Report on the proceedings of the
Safer Internet Forum 2016
24 November 2016
Forum Geesseknäppchen, Luxembourg

Further information from the Forum, including the full agenda, conference brochure with speaker biographies, and presentations can be found at www.betterinternetforkids.eu/sif2016.
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Executive summary

Building on the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children, the Safer Internet Forum (SIF) is an annual international conference delivered under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). The overall aim of the 13th annual Safer Internet Forum (24 November 2016) was to take a multi-stakeholder approach to ‘being the change’ for a better and safer internet for children and young people across Europe. More than 200 participants from approximately 40 countries attended the one-day event including parents, policymakers, researchers, industry and the European Commission (EC). Youth representatives from many of the 31 countries in the Insafe network also contributed their views about how the internet and new technologies were influencing their lives.

In his opening address, Javier Hernández-Ros, the Acting Director-General of the European Commission’s DG CONNECT, argued that the internet provided enormous opportunities for creative user-generated content but he recognised that the technology also posed serious challenges, which only a multi-stakeholder approach could help tackle.

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

The respective roles of media literacy and regulation in today’s online world
There was widespread agreement that critical thinking and resilience play a crucial role in adapting to our digital world and harnessing the internet for creative use. However, there was also concern that we are not doing enough to protect children from a range of threats including hate speech, self-harm material, sophisticated online marketing techniques and toys and apps that target infants. Some argued for greater parental control tools while young people in particular suggested they should be allowed to learn from their mistakes. Participants heard about recent EU regulatory initiatives with elements that are designed to help protect children online. Nevertheless, media literacy and coping strategies were still seen as vital, especially when helping young people deal with harmful but not illegal online content and behaviour.

The impact of emerging technologies on privacy, data security and online behaviour
In terms of behaviour, participants heard a number of warnings about the risk of new virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) technology separating children from their families and accentuating the impact of cyberbullying on victims. There were also concerns that the replacement of keyboards with voice-command computing might further reduce reflection before posting and, when used in smart homes and cars, could undermine privacy and data security. Finally, although not a new technology, there was increasing recognition of the role of algorithms in internet platforms and their capacity to alter online perceptions and behaviour. Indeed, the Head of Unit at DG CONNECT, Marco Marsella, highlighted this as a concern that the EC was currently raising with industry.

Changes in the production, distribution and combating of child sexual abuse material (CSAM)
Evolutions in CSAM production and distribution platforms were a major concern at the Forum including the use of VR technology for grooming, the live-streaming of abuse, abuse on demand and the added anonymity offered by the darknet and peer-to-peer networks. However, the increased effectiveness of new child abuse image databases and innovations in awareness raising and prevention efforts were also highlighted. In this respect, participants heard about new awareness-raising campaigns targeted at ‘regular’ porn consumers, initiatives to help people sexually attracted to children not to go further, and help for offenders to modify their behaviour.
Introduction

The 13th edition of the Safer Internet Forum (SIF) took place in Luxembourg on 24 November 2016 with a theme of ‘Be the change: principles, policies and practices for a better internet’. More than 200 stakeholders in the field of child online safety from some 40 countries around the world were in attendance to discuss the latest trends, risks and solutions related to youth online safety and empowerment. On the previous day, 19 youth panellists from across Europe also met in Luxembourg at the European Youth Panel (YEP) which is an annual event which precedes SIF. The youth panel brings together young people from all over the Insafe network to prepare their active engagement and participation at SIF and their meaningful contribution to the discussions.

Participants at the Safer Internet Forum therefore included young people, parent and teacher representatives, industry and government policy makers, technological and awareness-raising experts, and political, educational and social leaders from Europe and beyond.

The event included lively discussion on topics ranging from cyber psychology, hate speech, radicalisation and the commercialisation of childhood to the role of new technology in facilitating but also helping to eradicate child sexual abuse online. Participants also looked in more detail at recent European Union (self-) regulatory mechanisms and partnerships to prevent or minimise problems that internet users encounter online.

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 Connected Europe Facility (CEF) programme as part of the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children.

The strategy supports projects and events to help create a safer and more positive 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

Be the change: principles, policies and practices for a better internet

Opening speaker: Javier Hernández-Ros, Acting Director, DG CONNECT, European Commission
Welcome: Eric Krier, National Youth Service (SNJ) and BEE SECURE (the Luxembourgish Safer Internet Centre)

Participants were welcomed to the 13th annual edition of the Safer Internet Forum by the Acting Director of the European Commission’s DG CONNECT. In his opening address, Javier Hernández-Ros noted that the wide range of stakeholders present was a reflection of the breadth of concerns and opportunities raised by the internet and its associated technologies.

He argued that, given appropriate levels of critical thinking, the internet provided enormous opportunities for creative user-generated content, especially among children and adolescents who make up one in three internet users. Nevertheless, he recognised that the technology also posed serious challenges including the existence of violent content, hate speech, cyberbullying and child sexual abuse.

In line with the theme of the 2016 Safer Internet Forum, Javier Hernández-Ros stressed that creating a better internet required us all to work for change and not leave it to others. The European Commission could provide financial support and a regulatory framework, but real change could only be brought about with a multi-stakeholder approach. In this respect, he highlighted the recent invitation by the Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Günther Oettinger for leading ICT and media companies and NGOs to form a new alliance to engage in a self-regulatory process to tackle harmful content and behaviour online.

To conclude, the Acting Director of DG CONNECT noted that since protecting children online was an ever-changing challenge, it was particularly important that society listened to the experiences and concerns of young people themselves.
As a head of department at Luxembourg’s National Youth Service (SNJ) and coordinator of the country’s Safer Internet Centre, BEE SECURE, Eric Krier also offered a warm welcome to participants in his capacity as host of the Forum.

He agreed that only a multi-stakeholder approach could ensure the creation of a better internet for young people and emphasised Luxembourg’s collaborative work with police, government ministries, educators, parents and young people. Noting the increasing recognition of the role of algorithms in internet platforms, he drew particular attention to the role of industry as a stakeholder. Far from creating a commercial burden, he pointed out that companies who build safe ICT systems could also expect to gain a competitive advantage.

He concluded by thanking the European Commission for its continued financial support for the Safer Internet Forum, and European Schoolnet for organising the event.
The cyber effect – where is the digital revolution taking us?

**Keynote speaker:** Professor Mary Aiken, University College Dublin and author of ‘The Cyber Effect’

**Chair:** Will Gardner, UK Safer Internet Centre

**Respondents:** Paul Cording, Vodafone; João Pedro Martins, Youth participant

Following a keynote speech delivered by Professor Mary Aiken, a panel of respondents provided their perspectives on the issues raised.

**Mary Aiken** began her presentation by explaining that cyber psychology is concerned with the impact of technology on human behaviour and the interface between the two. Although at the moment the ‘real’ and virtual world could still be distinguished, she maintained that a symbiotic relationship was fast developing and, with the advent of smart cars and homes, the two would eventually merge.

Her book ‘The Cyber Effect’ draws on her own research and experience to explore how human behaviour changes online, including the role played by anonymity, disinhibition, immersion, escalation and the minimisation of status and authority. In this context, Mary Aiken stressed the need to consider the cognitive, physical, behavioural, psychological, social, developmental, affective, and motivational aspects of technology.

She noted that the American Psychological Association (APA) used to recommend that very young children should not be exposed to the internet whereas now it suggests one hour a day for 2-5 year olds. Yet, despite this change, she observed that there are still no clear guidelines for cyber cognitive development for babies and a lack of regulation of toys and apps that target infants, making reference in particular to concerns over emerging products, such as a baby seat designed specifically to hold a tablet in front of a captive infant.

With regards to children aged 4-12-years, Mary Aiken argued that society had become unduly concerned about surveillance and was relinquishing its collective responsibility for protecting the online rights of the child. In this respect, she suggested that algorithms could be used to help detect cyberbullying and more should be done to tackle legal but age-inappropriate content online.
such as self-harm material or pornography. Instead of just teaching children resilience online, she argued that cyber rights should be incorporated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and that young children should be taught online netiquette.

In the case of teenagers, Mary Aiken warned that virtual reality (VR) technology risked further separating them from their families and worsening the problem of cyberbullying. She also remarked on the risk of young people navigating the darknet and called for the Digital Age of Consent (an aspect of the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)) to be set at the upper limit of the 13-16-year-old range.

In his response to the keynote address, João Pedro Martins reflected on the discussions which had occurred during the previous day at the European Youth Panel (YEP), stating that he expressed the collective views of the youth panellists present in the room in his comments. He maintained that young people generally took a more positive view of the online future. He argued that parents should allow their children to learn from their mistakes and pointed out that countries had different views about what the digital age of consent should be.

For his part, Paul Cording recognised that industry was responsible for its own products and services and needed help and advice in developing them. Nevertheless, he pointed out that there were contradictions in society about whether parental controls or building resilience were the answer to internet safety for young people, and who should decide and enforce the relevant regulations.
Parallel session A1: Hate speech and radicalisation online

Chair: Hans Martens, Insafe
Panellists: Christel Mercadé, DG JUST, European Commission; Kira O’Connor, Twitter; Adina Braha-Honciuc, Microsoft; Gareth Cort, Childnet (UK Safer Internet Centre); Guðný Rós, Youth participant

The first of three parallel sessions examining how we can move from ethical considerations to real-life implications focused on online hate speech and radicalisation.

Christel Mercadé began by explaining the background and rationale behind the recently adopted EU Code of Conduct on illegal online hate speech, while providing a number of concrete examples of hate speech inciting hatred on various commercial platforms. The Code requires IT companies to develop internal procedures and staff training to guarantee that they review the majority of valid notifications for removal of illegal hate speech in less than 24 hours and remove or disable access to such content, if necessary. Beyond countering illegal hate speech online, additional actions may be taken to prevent the spread of hatred online, for instance the development of counter-narratives promoting non-discrimination, tolerance and respect, including through awareness-raising activities.

The two industry representatives, Kira O’Connor and Adina Braha-Honciuc, welcomed the new Code of Conduct and stressed that while their companies remain committed to freedom of expression, there is a clear distinction between that and conduct that incites violence and hate. Both emphasised that their existing rules and terms and conditions prohibit advocating violence and hate speech. Both companies have also put processes in place to enable users to report hate speech or hateful conduct.

As a member of Iceland’s youth panel that has taken part in the No Hate Speech Movement, Guðný Rós talked about her experiences and the need to involve young people in the discussion. She argued that many young people say things on the internet they would never dare to say face
to face and she pointed in particular to websites where people can send anonymous questions. She also talked about her experience as youth moderator of a ‘comment’ game that the Icelandic Safer Internet Centre’s youth panel developed, in which pupils need to rate how problematic certain types of content are, while reflecting on how young people can possibly react.

Finally, Gareth Cort outlined results from a Childnet survey in the UK which showed that four in five young people are exposed to online hate which made them feel angry, sad or shocked. While over two in three young people know how to report online hate to a social network, in practice only one in five reported online hate when they saw it. Within this context, Gareth also argued that media literacy can play a role in the fight against both online hate speech and radicalisation, even if these are typically very different phenomena, each with their own causes and consequences.
Parallel session A2: The commercialisation of childhood

Chair: Barbara Buchegger, Saferinternet.at/ÖIAT (Austrian Safer Internet Centre)
Panellists: John Carr OBE, eNACSO; Liselot Hudders, Ghent University; Verolien Cauberghe, Ghent University; Vernon Jones, MovieStarPlanet

A panel discussion on the commercialisation of childhood considered issues around messaging and regulation.

The second of the parallel sessions focusing on the transition from ethical considerations to real-life implications was introduced by Barbara Buchegger, who invited participants to answer a series of online questions related to the commercialisation of childhood.

Liselot Hudders kicked off the debate with research findings questioning whether today’s children are really more materialistic than previous generations.

For her part, Verolien Cauberghe observed that while children can usually distinguish advertising on TV they found it more difficult with online advertising, suggesting the need for more specific cues that flag up commercial content online.

John Carr made the point that supposedly free-to-use internet services only exist because of advertising. Companies are increasingly targeting children yet, unlike conventional media, there are very few online advertising regulations and they differ according to country.

In defence of ‘freemium’ products (apps that are free to download but include some paid-for services), Vernon Jones argued that children could be protected by only allowing parents to purchase the products with their credit card, hence ensuring parental ‘approval’ in advance.
Parallel session A3: Does technology facilitate or eradicate child sexual abuse online?

Chair: Arda Gerkens, Expertisebureau Online Childabuse
Panellists: Bruno Jakic, AI Applied; Anette Paavilainen, Europol; Maaike Pekelharing, Knowledge Institute for Online Child Sexual Abuse

In one parallel session, the panel debated “Does technology facilitate or eradicate child sexual abuse online?”

For the third of the parallel sessions looking at ethical considerations and their real-life implications, Arda Gerkens outlined some of the ways in which technology has helped to facilitate online sexual abuse including wider dissemination of material, the live-streaming of abuse, abuse on demand and challenges presented by the darknet.

Bruno Jakic noted that virtual reality (VR) technology is already starting to throw up new risks, with the first cases of grooming using VR coming to light. He called for increased pressure on tech firms to take safety issues into account when designing new products and services.

Anette Paavilainen argued that the internet was helping shed light on abuse cases that previously happened behind closed doors but she also identified peer-to-peer and darknet networks as key obstacles to combating child sexual abuse material (CSAM), because of the high level of anonymity they offered.

Finally, Maaike Pekelharing provided some examples of the challenges faced by hotlines including how CSAM continues to be shared via different IP addresses, so when it is removed from one website, it reappears on another.
Parallel session B1: Harmful but not illegal

Chair: Karl Hopwood, Insafe
Panellists: Nelli Kongshaug, Red Cross; Neil Melhuish, NetSafe; Marc van der Ham, Google; Patrick Geary, UNICEF; Rehana Schwinninger-Ladak, DG CONNECT, European Commission

One panel debated the challenges of responding to online content and behaviour which is not necessarily illegal, but nevertheless ‘problematic’.

The first of three parallel afternoon sessions dealing with policies and practices looked at potentially harmful online content and behaviour that is not illegal per se.

The debate was opened by Nelli Kongshaug who discussed some of the challenges faced by the Red Cross helpline for children and youth in Norway in trying to help young people deal with this type of content. She spoke about the ‘cotton diet’ where a piece of cotton wool is soaked in some orange juice and then eaten in order to make the person eating it feel full. Clearly this is not illegal but it is something which is being promoted by celebrities and which can cause real problems for young people.

Marc van der Ham then talked about how it is important for Google, in particular, to distinguish between content that they host and content hosted by others. He also described some of the tools that are available for parents to control and filter content, as well as Google’s work with impactful YouTubers to consider what tolerance and respect online looks like. Marc explained that using these YouTubers was very powerful as they have real influence with younger users.

From a UNICEF perspective, Patrick Geary discussed the challenge between allowing freedom of expression and access but also the importance of protecting children and young people. He made reference to the UNICEF/ITU COP guidelines for industry which cover five different areas:

1. Integrate children’s rights in policies and management processes.
2. Develop processes for handling child sexual abuse material.
3. Create safer and age-appropriate online environments.
4. Educate children, parents and teachers on child online safety.
5. Promote digital technology as a mode to further civic engagement.
Patrick made the point that these are both relevant and important for companies that develop, provide and make use of information and communication technologies.

Rehana Schwinninger-Ladak provided an overview of pertinent EC legislation such as the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) and self-regulatory initiatives such as the CEO Coalition (2013-2014) and the more recent Alliance to better protect minors online (2016-). She also referenced many of the initiatives funded through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) to improve outcomes for children and young people online, such as the Better Internet for Kids portal (www.betterinternetforkids.eu), the Insafe and INHOPE networks of Safer Internet Centres in Europe (providing awareness raising, helpline, hotline and youth participation services), and the annual Safer Internet Day campaign. CEF funding also supports the policy framework (such as the mapping of safer internet policies in Member States) and the research knowledge base (for example through actions supporting the EU Kids Online research network and the former POSCON thematic network (Positive Online Content and Services for Children in Europe)).

Finally, Neil Melhuish outlined some of the key provisions of New Zealand’s 2015 Harmful Digital Communications Act which tackles some of the ways people use technology to hurt others. It aims to prevent and reduce the impact of cyberbullying, harassment, revenge porn and other forms of abuse and intimidation. The Act also provides quick and affordable ways for people to get help if they are receiving serious or repeated harmful digital communications.

The session ended with an opportunity for participants in the audience to briefly debate the challenges of some specific cases.
Parallel session B2: EU regulatory frameworks

Chair: Rachel O’Connell, Trust Elevate
Panellists: Eva Lievens, Ghent University; Krisztina Stump, DG CONNECT, European Commission; Lubaš Kukliš, Council for Broadcasting and Retransmission; Martin Drechsler, FSM

This panel session explored how far ongoing legislative work properly addresses the needs of children and young people in the online realm.

The second of the parallel sessions on policies and practices focused on new EU regulatory frameworks designed to provide better online protection for youth and others.

First of all, Eva Lievens discussed the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) with particular emphasis on the age of consent and the GDPR’s likely impact on children’s online rights in terms of protection, provision and participation.

Krisztina Stump then explained the importance of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) from a ‘protection of minors’ perspective. She also looked at the types of audiovisual media services it covers and its likely impact on children and young people.

There followed a discussion of specific articles of the General Data Protection Regulation, in particular Article 25 that outlines the Privacy by Design principle, which requires data protection is designed into the development of business processes for products and services. Privacy by design may include the following measures:

- Data minimisation.
- Pseudonymisation.
- Transparency and consent.

The GDPR also introduces Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) as a means to identify high risks to the privacy rights of individuals when processing their personal data. When these are identified, the GDPR expects that an organisation formulates measures to address these risks. This assessment should happen before the start of processing of the personal data and should focus on
topics like the systematic description of the processing activity and the necessity and proportionality of the operations.

Krisztina Stump highlighted that, in June 2016, in a press release about the updated AVMSD, the Commission announced that it intends to engage platform providers in a self-regulatory process to implement measures designed to better protect children online. Crucially, the Commission explicitly stated its intention to encourage online platforms to use technological innovation relating to secure eID, which would also enable online platforms to both acquire verifiable parental consent (Article 8 of GDPR) and conduct age checks to limit children's access to harmful content (AVMSD). The Commission has set a timeline for this dialogue and intends to issue sets of principles and guidance on more secure means to protect children online at the latest by 2017.

From a regulatory perspective, Šuboš Kukliš stressed the relevance of these kinds of EU policy frameworks and the importance of finding the right balance between not over-regulating media services while still making sure minors are properly protected.

From an industry perspective, Martin Drechsler argued that self-regulation is often the most effective way of tackling online safety concerns. He maintained that in a rapidly changing audiovisual landscape it is also vital that companies are invited to contribute their expertise on the best way to move forward when it comes to new regulations.

The chair, Dr Rachel O’Connell, spoke about the PAS 1296 Age Checking code of practice, which is a sponsored, fast-track standardisation document developed through a consensus-building process facilitated by BSI Standards Limited. The purpose of the PAS is to provide public-facing service providers such as online vendors, sellers, importers or distributors selling age-restricted goods or services with a benchmark for good practice. The PAS enables both businesses and groups within society to mitigate risks to children and young people’s wellbeing by preventing ineligible customers from:

a) buying age-restricted goods online;

b) accessing age-restricted online content (e.g. streaming age-restricted media, adult content, specific categories of advertising);

c) using age-restricted online services (e.g. dating agencies); and

d) children accessing harmful content on platforms and apps (e.g. gaming social media and messaging).

There followed a discussion about the EU eIDAS Regulation. The regulation effectively provides a predictable regulatory environment within which mutual recognition of electronic identities across Europe and secure and seamless electronic interactions between businesses, citizens and public authorities can operate. The Regulation (EU) N°910/2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market (eIDAS regulation) was adopted by the co-legislators on July 23, 2014. The regulation ensures that people and businesses can use their own national electronic identification schemes (eIDs) to access public services in other EU countries where eIDs are available.

The closing minutes of the session focused on a discussion about age checking in relation to content ratings and how these differ in Members States. Šuboš Kukliš and Martin Drechsler discussed the International Age Rating Coalition (IARC), which is a global rating and age classification system for digitally-delivered games and apps that reflects the unique cultural differences among nations and regions. Martin discussed a similar initiative called Merlin.
Parallel session B3: Working with law enforcement

Chair: Verónica Donoso, INHOPE
Panellists: Mike Sheath, Lucy Faithfull Foundation; Nina Vaaranen-Valkonen, Save the Children Finland; Maria Sánchez, Europol
Video presentation: Maggie Brennan, University College Cork

Despite increasing collaboration among various stakeholders fighting child sexual abuse material (CSAM) worldwide, there is still much to be done. A panel of experts discussed some of the challenges.

The third of the parallel afternoon sessions looked at the work being done with law enforcement agencies to combat online child sexual abuse material (CSAM).

Mike Sheath argued for a preventative approach including help for offenders to modify their behaviour and counter their misconceptions about what CSAM is, making specific reference to three arms of prevention:

- **Primary prevention**: avoids the development of sexual abuse in our communities through the use of universal messages.
- **Secondary prevention**: detects problematic behaviours and offers opportunities for early intervention through the use of targeted messages.
- **Tertiary prevention**: responds to identified abuse and abusers, and seeks to prevent its recurrence and impact. This approach uses a range of targeted messages and direct interventions.

He went on to explain how the Lucy Faithfull Foundation and Stop It Now are applying their initiatives at these three different levels (for example, public education at primary level, adverts and campaigns at secondary, and research collaborations and training for police and NGOs at tertiary). Apart from its counselling groups, the Lucy Faithfull Foundation also produces informative videos that Google has agreed to automatically show to anyone who tries to search for
CSAM. The videos have been viewed over three million times and the Foundation’s helpline receives nearly 900 calls a month.

Nina Vaaranen-Valkonen reflected on the work being done by the Finnish hotline. She stressed the importance of listening to victims, helping people who are sexually attracted to children not to go further and reaching out to ‘regular’ porn consumers with messages like ‘Keep porn clean’ so they are encouraged to report CSAM.

María Sánchez spoke about the role of Europol in this space, explaining some of the new initiatives and programmes which have been put in place. In particular, she previewed a Europol victim-centric video campaign designed to raise awareness of the increasing phenomenon of child sexual extortion, which will be translated into multiple languages.

Finally, in a video presentation, Maggie Brennan explained some of the work which the University College Cork has been doing as part of the IWG (International Work Group for Best Practice in the Management of Online Sexual Offending), as well as considering some key issues for law enforcement regarding management and prevention of CSAM offences. In particular, she outlined a two-year consultation exercise with experts on the topic of best practice in the management of online sex offending, the results of which will be published in 2017.
Closing session: BIK to the future

**Moderator:** Kate Russell, BBC  
**Speakers:** Martin Schmalzried, COFACE; Chris Felton, UK Home Office; Tony Burns, Intel

The final plenary session of the Forum featured a debate moderated by BBC reporter Kate Russell on the key challenges stakeholders will have to deal with in the coming years and how we can make a ‘better internet for kids’.

Looking at future challenges, Martin Schmalzried commented on the potential of virtual reality (VR) technology to increase empathy among users, but also the risk it posed of augmented cyberbullying and sexual abuse. He warned of an over-reliance on algorithms that provide statistical insights but often fail to match human judgement in individual cases: he reminded the audience that machine learning is only as good as the data you feed in. However, in the area of cybersecurity, Martin Schmalzried held out the hope that new crowd-sourcing technologies and platforms may provide a way to harness the mass of consumers to better secure online services.

From a government perspective, Chris Felton cited the rapid spread of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and online radicalisation as two of the biggest threats. He expressed concern that VR and artificial intelligence (AI) could be used for grooming for child sexual abuse or terrorism, and if used to generate CSAM itself, might challenge current definitions of criminal activity. Nevertheless, he recognised that new child abuse image databases were also helping police to identify and take down more CSAM: a task that the use of AI technology might make even easier. In a similarly positive vein, he also mentioned the possibility of using VR and AI technology to help people talk more about child sexual abuse and to treat and rehabilitate victims of that abuse.

From an industry perspective, Tony Burns foresaw a re-imagining of human/computer interfaces in the future. He argued that advances in speech recognition would soon allow us to do away with the keyboard and use voice commands for our computing. He maintained that this new form of
interface would be faster, easier and more personalised but could also throw up several challenges. For example, the increased speed of response might worsen the problem of people not thinking before they post online, while speech recognition devices in smart homes and cars might undermine our privacy and raise new data security concerns.

To conclude the discussion, Kate Russell recalled the UK’s Green Cross Code road safety slogan, ‘Stop, look, listen and think’, and asked the speakers to propose their own internet-focused versions of the slogan. Tony Burns suggested ‘Stop, think, connect’ while Chris Felton put forward; ‘Use it, get value from it but don’t say anything you wouldn’t in person’. For his part, Martin Schmalzried simply suggested the addition of ‘act’ or ‘vote’ to the Green Cross code slogan.
Closing remarks: Safer Internet Forum 2016

Speaker: Marco Marsella, Head of Unit, DG CONNECT, European Commission

In his closing remarks, Marco Marsella recalled that the Forum had covered a very wide range of topics including the rights of the child, freedom of expression, parenting and surveillance.

What had emerged was a general acceptance that the building of trust, engagement and multi-stakeholder cooperation were key components of creating a better internet for kids. In this respect, he stressed the importance of continuing to listen to civil society along with industry and government.

He also identified a growing recognition of the importance of education in helping children and young people cope with the challenges and exploit the opportunities of the internet. He noted that the development of critical thinking and resilience played a crucial role in adapting to our digital world.

The European Commission is already working on many of the ethical issues thrown up by new technology and he highlighted artificial intelligence (AI) and the associated algorithms as a particular focus of the Commission’s current dialogue with industry.

He concluded by thanking European Schoolnet and BEE SECURE for organising and hosting the Forum. He also congratulated the Forum’s youth participants for making their voices heard and thanked the speakers for their insights, which would help inform the Commission’s future work in the field.