

Better Internet for Kids

Review of the year 2020



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FOREWORD



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2020 will not be easily forgotten: almost overnight most of our daily activities moved from offline to online due to the rapidly spreading new virus. This huge digital leap highlighted the opportunities of life online but also exacerbated risks, especially for children and young people.

The Better Internet for Kids (BIK) platform, the pan-European resource hub under the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children, promptly responded to the unprecedented online challenges with a COVID-19 mini-campaign, offering advice, help and resources to children, parents and teachers, supporting, for example, digital tools in the classroom and media literacy to fight disinformation around the virus. The platform, together with the national Safer Internet Centres, contributes substantially to the EU's digital transformation, an important element in Europe's recovery from the pandemic.

*The virus may have thrown a spanner in the works for many in 2020, but it did not stop us from progressing on the protection and empowerment of our children online. The **Safer Internet Day** celebration in February was marked in a record 170 countries worldwide. On the same day, **BIK Youth** launched the **Youth Pledge for a Better Internet** and challenged industry partners to improve the child friendliness of apps and tools. Young people were the focal point of the first ever fully online **Safer Internet Forum** in November. A record number of participants from a record number of countries explored digital opportunities and challenges for children with disability. For Europe to truly prosper, be it digitally or otherwise, we must include everybody.*

*In 2020, the Commission confirmed its commitment to children and digital with new initiatives and legislation such as the new **EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse**. 2021 will see the EU adopt a comprehensive strategy on the **rights of the child**, including **digital rights**. The work on child online safety and empowerment continues!*



BETTER INTERNET FOR KIDS – AN OVERVIEW

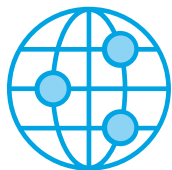
Building on a succession of Safer Internet programmes, Better Internet for Kids (BIK) is a European Commission-funded initiative aiming to create a better internet for Europe's children and youth. The initiative is now in its third cycle under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) funding instrument. This report provides an insight into some of the key achievements and areas of focus during 2020.

The Better Internet for Kids core service platform and related activities is managed on behalf of the European Commission by European Schoolnet (EUN), which coordinates the Insafe network of awareness centres, helplines and youth panels, in partnership with INHOPE (the International Association of Internet Hotlines), dedicated to the removal of illegal online content. These combined strands are commonly referred to as *Safer Internet Centres (SICs)*, operating in EU Member States, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom in the drive to keep children and young people safe online.

With EU co-funding to the level of 11 million euro in 2020 for this programme of work – representing the two service contracts (for EUN and INHOPE respectively) and grant agreements with Safer Internet Centres on a pro rata basis – this work is clearly of continuing strategic importance to the European Commission.

What is a Safer Internet Centre?

Insafe and INHOPE work together through a network of Safer Internet Centres across Europe – typically comprising an awareness centre, helpline, hotline and youth panel.



National awareness centres focus on raising awareness and understanding of safer internet issues and emerging trends. They run campaigns to empower children, young people, parents, carers and teachers with the skills, knowledge and strategies to stay safe online and take advantage of the opportunities that the internet and mobile technologies provide.



Helplines provide information, advice and assistance to children, youth and parents on how to deal with harmful content, harmful contact (such as grooming) and harmful conduct (such as cyberbullying or sexting). Helplines can be accessed via a variety of means – telephone, email, web forms, Skype, and online chat services.





Hotlines exist to allow members of the public to report illegal content anonymously. Reports are then passed on to the appropriate body for action (for example, an internet service provider (ISP) or law enforcement agency (LEA) in the country, or corresponding INHOPE Hotline).



Youth panels allow young people to express their views and exchange knowledge and experiences concerning their use of online technologies, as well as tips on how to stay safe. They also advise on internet safety and empowerment strategy, help create innovative resources, and disseminate eSafety messages to their peers.

Find out more about the work of European Safer Internet Centres on the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) portal at www.betterinternetforkids.eu.

Jointly, European Schoolnet and INHOPE support Safer Internet Centres in responding to the latest online issues, helping to promote the many opportunities the online world offers, while also addressing the challenges. And while Europe's children and youth are the main benefactors of this work, the Better Internet for Kids initiative also reaches out to, and collaborates with, a range of other stakeholders – parents and carers, teachers and educators, researchers, industry, civil society, decision makers and law enforcement – so reflecting the fact that we all have a role to play in creating a better internet. Additionally, the actions conducted in the framework of Better Internet for Kids frequently reach beyond Europe, impacting upon safer and better internet approaches right across the globe.

2020 has been a year like no other. The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered wide-ranging transformations in the digital environment, both in terms of opportunities and risks. It has shown us first-hand that digital technologies are an excellent medium to enable the greatest number of citizens – and especially children and young people – to find information, communicate, socialise, learn and play, often in ways that are not possible to the same extent in their non-digital lives. For many citizens, young and old, technology has provided a lifeline while the pandemic has continued on, offering a means to stay connected with family and friends, access services and provisions, and support their well-being and mental health.

Yet, with this realisation that our societies are more digital than ever came a growing awareness that many online tools and services are often not designed with the best interests of children and young people in mind. This observation manifested itself concretely as a range of online issues and threats rose in prominence in the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, as we collectively became increasingly dependent on digital means of communication. For example, the near-overnight move to emergency remote teaching and learning for many presented challenges for learners,



teachers and families alike, with schools and colleges scrambling to address policy and infrastructure concerns. Issues pertaining to misinformation, disinformation and conspiracy theories – particularly with regards to public health matters – took centre stage. As we collectively spent an increased amount of time online, privacy concerns also gained more attention. Equally, economically motivated cybercrime (such as ransomware, phishing and payment fraud) rose, along with predatory behaviours against children online and the volume and circulation of child sexual abuse material (CSAM).

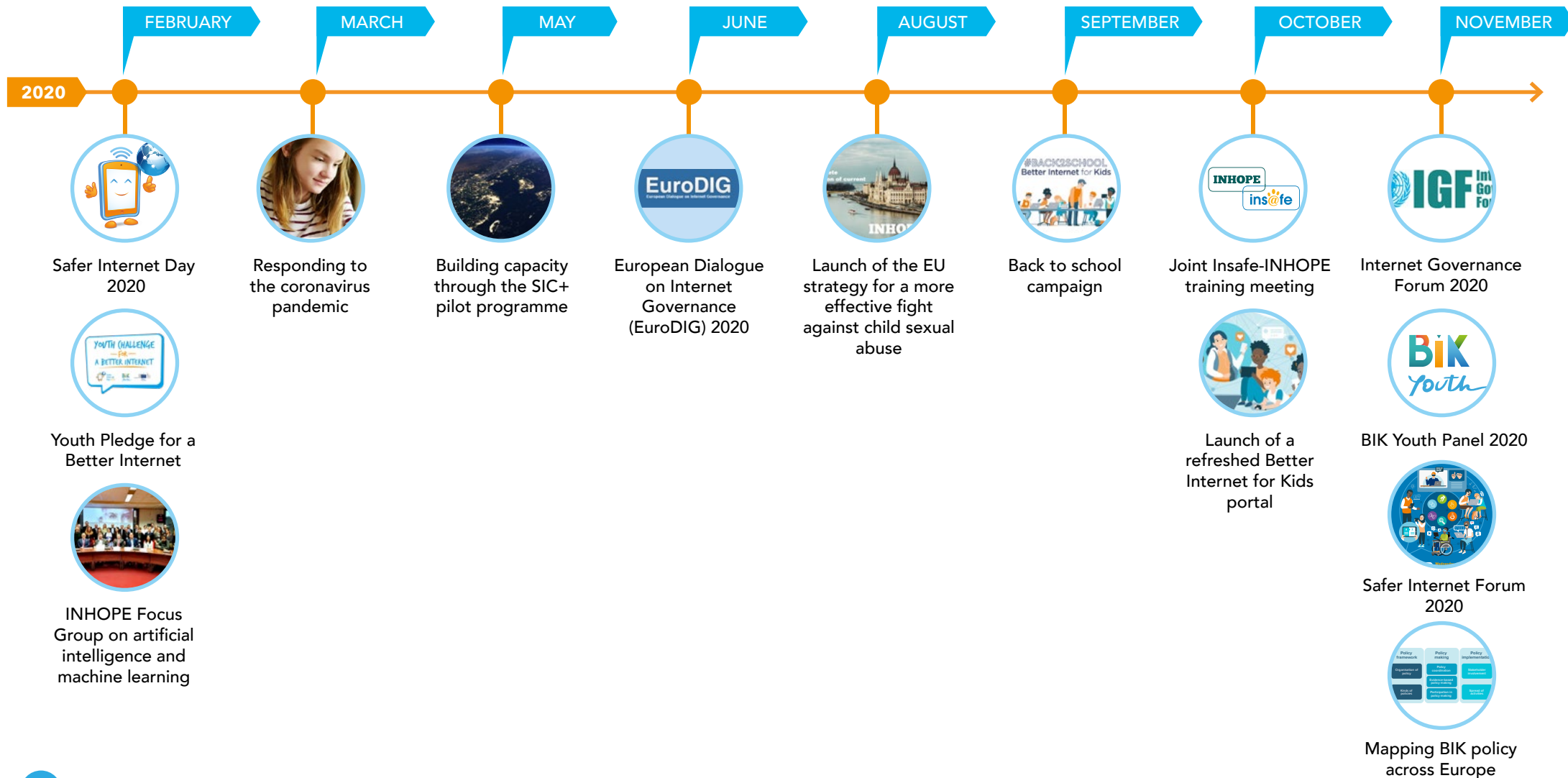
The European Commission's Better Internet for Kids programme, and the network of Safer Internet Centres in Europe, with their long-standing history of supporting children and young people to use the internet safely, responsibly, critically and creatively, were perfectly poised to react to this new reality. Safer Internet Centres reacted swiftly, adapting their service offerings to respond to the changing landscape, promoting existing resources on a range of online safety issues, creating new targeted resources to specifically respond to the challenges posed by the pandemic, switching face-to-face trainings to the online environment, and finding new and innovative ways to continue offering critical support services, such as helplines and hotlines, when physical offices could not be accessed.

Despite the challenges, 2020 has continued to see many developments and new initiatives under the Better Internet for Kids umbrella – many of which are discussed in more detail in the following sections. For example, the launch of a **Youth Pledge for a Better Internet** initiative has aimed to make terms and conditions more user friendly, in collaboration with industry partners; there has been a focus on **inclusivity and accessibility for children and young people online**, while a range of actions have been implemented to continue the **fight against child sexual abuse online**, to name just a few. As always, a multi-stakeholder approach underpins much of the work in the quest to ensure that we all work **together for a better internet**.

Discover more in the interactive timeline and articles which follow.



2020 IN REVIEW



Safer Internet Day 2020 (February 2020)



**Safer
Internet
Day 2020** | **Tuesday
11 February**

Together for a better internet
www.saferinternetday.org



*Safer Internet Day was celebrated on Tuesday, 11 February 2020
in over 170 countries around the world*

The 17th annual edition of **Safer Internet Day (SID)** was celebrated across the globe on **Tuesday, 11 February 2020**. The campaign's slogan, **Together for a better internet**, was, once again, a call to action for all stakeholders to join together and play their part in creating a safer and better internet for everyone, and especially children and young people.

Since its first edition in 2004, Safer Internet Day celebrations have grown each year to encompass more supporting countries, and an increasing number of stakeholders. The 2020 edition was no exception, with over 170 countries marking the day in some way, alongside more than 90 organisational supporters with an international remit. Many more organisations took part in national-level activities.

The *Safer Internet Day website* – the home of all things SID – showcased many of the events and actions taking place around the world, directing users to local contacts and sources of support and information for helping to establish a better internet in their respective countries.



Better Internet for Kids

In the build up to Safer Internet Day 2020, a new promotional video was launched to encourage stakeholders to play their part. The clip gained lots of attention – at the close of the day it had been watched over 132,500 times on YouTube, 680,000 times on [Twitter](#), and 8,500 times on [Facebook](#).



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M03BJfjBM3w>



Across Europe, the network of Safer Internet Centres provided a diverse backdrop to the celebrations. For example:

In **Austria**, the Safer Internet Centre published a study on the digital media habits of children aged 0-6. This focus on younger children was echoed in Safer Internet Day activities in **Iceland** and **Slovenia** in response to a trend of children starting to use digital devices at an ever-younger age.

In **Cyprus**, Safer Internet Day was celebrated with a large conference attended by over 1,000 students and teachers. The Cyprus Youth Panel was actively involved in the organisation of the conference and also hosted a session.

In **France**, activities included the launch of the FamiNum app, part of a 360° plan of actions aiming to shift digital education from the school to the home.

The role of online influencers and their impact on children and young people was a key topic of discussion, with activities in **Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy** and **Poland** reflecting on this issue.

In **Lithuania**, over 200 young people were invited to participate in the CYBERteen hackathon to generate solutions regarding data protection, cyberbullying and online disinformation.

In the **Netherlands**, the Dutch Safer Internet Centre collaborated with Europol on a European Youth Day, allowing 150 students aged 12-16 from six different schools to brainstorm ideas with helpline professionals.

In **Spain**, the Safer Internet Centre used the day to introduce the new Cybersecurity Helpline short number – 017 – which will make it faster and easier for children, young people, family or educators, as well as any internet user, professional or company, to receive help if they have any query or conflict with their use of digital technologies.

In the **United Kingdom**, the Safer Internet Centre hosted a drop-in session in Parliament, where two young people met MPs and launched the Youth Charter. This charter, created by young people across the UK, outlined four key demands that young people wanted from their government for Safer Internet Day.

Celebrations beyond Europe, facilitated by Safer Internet Day Committees across the globe, were equally vibrant and varied, including awareness sessions and workshops, debates and exhibitions, student competitions, and drama, musical and stand-up comedy performances.

On social media, Safer Internet Day enjoyed widespread support from the EU institutions, featuring in posts from the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the Child Rights Intergroup in the European Parliament, among many others. A flurry of other influential supporters from all domains – from industry to law enforcement, media to celebrity, and academia and civil society – also helped to spread the word, while many newspapers across the globe published articles on the campaign.

Find out more about Safer Internet Day at www.saferinternetday.org, or read on to learn more about other events on the day.



Youth Pledge for a Better Internet (February 2020 onwards)



The Youth Pledge for a Better Internet initiative was launched on Safer Internet Day 2020

Safer Internet Day would not be possible without the support of the European Commission, which has been providing financial and logistical support for the campaign since the very first edition as part of a range of wider initiatives delivered under the Better Internet for Kids activity line. On the occasion of Safer Internet Day 2020, the EC facilitated the launch of a new initiative in the form of a **Youth Pledge for a Better Internet**.

As part of this work, a group of Better Internet for Kids (BIK) Youth Ambassadors prepared a pledge on how to make information on the apps and services they use on the internet more age appropriate for

children and young people. After an initial mapping of recent research and youth consultation work carried out by Safer Internet Centres in the Insafe network, the BIK Youth Ambassadors collectively reflected on which priorities should be set in order to ensure that online platforms and services are designed in an age-appropriate way that truly meets the developmental needs of children and young people.

Encouraging online platforms and services to meet the information and transparency requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is a key objective. Every citizen of the EU – including children – has the right to obtain information about what happens to their personal data “*in a concise, transparent, intelligible and easily accessible form, using clear and plain language*”. Article 12 of the GDPR emphasises that this should be particularly the case for information addressed specifically to a child. Moreover, Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that, in order to come up with truly informative, effective and appealing privacy or data policies, children should be involved in the information design and evaluation processes.

As such, on Safer Internet Day, the young people presented their pledge at a high-level meeting at the European Commission in Brussels, also involving members of the [Alliance to better protect minors online](#) (a self-regulatory initiative designed to improve the online environment for children and young people). The intention was that the companies involved could then reflect on these discussions internally regarding the age-appropriateness of the policies they have in place.





BIK Youth Ambassadors met with industry stakeholders to launch the pledge

Following the launch event, the BIK Youth Ambassadors continued with this line of work throughout 2020 in ongoing dialogue with industry. Although initial plans for a co-design workshop to exchange ideas and best practices had to be modified due to restrictions caused by COVID-19, a number of virtual workshops and focus groups still took place with several industry partners launching dedicated co-creation projects to drive this agenda forward. As such, several BIK Youth Ambassadors

and industry partners presented an update on the work at the [Safer Internet Forum](#) in November 2020 (see also below). A further update will take place on the occasion of Safer Internet Day 2021 to review progress made and set ongoing priorities in this space.

Read more about the [Youth Pledge launch event](#) and [reflections from some of the youth participants](#) on the Better Internet for Kids portal, as well as [updates on this activity line](#) as presented at [Safer Internet Forum 2020](#).



INHOPE Focus Group on artificial intelligence and machine learning (February 2020)

Also on the occasion of Safer Internet Day 2020, and recognising the important role in hotlines in contributing to a safer and better internet, the European Commission and INHOPE held a specialist Focus Group meeting on the development and implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to detect and remove child sexual abuse material (CSAM) from the internet.



INHOPE hosted a Focus Group on artificial intelligence

Participants included hotline representatives, technology and internet industry representatives, law enforcement, academia and cyber-psychology experts. Discussion focused on what currently exists in terms of AI to combat online CSAM and what gaps there are, while the group of experts present considered how to further the potential of AI.

Panel sessions addressed the realities of the new technology, as well as sharing the possibilities and current shortcomings of AI as a solution to remove online CSAM. Law enforcement colleagues presented the application of CSAM by the police and how it could be used more effectively and practically applied in the future. An interactive workshop focused on applied solutions for hotlines and law enforcement agencies in integrating existing AI technologies, with much of the discussion centred around the need to define more specifically what we want AI to do, what analysts and hotlines need AI to do, and on solutions to overcoming barriers to the application of AI.

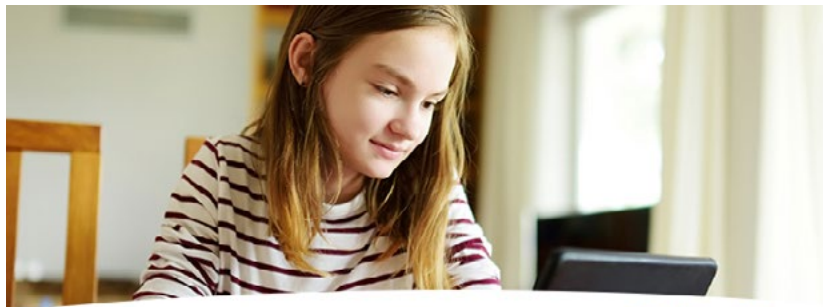
A further interactive workshop explored the bigger picture with regards to the possibilities of AI. Recommendations included the need to invest in AI and the application of AI to work in a preventative manner (for example, reducing the need for CSAM review by analysts), as well as the need for self-regulation and the ability for decisions made by AI to be revoked by humans.

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Read [more about the Focus Group on the INHOPE website.](#)



Responding to the coronavirus pandemic (March 2020 onwards)

March 2020 saw the coronavirus pandemic take hold across Europe and beyond, with many national lockdowns implemented at short notice with the aim of keeping citizens safe and limiting the spread of the virus. In this unprecedented time, as schools closed and people were confined to their homes, the internet and online services became more important than ever before. Being online provided a lifeline for many in society from the young to the old, learners and workers, and the vulnerable, curious and those seeking an escape from boredom. But, while technology presented many opportunities, it also amplified some issues and risks. Through the long-established strands of awareness raising and helpline services especially, Safer Internet Centres in Europe were perfectly positioned to provide localised support on staying safe online to children and young people, parents and carers, and teachers and educators in these challenging times.



Better Internet for Kids response to COVID-19

A mini-campaign provided access to resources to help overcome some of the online challenges posed by the coronavirus pandemic

Through a COVID-19 mini-campaign hosted on the Better Internet for Kids portal and via social media, Safer Internet Centres quickly rallied to provide a whole host of guidance and resources, providing general advice to families, suggestions for **positive content** and **online resources for family entertainment**, and tips on ensuring **well-being** during lockdown. To support the educational community, guidance was rapidly developed on **safe emergency remote teaching and learning**, including how to use the abundance of suddenly popularised video-conferencing tools safely in both online learning and social contexts. Responding to the heightened online risks to which all citizens were exposed, Safer Internet Centres equally promoted a range of resources on topics such as **managing screen time**, **disinformation and fact checking**, **protecting online privacy**, being alert to **online scams and threats**, and dealing with **harmful or illegal content**.

Benefitting from the network model to support capacity building and knowledge sharing which is at the heart of the Better Internet for Kids approach, Safer Internet Centres have met online several times during the pandemic to share experiences and resources, and to identify emerging trends and issues. This has allowed for responses to be adapted and tailored accordingly as the pandemic has progressed.

Equally, European Safer Internet Centres adapted their services accordingly to ensure that critical support services, such as helplines and hotlines, could continue to function under the new restrictions, while also maintaining staff welfare.



Representing the views and concerns of young people direct is a common theme running throughout Better Internet for Kids activity lines, and this has been equally important during the pandemic. Recognising the impact that the lockdown had on the lifestyles of this group especially – with increased reliance on digital technologies to maintain a social life, to study, to access culture, to express their creativity, and more – *BIK Youth Ambassadors shared their insights and tips* to cope with this new reality in the best way possible, along with their personal resource recommendations to speak directly to this target audience.

Read more on [Safer Internet Centre responses to COVID-19 on the Better Internet for Kids portal](#).



BIK bulletin

The Better Internet for Kids (BIK) bulletin is a quarterly electronic newsletter with the aim of keeping readers informed on better internet issues. Each edition provides a topical focus article looking at the latest trends in online life, with features from youth, industry and the research community, along with a mix of news and resources from key stakeholders in the field. The typical publishing cycle for the BIK bulletin is each March, June, September and December.

The focus of BIK bulletins throughout 2020 was as follows:

- ▶ **March 2020** – provided a special focus on **staying safe online during the coronavirus pandemic**.
- ▶ **June 2020** – focused on **freedom of expression online in the age of disinformation**.
- ▶ **September 2020** – reaffirmed **Better Internet for Kids priorities** for empowering children and young people online through a range of actions.
- ▶ **December 2020** – in line with the theme of Safer Internet Forum 2020, “**Digital (dis)advantage: creating a more inclusive world for children and young people online**”, this edition reflected on opportunities and challenges of being online for those with diverse disabilities, along with policy responses aiming to foster greater accessibility online.

Read past editions of the BIK bulletin – and subscribe to receive future editions – at www.betterinternetforkids.eu/bikbulletin.



Building capacity through the SIC+ pilot programme (May 2020 onwards)

Over the last decade or so, a range of organisations and consortia across the world have replicated or been inspired by the European Safer Internet Centre model. While several of these initiatives have already been acknowledged as Safer Internet Day Committees (coordinating the annual celebration of a safer and better internet each February), there has been a growing desire – and demand – to share the model and expertise further.

As such, in May 2020, the Insafe and INHOPE networks launched a new capacity-building initiative, the SIC+ pilot programme, to share experiences and expertise acquired within the development of the European Safer Internet Centre model with colleagues across the globe. Participating countries in the first phase were Armenia, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Serbia and Ukraine.

The pilot programme aimed to:

- ▶ foster knowledge sharing and capacity building on successful initiatives on online safety for children and young people, at regional and/or global level.
- ▶ promote the development and implementation of innovative actions to increase the participation of third-country organisations in online safety initiatives and best practices, in particular education programmes and awareness-raising campaigns, as well as helpline and hotline services, while identifying possible areas for exchange and mutual learning.

- ▶ address common challenges in the field of online safety for children and young people by promoting cooperation with the current Insafe-INHOPE network, aiming for a closer integration of these initiatives in global actions.

To realise these aims, programme participants attended a series of strand-focused webinars throughout the year, heard from experts in the field, and participated in professional development opportunities, while also sharing their own experiences and insights of better internet approaches in their respective countries.

The SIC+ pilot programme will draw to a close in early 2021. Participants will be asked to reflect on the opportunities and challenges of their participation in the programme to help shape any future initiatives.

Learn more about the [SIC+ pilot programme](#) on the [Better Internet for Kids portal](#).



European Dialogue on Internet Governance 2020 (June 2020)

EuroDIG – the European Dialogue on Internet Governance – is an “open platform for informal and inclusive discussions on public policy issues related to internet governance”. It “promotes the engagement of Europeans in multi-stakeholder dialogue in order to share their expertise and best practice and, where possible, identify common ground”. By pulling national perspectives together, this forum aims to shape European values and views on the topic of internet governance. The 2020 edition of EuroDIG, which was transformed into a digital format, focused on the theme **Towards a sustainable governance of the internet**.

As is typical, the Insafe network of European Safer Internet Centres was represented at EuroDIG, this time hosting a multi-stakeholder dialogue on **Social media – opportunities, rights and responsibilities** in an online workshop format. Contributors to the panel discussion included representatives from government, the technical community, civil society and academia.

Digital technologies have been at the centre of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and they have provided a lifeline for everyone in society. Social networking services allow people to connect, work, exchange, learn, and create, but they also present some risks – hate speech, cyberbullying and disinformation, to name just a few. Policies to address these challenges often revolve around increased oversight of citizens’ behaviours online, notably using artificial intelligence (AI). This, in turn, raises new concerns related to the risk of mass surveillance on social media. As human rights protected offline should also be protected online, the future of our online freedom depends on our ability to ensure that citizens’ online rights are respected.

Panelist therefore covered a variety of topics, such as tackling misinformation and disinformation, the importance of fact checking, underrepresentation of certain stakeholder types – such as children and young people – in disinformation-fighting initiatives, the preservation of freedom of expression, and the importance of media literacy – all important areas within the Better Internet for Kids agenda.

The outcomes of the workshop were subsequently presented in the [June 2020 edition of the Better Internet for Kids \(BIK\) bulletin](#).



Launch of the EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse (August 2020)

Child sexual abuse is a growing threat, both online and offline. To counter this phenomenon, the European Commission adopted an [EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse](#) in August 2020. The strategy establishes a framework for EU action for the period 2020-2025, to provide a comprehensive response to the issue of child sexual abuse, both online and offline.

Concretely, the document presents eight initiatives making use of all tools available at EU level to implement and develop the right legal framework to protect children, strengthen the law enforcement response, and facilitate a coordinated approach across the many actors involved in protecting and supporting children:

1. Ensuring the complete implementation of the current legislation.
2. Ensuring that EU legislation enables an effective response.
3. Identifying legislative gaps, best practices and priority actions.
4. Strengthening law enforcement efforts at national and EU level.
5. Enabling Member States to better protect children through prevention.
6. Establishing a European centre to prevent and counter child sexual abuse.
7. Encouraging industry efforts to ensure the protection of children in their products.
8. Improving the protection of children globally through multi-stakeholder cooperation.

The Better Internet for Kids initiative clearly has a role to play in driving the strategy forward, and especially the INHOPE network of internet hotlines. As such, INHOPE hosted and chaired a side event on the strategy at the 2020 edition of the [Safer Internet Forum](#) (see below). The session included a multi-stakeholder panel discussion with experts from hotlines, law enforcement agencies, industry and the European Commission. Panellists discussed how they see their sector collaborating with all relevant stakeholders to support the effective delivery of the strategy. Prominent themes emerged from the discussion, including improved international collaboration, support for law enforcement agencies, and addressing gaps in legislation which may impact upon the gathering of intelligence to support investigations.

To achieve what it sets out to do, this strategy requires collaborative action from all stakeholders:

“Without it, this strategy is just an empty shell... INHOPE are among the key players to turn this strategy into deeds”.

Representative from the European Commission, Safer Internet Forum 2020

To ensure the conversation continues beyond the Safer Internet Forum, and to enable everyone to get involved, INHOPE has subsequently published an eight-point mini-series on its website, explaining each point of the strategy and what it means for those working in the sector.

Discover [more about INHOPE's ongoing response to the EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse](#) on the INHOPE website.



Back to school campaign (September 2020)

Now an annual tradition, the back to school campaign typically provides an opportunity to showcase resources and activities provided by the Insafe network of Safer Internet Centres for the return to school after the long summer break. This year, however, things were a little different. September 2020 saw students and teachers alike slowly resuming face-to-face interactions for the first time in over six months, with in-school teaching being replaced by emergency remote learning over this time as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The launch of the **#Back2School with Better Internet for Kids** online campaign therefore explored the particular context in which children returned to school this year, highlighting both the opportunities that digital technologies present and reminding everyone of the heightened online safety risks which the pandemic has amplified.

#BACK2SCHOOL
Better Internet for Kids



A back to school campaign provided supporting materials for teachers and families

Recognising that the uncertainties around the re-opening of schools presented an added challenge for education professionals preparing for this new school year, Safer Internet Centres responded accordingly when designing informational and pedagogical resources for the back to school season. Many materials took into account both face-to-face and distance learning scenarios, or suggested blended learning approaches. Equally, the vast majority of resources were accessible online.

The range of resources offered by the Safer Internet Centres as part of the campaign was diverse. For example, Safer Internet Centres in **Cyprus** and **Estonia** launched student competitions; the **Hungarian**, **Latvian** and **Norwegian** Safer Internet Centres launched educational games; while the **Belgian**, **Bulgarian**, **Finnish**, **Greek**, **Irish**, **Italian**, **Luxembourgish**, **Romanian** and **Slovenian** centres also targeted parents and families through their back to school materials. The **Czech** Safer Internet Centre screened the award winning **#martyisdead** series and hosted a follow-up debate with experts within Zlín Film Festival for Children and Youth (the oldest and largest festival of films for children and youth in the world).

Read [more about the #Back2School campaign](#), and discover a host of resources from Safer Internet Centres across Europe, on the [Better Internet for Kids portal](#).



Joint Insafe-INHOPE training meeting (October 2020)

Jointly, Insafe and INHOPE support Safer Internet Centres in Europe in various ways, and capacity building is one of the primary activities of the two networks. One way in which this is done is through bi-annual network training meetings where colleagues from Insafe and INHOPE, respectively, come together to exchange knowledge, experiences and good practice. Agendas for these meetings are diverse, allowing the networks to focus on areas of particular or topical interest, while also inviting fresh perspectives from external partners and experts.

In a project first, a joint training meeting between the two networks took place online in October 2020, providing an opportunity to facilitate exchange between the two networks, to discuss areas of common ground, and explore opportunities for closer working between helplines, hotlines and awareness centres.

Many “grey areas” exist between the work of the two networks – areas where practitioners are clear that children and young people are being exploited, without any law being broken. While hotlines deal with child sexual abuse material (CSAM), helplines and awareness centres are dealing with the grey area content with increasing regularity, highlighting the need for ongoing close collaboration between all parts of a Safer Internet Centre. This meeting therefore allowed Insafe and INHOPE to address these grey areas as well as some of their more specific aspects, such as dealing with CSAM on adult pornographic websites, and the increasing concerns linked to self-generated sexual abuse images of minors.

The joint training meeting also explored the full spectrum of online safety risks and opportunities in the past, present and future. The opening keynote session, led by Dr Victoria Baines, from Bournemouth University and Julie Inman-Grant, Australian eSafety Commissioner, examined the work done in the online safety arena since the beginning of the EU Safer Internet Programme, while considering some key challenges for the future. A practical workshop session, led by colleagues from the CO:RE – Children Online: Research and Evidence project, highlighted the need for identification of priorities in an emerging child rights agenda through the update of the classification of online risks to children’s well-being.

Additionally, the meeting provided an opportunity to examine the ongoing work related to online risks which are specific to the COVID-19 pandemic within both networks, looking more specifically into harmful and illegal content, in particular on social networks. In this context, Safer Internet Centre staff and industry representatives were able to exchange solutions and best practices for appropriate responses.

Read [more about the joint Insafe-INHOPE training meeting](#) on the Better Internet for Kids portal.

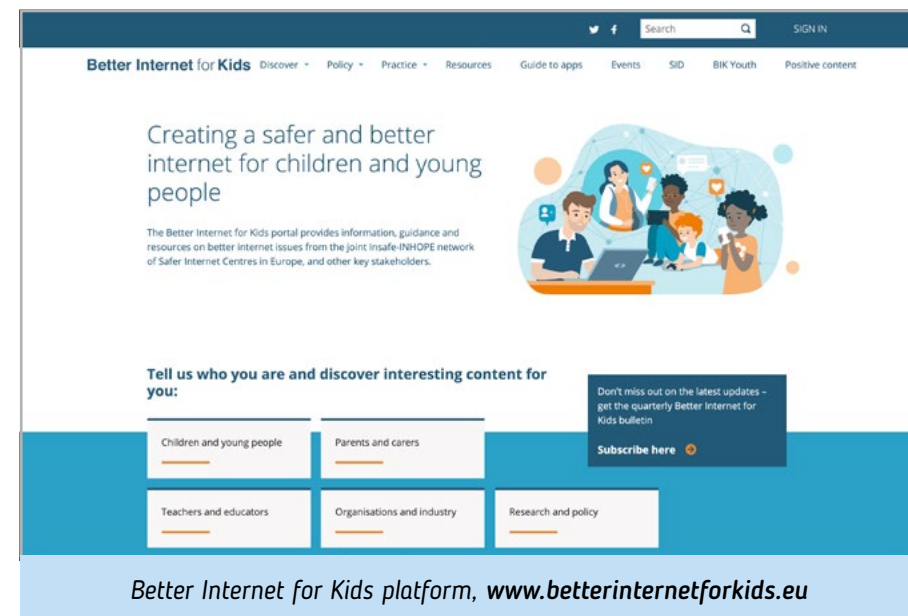


Launch of a refreshed Better Internet for Kids portal (October 2020)

The Better Internet for Kids core service platform provides an output for much of the work delivered under the Better Internet for Kids initiative. The platform, at www.betterinternetforkids.eu, consists of:

- ▶ a public-facing web platform (the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) public portal), providing a central point of access for the general public and wider stakeholders for information, guidance and resources on better internet issues, acting as a signposting service to Safer Internet Centres and localised sources of support, and other stakeholder content and services where appropriate. Specific content and services are also provided and delivered through the site such as the **Better Internet for Kids (BIK) bulletin** (an electronic quarterly bulletin), a Guide to apps and online services, a repository of eSafety resources, and so on. The platform also provides access to corresponding mini-sites for Safer Internet Day (www.saferinternetday.org), Better Internet for Kids Youth (www.bikyouth.eu), and Positive Online Content (www.positiveonlinecontentforkids.eu).
- ▶ an internal community for Safer Internet Centres to support them in the delivery of online safety services (for example, tools for the creation and sharing of resources, capacity building, networking and stakeholder outreach).

The platform underwent a major redevelopment during 2020, upgrading the underlying technology, providing a fresh visual identity and, importantly, embedding accessibility by design principles. New navigational routes provide targeted content for different stakeholder groups, while automated translation services (linked to the European Commission's eTranslation tools) are being piloted in key areas of the site with a view to scaling further in the future.



Internet Governance Forum 2020 (November 2020)

The annual *Internet Governance Forum (IGF)* serves to bring people from various stakeholder groups together, as equals, in discussions on public policy issues relating to the internet. This year's edition was hosted online by the United Nations under the overarching theme of **Internet for human resilience and solidarity**. In recognition of the extraordinary nature of 2020 and the increasing reliance of people to use the internet to stay connected with each other during the COVID-19 pandemic, an inaugural motto was also used for this year's IGF of **Virtually together**.

As in previous years, a delegation was in attendance to promote the Better Internet for Kids agenda in Europe on behalf of the European Commission and the Insafe-INHOPE networks, albeit virtually. The delegation hosted a pre-event, a workshop, and a virtual IGF Village Booth.

In the pre-event, titled *The coronavirus pandemic: a global crisis is showing us how to live online*, experts from the **Greek, Maltese and Portuguese** Safer Internet Centres shared their experiences of providing support services during the pandemic, reacting to the unprecedented situation by providing timely resources to keep the online space as safe as possible for children and young people, but also for adults. During the event, two *youth panellists also shared their experiences of the digital environment during lockdown*, reflecting especially on the opportunities and challenges of remote learning, and the emotional difficulties encountered by young people during lockdown.

“The meeting was an excellent opportunity to evaluate how our relationship with technology changed during the pandemic and share our personal opinions, but also listen to the experiences of other people from all over the world. Through this particular topic, it was easy to develop a deeper understanding of our relationship with the internet as well as prepare ourselves and make predictions about the changes yet to come.”

Electra, Youth IGF Ambassador from Greece

The second event looked at the power of social media in a workshop titled *The revolution won't be televised, but social mediatised?* A multi-stakeholder panel, moderated by two Better Internet for Kids Ambassadors, focused on five pertinent sub themes:

- ▶ Online versus offline activism.
- ▶ A new imperative: navigating different persona on social media.
- ▶ Social media and human connection: a hindering or facilitating effect?
- ▶ Regulating the use of social media by politicians.
- ▶ Involving youth in advisory and decision-making processes relating to internet and social media governance.



Through a lively discussion, the panellists considered whether the structural characteristics of the media landscape have remained the same with the advent of social media, or whether the rules of the game have changed.

Participation in events such as the Internet Governance Forum and **EuroDIG** (see above) is extremely valuable. Importantly, it provides a platform for showcasing the excellent work which is happening across Europe to keep children and young people safe online, while also allowing colleagues from the Insafe and INHOPE networks to connect with their counterparts across the globe. The online world is without borders, and so our responses, initiatives, processes and collaborations must mirror the same.

Find out more about [network participation at the Internet Governance Forum](#) on the [Better Internet for Kids portal](#).



BIK Youth Panel 2020 (November 2020)



The BIK Youth Panel 2020 was a fully digital edition

Youth participation is a key strand running throughout the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) project, ensuring that the voice of youth is represented, heard, and acted upon in resource development and policy approaches. To support this aim, each year a BIK Youth Panel is organised prior to and during the Safer Internet Forum, where youth panellists are able to voice their personal opinions and

challenges regarding technology use, and represent their peers. Drawn from national youth panels convened by Safer Internet Centres, many of these panellists go on to become BIK Youth Ambassadors, representing the Better Internet for Kids agenda at high-level events such as **EuroDIG** and the **Internet Governance Forum**, and contributing to initiatives such as the **Youth Pledge for a Better Internet** (see above).

For approximately two months prior to Safer Internet Forum 2020, 48 young people from 14 countries joined a total of eight preparatory online meetings, where they identified the topics they would like to focus on and the groups they would be working in. Throughout these meetings, BIK Youth Panellists worked collaboratively in small groups to script, film and edit video presentations on six diverse topics which concern them today:

- ▶ Fake or real?
- ▶ Human and ethical.
- ▶ Mental health and disability.
- ▶ Future Internet: Education on and off the internet.
- ▶ Future Internet: The timeline of technological and communicative advancement.
- ▶ Future Internet: Teacher education.



Members of the BIK Youth Panel 2020



Following the conclusion of the preparatory meetings, two days of BIK Youth Panel activities – which would traditionally take place face to face prior to the Forum – took place online. The Youth Panellists used this time to finalise their videos and to rehearse their presentations. They first presented their work to members of the Alliance to better protect minors online and representatives from the European Commission, before leading a session at the Forum in which they showcased the resulting videos, and voiced their concerns and aspirations for the future around these topics.

Find out more about the BIK Youth programme generally on the dedicated mini-site at www.bikyouth.eu.



Safer Internet Forum 2020 (November 2020)

Building on the *European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children*, the *Safer Internet Forum (SIF)* is an annual international conference delivered under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). Bringing together young people, parent and teacher representatives, industry and government policy makers, technological and awareness-raising experts, and political, educational and social leaders from Europe and beyond, the event takes a multi-stakeholder approach to considering the impact of technology on individuals and society.

The 2020 edition of the Safer Internet Forum took place online in November with a theme of **Digital (dis)advantage: creating an inclusive world for children and young people online**. Record numbers registered for this edition: over 650 people from 66 countries, representing a diverse range of stakeholders, participated in a variety of sessions over the course of four days.

In the keynote session titled **Digital dividends and digital disadvantage: children with disabilities' views and experiences of the digital environment**, Professor Laura Lundy discussed the challenges and opportunities that children with diverse disabilities encounter when accessing and using the digital environment, focusing on how they experience and navigate “danger” and “disruption”. As part of this session, a number of experts and young people considered the challenges they face and suggested some actions that should be taken by different stakeholders to ensure that children with disabilities are able to access and engage in the digital environment in the same way as all other children. Importantly, this session also considered the positive role that the digital environment can play in helping children with disabilities to realise their rights.



Safer Internet Forum 2020 placed a spotlight on inclusion online



As usual, a number of deep dive sessions complemented the main focus of the Forum. With a focus on innovative tech and educational solutions, one session considered how industry are responding to demands for increased accessibility and subsequently designing platforms with all users in mind, while another session explored some of the existing content and resources created for vulnerable groups from a broader perspective. A further session considered inclusive education, while also exploring best practices in using technology in schools to support children and young people with disabilities. Building on the inclusivity theme of the Forum, keynote sessions included sign language interpretation and closed captioning.

Side events on the preceding and following days complemented the main agenda of Safer Internet Forum 2020. A session on youth participation placed a particular focus on the **Youth Pledge initiative** (see above),

highlighting the importance of age-appropriate design principles, while presentations from the **BIK Youth Panel** emphasised young people's priorities for a safer online world. A further side event provided a focus on the **EU Strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse** (see above) and various stakeholder responses to it. The final session of the week provided an opportunity to learn more about the most recent findings from the **BIK Policy Map exercise** (see below) which seeks to compare and exchange knowledge on policymaking and implementation of Better Internet for Kids strategies in EU Member States.

Find [further information on Safer Internet Forum 2020](#) on the Better Internet for Kids portal, including recordings of many of the sessions.



Mapping Better Internet for Kids policy across Europe (November 2020 onwards)

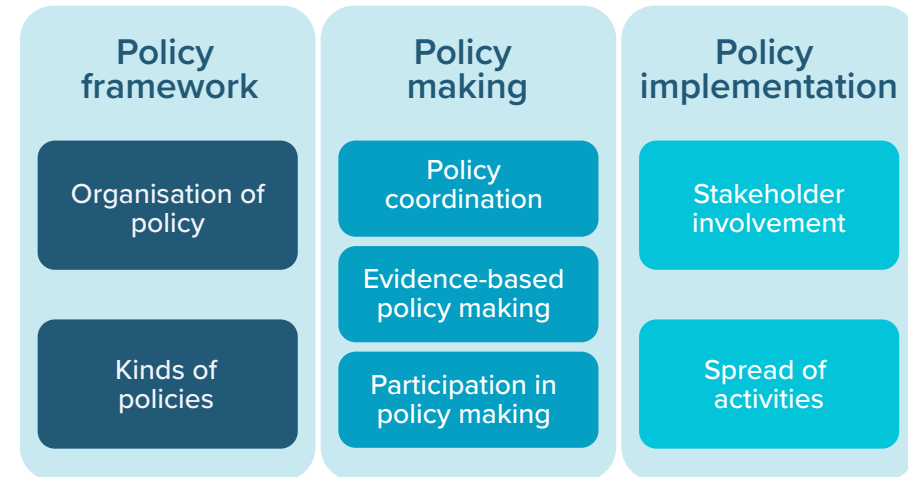
As is the case with much of our work, evidence informs both ongoing policy developments and practice. The Better Internet for Kids (BIK) Policy Map was created to compare and exchange knowledge on policy making and implementation in EU Member States on the themes and recommendations of the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children (or BIK Strategy) first set out by the European Commission in May 2012. A first report was published in 2015, while a second report was published in March 2018 to review progress made. A third iteration was published in November 2020, examining the further implementation of the BIK Strategy in 30 European countries, including all EU Member States, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom.

Findings in this latest edition are conceptually organised around three main topics which framed the research enquiry:

Policy frameworks or the organising principles and long-term goals for policies, guidelines, decisions and other statements made at the national level in the course of putting into practice the BIK Strategy.

Policy making or the general process by which policies are developed within each country, including how coordination and oversight is managed; the extent to which the policy agenda is informed by an evidence base; and whether there are arrangements for young people to be involved in the policy process.

Policy implementation referring to the involvement of the relevant stakeholders in the delivery of initiatives and the spread of activities as envisaged under each of the four pillars of the BIK Strategy.



BIK Map conceptual framework

Recommendations are subsequently made in line with each of the pillars of the BIK Strategy, namely to:

- ▶ stimulate the production of creative and educational online content for children as well as promoting positive online experiences for young children.
- ▶ scale up awareness and empowerment including teaching of digital literacy and online safety in all EU schools.
- ▶ create a safe environment for children through age-appropriate privacy settings, wider use of parental controls, and age rating and content classification.
- ▶ combat child sexual abuse material online and child sexual exploitation.



The report was formally launched at the 2020 edition of the **Safer Internet Forum** (see above), where a panel discussion considered implications for policy makers at both national and EU level. A further international panel, including participants from the **SIC+ pilot programme** (see above) considered future opportunities for policy mapping in Europe and beyond. Work on disseminating the findings of the study will continue into 2021.

Discover more about the [BIK Policy Map](#) and download the full report on the [Better Internet for Kids portal](#).



2020 IN FIGURES

Safer Internet Day



On Safer Internet Day 2020, over **11,500** schools were reached and nearly **4,000 other organisations** were involved across Europe alone. Many more were reached across the globe, with more than **170 countries** participating in celebrations in some way.

Resources



Throughout the year, **more than 28 million citizens¹** were reached, providing them with more than **1,100 new resources**. Many new resources responded to the challenges posed by the pandemic – key topics covered included **positive content** and **online resources for family entertainment**, tips on ensuring **well-being during lockdown**, **safe emergency remote teaching and learning**, **managing screen time**, **disinformation** and **fact checking**, protecting **online privacy**, being alert to online **scams and threats**, and dealing with **harmful or illegal content**.

¹ This figure is based on data from 23 Safer Internet Centres

² These figures represent all INHOPE member hotlines, not just those which are EC funded. The latest available figures are for 2019 at the current time.

³ ICCAM is INHOPE's secure software solution to collect, exchange and categorise reports on child sexual abuse material (CSAM), funded by the EU. ICCAM is used by INHOPE hotlines in different jurisdictions (countries) and INTERPOL. The name ICCAM is derived from the phrase "I see child abuse material".

Helplines



Unsafe helplines provide support services for young people (and their parents, carers, teachers and other adults) via telephone, email and online chat services. In 2020, Insafe helplines received more than **63,000** contacts with **cyberbullying** being the most common issue, followed by **love, relationships and sexuality online**.

BIK Youth



While limited by COVID-19, more than **340 events** involved youth participation throughout 2020.

Reporting



In 2019², a total of **183,788 reports** were processed in ICCAM³ by INHOPE hotlines from which **456,055 images and videos** were found and assessed. From these images and videos, a total of **320,672 were determined to be illegal** and, subsequently, national law enforcement agencies (LEAs) were informed and a notice for takedown was issued to the hosting internet service provider (ISP).



WHAT'S NEXT FOR BETTER INTERNET FOR KIDS?

This report is launched on **Safer Internet Day (SID) 2021** when Safer Internet Centres, Safer Internet Day Committees and supporters across the globe are once again joining “**Together for a better internet**”, highlighting the importance of the multi-stakeholder approach to creating a safer and better internet. Although we recognise that celebrations will look a little different this year with much of the activity constrained to online events as a result of the ongoing pandemic, we are still confident that it will be a vibrant and engaging occasion, during which many new resources and initiatives are launched with the aim of helping young people benefit from a myriad of online technologies.

And while Safer Internet Day may provide a single day of focus for our work, it also allows us to look towards the future priorities for driving the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) agenda forward.

Many EU policy initiatives having an impact on children and young people's safety and wellbeing in the digital environment are coming to fruition, along with strategies for supporting Europe's recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. Much of this will frame the agenda and work programme for the Insafe and INHOPE networks for the coming years.

For example, as already highlighted in this report, the [EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse](#) (2020-2025) establishes a framework for action to provide a comprehensive response to the issue of child sexual abuse, both online and offline. INHOPE and its member hotlines will play a prominent role in realising its aims in the coming years.

Education and awareness raising around technology opportunities and challenges, and the rights of all users when using digital services, will also be high on the agenda with topics such as high-quality content, respect of privacy and ethical standards, fighting disinformation, and further development of artificial intelligence growing in prominence; all issues which are already within the focus of BIK and the network of European Safer Internet Centres.

In particular the [EU strategy on the rights of the child](#) (2021-24) (due for publication in the first quarter of 2021) will provide the framework for EU action to better promote and protect children's rights, including in the digital age. Equally, the [Digital Education Action Plan](#) (2021-2027) outlines the European Commission's vision for high-quality, inclusive and accessible digital education in Europe. Among its priorities are enhancing digital skills and competences for the digital transformation. In 2021 we also expect important progress in the fight against harmful and illegal content, namely through the implementation of the revised [Audio-visual Media Services Directive \(AVMSD\)](#) and in the negotiations on the proposed [Digital Services Act \(DSA\)](#).

Safer Internet Centres in Europe will continue to respond to the issues raised, offering localised and targeted resources, providing access to helpline services for support and guidance to children, their families and teachers, and to hotlines for the swift removal of child sexual abuse material. Similarly, young people will continue to be consulted through engaging youth participation strategies, to ensure that our responses are fit for purpose for the audiences they aim to serve.



Underpinning all of the above, work is ongoing on ensuring that the [European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children](#) (or “BIK Strategy”) – the European Union policy framework launched in 2012, which has reinforced much of our work over recent years – is up to date and responds to the increasingly digital age.

As we continue to move forward with our mission of supporting Europe’s children and young people – and those that support them – to become empowered, responsible and critical users of digital content and technologies, we encourage you to stay tuned to the [Better Internet for Kids portal](#), the [quarterly Better Internet for Kids \(BIK\) bulletin](#), and project [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) profiles for the latest news and developments across all strands of activity, and areas where you can get involved too.



Better Internet for Kids

 www.betterinternetforkids.eu

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