Internet: 2005-2008 action programme on promoting a safer use, Safer Internet plus.

2004/0023(COD) - 18/02/2009 - Follow-up document

This Communication concerns the final evaluation of the multiannual Safer Internet plus programme (2005-2008.) The programme ran over a four-year period from 1 January 2005 to 31 December 2008 with a reference budget of EUR 45 million.

The report sets out in detail the findings of an independent evaluation. The evaluators found that the programme has been successful in achieving its objectives. It has contributed to achieving a safer Internet through a range of interventions.

Considerable achievements: not only has it continued to keep the issue of safer Internet high on the agenda of policy makers across Europe and beyond, but it has also become a driver for action outside the European context. The programme's experiences and best practices are seen as very helpful by other countries which are confronted by similar challenges. The very broad international membership of INHOPE is also a testament to the standing of the programme in the wider internet community. In addition,:

- the networking opportunity provided by the programme is highly valued by many stakeholders, who emphasize the fact that the programme enables sectors to work together who would otherwise not have joined forces, for example major telecoms providers and NGOs;
- the expansion of the two networks to cover virtually the whole European area as well as countries further a field is an undoubted achievement. The INSAFE network has grown from coverage of 21 countries in 2006 to 34 countries in 2008. The INHOPE network has had a similar growth, with 13 members joining during the period of the programme, bringing the total membership to 33;
- successful work has been undertaken in encouraging the mobile phone industry in its efforts to adopt effective self-regulatory mechanisms on protecting minors;
- as regards the awareness activities, the Safer Internet Day has been an undoubted success.

However, the **visibility of the programme** would be enhanced by greater online and offline presence and promotion. A greater consistency in branding would assist in establishing the identity and credibility of the programme within different sectors, countries and regions.

The **sustainability of the programme** itself is robust. It is, however, important to monitor the function of the networks to ensure that the model is still the most appropriate one. In particular, the requirement for hotlines, awareness nodes and helplines to form combined nodes at the national level in order to increase effectiveness also raises the question of whether the two networks should be required to combine in a single organisation to coordinate all activities across Europe.

The report sets out some **recommendations** to be taken into account for future work: (i) promote and protect the rights and privacy of children, young people and other legitimate Internet; (ii) achieve active support and involvement for the Programme and individual projects on a national level from all relevant sectors; (iii) high priority should be given to co-operation and collaboration with third countries, on a policy and operational level, particularly with regard to identifying, tracing and eradicating illegal child abuse images; (iv) enhanced dialogue and cooperation should be established among the various EU initiatives with an intersection of interests or the potential for collaboration with the Safer Internet plus programme; (v) future solutions should continue to take into account national, cultural, linguistic and socio-demographic factors; (vi) the technical knowledge base of the Programme should be further

strengthened; (vii) more proactive use should be made of the press and media across Europe; (viii) further knowledge enhancement activity could be conducted in two key areas: problematic, risky and criminal online behaviours on the part of children and young people themselves; the underlying reasons for the trends identified by INHOPE in respect of illegal content; (ix) the roles of the two networks (INHOPE and INSAFE) should be re-visited to ensure they offer the most appropriate mechanism for co-ordinating the work of national nodes; (x) a high priority should be given to raising the visibility of hotlines, which still suffer from low levels of public awareness; (xi) the Programme could engage more actively with industry.

The Commission invites the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions to:

- take note that the programme has been successfully implemented;
- assist the Commission in its work of increasing the visibility of the Safer Internet programme and stimulate a continued dialogue on safer Internet issues.