

Safer Internet Action Plan

Work Programme 2003-2004

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The Safer Internet Action Plan Work Programme 2003-2004

1 INTRODUCTION

The Safer Internet Action Plan provides funding for activities to deal with illegal and harmful content, as part of a coherent approach by the European Union.

The Safer Internet Action Plan as originally adopted ran for 4 years 1999-2002¹. The European Parliament and Council have decided to extend it for a further two years 2003-2004². During this period ("the second phase"), the Safer Internet Action Plan aims to ensure more extensive interfacing with national programmes and actions, improved exchange of information and best practice between Member State activities as well as between the action lines of the programme.

The coverage of the Safer Internet Action Plan will extend to new online technologies, including mobile and broadband content, online games, peer-to-peer file transfer, and all forms of real-time communications such as chat rooms and instant messages primarily with the aim of improving the protection of children and minors. Action will be taken to ensure that a broader range of areas of illegal and harmful content and conduct of concern are covered, including racism and violence. During the second phase, the Action Plan will progress towards integrated trans-national networks, encouraging stronger ties with national initiatives, providing a platform for exchanges and a framework for effective co-operation.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Analysis of the situation

By far the greatest use of Internet and new online technologies is for constructive informational or recreational purposes. This use will increase and diversify. However the use of the same technologies to spread illegal and harmful content will also increase and diversify at the same time.

There is continuing public concern about illegal and harmful content on the Internet, but also increasing activity at national level. Use of the Internet by paedophiles to contact children for online or offline sexual activity is a cause for increasing anxiety.

Types of *illegal* content or conduct include not only distribution of child pornography or racist material, but also use of computer networks and technologies to facilitate other offences.

Harmful content may either be content which is defined as such by law and so made subject to measures intended to restrict access by minors, or quite simply content which individual parents do not wish their children to see.

Most people would agree that children should not be exposed to content which is harmful to them. Such widespread agreement still leaves considerable room for discussion about what content is actually harmful for children of a particular age, who

¹ European Parliament and Council Decision N° 276/1999/EC of 25.1.1999, OJ L 33, 6.2.1999, p. 1.

² European Parliament and Council Decision N° 1151/2003/EC of 16.6.2003, OJ L 162, 1.7.2003, p 1.

should decide on the general rules which content providers should observe and who should decide on the application of those rules.

In a given age group there will be children who may react differently to depictions of sexual activity or violence. Different parents will take different approaches. It is also an area where national approaches seem to vary considerably.

The European Union has been a frontrunner in the fight against illegal and harmful content since 1996, with an approach agreed unanimously by the European Parliament and the Council. This is evidenced by the adoption of the Resolution on the Commission Communication on illegal and harmful content on the Internet by the European Parliament on 24 April 1997 and the adoption of [Council Recommendation](#) of 24 September 1998 on protection of minors and human dignity³, which is the first legal instrument concerning the content of on-line audiovisual and information services made available on the Internet. The implementation of the Recommendation was evaluated for the first time in 2001⁴ and as the Recommendation is closely linked to the Safer Internet Action Plan it should be noted that it is the intention of the Commission to adopt a second report on the implementation of the Recommendation at the end of this year. The proposed Council Framework Decision on combating the sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, which includes common definitions of sexual crimes against children and harmonises the range of penalties which national courts can impose on offenders, is an example of successful action at this level.

The Safer Internet Action Plan has been a major element in the Community's activity in the field. Considerable progress has been made in various methods of dealing with illegal and harmful content. More details can be found under the relevant action line descriptions.

The Safer Internet Action Plan is designed to facilitate practical measures where Community financial support is appropriate and effective, not requiring a change in the law to meet a need for enhanced co-ordination and support, for exchanging information, spreading best practice and fostering widely accepted codes of conduct.

2.2 What's different in the second phase?

- i. Enhanced networking will be encouraged through a Safer Internet Forum among all those active in the field in Member States and between project participants in the various action lines, particularly in the fields of hotlines, awareness-raising, content rating and self-regulation;
- ii. More active involvement of the content industry and media will be encouraged, and collaboration with government-backed bodies active in the area will be expanded;
- iii. Steps will be taken to involve associate candidate countries in ongoing activities and to share experience and know-how, and to increase links and encourage collaboration with similar activities in third countries, particularly

³ OJ L 270, 7.10.1998, p. 48.

⁴ Evaluation Report to the Council and the European Parliament on the application of Council Recommendation of 24 September 1998 on protection of minors and human dignity, COM(2001) 106 final, 27.2.2001.

countries where illegal content is hosted or produced, and with international organisations;

- iv. The coverage of safer use will be extended, primarily with the aim of improving the protection of children and minors, to new online technologies, including mobile and broadband content, online games, peer-to-peer file transfer, and all forms of real-time communications such as chat rooms and instant messages;
- v. Intensified action will likewise be taken to ensure that, primarily in the area of the protection of children and minors, a broader range of areas of illegal and harmful content and conduct of concern are covered, with an emphasis on crimes against children, such as child pornography and trafficking in children, and on racism and violence, and to promote awareness of issues related to data protection/privacy, network and data security and consumer protection in so far as they affect the use of the Internet by minors.

3 SCOPE OF THE PROGRAMME

The programme comprises the following action lines for the second phase:

Action line 1 Creating a safer environment

- 1.1 Creating a European network of hot-lines
- 1.2 Encouraging self-regulation and codes of conduct
- 1.3 Quality labelling scheme

Action line 2 Developing filtering and rating systems

- 2.1 Benchmarking of filtering software and services
- 2.2 Encouraging user-friendly content rating

Action line 3 Raising awareness

- 3.1 Setting up a broadly-based European network
- 3.2 Applied research in media education
- 3.3 Eurobarometer survey

Action line 4 Programme support

3.1 Approach

The general approach taken will be to enhance networking of, and information sharing among, those active in the field, while building on and strengthening achievements under the previous Safer Internet Action Plan. Actions based on facilitating co-operation and providing financial support to projects will take account of the global nature of the Internet by reaching out to candidate countries and to major players in third countries.

3.2 Financial support to projects

The main financial instrument will be grants to cost-shared projects. Under the Financial Regulation⁵, all such grants need to be co-financed by the contractors, who will need to demonstrate in the proposal their contribution to the project. The normal rate of funding for such projects will be 50%. The Commission will finance a limited number of projects at a higher rate, to cover the additional costs and the specific requirements of network co-ordination. The Commission will use a limited number of service contracts, for tasks involving specialist skills and logistical support. The standard EC procedures will apply for selecting and managing these projects (calls for proposals, calls for tenders).

The Safer Internet Action Plan will emphasise networking to achieve its objectives, particularly in the area of hotlines, where a network already exists, and awareness, where a new network will be set up. In order to ensure coverage of all Member States and of candidate countries joining the programme, national nodes will be able to make individual applications to join the network. A specific node will be charged with co-ordination.

3.3 Candidate countries

Negotiations are under way with candidate countries. They may not however be able to make the necessary arrangements to participate early in the programme. The continuous submission scheme will provide an opportunity for organisations from candidate countries to apply for funding.

Furthermore, operations targeting candidate countries, such as making provisions for EEA organisations to encompass such countries (e.g. hotlines established in EU countries providing mentoring, mobility and technical assistance such as establishing contacts and stimulating awareness etc) will be encouraged.

4 ACTION LINE 1 CREATING A SAFER ENVIRONMENT

4.1 Creating a European network of hotlines

4.1.1 Progress to date

Hotlines for reporting harmful and illegal content now exist in 13 Member States and Iceland, forming an EU hotline network under the umbrella of the INHOPE organisation, which also has associate members in the US and Australia. Between Dec. 2001 and May 2002 INHOPE members have processed more than 35.000 reports.

4.1.2 Objective

Preliminary consultation has shown that Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) appreciate and benefit from the input and support of hotlines. Throughout the consultation process there was strong support from LEAs for hotlines provided that they are 'official' (recognised by Member States), with clear responsibilities and follow agreed protocol and procedures. There is a need to develop a stronger framework for co-operation addressing issues surrounding the national status and

5 Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002 of 25 June 2002 on the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Communities (OJ L 248, 16.9.2002). http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/oj/dat/2002/l_248/l_24820020916en00010048.pdf

legal operation of a hotline, recognised tasks of a hotline, code of conduct addressing anonymity, protection of confidential data, integrity of personnel etc. National LEAs considered that the Commission could provide a platform for further discussions at European level, to increase effectiveness of co-operation.

During the second phase, the aim will be to complete the network's coverage in the Member States and to improve yet further the operational effectiveness of the network, to work closely with safer Internet awareness actions, particularly so as to increase public awareness of the hotlines, to provide practical assistance to candidate countries wishing to set up hotlines, to adapt best practice guidelines to new technology, and to expand links with hotlines outside Europe.

4.1.3 Establishing hotlines in the member and candidate states

In order for the hotline network to develop its full potential, it is necessary to ensure Europe-wide coverage and co-operation, and increase effectiveness through exchange of information, best practice and experience.

1. New hotlines are required in those EU and candidate countries where none currently exists.
2. These must be incorporated quickly and effectively into the existing European network of hot-lines.
3. Links between this network and hot-lines in third countries should be promoted, enabling the development of common approaches and transfer of know-how and best practice.
4. Existing mechanisms for co-operation between the national hot-lines and LEAs must be further improved.
5. There is a need for legal and technical training of hotline staff.

A standardised set of tasks and performance indicators will be used, in order to ensure comparability and to simplify project management and reporting. Active participation in networking and cross-border activities is mandatory. The hotline national nodes will be required to:

- establish, if necessary, and operate a hotline to receive information from the public relating to illegal content
- inform users of the hotline's scope of activity and how to contact it
- deal rapidly with complaints received, in accordance with best practice guidelines drawn up by the network and in co-operation with LEAs
- exchange specific information on identified illegal content in real time with other nodes of the network
- establish regular reports and consult with representative industry, user and public bodies
- provide statistics on the number and type of reports received in order to quantify the scale and type of the problem, public perceptions and how these vary throughout Europe
- in co-operation with LEAs, monitor success of operations by reporting instances of withdrawn content
- contribute to cross-border discussions and exchange of best practice

Hotlines should be linked to Member State initiatives, approved and supported at national level and should be financially viable to ensure continued operation beyond the duration of the present programme. Co-funding is intended for civilian hotlines which complement the activities of law enforcement but are not part of the mechanism of law enforcement, and so will **not** be provided for hotlines run by the police.

Note that within this document “national” refers to activities within Member States, as distinct from those at European level. It is, of course, for Member States to decide how best to implement actions within their country in accordance with specific national and regional requirements and policies.

In addition, where permitted by their charter, hotlines will be invited to extend their scope beyond child pornography to include other harmful and illegal content and conduct, and to extend their coverage to new online technologies. In appropriate cases, the same organisation could carry out the function of both hotline and awareness node.

The Commission will ensure close co-operation between the Safer Internet Action Plan and ongoing and upcoming funding programmes in the area of Justice and Home Affairs.

4.1.4 Hotline network co-ordination

In order to achieve maximum impact and effectiveness with available funding, the hotline network must operate as efficiently as possible. This can be best achieved by assigning a co-ordinating node to the network, which will develop European-level guidelines, working methods and practices. With the support of the co-ordinating node, the national hotlines will be free to concentrate on local implementation of the strategy and their core task of receiving and acting on reports of illegal and harmful content, in close co-operation with LEAs.

The co-ordinating node will:

- take contact with appropriate bodies with a view to completing the network’s coverage in the Member States
- improve the operational effectiveness of the network
- draw up best practice guidelines for hotlines and adapt them to new technology
- organise regular exchange of information and experience between hotlines
- provide a pool of expertise for advice and a coaching process for start-up hotlines, particularly in candidate countries
- ensure liaison with hotlines in third countries
- work closely with safer Internet awareness actions, particularly so as to increase public awareness of the hotlines, and to promote the network as a whole, generating European-level visibility e.g. a single identity and entry point providing simple access to the appropriate national contact,
- ensure regular contributions about hotline activities to the awareness web site and newsletter
- manage collection and exchange of statistical information

- participate in Safer Internet Forum and other relevant events, co-ordinating input/feedback from hotlines

Monitoring effectiveness of hotlines and collecting accurate and meaningful statistics on their operation (number of and type reports received, action taken and result etc.) is a critical task to quantify and qualify the extent of the problem, providing key information to decision makers. It will also provide a key input into awareness actions providing valuable feedback of the state of awareness in a given country. A close working relationship between the hotline co-ordinating node and the awareness co-ordinating node (see section 6.1) is essential to ensure the cohesion and effectiveness of overall programme operations.

4.1.5 Implementation

Co-funding will be made available at 50% to support the activities of national hotlines and to encourage participation in activities at European level:

- Participation in central network activities will be part of hotline tasks.
- Considering the European nature of the task, the specialised support infrastructure to be provided and the requirement for particular skills, the Commission is prepared to fund the co-ordinating node up to 80%.

A call for proposals will be published under the continuous submission scheme to allow **national hotlines** to apply for funding (identifier HOTNODE). A fixed deadline call for the **hotline network co-ordinating node** will be launched early in the programme (identifier HOTCOORD).

4.2 Encouraging self-regulation and codes of conduct

4.2.1 Progress to date

During the period up to February 2004, the existing selfregulation.info⁶ project run by PCMLP, the Oxford University Programme for Comparative Media Law and Policy, will be continuing its collection and analysis of self-regulatory and co-regulatory schemes and codes of conduct / best practices in the Internet and, for comparison, other relevant areas such as e-commerce, film and video, broadcasting, press and advertising codes. The geographical scope includes Member States and candidate countries, together with a number of third countries. The project makes such codes/practices available and provides advice and assistance on request to bodies on developing, implementing and monitoring codes of conduct. The selfregulation.info project has been given the task of proposing methods for implementing the distribution of quality labels. An international workshop took place in February 2003 which was open to all interested parties to tackle the issues involved in certification in the various media sectors and to see if there is a consensus on the way forward.

4.2.2 Objective

A fully functioning system of self-regulation is an essential element in limiting the flow of harmful and illegal content. Self-regulation involves a number of components: consultation and representativeness of the parties concerned; code(s) of conduct; national bodies facilitating co-operation at Community level; national evaluation of

6 <http://www.selfregulation.info>

self-regulation frameworks.⁷ There is a continuing need for Community work in this area. Under this action the intention is to build on preliminary work undertaken within the Safer Internet Action Plan in order to encourage implementation of codes of conduct within the European Internet and new media industries.

During the second phase advice and assistance will continue to be provided so as to ensure co-operation at Community level through networking of the appropriate bodies within Member States and candidate countries and through systematic review and reporting of relevant legal and regulatory issues, to help develop methods of assessment and certification of self-regulation, to provide practical assistance to countries wishing to set up self-regulatory bodies and to expand links with self-regulatory bodies outside Europe.

4.2.3 *Safer Internet Forum*

As a new instrument of the programme, it is proposed to create the Safer Internet Forum, providing a focal point for discussion at expert level and a platform to drive consensus, inputting conclusions, recommendations, guidelines etc. to relevant national and European channels.

The Forum will span all action lines, facilitating discussion and stimulating action relevant to harmful and illegal content. Consisting of plenary sessions and working groups, it will be a meeting place for actors from all areas – including government agencies and programmes, industry, other services within the European Commission, user organisations (e.g. parent and teacher associations, child protection groups, consumer protection bodies). The Forum will provide an opportunity for people active at national level, especially those involved in Member State programmes and initiatives, to exchange views, information and experience.

The Safer Internet Forum will have the specific objectives of:

1. Stimulating networking of the appropriate structures within Member States and developing links with self-regulatory bodies outside Europe
2. Increasing knowledge of national and international legal issues surrounding illegal content and the use of Internet and the scope for legislative, co- and self-regulatory measures
3. Stimulating consensus and self-regulation on issues such as quality rating of websites, code of conduct for service providers, cross-media content rating and extending rating and filtering techniques beyond the Internet to other areas such as mobile phones and online games
4. Examining the role of self-regulation in protection of minors, including where appropriate consumer protection, data protection/privacy, network and data security
5. Identifying means e.g. an approved ISP accreditation certificate, to ensure uptake of codes of conduct by industry

⁷ see the indicative guidelines for the implementation, at national level, of a self-regulation framework for the protection of minors and human dignity in on-line audiovisual and information services. Council Recommendation of 24 September 1998 on the development of the competitiveness of the European audiovisual and information services industry by promoting national frameworks aimed at achieving a comparable and effective level of protection of minors and human dignity (OJ L 270, 7.10.1998, p. 48).

Working groups will be convened for specific issues, with clear objectives and deadlines. Results and findings from ongoing and completed projects co-funded by the Action Plan will feed into the process. Thus, the Forum will provide a key link between first and second phases of the Safer Internet Action Plan, as well as between the Action Plan's action lines. By providing an open platform, it will help to raise levels of awareness and attract the involvement of the candidate states and other countries outside the EU, providing an international arena to address a global problem. The Forum will, therefore, ensure that key associations, industries and public bodies are aware of, are consulted on and contribute to safer use initiatives within the EU and internationally.

Suitable national representatives will be identified in each Member State, after appropriate consultations with the programme committee and other relevant authorities. The national representatives in the Safer Internet Forum are not intended to replace official national representatives e.g. those on the Programme Committee. They will act as key partners of the Commission for issues related to safer use of new online technologies. National participants will ensure that the Commission and other Member States are kept aware of national policy initiatives and examples of best practice.

The Safer Internet Forum will be open to participation of interested parties from outside the EU and candidate countries. International co-operation will be enhanced by a round table linked to the Forum in order to ensure regular dialogue on best practice, codes of conduct, self-regulation and quality ratings. The Commission will ensure that synergies with related fora and similar initiatives are fully exploited.

4.2.4 Implementation

A call for tenders will be organised in order to provide a secretariat to support the Safer Internet Forum including subject-field experts to suggest themes of study, prepare working papers, moderate discussions and record conclusions.

4.3 Quality labels

A system of visible "quality-site labels" for Internet Service Providers will be encouraged to assist users in identifying providers that adhere to widely recognised codes of conduct together with self-regulatory initiatives to back-up the reliability of self-labelling and services to audit the accuracy of self-rating labels. The discussions showed that there had already been considerable work in the area of quality labels, some in the framework of projects with Community funding. Any new scheme should therefore build on existing work and involve those who took part so as to benefit from their experience. The organisation awarding the quality site labels will take responsibility for its findings and the European Commission will not endorse the specific findings of the project. It is intended that the project should be self-sustainable in the medium term.

4.3.1 Implementation

A call for proposals (identifier QUALAB) for running a more widespread scheme will be published. Such an operation will receive 50% Community funding as a contribution in the start-up period but a more permanent source of finance to cover costs in the medium term will be required.

5 ACTION LINE 2 DEVELOPING FILTERING AND RATING SYSTEMS

To promote safer use of the Internet, illegal and harmful content must be easy to identify. Rating and filtering systems can help empowering users to select the content they wish to receive. Ratings may be attached by the content provider or provided by a third-party rating service. Filtering and rating systems must be internationally compatible and interoperable and developed with full co-operation of representatives of industry and users.

Significant progress has already been made (see below). The next step is to improve information about the reliability of existing rating and filtering systems and to examine additional needs created by new technologies, to increase adoption of content self-rating by industry and to increase the awareness and confidence of parents and other users to boost uptake.

This work should take into account user needs, by establishing the concerns of parents, teachers and other supervisors about content which they may wish to filter out, analysing different ways of using the Internet and other information technologies and suggesting ways of adapting filtering and rating techniques accordingly.

This action line consists of two actions:

- Benchmarking filtering software and services
- Encouraging user-friendly content rating

5.1 Benchmarking filtering software and services

5.1.1 Progress to date

13 projects which will improve the reliability of existing technology are being co-funded in the area of content rating and filtering. Synergies between projects have been identified leading to considerable cross-fertilisation and sharing of results. A number of products are now available on the market. The projects will significantly advance the state of the art and enhance user choice. The second phase will therefore concentrate on increasing the information available about performance and effectiveness of filtering software and services so that user can exercise that choice.

5.1.2 Objective

The objective of this action is to provide funding to allow an expert, vendor-independent, objective assessment of the filtering software currently available and to make recommendations for future products and lines of applied research. This is necessary to increase users' confidence in filtering systems, not to mention increasing their awareness of the filtering possibilities. Work will focus on benchmarking of filtering software and services considering performance, usability, resistance to hacking, suitability for European users and new forms of digital content. Assistance for advancing filtering technology will be provided under the Community research programme in close liaison with activities relating to content filtering under the Safer Internet Action Plan.

The organisation(s) carrying out the benchmarking will be expected to identify special issues relating to new or immature content technologies and recommend areas which should be targeted by future research. The final report on benchmarking should be prepared with a view to widespread dissemination, via the awareness actions.

The organisation carrying out the benchmarking will take responsibility for its findings and the European Commission will not endorse the specific findings of the project. It is intended that the project should be self-sustainable in the medium term.

The benchmarking exercise should focus on the role of a parental guardian over a hypothetical group of children. The benchmarking should commence with a definition of user needs, taking account of Europe's linguistic and cultural diversity. A consistently structured and comprehensive scoring approach should allow end-user carers and other target groups to select the most appropriate tool for their individual requirements.

The test process should produce comparative data on products tested. In the first place, an analysis should be made of the product documentation. Each product will be installed in accordance with the instructions, and once installed, the product should be tested on the basis of the default configuration. Further tests could be carried out to establish the degree of user configurability and the effectiveness of different settings.

To produce exploitable results, the criteria classes configurability, usability, effectiveness as well as transparency must be addressed.

The configurability covers all issues related to the set-up of each software component, including ease of installation and uninstallation, parameter configuration, setting up classes of users (e.g. age, cultural background), customising filtering criteria, as well as the quality of the documentation.

Under usability, is an advanced level of expertise necessary, or is an "out-of-the-box" running possible?

Under performance, the impact on system stability and operational integrity is to be assessed and whether a slow down of Internet access or other performance degradations are observed. Moreover, the software must not be able to be easily bypassed or disabled, as many young computer users are knowledgeable enough to try to uninstall content-filtering software or to fool the software. So each program's ability to prevent these tricks needs to be evaluated.

The criterion effectiveness represents the core functionality of filtering software. Whether the functioning is based on real-time filtering and/or rating, the fundamental question is not to know in all details how each tool works internally, but how efficient the filter is blocking all undesirable internet content, and also how far innocuous internet content is blocked as well ("overblocking"). The various content categories (pornography, hate, violence, racism, xenophobia, discrimination, drugs, terrorism, arms and explosives,...) have to be separately taken into account, as well as their presentation format (text/image/multi-media/...).

Attention should be paid to the supported transfer protocols. The benchmark should measure ability to deal with classical http, and the ability to filter or block other protocols and services such as download (ftp), eMail (pop3/smtp), peer-to-peer file transfer protocols, chat, instant messaging etc. where the documentation claims that these are filtered or blocked.

In terms of transparency, all monitoring and logging functions allowing the supervision and follow-up for the understanding of the software usage are meant. Particularly interesting is which reporting facilities exist and whether tracking logs are securely held.

The set of products to be tested should include both those aimed at individual end-users and those aimed at a typical groups of users such as a school network or library. A mechanism should be put in place for deciding how many and which versions of a product to test, if it is available simultaneously in a number of versions (client/ server, Windows / Macintosh / Linux etc), taking the definition of user needs into account.

Standards for quality assessment (cf. ISO 9126) should be used as a basis for benchmarking.

Special attention must be paid to security integrity, e.g. the resistance against hacker attacks and virus proof (including worms and Trojan Horses).

For the benchmark tool itself a standard test method (how the tests should be performed) as well as a standard test set need to be elaborated according to minimal requirements. To automate as much as possible the benchmark, a test driver and recorder would be welcome. For the presentation / visualisation of the results Standard reports need to be defined at an early stage, starting with the tabular presentation of the filtering software tools' claims.

5.1.3 Implementation

A call for proposals with a fixed deadline (Call identifier BENCH) will be launched to select an appropriate entity to carry out the work. In order to ensure a comprehensive analysis of all relevant issues, it is anticipated that the assessment will feature two evaluation campaigns over a two year period. Such an operation will receive 50% Community funding as a contribution in the start-up period but a more permanent source of finance to cover costs in the medium term will be required.

Proposers should indicate the number of filtering products which it is intended to test. The minimum test set is 10 products available in at least 3 Member States of the EU.

Eligibility: the selected contractor should be seen to be impartial. Proposers (and, where applicable, other companies in the same group) should not be active in developing filtering software or be part of a consortium developing such software or have any financial interest in products to be tested or other competing products.

The selected contractor should have experience in the area of product testing, and have both the necessary technical infrastructure and access to expertise in filtering technology and assessment of content.

5.2 Encouraging user-friendly content rating

5.2.1 Progress to date

The International Content Rating Association (ICRA), which received funding under the Safer Internet Action Plan, has produced a content rating system suitable for EU and international needs. Content providers rate the content on their own sites. Parents are free to set acceptance criteria according to their personal and cultural preferences and beliefs.

5.2.2 Objective

The second phase will promote take-up of self-rating by content providers and inform users about European filtering software and services.

The issues of rating and self-regulation/codes of conduct are linked and none can progress significantly without the existence of the others. This action line aims to bring together the industries and parties concerned such as content providers, regulatory and self-regulatory bodies, software and Internet rating organisations and

consumer associations, in order to further the implementation of rating systems which are easy for content-providers and consumers to understand and to use.

The rating systems should provide European parents and educators with the necessary information to make decisions in accordance with their cultural and linguistic values, and which take account of the convergence of telecommunications, audio-visual media and information technology.

5.2.3 Implementation

The issue of comparative content rating systems in the various media (television, film, interactive games, Internet) and different forms of transmission will be examined as part of the work of the Safer Internet Forum.

Information of users about European filtering software and services will be a task for the awareness network.

6 ACTION LINE 3 RAISING AWARENESS

6.1 Setting up a broadly-based European network

6.1.1 Progress to date

Awareness projects have produced valuable information on the way children use the Internet, provided insight into the best way to deliver the message about safer use and produced educational material. A large number of national and European awareness programmes exist, using various techniques and approaches. Altogether 12 projects covering 16 of the 18 EEA countries have taken part in projects establishing contacts and collaborative networks to raise awareness with partners from the public sector and NGOs and limited participation of industry.

6.1.2 Objectives

Awareness is the necessary complement of Action lines 1 and 2, since developments under these action lines will bear fruit only if actual and potential users are aware of them. Given the huge potential target audience for awareness actions (government ministries and regulators, parents, teachers and their associations, child-welfare groups) and the relatively small amount of funding available, the Safer Internet Action Plan will help to cluster, co-ordinate and leverage national initiatives in order to achieve added value and a broad campaign with maximum effect.

The Commission will continue to take steps to encourage cost-effective means of distribution to large numbers of users, notably by using multiplier organisations and electronic dissemination channels so as to reach the intended target groups.

Building on awareness work already undertaken, the emphasis of the second phase is on outputting and disseminating the message regarding safe use of the Internet. The Safer Internet Action Plan will provide co-ordination, via national nodes, of awareness actions and programmes in each Member State. A co-ordinating node will be funded to provide overall co-ordination of, and logistical support to national nodes, ensuring high European-level visibility of an effective awareness campaign implemented at national level. In particular, there is considerable scope for exchange of experience and best practice considering, for example, issues such as the most appropriate medium (press, TV, radio etc.) for a given country or sector.

Awareness actions will not be restricted to the issue of Web content considered unsuitable for children, but may address several categories of harmful content

(including e.g. xenophobia) as well as new forms of interactive information and communication brought about by the rapid deployment of the Internet (e.g. mobile and peer-to-peer services, broadband video, instant messaging, chat-rooms, etc.).

6.1.3 *National awareness actions*

Effective safer Internet awareness raising is most cost-effective when organised on a national basis, but co-ordinated at European level. The intermediate evaluation report⁸ called for greater co-ordination both within countries as well as between countries. To address these comments, the Safer Internet Action Plan will focus on co-ordinating actions using the Open Co-operation Method to set out common guidelines, methods, monitoring procedures and benchmarks based on agreed indicators.

In order for the awareness campaign to achieve its full potential, it is necessary to ensure Europe wide coverage. Therefore, it is a priority **to select appropriate bodies to act as awareness nodes in each Member State** and in each candidate country.

Bodies seeking to act as national nodes will need to show that they have the strong support of national authorities. They should have a clear mandate to educate the public in safer use of the Internet and new media or in media and information literacy, and must have the necessary financial resources to implement that mandate.

National nodes will be expected to:

- devise a cohesive, hard-hitting and targeted awareness campaign using the most appropriate media, taking into account best practice and experience in other countries
- establish and maintain a partnership (formal or informal) with key players (government agencies, press and media groups, ISP associations) and actions in their country relating to safer use of Internet and new media
- co-operate with work in the wider field of media and information literacy
- inform users about European filtering software and services and about hotlines
- actively co-operate with other national nodes in the European network by exchanging information about best practices, participating in meetings and designing and implementing a European approach, adapted as necessary for national linguistic and cultural preferences
- provide a pool of expertise and technical assistance to start-up awareness nodes (new nodes could be 'adopted' by a more experienced node)

6.1.4 *Awareness network co-ordination*

To ensure maximum co-operation and effectiveness, a co-ordinating node will be funded to provide logistical and infrastructural support for national nodes, ensuring European-level visibility, good communication and exchange of experience so that lessons learnt can be applied on an ongoing basis (for instance by adapting awareness material).

The co-ordinating node should:

- provide effective communication and exchange of information and best practice within the network

⁸ http://europa.eu.int/information_society/programmes/evaluation/pdf/report1iap_en.pdf

- provide training in safer use of Internet and new technologies for national node staff (training for trainers)
- provide technical assistance to candidate countries wishing to set up awareness actions
- co-ordinate national nodes' provision of expertise and technical assistance to start-up awareness nodes
- propose indicators and manage collection, analysis and exchange of statistical information about national awareness-raising activities so as to assess their impact
- provide infrastructure for a single, comprehensive trans-national repository (web portal) of relevant information and awareness and research resources with localised content (or local sub-sites as appropriate) including news snippets, articles, monthly newsletter in several languages as well as providing visibility for Forum activities
- expand links with awareness activities outside Europe
- participate in Safer Internet Forum and other relevant events, co-ordinating input/feedback from awareness network

6.1.5 Implementation

A call for proposals will be published under the continuous submission scheme to allow **awareness national nodes** (identifier AWARENODE) to apply for 50% funding. Proposers will be required to demonstrate the support of national authorities.

Considering the European nature of the task, the specialised support infrastructure to be provided and the requirement for particular skills, the Commission is prepared to fund the co-ordinating node up to 80%. A fixed deadline call for the **awareness network co-ordinating node** will be launched in mid-2003.

6.2 Applied research on media education

A call for proposals for 50% funding will be published (identifier MEDIA) to carry out applied research on media education involving all interested parties (e.g. education, official and voluntary children's welfare bodies, parents and teachers associations, industry, law-enforcement) into children's use of Internet and new technologies so as to identify educational and technological means for protecting them from harm, and develop training for trainers. Special attention will be paid to new technologies, especially computer games and mobile phones which are media growing in popularity with young people and where technological advances are likely to enable increasingly content-rich services. Work should include collection and analysis of existing results and studies across countries and age groups, considering and identifying national perceptions, beliefs, values and behaviour. Proposers should aim to cover gaps and weaknesses which emerge and extend the analysis to new technologies.

6.3 Eurobarometer survey

A Europe-wide survey on the issue of safer use of Internet and other new technologies by children will be carried out. This survey will provide reliable data from all Member States on public awareness of Internet safety, enabling evaluation of past action, and more importantly, providing ongoing projects with improved data to plan future

campaigns. The results of the survey should also stimulate interest in the news media, providing additional visibility for the programme.

The survey will be carried out through Eurobarometer, which is a regular opinion poll carried out by polling specialists on behalf of the European Commission across all Member States. A number of additional questions specific to the safer use of the Internet will be added to one of the regular surveys. A pool of experts in the safer Internet field will help analyse results.

7 ACTION LINE 4 PROGRAMME SUPPORT

7.1.1 Objective

This action line is used to fund general activities in support of the programme, including project reviews, studies and publications, conferences, seminars and meetings and final programme evaluation.

7.1.2 Implementation

Project-level reviews and strategic evaluation are an ongoing feature of the programme. It is obviously essential to make an in-depth evaluation in order to assess whether the objectives of the Action Plan have been achieved. An intermediate evaluation has already been carried out. A further evaluation at the four-year stage (end of the original Safer Internet Action Plan) will take place during the first half of 2003. This should provide useful input for planning activities beyond 2004. In order to fully assess the work carried out in the period 2003-2004, a final evaluation will be carried out at the end of Safer Internet Action Plan.

8 OUTLINE SCHEDULE OF MAIN CALLS

The following schedule is indicative only

8.1 Actions planned for 2003

August	Call for proposals for: hotline national nodes (continuous submission) hotline co-ordinating nodes (fixed deadline) quality labels for Web sites (fixed deadline) benchmarking filtering software and services (fixed deadline) awareness national nodes (continuous submission) awareness co-ordinating nodes (fixed deadline) applied research on media education (fixed deadline)
September	Calls for tenders: support for Safer Internet Forum

8.2 Actions planned for 2004

March	Call for tenders (Final Programme Evaluation)
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9 ACTION LINES OVERVIEW

	Item	First Phase (1999-2002)	Second Phase (2003-2004)
1.1	Hotlines	INHOPE association; 13 hotlines covering 11 countries, plus (non-funded) associates in USA and Australia	Expand to other EU/EFTA countries; reach out to candidate countries; strengthen international links.
1.2	Support for self-regulation	Advice to self regulatory bodies on codes of conduct (IAPCODE contract)	Networking of the appropriate structures within Member States through a Safer Internet Forum, expand links with self-regulatory bodies outside Europe supported by an "observatory" for legal/regulatory and technology/market watch. Examination of role of self-regulation in protection of minors, including consumer protection, data protection/privacy, network and data security
1.3	Quality labels scheme		Quality labels to assist users in identifying providers that adhere to widely recognised codes of conduct together with self-regulatory initiatives to back-up the reliability of self-labelling and services to audit the accuracy of self-rating labels.
2	Rating and filtering	5 rating and filtering projects (1999 call), 8 new projects (2001 call)	Focus on benchmarking of filtering software and services (performance, usability, suitability for European markets and new forms of digital content). Technical developments placed within Community research programmes. Work on rating to take account of convergence.
3.1	Awareness network	9 awareness projects, Safer Internet awareness exchange; 2002 call will aim to progress towards an integrated network of national focal points	Continue setting up European network for raising awareness of safer use of the Internet and new online technologies through exchange of best practice on new-media education, backed by a comprehensive transnational repository (web portal) of information and awareness resources. The network will also provide assistance to candidate countries wishing to set up awareness actions and expand links with awareness activities outside Europe.
3.2	Research on media education		Applied research on media education children's use of new technologies to identify educational and technological means for protecting them from harm.
3.3	Eurobarometer survey		Eurobarometer survey - Europe-wide survey on the issue of safer use of Internet and other new technologies by children will be carried out.
4	Support actions	Programme evaluation	Evaluations, reviews, publications

10 BUDGET OVERVIEW (2003 – 2004) - INDICATIVE

Action Line	2003 (000 euro)	2004 (000 euro)	Comment
1. Creating a safer environment			
1.1 <i>Creating a European network of hotlines</i>	1,950	1,350	Network nodes 50% funded central network activities 80% funded; 600 keuro
1.2 <i>Encouraging self-regulation and codes of conduct</i>		600	Service contract support for Safer Internet Forum
1.3 <i>Quality labelling scheme</i>	400	0	50% funded
Sub-total AL 1	2,350	1,950	
2 Developing filtering and rating systems			
2.1 <i>Benchmarking filtering software and services</i>		500	50% funded
Sub-total AL 2		500	
3 Awareness			
3.1 <i>Setting up a broadly-based European network</i>	3,950	3,050	Network nodes 50% funded, support for central network activities (600 keuro) 80% funded
3.2 <i>Applied research in media education</i>		500	50% funded
3.3 <i>Eurobarometer survey</i>	100	100	under framework contract
Sub-total AL 3	4,050	3,650	
4. Programme support			
<i>Proposal evaluations, final programme evaluation, project audits</i> <i>Project reviews</i> <i>International conferences, seminars and meetings (Commission-organised)</i> <i>Publications</i>	200	600	Service contracts
Sub-total AL 4	200	600	
Total	6,600	6,700	

The results of the evaluation of proposals under fixed deadlines and first evaluation under continuous submission will be used to select projects for funding under both the 2003 and 2004 budgets.

Priority for funding under the 2003 budget will depend on:

- operational requirements, in particular the need for a co-ordinating node for the hotlines and awareness networks;
- the relative quality of proposals selected

- ability of proposers to supply additional information to enable contracts to be drawn up

The breakdown by action line and action between 2003 and 2004 is therefore indicative only.