Report on the proceedings of the

Safer Internet Forum 2014

6-7 November 2014

Brussels, Belgium
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Executive summary

The annual Safer Internet Forum is funded by the European Commission’s Safer Internet Programme as part of its commitment to better quality content, services and protection to encourage a more positive online experience. The overall aim of the eleventh annual Safer Internet Forum (6-7 November 2014) was to debate how young people across Europe can access and create positive experiences and quality content online in an environment that guarantees trust and confidence.

More than 260 participants from approximately 40 countries attended the two-day event including young people, parents, policymakers, entrepreneurs, researchers, industry and the European Commission. A highlight of the event included youth and industry-driven sessions to identify emerging trends and technologies. Youth representatives from many of the 31 countries in the Insafe network participated in the discussions and outlined how they see the internet and new technologies influencing their lives, now and in the future.

In his opening address, Roberto Viola, Deputy Director-General, DG CONNECT argued for a four-pronged approach to the challenges and opportunities of the changing digital world. He stressed the need to promote digital literacy and education, maximise opportunities and minimise risks, encourage creativity and actively engage youth.

The Forum included sessions on a wide variety of subjects but four key themes emerged:

- Adapting online safety and empowerment strategies to ever-younger users of the internet.
- The acceptance of risk in order to exploit the internet’s opportunities and build resilience.
- The importance of striking the right balance between internet education and regulation.
- The need to empower youth as creators of the internet rather than simply consumers.

Strategies for ever-younger users of the internet

With the average age for starting to use a tablet just eight and half years old, there was much discussion of the effect of apps, advertising and other online content on the youngest internet users. Research presented at the Forum suggested that for the very young, co-viewing of apps with parents was vital while content should be interactive, social and meaningful. Debate focused on the need for parents of young children to be aware of, and use, built-in functions to avoid pop-ups and other intrusive advertising. There was also wide agreement that age-appropriate software should be clearly indicated and indeed some industry organisations are currently expanding their rating systems to include mobile software like apps. For their part, youth panellists reminded parents to make sure that they themselves are not damaging the online reputation of their youngest children by posting images that might embarrass them in later life.
Guided risk as a path to exploiting internet opportunities and building resilience

The increase in the number of young people reporting cyberbullying certainly shows that there are risks associated with online activity but the key is how we deal with them. Several speakers at the Forum stressed the importance of working with parents, researchers, policymakers and industry as well as young people because everyone needs to know how to limit conflict. Others observed that information plays a key role in resolving conflict. However there was general agreement that, at least for older children, risk does not necessarily equal harm and that in guided risk lies opportunity.

The theme was taken up again by Patricia Manson from the European Commission. In her closing remarks, she noted that where we create opportunity we may also create risk so we have to teach resilience and respect.

Striking the right balance between internet education and regulation

There was much discussion at the Forum of the challenges raised by ever-changing technology and online marketing techniques. For example, children are finding it increasingly difficult to distinguish between online advertising and ordinary content because of advertising’s omnipresence on the web and its tendency to blur lines between the two. As a result, children are sometimes exposed to tracking, inappropriate content, threats to privacy and even malware. There was agreement that more could be done to ensure that ads are clearly marked and removed if they lead to viruses. Nevertheless, the speed of technological development often makes self-regulation, or better still co-regulation, more timely and effective than regulation through law. For example, the internet advertising industry itself offers a way for users to opt-out of behavioural advertising.

Empowerment of youth as online creators rather than simply consumers

In his opening address, Roberto Viola set the tone for much of the Forum when he called for the encouragement of creativity and the active engagement of youth. Indeed, youth panellists themselves suggested that freedom of expression, the right to digital education and access for all would feature prominently in the forthcoming Youth Manifesto for a Better Internet. Keynote speaker Baroness Kidron argued that if we are to restore the human aspect to the internet, young people must be able to build and create on the net, not just consume. On a practical level, several industry representatives stressed that it was vital for young people to learn coding, and in one interactive vote nearly 70 per cent of the audience agreed. In this respect, several interesting initiatives were presented that aimed to demystify coding and programming through play and drag-and-drop technologies. Others pointed out that art, photography, marketing and many other skills also had a role to play in encouraging online creativity.
Introduction

The 11th edition of the Safer Internet Forum (SIF) under the theme ‘Growing up Digitally’ took place in Brussels, Belgium on 6-7 November 2014. More than 260 stakeholders in the field of child online safety from approximately 40 countries across the globe were in attendance to discuss the latest trends, risks and solutions related to child online safety.

Participants at the two-day event included youth ambassadors, academics, industry, teachers, NGOs, the European Commission and Ministry representatives. The event included lively discussion on topics ranging from iRights, advertising in the online world and suitable content and apps to good practice from young content creators across Europe. A graphic recorder was present throughout the event to record the key points from discussions.

The Safer Internet Forum is organised and funded by the European Commission with the assistance of the Insafe Coordination Team at European Schoolnet, under the Safer Internet Programme as part of the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children.

The Safer Internet Programme supports projects and events to help create a safer online environment for children and young people, as well as to promote industry self-regulation and international co-operation.
The European Commission welcomes Forum participants
Youth can make a difference in the digital society

Opening speaker: Roberto Viola, Deputy Director-General, DG CONNECT

Summary of opening address:
Roberto Viola opened the 2014 Safer Internet Forum with the observation that, when he was engineer working for NASA 20 years ago, he was told that the internet was just for kids. He believes it still is in the sense that young people, unlike older generations, are the ones that see the digital world as an indistinguishable mix between their online and offline lives. As in previous industrial revolutions, a profound change is occurring in society. Although the current economic crisis shows the challenges, the digital world is one of participation and young people understand this. Roberto Viola believes in a four-pronged approach to this changing world: the promotion of digital literacy and education, the maximising of opportunities and the minimising of risks, the encouragement of creativity and the active engagement of youth.
"Generation M" (mobile): what does it mean growing-up digitally?

Chair: Patricia Manson, Head of Unit, DG CONNECT
Speakers: Youth ambassadors from the youth manifesto initiative – Robert from the Czech Republic and Katy from the UK; Jacqueline Beauchere, Microsoft; Lelia Green, Edith Cowan University, Australia.

The session focused on what it means to grow up digitally for the new mobile generation and it kicked off with a preview of some of the key elements to be included in a youth manifesto for a better internet. Youth panellist Robert, proclaimed freedom of expression as a vital ingredient while accepting that that was hard to achieve if others used what you say and do against you. Fellow youth panellist, Katy stressed the need for a youth-determined netiquette that promotes positive communication, and which is underpinned by the right to digital education and free access. For her part, Leila Green pointed out that children have the right to make mistakes and it was the business of everyone to ensure that young people could fully engage and gain the breadth of digital experience to build resilience. Jacqueline Beauchere concurred that risk does not necessarily equal harm and argued that in guided risk, lies opportunity. She stressed that online safety is all about becoming better digital citizens and to do that we all need to develop SMART online habits. Jacqueline Beauchere concluded by suggesting we talk about “techknowledgy” and stop comparing our own childhood with that of our children. She pointed out that it is not a ‘digital childhood’ for them. It is all they have ever known, experienced or come to expect.
iRights – a broad based coalition

Keynote speaker: Baroness Beeban Kidron, OBE, Youth Advocate and Film Director, (UK)

From the start of her talk, Baroness Kidron declared herself to be a great admirer of the Youth Manifesto as living proof of what empowerment on the net is. However, she went on to question whether the web’s promise of an open, democratic and free world has actually been realised. She believes that rather than a market place of ideas we are now faced with a shopping mall of consumption. Rather than something that each of us shape as we use it, we now find a web that shapes us and technology whose social demands we feel powerless to resist.

Kidron stressed that we need to reconsider what it is to be human. For her, humans transcend the material with freedom and imagination, and find beauty beyond the purely functional.

If we are to restore the human to the internet, young people must be able to build and create on the net, not just consume. We have a social contract with the young to ensure their rights are preserved. To this end, Kidron has founded ‘iRights’, a broad coalition that campaigns for five key rights for young people: the right to remove what they have created on the net; the right to know what is done with their information and how the internet works; the right to be safe and comfortable online; and the right to digital literacy. The overall aim of the coalition is to keep technology human and deliver a better internet for the young.
Advertising – what’s too much?

Chair: Professor Sonia Livingstone, OBE, London School of Economics, (UK)
Speakers: Ben Williams, Eeye/Adblock Plus, (Germany); Jiami Xili Jongejan, Life Splash, (Netherlands); Rocco Renaldi, EU-Pledge Initiative, (Europe); Martin Schmalzried, COFACE, (Europe); Guy Parker, Advertising Standards Authority, (UK) and European Advertising Standards Alliance, (Europe).

Sonia Livingstone began the session by asking the audience to vote on whether children’s mobile experience is already too commercial. The answer was a resounding ‘Yes’ with 56 per cent judging it ‘much too commercial’ and 38 per cent ‘a bit too much’.

The panellists then offered their own observations about online advertising. It was noted that the current business model of the internet is to grow a massive user base and then look for ways to make money from it, which in turn leads to advertising. However, panellists also recognised that regulating online advertising is challenging because of its omnipresence and because - since the failure of the banner advertising model - online ads have increasingly tried to emulate the appearance of ordinary content. Children in particular are finding it ever harder to distinguish between the two, leaving them exposed to the risks of tracking, inappropriate content, threats to privacy and even malware. Given this, there was general agreement amongst the panellists that striking the right balance between regulation and education was vital. Furthermore, it was also recognised that ever-changing technology often made self-regulation, or better still co-regulation, more timely and effective than regulation through law. For example, the internet advertising industry itself offers a way for users to opt-out of behavioural advertising at www.youronlinechoices.eu; thereby stopping websites from tracking users’ habits and following them around the web with targeted ads.
Strand A: Self-expression - is that really me?

Youth chair: Viviane (Netherlands)
Youth speakers: Lia (Ireland); Alexandra (Germany); Loris (Luxembourg); Quentin (Malta).
Adult speakers: Janet Scott (UK); Javier Scott (Spain)

The session was planned and delivered by members of the youth panel who began by outlining some guidelines for children according to age group. The online reputation of 0-6 year olds was seen as the responsibility of parents who should avoid posting pictures that might embarrass them in later life. 6-10 year olds could begin experimenting with social networking but only under adult guidance and without their own accounts. 10-15 year olds should be allowed to familiarise themselves with social media. However, as a vulnerable age group lacking the confidence to express their individuality, adult guidance is still essential. 15-18 year olds were seen as a more responsible age group and should be allowed to learn from their mistakes on social networks. The young people then went through Childnet’s online reputational checklist. This included advice to search yourself online; check privacy settings; think before you post; deactivate or delete your account when you stop using a social-networking profile; and keep your digital footprint positive. An adult teacher on the panel confirmed that she looks up job applicants online and stressed the importance of ‘self-censorship’ when it comes to posting. A parent panellist recommended making online activity a family one when it comes to younger children.
Strand B: Suitable content and behaviour

i) Industry best practice: Positive tools and initiatives for an empowered generation

Chair: Dave Miles, Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI)
Speakers: María José Cantarino, Telefonica; Paul Cording, Vodafone; Julian Coles, BBC; Melina Violari, Facebook.

The session began with María José Cantarino outlining some of Telefonica’s initiatives including an Instagram workshop for 10-14 year-old-children to help them develop their tastes and creativity, and a family website providing information for parents concerned about what their children are doing online. She stressed that it was vital for young people to learn coding and how to use the internet not just as consumer.

Paul Cording believed that questions of emotional attachment online are becoming increasingly important not just when it comes to advertising but also radicalisation. He maintained that Vodafone is very committed to cooperating with parents, NGOs and governments to determine best practice and supply the right tools.

As a senior adviser on editorial policy at BBC, Julian Coles stressed the need for targeted messages, the right format and platforms to reach key audiences, messengers that are trusted by that audience and measurement of the effectiveness of different campaigns.

For Melina Violari of Facebook, the key was to work with partners to ensure best practice and the development of the right privacy controls and reporting tools. She also highlighted Facebook’s real name policy as a way to make users accountable for their behaviour and emphasised that there is nothing more powerful than online campaigns run by users themselves.

ii) Using technology to resolve conflict on- and offline

Chair: Giovanna Mascheroni, Net Children Go Mobile, (Italy)
Speakers: Eleanor Cooper, Princess Diana Award (UK); Lewis Hickmott, Anti-bullying Youth Ambassador, (UK); Alla Kulikova, e-Enfance (France); John Buckley, Spunout.ie (Ireland); Rosa Birch, Facebook.

Alla Kulikova began the session by noting that an increasing number of young people say they have experienced cyberbullying. She believes it is important to work with parents, researchers, policymakers and industry as well as young people because everyone needs to know how to limit conflict and what the consequences of not doing so are. John Buckley observed that there are lots of different kinds of conflict online and information plays a key role in resolving conflict: for example, knowing what to do if a friend is feeling suicidal. For Lewis Hickmott, the role of young people was key in teaching peers how to use technology like social network reporting tools. He said that some schools had experimented with anti-bullying email addresses while youth are using YouTube to offer advice. Rosa Birch stressed the importance of working with others to make sure that the language used in eSafety information is easily understood.
iii) How to find the right apps for your kids: labelling and trusted review

**Chair:** Agnes Uhereczky, Confederation of Family Organisations in the European Union (COFACE)

**Speakers:** Sabine Frank, Google; Bruno Jakic, Ai Applied, (Netherlands); Simon Little, PEGI (Europe); Sonja Emmert, iPhoneKinderApps, (Germany).

The final session of the strand on suitable content began with the observation that the average age for starting to use a tablet is just eight and a half years old, making our choice of apps particularly important. **Sabine Frank** reminded the forum that Google’s Android operating system allows for restricted profiles where everything is locked down apart from pre-selected apps. **Bruno Jakic** suggested that ‘networks of trust’ could be a way to discover apps. It could start by such a system prompting you to point towards someone who you’d trust to choose apps for your children. **Simon Little** announced that Pan European Game Information (PEGI), which already rates all boxed digital games in Europe, is currently developing a new system for apps. Meanwhile, **Sonja Emmert**, who writes a blog rating children’s apps, argued that it is up to us to talk back to developers about what we want. Developers are often young both in terms of age and experience and need interaction with customers to know how to improve their apps.
You decide: Apps, advertising and positive content

This theme was discussed in two parallel workshop sessions led by two different speakers but concluding with identical table discussions to draw up guidelines for parents, youth and industry.

Session A
Chair: Erik Krier, National Youth Service/BEE SECURE, (Luxembourg)
Speaker: Dieter Carstensen, LEGO, (Denmark)

Session B
Chair: Marjolijn Durinck, Safer Internet Centre, (Netherlands)
Speaker: Elyna Nevski, Tallin University, (Estonia)

In his pre-discussion presentation, Dieter Carstensen stressed the importance of learning through play and using meaningful tools that expand capacities rather than simply teaching young people how to pass exams. For her part, Elyna Nevski, talked about three things to consider when it comes to apps: content, context and child. She said that research showed that co-viewing of apps with parents was vital, content should be interactive, social and meaningful, and the app should actively engage the child.

In the subsequent table discussions a wide variety of guidelines for carers, youth and industry emerged. For example, for apps, it was suggested that age-appropriate software should be clearly indicated, parents with younger children should check the app and older children should think before they click and be aware of risks like malware. For advertising, online ads should be clearly marked as such, ads should be checked to ensure that they do not lead to viruses and parents of young children should enable built-in functions to avoid pop-ups. For positive content, industry should make content accessible to all and encourage constructive criticism while young people should be encouraged and given the tools to create their own content.

The key guidelines emerging from the discussions are summarised in the tables below.

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<th>Apps</th>
<th>Guidelines for youth</th>
<th>Guidelines for carers</th>
<th>Guidelines for industry</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Think before you click – be aware of malware and danger.</td>
<td>Parents should check the app before the child downloads it (up to the age of 12).</td>
<td>Age appropriate apps should be clearly indicated; parental control software should also be able to read this information.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Read info and talk to someone else – making youth and adults work together.</td>
<td>Parents should make a judgment of what the child understands and, if needed, protect access to download apps via a password.</td>
<td>There is a need to be transparent.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learn about the app settings and configure it accordingly.</td>
<td>Parents should educate themselves also, so they can discuss issues with their children.</td>
<td>App stores should give information on the level of advertising within an app.</td>
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### Advertising

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Guidelines for youth</th>
<th>Guidelines for carers</th>
<th>Guidelines for industry</th>
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<tr>
<td>Young people should be encouraged to share good examples and bad examples of what they see online.</td>
<td>If you give a device (as a gift etc.), be aware of your responsibility the moment you hand it over. Talk to your child: exchange knowledge and wisdom. Know something of the device - how it works, what its limitations are, etc. Build filters in your mind, rather than the device – in turn, these filters will automatically work on every device! Set a good example in terms of your own technology use. Ask companies for clearer terms and conditions. Communication and openness is vital – listen, be understanding and tolerant of generation gap.</td>
<td>Online ads must be clearly marked as such. Online ads must be free from viruses and malware. Communications should be clear and not misleading, e.g. free. The intended age group must be indicated clearly.</td>
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### Positive content

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<th>Guidelines for youth</th>
<th>Guidelines for carers</th>
<th>Guidelines for industry</th>
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<tr>
<td>Let young people explore content and make informed judgements. Have a safety label for a site. Make young people aware of rating systems and their purpose. Encourage young people to make their own content, and provide them with the tools to help them do so.</td>
<td>Consider how to produce positive content: for example, follow the rules of netiquette, think before posting, have fun. Test children on what they put online – is it really suitable for other children? Be transparent (regarding acceptable data usage, etc.).</td>
<td>Content should be accessible to all. Test content before it goes online. Always keep the intended age range in mind. Avoid advertising. Be transparent, and provide parents with information to help inform their choices. Encourage constructive criticism from users.</td>
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Young creators – good practices across Europe
Creativity, coding and positive experiences for and by youth

Chair: Grace Kelly, Youth Ambassador, (Ireland)
Speakers: Jonas Carlson, TOCA BOCA (Sweden); Namik Delilovic, Catrobat, (Austria); Koen Pellegrims, CoderDojo, (Belgium); Doug Belshaw, Mozilla Foundation, (UK); Nina Devani, Young Entrepreneur, (UK).

The session began with a simple question for the audience: Should all children be taught to code? The audience was in little doubt with nearly 70 per cent answering ‘Yes’. Then Grace Kelly turned to the panellists for their opinions. Jonas Carlson stressed the importance of play and referred to the apps TOCA BOCA make as ‘toys’ with no points to be won and no levels or progress. Namik Delilovic introduced Catrobat’s Pocket Code app and argued that children should not just be consumers but be able to program by themselves so that they can ‘protect’ themselves. Koen Pellegrims explained CoderDojo as ‘digital handicraft workshops’ where young people can build what they want through a drag and drop system. There is a show and tell period at the end of each session to build confidence and encourage development.

Doug Belshaw presented the Web Literacy Map and explained that coding is only one part of a more holistic web literacy. He argued that curriculum time is a zero-sum game, so coding is taking the place of something else. He also talked about the importance of more pressing issues around young people understanding what ‘data’ is – and ‘the cloud’. For her part, Nina Devani explained that she cannot code herself but, two years ago when she was 14, she designed an app. After attracting funding, she paid a developer to build the app and is currently planning her next one.
Closing remarks
What youth, parents and policy makers will take from the SIF

Chair: Patricia Manson, Head of Unit, DG CONNECT
Speakers: Anna Lena Schiller, Graphic recorder for the Forum; Janice Richardson, Insafe Network Coordinator.

The closing session began with the Forum’s graphic reporter, Anna Lena Schiller, running through a visual summary of what stood out for her during the two-day event.

Janice Richardson was then called on to give her impressions of the event. She stressed that the network had not forgotten its traditional role of helping to protect young people online but that other roles were just as important. In particular, she highlighted the importance of the Forum as a way of reaching out especially to young people as well as facilitating cooperation and communication among key stakeholders. Above all, she argued that co-creation is the key to building the online society of tomorrow and that listening is the essential part of communication, which is what the Forum is all about.

As representative of the European Commission, which has overall responsibility for the Forum, Patricia Manson emphasised that five Rs were at the centre of creating a better internet for young people: responsibilities, rights, risks, resilience and respect. She noted that where we create opportunity we may also create risk so we have to teach resilience and respect. Transparency, opportunity, creativity and especially activism were all important. Indeed, the Safer Internet Forum is a key example of how we must all learn together and collectively determine the type of internet we want.