

Children's internet safety in a social media age with the focus on sexual assault

ABSTRACT

The thesis focuses on Internet sexual predatory crimes against children. It contains not only the theoretical aspects related to this issue, but also presents the related effective legislation, presents conclusions obtained from personal research and suggests possible partial changes.

Sexual abuse of children in cyberspace in the form of cyber grooming is becoming a more current social issue every day. With the development of the Internet and social networks and the frequency of their use is growing at an uncontrolled rate by the day. Its effects can be severe for child's present and future life. It should therefore be given sufficient attention, both by the existing legal regulations and the tools available to detect and investigate it, and by the children themselves and their parents.

In view of the social harmfulness of cyber grooming, there was a need to regulate this problem within the European Union. As a result, the criminal offence of making unlawful contact with a child was introduced into the Criminal Code with effect from 1 August 2014, with the aim of punishing the preparation of sexual offences, where the preparation is not in itself punishable. Even though many years have passed since its enactment, there are still application problems in relation to this offence in practice.

The thesis is systematically divided into five parts. The first part describes cyber grooming itself, its perpetrators, victims, and the social networks and other chat platforms through which cyber grooming is perpetrated. The second and third part provide selected aspects of the substantive and procedural law relating to online sexual abuse in a predatory way against children. The fourth part presents the conclusions of own research based on 155 decisions of courts of first instance., especially in relation to the offence of making unlawful contact with a child. The last part of the thesis then evaluates the (in)sufficiency of the set legal regulation and selected aspects of the technical security of the Internet and social networks and suggests some partial changes and possible solutions.

The aim of this thesis is to bring the reader closer to the issue of cyber grooming as an existing social problem. To describe whether this problem is regulated and affected by *de lege lata* legal norms, and if so, to what extent. In addition, to present the real occurrence of cyber grooming through made research and to highlight the problem areas. Finally, the thesis aims in some respects to offer appropriate *de lege ferenda* regulations as well as suggestions for possible societal solutions.

Key words

cyber grooming – online grooming – sexual predator – safety of children