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### Malta Communications Authority Awards Trusted Flagger Status to the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS)

The Malta Communications Authority (MCA), in its capacity as the Digital Services Coordinator (DSC), announces the official designation of the Foundation for Social Welfare Services (FSWS) as a Trusted Flagger under Article 22 of the Digital Services Act (DSA). This status recognises FSWS's consistent efforts in detecting and reporting online content that endangers minors, including material related to child sexual abuse.

Jesmond Bugeja, MCA's Chief Executive Officer, stated: "Online safety requires proactive action. The designation of FSWS as a Trusted Flagger under the Digital Services Act strengthens Malta's commitment to protecting minors and vulnerable users from harmful content. Platforms must take their responsibility seriously, and the MCA will continue pushing for stronger safeguards to uphold digital well-being."

The **Digital Services Act (DSA)** is a European Union legislative framework that establishes responsibilities for online intermediaries and platforms to enhance user safety and transparency, particularly in addressing illegal online content. Under the DSA, trusted flaggers play a crucial role in detecting potentially illegal content and alerting online platforms. Being designated as a Trusted Flagger provides the FSWS with prioritised access to major social media platforms when reporting illegal content, ensuring that harmful material, particularly content related to child protection, is reviewed and removed more efficiently.

#### FSWS and Its Role in Online Child Protection

The FSWS plays a central role in Malta's social welfare landscape, addressing various aspects of community well-being, including child protection. As part of its commitment to online safety, the FSWS coordinates the **BeSmartOnline!** project, a national initiative aimed at promoting internet

safety among children and teenagers. BeSmartOnline! is part of the INSAFE and INHOPE networks, dedicated to safer internet centres and hotlines across Europe.

The project is a collaborative effort involving multiple partners, including the Directorate for Learning and Assessment Programmes (DLAP), the Office of the Commissioner for Children, and the Malta Police Force – Cyber Crime Unit. Supporting organisations such as the University of Malta, the Foundation for Educational Services (FES), and the Secretariat for Catholic Education also contribute to raising awareness and educating stakeholders about safe internet practices.

Alfred Grixti, FSWS's Chief Executive Officer, remarked, "The Foundation for Social Welfare Services has taken another important step in its mission as the Safer Internet Centre for Malta. Our mission has always been and remains to protect children and adolescents from all forms of abuse, both in real life and in the digital space."

As part of its online protection initiatives, the FSWS operates the **Child Web Alert Hotline**, a secure and confidential platform for the public to anonymously report websites hosting content related to online child abuse. Reports submitted through [www.childwebalert.gov.mt](http://www.childwebalert.gov.mt) are handled in collaboration with law enforcement agencies to investigate and remove harmful content.

### **MCA's Role as the Digital Services Coordinator**

The Malta Communications Authority (MCA) is Malta's national regulatory authority responsible for the electronic communications, postal, and eCommerce sectors. As the Digital Services Coordinator, the MCA enforces the DSA regulation in Malta and is a member of the European Board for Digital Services, contributing to coordination and implementation at the EU level.

Beyond its role in DSA enforcement, the MCA is also responsible for promoting competition, safeguarding consumer interests, and ensuring a secure and reliable digital ecosystem in Malta. The authority plays a key role in digital policy development, spectrum management, and the facilitation of emerging technologies to enhance Malta's digital economy. Through various initiatives, MCA supports digital literacy, cybersecurity awareness, and the development of eCommerce and digital services in the country.