# 5. Internet – Addressing the challenge

> "To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity."
>
> *Nelson Mandela, Nobel Peace Prize laureate of 1993, anti-apartheid activist, President of South Africa 1994-1999*

> "The rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened."
>
> *John F. Kennedy, President of the USA 1961-1963*

## CHECKLIST FACT SHEET 19 – CYBERCRIME: SPAM, MALWARE, FRAUD AND SECURITY

Have you set up strong different passwords for your accounts and configured two-factor security?

Have you explored security settings for your devices/accounts?

Are your operating system and your applications up to date?

Have you made a backup of your most important data?

## CHECKLIST FACT SHEET 20 – LABELLING AND FILTERING

Have you thought about the cultural and moral implications of filtering?

Do you know the difference between a "black list" and a "white list"?

Are you familiar with the most commonly used labelling systems for children's content, and what they signify?

## CHECKLIST FACT SHEET 21 – ONLINE HARASSMENT: BULLYING, STALKING AND TROLLING

Do you have a clear family or school policy in place so that children understand the repercussions when they are involved in online harassment?

Do you protect your personal details sufficiently? Many online problems are caused through ill-advised sharing of photos and information.

Have you investigated how to build better social and emotional skills (otherwise known as social literacy) to overcome the anonymity and "facelessness" of online communication that facilitate bullying, trolling and harassment in general?

## CHECKLIST FACT SHEET 22 – GETTING ASSISTANCE

Do you and your children/pupils know where to report illegal content?

Do you ever check statistics reported by helplines to understand emerging trends and risks?

What are the top five digital skills that will best protect you online?

Do you understand geolocation and Bluetooth sufficiently to use your mobile devices comfortably and safely?

M-learning and mobile wallets are areas in which the use of mobile devices is changing the way we learn, work and shop. What do you know about these recent evolutions?

# Labelling and filtering



## LABELLING

Labelling and filtering are both methods of restricting access to Internet content such as video, images, web pages and games. Despite early hopes from technical and child protection agencies a decade or so ago to create an electronic labelling system that could be embedded into websites for filtering purposes, nowadays labelling usually takes the form of a symbol visible to the naked eye that signifies that specific regulations or standards have been met. However, developing criteria for trust mark and labelling systems, to enable children and their families to identify suitable online content, and sharing international good practice in this area continues to be a priority for the Council of Europe, in particular through the Internet Governance Forum that is organised annually by the United Nations[1]. Labelling of sites is not only a means of protecting minors and increasing public trust in the use of online transactions, it also encourages compliance by content providers with legal standards.

---

1. www.intgovforum.org

PEGI is a European online labelling system supported by the European Commission as it provides guidance on age restrictions and types of content to be found in games and apps (see Fact sheet 16 on games). It provides guidance on age restrictions on games, apps and certain online content as well as an indication of the type of content they contain. It also shows that the content providers respect quality standards which include, amongst other things, obligations to try to keep websites free of illegal and offensive user-created content and undesirable links, to protect privacy and which have an independent complaints mechanism.

Quality and trust mark labeling can also be found on shopping and other online transaction sites to indicate that they respect regulations and prescriptions for secure transactions (see Fact sheet 13 on shopping online). One of the most frequent symbols that you may see is the padlock icon, which indicates that the page on the website you are on uses the SSL (secure sockets layer) protocol (a data transfer security standard that encrypts data and authenticates the server and the integrity of the message) or the TLS (transport layer security) protocol. You can therefore reasonably assume that your data, most notably banking details, are secured.

## FILTERING

Filtering is generally understood as the process of detecting and blocking inappropriate platforms and/or content on the Internet. It can be done within browsers and proxies, or by installing software censors, such as parental controls. Filters are established according to rules set up by parents, schools, businesses, governments and others. They usually function by means of "black" lists (of content to be blocked) or white lists (which bars access to all Internet content except items approved by the filter). Sometimes white lists are brought together within a software system where the carrier or service provider has control over applications, content and media, and restricts convenient access to non-approved applications or content. When such a system is set up for children, it is referred to as a "walled garden" or "closed platform"[2] in contrast to an open platform, where consumers have unrestricted access to applications, content and much more.

Another filtering method is when the rules are entered by means of keywords or terms, restricting or completely blocking the access to any web pages containing the banned words or phrases. By means of a password the person who has set the filtering rules can also allow access to sites on an ad hoc basis[3].

Today, multidevice filters exist. The filtering software or app can be uploaded to several devices, such as a laptop, tablet, smartphone, television or eReader, and be controlled centrally, for example, by the parent. Different rules can be set for children of different ages and these can automatically evolve with the age of the child. Filtering rules can be applied to restrict time spent online and access to contacts, as well as monitoring geolocation and much more.

## EDUCATION

- White lists are especially valuable when children take their first steps on the Internet, enabling them to recognise and quickly access their favourite sites. Not only will this help develop their visual discrimination, a pre-reading requisite, it will also help Internet activities to become shared family activities – a crucial element in ensuring your child's safety online.

- Filtering can be a very useful supplement to shield minors from unsuitable content on the Internet or to monitor usage, but should be used together with appropriate guidance from parents, teachers and child carers.

2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Closed_platform
3. http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com

- In a classroom situation, filters can be valuable in reducing the risk of students accessing inappropriate or harmful material. However, they do not alleviate the need to check sites to be proposed to students before setting Internet-based assignments.

- The Safer Internet Programme benchmark study (SIP-Bench) shows that today's filtering tools are capable of filtering potentially harmful content without seriously detracting from the opportunities the Internet offers to children and young people. More details are available on the Safer Internet Programme[4] site.

- The issues raised by labelling and filtering practices are rich in material for citizenship and/or social studies themes. Start a debate on the subject of online filtering. Is it an acceptable and necessary form of censorship?

## ISSUES

- Content filtering can block access to valuable information and resources, for example to World War history or sex education due to certain key words they contain.

- The labelling and rating of websites remains a largely voluntary practice, except where countries have laws to enforce certain standards. We live in a global world, and their effectiveness is to some extent impacted by their limited take-up by platform and content providers and the lack of common labelling and rating systems.

- Legislation cannot keep pace with technological evolution and still today filtering software services tend to label pages according to their own value systems and social agendas.

- It is difficult to decide what content is actually harmful for children of a particular age, who should decide on the general rules which content providers should observe and who should decide on the application of these rules. Therefore, filtering tools need to be very flexible to enable child carers to shape filtering rules according to the family values. Filter vendors need to develop techniques to ensure they filter in accordance with these criteria.

- Filters can also become a tool of censorship used to shape public opinion and stifle political dissent. Some countries block sites of opposing political parties or ideologies; this can be an interesting starting point for discussing human rights and democracy in class.

- Some people consider filtering as a form of censorship and therefore against the spirit of the Internet. Others claim that if filter software did not exist, governments would be under pressure to regulate online content.

- Filtering software vendors are struggling to keep up with the challenges of social media, mobile devices and the usage of the Internet by increasingly younger children.

- International discussions are ongoing to create a *.kids* domain to replace *.org*, *.com* and similar for sites that are adapted for children in order to guard them from online content that could be potentially harmful, malicious or unsuitable. As sites using the *.kids* domain name would be required to adhere to registration guidelines, the many challenges include setting up internationally acceptable standards, selecting an international monitoring agency and so forth.

---

4. http://www.sipbench.eu

## HOW TO

- If you are a game or app developer wanting to have your creation rated according to national or international standards, or a parent or carer simply wanting to understand the process, watch the "how to" video at the International Age Rating Coalition (IARC)[5] website. Most browsers and operating systems have in-built parental controls that you can set to filter out unwanted content. The blog, "How do I set up non-annoying parental controls on all my devices?"[6] provides information on how to do this on a broad range of devices and software. With most filter programs you can specify what types of content you wish to filter or allow. However, pre-installed filters may not fill all of your requirements, especially if you wish to set different rules for two or more users. You will need to purchase a dedicated program for a more sophisticated approach to filtering sites and monitoring usage. The latest Safer Internet Programme report[7] and Internet software reviews[8] can both be useful in choosing from the broad range of products available on the market.

## GOOD PRACTICE

- Have a close look at how a filter works before you install it. Does it make any ideological or cultural decisions in its filtering that you do not agree with?

- Use electronic aids with discrimination and do not believe the hype. Test product claims against personal experience. No filter can ever replace the "critical thinking filter" all Internet users need to develop, regardless of their age.

- Talk to students, parents and staff about their usage and needs, and do so regularly. Creating an open discussion environment will do more to add value to your learners' Internet experience than censorship or witch-hunts. Experts recommend that the key to fostering children's responsible use of Internet is for parents to take an interest in their children's online activities and spend time with them online.

- Consider "white listing" options – allowing access only to approved sites – for the youngest Internet users. Bookmark favourite and other child-friendly web sites on your browser to build a personal list for your children so they can easily access safe sites they have used before.

- Children and young people should be encouraged to talk about inappropriate material they find on the Internet. Teens repeatedly claim that one major challenge for them is not being able to speak to their parents about moral issues they are confronted with online. Report potentially illegal content to a hotline[9].

- Monitor your children's activities on gaming websites and look for the PEGI Online label to distinguish safe sites.

- More and more online communities rely on users themselves to help label content, especially when it is user generated. Be sure to label any content that you upload and to help flag content that is inappropriately labelled.

---

5. https://www.globalratings.com
6. http://web.archive.org/web/20160528132556/http://lifehacker.com/5868750/how-do-i-set-up-non-annoying-parental-controls-on-all-my-devices
7. http://www.sipbench.eu/
8. http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com
9. http://www.inhope.org

- Wikipedia has an entry on censorship in cyberspace: *<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Censorship_in_cyberspace>*.

- The Council of Europe media division website gives information on their work promoting self-regulation and user empowerment: *<http://www.coe.int/media>*.

- NetNanny at *<http://www.netnanny.com>* and Cyberpatrol at *<http://www.cyberpatrol.com>* are among the well-known commercial filter products.

- The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) aims to defend civil liberties on the Internet: *<http://www.eff.org/>*.

- The EU-funded SIP-Bench project annually publishes the results of comparative surveys on filtering products in nine languages: *<http://www.sipbench.eu/>*.

- A Council of Europe study on young people, well-being and risk online (2006) explores the meaning of harmful content in the protection of children and young people in the information society: *<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680483b30>*.

- The PEGI Online labelling system website offers information on online gaming, categories, risks, safety tips and a list of labelled websites: *<http://www.pegionline.eu>*.

- Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures to promote the respect for freedom of expression and information with regard to Internet filters: *<https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=CM/Rec(2008)6&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&direct=true>*.

- Relevant Council of Europe documents: for more information on labelling and filtering: *<www.coe.int/en/web/freedom-expression/internet-standard-setting>*.