
Safer Internet for Children

Safer Internet for Children and Youths

In 2013, ARC Fund continued its coordination of the national Safer Internet Centre as a member of the European network of Safer Internet Centers (In-safe) and of the International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE).

ARC Fund oversees a hotline for combating illegal and harmful content and conduct for children, called the Bulgarian Safer Internet Hotline. The hotline has received close to 1000 reports regarding, among others, child pornography, sexual solicitation of minors via the internet, harmful content easily accessible to children, and cyber-bullying between peers.

The hotline team has worked in close co-operation with a helpline, operated by the project partner Association Parents. The helpline consultants have responded to hundreds of queries from minors, parents and teachers concerning the online safety of children. In cases when they received a report about illegal content or conduct, the hotline team took the

necessary steps to remedy the situation. The collaborative work resulted in the prevention of several cases of attempted sexual abuse of children on the internet as well as assisting with advice in dozens of cases of cyber-bullying between minors. It also helped to address family problems connected to the use, by a child, of information and communication technologies.

ARC Fund's activities in the field of prevention of online crimes and bullying for children also aimed to raise the awareness of children, parents, teachers and professionals, and empower them to use the Internet and mobile communications in a more positive and safe way, including through:

- Trainings and campaigns;
- Research of the trends in the use of new technologies by children;
- Developing awareness and information materials and training methodologies;
- Stimulating co-operation among all stakeholders among the public institutions, industry and civil society.



Safer Internet Centre's mascot Flashboy is playing with children in a themed treasure hunt game in Dobroslavtsi

During the year, a series of trainings of teachers, pupils and professionals were conducted by the Safer Internet Centre team. Teachers from schools in the Nadezhda and Novi Iskar districts of Sofia were trained on how to use the methodology "Prevention of Virtual and Real Violence by Interactive Education at School". Trainings of teachers regarding online safety for children were held in the cities of Sliven, Varna, Rousse, Kozloduy and the town of Selanovtsi. Trainings of pupils were conducted in Varna, Dupnitsa, Dobroslavtsi and Sofia. At the annual meeting of secretaries of the local Commissions for Combating Anti-Social Acts by minors from the country, the activities of ARC Fund and training methodologies and possibilities were presented. From September, experts of ARC Fund took part in 5 trainings of officers from the juvenile crime departments from all over the country. A distance learning course on online safety, developed with the support of the Municipality of Varna, was upgraded and new group of school children were enrolled.

One of the most efficient ways to reach parents and their children was the organization and participation in various outdoor events at schools, children fairs and exhibitions in Sofia and around the country. In May, the traditional Familathlon outdoor

event for families was held in the South Park in Sofia. Together with more than 30 clubs, sports federations, and other organizations, many games, competitions and entertainment events for the whole family were organized. Through games and competitions, more than 2000 families were acquainted with the basic rules for the online safety of children, and the kids received prizes and presents together with awareness materials. Members of the Safer Internet Center team took part in the traditional 'Sofia Breathes' weekends, the Mobility Week, and children fairs in Sofia and Burgas.

For the Safer Internet Day on February 5th, ARC Fund organized a TeeNet Parliament. More than 100 pupils from Sofia and other cities gathered in the building of the national parliament to discuss and vote on a Charter of Online Rights of the Youth. ARC Fund assisted the Safer Internet Day celebrations around the country by preparing and sending awareness materials and lesson plans to more than 40 schools and libraries.

Owing to its active work in the field of protection of children online, ARC Fund was invited to sit on the board of the European project SIP BENCH. This project rates parental control tools, and was selected to be the national partner of the EU Kids Online European research network.



Young people participating in the TeeNET parliament for SID 2013