CounteR

Editorial

Dear Readers,

Welcome to Issue #7 of CounteR's newsletter! The project team is proud to announce that, following our second piloting session in Sofia, the LEA partners successfully tested and validated the platform's second version. The system is now ready for its final release, as AST's Adrian Onu explains in a special interview for our newsletter. Issue #7 provides important insights about the CounteR platform – the cornerstone of our project, which helps LEAs in the fight against radicalisation through identifying and countering radical content online. At the end of the project, all readers will be offered the unique chance to attend an exclusive demonstration and personally experience the CounteR platform's final version: if you are interested, sign up through the QR code published in our newsletter.

Issue #7 will also bring us to Brussels, Rome and Milan, highlighting project activities and interactions with stakeholders from the security, research and law enforcement ecosystems. Enjoy the newsletter's full text below and do send us your feedback! You can subscribe to the newsletter through filling in your email address in the box, located in the left bottom corner of CounteR's homepage. Follow CounteR on Twitter and LinkedIn to make sure you stay up-to-date with exciting project updates as they happen.

Sincerely yours,

The Editorial Team from EI

IN FOCUS: "LEAs Can Use the CounteR Platform to Proactively Monitor Online Content for Signs of Radicalisation and Extremist Activity"

In an interview, Adrian Onu (AST) highlights the types of tasks that the CounteR Platform can perform, its functionalities, and technological advantages.

The CounteR platform provides a proactive and technology-driven approach to identifying and countering radical content and the spread of extremist ideologies online. From a technical perspective, what tasks can the CounteR platform perform?

The CounteR platform is designed to serve as an early-warning tool for the detection of potential radical content. Six most important tasks and functions that this platform can handle best describe its range of vital capabilities. First, this is the proactive content monitoring – the tool enables law-enforcement agencies (LEAs) to conduct constant monitoring of online content across a

---

ISSUE #7 HIGHLIGHTS

• The LEA Partners Successfully Validated the CounteR Platform's Second Version

(p. 2)

• CounteR Interacted with Stakeholders at the Security Research Event (SRE) in Brussels

(p. 3)

The LEA Partners Successfully Validated the CounteR Platform's Second Version

On September 26-28 2023, the consortium partners gathered in Sofia, Bulgaria, for CounteR's fifth technical meeting and second piloting session, co-hosted by EI and IMG. The three-day busy agenda allowed partners to assess and analyse past and current tasks, as well as to strategize in view of the upcoming deliverables under the various work packages (WPs).

The discussions touched upon the improvements added to the data collectors, image and social network analysis, semantic reasoning and insight

correlation for the engine's integration, deep reinforcement learning, and network algorithms for automated removal of illicit content. Based on lessons learned from the first pilot in Milan in June 2023, the project experts fine-tuned the evaluation approach for the second piloting session.

Next, the technical partners provided hands-on exercises and guided practice for participants from the

LEA sector to become familiar with the functionalities of the software tool. The latest test scenarios and datasets specifically designed to evaluate the tool's performance were introduced and explained. The LEA partners validated the tool's second ver-

sion and all issues that were found were recorded in order to improve the overall quality and feel of the platform. The system went through a stress-test after the representatives of the law-enforcement entities successfully uploaded the synthetic datasets.

The tests were mainly focused on the NLP analysis module, developed by INRIA. Furthermore, during the testing phase, INS and IMG discussed the appropriate ways to issue reports for image analysis in order to have a better and richer user feedback. This segment significantly contributed to improving the models for the next system releases.

By month 36, the partners will develop a consolidated business exploitation plan for marketing the CounteR solution. The knowledge and know-how outputs, generated within CounteR, are considered key aspects of exploitation and sustainability, since CounteR is creating new knowledge in not just the technological field, but also in social, legal, and policy aspects.

For more information about the meeting in Sofia, check the CounteR website publication.

CounteR Project's Migration to Open Telekom Cloud

At the heart of CounteR's principles are ethics and privacy, two critical factors in the world of digital technology. As an increasing number of individuals and organisations are recognising the importance of data privacy and ethical practices, CounteR is

committed to aligning its operations with these vital issues. This move to the Open Telekom Cloud is in direct response to these critical needs, enhancing our ability to maintain stringent ethical and privacy standards.

Cloud-based infrastructure is a vital part of CounteR's development and staging environments, allowing for flexible, secure, and efficient data management. A public cloud infrastructure, like the one offered by Open Telekom Cloud, provides additional benefits, such as cost-effectiveness, data sovereignty, compute power, customisable options and superior privacy control, aligning with our mission to prioritise data privacy.

EI and INRIA Attended PopAI Project's Final Event in Brussels

CounteR Project's consortium representatives from EI and INRIA attended the final event of one of CounteR's sibling projects – popAI, which took place on September 19, 2023, in Brussels.

The conference, entitled "Towards a European AI Hub for LEAs Supporting the Ethical Use of AI in Policing" gathered various stakeholders, including

members of the EU Security Research cluster on AI (SU-AI), sibling projects ALIGNER and STARLIGHT, as well as representatives of the security and research ecosystem. The event presented the popAI project results in terms of policy recommendations, multi-disciplinary best practices, and ethics toolbox for the ethical use of AI in civil security. On the agenda were several insightful multi-disciplinary panel discussions and presentations, in line with popAI's exploitation activities.

For more information about the event, check the PopAI website publication.

CounteR Interacted with Stakeholders at the Security Research Event (SRE) in Brussels

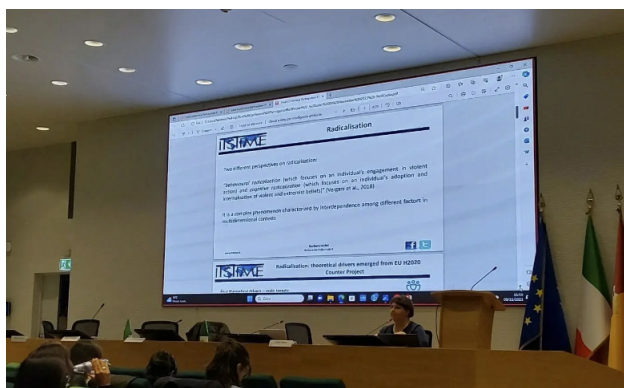On October 24-25, CounteR participated in the Security Research Event (SRE) – SRE2023 in Brussels, hosted by the European Commission's DG Home Affairs. SRE is the annual meeting of industry, governments, and knowledge institutions to discuss security in Europe. A number of EU-funded project were in attendance, namely through EU's Horizon Europe Programme and the Internal Security Fund.

CounteR was represented with a stand at the exhibition jointly with the INDEED project. Experts from AST and EI attended the event on behalf of the CounteR Consortium. "This was an opportunity to meet with colleagues from across the ecosystem and EU-funded sibling projects", EI's Apostol Apostolov from EI commented. "We were thrilled to attend the event's panels, which were very insightful; and we also had the change to disseminate CounteR's new brochure to interested stakeholders at our stand during the exhibition".

For more information about the SRE event, check the CounteR website publication.

CounteR Attended the Final Conference of PARTICIPATION

Prof. Marco Lombardi and Prof. Barbara Lucini from Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (UCSC) attended the final conference of PARTICIPATION: a sibling project of CounteR, also funded through the Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Programme.

PARTICIPATION aims at capturing and exploring contemporary experiences of extremism and radicalisation. Through more effective social and education policies and interventions, the project seeks prevent extremism, radicalisation and polarisation that can lead to violence.

Prof. Lucini and Prof. Lombardi were among the keynote speakers from academic institutions during a panel at the final conference, entitled "*Participatory approach to analysing and preventing radicalisation*". Its two main themes – conspiracy theories and radicalisation trends, and the role of civil society and institutions in preventing violent extremism – gathered a number of researchers, practitioners, NGO workers, institutional representatives, and other stakeholders.

For more information about the PARTICIPATION event, check the CounteR website publication.

IN FOCUS
ADRIAN ONU: "LEAS CAN USE THE COUNTER PLATFORM TO PROACTIVELY MONITOR ONLINE CONTENT FOR SIGNS OF RADICALISATION AND EXTREMIST ACTIVITY"

(from p. 1)

spectrum of platforms, encompassing social media, websites, and more. Presently, CounteR oversees online content on platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, and Telegram, as well as specific websites from the open web, deep web, dark web, and even manually uploaded content. Next, I would highlight the reactive mode – Internet service-providers (ISPs) can leverage this mode to moderate radical content. It provides a binary classification for the content that is uploaded, aiding in swift content moderation. The third aspect is of course the detection of radical content – the platform is adept at pinpointing potential signs of radicalisation, extremist ideologies, and hate speech within the content it monitors. In addition, it facilitates the analysis of multi-modal content — scrutinising radical images and videos and discerning connections between radical entities and their content. Another notable function is its ability to visualise

Social Network Analysis (SNA), granting insights into potentially radical communities and their members. Regarding reporting and analysis, CounteR produces comprehensive reports and analytics. This assists authorities and organisations in gauging trends, identifying emerging threats, and determining the efficacy of their counter-radicalisation measures. Furthermore, the platform encourages collaboration and information exchange among diverse stakeholders, paving the way for unified strategies to tackle radicalisation. As to ethics and privacy, CounteR's core runs an ethics and privacy engine that enables data protection and privacy controls. Last but not least, the user interface has an intuitive design: the platform provides stakeholders with efficient means to engage with the data and reports it generates.

What are the CounteR Platform's functionalities?

The tool offers six key functionalities: data collection; proactive content monitoring; detection of radical content; Thread Insights: correlation, SNA, and risky users; Collaboration, Reporting, Configuration; and Privacy Engine. Following the second piloting session, the LEA partners validated the tool's second version and all issues that were found were recorded in order to improve the overall quality and feel of the platform. The

system went through a stress test after the representatives of the law-enforcement entities successfully uploaded the synthetic datasets. Overall, the CounteR Platform will assist LEAs and other organisations in the fight against radicalisation and terrorism, serving as an early-warning tool for the detection of potential radical content. In addition, all this is very well summarised in the CounteR brochure, published on our website. Readers can see the complete information summarised concisely.

How does the platform work as a concept, and what are one or two most typical scenarios in which an LEA or ISP can use the platform?

The overall concept of the CounteR platform is to provide a proactive and technology-driven approach to identifying and countering radical content and the spread of extremist ideologies online, with the ultimate goal of preventing life-threatening terrorist attacks. LEAs and ISPs can use the CounteR platform in a variety of scenarios to enhance their counter-radicalization and threat prevention efforts.

One typical scenario in which they can use the platform is in the field of monitoring and early warning. LEAs can use the CounteR platform to proactively monitor online content for signs of radicalisation and extremist activity. For example, if they receive information about individuals or groups of concern, they can input relevant keywords, profiles, or indicators into the platform. The tool will continuously scan the internet and provide results when it detects content or behaviour associated with the specified threats. This allows LEAs to intervene early, investigate potential threats, and take preventive action to deter radicalization or terrorist activities.

Another typical scenario can be related to compliance and moderating: ISPs are often required to comply with legal and regulatory requirements related to the removal or reporting of illegal or extremist content on their platforms using the Reactive mode. The CounteR platform can assist ISPs

in identifying and flagging such content, helping them fulfil their legal obligations. ISPs can use the tool to automate content monitoring and reporting processes, streamlining their compliance efforts and ensuring that harmful content is promptly addressed.

These scenarios highlight the platform's versatility in supporting LEAs and ISPs in their efforts to counter radicalization and prevent life-threatening terrorist attacks. It provides a proactive and efficient means of identifying potential threats and managing compliance with relevant laws and regulations.

What are the features that make CounteR better than other similar products?

The following three key aspects best describe CounteR's benefits: first, Diverse Radicalisation Domain Detection: unlike many tools that may only focus on one form of extremism, CounteR distinguishes itself by its capability to detect content across a variety of radicalisation domains. This includes, but is not limited to, jihadism and far-right ideologies. This ensures a comprehensive and holistic approach to monitoring and combating radical content online. Second, Multilingual Content Detection: in an increasingly globalised world, the ability to monitor content in multiple languages is essential. CounteR stands out with its multilingual support, able to detect and analyse content published in a multiple of languages, such as English, French, Arabic, Latvian, German, Romanian, Bulgarian, Greek, and Portuguese. More languages will be added in the future. This ensures that the platform is not constrained by linguistic barriers: it can operate effectively across diverse geographical regions. The good news is that more languages will be added in the future. Thirdly, I would point out the Advanced Moderation Engine: one of the distinct features of CounteR is its moderating engine, which is designed to classify extremist categories not targeted by market tools, such as Open AI.

The full interview is published on CounteR's website.

Adrian Onu COO of ASSIST Software, has a degree in Computer Science and over 15 years of experience in IT&C. He started his career in networking and IT infrastructure, designing and implementing data networks and processing systems, before moving to software engineering of projects in different sectors, such as security, e-health or Business Services. At present, Adrian manages operations in ASSIST Software and coordinates various software engineering projects in the company.

CounteR Platform Demo Session

Are you interested in a CounteR demo session…?
Sign up now for CounteR's testing panel through this QR code!

At the end of the project, all registered users will be offered the unique chance to attend an exclusive demonstration and personally experience the CounteR platform's final version.

Stay Tuned to Newsletter's Issue #8!

In issue #8, we will present a new collection of scientific publications and specialised articles, authored by experts and scientists from organisations that belong to the CounteR consortium. They can be found on our website's Publications Section.

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, 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

Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore Academia, Italy

Serviciul de Protectie si Paza, 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, France

Ministère de l'intérieur/ direction générale de la sécurité intérieure, 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

CounteR

https://counter-project.eu

https://twitter.com/CounteRH2020

Linked in

https://www.linkedin.com/company/counter-project/