Public report

Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre
Safenet.bg

2019

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 2019
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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 for children content and conduct in 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 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 Roditelji 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 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
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 2019, the Hotline received and processed 9289 reports which referred to websites featuring illegal content or conduct:

- Child sexual exploitation material – 9125;
- Child erotica/nudism – 14;
- Grooming – 12.

1414 of the total reports were transmitted to the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior, 7711 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 2019 the Helpline responded to 521 queries related to the following issues:

- Harmful content – 39
- Sexual harassment – 5
- e-Crime – 4
- Cyberbullying – 35
- Personal data – 8
- Sexting – 5
- Sextortion – 12
- Digital and media literacy – 19
- Privacy settings – 36
- Online reputation – 11
The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre 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 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 2019, the work of the Safer Internet Centre covered several main priorities: awareness campaigns, education and training, research and operation of the Hotline and the Helpline.

The Cyberscout Training Programme

In 2019, the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre conducted the fifth yearly round of its Cyberscout Training Programme. The programme uses peer-to-peer training methods for preparing 5th-graders to popularize the most dangerous online risks and the ways for combating them among their peers across Bulgaria. With the financial support of Telenor Bulgaria and the help of the Ministry of Interior, 862 students at 42 schools in 25 settlements in Bulgaria were trained as Cyberscouts. The trained children were from Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, Pernik, Elin Pelin, Vratsa, Montana, Zlatitsa, Zlataritsa, Troyan, Ablanitsa, Dolno Osenovo, Svistov, Akakovo, Staro Oryahovo, Targovishte, Popovo, Silistra, Dobrich, Popovitsa, Septemvri, Yakoruda, Kardzhali, Stara Zagora and Saedinenie. The certified Cyberscouts raised awareness about online safety to more than 1,000 of their peers through their own attractive and original activities. For a second consecutive year, external trainers from partners of the Bulgarian SIC with which cooperation agreements were concluded - the Youth Centre Plovdiv and the Hope Foundation (Varna), as well as trainers from new partners – the Youth Centre – Vratsa and PULSE Foundation (Pernik) with which also
agreements were signed, provided Cyberscout trainings. Those trainers were trained and supervised by the Bulgarian SIC’s Cyberscout trainers.

The methodology of the two-day training programme is built upon the principles of autonomy and experiential learning. During the first day of the training, through a supportive environment and interactive methods, the participants engage in a series of challenges, related to the main online risks and to the ways for combating them. After each challenge, the participants reflect on their experiences and apply what they have learned in the next challenge. During the second day of the training, the participants use their newly acquired skills and knowledge to enter role of Cyberscouts to give advice to their peers and organize public awareness events in simulated scenarios. In addition to these practical skills, the methodology also develops the teamwork and critical thinking skills of the participants.

After the training, the Cyberscouts divide into Cyberscout squads and are invited to participate in monthly gamified missions, which further hone their skills, including a mission to implement their awareness-raising projects and thus participate in a national competition between the Certified Cyberscouts. The participants in the three best squads are awarded on the Safer Internet Day event in Sofia in February of the next year.

**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 2019, the young people worked actively on a campaign against Cyberbullying and promoting positive online behaviour #YouAreTheHero which was designed by them. They also had eight training sessions on media content creation provided by media professionals within a joint project of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre and the youth media Teen Station. The young people planned and moderated the main activity to celebrate the International Safer Internet Day on February 5, 2019, dedicated to the topic of countering Cyberbullying when their #YouAreTheHero campaign was also launched. Members of the Youth Panel also took part as presenters and facilitators of the event.

In 2019, two members of the Bulgarian SIC’s Youth panel joined the “Megaphone” National Youth Network maintained by the National Network for Children. They also joined the “Reporters” initiative of the NNC. Within this initiative young people are trained and encouraged to interview their peers in order to present to the society the opinions of youth on various important topics concerning their rights and lives. One of these two members of the Bulgarian SIC’s Youth panel was also elected by the other young reporters to be the representative of Bulgaria in the Eurochild Children’s Council.

Representatives of the Youth Panel took an active part in the International Safer Internet Forum on 21 November, as well as in an event in the European Parliament for the International Children’s Rights Day (as the Bulgarian representative in Eurochild Children’s Council) on 20 November, both held in Brussels. On the same date, other members of the panel took part in the “Voice it” National Youth Forum in Sofia. Members of the Bulgarian SIC’s Youth panel planed and actively participated in the Centre’s activites at the annual Familiathlon event for children and parents in Sofia and at the event for the Children’s Rights Day in Pernik, among others. Members of the Youth panel, along with Bulgarian SIC’s experts also joined the Executive Council for launching the international U-report platform in Bulgaria.
In 2019, they also gave a number of interviews on the topics of online safety and digital media literacy for various media.

#YouAreTheHero Campaign

In 2019, Youth Panel members continued their work on their campaign against hate speech online and cyberbullying, called #YouAreTheHero. The young people prepared the storyboard for the campaign videospot (after carefully analyzing the characteristics and needs of the target group and after the young people had a series of trainings on a successful marketing model). The video was shot by Mr. Boyko Shtonov, a professional director who is also a mentor of the youngsters working on the youth media Teen Staion. The members of the Youth panel participated in the making of the video as well as the casting of the young actors – Daniel Dimitrov (who later also joined the Youth panel) and the young girl Sofiya. The video contains a "call for action" – the viewers are "challenged" to post a picture of themselves wearing their "hero sweatshirt" on social media with the hashtag #ГероятСиТи (#YouAreTheHero). With this symbolic action they show their support to the campaign's cause for positive online behavior.

In August and September 2019, the next phase of the campaign was conducted – “#You Are the Hero. I don’t know what you did this summer. Tell me”. Within this phase the young people were encouraged to share their good acts online on the campaign’s Facebook page in order to inspire their peers to create more positive online and offline environment.

Trainings on media content creation for youth

In 2019, a joint project of the Safer Internet Centre and the Voice of Children Foundation (founded by the radio journalist and TV host Evelina Pavlova, creator of the Teen Station online youth media) for trainings on media content creation for young people was implemented. The trainings were conducted by professional journalists and other media experts who trained the young people in journalistic skills. In 2019, six trainings for youth groups from Sofia and Russe were conducted. Trained young people started creating their own media content, which is published in the Teen Station youth online media.
Safer Internet Day

The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre and the youth media Teen Station launched a campaign promoting positive online behaviour and countering hate speech and cyberbullying at the main event for celebration of the international Safer Internet Day in Bulgaria on 5th of February 2019.

The main activity of the Safer Internet Day was devoted to countering online hate and cyberbullying. The Youth panel had planned and facilitated an interactive session in which the SID participants were split in working groups. The Cyberscouts from various towns in Bulgaria who won a national competition, as well as their teachers and representatives of various organisations and institutions participated in the main session. In a final discussion the participants shared their suggestions for countering hate speech online and cyberbulling.

The campaign #YouAreTheHero was designed by the members of the Youth panel of the Bulgarian SIC. The young people wrote the storyboard of the campaign video and participated in the making of the videospot, as well as in the casting of the young actors Daniel (who also joined the Youth panel) and Sofiya. The video was directed by Boyko Shtonov, who is also a mentor of the young people within a common project for youth media content creation of the Bulgarian SIC and the youth media Teen Station created by the famous Bulgarian journalist Evelina Pavlova.

Sanja Saranovic, UNICEF Deputy Representative in Bulgaria, was a special guest of the event. She greeted the young people for their remarkable activity and encouraged them to present their suggestions and recommendations to the state institutions, as well as to the international organisations, in order to contribute to the global efforts for creating a better internet for children.

Traditionally, on a special ceremony, the children who won a national competition among cyberscouts from all over the country trained by the Bulgarian SIC in 2018 received their certificates by Yavor Kolev, Head of Transborder Organized Crime Department of the General Directorate Combating Organised Crime, as well as awards by Telenor Bulgaria, supporting the Bulgarian SIC’s Cyberscout programme. Cyberscout squads from Gotse Delchev, Dobrich, Targovishte and Karlovo deserved their awards for their activities for raising awareness on internet safety among their peers and parents.

For a second year, the campaign “Media Literacy Days” organized by the SIC initiated Coalition for Development of Media Literacy of Bulgarian Children (having 15 member-organisations) was also launched on the Safer Internet Day. The Bulgarian SIC which is one of the founders of the Coalition developed a package of materials for teachers for development of digital and media literacy of their students. The package included lesson plans for different age groups of students, presentations, plans for meetings with parents, etc.
The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre (SIC) took part in the organization and realization of the 11th annual open-air event for families “Famillathlon”. Almost 4000 parents and their children joined the festivities on 12th May 2019 in the South Park in Sofia. The SIC team together with members of the Youth Panel, raised their awareness about the most important aspects of internet safety through different interesting activities.

The visitors to the Centre’s stand took part in various interactive games and in discussions focused on the online safety of children in different age groups. Such as: PC Doctor - travelling “clinic” dealing with online safety of mobile devices. The teenagers had the opportunity to test their knowledge about online safety by answering the quiz on the mobile application SafenetApp developed by the Safer Internet Centre with the support of Internet Society and Telenor Bulgaria.

The members of the Youth Panel took part in all activities organised by the Centre. They presented the new campaign against hate online #ГероятСиТи (#YouAreTheHero). The “Famillathlon” attracted a record number of families and was supported by over 50 organisations, sports clubs and companies. All partner organisations offered the parents and their children various activities encouraging them to have fun and enjoy a Sunday together. The main organisers of the event were the partners in the Safer Internet Centre – Association Roditeli (Parents).

On 28th September 2019, “Famillathlon” events took place in Gorna Oryahovitsa as well, in the town’s park “Detski kat”, organized by the Municipality of Gorna Oryahovitsa and Association “Youth Parliament of Gorna Oryahovitsa” with the support of the local Commission for Combating Anti-Social Behaviour of Minors, the local Museum of History and the online platform sportuvam.info. Association “Roditeli” and the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre participated actively in the event.

Holistic model for development of digital and media literacy at school

In 2019, the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre started a new project supported by Oak Foundation for development and implementation of a holistic model for systematic development of 21st century skills at school on the basis of the obligatory curriculum for students from 1st to 12th grades. In the summer of 2019, the SIC’s team developed the model and in the period from September to November 2019, a series of trainings for teachers from “Elin Pelin” High School in Sofia was provided. Some teachers developed their own lesson plans according to the proposed model and piloted them at school. In December 2019, the Bulgarian SIC and “Gen. Jose de Sen Martin” High School and “Yordan Yovkov” High School in Sofia conducted a series of trainings for teachers from these school to implement the model under the supervision of the SIC’s experts in the next year.

“Digital Literate” methodology and guide for teachers

In the beginning of 2019, in partnership with “Dobri Voynikov” High School and Lozenets District in Sofia, Association “Roditeli” (Parents) and Applied Research and Communications Fund, coordinating the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre, started a new project for development of a new training methodology and piloting of new Guide for teachers with lesson plans for development of digital and media literacy of teenagers, entitled “Digital Literate”. The guide was based on the SIC’s guide “Prevention of Virtual and Real Violence” but the scope of the included topics has been expanded. In April 2019, the lesson modules included in the new guide were successfully
piloted at “Dobri Voynikov” High School in Sofia by trainers of the Bulgarian SIC. Teachers from that school attended the trainings and gave feedback to the SIC team which allowed to further improve the methodology and the content. In September 2019, three trainings on the new training methodology for teachers at that school were provided by the SIC’s sexperts.

Educational Campaigns for Engaging Parents and Teachers and Campaigns for Young People

The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre continued actively to involve parents and teachers in the development of digital literacy skills of Bulgarian children through periodic campaigns and new initiatives.

Media Literacy Days Campaign

On the Safer Internet Day (5 February 2019) for a second time the Coalition for Media Literacy in Education launched its Media Literacy Days Campaign. Within the campaign, the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre developed lesson plans and presentations for teachers of students in various age groups, as well as guidelines and plans for meetings with parents. Lesson plans on the topic of netiquette (ethical and safe online behaviour) were developed for students from 1st to 4th grade, as this is the most appropriate age for starting explaining to children that aggressive and offensive behavior is unacceptable and can lead to cyberbullying. Cyberbullying was also the topic for students from 5th to 7th grade as this is the most common online risk for children at that age and it is important for them to learn how to prevent or react to such problems. Sexting was the topic for students from 8th to 12th grade – this modern form of flirtation by sending provocative pictures and videos. The main risk here is the possibility that those intimate picture or videos leak on the web.

The lesson plans, the presentations and additional guidelines for teachers, as well as plans for meeting with parents on topics of online risks are free to download from the “Materials” Section of the SIC website.

It Depends On You Campaign

In 2019, Bulgarian SIC and Telenor Bulgaria continued joint their campaign for safer online environment for children “It Depends On You” in partnership with the Bulgarian video platform “VBox 7”.

The Bulgarian SIC experts and members of the Centre’s Youth panel created scripts for 12 animated educational videos containing useful advice for online safety for parents and children on various topics concerning main online risks. The videos were uploaded on the campaign’s web site, the SIC website as well as in YouTube.

In October and November 2019, within this initiative a series of meetings with parents took place in Plovdiv, Burgas and Varna. At those meetings Bulgarian SIC experts discussed with the parents the main online risks and the proper ways for prevention and reaction to internet related problems.
Find Another Way Campaign

In 2019, Applied Research and Communications Fund (coordinating the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre), the Centre for Study of Democracy (CSD) and Intelday Solutions Advertising Agency planned a campaign countering online dissemination of far-right messages among youth (aged 14-19) and fostering tolerance and critical thinking. The campaign was planned within the YouthRightOn Project (Resilient Youth against Far-Right Messages Online – YouthRightOn), funded by the Civil Society Empowerment Programme – CSEP within Internal Security Fund of the General Direction Migration and Internal Affairs of the European Commission.

A national representative survey conducted by the Centre for Study of Democracy (CSD) revealed alarming data about the exposure of the Bulgarian youth at hateful and violent messages. According to the findings, 52% of the Bulgarian youth (aged 14-19) have been exposed to such content online. According to psychologists the frequency of exposure on materials containing violent messages or actions increases the threshold of tolerance to violence and can lead to violent acts. According to the survey, 12-16% of the Bulgarian youth (from 1018 young people aged 14-19 who were interviewed) approve online content containing various hateful or aggressive messages. The research findings showed that the passive consumption of such content is correlated to the higher level of approval of the calls for violent or radical actions.

In September-October 2019, five focus groups with young people and four focus groups with teachers were conducted in Plovdiv, Vratsa, Kyustendil and Sofia. Focus groups with students and teachers from “Vasil Levski” Sports High School in Plovdiv, “Kozma Trichkov” High School in Vratsa, “Prof. Emanuil Ivanov” High School of Mathematics and Natural Science in Kyustendil and “Dobri Voynikov” High School of Foreign Languages were organized. The Bulgarian SIC’s Youth panel members also participated in a focus group.

The information from the discussions within the focus groups served for planning an online campaign for young people, as well as for a development of a Guide for teachers with lesson plans for fostering tolerance and development of critical thinking for prevention of far-right radicalization. The campaign logo and slogan were consulted with the members of the Bulgarian SIC’s Youth panel, as well.

The campaign launch was planned for January 2020. Training for teachers for a new training methodology and a Guide with lesson plans for teachers for fostering tolerance and development of critical thinking, both developed by experts of ARC Fund, was planned for February 2020. On this training teachers would also have the opportunity to provide feedback for the methodology which will be used by the experts of ARC Fund for refining the teachers’ guide.
Conferences and forums

Conference “Holistic model for digital and media literacy development based on school curricula”

Over 90 teachers from 34 cities and towns across Bulgaria participated in the conference “Holistic model for digital and media literacy development based on school curricula”. The conference took place in the city of Veliko Tarnovo on 22nd – 24th November 2019.

This is the second conference of this type after the first national conference “How to teach media literacy at school – methods and practice”, which took place in Sofia on 10th of November 2018.

The conference was organized by the national Safer Internet Centre with the support of Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom. 93 teachers from 54 schools across the country took part in the conference - 23 teachers from primary school (1st – 4th grade), 27 from middle school (5th – 8th grade) and 43 teachers from high school (8th – 12th grade). During the 3 conference days the teachers had the chance to learn about the advantages, the problems and the realities of the digital native generation, the role of the educational system and the importance of the school – family partnership.

The main theme of the conference was the digital and media literacy and the development of the key 21st century skills during all educational stages. The new methodology for the development of digital and media literacy “Primary education in the digital era; A teacher’s guidebook” was presented. The methodology was developed by the Centre’s team together with primary school teachers. It is based on the national primary school curricula and aims to integrate the 21st century skills into the everyday practice of the teachers.

The participants had the opportunity to take part in different, interactive workshops based on different school subjects and according to the grades they are teaching. During the workshops they focused on the key competences they would like to help their students develop and how to better integrate these competences in their day to day teaching based on the standardized school curricula. All teachers prepared lesson plans based on the subject they are teaching, as well as, combined lesson plans together with their colleagues taking into consideration the cross-curricular links suggested in the school programmes by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science. The educators discussed the importance to teach those skills in a systematic way throughout the educational journey of the students in order to achieve long term results. They also recognised the importance of working with the families for the development of the 21st century skills.

“Voice it” Youth Forum

Members of the Youth panel of the Bulgarian SIC raised awareness about internet risks to their peers who participated in the annual Youth forum “Voice it” through various interesting and entertaining activities. The national youth forum was organized in partnership with UNICEF Bulgaria. It took place on 20 November 2019 – the international Child’s Rights Day at the National Palace of Culture in Sofia.

The SIC’s stands were most visited by the young people who participated in the forum, as this year more than 250 children and young people attended the event. The members of the Bulgarian SIC’s Youth panel planned and
provided attractive gamified activities for provoking the young participants to reflect on online risks and the proper ways of prevention and reaction to internet related problems. They attracted the attention of their peers to important topics as cyberbullying, fake profiles in social media, sexting, harmful online content, security settings and fake news.

The annual Youth forum was organized with the active participation of the members of the “Megaphone” Youth Network from all over the country. Two members of the Bulgarian SIC’s Youth panel are among the “Megaphone” members, as well. The young people had leading role and each year they define the topics which the youth would like to share their opinion about.

**Expert Meeting on "The Virtual World and Its Influence on Children"**

In relation to frequent media speculations on the topic of “addiction to internet” the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre and the Bulgarian Association of Pediatricians organised for a second time a round table for experts including pediatricians and other medical professionals on the topic of the influence of digital environment on children’s health.

**“School for Future” Conference**

Experts of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre actively participated at the “School for Future 3.0” conference for teachers which took place from 15 to 17 November 2019 in Bansko. The conference was dedicated to presenting various innovative methods and approaches in education and sharing of best practices which could be useful for teachers and school principles. The SIC experts moderated two workshops for teachers – “How to develop digital and media literacy at school” and “Parents at school”.

**International Cooperation**

In 2019, the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre continued to be an active member of the Insafe European Network of the Safer Internet Centres and the INHOPE International Association of Internet Hotlines. The Centre contributed to the work of the two networks and cooperated with other Hotlines and website owners/administrators across Europe to remove illegal and harmful content from the Internet. Representatives of the Bulgarian SIC participated in two regular meetings (in Crete, Greece in August, and in Ljubljana, Slovenia in September) and in series of online meetings of the INHOPE and Insafe networks.

The Bulgarian SIC has also been an active member of the Radicalisation Awareness Network – RAN and the European Crime Prevention Network – EUCPN which ranked the Centre’s Cyberscout Programme 9th in Europe in December 2017. The Bulgarian SIC has been an active member of the international research network Global Kids Online, as well.

In 2019, a member of the Bulgarian SIC’s Youth panel was elected for a representative of Bulgaria in the Eurochild Children’s Council.
Safer Internet Forum

Bulgarian SIC’s experts and youth representative participated in the annual Safer Internet Forum, organised by Better Internet for Kids network (combining Insafe - the European network of Safer Internet Centres and INHOPE International Association of Internet Hotlines) which took place on 21 November 2019 in Brussels.

This year the main topic of the forum was "From online violence to digital respect". The members of the European Youth Panel, including a member of the Bulgarian Youth Panel, for the first time had the opportunity to organize their own sessions for all participants. The Bulgarian representative assisted by a Schoolnet expert planned and conducted a highly interactive session involving gameplay elements and provoking in-depth discussion, not only about victims of online bullying, but also about its perpetrators - the reasons for some of the children being bullies online and how adults can help them.

Other interesting sessions were held on the topic of digital violence with the participation of experts such as Roger Loppacher, Chairman of the Audiovisual Council of Catalunya, Thomas Myrup Kristensen, Managing Director EU affairs for Facebook, Stephen Turner, Head of Public Policy, Government and Philanthropy for Twitter, as well as other young people such as Emma Holten, a Human rights activist, Gina Marlin, a writer and activist, and more.

On 22 November, Bulgarian SIC expert Dr. Emanuel Georgiev participated in the European Commission's Consultative Meeting with representatives of the members of Better Internet for Kids network, where the participants discussed the Commission's strategy for online child safety, as well as the needs of the Safer Internet Centres in Europe and their recommendations.

Celebration of the International Child’s Right Day in the European Parliament

In November 2019, a member of the Bulgarian SIC’s Youth panel, elected to be the representative of Bulgaria in Eurochild Children’s Council participated in discussions with high rank European politicians at the event for celebration of the international Child’s Right Day in the European Parliament in Brussels.

Milena Radoitseva, as a Bulgarian representative in the Eurochild Children's Council (after being elected by other youngsters, participating in the National Network for Children’s “Reporters” initiative) participated in a High-level conference to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child held in the plenary chamber of the European Parliament in Brussels on 20.11. Official guests of the event were Her Magesty Matilde, the Queen of the Belgians and the President of the European Parliament David Maria Sassoli, who welcomed the participants and stressed that the topic of children's rights was a priority for the European Union. The conference was attended by Vera Jourova, Commissioner for Justice,
Consumers and Gender Equality, Michael O'Flaherty, Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Velina Todorova, Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the United Nations, Charlotte Petri Gornitzka, Deputy President of UNICEF, the President of Eurochild and former President of Malta Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca and others. Children's and youth representatives also took part in the discussion panels.

The conference acknowledged the progress made over three decades and discussed the challenges ahead in a global and digital world. The focus on the topic of children’s rights in the digital environment was raised by many of the participants, incl. by the President of the European Parliament, David Maria Sassoli.

Within the same and the following day (21 November), the members of the Children’s Council participated in a number of meetings with members of the European Parliament and other high rank European politicians or heads of reputable international organizations.

**Cooperation with Global Kids Online and UNICEF Innocenti**

In 2019, the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre continued to collaborate with the Global Kids Online research network in order to contribute to synchronizing the network’s research approach with the broader concept for digital and media literacy used by the Bulgarian SIC. Cooperation with the UNICEF Office of Research – UNICEF Innocenti, has also started. Petar Kanchev, an expert of the Bulgarian SIC, joined the research team which works on a Global Report on children in the world and the internet.

**National Cooperation and Media Coverage**

**Coalition for Development of Digital and Media Literacy in Education**

Established in 2017, by the initiative of the Safer Internet Centre and the Red House Centre for Culture and Debate, the Coalition for media literacy in education continued its active work during 2019.

The Coalition includes the Institute for Progressive Education, the Centre for Inclusive Education, the Association of European Journalists in Bulgaria, Teach for Bulgaria, National Network for Children, Education Bulgaria 2030, the Voice of Children Foundation.

The aim of the Coalition is to stimulate the public debate on the subject and to collect and promote the 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 basis on which further education can build, so that students can get out of high school as active citizens of the 21st century and participants in the economy.

In February 2019, the Coalition organised the "Media Literacy Days" campaign launched on Safer Internet Day (5 February), including a series of activities and initiatives organised by the member organizations. The Coalition also organised second practical-methodical conference “Holistic model for digital and media literacy development based on school curricula”, which gathered 90 teachers on 22-24 November in the city of Veliko Tarnovo.

**Partners Networks**

**National Network for Children and “Megaphone” Youth Network**

Applied Research and Communications Fund and Association Roditeli are active members of the National Network for Children, bringing together 150 organizations working with and for children and families across the country.
In 2018, ARC Fund and AR participated in the development of common strategies and network positions on topical issues concerning children. Both organizations participated also in organizing the Golden Apple Awards for contribution of public figures, ordinary people and organizations, working to improve Bulgarian children’s life and welfare. They also contributed to the annual Report Card - annual report which evaluates whether the government and administration have fulfilled their commitments to the children rights in the past year, especially contributing to the assessment of the state achievements in the field of the well-being of children and their online safety and development of their digital literacy skills.

In 2019, two members of the Bulgarian SIC’s Youth panel joined the “Megaphone” Youth Network coordinated by the National Network for Children. They participated in the Autumn School of the “Megaphone” network. The youth panelists also joined the “Reporters” Initiative of the National Network for Children. Within this initiative the young reporters are trained and encouraged to interview their peers on various topics concerning children and youth. The young reporters elected Milena Radoytseva, a member of the Bulgarian SIC’s Youth panel, to be the representative of Bulgaria in Eurochild Children’s Council.

The organisations coordinating the Centre also participated in the organization of the “Voice it 2019” Youth Forum, organized with the support of “Megaphone” Youth Network”. The members of the Bulgarian SIC’s Youth Panel were actively involved in the event.

“Childhood without Violence” Alliance

The Applied Research and Communications Fund and Association Roditeli were among the founders of the Alliance “Childhood without Violence” in early 2018, bringing together 19 civil society organizations and academics working for years for prevention of violence against children. The members of the Alliance “Childhood Without Violence” aim to become a wide public platform involving representatives of all spheres of society – civic organizations, parents and citizens, institutions, business, media to prevent violence against children.

Learning Action Partnership

ARC Fund (Coordinator of the Bulgarian SIC) has actively participated in the Learning Action Partnership (LAP) which is a network for exchanging ideas and good practices in the field of prevention of sexual exploitation of children, coordinated by the Bulgarian Association for Family Planning and Sexual Health (BFPA), since its founding in 2015. In 2019, representatives of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre contributed to the sharing of information and best practices - data from a national representative survey "Bulgarian Kids Online", as well as methodologies and resources for developing digital skills and media literacy of children as an important tool for prevention of risks online.

Partnership with UNICEF Bulgaria

In 2019, the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre continued its partnership with UNICEF Bulgaria which joined the Public Council for Safer Internet Use in 2018. Members of the Bulgarian SIC’s Youth panel participated in a national conference organized by UNICEF Bulgaria. In 2019, Dr. Emanuil Georgiev and Mirela Dimitrova, experts of the Bulgarian SIC and
Coordinators of Youth Participation, along with Dimana Dodova and Simona Valeva, young members of the SIC’s Youth panel joined the Executive Council of the platform for gaining youth opinions on subject which are important for young people U-Report Bulgaria, coordinated by UNICEF Bulgaria. As members of the Executive Council they actively participated in preparatory work for launching and promoting of the platform.

**Cooperation with Schools and State Intitutions**

Many of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre’s activities were carried out in cooperation with various partners, both nationally and locally. The Bulgarian SIC has traditionally good cooperation with many schools and municipalities in the country. Teachers and their pupils were actively involved in the "Media Literacy Days 2019" and, as well as in the approbation of “Digital Literate” Handbook for development of digital and media skills of children, the methodological and practical conference "Holistic model for development of digital and media literacy at school" which took place in Veliko Tarnovo, etc.

The Ministry of Education and Science has actively participated in an expert group for developing a model for development of digital and media literacy in education. In partnership with the National Commission for Combating Trafficking of Human Beings, Bulgarian SIC’s experts provided 7 trainings on prevention of trafficking of children through the internet. The Bulgarian SIC has an active cooperation with the State Agency for Child Protection. There was a good cooperation with other institutions and the SIC’s experts had a lot of successful working meetings with the local Commissions Combating Anti-Social Behaviour of Minors, Child Protection Departments, Municipal Administrations, local police departments, regional Education Inspectorates and local Commissions for Combating Trafficking of Human Beings, among others.

**Media Coverage**

In 2018, the partnership with the daily morning talk show "Before Noon" on the national TV channel BTV continued, which allowed the introduction of digital literacy and online safety topics with a weekly coverage of various issues in the field. The experts of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre also were interviewed many times by print and electronic media when different campaigns were launched, as well as about other activities and initiatives and the findings from the national representative survey "Bulgarian Children Online". The SIC experts actively promoted the need for a systematic integration of digital literacy and media skills in the Bulgarian educational system, commented on topics such as violence in intimate teenage relationships, online safety of children and young people, the risks to young children using social networks and the ways for prevention, the prevention activities of the SIC, the role of mobile devices in schools, Cyberbullying, online radicalization, extremism and hate speech, as well as the actions that parents and schools have to take to protect children on the internet. The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre's work was presented in over 200 publications, radio and TV broadcasts.

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