

Reply to the questionnaire

- Public consultation safer internet and online technologies for children

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Research Topics:

-Social and Cultural Change Triggered by New Media

-Media Contexts of Education

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Research Topics:

Exploring the use of project-based teaching as a tool for creating awareness of sexual abuse of children in digital media.

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Questionnaire 1

Fighting illegal content

The definition of illegal content varies from country to country due to differing cultural traditions and national legislations. It can be accessed via the Internet, through mobile phones and game consoles. Even though the definitions of what is illegal content varies across countries, from racist and discrimination material to cyber crime, fraud, hacking, identity theft etc., the production and distribution of child sexual abuse material is considered to have the most severe consequences for children, and it is illegal in most European countries.

The production and distribution of child abuse material is facilitated through commercial websites, user generated web sites and peer-to-peer/file sharing networks.

1.1 In your opinion, is there a need beyond the year 2008 to pro-actively fight against illegal content?

Answer: Yes. There is no sign, as far as we can see, that the spreading of illegal content is diminishing, so this work has to be continued in 2008

1.2 If so, please give indications on what kinds of illegal content/material should be dealt with.

Answer: Any visual depiction, including any photograph, film, video, picture, or computer or computer-generated image or picture, whether made or produced by electronic, mechanical, or other means, of sexually explicit conduct, where children are engaged, or made to look like they are engaged, in sexual activity.

1.3 Which should be the means of fighting the production and distribution of illegal content, in particular child sexual abuse material, and what stakeholders should take initiatives (industry, governments, NGOs, financial institutions etc.)? Please suggest ways in which the different stakeholders can contribute in fighting against production and online distribution of illegal content.

Answer: In our opinion the most important means are the use of various projects and tools that might create awareness of the problem of sexual abuse of children in digital media. This can be done by all stakeholders, and one example is the Norwegian Child Sexual Abuse Anti Distribution Filter. When an internet user types an address in his/her browser or clicks a link to an URL that is in the filter, the ISP redirects the browser to a specific page instead of the desired address – the so called “stop-page”. This contains information about what kind of content the user tried to access, links to Norwegian legislation and contact information for the police. Other means are awareness projects directed by Higher Education Institutions, where the aim is to give Computer- and Teacher Education students, parents, and teachers in various levels of the national educational system knowledge about the field of sexual abuse of children, so as to rise their awareness and enable them to pass this knowledge and awareness along both other students, professionals and parents, and to the rest of our society. One

example of such a project is „Project Getting Involved“, that is implemented in the computer science and teacher education at Nesna University College, Norway and in the Media and Information Technologies education at the University of Zielona Gora, Poland

- 1.4 A central element of the fight against illegal content for the Safer Internet plus Programme has been to support an international network of civilian hotlines where the public can report illegal content, should they chance upon it online. In your opinion, is this the most appropriate way of dealing with illegal content beyond 2008? How could their cooperation with law enforcement agencies be strengthened?

Answer: In our opinion hotlines by private institutions is not the most appropriate way of dealing with illegal content. Experience from Norway shows a much better situation when these hotlines are disbanded and such activities are left solely to the police.

- 1.5 How can other organisations support national/local and international law enforcement agencies in dealing with the production and online distribution of illegal content?

Answer: By supporting, or develop, awareness raising projects

- 1.6 The internet has a global dimension: illegal content can be produced in one country, distributed from a second, and accessed/downloaded in many countries across the world. Please specify which actions should be taken internationally. Are there specific countries which should be focussed on?

Answer: In our opinion the focus must be on creating a common legal basis, with the same legal definitions of what is to be considered abusive material. Russia seems to be one country one should have a specific focus on.

- 1.7 Research and development of efficient technological tools (filtering systems, image recognition etc) can contribute to reducing online distribution and indirectly the production of illegal content. Which are the subjects which should be addressed when supporting the development of technologies?

Answer: Such research and development should primarily focus on sites that distribute abusive materials, i.e. a focus on ip-addresses of known distributors not the usual content oriented filter systems of the past.

- 1.8 Analysis of psychological effects of victims and studies of how offenders use the Internet to distribute the evidence of the sexual abuse of children can also contribute to the fight against illegal online content. Which are the subjects which should be addressed in these areas when conducting research?

Answer: No opinion

- 1.9 The legal situation concerning online distribution of illegal content and indeed the definitions of what is illegal differ across the EU Member States. Which are the issues which should be addressed when harmonising legal provisions across Member States?

Answer: A complete harmonisation of every aspect as for definitions of abusive material

Questionnaire 2

Fighting harmful content

Harmful content is content that potentially can be harmful or dangerous for children, and includes content which parents and carers do not want their child to have access to. It can be accessed through Internet, mobile phones and game consoles. What is considered harmful for children varies across cultures. However, in most cases it ranges from pornography, violence, racism, xenophobia, self-mutilation, anorexia, suicide sites, dangerous sects or hate speech to child sexual abuse material.

Risks for children who are exposed to harmful/unwanted content are psychological trauma and encouragement of harmful behaviour, such as violence against oneself (self-mutilation, developing eating disorders, and suicide) and others (inflicting violence or sexual abuse of others, bullying, happy slapping etc). In addition, accessing and downloading such content can give rise to security risks: viruses, spam, hacking, identity theft which may cause financial problems and damage to the computer, inadequate advertising, copyright infringement and co-participation in an illegal activity.

- 2.1 In your opinion, is there a need beyond the year 2008 to pro-actively fight against harmful content? If so, please give indications on what kinds of harmful content/material (subjects to be covered) should be dealt with.

Answer: Yes. As for what kind of harmful content that should be dealt with, we consider racism, xenophobia, hate speech and child sexual abuse material as material that should be dealt with.

- 2.2 Which are the means of fighting the production and distribution of harmful content and what stakeholders (media, governments, industry, NGOs, schools etc) should take initiatives? Please suggest ways in which the different stakeholders can contribute in the fight against the online distribution of harmful content.

Answer: In our opinion the most important means are the use of various projects and tools that might create awareness of the problem of sexual abuse of children in digital media. This can be done by all stakeholders, and one example is the Norwegian Child Sexual Abuse Anti Distribution Filter. When an internet user types an address in his/her browser or clicks a link to an URL that is in the filter, the ISP redirects the browser to a specific page instead of the desired address – the so called “stop-page”. This contains information about what kind of content the user tried to access, links to Norwegian legislation and contact information for the police. Other means are awareness projects directed by Higher Education Institutions, where the aim is to give Computer- and Teacher Education students, parents, and teachers in various levels of the national educational system knowledge about the field of sexual abuse of children, so as to rise their awareness and enable them to pass this knowledge and awareness along both other students, professionals and parents, and to the rest of our society. One example of such a project is „Project Getting Involved“, that is implemented in the computer science and teacher education at Nesna University College, Norway

and in the Media and Information Technologies education at the University of Zielona Gora, Poland

- 2.3 In your opinion, should the media take an active part in the awareness-raising in this sphere and in what way?

Answer: Yes, by developing educational programs, web sites or other material.

- 2.4 Which role could education have in empowering children to deal appropriately with harmful content? Should it be integrated into school curricula? If so, which would be the best ways of doing so?

Answer: Safer Internet practices should be a natural part of the every day use of information technology in the class room.

- 2.5 A primary activity of the fight against harmful content for the Safer Internet plus Programme has been to support an international network of awareness nodes which promote public campaigns informing the public of the risks linked to the use of online technologies and on safeguard measures. In your opinion, is this the most appropriate way of dealing with harmful content beyond 2008? If so, please indicate in what ways this line of action can be strengthened.

Answer: Yes we think that this work is quite appropriate. One way of strengthening this work is by urging, and enabling, higher educational institutions to be a part of this awareness work.

- 2.6 Efficient technologies can help to make the use of the Internet, mobile phones and game consoles safer for children to use (eg. filtering software by Internet Service Providers or at user's computer, age verification mechanisms etc). Which are the subjects which should be addressed when supporting the development of technological tools?

Answer: Such research and development should primarily focus on sites that distribute abusive materials, i.e. a focus on ip-addresses of known distributors not the usual content oriented filter systems of the past.

- 2.7 Research on sociological issues and analysis of psychological effects of particularly of the harm to children on different kinds of harmful content can contribute to building knowledge about how to deal with these issues. Which are the subjects which should be addressed in these areas when conducting research?

Answer: No opinion

Questionnaire 3

User- generated content and online communication

Children and adults alike use online technologies for communication. It takes place in a number of different ways; through mobiles, e-mail exchange, sites which facilitate users to create profiles, virtual networks, image exchange sites, Instant Messaging Services, blogs, chats and peer-to-peer services, dating sites and other "social networking sites" and user interactive services. Amongst others, the risks for children using these features are grooming, disclosure of sensitive personal information/images, exposure to harmful content (pornography, sexual speech, violence etc) encouragement to harmful behaviour (e.g. happy slapping"), bullying and harassment.

Internet allows both children and adults to create their own content ("user-generated content") and make it accessible to other users through Internet or mobile phones. Children are particularly vulnerable as they more easily disclose sensitive personal data (information and images), they sometimes engage in behaviour that is risky to themselves and can quickly get out of hand. They can also get traumatic experiences when confronted with illegal and harmful content or conduct. In addition, their use is in some cases associated with copyright infringement.

- 3.1 Which are the best means of addressing these risks with the aim of child online protection, in particular grooming and bullying? Which stakeholders should be responsible for initiatives in this field, and what roles should they have (industry, media, governments, schools, NGOs etc)?

Answer: In our opinion the most important means are the use of various projects and tools that might create awareness of the problem of both the issue of personal privacy and sexual abuse of children in digital media. This can be done by all stakeholders, but especially educational institutions. We will recommend the use of awareness projects directed both towards teachers, parents and children as mentioned before.

- 3.2 Can you name further, not listed risks or further potentially dangerous forms of communication? Which are the best means and ways of addressing them?

Answer: No opinion

- 3.3. Which role could education have in empowering children to deal appropriately with harmful and illegal user-generated content? Should such issues be integrated into school curricula? If so, which would be the best ways of doing so?

Answer: Safer Internet practices, including knowledge of personal privacy and the danger of chat rooms and other online environments, should be a natural part of the every day use of information technology in the class room.

- 3.4 Should the media take an active part in the awareness-raising in this sphere and in what way?

Answer: Yes, by developing educational programs, web sites or other material.

- 3.5 A central element for the Safer Internet plus Programme in making Internet safer for children has been to support an international network of awareness nodes which promote public campaigns informing the public of the risks linked to the use of online technologies and on safeguard measures. In your opinion, is this the most appropriate way of dealing with communication risks and user-generated content beyond 2008? If so, please indicate in what ways this line of action can be strengthened.

Answer: Yes we think that this work is quite appropriate. One way of strengthening this work is by urging, and enabling, higher educational institutions to be a part of this awareness work.

- 3.6 Development of efficient technologies can help to make the use of the online communication safer (e.g. monitoring social networking sites, age verification systems etc). Which are the subjects which should be addressed when supporting the development of technologies within this field?

Answer: In our opinion age verification systems should be the main focus point in such developments.

- 3.7 Research on sociological issues concerning use of online technologies, particularly how children themselves perceive risks, how offenders use online technologies to get into contact with children, the effects of grooming and bullying on children, as well as analysis of effective awareness-raising methods, can help to understand better how trends, behaviours and risks evolve in the society and to formulate awareness-raising initiatives in this field. Which are the subjects which should be addressed in these areas when conducting research?

Answer: Our opinion of this are naturally influenced by our work with “Project Getting Involved” and our students in both Norway and Poland. We feel that all subjects mentioned in the above question are of equal importance.

- 3.8 The legal situation concerning grooming online differs across the EU Member States. Which are the issues which should be addressed when harmonising legal provisions across the Member States?

Answer: A complete harmonisation of every aspect as for the legal definition of grooming.