European Commission: Safer Internet Day Stresses Children's Safety on the Internet

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This year, Safer Internet Day was celebrated on 7 February. In 37 countries across the world, including 24 EU countries, around 100 organisations participated in this annual event to promote internet safety for children. Safer Internet Day is organised by Insafe, the EU network for internet safety awareness. The latter is in line with the European Union's ongoing efforts to make the internet safe for children (see IRIS 2005-9: 3).

Insafe organised a global “blogathon” or “blog-marathon”. Organisations active in promoting internet safety and special guests made postings, and visitors, children, schools and parents were invited to comment. The blogathon aimed to raise awareness about the danger of posting personal information, the legal consequences of publishing copyright material and issues like false identity, hacking and security threats. Information Society and Media Commissioner, Viviane Reding, launched the blogathon focusing on treating each other with the same respect online as we do in the real world.

Results of a Eurobarometer survey on Safer Internet, run in December 2005, are to be published at the beginning of March. The Eurobarometer survey showed that although 50% of parents in the 25 Member States declare that their child has access to the internet, only 20% set rules regarding internet use. Most of the parents who do set rules deny their children access to certain websites (55%) and control time spent on the internet (53%). Less popular rules are not allowing children to meet in person someone they first contacted on the internet (35%) and not allowing downloads of music and films (19%).

Insafe is part of the Commission's Safer Internet Programme, which aims to hand parents and teachers the tools they need to ensure internet safety. The current 4-year programme, with a budget of EUR 45 million, is to combat illegal and harmful content, online as well as in other media. It explicitly addresses racism and e-mail spam. Other activities organised by Insafe this year include “I will teach you”. This event allows children to teach adults about their activities on the internet and mobile phones.

Current projects and activities in the Safer Internet Programme include 21 hotlines for users to report illegal content, 23 nodes for raising awareness of safer use of the internet, a quality labelling scheme for websites, pilot projects in self-

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regulation to combat spam and to extend content ratings to online games, benchmarking of filtering software and the Safer Internet Forum. In 2005, the Forum concentrated on safety issues raised by the use of mobile phones by children.

"Safer Internet Day 2006: EU stresses commitment to safer use of the Internet", press release of 7 February 2006, IP/06/126

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