
Guidelines proposed for Child Online Protection (COP) initiative

By ITU

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Focus on children, parents, teachers, policy-makers and industry

Geneva, 20 May 2009 —

Guidelines for the protection of children in cyberspace were presented as drafts for discussion on Monday, 18 May in connection with the theme for the 2009 World Telecommunication and Information Society Day. The draft

guidelines will be reviewed at the Strategic Dialogue on Safer internet Environment for Children in Tokyo, 2–3 June.

The final Guidelines on Child Online Protection will be issued at ITU

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, 5-9 October 2009 in Geneva, Switzerland. Comments will be accepted until 30 June 2009.

ITU Secretary-General Hamadoun Touré asserted that "we must do everything in our power to create a healthy online environment for our children". He said he was confident that "a secure cyberspace for our children will not remain an ideal but will become a reality". Dr Touré recognized the importance of the draft guidelines prepared in close collaboration with numerous UN agencies and other organizations, including UNICRI, INTERPOL, and the European Commission.

"In choosing 'Protecting Children in Cyberspace' as the theme of this year's

World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, ITU and its Members hope that the many activities that accompany this event around the world will mark the start of a year-long ‘Call for Action’ of awareness-building which targets policy makers, industry, educators, parents and children, as well as helping garner further high-level international support," said Mr Sami Al Basheer, Director of ITU’s Telecommunication Development Bureau.

The Guidelines on Child Online Protection (COP) are aimed at establishing a safe and secure cyberworld for future generations. The set of four guidelines advocate empowering children and young people through education and awareness; providing information, advice and safety tips for parents, guardians and educators; and providing key information to policy makers as well as to industry in order to formulate national and international strategies.

Empowering children

As children and young people become digital citizens in an online world that

has no borders or frontiers, it is critical that threats to their well being must be addressed by all stakeholders, including children themselves. They are urged to learn to use their computers and online devices safely, including the installation of firewalls and anti-virus software and how to spot unusual communications.

The draft guidelines examine children's online rights, harmful and illegal content, cyber bullying, privacy and online commerce. Presenting the Guidelines for Children, Mr Dieter Carstensen, Project Manager of Save the Children Fund pointed out that the best form of defence in protecting children is to make them aware of what can happen online and provide options and solutions.

For children, a set of **SMART** rules have been spelled out with regard to:

S

etting limits

M

meeting online friends offline

A

accepting invitations/friendships

R

reacting

T

telling someone about their concerns

Guidelines for parents and educators

Ms Isabella Santa, an expert with the European Network & Information Security Agency (ENISA) pointed out that parents and educators must work together and become familiar with the Internet sites that are accessed by children and decide what is appropriate and safe online. ENISA is promoting awareness among parents to enhance the safety of children using virtual worlds and the Internet. ENISA believes that knowledge of what children can do online and parental involvement are crucial. Parents must be educated, empowered and engaged to ensure truly positive and valuable experiences for their children, while reinforcing safety online habits in the process.

Guidelines for Policy-Makers

Mr John Carr, Secretary, Children's Charities' Coalition on Internet Safety (CHIS) presented the draft Guidelines for Policy-makers. Noting that the Internet has become a tremendously enriching and empowering technology with children and young people among its major beneficiaries, the Guideline suggests that national governments have an obligation to provide for the protection of legal minors in both the "real" and "virtual" worlds. Governments and policy makers have a major responsibility to set up a sustainable framework within which an appropriate national and multinational response can be developed. In doing so, the Internet industry and its stakeholders will have important roles to play, not least because the speed with which the technology can change means that many of the traditional methods of law or policy making no longer fit this purpose.

Guidelines for industry

Ms Natasha Jackson, Head of Content Policy, GSMA presented the draft Guidelines for Industry. In many countries around the world, industry is taking a lead and adopting voluntary and self-regulatory approaches that demonstrate commitment to developing a responsible approach to children's use of online ICT and communications. It is very much in the industry's interests to take action, to get ahead of the curve, not only because it is the right thing to do from a moral perspective, but also because, in the longer run, it will help develop public confidence in the Internet as a medium.

In a statement, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) welcomed the launch of the Child Online Protection Initiative and the creation of common Guidelines for Industry in a converged digital world. Broadcasters are ready to jointly identify solutions — based on self-regulation or co-regulation — that can improve the situation for children on all platforms. This can succeed if it embraces all actors along the chain: from children themselves to governments and regulators, the media and international institutions. Only a multi-stakeholder approach can achieve success on such a complex issue.

According to the draft Guidelines for Industry, collaborating with local broadcasters should be very helpful in terms of developing such an understanding. It is also important to understand how the local legislation

perceives the 'location' of content and determines the 'place' at which a service is delivered or received.

"The EBU strongly believes that widespread media literacy is the best and ultimate protection for children," said Jean Réveillon, Director General of the European Broadcasting Union. "EBU Members have large experience in this field and we look forward to sharing our know-how with all of you in the common work to come."

Child helplines

International Child Helpline Day marked in tandem with World Telecommunication and Information Society Day on 17 May, focused attention on the use of communication tools to help children access the information and resources required when needed. "Through our partnership with Child

Helpline, an international NGO, we are currently lobbying telecommunication administrations around the world to consider allocating a common global number that would provide direct access to helplines run by organizations dedicated to child protection and welfare," Mr Al Basheer said.

For more information, please visit

www.itu.int/osg/csd/cybersecurity/gca/cop/

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