[IE] Internet Content Advisory Group report published

IRIS 2014-8:1/28

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On 24 June 2014 the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources published the report of the Internet Content Advisory Group. The Group, which consisted of experts in the fields of child safety and online behaviour, as well as legal, technical and industry experts, and a student representative, considered emerging issues in the area of online content and its general impact on the lives of children and young people (see IRIS 2014-4/22).

The Group were asked to consider a number of issues arising for society, and in particular for children and young people, from the dramatic growth in Internet use. The Minister sought recommendations from the Group on the existing national regulatory and legislative frameworks, and policy responses to issues of internet content governance, specifically in relation to online abuse and the accessing of potentially harmful content.

In order to inform the policy recommendations a public consultation was undertaken and 59 responses were received from citizens, industry, not for profit organisations and representative groups. The Group also met with a number of the major international companies based in Ireland who operate in this space, including Facebook, Google, Twitter and Three Ireland.

The Report makes a series of recommendations that the Group believe will bring about better coordination of existing governance measures and that will target guidance and support to where it is needed most. They also recommend the consolidation of national governmental capacity to manage both the opportunities and inevitable risks that arise from convergence around the global Internet.

A total of 30 specific recommendations are made by the Group, these include:

- revising the role of the Office for Internet Safety to deal exclusively with issues of law enforcement and illegal online content;

- charging the Department of Communications Energy and Natural Resources with coordinating Internet content policy at government level;

- assigning responsibility for the implementation of the provisions of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, in relation to on-demand media services, to the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland;

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- establishing an inter-agency working group to identify appropriate mechanisms to ensure Internet safety and digital literacy skills are taught as a core element of the curriculum at both primary and post-primary levels;

- amending of the Communications Regulation (Amendment) Act 2007 to include 'electronic communications' within the definition of measures dealing with the 'sending of messages which are grossly offensive, indecent, obscene or menacing';

- encouraging Internet service providers and mobile network operators to include parental control products and services as part of their consumer offering; and

- a series of awareness-raising measures in order to highlight ways to prevent children from accessing age-inappropriate content.

Following publication of the Report the Minister announced the formation of an implementation group chaired by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources and comprising representatives of the Departments of Children and Youth Affairs, Education and Skills, Justice and Equality, and Health, who will agree on and oversee the implementation of the recommendations.

Report of the Internet Content Governance Advisory Group, May 2014

http://www.dcenr.gov.ie/NR/rdonlyres/0BCE1511-508E-4E97-B1A9-23A6BE9124AA/0/InternetContentGovernanceAdvisoryGroup.pdf

Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Press Release: Communications Minister announces new framework for the oversight of internet content, 24 June 2014

http://www.dcenr.gov.ie/Press+Releases/2014/Communications+Minister+announces+new+framework+for+the+oversight+of+internet+content.htm

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