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

2004/0023(COD) - 12/03/2004 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to develop a programme promoting safer us of the Internet and on-line technologies. PROPOSED ACT : Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council. CONTENT : the internet and other new on-line mediums are enjoying a phenomenal growth across the EU. Recent studies show that internet penetration in the home stands at more than 42% whilst for businesses and schools internet penetration exceeds 90%. Adults and children alike are increasing their access to internet and other on-line mediums. Some of the statistics make worrying reading. For example, four out of ten children who have chatted on the internet say that people, with whom they have only had internet contact, have asked to meet them in person. 14% of the children have met someone they first met on the net. Only 4% of the parent think that the children have done this. 44% of children using the internet have visited a pornographic web site either by accident or on purpose. One fourth has received pornographic material through the net. 30% of the children have seen web sites with violent material, while only 15% of parents think their children have seen this. On a different issue, the proliferation of unsolicited e-mail (spam) has grown exponentially - to the extent that it may be hindering the development of e-commerce and the information society. Experts estimate that soon, over 50% of global e-mail traffic will be spam. Currently, national measures govern both illegal and unwanted content on the internet. The global nature of on-line activities, however, means that an international approach to tackling problems related to the internet are needed. EU work in this area rests primarily on the Directive on Electronic Commerce. The adoption of the Directive on privacy and electronic communications will lead to a pan-European "ban on spam" directed at individuals. Other areas in which the EU has taken an initiative include the Recommendation on the protection of minors and human dignity. The Commission predicts that there will be a continued need for action both in the area of unwanted and illegal content, particularly child pornography. The Commission is proposing this Decision in an bid to minimise the twin problems of illegal and unwanted content on the internet. The objectives of the programme are: - To promote safer use of the internet and new online technologies (particularly for children). - To fight against illegal and unwanted content. The end user being parents, educators and children. The programme will seek to involve different actors such as content providers, internet service providers, mobile network operators, regulators, standards bodies, industry self-regulatory bodies, national regional and local authorities, schools, consumer associations, families and child welfare groups. The Commission proposes four Actions: 1) Fighting against illegal content : This will primarily be done through funding network co-ordination and individual hotlines where people can register illegal or unwanted content anonymously. The network will be extended to include the new Member States, candidate countries and other European countries where illegal content is hosted and produced. The hotline network would facilitate an exchange of information on the major types of illegal content - extending beyond the area of childpornography to include issues such as racist content. 2) Tackling unwanted and harmful content : Here, the Commission proposes funding for: - Technological measures which empower users to limit the amount of unwanted and harmful content. - The development of effective filtering technology. - Facilitating methods on how to exchange information. - Best practices on the effective enforcement against spam. 3) Promoting a safer environment : This will largely be achieved through the "Safer Internet Forum" which has been set up under the existing Safer Internet Programme. It is a discussion forum which includes representatives from industry, child welfare organisations and policy makers. It is a useful platform for national co-regulatory or self-regulatory bodies to exchange ideas and experiences. 4) Awareness-raising : Under this heading the Commission proposes concentrating on pump-priming, encouraging the multiplier effect and exchanging best practices through an established network. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS : - Budget lines: 09 03 03 (ex-line B5-821) and 09 01 04 04 (ex-line B5-821A). - Total: EUR 50 million. - Period of application: 01/01/05 to 31/12/08. - Staff: 4 grade A permanent post; 1 grade B permanent post; 2 grade C permanent post.