

Multiannual action plan on promoting safer use of the Internet: extension to 2004

2002/0071(COD) - 22/03/2002 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to present a proposal for a decision amending Decision 276/1999/EC adopting a multiannual Community action plan on promoting safer use of the Internet by combating illegal and harmful content on global networks. **CONTENT** : Decision 276/1999/EC of the European and of the Council of 25 January 1999 adopting a Multiannual Action on promoting safer use of the Internet by combating illegal and harmful content on global networks was adopted for a period of 4 years. In accordance with article 6 (4) of the decision, the Commission has submitted to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions an evaluation report on the results obtained at the end of two years in implementing the action lines set out in the Annex to the Decision. The findings of the evaluation formed part of the basic documentation for a workshop on safer use of new online technologies at which leading experts in the field examined the likely future evolution of the issues addressed by the Action Plan and made recommendations to the Commission. The conclusions of the evaluation report and of the workshop can be summarised as follows: - new online technologies, new users and new usage patterns create new dangers and exacerbate existing dangers at the same time as opening a wealth of new opportunities; - there is a clear need for co-ordination within the safer Internet field, both on the national and the European level. There should be a large degree of decentralisation using networks of national focal points. The involvement of all the relevant actors, especially a greater number of content providers in the different sectors, should be encouraged. The Commission should act as a facilitator for and contributor to European and global co-operation. Co-operation between the Community and candidate countries should be enhanced; - more time is needed for actions to be implemented to enhance networking, to achieve the objectives of the Action Plan and to take account of new online technologies. The Action Plan should therefore be extended for a further 2 years duration. Its scope and implementation should be adapted to take account of lessons learned and new technologies. It should be added that there is a need for co-ordination at European level. This will be reflected in a number of measures: - partner involvement: promote more active involvement of content industry and media, expand collaboration with government-backed bodies active in the field. - Project structure: progress towards integrated network(s) with in-built awareness and dissemination mechanisms and central access point(s), combined with national focal points forming a Safer Internet Forum linked to an international Round Table. - Programme structure : closer links between action lines e.g. hotline and awareness activities, rating and self-regulation. - Subject coverage: the focus on child protection will be widened to include other types of illegal and harmful content (racism, violence etc.), and awareness of issues of consumer protection, data protection/privacy, and network and data security. - Technology coverage: the focus of the Action Plan will be widened to include mobile and broadband (especially video) content, chat rooms and Internet messaging services, online games etc. The title of the Decision will be amended to reflect this. - Adjustment of financial envelope and indicative breakdown of expenditure: an increase in the financial envelope is necessary to provide a further 2 years' activity. The indicative breakdown of expenditure between action lines needs to be adapted to reflect the cost implications of new priorities and new methods. - Geographical coverage, adjustment of list of applicant countries: progressive widening to encompass accession countries. The list of applicant countries able to participate should be amended by including Malta and Turkey, who became applicant countries after the original decision was adopted. Encourage collaboration with third countries and international organisations. In light of the above mentioned considerations, the Commission proposes that the European Parliament and the Council adopt a Decision amending Decision 276/1999/EC adopting a Multiannual Community Action Plan on promoting safer use of the Internet by combating illegal and harmful content on global networks.