Safer Internet Day

On 10 February 2009, for the fifth time already, the Nobody’s Children Foundation and NASK, implementing entities of the EU project Saferinternet.pl, organised the Safer Internet Day in Poland. Therefore, the University Library in Warsaw held a conference on the safety of the youngest Internet users.

The Safer Internet Day was established following the initiative of the European Commission in 2004 within the Safer Internet programme and it aims to initiate and promote actions for the safety of children and teenagers. The international celebration of the Safer Internet Day was organised under the patronage of the Information Society and Media Commissioner, Viviane Reding.

In Poland the celebration of the Safer Internet Day was held under the honorary patronage of the Minister of Interior and Administration, Deputy Prime Minister Grzegorz Schetyna, the Minister of National Education, Katarzyna Hall and the President of the Office of Electronic Communications, Anna Strężyńska. The main partner of the Safer Internet Day 2008 is the TP Group Foundation.

The conference on the occasion of the Safer Internet Day was opened by the Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Interior and Administration, Mr. Witold Drożdż, the Director of the Nobody’s Children Foundation, Mrs. Monika Sajkowska, the Director of NASK, Mr. Maciej Kozłowski, and Mrs. Jadwiga Czartoryska from the TP Group Foundation. At the beginning of his speech, Minister Drożdż thanked for inviting the Ministry of Interior and Administration to exercise patronage over such a noble initiative. The Minister also expressed his thanks to the people who deal with Internet safety issues in their everyday work and whose efforts led to the implementation of these important and useful initiatives. Minister Drożdż also emphasised the significance of undertaking actions which not only make the youngest aware that the Internet is dangerous, but also make the society realise that offences committed via electronic means do not remain unpunished.

The organisers of the Safer Internet Day in Poland encourage schools and other institutions and organisations to undertake educational activities connected with online safety. The motto of this year’s celebration “Play on the Web – SAFELY” is not only supposed to underline the positive nature of the Internet, its educational and entertainment values, but also to remind Internet users about its dangers.
A survey carried out for the Nobody’s Children Foundation shows that 90% of Polish Internet surfers considers the phenomenon of child pornography in the Internet a serious problem, 17% at least once came across pornographic material depicting children, and 14% of them reported this fact to a relevant organisation or institution. Moreover, 77% of Polish Internet users claim the Internet providers should “obligatory and unconditionally” block access to pornographic material depicting children. The majority of Internet surfers are also of the opinion that each person who comes across pornographic content is obliged to report this fact to relevant institutions, such as the police (85%) or a proper social organisation (84%).

On the Safer Internet Day, a nationwide campaign “Play on the Web – SAFELY” devoted to the problem of cyber violence against minors was launched as well. The campaign was prepared by the Belgian LDV UNITED agency, to the order of the European Commission, and is an answer to the growing scale of Internet peer violence encountered Europe-wide. Campaign messages have been prepared in all official EU languages. In Poland, the campaign is coordinated by the Nobody’s Children Foundation and by NASK - national implementing entities of the Safer Internet program. The campaign consists of commercial spots (30 and 60 seconds) and Web advertisements emphasizing the problem of peer violence on social networking websites. A survey conducted for the Nobody’s Children Foundation in 2007 indicates a considerable scale of the problem of cyber violence in Poland:

- 21% of children are humiliated, put to shame and humbled online
- 16% are threatened and blackmailed
- 57% respondents aged 12-17 were at least once a subject of pictures or videos made against their will
- 14% of children report cases of disseminating, with the use of the Internet or mobile phones, materials that humiliate them

The television commercial of “Play on the Web - SAFELY” will be aired under a non-profit scheme by numerous nationwide and local media.

At the conference, the following actions were also presented: “Child-Friendly Internet Café”; “My first mobile”, new educational offer of the “Child in the Net” campaign; the “TP Corporate Volunteering” programme.

Students – representatives of the Youth Panel from the Kardynał Wyszyński State Secondary School No. 27 in Warsaw – also participated in this conference. They presented their favourite social networking portals, identifying at the same time their drawbacks and providing examples of improvement methods. The main objections included, among others: technical breaks, lack of privacy, existence of fictitious profiles, lack of knowledge about Polish social networking portals among foreigners.