[IE] Hotline on Child Pornography

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At the end of November 1999, the Internet Service Providers Association (ISPA) launched a hotline service aimed at rooting out child pornography on the Internet in Ireland, either by removing it or by referring it to the gardai (police). The hotline will be available to receive complaints from the public about any child pornography found on the Net in Ireland. The intention is not to block web sites but rather to remove harmful material and, where the material is hosted outside the country, to pass the information on to the relevant organisation and co-ordinate removal of the material, if appropriate.

The hotline, which is financed by the ISPA, EU and the Irish Government, follows from the recommendations of the government's working group on illegal and harmful use of the Internet. The group, which reported in 1998, recommended the establishment of a system of self-regulation. As well as a complaints hotline, it would include common codes of practice and common acceptable usage conditions, an advisory body to coordinate measures to ensure a safe Internet environment and the development of an awareness programme to empower users to protect themselves or others in their care. In 1998 also, the Child Trafficking and Pornography Act was passed, which provided wideranging definitions and penalties (see IRIS 1998-10: 10).

Initially, the hotline will concentrate on child pornography but it is believed that the system and procedures being put in place could in the longer term be applied to other illegal uses of the Internet, such as copyright infringement or piracy.

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