

## Statement from Iain Drennan, Executive Director, WePROTECT Global Alliance

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It is disappointing and concerning that the Trilogue between the European Parliament, Commission and Council last week failed to result in an agreement clearly allowing the continued use of digital tools to identify, report and remove child sexual exploitation and abuse online before the Electronic Communications Code came into force yesterday (20 December).

If consensus cannot be found to allow these tools to continue, we could lose the ability to use effective automated detection to identify known child abuse material, to flag child grooming attempts and ongoing sexual abuse of children, and identify offenders. With Europe already a global epicentre for hosting child sexual abuse material, this would leave children all over the world more vulnerable to online-facilitated sexual abuse. Law enforcement and child protection agencies would effectively be left in the dark without key, proven methods that help to identify millions of incidents of child sexual abuse each year.

We welcome the commitment that some tech companies have already made to continue proactively doing everything in their power to identify and respond to child sexual exploitation and abuse on their platforms. It's important to note that tech companies have designed these tools voluntarily, recognising the need to do more to protect children online. It is imperative that the tools are not simply allowed to lapse, with no agreed replacement in place. The private sector has a key role to play alongside governments, civil society and international institutions in addressing child sexual abuse and exploitation online: no single entity can tackle this problem alone.

We urge the European Parliament, Commission and Council to swiftly agree a way forward, enabling technology companies to continue to use these important tools until a sustainable, long-term solution is reached.