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

2004/0023(COD) - 06/11/2006 - Follow-up document

This report has been prepared in accordance with Article 5 (3) of Decision 854/2005/EC *establishing a multiannual Community programme on promoting safer use of the internet and new online technologies*, referred to as the "Safer Internet plus" Decision. According to this Article the Commission is to report to the Parliament and the Council on the implementation of the actions, as set out in the Decision, by mid-2006. To recall, the budget for the multi-annual programme, covering the period 1 January 2005 – 31 December 2008 is EUR 45 million. For the year 2006 the budget stood at EUR 20.5 million.

The programme is divided into four main actions:

- The fight against illegal content.
- Tackling unwanted and harmful content.
- Promoting a safer environment.
- Raising awareness.

Coverage of the new programme extends to new online technologies including: mobile and broadband content, on-line games, peer-to-peer file transfer and all forms real-time communications such as chat rooms and instant messages. One of the main aims of the Decision is to improve the protection of children and minors. The programme does, however, cover other fields of illegal on-line activity such as racism and violence.

In September 2005, the Commission published the "Safer Internet plus" call for proposals. Of the 59 proposals received, 37 were selected following an evaluation period. This involved funding some EUR 11.79 million in total (of which EUR 9.21 million derived from the 2005 budget and EUR 2.58 million from the 2006 budget). Funding was distributed as follows:

- Hotlines: 1 network coordinator and 16 hotlines covering 15 countries;
- Awareness nodes and help lines: 1 network coordinator and 16 awareness nodes;
- User empowerment: 1 thematic network;
- Self-regulation: 1 thematic network;
- Media: 1 thematic network.

The Safer Internet Forum

The Safer Internet Forum was set up under the Safer Internet Action Plan to provide a focal point for discussion and to encourage action on illegal, unwanted and harmful content. It provides a platform for consensus- building, recommendations and guidelines. It also provides an opportunity to discuss ways in which industry can contribute to combating illegal content.

In 2005 the main topic discussed in the Safer Internet Forum was "Child safety and mobile phones". This focused on risk assessment, emerging solutions and national codes of conduct. In 2006, discussion with mobile network operators, child safety organisations, researchers and public bodies continued, with the objective of reaching an agreement on best practices on child protection and their implementation across Europe. In June 2006, two new topics were discussed in the Forum: children's use of new media and blocking access to child sexual abuse images.

Safer Internet Days

Safer Internet Day is a global drive to promote a safer Internet for all users, especially young people. In February 2005 and 2006, Safer Internet Days were organised under the patronage of Commissioner Viviane Reding by the European internet safety network INSAFE, which is co-funded by the Safer Internet Programme, with the participation of a broad number of organisations and countries from both within and outside of the EU. In 2006 the Commission intends to continue the above activities and to enhance their impact by:

- Consolidating and extending the geographical coverage of the hotlines and awareness-raising networks.

- Fostering closer cooperation between all stakeholders in Safer Internet activities.

- Offering practical advice on how to use the Internet more safely.

- Increasing the visibility of the Safer Internet plus programme among European citizens.

To conclude, the great number of reports received by the hotlines (over 534,000 in 2005 alone) shows the increasing need for programmes capable of fighting illegal on-line content. Safer Internet Day, with its broad national participation and media coverage, is increasingly recognized as a valuable communications tool. Awareness nodes are providing ever more targeted campaigns at children, parents and teachers.