



Summary of the responses to CLOSED AHQ on use of social media (OSINT) in processing claims in connection with asylum applications

Requested by NO EMN NCP on 23rd September 2016

Responses were received from Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Slovak Republic, Sweden, United Kingdom and Norway.

Disclaimer: The responses were provided primarily for the purpose of information exchange among EMN NCPs in the framework of the EMN. The contributing EMN NCPs did provide, to the best of their knowledge, information that was up-to-date, objective and reliable. Note, however, that the information provided did not necessarily represent the official policy of the EMN NCPs' Member State.

Background information:

The *Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)* is in the process of exploring possibilities of establishing a system of social media checks in connection with the processing asylum claims, but also in connection with other forms of applications for residence permits. This EMN AHQ will help us to map MS practices and experience in this regard and to establish whether any MS is interested in taking part in a common effort based on best practices. The AHQ asked for contact information and for that reason only a compilation for restricted distribution has been prepared.

Summary of responses:

1. Six responses signalled that the MS has developed a system for checking social media profiles, and another nine responses signalled that social media profiles might be checked sporadically. *Facebook* was mentioned most frequently, but several other sources were also listed in one or more responses. 2014 (by one response) and 2016 (by two responses) were given as the year when such checking was undertaken for the first time.
2. Among the MS that do check social media the response from three signalled that this would happen on a daily basis/always, while four signalled that this would happen once-a-week/frequently. For the rest such checking would be more sporadically.

3. The responses indicated that sporadic social media searches would be triggered by information provided by the applicant or police investigation, in order to verify or supplement country of origin information, the applicant's identity, motives for applying for protection, credibility, or because of security concerns.
4. Asylum applications were mentioned in a few responses as a type of case where the MS would most frequently make use of social media checks, and one response indicated that media in Arabic and Turkish were monitored most systematically.
5. The nature of the information (or type of profiles) which were most frequently sought is indicated by the reasons that triggered the search, cf. 3. above.
6. As indicated under 1. above *Facebook* was indicated most frequently as the type of site searched, but a list of other was provided in at least one response.
7. None of the responses signalled that there had been a systematic evaluation of the reliability and/or validity of the information gained from searching social media, but several responses signalled that this information would not in itself have evidential value.
8. In 13 of the responses it was signalled that the responding MS would be interested in participating in a cooperative effort to establish best and enhanced practices for using and checking social media data the casework.