

Safer Internet for Children

In 2010, ARC Fund acted as the coordinator of the National Safer Internet Center (SIC) – part of the pan-European INSAFE network, and continued and expanded the scope of its activities aimed at creating a safer online environment for children and minors. Besides operating the **Bulgarian Hotline for reporting illegal and harmful Internet content** and conduct, which received and dealt with more than 100 reports per month, a substantial part of the activities were focused on awareness raising among children, parents and child carers, teachers and educators, law enforcement officers and magistrates.

An important part of the Safer Internet Center's activities was the training of major stakeholders in the field and of the various target groups.

ARC Fund established a close working partnership with the newly founded non-governmental International Cybercrime Investigation Training Academy (ICITA) in Bulgaria which was officially launched on May 31, 2010 with the support of the Ministry of Interior and the Supreme Justice Council. ICITA started training sessions for police officers, prosecutors and judges in the judicial (appeal) districts of the whole country with the aim to raise the capacity of Law Enforcement Agency (LEA) prosecutors and courts in combating computer-related crimes. ARC Fund participated in designing the agenda for the 4-day training sessions by including 3 presentations/workshops focusing on child sexual abuse online. During the period, SIC took part in 3 training sessions reaching out to more than 100 police officers, prosecutors



A training session on combating computer-related crimes against minors for police officers, prosecutors and judges from the Veliko Tarnovo Appeal District, held in Troyan from 2-4 December, 2010

and judges from the judicial (appeal) districts of Burgas, Sofia and Veliko Tarnovo. ARC Fund presented the Safer Internet Program of the EC, the role on the INSAFE (European Safer Internet Centers) and INHOPE (International Association of Internet Hotlines Operators) networks, the activities of the Safer Internet Center in Bulgaria, and acquainted them with a comparison of the national legislations in Bulgaria and other EU member countries. Additionally, ARC Fund laid out recommendations for amendments in the Bulgarian Legislation and the Penal Code as well as recommendations for introducing them into court practices and the implementation of new texts criminalizing the grooming of minors.

During the period, SIC hosted two study visits under two different groups of experts from non-EU countries who expressed interest in learning from the Bulgarian and the EC expertise in order to launch their own national Safer Internet Centers. From the 20th to the 23rd of June, 5 representatives of NGOs from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia visited Sofia for a study visit to ARC Fund in the framework of a joint project with the Sarajevo office of Save the Children Norway. From the 13th to the 16th of September, SIC hosted a study visit attended by 2 representatives of NGOs from the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia under the piloted non-EU experts study visits scheme of the EC. The visiting experts were acquainted with the objectives of the Safer Internet Program of the EC, the activities of the INSAFE and INHOPE networks and of the expertise of the Bulgarian SIC. They were trained how to establish and maintain a hotline and awareness center, acquainted with various tools and methods for awareness raising and for training the target groups. They also participated in a short training on *the Real and Virtual Violence Prevention*

interactive educational methodology developed by the Bulgarian SIC, which has been implemented in dozens of schools in the country, and handed the methodology guidebook used for the educational course to adapt and implement in their secondary schools.

ARC Fund was actively training school pupils and teachers in 2010 using *the Real and Virtual Violence Prevention by Interactive Education* methodology developed by ARC Fund and its main partner in SIC, Association Roditeli, and officially approved by the Ministry of Education. In 20 schools in Sofia, trained educators delivered more than 300 lessons as substitute teachers during free classes. After the first training in March, 2010 and a second one from June 28 until July 2, the school psychologists of all 40 municipal secondary schools in the second largest city of Varna were trained on the methodology and started delivering lessons under the supervision of the Prevention Directorate at Varna Municipality, which was covering all the expenses for the training sessions and the honoraria for the educators. In June, September and October the modular interactive lessons from the second volume of the methodological guidebook were tested in a number of schools and volunteers and educators started implementing the second level of the course consisting of an additional 25 lessons focusing deeper on developing emotional intelligence and non-aggressive behavior online and offline.

On September 30, in Senec, Slovakia, on the invitation of ERSTE Foundation and in the framework of the ACES project (<http://www.aces.or.at>), ARC Fund demonstrated *the Real and Virtual Violence Prevention* methodology by moderating two 3-hour workshops *Am I a Cyber-Bully?* with children and teachers from schools in Central and Eastern Europe.

Apart from the interactive educational course, ARC Fund organized or participated in online safety open lessons in schools around Bulgaria at the invitation of schools or municipalities in Sofia, Smolyan and Bansko.

In order to also reach the parents, on September 22, Bulgaria's Independence Day, and as an event connected to the European Mobility Week, ARC Fund organized a street competition in which more than 200 children and their parents took part in the discovery-tour Time Machine, under the slogan "Safe in the Street, Safe Online". The event was in the framework of various other street activities of many Bulgarian NGOs and under the auspices of the Mayor of Sofia, Mrs. Yordanka Fandakova. The family orientation game consisted in map reading and locating five given downtown landmarks. Upon arrival

at a landmark, the participants received a card, which pictured the way the landmark of interest looked in the past. When children-parent teams gathered all five cards, they had them bound together in a nice keepsake album. Children also received a magic folding cube and a game-book, featuring the online child defender character Flashboy, as well as a poster with the main rules of internet safety and stickers with the web-address of the Internet Hotline as prizes. Parents were handed an 'Are you ready to talk to your children about the Internet?' brochure, and those who had a first-grader this year also received a 'Welcome to School, Parents' booklet containing basic rules and advice for online safety.

Due to the active involvement of Varna Municipality and based on an official agreement signed by the Deputy Mayor,



The Time Machine competition, held in Sofia on 22 September 2010, attracted around 2,000 children and parents.

the Varna municipal peer group consisting of some 40 secondary school pupils was officially established as a new SIC Youth Panel. Unlike the previous Youth Panel from Sofia, the peer group in Varna is representative not only of the excellent students but involves all types and varieties of school children aged 15-17. The group is professionally coordinated by an experienced and skilled psychologist. During the training sessions of school psychologists in Varna, two meetings with the Youth Panel were organized and channels for further contacts were established. Two representatives of the Varna Youth Panel were selected and participated in the summer camp in Bran, Romania organized by the Romanian SIC in mid-July

In November, an annex to the Contract with Sofia University was signed for the

continued teaching of the course *Real & Virtual Violence Prevention* to university students. The Faculty of Philosophy also entered the program and after finishing the course, students of psychology and philosophy will be able to pass 90 hours of practicum internship working as educators in schools under the supervision of SIC team members.

From February 9th, the traditional Safer Internet Day, a large campaign “Think Before You Post” was started. The European TV spot of the campaign was broadcasted more than 1,000 times by 7 TV channels with a special emphasis on music and entertainment channels most popular among minors. Online banners of the campaign were placed on a dozen websites and at meetings with more than 3,000 school children the meaning of the campaign motto was discussed. This



Flashboy was the main actor during Famillathlon 2010, held in Sofia on 15 May 2010

raised the awareness of minors to the need of proper online behavior in order to minimize the risks of unwanted and harmful contact on the Internet.

A significant part of the work of the program team was dedicated to the development of new awareness resources and tools for the different target groups as well as organizing activities and events for disseminating them. As there is a lack of appropriate awareness material for small children, two new resources were developed – a game-booklet and a magic folding cube. Both display the character Flashko (Flashboy) – the hero of the Safer Internet Centre who was chosen by the children themselves in an online competition. The booklet "Flashboy: Mission Famillathlon" was printed out for the annual outdoor event for parents and children.

On May 15th, the UN Day of the Family, a whole day event was organized in Sofia under the auspices of H.E. the Ambassador of France in Bulgaria and the EC Office in Sofia. It was opened in the city center by Sofia city Mayor Mrs. Yordanka Fandakova and the start was given to a Bicycle Tour for parents and children to the South Park. Participants ranged from 4 to 54 years of age. From the central stage in the South Park, the youngest

and the oldest participants in the tour received their prizes and the Family Safer Internet Day was announced by the Deputy Chairman of the State Agency for Child Protection, Mr. Kalin Kamenov. There was a lot of music, presentations of dances, singing, and martial arts from groups of children from various schools. The children and their parents participated in competitions organized by more than a dozen sports federations and children's organizations. Most interest was attracted by the orientation competition "Little Europe" in which children had to run across the park to find the locations of the 27 capitals of the EU countries and receive a stamp. After collecting all stamps they received prizes including the awareness booklet *Flashboy: Mission Famillathlon*, magic folding cubes with the same Flashboy – the hero defender of the children online, and EU starred balls and toys. For the parents the booklet "Are you able to talk with your children about the Internet?" was distributed. A Safer Internet quiz competition from the stage on the theme "Think B4 U Post" brought additional prizes for the smartest answers. More than 2000 parents and children took part in the whole day.

Website:
www.safenet.bg/index.php?id=1388