

Public report

Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre
Safenet.bg

2020

Activities of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre, coordinated by the Applied Research and Communications Fund and Association Roditeli (Parents), in partnership with DeConi Advertising Agency in 2020

About the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre

The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre (SIC) was established in 2005 by the Applied Research and Communications Fund (ARC Fund) with the financial support of the European Commission. Association Parents and DeConi Advertising Agency became ARC Fund's partners in 2008.

In May 2006, ARC Fund launched the Bulgarian Internet Hotline for fighting illegal and harmful for children content and conduct in Internet, which became a member of the International Association of Internet Hotlines INHOPE established in 43 countries around the world.

The SIC Awareness Node became operational in June 2008 and is run by a consortium consisting of ARC Fund, Association Parents and DeConi Advertising Agency. Finally, a national Helpline was launched in 2011, operated by Association Parents. The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre is a member of the European Network of 30 Safer Internet Centres – Insafe, and of the EU Kids Online and Global Kids Online research networks.

The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre collaborates with numerous key stakeholders in the country and abroad. Thirty government agencies, non-governmental organizations and private companies having activities in the field of online safety of children and young people, are members of its advisory board – the Public Council on Safer Internet Use.

Who we are?

The Applied Research and Communication Fund (ARC Fund) is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation in public interest, established in Sofia in 1991. Its mission is to promote and shape information society and knowledge economy in a national, trans-regional, European and global context. ARC Fund is among the leading Bulgarian organisations working for the development of a knowledge-based society and sustainable innovative economy.

ARC Fund's main activities include:

- Conduct applied research and analyses that assist the development and implementation of public policies;
- Promote public policy consensus by bringing together the key actors in government, industry and civil society, and by forming coalitions and public-private partnerships;
- Build capacity of various professional groups through trainings and transfer of knowledge and good practices;
- Design innovative solutions to development problems, and form new policy concepts and innovative policy-making tools.

ARC Fund is a member of several national and international networks, working in the fields of children rights, children protection and safer Internet:

- The European Network of Safer Internet Centres (Insafe)
- The International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE)
- The National Network for Children
- European research network EU Kids Online
- Global Kids Online research network
- The Radicalization Awareness Network

ARC Fund is also a coordinator of the Public Council on Safer Internet Use.

Association Roditeli is a non-government organization, established in 2001. It works towards validating the role of the family in the upbringing, raising, and education of children. The focus of its work is improving the

relationship between the family and the school, validating the values of citizenship and healthy living. To accomplish its goals, Association Parents works on projects with different organizations and institutions. Its

advocacy activity in partnership with the non-governmental sector, business, institutions and individual citizens aims to guarantee the rights of children and families in Bulgaria.

Association Parents is a member of:

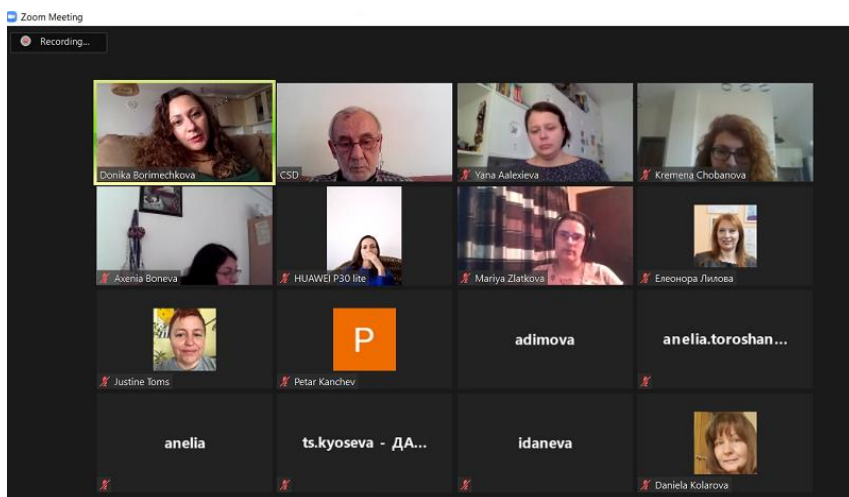
- The National Network for Children
- The Public Council for Safer Internet in Bulgaria
- Workgroups in the Ministry of Education, the National Council for Child Protection, Sofia Municipality’s Education Department

DeConi Agency is a marketing agency with a twenty year history of successful brand building and promotion. The Agency has introduced to the Bulgarian market international brands such as OMV, Jim Beam, Dunkin’ Donuts, KFC, JYSK, Prisun, Creditex, and Lidl.

The agency specializes in corporate social responsibility, creating effective models of cooperation between companies, NGOs, government and international organisations, with a lasting impact on sustainable development of specific communities on a local and regional level and the Bulgarian society as a whole.

Public Council on Safer Internet Use

The Public Council on Safer Internet Use (SIC Advisory board) was founded in April 2006. Its members are representatives of the major stakeholders – public institutions, industry associations, private companies and non-governmental organisations. All Council members share the common mission – to make Internet a safer environment for the minors.



The last meeting of the Advisory board for the year was held online in December.

The Public Council discusses and approves the periodical activity reports of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre and gives recommendations for improving its work. It approves operational procedures of the Hotline and the Helpline, and if needed, changes them in accordance with the alterations in the national legislative, social and economic conditions. If a major problem or controversy arises in the process of work of either the Hotline or the Helpline, the Public Council decides upon an appropriate course of action.

The member organisations actively work for the realisation of the goals of the Safer Internet Centre. They have initiated or participated in numerous activities for promoting Safer Internet rules in order to increase social awareness about risks for the minors in Internet and about ways for preventing them.

At a regular meeting of the Public Council on 17 December, 2019, the Commission for Personal Data Protection and Net 1 telecom company were accepted as new members of the Advisory board. In this way, the coalition of institutions and organizations committed to work in the field of child protection in the digital world is expanding and the ability to develop coordinated national policy and joint action was strengthened. The Bulgarian branch of UNICEF in the recent years has included the broad spectrum of its activities and the important topic of protecting children and their rights in the digital age.

Members of the Public Council on Safer Internet Use:

1. Parliamentary Committee on Children, Youth and Sports (Chair)
2. State Agency for Child Protection (Deputy Chair)
3. Society for Electronic Communications (Deputy Chair)
4. Ministry of Education and Science
5. Ministry of Interior
6. Ministry of Culture
7. Ministry of Transport, Informational Technologies and Communications
8. Sofia Municipality
9. Internet Society – Bulgaria
10. Bulgarian Association of Information Technologies (BAIT)
11. Cisco Systems – Bulgaria
12. Law and Internet Foundation
13. Association Parents
14. Kabinata
15. Partners Bulgaria Foundation
16. Bulgarian Federation for Electronic Sport
17. Gender Education, Research and Technologies Foundation
18. Vivacom
19. A1
20. Telenor Bulgaria
21. Microsoft Bulgaria
22. Centre for the Study of Democracy
23. National Network of Children
24. Digital National Coalition
25. “Digital Kids” Foundation
26. Justin Toms, university lecturer
27. UNICEF Bulgaria
28. Bulbera Ltd.
29. Net 1
30. National Commission for Personal Data Protection

Hotline for Fighting Illegal and Harmful for Children Content and Conduct in Internet

The Hotline was launched in May 2006. Its main priority is to stop the dissemination of material of child sexual exploitation and fight other forms of sexual abuse of children in Internet (grooming, trafficking, sex tourism and others), as well as to remove or limit the availability of online content inappropriate or harmful for children. Any adult or minor, who wants to report online content or conduct, which is illegal according to the Bulgarian legislation or may have a traumatic or other harmful effect on the minors using the web, can easily file a report using an online reporting form on the website <http://www.safenet.bg>. The anonymity of the reporting person is guaranteed.

ARC Fund and the Hotline actively cooperate with the relevant law-enforcing agencies, based on a Framework Agreement with the Ministry of Interior signed in January 2006. The experience has shown that a good and

working partnership between a public Internet Hotline and the relevant law enforcement body significantly increases the efficiency of the fight against the illegal and harmful for children content and conduct in Internet.

The Hotline's work follows the operational procedures, which been consulted and approved by the Public Council on Safer Internet Use. The procedures guarantee that if the reporting persons wish to remain anonymous, their privacy will be strictly respected. When they receive a report, the Hotline operators first establish the physical location of the reported content. If the server is located in Bulgaria, the report is transmitted over a specially established secure communication channel to the Cybercrime Department of the Ministry of Interior in line with the Framework Agreement for cooperation. When the content is traced to another country, which is a member of the International Association of Internet Hotlines INHOPE, the report is passed on to the partner Hotline. In cases when the content is located in a third country, the report is transmitted to the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior, which takes further steps based on the international police cooperation procedures.

The most common way to submit a report is through an online form available on the website <http://www.safenet.bg>. However, Hotline operators also react to reports and queries by phone (02/973 3000), e-mail (hotline@online.bg) or through the SafenetBG Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/SafenetBG>). When appropriate, the Hotline operators advise the reporting person to contact the Helpline psychologists in accordance with the internal procedures for transfer of reports, adopted by the ARC Fund and Association Parents who are operating the SIC Helpline.

In 2020, the Hotline received and processed 17 855 reports which referred to websites featuring illegal content or conduct:

- Child sexual exploitation material – 17 081
- Child erotica/ nudism – 16
- Grooming – 19

680 of the total reports were transmitted to the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior, 17 026 were forwarded to other INHOPE Hotlines, in case of 3 reports other relevant Bulgarian state institutions were notified, and in 2 cases it was demanded from website owners to take down inappropriate or harmful to children the content.

Helpline for Online Safety

The SIC Helpline is managed by Association Roditeli. It is a consulting centre for providing support and advice related to online incidents involving children and young people. The trained operators-consultants of the Helpline are available through a short telephone number 124 123 (with the charge of 0.07 euro per call regardless of its duration), a real-time chat module on www.safenet.bg and an email address (helpline@online.bg). Information for all consultations is strictly confidential and it's kept in a database in accordance with the Law for Protection of Personal Data. All clients, contacting the Helpline, can remain anonymous if they wish to.

The Helpline works on weekdays from 10 am to 6 pm. The consultants of the Helpline are trained psychologists, who are well prepared to assess the seriousness of a situation and, if necessary, to direct the victim towards receiving additional help, consultation and/or therapy from the appropriate institutions and organizations. The role of the consultants is extremely important in cases in which children face online risks which are result of their peers' harmful actions. Such actions are cyberbullying, uploading illegal or harmful content on sites for sharing pictures and videos or social media as well as irresponsible or risk online behaviour.

When someone contacts the Helpline about a case related to sexual harassment, grooming, dissemination of material of child sexual exploitation, dissemination of content of terrorism, xenophobia, racism or ethnic hatred online, cyberbullying or online frauds the consultants forward those cases to the Internet Hotline. There these cases are analysed and, if necessary, forwarded to the Ministry of Interior for further investigation.

In 2020 the Helpline responded to 459 queries related to the following issues:

- Harmful content – 19

- Sexual harassment– 16
- Sexual grooming - 3
- e-Crime – 2
- Cyberbullying – 25
- Personal data – 11
- Sexting – 4
- Sextortion – 11
- Digital and media literacy – 26
- Privacy settings – 45
- Online reputation – 18

Website of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre



The Bulgarian SIC continued to develop and update its official website www.safenet.bg. The website serves as one entry point to both services of the Centre - Hotline and Helpline, making it more convenient and straightforward for the users to submit reports or ask for consultations. The website's homepage provides access to the online form for reporting illegal and/or harmful for children content and conduct in Internet. Access to the chat with Helpline's consultant is also available on the homepage. The

website includes practical and informative explanations about the most common online risks for children. It features detailed presentation of initiatives, trainings and resources (guidebooks, publications, presentations, lesson plans, posters, etc.) of the Centre. Finally, there is a regularly updated news section. The website has a mobile version as well, making it easy for the users to access it from their smartphone or tablets. The unification of previously divided websites of the Hotline and the Helpline has resulted in tremendous increase of site visits, which range from 100 to 500 unique visits per day.

Projects and initiatives in pandemic situation

Unfortunately, most of 2020 passed in an emergency situation with lockdowns and restriction for public events and meetings. With the exception of the first 3 months, the SIC had to radically change its mode of work and keep as many as possible of its usual activities.

Training and awareness raising

In the last 6 years, SIC has been running the Cyberscout training program which was ranked 9th in Europe by the European Crime Prevention Network in 2017. The Cyberscout training program for children aged 11-12 has become highly popular among schools. The results of the training are acknowledged by teachers and pupils alike. In 2020, the SIC team and its regional partners managed to train 150 teenagers from 8 schools in 5 cities and towns across the country before the first (March-May) and the second (November) nationwide lockdowns. And in October, one more training was conducted before the full closure of schools. The team continued online communication with trained students who received various tasks ("Cyberscout missions") for raising awareness about online safety among their peers. Thus, the trained children were invited to participate in a national competition among all trained Cyberscouts by organizing various activities and initiatives among their peers to transfer the newly acquired knowledge and skills. Through these activities supported by a teacher they could

reach to close to 500 other children. In August 2020, the SIC also trained another 20 professionals from various non-profit organisations for trainers in Cyberscout Programme.

A large part of the activities had to move online. Thus, more than 1500 children, close to 560 teachers, about 430 parents and more than 410 professionals (including educational experts, teachers and school psychologists, social workers, members of local commissions for combating trafficking of human beings among others) were involved in trainings and awareness raising events both live and online.

Besides the direct protection and support of children facing online risks and involvement in a number of research projects in the field of online safety and victimization of children and young people, the SIC has developed and has been implementing various educational methodologies for prevention of cybercrimes and online abuse of children.

For a third time, the Coalition for Media Literacy at School, of which ARC Fund is among the founders and which currently has 17 member organisations, launched “Days of Media Literacy” campaign on the Safer Internet Day (February 2020). The Safer Internet Centre provided a package of materials for schools, containing lesson plans for various age groups of students, Guidelines for teachers, plans for meeting with parents, etc.

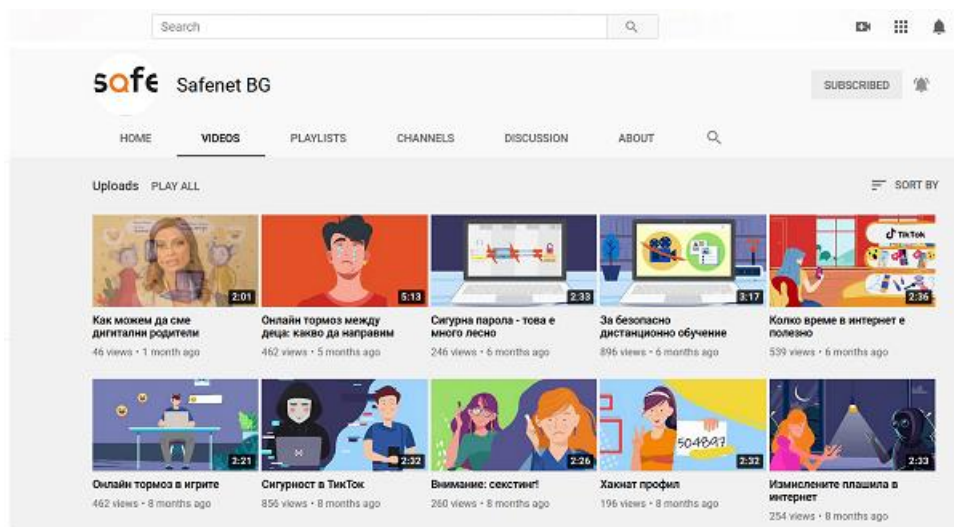
Methodologies

In 2020, the team developed a methodology for training young people for peer trainers on topics of prevention of sexual exploitation of children online. 20 young people from the SIC Youth panel and three schools in Sofia where trained online for peer trainers and are expected to train their peers next year. Teacher from the three schools were trained to support the young peer trainers were acknowledged with the methodology which they can use to train other children in the future. ARC Fund also participated in development of three tools which address the MIL (Media and Information Literacy) competences described in the UNESCO Global framework for assessment of MIL – online game for young people, peer-to-peer methodology and storytelling guide. Those tools will help to young people to develop their critical thinking and express their opinion and ideas for solving of social problems.

A methodology for development of critical thinking and fostering tolerance through development of digital and media skills in high schools for teachers has been also developed in 2020, thanks to the efforts of ARC Fund experts, and feedbacks from professional teachers. The methodology contains 10 modular lessons for developing digital and media skills (communication skills, information assessment skills, etc.) related to emotional intelligence and critical thinking as a prevention of acceptance of far-right messages and thus, far-right radicalization among youth. In the end of the year, ARC Fund experts developed also another three methodology guidebooks for countering anti-Roma manipulation and disinformation. The package includes a basic

methodology guidebook for how to detect and tackle the fake news, disinformation and manipulation addressing general societal issues and in particular anti-Roma manipulation, providing basic knowledge and skills to all target participants, a practical guidebook for capacity building of Roma leaders, activists, mediators, Roma and pro-Roma which will equip the target Roma multipliers with the needed specific methods and tools

to detect, monitor and counteract the fake news and anti-Roma disinformation, which are accelerating the anti-gypsyism and a practical guidebook for teachers to teach children and young people in schools on how to identify and counter



20 awareness videos were produced in 2020

hostile narrative, disinformation, manipulation and fake news, which are generating racists stereotypes and inciting hostility against Roma people.

In 2020, a holistic model for development of digital and media literacy in students from all age groups through the existing curriculum, developed by the SIC’s team in the previous year, was implemented in the 90th High School in Sofia. The model included modules on systematic work for with parents and building of school community. Teachers from that school received series of trainings on the updated holistic model provided by the Centre’s experts and developed their teaching plans and planned their lessons on various school subjects on the basis of that model. ARC Fund experts supervised teachers’ lessons (more of which were provided online because of the lockdown) and provided them feedback (within a common reflection on the provided lessons).

Adapting to a pandemic situation

The SIC has adapted to the unusual pandemic situation and provided numerous webinars on online safety issues for teachers, parents and young people and created quizzes on such topics for the popular Kahoot educational online game and guidelines for safe internet use disseminated through the channels of the Bulgarian Red Cross during the first lockdown. The organization also created 20 awareness videos on online safety topics, including some which are useful for teachers. The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre provided guidelines for teachers for remote teaching during the lockdown. Along with its partners in the Coalition for Media Literacy at School, a research on how Bulgarian students assess the remote education during the lockdown was conducted and the results were presented to the Ministry of Education and the media.

In order to be able to reach the target groups and raise awareness the SIC members had over 50 media participations, interviews and publications in various media. In a project with the popular BG Radio a series of 60 podcasts were broadcasted in the period October-December.

Youth participation

Since 2010, the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre has been working actively on youth participation, maintaining its Youth panel – a voluntary structure of young people aged 14-18. In 2020, the young people planned and hosted the main event for the Safer Internet Day (February 2020) in Bulgaria and engaged children and professionals who participated at the event to provided recommendations on online safety to parents. The members of the



The Youth panel member Milena became a TV star.

Youth panel also planned and hosted numeral other events of the Bulgarian SIC and its partners as the “Voice it” Youth forum organized by the National Network for Children (which was dedicated to countering discrimination this year), as they created a video for the forum and two of them participated in planning and hosted a live event for restricted number of participants (because of the epidemic situation) which was live streamed online.

Since 2019, two members of the Youth panel are also members of the Youth network “Megaphone”, maintained by the National Network for Children, as well as the network’s “Reporters” initiative. One of them was also elected with the majority of the votes of the young people involved in this initiative to be the representative of Bulgaria in the Eurochild Children’s Council and participated various international forums which this year took place online because of the pandemic (including the annual event of the European Parliament for the Child Rights Day where the SIC’s Youth Panel representative was selected to be among the key speakers). Thus, she had the opportunity to discuss important topics concerning children with high level European politicians. In 2020, she was recognized by the American news giant The Washington Post as one of 12 global kids bettering their communities and our world which was widely covered by the Bulgarian media.

Cooperation

Being a member of the Insafe and INHOPE networks co-funded by the Connecting Europe Facility's Better Internet for Kids Programme, the Bulgarian SIC participated in the online meetings of the networks as well as in a number of webinars and in the annual Safer Internet Forum.

Being recognized as a center of excellence in the field of child protection on the internet, the SIC experts participates in various national and international activities and working groups for developing strategies and proposals for necessary legislative measures, social service procedures and practices. Experts from ARC Fund were included in an international working group formed by the European Crime Prevention Network to prepare a more structured and evidence-based strategy for the prevention of crimes against children. ARC Fund participates on a regular basis in working and training meetings of the Radicalization Awareness Network presenting its expertise and sharing knowledge and practices with other organizations. ARC Fund also became Trusted Partner of Facebook and Trusted Flagger of Google.

The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre thanks all of its partners and supporters who helped with the realization of all activities in 2019!