



Counter

NEWSLETTER

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the Christmas edition of the [Counter Project's](#) Newsletter!

Issue #4 will present information about our latest [consortium](#) meeting, hosted by [MITLA](#) and [ICON](#) in Malta. On that occasion, the “Special Interview” rubric will feature MITLA's [Dr. Michael Zammit Maempel](#), who speaks about the steps, leading to developing a protection strategy for Counter's intellectual property rights (IPRs). This newsletter

will also provide updates by [CINI](#), [IMG](#) and [EI](#) on how Counter was presented to various audiences in Italy and Bulgaria and how the project team engaged with industry stakeholders and media professionals in these countries. Notably, on its front page, Issue #4 features a special Christmas greeting by Counter's Project Coordinator, Cătălin Trufin ([AST](#)).

Enjoy the newsletter's full content and send us your [feedback](#) – we welcome readers' suggestions for Issue #5, which is due to be released in the last days of 2022, as well as your ideas about the content of the new editions, planned for 2023.

IN FOCUS: COUNTER'S AUTUMN TECHNICAL MEETING IN MALTA

On September 28-29, 2022, Counter's third technical meeting took place in Valetta, Malta. Hosted by MITLA and ICON, the consortium meeting provided an opportunity for the partners to review the status of the work with a focus on current and upcoming tasks and deliverables. Mirroring the format of the second technical meeting, held in Paris in June, the presentations and updates by partners were organised per work package (WP).

[UCSC](#) representatives briefed the group about the analysis of radicalisation ecosystems both online and offline and the radicalisation taxonomy and ontology, part of WP2/Social and Psychological

Factors in the Radicalization Process. [CINI](#) partners provided an overview of the collection of open and dark and deep web data – a key component of WP3/Data Acquisition and Management; while [INRIA](#), [IMG](#), and [ELTE](#) focused on WP4/Data Analytics for Detecting Radical Content's data understanding and preparation, the basic features and transfer learning regarding the NLP analysis, and image and social networks analyses. In terms of WP5/Data Modelling Ecosystem, [ELTE](#), [INS](#) and [IMG](#) provided an overview of progress on the tasks – in particular, semantic reasoning and insight correlation engine, deep reinforcement learning, (continues on p. 5)

IMG and EI engaged Bulgarian fact-checkers on the role of AI in detecting radical content online, p. 2

Counter attended the ITADATA2022 Conference in Italy, p. 3

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Dr. Michael Zammit Maempel: “MITLA will guide Counter's partners on key legal aspects, related to project's workings”, p. 6

A Word by the Project Coordinator



Dear Readers,

With the approach of the winter holidays of 2022, I would like to extend my warmest Christmas greetings to all of you and your families. We at the Counter Project wish to keep

and further expand this fruitful and active relation with stakeholders from across the ecosystem throughout the New Year 2023. Let me use the opportunity to provide our readers with a brief progress update.

The Counter project has made great progress by the time it has reached the halfway point of its lifespan. The strong and consistent consortium has reached significant milestones and we currently are preparing to release the first version of the Counter platform.

The proposed solution is the result of a close collaboration between academia, data science specialists, software developers, ISPs, law enforcement agencies, and ethical and legal consultants. Social and psychological factors of radicalisation were thoroughly examined, and extensive social network analysis and image analysis were performed, to ensure that the project will produce a valuable comprehensive tool that also complies with ethics requirements and GDPR regulations.

Since its launch, the project has been actively promoted not only in the online environment, but also at a series of events and technology and security fairs, organised across Europe. The latest and most interesting examples are presented in the current issue of our newsletter – a powerful communication and dissemination tool that brings Counter's team closer to all those interested in countering radicalisation across borders.

Once again, happy winter holidays and Merry Christmas!

Sincerely,

Cătălin Trufin (AST)
Project Coordinator


Counter Partners' Updates

In September, the [Counter Project](#) attended the [IMPROVATE](#) South East Europe Defence and Cyber Conference, held in Sofia/Bulgaria. [EI](#) and [IMG](#) representatives participated in this high-level event, attended by AI experts in the fields of defence and cybersecurity, as well as leading political, government, industry, CSO, academia, and diplomatic community representatives from NATO, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Israel, Greece, Bosnia, Montenegro, Romania, and Albania – including former world chess champion and AI expert [Garry Kasparov](#).



The conference featured panel discussions on the impact of the Ukraine war on future weapons' development, global lessons from the Ukraine-Russia war, and cyber warfare in future conflicts. For Counter, IMPROVATE was an opportunity to foster insightful professional connections and contacts, interact with potential partners, and foster innovation.

"Always happy to discuss our potential with pioneering computer vision tech in countering radicalisation and eliminating online threats", IMG's Georgi Kostadinov [commented](#).


For more details about the event, find [here](#) our news article's full text. 



In September, CounterR was presented to the Italian Conference on Big Data and Data Science – [IT-ADATA2022](#), held in Milan, Italy. This is the new annual event, supported by the Big Data National Laboratory of [CINI](#). The conference aims at putting together researchers and professionals from academia, industry and government working in the field of big data, data science, security and privacy,



plemented the solution, presented for ingestion and analytics and how the project team intends to proceed with its research.

“CounterR provided a very concrete example of how some of the most challenging research topics that are of interest to the CINI Big Data Laboratory can be applied in a concrete and challenging environment – for instance, architectures and procedures for data ingestion from heterogeneous data sources, or advanced analytics for radicalisation detection. It was very interesting to see our research applied in such an important context”, Chiara Braghin – Assistant Professor at UNIMI in Milan, commented. 

In October, [IMG](#) and [EI](#) experts presented the CounterR solution to journalists and fact-checkers, working for Bulgaria’s largest and most trusted public broadcaster – the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR).

Together with other international experts, EI and IMG representatives provided the fact-checkers with a state-of-the-art training on utilising digital tools and platforms for checking facts more effectively, analysing content and images, monitoring the disinformation ecosystem, discovering the linkages between websites that disseminate misleading information and the mechanisms through which disinformation works on social media.

The experts briefed the participants about IMG and EI’s joint work as part of the CounterR consortium, the project goals, and the expected results. The group demonstrated a high interest in the role of AI in detecting radical content online and in the tools for curbing vulnerable audiences from being exposed to radicalisation online. “The more

HPC and advanced application verticals.


In this year’s edition, specific sections were dedicated to past and current projects, in which CINI participates as coordinator or as partner. The objective was to disseminate scientific achievements and to hear back from the ITADATA community, reflecting on future proposal opportunities. The audience included academics and industrial researchers, who discussed how their research can be applied in concrete innovative projects looked for possible collaborations and synergies.

CounterR was presented by [UNIMI](#) in terms of its generic goals, challenges and objectives and by [UNIBA](#) in terms of its scientific achievements in the area of social media analysis. The participants were interested in learning how CounterR has im-




people are aware of the existence of such content and the methodologies to spot them, the less impact disinformation and misinformation online will have”, IMG’s Georgi Kostadinov [commented](#). As a next step, in November, BNR’s fact-checkers [sought](#) again Mr. Kostadinov’s expertise while implementing a specific fact-check piece: an OSI-NT investigation that debunks the rumour that the IPRs of Bulgaria’s national anthem have been “sold” by previous governments.

introduce the CounterR project's goals, objectives, expected results, and consortium partners.

The attendees discussed the threats of online radicalisation of vulnerable groups, particularly youth and unemployed individuals with low levels of education and income, living in remote areas. The EI representative talked about the role of AI in detecting radical content online from social media and briefed the audience of the CounterR Project's [publications](#) and [activities](#) in this domain. 



For more details about the event, find [here](#) our news article’s full text. 

In December, EI’s representative Dr. Borislav Mavrov introduced the CounterR Project to communications professionals and civil society activists from two Bulgarian regions – Dupnitsa (SW) and Varna (E).

During a live-broadcast event, [entitled](#) “The EU Themes in Bulgarian Media – Regaining the Audience's Trust”, Dr. Mavrov took the opportunity to

IN FOCUS

CounterR's Autumn Technical Meeting in Malta


(from p.1) and network algorithms for automated removal of illicit content.

Regarding WP6/Backend, Frontend and Infrastructure. AST presented the technical details of each service, related to integration, including a demo of the current CounterR flow, a presentation of the cloud, and the on-premise deployment specifications. Next, [ETI](#) and MITLA briefed the group about progress on WP7/Data Privacy and Ethics Requirements with an overview of data minimization and pseudonymisation in the CounterR system.

The following module included updates by [NOVA](#) and INS on WP8/End-User Training and Knowledge Empowerment and Pilots – details about the methodology, roadmap and end-user contributions were provided. Consortium members discussed the training content and the calendar of training sessions and field demonstrations.

The meeting's conclusive segment, dedicated to WP9/Dissemination, Ecosystem Development and Exploitation, included an overview by MITLA and EI on the IPR management and strategic IP protection, as well as the upcoming joint task for developing CounterR's business exploitation plan.



“Together with ICON, MITLA proudly hosted this meeting. This is one of the many EC H2020-funded projects in which MITLA participates contributes successfully. MITLA looks forward to offer more participation opportunities in such projects to all its members”, Dr. Antonio Ghio, President of MITLA, [commented](#). Notably, the meeting was featured by the Malta Council for Science & Technology ([MCST](#)): the country's state agency responsible for the promotion and management of Malta's EU funds, related to research and development. 



SPECIAL INTERVIEW

Dr. Michael Zammit Maempel: “MITLA Will Guide CounteR's Partners on Key Legal Aspects, Related to Project's Workings”

The Malta IT Law Association – [MITLA](#) – which leads all the aspects, related to CounteR's intellectual property rights (IPR), co-hosted the third consortium meeting in September. On that occasion, our newsletter presents a special interview with MITLA's project manager Dr. Michael Zammit Maempel.

Dr. Maempel, what are MITLA's specific roles in, and contributions for, the CounteR Project within the consortium?

In simple terms, MITLA's role on the CounteR Project is to research the legal areas into which the project will venture. These are primarily related to the fundamental right to privacy of the individual, especially as expressed in the General Data Protection Regulation. MITLA will also be contributing to those aspects that involve intellectual property. Overall, MITLA will be guiding the partners on the key legal issues that affect the workings of the project to ensure that it is legally compliant at all times.

What are the key outcomes of the discussions with relevant project partners, initiated by MITLA, for the identification of intellectual property assets developed within the project?

The project is roughly in its middle, which means that the exciting times when things start to come togeth-

er and the intellectual property issues are examined are about to start. In this sense, MITLA will firstly be educating the project partners on what their respective rights are, and what third party rights they need to watch out for; and, secondly, will be compiling a full registry of IP rights that have been used or created in the project. This registry will then form one of the bases on which the commercial exploitation of the project can be assessed and mapped out.

What are the planned steps ahead for designing an IPR protection strategy?

Once the collection of the raw information from all the partners is complete, it will be possible to assess whether there is any basis in hand for the registration of any trademarks, designs, or patents. Since copyright is not registrable, those elements of the project that are subject to copyright will be highlighted either as challenges or opportunities.

MITLA and ICON hosted CounteR's [consortium meeting](#) in September in Malta. What are your key takeaways from the interaction with the project partners?

Due to the pandemic, face-to-face meetings could not occur during the project's first year, and the Malta meeting was only the second in-person meeting in the course of the project. This gathering highlighted how direct communication is often more effective



[Dr. Michael Zammit Maempel](#) Michael is a graduate of the University of Malta and Queen Mary University of London, with specialist degrees in Computers and Communications Law. He has been a practising lawyer for 21 years and a MITLA member since its earliest days, and also a member of its Executive Committee.

In 2017, Dr. Maempel took on the role of Project Manager for the first EU Horizon 2020 project taken on by MITLA, a role which he carries to this day. In this respect, he coordinates the work carried out by MITLA's team of researchers, all of whom are members of the organisation.

than virtual meetings and how – despite our love for technology – human interaction is always stronger and more impactful than its digital counterpart.

What experience does MITLA have so far with EU Horizon 2020 projects?

Since 2017, MITLA has been a project partner on three Horizon 2020 projects, including CounteR, and all of which have drawn on MITLA's knowledge and research skills in ICT law. The [RED Alert Project](#) had aims and objectives that were similar to those of CounteR, and was successfully completed in 2021. Meanwhile, MITLA is also working on the [BorderUAS Project](#) which aims at monitoring Europe's land borders by using lighter-than-air unassisted aerial vehicles equipped with sensors that can detect illegal human movement or activity across the densely-forested and often inaccessible terrain on the EU's Eastern frontier.



MALTA IT LAW ASSOCIATION

The Malta IT Law Association (MITLA) exists primarily to promote the advancement and development of information communications and technology law in Malta and the advancement of Malta as an international centre of excellence in ICT Law. To

this end, it actively researches, discusses and circulates information on legal developments taking place on the international plane and within the European Union with respect to ICT Law and the knowledge economy. For more information, see the "About Us" section on MITLA's website.

Stay Tuned to Newsletter's Issue #5!

Our next newsletter will focus on the law enforcement agencies (LEAs) that make part of the CounteR consortium. We will also present some of the most recent scientific publications, produced by the research and academic partners

CounteR Consortium



ASSIST Software SRL, Romania



ETICAS Research and Consulting,
Spain



INSIKT Intelligence, Spain



Elliniki Etairia Tilepoikinonion kai Tilematikon
Efarmogon A.E.-Forthnet S.A., Greece



Imagga Technologies Ltd., Bulgaria



Ministério da Justiça, Portugal



ICON Studios Ltd., Malta



Hochschule für den
öffentlichen Dienst
in Bayern
Fachbereich
Polizei

Hochschule für den öffentlichen
Dienst in Bayern, Germany



Consorzio Interuniversitario
Nazionale per l'Informatica, Italy



Institut national de Recherche en
Informatique et Automatique, France



State Police Latvia, Latvia



Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary

Valsts policija



Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Academia, Italy



Serviciul de Protecție și Pază,
Romania



Malta Information Technology Law
Association, Malta



National Police General Directorate
at the Ministry of Interior of the
Republic of Bulgaria



European Institute Foundation,
Bulgaria



Association les Militants du Savoir,
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France

YOUR COUNTER POINTS OF CONTACT ARE:

Mr. Catalin Trufin, Project Coordinator
ASSIST Software SRL
catalin.trufin@assist.ro

Mr. Borislav Mavrov, Dissemination manager
European Institute
bmavrov@europe.bg



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