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REPORT

from:	Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1)
to:	Council
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Subject:	Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a multiannual Community programme on protecting children using the Internet and other communication technologies - <i>General approach</i>

1. The Commission adopted its proposal for a successor to the Safer Internet Plus programme on 27 February 2008. The preparatory bodies of the Council have examined the proposal and the text as it results from this examination is attached in annex.¹

¹ The recitals have not been addressed and will not be included as part of the general approach.

2. Subject to a small number of (parliamentary) scrutiny and linguistic reservations (see footnote 2, page 3), the text has the support of all Member States. The Commission, for its part, has indicated its positive stance towards the Council proceeding with a 'general approach', although for formal reasons it must maintain its own proposal at least until the European Parliament votes in first reading.

 3. The Council is invited to reach agreement on a general approach, pending the first reading opinion of the European Parliament.
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²Proposal for a

DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL
establishing a multiannual Community programme on protecting children using the Internet
and other communication technologies
(Text with EEA relevance)

Article 1

Objective of the programme

1. This Decision establishes a Community programme to promote safer use of the Internet and other communication technologies, particularly for children, and to fight against illegal content and harmful conduct online.

The programme shall be known as the “Safer Internet”³ programme (hereinafter “the Programme”).

1a. For the purposes of this Decision, 'children' shall mean persons under 18 years of age.

2. In order to attain the overall aim of the Programme, the following lines of action shall be addressed:

(a) ensuring public awareness;

(b) fighting against illegal content and tackling harmful conduct online;

(c) promoting a safer online environment;

(d) establishing a knowledge base.

The activities to be carried out under these lines of action are set out in Annex I.

The Programme shall be implemented in accordance with Annex III.

² Parliamentary scrutiny reserves: DK, MT, UK; linguistic reserve: ES; general scrutiny reserve: IT

³ The title of the programme should be translated into all languages

Article 2

Participation

1. Participation in the Programme shall be open to legal entities established in the Member States.
2. The Programme shall be further open to the participation of:
 - (a) legal entities established in European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries which are members of the European Economic Area (EEA), in accordance with the conditions laid down in the EEA Agreement;
 - (b) legal entities established in accession countries and candidate countries benefiting from a pre-accession strategy, in accordance with the general principles and general terms and conditions for the participation of those countries in Community programmes established in the respective Framework Agreements and Association Council Decisions;
 - (c) legal entities established in countries of the Western Balkans and the European neighbourhood, in accordance with the provisions to be determined with those countries following the establishment of Framework Agreements concerning their participation in Community programmes;
 - (d) legal entities established in a third country being a party to an international agreement with the Community, under the terms or on the basis of which it makes a financial contribution to the Programme;
 - (e) international organisations and legal entities established in third countries other than those mentioned in points (a), (b), (c) and (d) under the conditions set out in Annex III.

Article 3

Competences of the Commission

1. The Commission shall be responsible for the implementation of the Programme.
2. The Commission shall draw up annual work programmes on the basis of this Decision.
- 2a. In the implementation of the programme, the Commission shall, in close cooperation with the Member States, ensure that it is generally consistent with and complementary to other relevant Community policies, programmes and actions.
3. The Commission shall act in accordance with the procedure referred to in Article 4(2) for the purposes of the following:
 - (a) adoption and modification of the annual work programmes, including determination of the priority areas for international cooperation;
 - (b) any departure from the rules set out in Annex III;
 - (bb) assessment of the projects proposed following calls for proposals for Community funding where the estimated Community contribution is equal to, or more than, EUR 500 000;
 - (c) implementation of measures for evaluating the programme.
4. The Commission shall inform the Committee referred to in Article 4 of progress in the implementation of the Programme. In particular, the Commission shall inform the Committee immediately about all selections decisions taken on matters falling outside of the scope of paragraph 3.

Article 4

Committee

1. The Commission shall be assisted by a committee.
2. Where reference is made to this paragraph, Articles 4 and 7 of Decision 1999/468/EC shall apply, having regard to Article 8 thereof.

The period laid down in Article 4(3) of Decision 1999/468/EC shall be three months.

3. The Committee shall set out its rules of procedure.

Article 5

Monitoring and evaluation

1. In order to ensure that Community aid is used efficiently, the Commission shall ensure that actions under this Decision are subject to prior appraisal, follow-up and subsequent evaluation.
2. The Commission shall monitor the implementation of projects under the Programme. The Commission shall evaluate the manner in which the projects have been carried out and the impact of their implementation in order to assess whether the original objectives have been achieved.
3. The Commission shall report on the implementation of the action lines referred to in Article 1(2) to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, by [two and a half years from date of publication] at the latest.

The Commission shall submit a final evaluation report at the end of the Programme.

Article 6

Financial provisions

1. The Programme shall cover a period of five years from 1 January 2009.
2. The financial reference amount for the implementation of the Programme for the period from 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2013 is hereby set at EUR 55 million.

The annual appropriations for the period 2009 to 2013 shall be authorised by the budgetary authority within the limits of the financial perspective.

3. An indicative breakdown of expenditure is given in Annex II.

Article 7

This Decision shall enter into force on the date of its publication in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

Done at Brussels,

For the European Parliament
The President

For the Council
The President

ACTIONS**Introduction**

The objective of the programme is to promote safer use of the Internet and other communication technologies, particularly for children, and to fight against illegal content and harmful conduct online.

To achieve this objective, the programme will focus on practical help for the end-user, particularly children, parents, carers and educators, by encouraging multi-stakeholder partnerships.

The programme has the overall aim to promote safer use of the Internet and other communication technologies (hereafter referred to as “*online technologies*”), especially by children, promote the development of a safe online environment, reduce the amount of illegal content disseminated online, tackle potentially harmful conduct online and ensure public awareness of online risks and precautions.

In order to ensure a coherent approach to risks, where content and services may be accessed and used both online and offline, such as in the case of video games, the programme may address both types of access and use.

The programme will be implemented through four general action lines:

1. Ensuring public awareness

The activities will be aimed at increasing the awareness of the public, in particular children, parents, carers and educators, about opportunities and risks related to the use of online technologies and means of staying safe online. They will also address the opportunities and risks of services using new distribution platforms, such as audiovisual services using mobile phone networks. The main overall actions planned to be taken are:

1. *Raising public awareness and disseminating information on safer use of online technologies.*
The activities will promote public awareness [...] in a coordinated way across Europe, by conveying a positive message on the opportunities for a wider and more intensive use of ICT, while providing adequate information about risks and ways to deal with them. Activities will encourage cost-effective means of distributing awareness information to a large number of users, for instance, through co-operation with mass media, through online distribution of user-generated content and through the educational system. Methods of distribution and presentation of the messages will be adapted to the various target groups (different age-groups of children and their parents, educators).
2. *Providing contact points where parents and children can receive answers to questions about how to stay safe online, including advice on how to deal with both grooming and cyber-bullying.* Activities will be aimed at empowering users to make informed and responsible choices by providing them with advice on relevant information and precautions to be taken to remain safe online.
3. *Encouraging enhancement of efficient and cost-effective awareness-raising methods and tools.* Actions will be aimed at improving relevant awareness-raising methods and tools with a view to making them more efficient and cost-effective in a long-term perspective.

4. *Ensuring exchange of best practices and cross-border cooperation at European level.* Actions will be taken to ensure effective European cross-border cooperation and effective exchange of best practices, tools, methods, experience and information.
5. *Ensuring exchange of best practices and cooperation at international level.* Actions will aim to promote cooperation and exchange of best practices, tools, methods, experience and information at international level in order to encourage common approaches and methods of work and improve and enhance the effectiveness, cost-efficiency and the range of global initiatives.

2. Fighting against illegal content and tackling harmful conduct online

The activities are aimed at reducing the amount of illegal content circulated online and dealing adequately with harmful conduct online, with particular focus on online distribution of child sexual abuse material, grooming and bullying. The main overall actions planned to be taken are:

1. *Providing the public with contact points for reporting online illegal content and harmful conduct.* Activities should ensure that these contact points are effective and visible for the public, liaise closely with other actions at national level, and cooperate at European level to deal with cross-border issues and to exchange best practice.
2. *Tackling harmful conduct online, in particular grooming and bullying.* Activities will aim to tackle online grooming, the process by which an adult befriends a child with the intention of committing sexual abuse, and bullying. Actions will deal with technical, psychological and sociological issues related to these issues and will promote cooperation and coordination between stakeholders.

3. *Stimulating application of technical solutions for dealing adequately with illegal content and harmful conduct online.* Activities should encourage the design, development or adaptation of effective technological tools to deal adequately with illegal content and tackle harmful conduct online, for general use by stakeholders.
4. *Promoting cooperation and exchange of information, experience and best practices between stakeholders at national and European level.* Activities will aim to improve the coordination of stakeholders involved in countering the distribution of illegal content and harmful conduct online and encourage the participation and engagement of these stakeholders.
5. *Enhancing cooperation, exchange of information and experience in fighting online illegal content and harmful conduct at international level.* Activities will aim to improve cooperation with third countries, harmonise approaches in dealing with illegal content and harmful conduct online at international level and encourage development of common approaches and methods of work.

3. Promoting a safer online environment

The activities will aim to bring together stakeholders to find ways of promoting a safer online environment and protecting children from content that may be harmful for them. The main overall actions planned to be taken are:

1. *Enhancing cooperation, exchange of information, experience and best practice between stakeholders.* Activities will aim to improve cooperation, harmonise approaches in creating a safer online environment for children and enable best practices and methods of work to be exchanged. Actions will aim to equip stakeholders with an open platform for discussion of the issues linked to promoting a safer online environment and ways of protecting children from potentially harmful content across different platforms.

2. *Encouraging stakeholders to develop and implement adequate systems of self- and co-regulation.* Actions will encourage the creation and implementation of self- and co-regulatory initiatives and encourage stakeholders to take account of child safety when developing new technologies and services.
3. *Stimulating the involvement of children in creating a safer online environment.* Actions will aim to involve children with the aim of better understanding their views and experiences concerning the use of online technologies and on how to promote a safer online environment for children.
4. *Increasing information about adequate tools for dealing with harmful content online.* Activities will aim to increase information about the performance and effectiveness of tools, such as filtering systems, for dealing with potentially harmful content online and to equip users with information, instruments and applications adequately supporting them in dealing with harmful content across different platforms.
5. *Ensuring compatibility between the approach taken in Europe and internationally.* Activities will promote cooperation and exchange of information, experience and best practices between stakeholders at European level and internationally.

4. Establishing a knowledge base

The activities will aim to establish a knowledge base for dealing adequately with existing and emerging uses of the online environment and relevant risks and consequences, with a view to designing adequate actions aimed at ensuring online safety for all users. The main overall actions planned to be taken are:

1. *Encouraging a coordinated approach concerning investigation in relevant fields.* Actions will ensure a concerted effort to bring together scientists and experts engaged in the field of child safety online at European level, stimulate international cooperation and coordination, and establish updated overviews of existing and emerging research.
2. ⁴*Providing updated information concerning children's use of online technologies.* Actions will be taken to generate updated information concerning children's use of online technologies and the way they and their parents and carers deal with both opportunities and risks. The actions will comprise quantitative and qualitative aspects. Actions will also aim to increase the knowledge of children's own strategies for dealing with risks in the online environment, and assess the effectiveness of these strategies.
3. *Promoting investigation on online victimisation of children.* Actions will aim to investigate technical, psychological and sociological issues related to the victimisation of children in the online environment, including bullying, grooming, issues relating to online child sexual abuse material and emerging forms of conduct that can put children at risk of harm.
4. *Promoting investigation on efficient ways to improve safe use of online technologies.* Actions may concern investigations and trials of awareness-raising methods and tools, successful co- and self-regulatory schemes, the effectiveness of different technical and non-technical solutions, as well as other relevant issues.
5. *Increasing knowledge of the effects of the use of current and emerging technologies on children.* Actions will aim to better understand the psychological, behavioural and sociological effects on children using online technologies, ranging from the effect of exposure to harmful content and conduct to grooming and bullying and across different platforms, from computers and mobile phones to game consoles and other emerging technologies.

⁴ It was agreed that a recital be added encouraging Member States to provide data to EUROSTAT regarding under 16s.

INDICATIVE BREAKDOWN OF EXPENDITURE

(1)	Ensuring public awareness	48 %
(2)	Fighting against illegal content and tackling harmful conduct online	34 %
(3)	Promoting a safer online environment	10 %
(4)	Establishing a knowledge base	8 %

METHODS OF PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

(1) The Commission will implement the programme in accordance with the technical content specified in Annex I.

(2) The programme will be implemented through actions comprising:

A. Shared-cost actions

1. Pilot projects and best practice actions; ad hoc projects in areas relevant to the programme, including projects demonstrating best practice or involving innovative uses of existing technology.
2. Networks and national actions bringing together a variety of stakeholders to ensure action throughout Europe and to facilitate coordination activities and transfer of knowledge.
3. Europe-wide investigation carried out on a comparable basis into the way adults and children use online technologies, the resulting risks for children and the effects of harmful practices on children, and behavioural and psychological aspects with emphasis on child sexual abuse related to the use of online technologies, investigation on upcoming risk situations due to transforming behaviours or technological developments, etc.
4. Technology deployment projects.

B. Accompanying measures

Accompanying measures will contribute to the implementation of the programme or the preparation of future activities.

1. Benchmarking and opinion surveys to produce reliable data on safer use of online technologies for all Member States collected through comparable methodologies.
 2. Technical assessment of technologies such as filtering designed to promote safer use of the Internet and new online technologies.
 3. Studies in support of the programme and its actions.
 4. Exchange of information through conferences, seminars, workshops or other meetings and the management of clustered activities.
 5. Dissemination, information and communication activities.
- (3) In pursuance of Article 2(2)(e), international organisations and legal entities established in third countries may take part in shared-cost actions, with or without Community funding, under the following conditions:
- (i) the action must fall under a priority for international cooperation as defined in the work programme. These priorities may be defined by thematic area of activity, by geographic criteria or both;
 - (ii) the work programme may define further criteria and conditions which must be satisfied by international organisations and legal entities established in third countries in order to receive Community funding.

- (4) The selection of shared-cost actions will be based on calls for proposals published on the Commission's website in accordance with the financial provisions in force.
 - (5) Applications for Community support should provide, where appropriate, a financial plan listing all the components of the funding of the projects, including the financial support requested from the Community, and any other requests for or grants of support from other sources.
 - (6) Accompanying measures will be implemented through calls for tenders in accordance with the financial provisions in force.
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