

Public report

Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre
Safenet.bg

2021

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 2021

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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 to children content and conduct on the Internet, which became a member of the International Association of Internet Hotlines INHOPE. 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. Twenty-eight 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 are we?

The Applied Research and Communications (ARC Fund) is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation in the 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 training, transfer of knowledge and good practices;
- Design innovative solutions to development problems, and form new policy concepts and innovative policymaking tools.

ARC Fund is a member of several national and international networks, working in the fields of children's 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 (RAN)
- The Eurochild Children's Council (ECC)
- Media Literacy Coalition

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

Association Roditeli (Parents) 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 on 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 4 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
- Media Literacy Coalition
- 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 the 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 the Internet a safer environment for minors. 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 minors on the Internet and about ways for preventing them.

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. Yetel
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 to Children Content and Conduct on the Internet

The Hotline was launched in May 2006. Its main priority is to stop the dissemination of material on child sexual exploitation and fight other forms of sexual abuse of children on the Internet (grooming, trafficking, sex tourism and others), as well as to remove or limit the availability of online content inappropriate or harmful to children. Any adult or minor, who wants to report online content or conduct, which is illegal according to the Bulgarian legislation or may have traumatic or other harmful effects 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 illegal and harmful to children content and conduct on the Internet.

The Hotline's work follows the operational procedures, which have been consulted and approved by the Public Council on Safer Internet Use. The procedure 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 the transfer of reports, adopted by the ARC Fund and Association Parents who are operating the SIC Helpline.

In 2021, the Hotline received and processed 15 694 reports which referred to websites featuring illegal content or conduct:

- Child sexual exploitation material – 15 276;
- Child erotica/ nudism – 8;
- Grooming – 24.

2540 of the total reports were transmitted to the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior, 13 046 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 the 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 risky online behaviour. When someone contacts the Helpline about a case related to sexual harassment, grooming, dissemination of material of child sexual exploitation, dissemination of the content of terrorism, xenophobia, racism or ethnic hatred online, cyberbullying or online fraud 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 2021, the Helpline responded to 256 queries related to the following issues:

- Harmful content – 11
- Sexual harassment – 2
- Sexual grooming - 9
- e-Crime – 9
- Cyberbullying – 28
- Personal data – 9
- Sexting – 1
- Digital and media literacy – 25

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 to children content and conduct on the 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 a detailed presentation of initiatives, training 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 users to access it from their smartphones or tablets. The unification of previously divided websites of the Hotline and the Helpline has resulted in a tremendous increase in site visits, which range from 100 to 500 unique visits per day.

Projects and Initiatives

In 2021, the work of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre covered several main priorities: awareness campaigns, education and training, research and operation of the Hotline and the Helpline.

Youth panel of the Bulgarian SIC

The Youth panel of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre is a voluntary structure which exists as a successful form of youth participation since 2010. Its members are young people aged 14-18 who meet face-to-face regularly to develop their digital and media skills and play an important role in the initiatives and events, organized by the Bulgarian SIC and its partners.

In 2021 r. the members of the Youth panel planned and moderated the main event in celebration of the international Safer Internet Day which took place on 8 February. This time the main topic was Fake news and misinformation. Because of the pandemic situation, for the first time, the event took place online and was live-streamed on the Bulgarian SIC's Facebook page. It reached more than 21 000 people. Young people and professionals participated in the online event and gave recommendations on how to recognize fake news and misinformation on the Internet.



In 2021, the members of the Youth panel (Dimana Dodova and Milena Radoytseva), who were part of the "Megaphone" Youth Network maintained by the National Network for Children's (NNC) as well as the Network's "Reporters" initiative, completed the two-years "Megaphone" program successfully and were certified by the NNC. Milena also represented Bulgaria in the Eurochild Children's Council (ECC), as she was elected with the majority of the votes of the young people, involved in the "Reporters" initiative. The elected girl participated in a number of international online forums.

In 2021, the members of the Bulgarian SIC's Youth panel exchanged experience and best practices with the young members of "To Be Friends" Youth Club of the PULSE Foundation, Pernik. The Youth panel hosted a meeting in Sofia, and the Youth Club hosted a meeting in the town of Pernik. The young people from both youth organisations participated together in the main event for the Youth Day which took place in Pernik in August.

Safer Internet Day

On 9 February 2021 r. more than 140 countries on all continents celebrated the 18th Safer Internet Day. Starting as an initiative of the European Union, the aim of this day is to draw attention to the need for adequate measures to protect children in the digital space.

The SID's slogan "Together for a better internet" reminds us that the online safety of children depends on the combined efforts of all stakeholders – State institutions, business actors, the education system, parents, non-government organisations, and civil society. Many schools, municipalities and organisations in Bulgaria celebrated the SID with their initiatives.



The main online event of the Safer Internet Day in Bulgaria reached more than 21,000 people, 9 February 2021

Traditionally, the main event to celebrate the Safer Internet Day was organized by the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre, a member of the Better Internet for Kids international network. Because of the pandemic situation this time the event took place online with about 80 participants – young people, teachers, and other professionals. The online event was screened for students in many Bulgarian schools. Dr Eleonora Lilova, President of the State Agency for Child Protection opened the event.

As usual, during the event, the three best "Cyberscout squads" were announced. After their training within the Cyberscout programme, those children who were involved in the "squads" organized their own initiatives to raise awareness about online safety among their peers. This time, the awarded students were from the towns of Saedinenie and Stara Zagora. All teams trained in 2020, were supported by their teachers throughout their Cyberscout journey and were encouraged to participate in the national competition

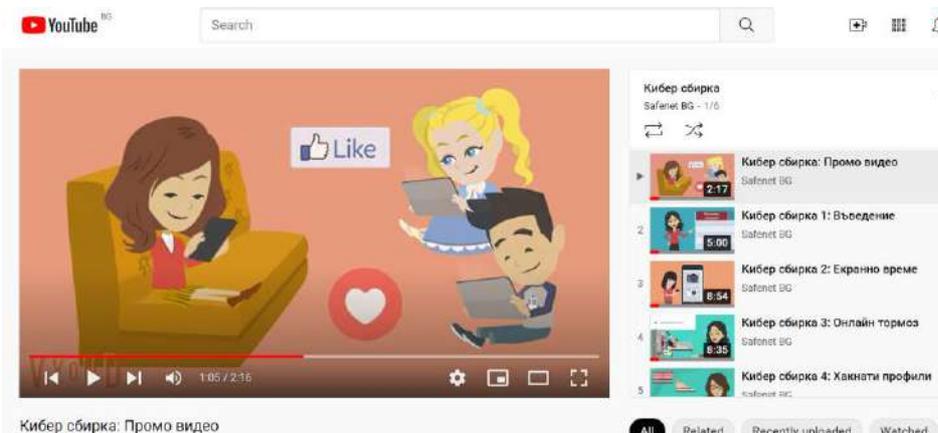
The members of the Bulgarian SIC's Youth panel suggested the main topic this year – how to recognize fake news and disinformation online. They also moderated the event and started with a discussion on the information and misinformation about the Covid pandemic. After that, all the participants joined a discussion about disinformation and misinformation in general and how to recognize false information available online. The young people from the Children's Council of the State Agency for Child Protection actively participated in all discussions. In the final session, the Youth panel members presented UNICEF's U-Report platform which empowers young people to share their opinions on issues which matter to them and announced an upcoming poll about the fake news and misinformation conducted by the Bulgarian SIC which was available on its platform in March.

The main online event of the Safer Internet Day in Bulgaria was live-streamed and recorded on the Bulgarian SIC's Facebook page and reached more than 21,000 views.

Traditionally, on the Safer Internet Day was launched the annual "Days of Media Literacy" campaign by the Media Literacy Coalition. The member organisations of the Coalition announced various awareness-raising and educational initiatives for teachers, parents, young people, and children which were carried out in the following two months.

Educational Videos

In 2021, the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre's team created a series of six educational animation videos for children. The videos are related to some of the most common online risks such as Cyberbullying, "hacked" accounts, too much screen time, and the risks related to the children's "digital footprints". They can be used by teachers to initiate discussions on online safety and the appropriate and inappropriate conduct in the digital environment at their schools.



The videos are suitable to be watched by students, as well as by younger children together with their parents. They could be used during the remote teaching, that the teachers provided during the pandemic situation. The videos are available on the Bulgarian Safer Internet's YouTube channel and have already reached more than 2100 viewers.

Training and Campaigns

The Safer Internet Centre continued to actively engage parents and teachers in developing the digital-media literacy of Bulgarian children through periodic campaigns and new initiatives.

A Holistic model for building key competences at school

Between March 2020 and July 2021, experts at the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre and the team of the 90th High school Gen. José de San Martín in Sofia have been collaboratively testing the Comprehensive Model for Building Key Competences in Schools.

Under the leadership of Emilia Ivanova, the principal of the 90th High School, the pedagogical team created and implemented its overall vision for the integration of key competences with the curriculum according to the needs of its students. Based on the vision, the

teachers developed and implemented mutual and individual lessons, student projects, and extracurricular and community activities with a focus on the systematic, step-by-step, and multidisciplinary building of the key competencies for personal development and sustainable lifestyle of the students.



Data from the model's approbation were collected and analysed by an independent evaluator - Hermina Emiryan through an online survey with 30 teachers, as well as interviews and a focus group with members of the school's administration and teaching staff. According to the analysis, the students developed almost all of the competencies outlined, with particular emphasis on tolerance and cooperation. Teachers, in turn, have increased their sense of community and positive interaction with parents. These results are a consequence of

the model's methodology, which emphasizes team-based multidisciplinary education by the teaching team and autonomy and interaction among students during learning activities.

“Find Another Way” Campaign

In 2021, the “Find Another Way” campaign was finalised. The campaign aims to encourage critical thinking and tolerant attitudes in young people aged 14-20 years. The campaign included an online communication campaign and an offline component to give it depth by supporting the work of teachers from different schools and localities who joined the initiative with students from that age group. “Find Another Way” was implemented by a partnership



Teachers from different localities piloted lesson modules from the Methodology for development of critical thinking and tolerant attitudes

between the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre, the Centre for the Study of Democracy (CSD) and the d:istinkt Communication Agency in the framework of the “Resilient Youth against Far-right Extremist Messaging Online” (YouthRightOn) Project. The Project was funded by the European Union’s Internal Security Fund — Police of the European Union.



Popular persons and vloggers such as Pavel Kolev and Icaka took part in the “Find another way” campaign

During the online campaign were developed a series of videos in partnership with the communications agency d:istinkt. Some of them are videos of reactions of celebrities and popular vloggers (Preya, Pavel Kolev, Hristo Stefanov, Stefan Popov-Chefo) to materials containing hate speech; two educational animated videos “Not Everything on the Internet is Truth” and “Don’t Let Yourself be Manipulated”; a video telling the story of a young man who got radicalised, narrated by the actor Zhivko Simeonov, and three video messages by guitarist Deyan Yankov, who is behind the initiative for young people T.R.A.P. (Trotoara Room for Angry People

The offline component of the campaign “Find Another Way” involved teachers participating in the

initiative with lesson modules from the methodology developed by experts of the Safer Internet Centre to develop tolerance and critical thinking in students. Teachers from seven schools in Sofia, Plovdiv, Kyustendil and Stara Zagora took part in a first training meeting in January 2020 to get acquainted with the methodology. Following the meeting, the teachers tried out the lesson modules with their students. In April 2021, experts from the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre gathered the teachers again for an online meeting, where the teachers gave feedback from piloting the lessons in their schools. Their feedback was integrated into the final version of the methodology, which was published as a teacher's guide and distributed to schools across the country.

Trainings within the “Care for Truth” Initiative

Within the framework of the initiative "Care for the Truth" in the period May-July experts of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre and their partners from the CEGA Foundation and Roma Lom Foundation, in strict compliance with the anti-epidemic measures, conducted five live training sessions of Roma leaders, activists, mediators and representatives of Roma and pro-Roma civil society



A series of trainings for teachers and other professionals on the topic of fake news and disinformation was provided in 2021.

organizations on how to recognize and counter fake news, misinformation and media

manipulation related to the Roma community. Two three-day trainings for a group of trainees from Northern Bulgaria were held in Varshets and another two for a group of trainees from Southern Bulgaria were held in Hisarya and Bansko. Another practical training on how to collaborate with each other to raise awareness on the topic of fake news and misinformation of the people from the communities they work with, designed for both groups of trainees, was also held in Bansko.

In 2021, experts from the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre and the CEGA Foundation also conducted two trainings for teachers from all over the country on how to identify fake news, misinformation, and media manipulation and how to develop the skills of assessing the trustworthiness of information in their students - the first of which was held online in April and the second was held live in Bankya over three days in October.

The “Care for Truth” project is implemented in partnership with CEGA Foundation, CSD and Roma Lom Foundation and is co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020) of the European Union.

“Media Literacy through the Curriculum” Training

In June 2021, a Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre’s expert Dr Emanuil Georgiev, together with Media Literacy Coalition expert Angel Angelov, conducted a series of online trainings for teachers on "Media Literacy Through My Subject" - a hands-on training program that prepares teachers to develop their students' media literacy regardless of subject or medium - online or in person. Nearly 50 teachers from across the country (out of over 85 registered) participated in the course. Of these, 35 received their certificates of successful completion and joined the Digital Stars Media Literacy Coalition community after developing and presenting their own lesson plans for developing digital competence and media literacy across their subject areas: Bulgarian language and literature, English, information technology, biology and health education and human and nature, philosophy, civics education, geography and economics, informatics, history and civilization, general education in primary school.

Twenty of the plans and presentations developed by the teachers were uploaded on the Media Literacy Coalition website. Each resource focuses on one or more competences from the EU's Digital Competence Framework (DigiComp) - information literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety and problem-solving. The teachers' starting point was the Media Literacy through Distance Learning handbook.

The trainings and the manual are part of the Media Literacy through Distance Learning project implemented by the Media Literacy Coalition (MLC). The project is supported by America for Bulgaria Foundation.

Guides and Education Methodologies

“Competence Approach in Practice” Guide

In 2021, the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre published a teacher's guide "The Competence Approach in Practice", which presents a comprehensive model for building students' key competences at school, developed by the Centre's experts. The handbook includes five training modules related to the different aspects of this model, as well as the results of approbation at 90th High school Gen. José de San Martin in Sofia, where the model was implemented between February 2020 and June 2021. Also included are specific success stories of teachers from the school who have worked with this approach in their classrooms.

The handbook was developed as part of the Holistic School-Based Model for Building Digital Literacy project, funded by the Oak Foundation through the Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation.

Guide for development of critical thinking and fostering tolerance

In 2021, a teacher's guide for developing critical thinking and tolerance in students by developing their digital-media skills and competencies was completed and published. The training methodology included in this manual was developed in the framework of the "Find Another Way" campaign for the prevention of radicalisation among young people by experts of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre.

The final version was also developed based on the feedback received from teachers who participated in a training meeting in Sofia on the methodology and tested the lessons in their schools.

The handbook contains 10 sample lessons related to developing different types of digital-media skills in students (such as skills for assessing the credibility of information, communication skills, etc.) so that the development of emotional intelligence and critical thinking can be the basis of prevention against far-right and other radicalisation among young people.

The campaign "Find Another Way" was implemented in partnership with the Centre for the Study of Democracy and the communication agency d:stinkt in the framework of the initiative "Resilient Youth Against Far-Right Extremist Messages Online (YouthRightOn), funded by the Internal Security - Policing Programme of the European Union.



Guides on recognizing fake news and disinformation



In 2021, within the Care for Truth initiative experts from the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre developed three practical manuals, available online. The manuals are focused on building capacity among Roma leaders and mediators, Roma and Pro-Roma activists, as well as, teachers, equipping them with specific methods and tools on how to detect, monitor and counter misinformation and media manipulation that fuel stereotypes and negative attitudes towards certain communities such as the Roma:

- a basic methodological guide on how to recognise fake news, disinformation and media manipulations concerning societal issues in general and anti-Roma manipulations in particular;
- a practical guide on how to counter fake news, disinformation and media manipulation related to the Roma community that fuels antigypsyism;
- A practical guide for teachers on how students can identify fake news, disinformation and media manipulation that fuels stereotypes and negative attitudes towards certain communities.

The Care for Truth initiative is implemented in partnership with CEGA Foundation, Centre for Study of

Democracy and Roma Lom Foundation and is co-funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020) of the European Union.

Methodology for training of young people for peer trainers

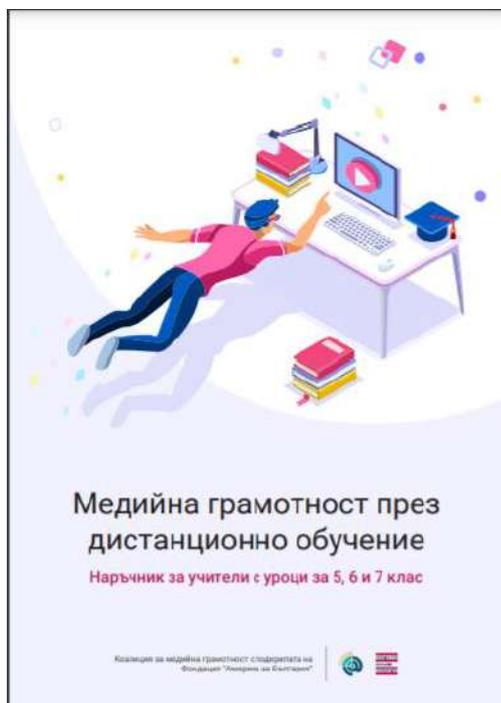
In 2021, the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre printed a methodological guide “Young People Lead the Change”, designed for teachers and youth workers to prepare young people to become peer educators on topics related to the prevention of child sexual exploitation online. The handbook also includes a module on training youth as peer educators on other topics of their choice. The methodology was developed within the framework of the “Young People Lead the Change” initiative,

The methodology was developed within the framework of the “Young People Lead the Change” initiative, part of the “Ability to Change” project on child sexual exploitation prevention, implemented by the Learning Action Partnership and supported by Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation and the Oak Foundation. This methodology was presented at an online conference organised by the New Bulgarian University's Know How Centre and to members of the Learning Action Partnership.



Within the Erasmus+ funded MILagers project, the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre also participated in an international team that elaborated three other tools to develop competences related to media information literacy in young people as described in the UNESCO framework - an online game for youth, a peer-to-peer

knowledge transfer methodology and a storytelling guide. These tools will help young people to develop their critical thinking and to express their opinions and ideas to solve important social problems.



"Media Literacy through Remote Teaching" Guide

Due to the pandemic situation in the last two years, teachers, students and parents have had to adapt quickly to distance learning. The Media Literacy Coalition together with the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre and with the support of America for Bulgaria Foundation developed and published a practical guide for teachers "Media Literacy in Distance Education". The guide contains 9 lessons for direct application in the learning process, which build on the principles and lessons developed in the methodology "From Digital Competence to Digital Citizenship" and the methodology of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre, based on the European Framework for Digital Competence. The lessons are suitable for grades 5, 6 and 7 and can be applied in Class time, Information Technology, Bulgarian Language and Literature and History. The handbook, as well as the curriculum for a series of teacher training sessions on the topic, was developed by a team of the Media Literacy Coalition, including experts from the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre, the Faculty of Primary and Pre-school Pedagogy of the Sofia University and a History teacher.

Conferences and Forums

"Competence Approach in Practice" Conference



Representatives of 11 schools across the country took part in the conference "Competence-based approach in practice" between the 3rd and 5th of December 2021. The conference was organised by the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre at the National STEM Centre in Sofia.

The participants were introduced to the Holistic Competence model developed by the Centre and got to hear the inspiring stories of their colleagues from 90 High School "Gen. José de San Martín", where the model was first implemented and tested. Training sessions for all five modules of the Methodology were also organised for the participants.

During the training, the directors and the pedagogical specialist of the schools created

their visions for the systematic and multidisciplinary building of key competencies of their students through the educational content. They created plans for individual and combined lessons to implement their visions, created assessment tools, prepared strategies to involve parents as active partners in the implementation of the Competency-based approach and planned activities to help bring the school community together. The participants also shared their own experiences and good practices and started long-term cooperation for the integration of the competency-based approach in the Bulgarian educational system.

Representatives from 11 schools from different locations in the country participated in the conference.

“Voice it” Youth Forum

The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre also took part as a partner in the annual youth forum "Voice it: opinion matters", organized by the Megaphone Youth Network and the National Network for Children and held on 19 November 2021. Due to the epidemic situation, for the second year in a row, the forum gathered a small group of panellists but was broadcasted live on the Facebook page of the National Network for Children. The forum was held under the banner #Filter and focused on two main themes chosen by the young people at the organisation: online risks and ecology. The youth participants from Megaphone invited Dr Emanuil Georgiev, an expert from the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre, as a speaker in the first discussion panel related to the topic of online risks. The video of the campaign of the Youth Panel of the Safer Internet Centre "You are the hero" was broadcasted. Official guests of the forum were also Rositsa Petrova, Chairman of the Board of the National Network for Children and Sanja Saranovic, UNICEF Representative for Bulgaria. Other experts, selected and invited by the young people from Megaphone, took part in the discussions. The famous journalist and radio presenter Maria Cheresheva supported the young people as a main host of the event and a moderator of the discussions.



“Media Literacy against Disinformation” Conference

The Media Literacy Coalition, together with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, organized the National Conference "Media Literacy Against Misinformation". The event was held on December 2 in a hybrid format - the speakers and panellists were live at the Sofia Event Centre and the Facebook event was streamed live online). Antoaneta Vassileva, an expert from the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre, participated in the discussion as a panellist, along with a dozen representatives of the civil sector, as well as government institutions and businesses. During the conference were presented current projects for the development of media literacy through and outside the education system, covering the youngest to the oldest citizens of Bulgaria. It was also discussed what the problems and possible solutions are, as well as what are the best approaches when working with each group.



International Cooperation

In 2021. The Centre continued to be an active member of the European Network of Safer Internet Centres Insafe and the International Association of Internet Hotlines INHOPE. The Centre contributed to the work of both networks and interacted with other Hotlines and site owners/administrators in Europe to remove illegal or harmful content for children from the web.

Representatives of the Centre participated in international conferences that were held online due to the pandemic, as well as in a number of online workshops of the INHOPE and Insafe networks. Milena Radoytseva

from the Youth Panel of the Safer Internet Centre, who was elected as Bulgaria's representative to the Eurochild Children's Council, also participated in a number of international forums that also took place online.

National Cooperation and Media Coverage

Media Literacy Coalition

The Media Literacy Coalition, established in 2017, continued its active work in 2021. The Coalition includes the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre, the Institute for Progressive Education, the Centre for Inclusive Education, the Association of European Journalists in Bulgaria, Teach for Bulgaria, the National Network for Children, Education Bulgaria 2030, and the Voice of the Children Foundation. The aim of the Coalition is to stimulate public debate on the topic and to gather and promote existing good practices of individual schools, teachers, educational institutions, organizations and media aimed at building basic digital-media skills

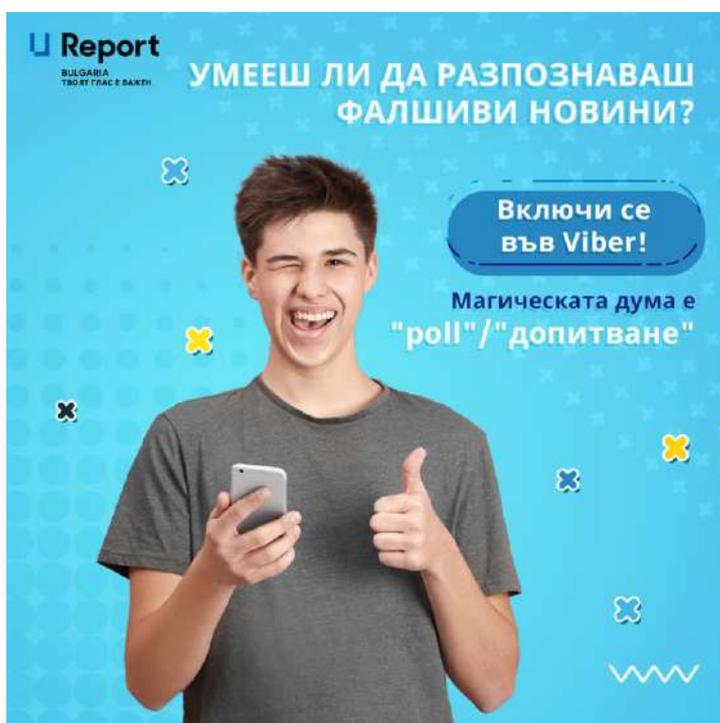


in children. These skills should become the foundation on which further education can build so that students emerge from secondary education as active 21st-century citizens and participants in the economy.

In February 2021, the Coalition organised and held "Media Literacy Days", launched on Safer Internet Day (9 February) and included a series of initiatives by participating organisations. In the framework of the project "Media Literacy through Distance Education", the Media Literacy Coalition in partnership with the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre and with the support of America for Bulgaria Foundation developed a guide for teachers to enhance children's media literacy through distance education. Experts from the Coalition and the Centre conducted a series of online training sessions for teachers on this methodology in June 2021. The Media Literacy Coalition, in cooperation with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, also organized a national conference "Media Literacy Against Misinformation". It was held on 2 December in a hybrid format (speakers and panellists were live in Sofia, and the event was broadcast live online for all other participants).

Partnership with UNICEF Bulgaria on U-Report

In 2021, the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre actively participated in the Executive Board of the U-Report Youth Platform, which brings together various civil society organisations and is coordinated by UNICEF Bulgaria, which is also a member of the Safer Internet Public Council. The Youth Report Platform was presented by the Youth Panel of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre at the main event during the Safer Internet Day in Bulgaria on 9 February. The main theme of the celebration was fake news and online misinformation. Experts from the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre also developed a survey on the topic of fake news. It was presented to young subscribers of the platform in May 2021. This and other U-Report polls, as well as the platform itself,



were also promoted periodically on the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre's Instagram account, managed by the Centre's Youth Panel.



National Network for Children and "Megaphone" Youth Network

Applied Research and Communications Foundation (ARC Fund) and Parents Association, coordinating the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre, are active members of the National Network for Children (NNC), uniting 135 civil organizations working with and for children and families across the country. In 2021, ARC Fund and Parents Association participated in the development of common strategies and positions of the network on issues concerning children, in the organization of the Golden Apple Awards and the Annual Meeting of the NNC, actively participated in the preparation of the Notebook on

the success of the state in caring for children, contributing to the assessment of what has been done for the well-being of children and their online safety and the development of their digital-media literacy. The organisations coordinating the Centre were also involved in the organisation and delivery of the youth forum Voice it 2021: Views that Matter, with the Centre's expert Dr Emanuil Georgiev invited by the "Megaphone" Youth Network to participate in one of the two discussion panels on online risks. The members of the Youth Panel of the Safer Internet Center, Dimana Dodova and Milena Radoytseva, completed their participation in the two-year program "Megaphone" of the National Youth Network, as well as in the initiative "Reporters" and were certified. Milena Radoytseva, elected by the majority of the votes of the young people participating in the Reporters, continues to represent Bulgaria in the Eurochild Children's Council.

Learning Action Partnership (LAP)

ARC Fund and Parents Association (partners in the Bulgarian SIC) have been actively involved in the Learning Action Partnership for the Prevention of Child Sexual Exploitation (LAP), coordinated by the Bulgarian Family Planning and Sexual Health Association (BFPA), since its establishment in 2015. In 2021, experts of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre implemented the initiative "Youth Lead the Change" within the framework of the project "The Ability to Change" funded by the Oak Foundation through the Foundation Workshop for Civic Initiatives. Within the framework of this initiative, a methodology for training young people to be peer educators was developed and printed as a manual for teachers and youth workers. Online training on the methodology was conducted for young people from the Youth Panel of the Safer Internet Centre as well as



A meeting on the awareness campaign of the LAP took place in Dolna Banya in July 2021 г.

students from three schools in Sofia. Again, in the framework of the partnership, experts from the Centre also held focus groups with teachers, parents and professionals from institutions and the civil sector on the topic of how the mechanism for prevention of violence in schools works. Based on these focus groups, specific recommendations were prepared for the institutions to improve the work of the Mechanism. Experts of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre actively participated in the preparation of the LAP campaign on sensitization to child sexual exploitation. On 20-23 July in Dolna Banya and was held a Partnership meeting on the topic which also contributed to the sharing of information and good practices on the LAP website.

Partnership with the Digital National Alliance (DNA)

In July 2021, the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre participated in a training for a total of 30 participants from Bulgaria, Italy, Romania, North Macedonia, Portugal, Spain, and Lithuania, aiming to provide young professionals with knowledge and skills on the topic of media literacy and fake news. The nine-day training was held within the framework of the "Lie to Me" project, implemented by the Digital National Alliance (DNA) with the support of the European Commission and the Erasmus+ programme. During the workshop, the international group produced a handbook with tools and guidelines on the safe critical consumption of online media content.



The experts of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre took part in two training modules, the first of which presented the activities of the Centre and discussed with the participants the most common risks for children on the Internet, as well as the main digital competences that young people need to develop. In the second module, the trainers from the Centre presented to the trainees the tools for developing the media and information literacy of young people, developed by the MILagers project.

Youth exchange and partnership with the PULSE Foundation

An exchange of knowledge and best practices took place between young volunteers from the Youth Panel at the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre and the Youth Club "Let's be friends" at the PULSE Foundation, Pernik.

On May 30, the youth from the club visited the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre in Sofia for the first time, and on June 20, members of the Youth Panel will visit Pernik. Young people from both youth teams got to know each other and discussed what they do to spread knowledge among their peers. Both teams also worked together on their ideas for future collaborative work.

During the visit of the young people from Pernik, the representatives of the Youth Panel of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre spoke about their activities and causes. They went into detail on how they planned and



organized the #YouAreTheHero campaign, and its inspiring message of positive and responsible online behaviour as opposed to online bullying and online hate. As well as their previous campaign #DressYourself, which is demonstrating in a positive and creative way the risks of early sexualisation among children. The members of the Youth Panel also explained how they plan and conduct the main activities of important events

of the Centre. An example of those is Safer Internet Day – which addresses a different cause and an issue for children and young people online every year. The Panel is actively involved in events organised by SIC's partners. The members of the Youth Panel also presented the Centre's Consultation Hotline, which young people and their caregivers can contact in case of problems online.

During the meeting, the two youth teams exchanged ideas and discussed their ways of working and started thinking about future joint projects. During the visit of the Youth Panel for a Safe Internet in Pernik on June 20, the young people from the Youth Club talked about their activities and the causes they are dedicated to, such as reducing violence towards and among children, spreading knowledge about children's rights etc.

The two youth teams also planned together a specific joint initiative for the Youth Day, which took place on 20 August in Pernik. They introduced in an interesting and entertaining way the young participants in the event to the problems related to bullying on and off the Internet and how they could react in such cases, as well as to whom the young people could turn for help and advice.

The activity took place within the framework of the annual plan of the Pernik of the Youth and the Municipality of Pernik.

Cooperation with schools and State institutions

Many of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre's activities were carried out in collaboration with various partners both at a national and local level. The Centre has traditionally had good cooperation with many schools and municipalities in the country. Teachers and their pupils were actively involved in the testing of the Comprehensive Model, in the "Find Another Way" campaigns and in the „Care for Truth" training sessions.

The Centre participated in an expert group at the Ministry of Education on the preparation of a concept for digital-media literacy. The Centre also cooperated with the State Agency for Child Protection and its Children's Council, whose representatives took an active part in the Safer Internet Day event. Cooperation with other state institutions was also at a high level and the Centre's experts had very productive working meetings with professional communities such as local commissions for combating juvenile delinquency, child protection departments, municipal administrations, local police departments, district education inspectorates and local commissions for combating human trafficking.

Media Coverage

In 2021, the experts of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre made many other appearances in the print and electronic media, presenting the various campaigns, and data from the Hotline and the Help Line. They were also discussing the need for systematic integration of digital-media literacy in the Bulgarian education system and commenting on topics such as violence in intimate relationships between teenagers, online safety of children and young people, risks for young children when using social networks and ways to prevent them, prevention activities, the role of mobile devices in schools, online bullying among minors, online radicalisation, extremism and hate speech, fake news and disinformation, as well as what parents and schools need to do to protect children online. The activities of the Centre were covered in over 100 publications and broadcasts.

The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre thanks its partners and supporters who helped to realize all activities in 2021!