

Internet: multiannual action plan on promoting safer use

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OBJECTIVE: to help create an environment favorable to the development of industries associated with the Internet by promoting safe use of the Internet. **SUBSTANCE:** the Commission proposes to adopt a multiannual Community action plan (1998-2002) to promote safe use of the Internet. The proposed action plan is specifically geared to measures which require Community funding. It seeks to: - encourage those concerned (industry, users) to develop and use adequate systems of self-regulation; - impart initial impetus by supporting the demonstration and application of technical solutions; - alert and inform parents and teachers, particularly through the appropriate associations; - encourage cooperation and exchanges of experience and best practices; - promote coordination across Europe and between those concerned; - ensure that the approaches adopted in Europe and elsewhere are compatible. In order to realize these objectives, the action plan comprises four action lines: 1) creating a safe environment by restricting the circulation of illegal and harmful content on the Internet (child pornography, racism and anti-Semitism, etc.) and encouraging self-regulation by the industry and the development of codes of conduct; 2) encouraging the industry to develop filtering and rating systems to enable parents or teachers to select content appropriate to children, while allowing adults to select whatever legal material they wish to access, taking account of cultural diversity; 3) encouraging user awareness of the services provided by the industry, particularly among parents, teachers and children, to improve their knowledge of the opportunities afforded by the Internet and enable them to take advantage of them; 4) support measures such as evaluation of the legal implications of the unique characteristics of the Internet and its global nature (e.g. the law applicable and liability for criminal offences). Participation in the action plan will be open to legal entities established in the EFTA countries which are members of the European Economic Area and to European international organizations.