



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
Information Society and Media Directorate-General  
Digital Content and Cognitive Systems  
**eContent and Safer Internet**

## **European Teachers' Panel on Promoting Online Safety in Schools**

**21 October 2009 Luxembourg – Euroforum**

### **REPORT**



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## I. Introduction

27 teachers from across the EU, selected through the INSAFE network, met in Luxembourg on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2009 as a group to discuss promoting online safety in schools. Representatives of this group presented the findings of the Teachers' Panel at the Safer Internet Forum on 22nd-23rd October 2009.

It was noted at the outset that this was essentially a group of experts, people who had a real interest in online safety and many of whom have been delivering these messages effectively to children and young people for some time now.

However, the group were able to speak for their colleagues from school and all had a good perspective on the state of online safety provision across their respective countries.

The panel had an initial plenary session and all participants were invited to comment on their vision for teaching internet safety in schools.

The group was brilliantly moderated by Karl Hopwood and Barbara Buchegger.

The teachers gave very positive feedback on the overall meeting and on its moderation.

Already during the plenary session it became clear very quickly just how important the subject of promoting Online Safety in schools was to the group and also some of the frustrations surrounding the delivery of this to children and young people.

The full agenda of the meeting is available in Annex I.



Plenary session of  
Teachers' Panel

## II. Summary of main common areas of discussion

Following the plenary session, teachers were split into 2 parallel groups covering primary aged children (up until the age of 12) and secondary aged children. Both groups addressed similar issues.

The following bullets provide a summary of the main areas of discussion in the two groups and these are expanded below.

### **What possibilities and risks should be discussed at school?**

- The consequences of children's actions – how this can impact on their future.
- Privacy issues when using social networks
- Cyberbullying
- Grooming
- Media literacy
  - How to research on the Internet
  - How to become able to judge content from the Internet (distinguish commercials from other sites)
- How to integrate games in learning – make school more interesting (serious gaming)
- Downloading and copyright issues
- Mobile phones and particularly financial problems
- Maintain a balance of positive and negative – children and young people need to know some of the risks, but not be overwhelmed and given negative messages.
- Sexting – this was a common concern, even amongst the primary colleagues, but it was noted that often the terminology that is used can be unhelpful as although it means something to adults, it means little or nothing to children and young people.

### **What types of information is needed at different ages?**

- Children need to start receiving online safety education as soon as they start to use a computer or other technology. There were some who felt that this didn't need to happen too early, but the main consensus was that awareness raising needed to start as soon as the technology was a part of their lives, when the child is 6 years old.
- Is restricting the Internet for older students at school sensible, since pupils have unrestricted access to Internet on their mobile phones and at home. It is better to empower them to help themselves.

### **How to empower and build confidence of teachers when using online technologies and teaching online safety in the school environment**

- Teachers need to overcome their fear of the technology – they feel that because the children have more technical skills, they, the teacher are ill-equipped to offer support and guidance.

- Teachers have to be able to use ICT in classroom activities (ICT as a normal tool), being confident with using ICT)
- Teachers have a role to play as they bring a wide experience, life skills and an understanding of what is and is not appropriate.
- Ensure that online safety is a whole school issue and not left to one or two people.
- Make it clear that there is no need to panic – none of the behaviours or risks are new – the internet is merely a tool providing easier access to some of the inappropriate content or activity.
- Empower teachers so that they can keep themselves safe when they are online. They need to set a good example.
- Let pupils teach their teachers and let them learn from each other.

### What material do teachers need to *easily* teach online safety in schools?

- Materials need to link the real world and the online world.
- Ready useable material
- Creativecommons material that can be exchanged



*Example of material for schools produced by awareness centres*

### What are children and young people actually doing when they are online?

As digital natives, children and young people make full use of the internet and what it can offer. They are engaging in a range of different activities, some legal, some not. Teachers felt that it was important to understand (or at least be aware of) what they are doing in order to be able to best support them.

- MSN, Chat, Instant Messenger, Skype
- Research, help with schoolwork and assignments
- Downloading music, video
- Uploading content
- Playing games
- Accessing inappropriate content
- Using social spaces

## Common engagement of teachers, parents and pupils – teamwork

- It is essential that everyone who works with children and young people are involved in this.
- Where does the role of the school and the teacher start and stop?

The group agreed on the importance of the role of teachers in promoting online safety, however teachers should not replace the parental role.

- How to reach parents?
  - Involve their children in order to teach them
  - Integrate it in interesting and creative events
  - Newsletters and online material

Concern was expressed from the panel about parents and more importantly the engagement of schools with parents around this issue. Many schools had attempted to deliver awareness raising sessions with parents, but with very limited success, a common concern was that the small number of parents usually attending these sessions are not the “hard to reach” group. Children of the hard to reach parents are more likely (as far as teachers are concerned) to be vulnerable and at risk of some of the online dangers and so it is very challenging to know how best to reach this group. One member of the panel suggested using existing parents evenings to talk about online safety issues while parents are already in school. There was some discussion around whether it was the role of the school to deliver some of these messages to parents, but most felt that ultimately it was, despite the fact that some of their colleagues would be likely to disagree.

## Mobile devices

A growing concern for schools, the question was asked, do they represent problems or possibilities? Many children and young people talk about needing to “power down” when they attend school as the technology is not allowed. In some cases this may be justified, schools have had instances of children taking photos or videos of lessons, of children being reprimanded and more of a concern, children being photographed while changing or showering. However it was acknowledged that in schools where there was a clear policy about online conduct, there should be fewer problems of this nature – children need to be aware that there are consequences for their actions when they are online in the same way that there are consequences in the “real world”.

## Filtering

In 2/3 of schools across the EU, the internet is filtered and restricted. Yet most young people do not have similar restrictions at home and on their mobile devices. Teachers reported that this can cause difficulties in schools, particularly in relation to working together with pupils to address some of the issues of social networking profiles and how to protect online privacy. If children are to be empowered to use the technology safely, then restriction is not the most effective way. However it was also noted that if no filtering was present at school many teachers would be less confident in using online technologies in the classroom.

## Use of new media in classrooms

Unfortunately the panel felt that new media was not being used as effectively as it could be in classrooms. Some schools have spent huge amounts of money in order to equip their teachers and classrooms with the latest technologies; however these are not always employed in the most meaningful ways and teachers need training in order to be able to make best use of them.

New media should also be used in order to deliver online safety messages, videos, podcasts as well as leaflets and newsletters were all cited as useful methods of raising awareness, particularly with parents and the wider community.

## Peer to peer teaching and learning

This was seen as a very effective method of delivery for online safety messages by many members of the panel. Children and young people can often have a high reputation with their peers which puts them in a powerful position as regards online safety.

Children and young people can help here – parents and teachers often feel technically inadequate, but children and young people lack the life skills and the knowledge and understanding of the world. Essentially, both groups need each other and the panel was keen to point out the benefits of using pupils to teach staff about some of the technical aspects. Using pupils to inform parents was also considered a useful method and this was likely to make parents curious.

### III. Specific outcomes from the two working groups

The Primary school teachers group discussed as well to what extent Online Safety is included in the curriculum and it is currently being taught at school.



*The Primary school teachers' group*

Please note that the information presented in the table below is merely based on the experience and perception of one teacher per country and does not represent any official information on the country situation.

Country	Is online safety taught	Is it statutory	How is it taught?
Bulgaria	No, very patchy and no incentives to teach online safety.	No	2 lessons per year in the 5 <sup>th</sup> grade.
Cyprus	No and there are no incentives to teach it. However, teachers do try to deliver it as they think it is important.	No	All schools have filtered access, this is often seen as the solution. Some teachers work with pupils to develop rules for internet use. Catchphrases are used <sup>1</sup>
Denmark	Some teachers provide time for this as there is lots of media coverage.	Using the internet is part of the 2009 curriculum. But internet safety is not.	Lots of good resources including film from the media council. Peer to peer is encouraged as this is very effective.
Finland	Yes, in some schools, but this very much depends upon the individual teachers.	There was mention in the 2005 curriculum of media literacy. This does not cover today's social media.	
Greece	Patchy coverage.	No	Some teachers are involved in other EU projects and try to deliver online safety as part of them. NB. Every child gets a free wireless notebook when they are 13
Hungary	Very patchy and down to the individual teacher or school	It is mentioned, but there is no guidance about what to actually do.	Resources are scarce.

<sup>1</sup> Read, think, click; type, check, click; close and discuss....

Ireland	Patchy coverage in about 50% of schools	Not statutory, but mentioned in the PSHE curriculum	NCTE have 10 and 20 hour CPD courses., they also provide seminars for parents.
Luxembourg	Yes, in some parts of the country – mainly between the ages of 9 and 12.	No	Experts visit the schools and deliver a session. (2x9 mins) mainly in the north of the country.
Netherlands	If teachers want to teach it then they can.	No	Lots of materials are available – schools can ask the police to come into school as the experts and there is no charge for this
Romania	No, but Microsoft, Insafe and Save the Children all deliver voluntary sessions	No	Main problem is the adult mentality, people need to be more open-minded. There aren't enough resources.
Slovenia	Yes, taught in lots of schools and awareness is being raised.	No	Lectures are given to children, teachers and parents. Materials are sent to schools and there are plans to make online safety part of the curriculum.

The Secondary School teachers group formulated the following "wishing list":



*The Secondary school teachers' group*

#### **What do we need from school administration?**

- Guidelines: what to do with them and when (content and age)
- Make teachers aware, that they have to teach it!
- Make clear, who is responsible that is really taught.
- Support for teachers who are willing to try something new
- Involve parents

#### **What do we need from government?**

- Make clear that Online Safety has to be taught in school
- Invest not only in hardware, but also in didactical support (how to use technology in classroom)
- Laws and regulation, how social networks should work (guidelines for industry)

#### **What do we need from NGO?**

- EU wide exchange of material (we don't want to invent the wheel again)
- A think tank that is researching new trends and transfer that to educational system
- Train the Trainer offers

#### **What do we need from Industry?**

- Social responsibility concerning data usage in social networks
- Moderation in social networks
- Try to enhance media literacy, so everybody is able to understand ToS

## IV. Main conclusions

There is a common consensus from the teacher panel around all of the issues discussed. It was felt that the most effective way of delivering online safety messages in a way that would make a difference to children and young people was by embedding the messages within the existing curriculum, although it was acknowledged that there would be occasions when certain aspects did need to be specifically taught – (for example passwords).

There was some concern expressed about the difficulties in assessing online safety messages for the impact they have.

One example provided came from Denmark where the teacher had asked the children (primary) to prepare some videos that she could showcase at a conference. The children made their videos but then, following discussions decided that none of them could be shown – some contained references to the children's names, some showed too much information about where they lived etc. the fact that the children decided that they shouldn't be shown, was a good demonstration of how effective the online safety messages had been. It was generally acknowledged that although schools are usually able to identify the impact that particular teaching or intervention has had on pupils, this has not been the case with regards to online safety.

Online safety is like any other subject that needs to be addressed within schools – the following need to be considered: knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

**Knowledge** will encompass some of the more technical aspects of how things actually work and this area may need some understanding of specific technologies, an ideal role for children and young people to play.

**Skills** will include some specifics such as how to create strong passwords and how to ensure that your accounts are private – these are crucial and teachers will need some support to address these as they will change and differ for different technologies and applications.

**Values** are part of citizenship and encompass behaviours and understanding of what is right and wrong in the real world. Education about values needs to be an ongoing process.

**Attitudes** need to reflect the understanding that children and young people have about the internet. They need to have a positive attitude whilst recognising that there are risks. Their knowledge and values will contribute to this positive attitude towards online technologies.

Last but not least the whole panel agreed on the fact that helping children and young people to stay safe online needs to be a team effort, everyone must be involved, parents, teachers, young people, the wider community.

## Annex I: Agenda of the meeting

9:15-9:30	<b>Registration and welcome</b>
9:30-09:45	<b>Introduction to teacher's panel</b>  Outline of the day, overview of agenda
<b>Online safety in Schools: setting the scene – plenary session</b>	
09:45-10:30	<b>Personal introduction of each participant and overview of issues, concerns, needs</b> (based on the feedback received from the member of the teachers' panel beforehand)
10:30-10:45	<b>Coffee break</b>
<b>The teachers' experiences and concerns</b>  <b>discussion in two groups (Primary-Secondary teachers)</b>	
10:45-11:30	<b>What are the children and young people who you work with doing online? What sort of risks are they facing?</b>  This will provide a good opportunity for teachers to share local concerns with colleagues and form a picture of some of the issues we face on an EU scale, what are the similarities and differences we need to consider
11:30-13:00	<b>How are online safety issues addressed in your school?</b>  Is online safety in the curriculum? If yes, how is it implemented?  Are you teaching online safety on a voluntary basis? Are there incentives for teaching online safety?  <b>How should online safety issues be addressed in school?</b>  Who should take the responsibility for doing this? In what subjects? From what age should the work start?
13:00-14:00	<b>Lunch</b>

<b>Teachers needs</b> <b>discussion in two groups (Primary-Secondary teachers)</b>	
<b>14:00 – 15:00</b>	<p><b>What material do you use for teaching Online safety?</b></p> <p><b>How effective are the materials we have to work with?</b></p> <p>Each teacher should bring examples of their teaching material in order to have an exchange of views on the existing material</p>
<b>15:00– 15:45</b>	<p><b>How confident are you and your colleagues to deal with the issues surrounding Online safety?</b></p> <p>What needs to be done to build confidence? What are your needs?</p> <p>What kind of organizations are best placed/have a responsibility in meeting your needs? (School administration, Govmt, industry, NGO...)</p>
<b>15:45- 16:00</b>	<b>Coffee break</b>
<b>16:00- 16:30</b>	<p><b>Engagement with parents</b></p> <p>How have you and your colleagues addressed this complex issue? Which methods have been effective? How do we reach the hard to reach parents?</p>
<b>Summary of the discussion in plenary session</b>	
<b>16:30- 17:20</b>	<p><b><u>Summary of parallel sessions</u></b></p> <p>What are the common issues?</p> <p>What are the main concerns, the greatest challenges?</p> <p>Where can we work together?</p> <p>What are our next steps?</p>
<b>17:20- 17:30</b>	<p><b>Certificates' ceremony</b></p>