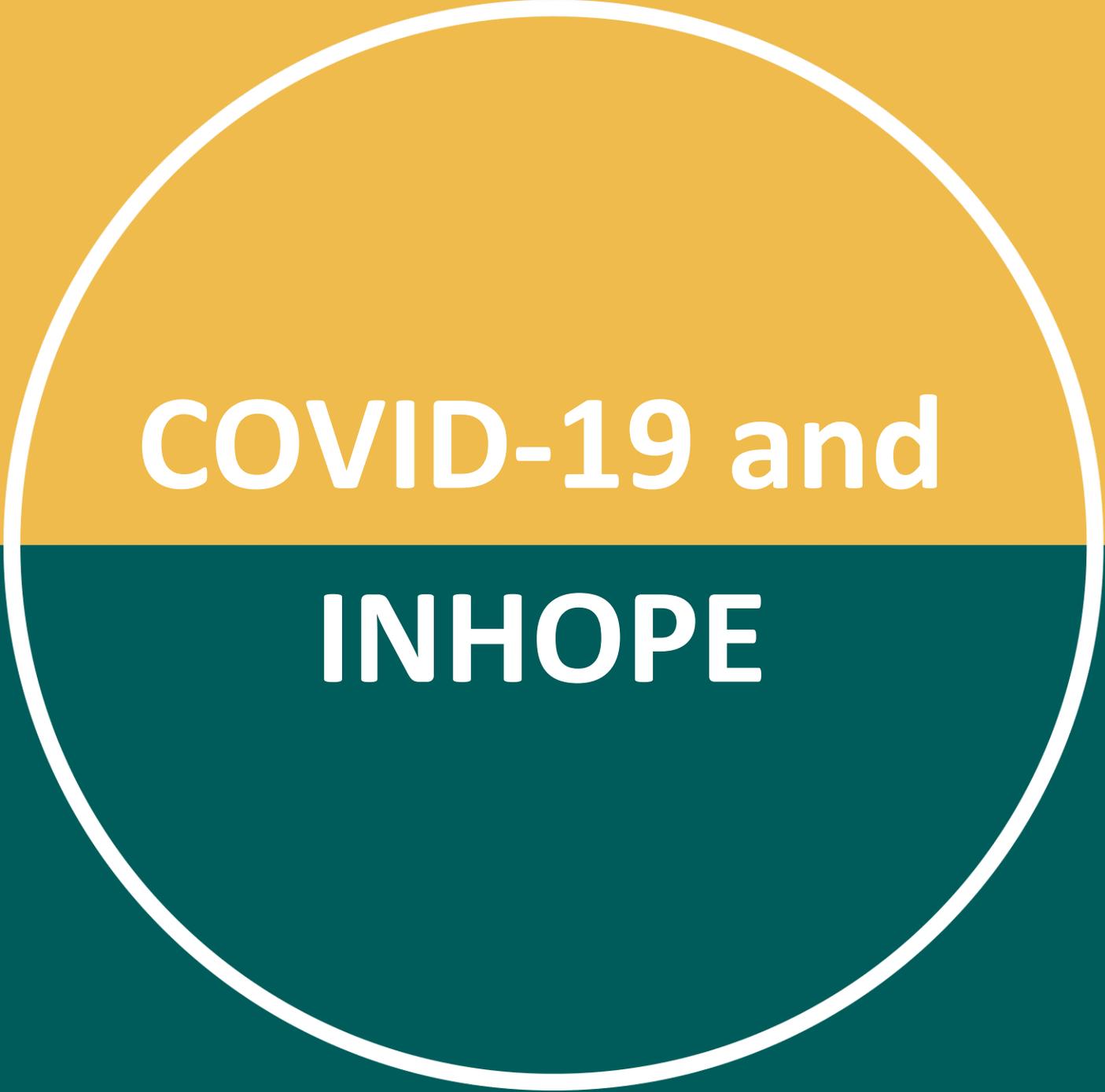

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COVID-19 and INHOPE

COVID-19 and INHOPE member hotlines

The status of INHOPE member hotlines' operation during the Coronavirus pandemic

Strong and resilient, INHOPE member hotlines have continued the fight against child sexual abuse material (CSAM) online during the Coronavirus pandemic. Like many other sectors however, COVID 19 has had a significant impact on the work of hotlines. To classify illegal material and send the URLs to law enforcement or a hosting provider, hotlines have agreements with national authorities to allow them to review CSAM reports. To do this in a safe and secure manner, each hotline must have a secure area, available only to authorised staff. Illegal material can then only be reviewed through a computer with specific technical and physical security protocols in place. So, what do you do when you can't easily access hotline buildings due to a worldwide pandemic?

Continued operation of hotlines

The majority of member hotlines managed to remain fully operational despite severe limitations. When put to the test, they proved to be agile and resilient, finding innovative solutions to ensure that reports were processed.

For example, many hotlines created teams or shift patterns to regulate the number of people in the office at any one time. Also, travel restrictions imposed by lockdown in many countries required hotline analysts to have permission to travel to work as "essential workers". One such example of this was the Irish hotline – Hotline.ie – which received this permission via a formal recognition from the Ministry of Justice and Equality. The formal recognition by authorities that hotline analysts are registered as a vital profession demonstrates their understanding of the importance of combating online CSAM and protecting potential victims of child sexual abuse.

Staff welfare

INHOPE member hotline analysts have an extremely traumatic and challenging job. Thus, staff welfare is always a high priority but this became even more important when normal working routines and environments had to change. To minimise the long-term detrimental impact to hotline staff, alternative staff welfare measures were introduced by hotlines at short notice. Dyzurnet.pl, the Polish hotline organised structured office duties meaning no one could process CSAM reports from home. They also introduced daily staff calls which were found to be very helpful. Similarly, Cyber Report in Australia, required each team member to develop a self-care plan for both home and work duties. This included proactively engaging in a wide variety of activities such as online gaming, exercising, studying and reading, and an equal amount of bingeing on food and television! They found these beneficial in ensuring the stresses of life and work did not impact staff wellbeing or morale.

As lockdown continues in many countries, staff welfare remains a huge priority for all.

Additional services

During this pandemic, INHOPE member hotlines rose to the occasion and, alongside the usual services, many offered additional services too.

Many hotlines published articles and tips on their websites on a variety of Coronavirus-related topics. Several of these discussed the risks to children of increased time spent online, such as:

- Tips for parents from [Drossinternets](#) in Latvia and [Spletno Oko](#) in Slovenia.
- [Recognising and dealing with fear](#) from Telefono Azzurro in Italy.
- [The increased risks of sexual abuse during COVID-19](#) by Red Barnet in Denmark.
- A [list of offers and advice centres](#) published by jugendschutz.net in Germany.
- Blogs sharing resources by [Ora de Net](#) in Romania.

Beyond Europe, a wider net was thrown by the [eSafety Commissioner](#) in Australia and [Netsafe](#) in New Zealand who offered online safety tips targeted at different age groups and demographics. In South Africa, as well as protecting against risks online, the Film & Publications Board produced an [educational video](#) on how to protect yourself from contracting the virus.

Alongside these publications, many hotlines across the globe also strengthened their services:

- SafeLine Greece began processing reports of fake news circulating misinformation regarding Coronavirus.
- Safernet Brazil extended the number of places available in their [new distance learning course "Educating for Good Choices Online"](#).
- NCMEC in the US ran a social media campaign highlighting its ongoing commitment to be a lifeline for families facing the crisis of a missing or sexually exploited child during the global disruption caused by COVID-19.
- IWF in the UK brought forward the release date of its podcast series [Pixels from a Crime Scene](#) to serve as a mitigating force against the fears that children and predators alike would be spending more time on the internet.

INHOPE is very proud of the network and how, collectively, hotlines have reacted in playing their part in helping society get through this pandemic safely.

INHOPE – a coordinated approach

This period has also shown the strength of the INHOPE approach to tackling CSAM as a network of hotlines, using the EC-funded ICCAM technology platform to securely exchange CSAM reports.

At the start of the pandemic, INHOPE coordinated the activities of hotlines via a real-time shared Hotline Operational Sheet where members could update live what their situation was, allowing all members to see the status of every other member. This, for example, allowed NCMEC to inform the network that they could not classify reports. Analysts in hotlines in Europe, Asia, Africa and Oceania were then able to pick up the additional workload and ensure that notice and takedown times were impacted as little as possible.

INHOPE also launched a communications campaign, "#ReportIt", during COVID-19. The campaign aimed to increase the awareness of the public for the possibility to report CSAM to INHOPE hotlines. The campaign garnered over 22,000 engagements (likes/shares/comments), almost 150,000 video views, and reached over 3.8 million people.

Find out more about the work of INHOPE and its member hotlines at www.inhope.org.