# European Commission: Action Plan on Promoting Safe Use of the Internet

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As the Internet is used as the medium for a certain number of potentially illegal and detrimental sites and can also be used to distribute activities of a criminal nature, the European Commission adopted, on 26 November 1997, a proposal for an action plan on promoting safe use of the Internet. The proposal came in the form of a communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

The plan covers both illegal and detrimental content, which it examines both with regard to their approach and to the ways and means of controlling and penalising them.

Illegal content of certain net sites comes under various headings, such as national security (e.g. terrorist activities, protection of minors (e.g. pornography), protection of human dignity (e.g. racial discrimination), economic security (e.g. credit card fraud), the protection of privacy, intellectual property rights, etc. Illegal content has to be attacked at the source by the police and the judiciary authorities, with the backing of industry, through efficient self-regulation (codes of conduct, setting-up of hot-lines for users to report site contents they consider to be illegal).

The notion of detrimental content refers to site content which is authorised but the distribution of which is restricted (to adults, for example) or which could be offensive to certain users. Technological solutions (filtering and classification systems, self-regulation) systems can be used to control these sites, alongside a campaign to increase user awareness, especially among parents and teachers.

The Commission envisages four main lines of action :

- Creating a safe environment (hot-lines, self-regulation)

- Developing filtering and classification systems

- Encouraging awareness campaings

- Monitoring and support for legal developments in the sector.

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The action plan, as set out in the communication, should soon be included in a proposed decision of the Council of the European Union.

***Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, 26 November 1997, "Action Plan on promoting safe use of the Internet"***

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