OUTCOME REPORT

ITU Workshop "Fostering a Culture on Child Online Protection: Roll-out of the ITU COP Guidelines in Europe" – Draft

Version 1.1

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

The ITU workshop on "[Fostering a Culture of Child Online Protection: Roll-out of the ITU COP Guidelines in Europe](#)" (hereafter "workshop") was held online on 24 September 2021. The workshop was organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Office for Europe within the framework of the [15th International Conference: Keeping the Children and Young People Safe Online](#).

The Conference is co-organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) under the framework of the ITU Regional Initiative for Europe "*Enhancing trust and confidence in the use of information and communication technologies",* adopted by WTDC-17 in Buenos Aires. The Polish Safer Internet Center (PCPSI) and the German klicksafe consortium led the organization of this event. The centre is co-funded by the European Union. The main partner of this conference was the Orange Foundation. The 15th edition of the Conference covered a large set of issues related to the safety of children and young people online and acted as a platform for both international and national stakeholders across various sectors such as NGOs, education sector, governments, and industries to reflect on the threats, opportunities and the future of children online safety.

The workshop drew attention to the ongoing efforts of ITU and its partners in advancing the agenda of Child Online Protection, and offered an opportunity for dialogue between experts in the field and national stakeholders. The workshop provided a platform for exchanging on recommendations and country-level experiences in developing a child online protection strategy.

The workshop mainly focused on providing an overview of the COP guidelines for policy-makers, parents and educators, and industry. It also allowed stakeholders from Albania, Hungary, Malta, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine to discuss the current national framework in place and remaining challenges to ensure the safety of children online, as well as best practices encountered during the roll-out process of the guidelines at the national level.

The workshop's agenda covered the following:

- - Session 1 on "Overview of the Child Online Protection Guidelines"
- - Session 2 on "The journey towards ensuring child online protection: Roll-out of the COP Guidelines at the national level"

The main outcomes of the workshop are outlined in this report, which structures the key points that emerged during each session of the workshop.

2. PARTICIPATION

The Workshop was an open event, mainly targeting child online protection players such as policy-makers, stakeholders from the industry sector, stakeholders in the Educational System, as well as parents and educators. Nine (9) eminent speakers presented and discussed during the sessions. Details about the agenda and speakers as well as all presentations delivered, can be found on [the event's website](#). The workshop was attended by 76 participants.

Figure 1 - Virtual Group photo

3. DOCUMENTATION

The Workshop was held virtually. Relevant documentation, was made available in electronic form on the event's webpage. **Video recording** of the workshop, as well as this outcome report, are also made available on the website.

4. OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder, Head of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Office for Europe

In his opening speech, **Mr. Jaroslaw Ponder**, Head of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Office for Europe, welcomed all participants by inviting them to learn about the ITU COP Guidelines, as well as to discover what are the initiatives that national stakeholders in Europe are undertaking to ensure a safe and empowering online environment for children and young people.

After welcoming the participants, Mr. Ponder started his speech recalling that we live in a digital era which makes technology entwined with our lives. As much as it provides children with many opportunities, it is important for us to recognize that it also exposes them to serious risks and challenges. Mr. Ponder then referred to how the current COVID-19 pandemic increased these trends.

Mr. Ponder brought to our attention that it is in our responsibility to protect children and youth from online harms as they are a vulnerable population and by nature are prone to making mistakes. Within this context, Mr. Ponder then proceeded by mentioning the ITU COP Guidelines which were updated and

officially launched in June 2020 in all six UN languages, and reiterated the commitment of European countries in participating in this global mission by engaging in the translation and rolling-out of the ITU COP Guidelines at national level.

Through his introductory words, Mr. Ponder left the floor to experts in Child Online Protection and co-authors of the ITU COP Guidelines to provide an overview of the Guidelines and highlight how these can support in the development of a child online protection framework at the national level, and further on to speakers from Albania, Hungary, Malta, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine to discuss country-level strategies, initiatives and good practices to ensure a safe and empowering cyberspace for all children and young people.

5. WORKSHOP SESSIONS

SESSION 1: OVERVIEW OF THE CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION GUIDELINES

Focus: Co-authors of the ITU Child Online Protection Guidelines to present such Guidelines, providing an overview of related objectives and strategies, together with their recommendations on what would be the prerequisite for a successful implementation of the COP Guidelines for Policy-makers/ Parents and Educators/ Industry.

Moderator: Ms. Sarah Delporte, Project Officer, ITU Office for Europe

Speakers: **Presentation 1,** Mr. David Wright, Director, Safer Internet Centre UK, and co-author of the ITU COP Guidelines for Policy-makers, **Presentation 2,** Ms. Sonia Livingstone, Professor, London School of Economics & Global Kids Online, and co-author of ITU COP Guidelines for Parents and Educators, **Presentation 3,** Mr. Giacomo Mazzone, Expert of the EU Digital Literacy Group, RAI, and co-author of the ITU COP Guidelines for Industry

Mr. David Wright, Director of Safer Internet Center UK – **Presentation of the ITU COP Guidelines for Policy-Makers**

" *"Every child everywhere must be Protected online. We must make it our global priority and we must act now.".*

Her Majesty Queen Silvia of Sweden
at the launch of the COP 2020 Guidelines,
23 June 2020

Key Points:

- The introduction of the COP Guidelines for Policy-Makers provides the internationally agreed definition of child online protection, which is defined in context as any harm, legal or illegal, that children will encounter in the online environment. The introduction chapter of the Guidelines further focuses on the impact of technology on children, defining key harms and threats that children are exposed to when going online, and puts an emphasis on the situation of children with specific vulnerabilities or additional needs;

- The guidelines propose concrete recommendations for policy-makers on how to prepare a national child online protection strategy. The guidelines suggest assessing and identifying relevant stakeholders in the country such as children, parents, ministries, the industry, as well as active NGOs in this area, and determining already existing frameworks and activities to provide a safe online environment for all children;

- Section four of the guidelines includes recommendations for frameworks and implementation, providing examples of possible regulatory frameworks and legal aspects. It further provides a national checklist which helps in the establishment of the current landscape. The checklist suggests **(i)** considering the existing legal and regulatory frameworks; **(ii)** exploring the existing or potential structures that the population could use to report illegal or legal online content that could cause them any harms, with special emphasis on providing such structures to vulnerable population; **(iii)** outlining the key stakeholders; **(iv)** considering the academic landscape: conducting research and providing high quality data to determine the understanding and level of awareness among the population regarding online threats and harms, as well as to identify the gaps and vulnerabilities in ensuring the safety of children online; evaluating the education curriculum from the perspective of digital skills and digital competencies; **(v)** looking at how child online protection integrates within the existing child protection system; **(vi)** thinking about opportunities to raise national awareness – considering events such as **Safer Internet Day**.

Ms. Sonia Livingstone, Professor, London School of Economics – **Presentation of the ITU COP Guidelines for Parents and Educators**
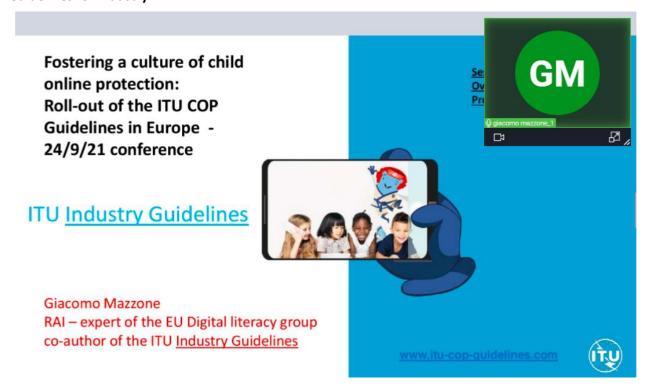
Key Points:

- Parents and educators need to recognize that, by comparison, **(i)** children and young people are digital native and cannot imagine a pre-digital world, and that **(ii)** the digital world can offer many opportunities and benefits, and has the power of bringing people together. The digital world has also increased the risks children are exposed to online, and it requires coordinated action on behalf of policy-makers, industry and parents and educators;

- The ITU COP Guidelines for Parents and Educators have the objective to provide an understanding of the role and responsibilities of parents and educators in relation to the activities of all other key stakeholders who have a role in ensuring online safety for all children;

- The Guidelines provide an overview of children's online activity, identify both the risks and opportunities they may encounter, and offer strategies that parents, educators and guardians can use to keep children safe online;

- The Guidelines divide the risks into **content risks**, where the child is the receiver of harmful content, **contact risks** where the child might be put to risk when contacted by adults, and **conduct risks** where the child is either a victim or perpetrator of those risks, or sometimes can be found in both of these positions;

- The Global Kids Online Project developed and implemented a survey showing that internet home use is greater than school use, particularly in low-income countries. The data helps in providing an understanding on the role and responsibility of parents, caregivers and educators in keeping children safe during their time online. The issue here might be that, from a policy-maker perspective, it is both difficult and expensive to reach out to parents. In this context, schools play a crucial role given that they have better access to parents and occupy number one in parents' preferences to be guided in their role of keeping their children safe online;

- The results of another survey assessing which is the most likely person to be reached out when encountering a difficult situation online show that children are more likely to tell a friend and less likely to tell a parent, except from a study showing that in Bulgaria and Montenegro children are quite likely to tell a parent;

- Parents have the responsibility of bridging the communication gap that exists between children, themselves and educators. Schools have the responsibility of educating children and supporting them in developing digital skills. Furthermore, schools must provide a comfortable environment for expressing and exchanging on issues related to the online world, so that children will hold the necessary knowledge to support their peers when needed.

Mr. Giacomo Mazzone, Expert of the EU Digital Literacy Group, RAI – **Presentation of the ITU COP Guidelines for Industry**

Key points:

- The Guidelines for the Industry are targeted at telecom operators, broadcasters, social media, internet service providers and regulators. These guidelines provide a checklist where the most important points are: **(i)** providing connectivity, data storage and hosting services; **(ii)** offering curated digital content and; **(iii)** the artificial intelligence- driven systems;
- There are a number of initiatives that are taking place around child online protection, such as: the global implementation campaign of the COP guidelines, funded by Saudi Arabia; the digital track of G20 under the Italian presidency took the decision to focus on children and their digital activity. The implementation will be made between national broadcasters, internet service providers, telecom operators, internet platforms, regulators and child protection authorities;
- Collaboration between all sectors is needed in order to have useful results with a powerful impact;
- Mr. Mazzone shared the example of the actions taken by the Italian government following the case of a 10 years old girl who was registered on TikTok as having 13 years old, and who died by suffocation due to a dangerous TikTok Trend. The example draws attention to the crucial need of having an age verification procedure in place. At the moment, the accounts of all children under the age of 13 are closed, and the age verification procedure is done through AI tools.

SESSION 2: THE JOURNEY TOWARDS ENSURING CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION: ROLL-OUT OF THE ITU COP GUIDELINES IN EUROPE

Focus: National stakeholders to discuss current actions and initiatives at national level to ensure the safety of children and young people online, and to share remaining challenges and best practices that emerged from the process of rolling out the COP Guidelines, as well as future initiatives.

Moderator: Ms. Sarah Delporte, Project Officer, ITU Office for Europe

Speakers: Ms. Klorenta Janushi, Head of the Communication and Information Dissemination Unit at the Directorate of Electronic Certification and Cyber Security, Council of Ministers in Albania; **Ms. Katalin Baracsi Dr.**, LL.M lawyer specialized in Infocommunication; **Ms. Antonella Gatt**, Director International Relations and Program Implementation at the Ministry of Education in Malta ; **Ms. Claudia Oprescu**, National Coordinator at the Safer Internet Centre in Romania ; **Mr. Şahin Bayzan Dr.**, Coordinator at the Safer Internet Centre in Turkey and **Ms. Oleksandra Kovalenko**, Head of the Expert Group on Online Safety at the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine.

Key Points

Albania, Ms. Klorenta Janushi

- Child online safety is one of the main focus points of the national strategy for cybersecurity which has been approved last December 2020. The objectives are to raise public awareness in cybersecurity and cyber threats, to strengthen the legal framework and to prevent child sexual abuse on the internet. The ITU COP Guidelines support the objective to raise awareness among specific targeted groups such as children, parents and the industry sector through trainings, workshops and promotional videos to reach a larger audience;
- Rolling out the COP Guidelines will help all the sectors to strengthen their measures related to the safety of children online. The Authority, with the support of ITU, will support in understanding the risks and provide guidance on how to address the related issues;
- Albania conducted a study on "Children's experiences in using the Internet in Albania" in partnership with UNICEF Albania. 1000 children aged 9– 18 years old and their parents were surveyed. The study showed that 14% of children surveyed have experienced upsetting situations online, especially those aged 15–17;
- In October 2020 the National Authority for Electronic Certification and Cyber Security in Albania hosted workshops on child online protection that reached 100 parents and showed that parents and educators are not prepared to protect their children online. Starting in September 2021, the National Authority for Electronic Certification and Cyber Security in Albania, with the support of ITU, will roll out the ITU Global project "Creating a Safe and Prosperous Cyberspace for Children".

Hungary, Ms. Katalin Baracsi Dr.

- In 2015 the Government of Hungary held a national consultation campaign on internet and digital development and adopted a strategy on child online protection. The focus is on protecting children from harmful content and on strategies that help children, parents and teachers to learn

how to use the internet in a conscious and protective way. The strategy has special programs such as Smart Kindergarten and peer mentoring programs;

- The Ministry for Innovation and Technology supported the implementation of the COP Guidelines. It is very important and a key point in Hungary to engage more people in the process of the COP Guidelines implementation and to take more actions towards ensuring internet safety;
- The remaining current challenges are to raise awareness of online safety, maintain mental health and develop digital skills;
- The Hungarian version of the ITU COP Guidelines was published at the beginning of 2021 during an official online launching event. There were official online events for teachers and a series of live meetings with children and the youth where the ITU COP mascot Sango was made known to both children and parents. Children had the opportunity to play with Sango and parents were presented an overview of all ITU COP materials;
- On 24th of September started the Researchers' night and for the next weeks there will be various family programs which will be an opportunity to present Sango and promote the COP Guidelines.

Malta, Ms. Antonella Gatt

- Online bullying is a criminal liability under Chapter 9 of the Criminal Code in Malta. A reform of the Alternative Care Act for the protection of minors puts the professionals who identify any abuse against a minor under the obligation to report it. There are supporting Agencies and Units who provide support to minor who deal with traumas and unpleasant experiences children have been going through online;
- Due to COVID-19 there has been an increase in the abuse children face in the cyberspace. The COP Guidelines help in having a consolidated and holistic approach which is lacking at the national level. The Guidelines also help in advancing raising awareness in child online protection and building a concrete policy around this topic. Statistics are crucial in addressing child online protection and at the moment this is something that is lacking in Malta. The COP Guidelines could help in eliminating child online abuse and in addressing abuse from children to children;
- At the national level there are certain initiatives and campaigns around child online protection. One of the main awareness campaigns is the "Be Smart Online" campaign led by the Government in partnership with the civil society. The Malta Foundation of the Wellbeing of Society has recently embarked in the implementation of the ITU COP Guidelines. A future initiative is the establishment of a think tank which will bring together government representatives, the industry, the civil society and the academia collaborating together to form policies related to child online protection. There will be an external high level advisory board which will guide the think tank and provide recommendations. Future initiatives include the creation of an application, and the collaboration with internet service providers which could block certain sources of online abuse.

Romania, Ms. Claudia Oprescu

- There are three disciplines in the Romanian National School Curriculum that cover child online safety, such as school counseling and vocational guidance, social education and information and communication technology. Taking into account the risks children face in the online environment, the issue is insufficiently addressed within the curriculum. The Safer Internet Center coordinated by Save the Children Romania supports the development of digital competencies among teachers regarding child online protection, by designing and providing

special courses. In this direction, the Safer Internet Center partners up with the Ministry of Education, state organizations and telecom industry stakeholders;

- Save the Children Romania conducted a study in 2019 which showed that children who spent more than six hours per day online are more dissatisfied with their present life, their relationships and less optimistic about the future. The same study showed that less than two out of 10 children talk to an adult when encounter any difficulties in the online environment, and that the adult doesn't have the proper knowledge to manage the issue;

- The Romanian Safer Internet Center carries projects for 11 years to provide a safe online environment for children, which address topics such as cyberbullying and online addiction. The center also provides webinars for parents and advertising campaigns, and provides teachers with training courses to teach them how to use the internet in a safe way. As future initiatives, the Center wants to develop a children online safety discipline curriculum for schools and to build a strong community within the education system which will contribute to a safer online environment for all children.

Turkey, Mr. Şahin Bayzan Dr.

- The Government takes all necessary measures to protect children against all kinds of abuse in accordance with Article 41 of the Turkish Constitution;

- The Safer Internet Center, Helpline, Hotline and Awareness Center are working to minimize online risks, and to enable children to experience the online environment in a positive and safe way;

- The increased time spent in front of the screen due to the COVID-19 pandemic which has led to various psychological and physical health problems, and the shift from face-to-face online safety training programs to virtual ones are remaining current challenges to ensure child online safety in Turkey;

- The Safer Internet Center in Turkey provides a series of filtering tools which protect children, prevent the contact with strangers and don't allow access to social media sites. The Open Source Project is planning to create an open source book for online safety of children and to make it accessible to parents, teachers, those working with children and young people.

Ukraine, Ms. Oleksandra Kovalenko

- Within the Ministry of Digital Transformation there is a department of online safety who focuses on child online protection. The Ministry has developed an Action Plan on child online protection that provides tasks for different Ministries and Agencies. The Action Plan was developed based on the recommendations provided by the ITU COP Guidelines and other international organizations including Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and WeProtect Global Alliance. The document is in final stage of approval by the government and focuses on improving the legislation on online harm against children and strengthening the law enforcement capacity in this matter;

- The Government of Ukraine conducted an online survey which showed that 35 percent of teenagers and 12 percent of adults are feeling protected in the online environment. The survey offered an understanding regarding the perception of population and identified the risks children encounter online;

- At the beginning of the year Ukraine has translated and launched the ITU COP Guidelines, which are online and can be accessed very easily. The Ministry has also worked in partnership with an

NGO to produce video presentations, held a series of webinars which reached 600 teachers on online safety, and recently launched an Amber Alert service in partnership with Facebook, promoting positive partnerships with corporations which are specialized in finding children. A future initiative is the development of a software which will have the ITU COP Guidelines as a main reference to create the content. The Ministry is also participating in the Safer Internet Day and putting efforts into creating more information campaigns.

6. CLOSING REMARKS

Ms. Sarah Delporte, Project Officer, ITU Office for Europe

Ms. Sarah Delporte, Project Officer at ITU Office for Europe, and Moderator of the event, thanked the co-authors Mr. David Wright, Ms. Sonia Livingstone and Mr. Giacomo Mazzone for their interventions and for preparing the stage for the discussions. She then thanked all panelists for their participation and for sharing their experiences, and the audience for contributing to the success of the event.

Ms. Delporte continued by underlying that the workshop provided all participants with further knowledge and information which will help them in the ongoing work towards ensuring the safety of children online. She highlighted that Session 1 offered information on the ITU COP Guidelines and provided the participants with recommendations that facilitate the development of a safe and empowering cyberspace for all children. Ms. Delporte then proceeded by highlighting the importance of adopting a global and multistakeholder approach based on harmonized and inclusive strategies. The Panel discussion offered national stakeholders the platform to share their experiences and to learn from each other, as this is an important part in working together to advance the agenda of child online protection.

Ms. Delporte concluded by reiterating the commitment of ITU to assist national stakeholders in Europe in their efforts towards fostering a culture of child online protection.