

Safer Internet Program

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ARC Fund has been implementing the EC Safer Internet Program in Bulgaria for 15 years as coordinator of the Safer Internet Centre (SIC) with its three components: Awareness node, Internet Hotline for reporting illegal and harmful to children online content and conduct, and the national Helpline for consulting children, parents, teachers, social workers and other professionals on issues concerning children's safety online.

The organization operates a Hotline for reporting online content that is illegal and harmful to children and supervises a Helpline operated by its partner Parents Association.

The Centre is member of the International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE) and of the European network of Safer Internet Centres (Insafe), and is Bulgaria's representative in the EU Kids Online and Global Kids Online research networks. It is also a member of the European Crime Prevention Network (ECPN) and the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). A member of the Bulgarian SIC's Youth panel was selected for a Bulgarian representative in the Children's Council of the Eurochild international network. The Centre was granted a Quality Certificate by the International Association of Internet Hotlines INHOPE. The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre is Trusted Partner of Facebook and Trusted flagger of Google.

In 2019, through its Safer Internet Program, ARC Fund conducted a large range of activities in the field of protection of children online. The organization operates a Hotline for reporting online content that is illegal or harmful to children in close cooperation with the other INHOPE member hotlines, the national law enforcement authorities (LEA) and Interpol and supervises a Helpline operated by its partner Parents Association. The Hotline reports about online sexual exploitation of children are verified and transferred for further legal action to the national Cybercrime Unit. Via the Helpline, trained psychologists consult children, parents and teachers about problems and incidents with children on the Internet. The Internet Hotline for fighting illegal and harmful content and conduct online received and processed 9289 reports of sexual exploitation of children online. Over 1800 teenagers

from across the country were trained under its most successful program Cyberscout. More than 5400 children, 1000 teachers, 5000 parents, 100 university students and 3500 professionals (educational experts, psychologists, social workers, etc.) were involved in training and awareness raising events. The Ministry of Education and Science participated in a working group of ARC Fund experts, professional teachers and university professors, set up to develop a methodology for teaching digital and media skills in primary schools.

In 2019, the Hotline received and took necessary actions on 9289 reports, as 9125 of them were on child sexual abuse materials, 14 – on child erotic or nudism, 12 – on child sexual grooming. 1414 of those reports were directed to the Law Enforcement Authorities (the Cybercrime Unit of the General Direc-

torate Combating Organized Crime), 7711 were sent to other Hotlines (members of IN-HOPE), 3 were directed to other Bulgarian institutions and in 2 cases the Centre asked for harmful to children online content to be removed.

During the year, the Helpline provided 521 consultations on various issues ranging from cyberbullying to security settings and use of the Internet and digital devices by minors. Among those consultations, 39 consultations concerned potentially harmful to children online content, 36 were on security settings, 35 on reported cases of cyber bullying, 12 were on sextortion.

Besides the direct protection and support of children facing online risks and involvement in a number of research projects in the field of online safety and victimization of children and young people, ARC Fund has developed and has been implementing various educational methodologies for prevention of cybercrimes and online abuse of children. ARC Fund coordinates a working group of primary school teachers, university professors and representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science set up to Safer Internet Program. The working group developed a Methodology for teaching digital and media skills in primary schools. The methodology, which also includes 10 modular lessons for teaching digital and media competences to primary school children, is based on the formal curricula. The lessons were piloted in dozens of schools. Taking

into account the feedback to and the evaluation of the program, the working group developed a holistic concept for teaching digital and media literacy from 1st to 12th grade for the Ministry of Education and Science.

In the summer of 2019, a holistic model for development of digital and media literacy of students from all age groups through the existing curriculum was developed by the SIC's team. The model included modules on systematic work with parents and building of school community. Teachers from the 19th High School in Sofia received several trainings on the updated holistic model provided by the Centre's experts. In 2019, with the support of Sofia's Lozenets District, experts from the Safer Internet Centre (Parents Association and ARC Fund) also developed a new guide for teachers with lesson plans entitled "Digital literate" as updated version of the guide "Virtual and real violence". The new version enlarged the scope of the topics and included issues like security setting in social media and fake news. The guide was piloted in 35th High School in Sofia.

In the last 5 years, ARC Fund has been running the Cyberscout training program which was ranked 9th in Europe by the European Crime Prevention Network in 2017. In 2019, over 860 teenagers from across the country were trained under the Cyberscout program. After completing a 2-day training in online safety they started organizing various initiatives and activities to pass the newly acquired knowledge to over 1000 of their peers. All together during the year, more than 5400 children, close to 1000 teachers, more than 5000 parents, over 100 university students and more than 3500 professionals (including educational experts, school psychologists, social workers, members of local commissions for combating trafficking of human beings among others) were involved in training and awareness raising events. In 2019, the Centre's team provided also 7 trainings of peer trainers on prevention of human trafficking and online risks in

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Начално образование в
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partnership with the National Commission for Combating Trafficking of Human Beings.

The Cyberscout training program for children aged 11-12 has become highly popular in schools. In 2019, ARC Fund trained over 860 children from 42 schools in 25 cities and towns, who were invited to participate in a national competition among all Cyberscouts by organizing various activities and initiatives among their peers to transfer the newly acquired knowledge and

skills. Through these activities, supported by a teacher, they could reach close to 1000 other children. The results of the training are acknowledged by teachers and pupils alike. As one teacher put it: “Our trained pupils are very enthusiastic and put a lot of effort in the preparation of various awareness raising activities targeting their peers. They feel very proud to be Cyberscouts and to teach other children how to prevent risks on the Internet”.



Newly certified cyberscouts

Being recognized as a center of excellence in the field of child protection on the internet, ARC Fund participates in various national and international activities and working groups for developing strategies and proposals for necessary legislative measures, social service procedures and practices. It conducts a regular basis training of children, teachers, parents, care givers, and social workers and is involved in various awareness raising activities. Experts from ARC Fund were included in an international working group formed by the European Crime Prevention Network to prepare a more structured and evidence-based strategy for the prevention of crimes against children. ARC Fund participates on a regular basis in working and training meetings of the Radicalization Awareness Network pre-

senting its expertise and sharing knowledge and practices with other organizations. ARC Fund also became Trusted Partner of Facebook and Trusted Flagger of Google. Intervention and support in cases of incidents and risks for children online are important priorities, but the Safer Internet Centre places a major focus on prevention.

Since 2010, the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre has been working actively on youth participation, maintaining its Youth panel – a voluntary structure of young people aged 14-18. In 2019, the young people provided their own campaign “You are the hero”, promoting positive online behavior and countering cyber bullying. They have been trained on marketing models and the Youth panel Coordinators facilitated the creative pro-

cess. The youngsters themselves created the campaign slogan, message and the screenplay of the campaign video which was shot by a professional director. The campaign was launched on the Safer Internet Day (February 2019) and was also promoted by the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) international network on their BIK Youth mini site. With the support of the Embassy of the United States of America in Bulgaria and a partnership with “The Voice of children” Foundation, maintaining its youth media platform called “Teen Station”, the young members of the Youth panel in Sofia, as well as young people from Ruse were also trained on media content creation by media professionals. Thus, the trained youngsters developed their digital and media skills and joined the editorial teams of the “Teen Station platform”. The members of the Youth panel also planned and hosted numeral events of the Bulgarian SIC and its partners – the main Bulgarian event celebrating Safer Internet Day, the Centre’s participation in the “Voice it” Youth forum (organized by the National Network for Children), the SIC’s participation in the annual open event

for children and parents “Familathlon”, the SIC’s activities for celebrating the Child Right’s Day in Pernik, etc.

In 2019, two members of the Youth panel joined the Youth network “Megaphone”, maintained by the National Network for Children, as well as the network’s “Reporters” initiative. One of them was also elected with the majority of the votes of the young people, involved in this initiative, to be the representative of Bulgaria in the Eurochild Children’s Council and attended the annual event of the European Parliament for the Child Rights Day which took place in Brussels in November. There participants had the opportunity to discuss important topics concerning children with high level European politicians. Another member of the Bulgarian SIC’s Youth panel joined the European Youth panel of the Insafe network and actively participated in the annual Safer Internet Forum which also took place in Brussels in November. For the first time, the young people planned and hosted their own session for all the participants at the forum.



At the annual youth forum Voice It the stand of ARC Fund managed by the youth panelists attracted many young participants.

For a second time, the Coalition for Media Literacy at School, of which ARC Fund is among the founders and which currently has 17 member organizations, launched “Days of Media Literacy” campaign on the Safer Internet Day (February 2019). The Safer Internet Centre provided a package of materials for schools, containing lesson plans for various age groups of students, Guidelines for teachers, plans for meeting with parents, etc. In partnership with the Coalition and the Foundation for Liberty “Friedrich Naumann”, the Safer Internet Centre also organized a second practical conference for teachers on how to develop digi-

tal and media literacy at school, which took place in Veliko Tarnovo in November 2019. The participating teachers were invited to create their own lesson plans on the various subjects which they teach using the holistic model for development of digital and media literacy, proposed by the Centre. A number of teachers who participated at the previous conference (in Sofia, November 2018) had already created their lesson plans. In the beginning of 2019, 14 of them were selected by the Safer Internet Centre’s team and published in both the Centre’s and the Coalition’s websites as resources which can be used by other teachers.