

## EU programme leads the way in tackling illegal and harmful web content

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The Safer Internet programme, which has been commended for its effectiveness by an independent evaluation, is now being used as

a model in how to tackle harmful online content whilst respecting freedom of expression in many countries in the Asia-Pacific region and in Northern and Latin America.

'We have come a long way and very quickly,' said Viviane Reding, Commissioner for Information Society and Media. 'For many years the Safer Internet programme has been successfully promoting safer use of internet and other online technologies, particularly by children, and fighting illegal and harmful content ranging from child pornography to racism. The Commission has also encouraged industry to be more proactive in dealing with child safety.'

The main achievements of the programme include a European network of 21 national hotlines for end users to anonymously report illegal internet content and the creation of 23 national awareness nodes to promote safer internet use to children, parents and teachers.

According to INHOPE, the International Association of Internet Hotlines, about 65,000 reports were referred to national and international law enforcement agencies

during 2005 for further action and investigation.

To consolidate these results, the EU's 'Safer Internet plus' programme (2005-2008) will be promoting 'combined hotlines and awareness nodes'. Pilot projects to encourage cooperation between hotlines and law enforcement agencies will also be funded from 2007 onwards.

The Commission has also called for stronger support from Member States to promote awareness of hotlines among end users and to promote better cooperation between hotlines and other stakeholders, in particular the police and Internet Service Providers.

Children's feedback is essential to identify problems and design appropriate solutions. The new EU-funded project EUkids online aims to improve knowledge of children's behaviour on the internet and their current perception of the risks involved. To strengthen awareness of filtering tools, in particular among parents and schools, the Commission is also funding an assessment of the filtering software and services currently available (SipBench). The first results are expected in December this year.

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