

Safer Internet Program

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Since 2005, ARC Fund has been coordinating the Safer Internet Centre (SIC) in Bulgaria as part of the European Insafe network and the International Association of internet hotlines INHOPE. The organization operates a Hotline for receiving reports about online content that is illegal and harmful to children 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 Cyber Crime Unit. Via the Helpline, trained psychologists consult children, parents and teachers about problems and incidents with children on the Internet.

An important priority in the Safer Internet Centre's activities is raising the awareness of children, parents and teachers about the online risks for children's safety by developing information materials, conducting campaigns, designing methodologies for schools and training pupils and teachers on Internet safety. In 2005, ARC Fund's Hotline was awarded a plate of honor by the Ministry of Interior for civic assistance to police work.

In 2017, ARC Fund's Safer Internet Program ran and helped expand the activities of the SIC and the Public Council on Safer Internet Use involving 22 stakeholders: public institutions, business associations, telecoms, civil society actors, experts and professionals. Children and youth participation has always been of significance in following the trends of ICTs use by minors and in consulting young people about the most efficient ways to reach and influence their peers in order to raise their awareness and skills to remain safe, while making use of the unlimited opportunities for learning and growing up as responsible and successful digital citizens that digital technologies offer.

In 2017, the SIC Hotline processed over 4000 reports. Hundreds of online child sexual exploitation websites and mate-

rials were identified and removed. The Cyber Crime Unit of the Ministry of Interior's Directorate-General for Combating Organized Crime helped identify and take into custody dozens of perpetrators involved in child sexual exploitation or in the production and dissemination of child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) online.

SIC developed a number of information, awareness and training materials and performed dozens of trainings of children, teachers and parents on how to avoid online threats and risks and respond to incidents on the Internet. In 2017, trainings were delivered to over 800 teachers, school psychologists, school counselors and social workers, more than 300 parents and over 350 children and teenagers in more than 25 towns nationwide. The SIC team updated and



240 children were trained in the Cyberscout Program

designed new methodologies for effective training. Its *Cyberscouts Training Program*, underway for a third consecutive year, has proven to be one of the most successful awareness raising and training tools.

The creation and regular update of a knowledge base supporting the development of state-of-the-art awareness and training tools and methods is an

important part of the SIC activities. As a representative for Bulgaria of the international research network *Global Kids Online*, ARC Fund conducted a national representative survey *Bulgarian Kids Online*. Comparing the new survey data with the findings of the previous *EU Kids Online* survey based on a similar methodology from 2010 helped identify the trends in ICT use and online risks to children. Based on the survey results,

CYBERSCOUTS TRAINING PROGRAM

In 2017, more than 240 children from 12 schools in 15 cities and towns in the country passed the two-day training. The certified 12-year-olds spread among more than 800 of their peers their knowledge about the main dangers and risks on the Internet and the appropriate ways to prevent them. The national cyberscouts' network already includes more than 500 children in 32 cities and towns. The program was ranked 9th in Europe by the European Crime Prevention Network (EUCPN).

three comparative analytical reports were published: *Bulgarian Kids Online: Risks and Harms*, *Parental Support for Development of Children's Digital Skills* and *Are Digital Natives Digitally Literate?*. The reports attracted broad interest among researchers, academics and professionals both in Bulgaria and abroad, as well as among the general public and the media. The findings were presented at the main national event marking the International Safer Internet Day 2017 and a conference organized by UNICEF Bulgaria and the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP).

The *Bulgarian Kids Online* survey findings became the basis of the first methodology for developing digital and media literacy (DML) of children in primary education in Bulgaria *From Digital Literacy*

to Digital Citizenship. The methodology devised by SIC experts, lecturers from the Faculty of Pre-School and Primary School Education (FPPSE) of Sofia University and practicing teachers, was piloted in dozens of schools and a proposal was made to the Ministry of Education and Science to include it in the primary school curriculum. The methodology has already become part of the curriculum of Bachelor's and Master's degree programs of Sofia University's FPPSE.

To combine its advocacy efforts with those of other organizations and stakeholders, ARC Fund, together with the Red House Centre for Culture and Debate and 12 other NGOs working for a 21st century educational reform, founded a *Coalition for Development of Media Lit-*



Findings from a national representative survey were presented to stakeholders and experts



A coalition for development of media literacy in primary schools was launched in September 2017



Bulgarian Youth discussed important topics of online safety with regional managers of Facebook

eracy in Schools launched on 11 September 2017 in Sofia. The coalition is open for new members, experts and professional educators. Among its prominent founders are the Institute for Progressive Education, the Association of European Journalists in Bulgaria, and Teach for Bulgaria Foundation, the National Network for Children, Education Bulgaria 2030, and The Voice of Children Foundation. The coalition will aim to encourage public debate on the topic and raise awareness about best practices in the development of digital and media literacy. To this end, it set an ambitious long-term agenda of initiatives and events focused on digital and media education in schools and on advocating adequate education reforms.

To involve children closely in achieving digital and media literacy, in April 2017 ARC Fund organized a youth event in Sofia at which 30 young people discussed important topics of online safety with regional managers of Facebook.

Members of the youth panel of SIC also participated in the national youth forum *Voice It*, organized by the National Network for Children where they emphasized the need for early development of digital and media literacy for prevention of the risks for children and young people in digital environments. The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre was one of the hosts of the forum which took place on 20 November 2017 at the Ancient Serdica Complex in Sofia. Young people suggested that in order to help decrease hate speech and aggression both offline and online, critical thinking and all components of digital and media literacy should be further incorporated in the school curricula.

The SIC youth panel developed the scenario for the major Safer Internet Day



A new mobile application was launched by the SIC

event in Bulgaria on 7 February 2017 in Sofia. They moderated a discussion between students, teachers, experts, and NGO representatives, and brainstormed case studies, illustrating hate speech on the Internet, as well as possible ways to prevent online hatred. Participants came up with specific recommendations to the Ministry of Education and Science.

Discussions continued at the annual Youth Parliament event in the town of Gorna Oryahovitsa and in several other Bulgarian towns as part of the the SIC school campaign *Ot Teb Z@visi* (mean-



Young people and professionals discussed on prevention of hate speech online on the International Safer Internet Day

ing “It all depends on you”). SIC developed presentations, lesson plans, and a teacher’s guide to be used in the classroom. More than 100 schools all over the country took part in the campaign.

In late 2017, the Safer Internet Centre launched a mobile application which provides quick access to the SIC Helpline and Hotline. It has a password strength checker and a test of users’ knowledge about online safety. *SafeNetApp* was developed with the support of Telenor

Bulgaria and Internet Society and is available for mobile devices with both Android and iOS. It supports a one-click opening of the online form for reporting illegal and harmful content and quick access to a Helpline consultant (via phone or chat). The application was designed as an educational game with a quick SIC contact functionality. If users want to enter in competition with other users, they can sign up to check their ranking among those who passed the test. They can also do the test repeatedly to improve their performance.