Protection of children using the Internet and other communication technologies. Safer Internet programme 2009-2013

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The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs adopted the report by Roberta **ANGELILLI** (UEN, IT) and made several amendments to the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a multiannual Community programme on protecting children using the Internet and other communication technologies ('Safer Internet').

MEPs underline the need to adopt measures at EU level in order to protect the physical, mental and moral integrity of children, which might be impaired by accessing inappropriate content. They claim that particular efforts should be made to explore solutions to prevent intentional proposals, through information and communication technologies, of an adult to meet a child for the purposes of committing sexual abuse or offences, while at the same time special attention should be given to the peer support system. Action should also be aimed at preventing the victimisation of children by threats, harassment and humiliation via the Internet and/or interactive digital technologies, including mobile phones.

The main amendments – adopted at 1st reading of the codecision procedure – aim to strengthen child protection against these threats:

- MEPs introduced a certain number of amendments, in particular to insist on the need to combat **new worrying phenomena** such as the soliciting of children through psychological manipulation for sexual purposes (grooming), electronic harassment and electronic files showing physical and/or psychological aggression) and ensure public awareness of online risks and precautions, as well as to develop pedagogical tools on the basis of sound practices;

- the **actions and measures proposed** in the framework programme 'Safer Internet plus' should aim, inter alia:

- to provide the public with and promoting the existence of contact points and hotlines for reporting online illegal content and harmful conduct. These contact points will also provide the public with the necessary information on how to report illegal content and assess the content of on-line information services which could harm the physical, mental or moral integrity of children;
- to adopt a quality label for service providers, so that users can easily check whether or not a given provider subscribes to a code of conduct;
- to use filters by end-users which would prevent information offending against children's physical, mental or moral integrity from passing through on-line technologies;
- to support and promote measures to encourage positive content for children;
- to explore the effectiveness of tools developed in cooperation with the Internet industry that enable law enforcement agencies to track down criminals on the web;
- to encourage international sharing of expertise and pooling of ideas between governments, law enforcement agencies, hotlines, banking/financial/credit card institutions, child abuse counselling centres and child welfare organisations and the Internet industry;
- to create close cooperation between national authorities, police and contact points. Actions will be taken to build a common European database collecting information on child abuse and to ensure its connection with Europol;

- to improve co-operation with domain name registries in Member States, and to encourage positive relationships with registries outside the EU to enable earlier detection of potentially illegal content and minimise the longevity of known websites offering child sexual abuse content;
- to encourage and assist Internet service providers to develop, as a tool of self regulation, 'child safe' labelling for web pages;
- to increase information, particularly for parents, carers and educators, about the performance and effectiveness of tools, such as filtering systems, for dealing with potentially harmful content online;
- to enable children to make responsible use of on-line technologies, in particular through media literacy or media education programmes.

- lastly, MEPs propose that **expenditure** be broken down as follows:

1. Ensuring public awareness: 48%;
2. Fighting against illegal content and tackling harmful conduct online: 34%;
3. Promoting a safer online environment: 10%;
4. Establishing a knowledge base: 8%.