

Censorship and Take-downs

How Legislation Intended to Disrupt
Online Extremism Could Potentially
Contribute to Radicalization

Presentation by Pina Witt

“The rule of law applies online just as much as offline. We cannot accept a digital Wild West, and we must act (...)”

Vera Jourova, EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, 28th September 2018

Research Question:

To what extent can the German NetzDG have potential negative implications with regard to the prevention of radicalisation?

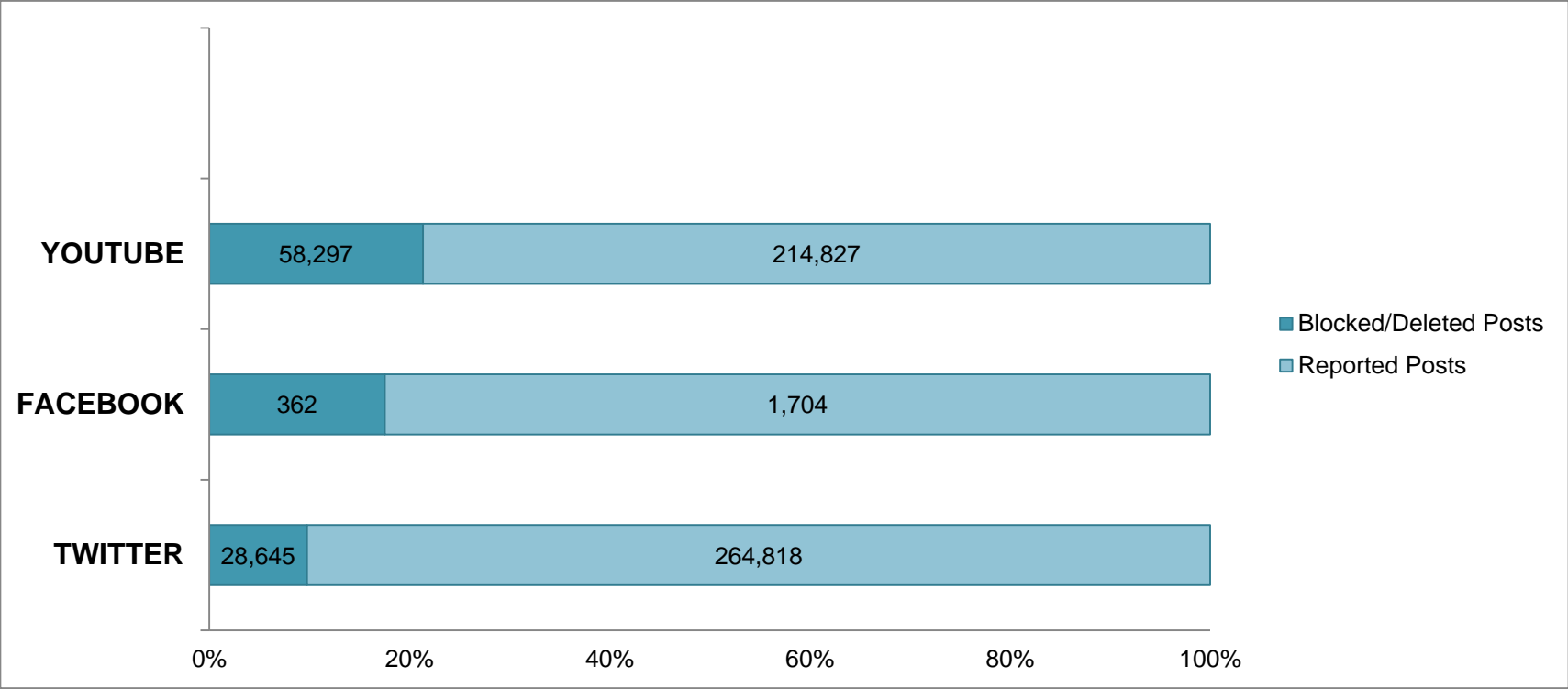
Outline

1. The German *NetzDG* and Overblocking
2. The Theory of Psychological Reactance
3. The *NetzDG*'s potential contribution to online radicalisation
4. Conclusion

1. The German NetzDG and Overblocking

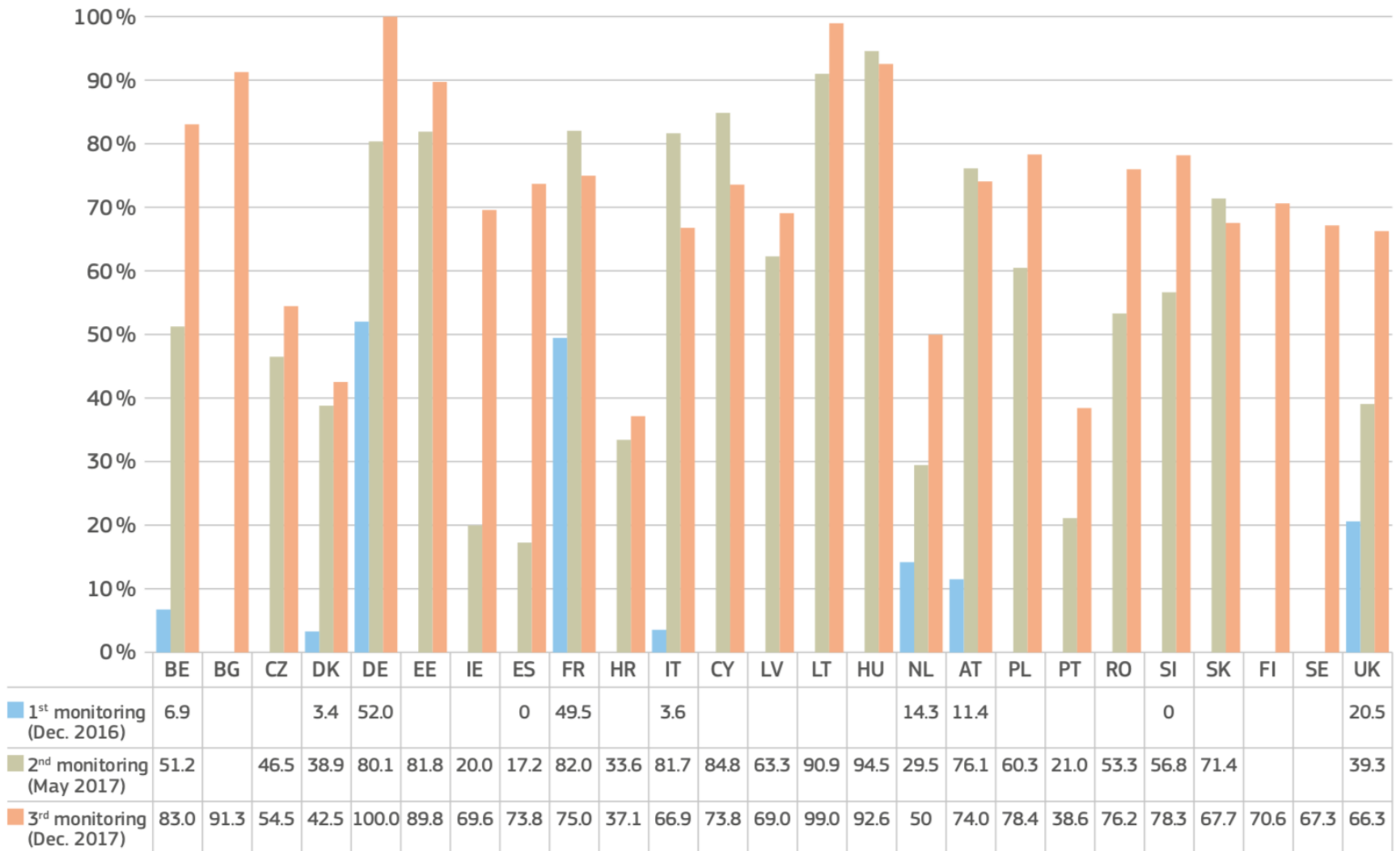
- entry into force 1st October 2017 / 1st January 2018
- Obligation to remove or block
 - “obviously illegal” content within 24 hrs
 - Any other illegal content within 7 days
- Fine of up to 5 mio Euro in case of breach
- “overblocking”?

Self-reported Removal Rate Jan-Jun 2018



Source: Transparency Reports of Google, Facebook, Twitter; Jun/Jul 2018

Rate of removals per EU country (in %) ⁽¹⁾



Source: European Commission Factsheet “Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online’s third evaluation”, Jan 2018



Blurred text, likely the user's name or a short bio, which is illegible due to blurring.

Almans sind für mich Abfall

3:26 PM - 3 Jan 2018

“Germans are rubbish for me” (own transl.)

2. Theory of Psychological Reactance (Brehm, 1966)

- Inherent need for freedom
- Reactance: psychological reaction emerging from perceived pressure to oblige to certain attitude or act in certain way
- Absolute reluctance to adopt attitude or action and freedom increases in valence
- Study on censorship (Worchel, Arnold & Baker, 1975)

3. The NetzDG's potential contribution to online radicalisation

- Deletion/blocking of content = deprivation of freedom
 - RAND Corporation (2013): Internet contributes to radicalisation process
 - UNESCO (2017): social media plays role in individual's radicalisation process
- Reactance likely to occur
- Overblocking increases risk of contribution to radicalisation

4. Conclusion

- Potential that through overblocking, NetzDG significantly increases risk of online censorship contributing to radicalisation
- Example of “unreflectedness” of political action

References

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Thank you!