

Press release

The European Internet Coregulation Network releases two reports on:

"Protecting Minors from Harmful Content on Mobile Phones"
"Internet Governance"

PARIS, JULY 28th, 2005 – The European Internet Coregulation Network (EICN) releases two reports today: "[Protecting Minors from Harmful Content on Mobile Phones](#)" and "[Internet Governance](#)". Both documents are the results of the works undertaken by the EICN [members](#) since 2004. These documents will be **submitted today to Viviane Reding, European commissioner for information society and media.**

Protecting Minors from Harmful Content on Mobile Phones

Child protection on the internet is a growing source of concern in many European countries. The development of multimedia online mobile services (3G) stresses the need for a secure environment for children on mobile phones.

In its first recommendation on "*Protecting Minors from Exposure to Harmful Content on Mobile Phones*", **the EICN designates child protection as one of its priorities for action.**

As a member of the EICN, the [Oxford Internet Institute](#) (OII) has led a working group examining the child protection implications of Internet-enabled mobile phones and other new mobile devices. The working group gathered information on the best practices of local mobile phone operators, content providers and distributors on a European scale, also using information provided by the EICN members and their contacts.

Many press reports and sensational stories have tended to exaggerate the dangers of mobile access. In fact, the mobile phone and the Internet also provide a major means for protecting children, such as enabling parents to contact their children when they are away from home. Nevertheless, this is not a time for complacency, and there should be more informed debate about the actual use of mobile phones and policy approaches to protecting children from unwanted access.

The EICN draws the main following conclusions concerning the regulation of commercial and Internet-based content on mobile phones:

- The introduction of **codes of practice** is a suitable policy response to the risks of exposure of minors to inappropriate content on the mobile

terminals. Such codes of practices are already in place in UK, Ireland and Italy.

- The "**coregulation approach**", as the policy-making process involving industry, governments and user groups in the regulatory debate, can reflect more accurately all stakeholders' concerns and allow for more transparency in the design and enforcement of these codes.
- The **common set of principles upon which national codes of practice could be built** includes: awareness-raising and media literacy training by government and industry to empower parents and children to use the Internet safely; **content classification and age rating** to control access to commercial content, **site blocking and filtering tools to limit access to wider Internet content**; role of independent rating bodies to classify any content offered by the operators; **moderation** where appropriate **of interactive services** used by minors, such as chatrooms; research by manufacturers and network operators to look at new ways of managing access to content by minors through mobile phones, especially on the wider Internet.

On this basis, members of the EICN will further endeavour to develop and promote such Codes of Practice in their own states, with a coregulation approach involving the public authorities, the private sector and the civil society.

For more information on this report:

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Report on Internet Governance

This report is the EICN's contribution to the European institutions' ongoing debate on the controversial issue of internet governance. It also aims at feeding the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in Tunis in November 2005.

This report is based on the works directed by the French Internet Rights Forum ([Forum des droits sur l'internet](#)). It is linked in its spirit to the works undertaken by the group on Internet governance established by Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations.

With this document, the objective of the EICN is to feed the public debate with key elements for a good "internet governance". This vision is built on the expertise of its members in the legal and policy issues related to the internet.

- **EICN philosophy of regulation: the coregulation**

According to the EICN, a new path has to be elaborated, adapted to the specificities of the network. **It must be based on a new scheme of cooperation between the public and the private actors** more balanced, more flexible, more open. This smooth procedure, associating all parties in the elaboration of the rules of the network is called **coregulation**. **Coregulation leading to a real "multi-stakeholder partnership"** is the governance pattern which is best adapted to the internet.

- **Recommendations for a good "internet governance"**

EICN identifies **8 key principles** for a good internet governance:

1/ As any social space, Internet needs regulation according to **common social values**. It implies new responsibilities for all the actors, public and private.

2/ Because the internet is decentralized, the method of regulation needs a **bottom-up process**.

3/ **Opening to all the stakeholders** (business and civil society representatives) as a sign of their interdependence to contribute to every stage of the preparation of norms.

4/ **Reaching for consensus**: procedures need to seek acceptance of proposals by every participant.

5/ **Combining regulatory tools of each stakeholder** (regulation, best practices, information and pedagogy...).

6/ **Combining the national and international dimension of the internet**.

7/ **Recognizing a specific role for public authorities**.

8/ **Recognizing the necessity of a cultural change**.

For more information on this report:

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Background on the European Internet Coregulation Network (EICN)

The European Internet Coregulation Network was initiated by the French organization, Internet Rights Forum (Le Forum des droits sur l'internet), in partnership with organizations from 7 European countries during the WSIS in Geneva in December 2003. This network has received the support of Erkki Liikanen, the then European Commissioner responsible for Enterprise and Information society.

The members of the European Internet Coregulation Network:

Austria: *Osterreichisches Institut für Angewandte Telekommunikation*

Belgium: *Observatoire des Droits de l'Internet – Observatorium van de Rechten op het Internet*

France: *Le Forum des droits sur l'internet (Internet Rights Forum)*

Italy: *Forum per la tecnologia della informazione*

Hungary: *Information society research institute*

Sweden: *Swedish law and informatics research Institute*

United Kingdom: *Internet Watch foundation and Oxford Internet Institute*

At European level: *Confederation of European Computer User Associations*

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