

Protection of children using the Internet and other communication technologies. Safer Internet programme 2009-2013

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The Commission presents a report setting out the final evaluation of the multi-annual EU programme on protecting children using the Internet and other communication technologies -Safer Internet 2009-2013.

The evaluation is based on an external study using data collected through surveys and interviews with project participants and a wider range of stakeholders.

With a **budget of EUR 55 million**, the Programme co-funded projects in the Member States, Iceland, Norway, Serbia (through a memorandum of understanding) and provided limited funding to Russia for participation in European networking activities. 92% of the budget co-funded projects on:

- **increasing public awareness** in particular among children, parents and teachers about opportunities and risks related to the use of online technologies, and means of staying safe online;
- **fighting against illegal content** and harmful conduct online, with particular focus on online distribution of child sexual abuse material, grooming and cyber-bullying.

Main conclusions: the evaluation shows that the Programme has been **successful in achieving its main goals** and that EU intervention had been both necessary and effective in the delivery of results.

- The Programme co-funded **Safer Internet Centres (SIC)** in all EU Member States, Iceland, Norway, Serbia and Russia. SICs carried out activities to raise public awareness; they operated **helplines** from which children and parents could get support and advice on online related issues. Stakeholders perceive the fact that SICs exist in 27 Member States as the **main added value of the programme** as this allows the sharing of knowledge and good practice.
- European Safer Internet activities are often considered good practice internationally, and have been taken up in Latin America, the US and Asia-Pacific. The **Safer Internet Day**, which stems from the Programme, is an international yearly event to raise awareness of child online safety.
- The programme was recognised to have been **delivered efficiently**, although certain procedures were highlighted as presenting scope for simplification.
- The programme has had a **medium to high impact**, mainly in raising awareness due to the focus on networking and creation of synergies, and fighting illegal content.
- The establishment of a **system of notice and takedown** of sexual abuse material complemented by voluntary efforts from industry to counter distribution of this material through their infrastructure has significantly reduced the time to removal. In 2011, 60% of the reported content was removed within 1 to 3 days compared to over 90% in 2014.

Continuation of most effective activities: in order to keep up and build on the results achieved, the report suggests the following:

- **continue the work of the SIC awareness centres**, by further reinforcing awareness-raising activities, including the dissemination of information and tools for children on safer use of online technologies and continuation of the annual Safer Internet Day;
- ensure that the SICs reach out to **children in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations** (such as children with disabilities, children at risk of poverty, children in migration);

- continue **research** at EU and national level on children's behaviour online and the risks they face to keep the knowledge base up to date. The rights-based approach evident in **EUKidsOnline** should be replicated in future research, with a view to further realising the rights of the child in the online environment;
- continue the **mapping** of Safer Internet policies on a regular basis;
- continue the **coordination role** of the Commission in future Programmes.

The Commission also recommends:

- facilitating the monitoring of impact of projects through a robust monitoring system and regular independent evaluations;
- continuing communication between all relevant entities and stakeholders in order to share good practices and to ensure that there is no overlap between future initiatives;
- encouraging industry and Member States' involvement.