



# Public report

## Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre

*Safenet.bg*  
*Web112.net*  
*Blob.bg*

*2011 г.*



## Introduction

Bulgaria has been participating in the Safer Internet Programme of the European Commission since 2005 through its national Safer Internet Centre operated by several non-governmental organisations under the co-ordination of the Applied Research and Communications Fund (ARC Fund).

ARC Fund established and launched the Bulgarian Internet Hotline for fighting illegal and harmful for children content and conduct in Internet in May 2006. In June 2008, ARC Fund, in consortium with three other Bulgarian organisations - Association Roditeli (Parents), the Bulgarian Federation for Electronic Sport and DeConi Advertising Agency - founded the national Awareness Centre, co-financed by the Safer Internet *plus* Programme of the European Commission. The third component of the Safer Internet Centre services – a national Helpline acting as a consultation call-centre responding to questions and concerns of young people, parents and teachers linked to minors' experiences online went fully operational in April 2011. Due to the good cooperation between ARC Fund and the three Bulgarian mobile operators, the Helpline telephone number 124 123 has a very low charge of 0.07 euro per call notwithstanding its duration.

ARC Fund is a member of the International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE), as well as of the European Network of Safer Internet Centres INSAFE. It is also a member of the National Network for Children – a Bulgarian network of some 90 non-governmental organisations, working in the field of children rights, child care, and children protection, which is a member of the Regional Network of non-profit organisations and UNICEF for children from Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and Baltic countries.

The aim of the Bulgarian Hotline is to provide a reporting facility, easily accessible by every citizen and minor, for reporting spotted online content or conduct, which is illegal according to Bulgarian legislation or may have a traumatic or other harmful effect on the minor users of the web. The main priority in the Hotline activities is to fight dissemination of child sexual abuse images and children grooming in Internet. The European and Bulgarian experience proves that setting up a public Internet Hotline increases significantly the efficiency of the competent law enforcement authorities in their fight against illegal and harmful for children content, conduct and contacts in Internet. Most Hotlines are being run by non-governmental organisations thus simplifying the procedures for reporting illegal and harmful content and conduct and guaranteeing the anonymity of the reporting persons.

Some of the risks for minors in Internet arise as a result of the online actions and interactions of the minors themselves. Among these are cyber-bullying, e-violence and posting of illegal and harmful content in websites for image and video sharing and in social networking sites.

## Who We Are

**The Applied Research and Communication Fund (ARC Fund)** is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation in public interest, established in Sofia in 1991. Today ARC Fund is among the leading Bulgarian organisations working for building up a knowledge-based society, empowered by the might of information technologies and innovation.

ARC Fund has been actively involved in the efforts to formulate and implement policies for the development of information and knowledge-based society both on national and international level by:

- Conducting applied research and analyses that assist the development and implementation of public policies ;
- Introducing new policy concepts and innovative policy-making tools (e.g. foresight);
- Promoting public policy consensus by bringing together the key actors in government, industry and civil society, and by forming coalitions and public-private partnerships;
- Building capacity in various professional groups by providing specialized trainings and facilitating the transfer of knowledge and international good practice;
- Designing innovative solutions to development problems by initiating pilot projects that demonstrate the values of technologies, including ICTs, in strengthening democratic governance, empowering civil society, and developing competitive businesses.

**Association Roditeli** was established in 2001 as a non-profit organisation in public interest, founded according to the law for non-governmental legal entities.

Association Roditeli is:

- Member of European Parents Association
- Member of the National Network for Children
- Member of working groups at the National Council of Child Protection
- Member of the Public Council on Safer Internet Use
- Member of the Consultancy Board for Education at Sofia Municipality
- Member of the Consultancy Board “Children of Sofia”

The mission of the Association is to encourage parents to be the best parents they can be and to support kids to grow up as the best adults they can become. Its main aim is to develop and win recognition of parenthood as a main spiritual value of the society as well as natural environment for rising up and educating the children.

## Public Council on Safer Internet Use

In line with accepted European practice, the activities of the Bulgarian Internet Hotline for fighting illegal and harmful for children online content and conduct is being supervised by an advisory board – the Public Council on Safer Internet Use, founded in April 2006. The members of the Public Council are representatives of the major stakeholders – public institutions, industry associations, private companies and non-governmental organisations involved in development of information technologies and knowledge-based society which share the common mission of the project to make Internet a safer environment for minors.

At its regular meetings the Public Council discusses and approves the periodical activity reports and the annual Public reports of the Hotline and the national Safer Internet Centre and gives recommendations for improving its work. It monitors abidance by the approved operational procedures of the Hotline and takes decisions to change them when the conditions in the country – legislative, social and economic - change. The Public Council initiates various activities for promoting Safer Internet rules and raising social awareness about risks for minors in Internet and the ways for their prevention. The member organisations of the Public Council play an active part in a number of initiatives of the Safer Internet Centre.

When an organisation or individual expresses willingness and has proven capacity in the area of safer Internet the Public Council, in conformity with its Statutes, vote for new member. The new members must have the capacity to contribute to raising the efficiency of the activities of the national Safer Internet Centre and the Bulgarian Hotline for fighting illegal and harmful for children online content and conduct.

## Members of the Public Council on Safer Internet Use

1. Chair – **Galina Bankovska**, deputy chair of the parliamentary Commission on education, culture, children, youth and sports
2. Deputy-chair – **Dimitar Dereliev**- Deputy Minister of Culture
3. Deputy-chair - **Teodor Zahov** - chairman of two major IT business associations - the Association for Electronic Communications and the Bulgarian Association on Information Technologies.
4. Ministry of Culture
5. Ministry for Education, Youth and Science
6. State Agency for Child Protection
7. Ministry of Interior
9. Executive Agency for Information Technology and Communications
10. Sofia Municipality
11. Bulgarian Association for IT /BAIT/
12. Cisco Systems - Bulgaria
13. Law and Internet Foundation

14. Roditeli Association
15. Bulgarian Federation for Electronic Sport
16. Gender Education, Research and Technologies Foundation
17. Vivacom
18. Mobitel
19. GLOBUL
20. Microsoft Bulgaria
21. Applied Research and Communications Fund
22. Center for the Study of Democracy

## Hotline Operational Procedures

The operational procedures of the Bulgarian Hotline have been initially approved and afterwards amended by the Public Council on Safer Internet. The full text of the procedures is available at the Hotline website. The aim of the adopted Hotline operational procedures is to ensure that the activities of the Hotline are efficient and fully transparent to the general public.

The procedures guarantee, according to the reporting person's choice, full anonymity. The Hotline uses a secure communication channel for transmitting the reports to the competent authorities which are authorized to take the necessary measures.

After receiving a report, the Hotline operators trace the content to find out its physical location.

When the content has been traced to a server or other computer in Bulgaria, the report is transmitted via a specially established communication channel to the Ministry of Interior in virtue of a framework Agreement for co-operation officially signed in 2006.

When the content has been traced to the territory of a country member of the International Association of Internet Hotlines INHOPE, the report is transmitted to the partner Hotline.

When the content has been traced to a third country, the report is transmitted to the Ministry of Interior for taking further measures based on the international police co-operation procedures.

The Hotline operators answer queries by phone or by e-mail in case when there is a threat for the physical or psychological well-being of a minor or according to the internal procedures for reports transfer transmits the call to the Helpline consultants.

The Bulgarian Hotline is reporting periodically to the Public Council on Safer Internet and to the general public in annual Public reports which are published on the Hotline website.

## Hotline Activities

During 2011, the Bulgarian Hotline received and processed a total of 751 reports. 146 of the reports concerned real illegal or harmful content or conduct online. Positive trend was the decrease in the number of reports of grooming activities – from 17 in 2010 to 7 in 2011. But a worrisome fact is that for the first time there were 2 reports about child sexual abuse images hosted in the country. Also a negative trend was the number of 50 reports about racist or xenophobic content – first time the Hotline received reports about that content category.

66 of the reports concerned websites in Bulgaria which were reported to contain inappropriate for minors content or conduct. After the initial analysis by the Hotline operations, the classifications of the reports were as follows:

- child pornography – 20;
- child erotica – 4;
- child grooming – 7;
- adult pornography accessible to minors – 9;
- adult pornography – 46;
- extreme pornography – 1;
- racism and xenophobia – 50;
- promoting violence against an individual – 33;
- promoting drugs – 1.

During the year, there were 20 inquiries addressed to the Hotline.

The Hotline undertook 391 actions, as follows:

- 13 of the reports were transferred to the appropriate competent authorities;
- 48 website owners or authors of content were contacted regarding inappropriate content;
- 15 reports were transmitted to respective partner hotlines in other countries;
- 145 of the persons who submitted reports and did not request anonymity were informed about the progress of their case.

## Helpline Operational Procedures

A team of trained professionals answers the inquiries made to the Helpline by telephone, chat and e-mail. The working hours of the helpline are 10 a.m. to 4 a.m. (Monday-Friday). When an enquiry is made, the operator answers and supports the client to the extent of his expertise. Every interaction is recorded and stored in the database. All interactions are strictly confidential though some limitations apply in cases when a child life or wellbeing is at serious risk.

Clients have the option to stay anonymous, so sharing personal information or contacts is not obligatory in order to use the service. Nevertheless, operators are obliged to request such information in case of immediate danger to the physical and psychological wellbeing of the caller. In case of inappropriate content or conduct, the helpline refers that case to the Hotline or/and to other relevant organisations.

In case of immediate danger of a child, the case is reported to the Child Protection Agency, the respective police and school authorities and health care institutions. These actions are mandatory and they are taken with or without the consent of the client. The supervisor in duty is responsible for the case referral as well as for the follow-up of the client. A report is filled and entered into the database.

## Helpline Activities

The newly launched Helpline showed a steady popularity rise due to the visibility of the SIC in Bulgaria, so more and more children, parents and teachers have been reaching out to the consultants for advice and support.

After the initial analysis by the Helpline operations the enquiries were classified as follows:

- information for enhancing skills for online safety (profile safety, spam, filters) - 94
- internet safety rules against online risks - 11
- unwanted communication with strangers online - 17
- meeting with a stranger from internet - 23
- cyberbullying (internet and mobile phone) - 14
- grooming - 14
- protection of personal information (identity theft, using photographs) - 31
- harmful and illegal content (violence, racism, hate, eating disorders, suicide, self-harm) - 36
- internet fraud - 5
- information about the work of the helpline - 1
- other (love, friendship, substances, etc.) - 15

The Helpline took 293 actions:

- counselling - 261
- informing about the Hotline and redirecting - 27
- informing about the Cybercrime Unit hotline [cybercrime.bg](http://cybercrime.bg) and redirecting - 3
- redirecting to another organization - 1

There were 196 enquires made by email, 90 by telephone, 76 by Skype and 1 in person.

## Safer Internet Centre Activities

In 2011 ARC Fund considerably expanded the scope of its activities aimed to encourage positive, responsible and safer use of Internet and mobile technologies among children and young people. All three of the Safer Internet Centre (SIC) services are already available in Bulgaria – Awareness node, Internet Hotline for reporting illegal and harmful for children online content and conduct, and a national Helpline acting as a consultations call-centre responding to questions and concerns of young people, parents and teachers linked to minors' experiences online, which went fully operational since April 2011. Due to the good cooperation between ARC Fund and the three Bulgarian mobile operators, the Helpline telephone number 124 123 has a very low charge of 0.07 euro per call notwithstanding its duration.

The SIC activities during the year have been following the traditional priorities of the programme – raising awareness among children, parents, teachers and professionals regarding the positive and safe use of Internet and mobiles through:

- Developing educational materials;
- Implementing information and awareness raising campaigns and trainings;
- Monitoring the emerging trends in technology use among young people;
- Supporting cooperation between various stakeholders.

The newly launched Helpline showed a steady popularity rise due to the visibility of the SIC in Bulgaria, so more and more children, parents and teachers have been reaching out to the consultants for advice and support.

In its activities SIC relies on a close co-operation with public institutions, private business associations and NGOs united in a Public Council on Safer Internet. The Public council acts as an advisory board to SIC.

The public-private partnership demonstrated its effectiveness in 2011 when two important legislative steps were taken. With the support of several state institutions on 2<sup>nd</sup> November the National Assembly finally ratified the Convention of the Council of Europe on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse for which SIC had been lobbying for the last 2 years. And a draft of a new Child Protection Bill provided for creating a register of child sexual abusers and employers' obligation to check there candidates for jobs presuming contact with children – another piece of legislation SIC had been heavily lobbying for, including by creating a Facebook cause supported by nearly 5,000 supporters.

### Safer Internet Day 2011

The culmination of SIC activities throughout the year was the celebration of the Safer Internet Day (SID) on February 8<sup>th</sup>. In 2011 the focus was on "our virtual lives" around the slogan "It's more than a game, it's your life". The main event took place at the "Elisaveta Bagriana" school in Sofia, where three deputy-ministers – of education, Ms. Milena Damianova, of culture, Mr. Todor Chobanov and of transportation, information technologies & communications, Mr. Parvan Rousinov, and the deputy-chairman of the State Agency for Child Protection, Mr. Kalin Kamenov launched the new Safer Internet campaign.



After the official part of the event, the attendees entered a classroom, where Mr. Rousinov talked to children about how to stay safe on the Internet and explained to them the rules of the new "Flashboy in the World of Spammies" family game which can be also played at school. The educational board game, developed by Association "Parents" and the Bulgarian SIC especially for SID 2011, was then played by the attending fourth-graders. Flashboy, the defender of children online, dressed in its special costume, also helped children. The game provoked great enthusiasm among children and brought a lot of fun and laughter.

Safer Internet Day was celebrated in more than 100 schools in 14 cities and towns around the country – Sofia, Varna, Kozlodui, Dimitrovgrad, Gotze Delchev, Vratza, Novi Pazar, Madan, Magarovo, Veliko

Tarnovo, Kazanlak, Sliven, Rousse, and Biala. The Bulgarian SIC and Association “Parents” sent more than 3,000 “Flashboy” games, posters and badges to the participating schools to use in the events and initiatives they had planned.

## Peer research training

Experts from the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre and the Cybercrime Unit of the Ministry of Interior participated in March in two 3-day trainings of pupils from 4 cities organized by the Center for Inclusive Education in the framework of a project co-financed by Save the Children-Norway and the Swiss Oak Foundation.



Two groups of children aged 12-14 and 15-17 from schools in Blagoevgrad, Stara Zagora, Ihtiman and Sofia got to know more about online risks and safe use of Internet. They were acquainted with the principles and methods of the peer research and at discussion sessions defined the main objectives for their research.

Their results were published in a special booklet.

## Annual Famillathlon

On the sunny May 14<sup>th</sup>, hundreds of children and their parents gathered at the Pigeons meadow in the South Park in Sofia. The families spent the day playing and having fun together as they joined the third edition of the Famillathlon open-air annual event, organised by the National Safer Internet Centre.

The event was supported by Sofia Municipality, Vivacom, Devin, Voltaren with the media partnership of the Bulgarian National TV and Darik Radio. The main idea was to promote sports as a way to enhance health and strengthen family relationships. During the Famillatlon, the children experimented with various sports and leisure activities such as badminton, softball, capoeira, aikido, paneurhythmy, roller skating, karate, family games, robotics, boxing, art workshops, relay reading, hiking, petanque, rugby, acrobatic rock and roll, taekwondo, and many more...

Like in the previous years, there was an orienteering track called the Little Europe. It proved to be a funny and engaging way for children to get familiar with the 27 European capitals. The children were “traveling” across Europe to learn more about the culture and traditions of the different nations.

Flashboy, a fictional character created by the National Safer Internet Centre, was also part of the Famillathlon. He is always ready to help and knows everything about safer internet and mobile communications. Flashboy introduced the new initiative of the National Safer Internet Centre – the safer internet Helpline. Its telephone number is 124 123. The Helpline provides consultations to children and parents about online risks for children and is operated by Association Roditeli - partner of ARC Fund in the national Safer Internet Centre.



## Sofia Breathes Festival

Sofia Breathes festival was part of Sofia’s application for 2019 European Cultural Capital. There was a program with art workshops, sport events, games and various performances to entertain Sofia residents and visitors. The helpline team had a stand where children played “Flashboy in the Land of Spammies” on large vinyl to learn basic safety rules. They received SIC educational materials.



## The Bulgarian Helpline went mobile

Having in mind the uptrend in internet use via mobile phone among teenagers as well as the young people’s passion for new technologies the Bulgarian Helpline of the National Safer Internet Centre developed an Android application for smart phones. The application can be downloaded from the Helpline website.

Besides the opportunity to look at the contents of the Helpline website and its Facebook page, the application provides easy one-touch access to the short number 124 123 of the Helpline and possibility to compose and send report by email.

The Helpline team expects that going mobile would give an additional incentive to the teenagers and children to contact the consultants.

### Online games for preschoolers: “Play and learn: Being online”

Nowadays, children start using Internet at much earlier age. Therefore, one of the new priorities of SIC activities was designing and developing awareness and educational materials to meet the needs of the youngest users of Internet. The activity book “Play and learn: Being online” released by the European Network of Safer Internet Centres INSAFE targeting children from 4 to 9 years was transformed in collaboration with the children website Dechica.com into an online tool.



The 20 and more activities included in the booklet are now freely available for kids to play on the website. Based on that, an interactive presentation was designed to be used by elementary school teachers in class.

### Children’s Sofia

On 15<sup>th</sup> September, on the occasion of the first school day the SIC promoted the helpline services in front of the National Theater in Sofia as part of the Sofia Municipality initiative “Children’s Sofia”. Children had the opportunity to learn basic safety rules in a funny and engaging way through playing “Flashboy in the Land of Spammies”, while their parents were consulted on the issues young people face online.

### International conference “Say NO! to cyberbullying”



On 27 and 28 August, an international conference “Say NO! to cyberbullying” gathered in Sofia school principals and teachers from 9 cities and towns and representatives and experts from Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Bulgaria. The forum was co-organised by [Madara-Bulgaria Foundation](#), the Department for information and qualification of teachers at Sofia University and the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre (SIC) at the [Applied Research and Communications Fund](#).

Teachers from 3 cities presented their best practice in addressing cyber-bullying and bullying at school. At the end of the forum, the Bulgarian participants prepared a proposal to the Ministry of Education requesting that online safety be included in the school curricula from 1<sup>st</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

### European Mobility Week

On 22<sup>nd</sup> September, the European Mobility Day, a lot of children played “Flashboy in the Land of Spammies” in the centre of Sofia where traffic was closed. Everybody was welcome to learn more about SIC initiatives at its information stand. Hundreds of booklets and brochures were distributed, as well as bracelets and stickers that promote the newly-established helpline



### Competition for Teachers

In October-November SIC and the Network of Teachers Innovators organised a national competition for teachers who were asked to develop innovative lessons and methods for teaching online safety to their pupils. The teacher had to choose one or more of the eight basic digital skills and to explain it to students in a way that is appropriate and engaging for the children at that particular age. Pupils of the top 10 rated teachers were further tested online. The first prize was a laptop.

## Open Lessons on Internet safety for students

SIC teams visited schools in three cities where open lessons on safer Internet for students, teachers and principals took place. A special guest in Sofia and Varna was Yavor Kolev, head of Cybercrime Unit of the General Directorate for Countering Organised Crime at the Ministry of Interior who participated in the discussions by sharing real-life experience.



## Training on prevention of real and virtual violence

In 2011 ARC Fund and Association Parents continued training educators for implementing the “Real and Virtual Violence Prevention by Interactive Education” methodology in schools. This year additional 18 teachers were trained to use the methodology in the schools in the city of Dimitrovgrad. Annual supervision was organised for 50 school counsellors in the city of Varna who already implement the methodology in their schools. They were further introduced to the recently published second educator’s manual aiming to deepen the education in emotional intelligence and social skills that are considered an important protective factor preventing children victimisation. In the city of Ruse, 16 teachers and professionals from the Prevention Directorate at Ruse Municipality also passed training in the “Real and Virtual Violence Prevention” methodology and started its implementation in schools.

## Cybercrime Investigation Trainings

Continuing from last year, experts of Safer Internet Centre (SIC) participated in the last training of police and magistrates as part of a project on capacity rising of law-enforcement, prosecution and courts in combating computer-related crimes, led by the International Academy for Cybercrime Investigation Training. In Velingrad 12 judges, 16 prosecutors and 7 police officers from Plovdiv Appeal District were trained. Altogether the 5 trainings in all 5 judicial districts of the country involved more than 260 law enforcement officers and magistrates.

## Online training for teachers

SIC developed five 2-hour lectures as part of an online training to increase the digital competencies of teachers, organized by the Network of Teachers Innovators. The module “Online safety for pupils and teachers” covers the topics: Prevention of online abuse of children; Risks and opportunities for children online, Prevention of real and virtual violence through personal growth, Digital literacy and emerging technologies, and Online safety: “good” and “bad” messages. The first lecture took place in December and was attended by more than 350 teachers.

## Online training for students

On the initiative and with cooperation from Varna Municipality, ARC Fund started developing an online distance learning course on safer Internet for pupils. 70 students between 16 and 18 years of age volunteered to participate in the pilot phase of the project. The course has three levels and prepares the trainees to become peer educators on safer Internet. Lessons at Level 1 introduce the basic Internet user skills such as web browsing, viruses, information search, communication, security settings. Level 2 aims to enrich the understanding of these topics through more detailed information on types of malware and online scams as well as on the positive and safe use of social services that exist online. Level 3 introduces the concept of peer support through research and education. All levels include presentations, demonstrations, and additional helpful materials to facilitate learning.

Trainees who fulfil the requirements of all three levels will be awarded an Online Safety Expert Certificate.

## Research on cyber-bullying



In order to monitor the trends in Internet use among children and teenagers, SIC initiated focus groups with pupils and teachers and an online survey for pupils, teachers and parents. The research agenda was to assess participants’ perception of youth aggression online. 12 teachers and 24

children at 12-18 age participated in the focus groups. The opt-in online surveys on several popular websites were filled by 213 children, 33 parents' и 1033 teachers. The surveys results demonstrated that most of the students don't engage in an intentionally harmful behaviour online. Even when they act mean, in the majority of cases the assault is perceived benign by both the victim and the perpetrator. This phenomenon was named "Hate for Fun online culture" to convey the idea that Internet serves as an environment where children feel they may experiment "safely" with identities, norms and boundaries.

The model was presented at the Fifth International Conference "Keeping Children and Young People Safe Online" on 20-21 September 2011 in Warsaw.

## **SIC Youth Panel**

In July ARC Fund organised for the second year in a row the participation of two representatives of the SIC Youth Panel from Varna in an international summer youth camp in Moeciu, Romania. The camp was organised by the Romanian Safer Internet Centre. The two youngsters completed training on different topics ranging from online safety to development of projects and peer training and their team won second prize in a project contest. A pupil from the Youth panel represented Bulgaria at the European Youth Panel meeting in Luxemburg and presented a video of hers on "Online Reputation". ARC Fund organised also her father's participation in the European Parents Panel.

## **International Activities**

During the year ARC Fund experts participated in a number of international events and initiatives. The SIC team hosted a visit by 5 representatives of NGO organisations from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The visiting experts were acquainted with the objectives of the Safer Internet Program of the EC, the activities of the INSAFE and INHOPE networks and of the expertise of the Bulgarian SIC. They were trained how to establish and maintain a hotline and awareness centre, acquainted with various tools and methods for awareness raising and for training the target groups. Additionally, SIC took part in training sessions of 15 experts from Serbian NGOs in Novi Sad, invited by B92 Fund and Save the Children – Norway Sarajevo Office. In November SIC accepted 2 members of the Polish Safer Internet Centre, who came to Bulgaria on a bursary exchange visit. They were introduced with SIC activities in Bulgaria and the working procedures of the helpline and the hotline.

In 2011 members of SIC took part in 4 INSAFE and INHOPE meetings and in the annual Safer Internet Forum in Luxembourg, where SIC presented its experience and initiatives about ensuring a safer online environment for minors in Bulgaria.

**The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre thanks all of its partners and supporters, who helped with the realization of all activities in 2011!**