

**To Surf in Safe Waters
Friendly Internet
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INDEX

Introduction: to surf in safe waters

CHAPTER 1 – The wonders of the Internet

To draw near to the Internet to know it better
Unjust prohibitions are not of help, on the contrary...
What is good on the Internet
The human side of the Internet
We won't do without the Internet anymore
People feel like writing letters again
A personal expressive space
The internet and the new equality
To conclude

CHAPTER 2–To know and to prevent risks deriving from the contents of sites

Pornography has conquered the Internet too
Pedophilia on the Internet: the invisible monsters
Violent contents and racism
Exhortation to the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco
Betting and gambling on the Internet

CHAPTER 3 – When the on-line business represents a danger

Misleading advertising: old systems, new means
The traps of the on-line buying
Our personal data going round the world:
privacy safeguarding on the Internet

CHAPTER 4 – The risks connected to use of the Internet in general

Viruses
When surfing is not free of charge
The problem of responsibility for what is put on the Internet
Lost in the cyberspace: the limits of a reasonable dedication to the Internet

Comparative tests on content filtering software: the results

Partner countries and participating organisations

TO SURF IN SAFE WATERS

The Internet: a world in the world

What is exactly the Internet? This mysterious object that, since the sixties up to today, has brought on the most extraordinary revolution of communications in the history of human kind? A huge library? A virtual trip in all the countries and through all the cultures? An enormous amusement park taking up children and adults time with its surprising attractions? Or, again, the negative side of TV, inheriting its violent and vulgar contents, invading lives of the most defenceless people and offering victims to the masters of organized pedophilia, to criminals and swindlers and to traders without scruples?

The Internet has become a symbol of globalization

Someone noticed how the Internet has become the place of freedom, equality and expression without limits or censorship...shortly, another world where the ordinary categories of knowledge and of experience are twisted, a virtual space, sometimes being a source of the huge wealth of the real world, sometimes a rubbish heap, or a representation of indecency.

Resource or danger?

The Internet is all of this and much more. An uncontrolled creation of our troubled age, consequence of the noblest expressive needs and of the freedom of speech, as well as of the trade and politic logics, faithful representation and hated symbol of the unstoppable globalization that is changing our world. Like and more than television, it has divided observers and educators between “against” and “for” the Internet: a debate without a solution.

Freedom of expression..., yes, but with which limits?

Legislation and jurisprudence are hesitating to intervene, to regulate somehow this explosion of texts and images, these new social and economic habits and relationships: the result? Unpunished crimes, violated privacy, offences to the (legitimate) sensibility of thousands of Internauts, diffused anxiety (almost a real social alarm), among families and educators that fear that children can come into contact with harmful and misleading contents.

To regulate with new tools

But is it right to accuse who has at his disposal tools exclusively thought to regulate traditional society and that have nothing to do with such a new and different space? It is not easy to enforce, or to think about effective rules and interventions able to put in order this “world public place”. It escapes from the borders established by the states (a Web page published in Brazil, subject to the legislation and jurisprudence of its country, is anyway visible and it produces its eventually harmful effects all over the world), from the sovereignty of the laws and finally from the morality shared by the public opinion, to become a place, people imagine, of absolute freedom. And it is really like that: numerous opinion polls showed that the Internet people are jealous of this freedom and of the possibility to put and find almost everything on the Internet. Really everything.

To protect our children : first of all education and information

And so, what shall we do? How can we protect our children from the negative and dangerous side of the Internet? The answer is the same that has always guided us in the real world: to infuse common sense, information and education into them, the awareness that human kind has many sides and that it is not always desirable to know all of them. Then, to assist them, to be always at their side, personally too, to share the joy of the many discoveries they can do with the Internet, showing them we are up to

the changing times, that our values and our experience are still “good” to live in the third millennium and, why not, in the cyberspace. Shortly, we have to make an effort to grow with them.

Let children open the doors of technology

Some technological notion, some advice from the experts and a bit of good will, will allow us to put aside our (understandable) wariness towards the not well-known things to face the trip into the Internet with enthusiasm and curiosity. We have not to rule out the possibility that our teachers will be just our children. On the other hand, everybody knows that they are more inclined and informed than us about electronic contraptions...

A survival course on the Internet

This guide intends to be an easy and pleasant reading, educational and at the same time recreational, for teachers and parents that have passed the test of changing times and are ready to venture on a real “survival course” on the Internet.

A view on the Web: to know is to understand

The first section illustrates the positive aspects of the Web, showing a view of contents, resources and available functionalities. Some observation will be dedicated to the need and opportunity, especially for children, to take familiarity with the Internet for the numerous services it offers and for its increasing importance in the working field. Finally, some reflections on the Internet virtues from a human, relational and ethic point of view, besides the growth and the forming of personality of children.

Which dangers in the contents of sites?

The second section is dedicated to an analysis of existing potential dangers as far as misleading contents and nasty encounters are concerned, which is the result of our both documentary and direct survey (with interviews to parents, teachers and children), that highlighted the perceived and mostly feared dangers. There will also be a psycho-sociological analysis and some advice on how dealing with the different problems.

Technology helps to “safe surfing”

The third section includes a view of the technical solutions as “mechanical” tools of defence. Filtering software (barriers for the access to awkward sites) and sure portals (in which the analysis and the classification of sites are made first by the authors, allowing the access only to the “sure” ones) are a valid help especially for the youngest whose limits must not be underestimated. Characteristics, positive and negative aspects, together with some advice on their use and for eventual personalization, are presented with the results of a comparative test we carried out on the most well known client-based products, that is, those filtering programs we can install at home, or on the PC at school (there are also filtering systems offered by the Internet Service Providers: the access to the Internet is regulated by filters working on the server).

To defend ourselves against an aggressive business

The fourth section deals with the e-business and its deceits, from the negative effects of misleading advertising to the risk of frauds, or that to be driven to gambling and betting. Possible remedies and right prevention measures are proposed case by case.

An important and demanding work

Finally, we will make some reflections on the importance of the role that parents, teachers and school social workers can play in guiding the youngest to a correct approach to the Internet, without useless alarmisms or unjust prohibitions, but with trust and awareness about the potentialities of growth and maturity that this technological mean offers.

Easy PC and Internet for the computer inexperts

In the appendix we are going to give a short presentation of an operative guide (a sort of ABC of the computer and of the Internet, for courageous inexperts), a glossary of technical terms and neologisms born with the Internet, a map of sites to illustrate didactic-educational resources and games, useful for a correct and profitable use of the Internet.

A starting point for a reflection

This guide does not pretend to be exhaustive, to remove every doubt or to solve every problem, but it intends just to suggest some reflections, to give a support to safety and to promote a trusting approach to the Internet.

CHAPTER ONE

The wonders of the Internet

To draw near the Internet to know it better

The “mysterious machine”: try to know it better with the help of our children

There are not many people having enough time to surf on the Internet everyday, to discover the variety of available resources, to try out new paths and load software, in short to enjoy all the vast, boundless whole of information and tools that are on the Internet. Sometimes the difficulty lies in the scarce technological knowledge and experience with the PC, or in a certain bent to surrender at the first difficulties...

You should be very motivated to persist in giving commands to a machine that does not want to obey, in trying to understand all those pages written in English and in fighting all the terrible viruses threatening our computers.

Well, we should have a good reason, not only because the PC is becoming a more and more useful resource to save time (it can spare us to go to the bank or to the post office, it allows us to book our holidays, to buy some tickets for the theatre, or even to receive our shopping directly at home if we do not feel like going out, to read the newspaper online and much more), but also because our child spend a lot of time on the Internet and we should try to know better this new friend of him... our best guide? But it's just him! Let him take us “for a walk in the cyberspace”, to show us all his discoveries: it will be an occasion to observe his behaviour and his reactions, but also a good way to introduce a chat on some burning questions that, otherwise, we should have brought up just like that, with the risk to be boring or busybody.

Unjust prohibitions are not of help, on the contrary

We must learn to live with the Internet

It would not be very useful, if not countproductive, to prevent the surfing on the Internet in order to keep children away from the Internet dangers and to avoid the contact with its worse contents. Actually, (perhaps unbeknown to us), there are many possible ways of access: at some friends' house,

at school, in the so-called Internet-café, in the amusement arcade... We must take this into consideration, trying to impose reasonable limitations and explaining the reasons. Parents who are total enemies of the technology, are very far from the everyday life of their sons, from their way of being, feeling, learning, interacting with the world and growing. The Internet is an indestructible reality, that continues to grow; a new parallel world we have to learn to live with (our children are already doing this and sometimes they are more informed about the risks and more prepared to face them than us). It is no use to deny this. Furthermore, prohibitions could be temptations themselves, with the result to arouse morbid curiosity just towards those contents we fear, and to cultivate a distorted and negative idea of the Internet, preventing a profitable and serene use.

Dialogue gives rise to trust and responsibility

A useful advice could be that of conceding to children, with gradualness and caution, this new “freedom”, without renouncing to a certain surveillance, but also without being obsessing, or excessively alarmists. The best way? To take any chance of staying with them during the virtual trip, surfing together (and, why not, chatting together with American, Australian, African friends...), teaching them to recognize dangers and deceits, but also giving them advice on how making amusing and effective a resource always to hand.

What's good on the Internet?

The Internet is continuously in evolution

It is hard to describe in a few lines the immensity of contents that are on the Internet. It is enough to think that every day thousands of new pages are published, new sites and functions are added, new portals are created to meet the need to organize and file all this information, making it more accessible.

A great resource to satisfy the need for information

The point is that on the Internet there is more of what we can read and know in our whole life and it is changing continuously. In case, the problem is how to get the information when we need it, to use the research engines and portals to find quickly what we are looking for. With regard to this, we must not forget the invaluable help that the thematic groups of discussion can offer us (a sort of very specialized “virtual salons” where the members of the group exchange information and advice: there you can find some real experts for the different subjects), created to share knowledge and experience, ills and remedies, ready to help anyone asking for it. Furthermore, sites hosting them, offer exhaustive pages of FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions).

In the appendix you will find a list of the useful sites and of the didactic resources for teachers and parents, of sites with games and education advice for kids and adolescents and of the protected portals dedicated to them and other.

A valid support for didactics and education

For the moment limit ourselves to consider the utility and fertility of the Internet for a school project (for example on an historical period, a literary author, a volcano...): images, news, interviews to scientists and famous men of culture, press releases, reports of conventions, pieces of texts, whole online encyclopedias, a world of available information, that we would never imagine to be able to offer to our children in only an afternoon dedicated to homeworks.

Then there are many sites offering lesson and courses (the so-called distance learning), at every level and for many subjects. Both students and teachers can make use of them (updating and widening to be

always informed). And if the language is sometimes an obstacle, this is an occasion to learn it, practically live...

The whole world on the screen of our PC

And what about museums offering a virtual visit on the Internet? The Louvre of Paris, to make just an example. Then the European institutions, the official sites of all governments and nations, the legislation and the daily newspapers and magazines (many of them were created just as online magazines).

And what about the books? What will happen to books if children get used to read only Web pages? First of all, on the Internet there are a lot of books and sites dedicated to literature are increasing, stimulating reading and quoting passages (with or without commentary), or even publishing online the whole text (ready to be loaded down and printed: have a good reading!). Secondly, statistics indicate that the children most affectionated to the Web, are also the ones who read more. Surprising and pleasant discovery!

To communicate and socialize on the Internet

In the Web you can find not only a great variety of information and contents, but also communication tools (think about the chats and e-mails, videoconferences, didactic sites with real online teachers etc.), very useful to cultivate sociability and fight shyness, solitude, inhibitions due to handicaps...

On the Internet children meet to share interests and passions (music, favourite comics, sport stars and heros, collecting etc.), to exchange objects, ideas and plans for life. To meet many new friends, helps in overcoming the often narrow social spaces (for ex. a little provincial town with a few young people) and opens the cultural and ethic prospects of the world.

Technology does not always bring alienation with it

It is not true that technology necessarily leads to solitude and alienation (a risk more connected to videogames and TV), or at least, it is not true anymore since the Internet has shown its "human" potential. To take part in a virtual community, helps to discover how can be pleasant the exchange and the dialogue with people belonging to different cultures, children of the same age of other countries or simply of other schools, encourages the initiative in the field of collective activities and discourage the passivity of the afternoons spent in front of the TV. The Eurispes report "The providers and minors' rights" has highlighted the fact that those kids and adolescents using more the PC and the Internet, are the ones spending less time watching TV. Furthermore TV is less stimulating and interactive, and it often shows to children dangerous and harmful contents not good for them.

Voluntary service and solidarity have found their place on the Web

For many associations (for environment protection, to support developing countries, against animal ill-treatment, for social work etc.), the Internet has become a meeting and recruitment point. Friendship and solidarity too have found a place on the Internet. An example? The project "Children in hospital" allowed hospitalized children to receive their education and to continue to grow up thanks to net of didactic exchange and meeting with students of many schools just through the Internet...Everybody knows that the most dogged solidarity competitions (to find a bone marrow donor, to comfort someone seriously ill, to raise funds), took place right on the Web, thus showing its human side and respecting the values of this virtual community.

We won't do without the Internet anymore

To know the PC and the Internet will be indispensable

It is necessary to remember that present and future generations in a few years won't be allowed to leave computer and Internet apart, in the work and in their private lives. So, to help children to become familiar with this mean, its conventions (the so-called Netiquette, a real etiquette for the Internet) and its obstacles, a difficult, but necessary task for teachers and parents not accustomed to technology.

A fundamental tool for work

Today most of companies publishes its job offers and collects curriculum vitae online, universities use the Web to spread news on didactic activities, to book the exams and to publish announcements of competition, institutions and public administrations offers services at distance and help citizens to deal with papers, many training institutes have put their courses on the Web (distant training is very useful to fill the lack of facilities in some areas and to lower the costs, making accessible to everybody what once was only for a few people).

The Internet has created new jobs

Finally, let's think about the fact that many of these new jobs are closely connected with the so-called ICT (Information and Communication Technology, that is all the informative and communication technology in its different forms): from the New Economy to the marketing, from advertising to technical services and company advice.

To deprive children of a basic knowledge in this very important sector of our society, can bar them from good job opportunities.

People feel like writing letters again

The "e-mail": the electronic letter

Let's think to the fact that the e-mail (the electronic post that magically deliver our letters in real time), has introduced again the writing within friendship: telephone had eliminated love letters (only to do an example), letters of comfort to far friends, or to ill relatives ...today we can recover this form of communication (e-mails are very informal), to enjoy again the search for the most suitable word to use, to read again and again and make the necessary corrections, to perfect the expression of our thought, to organize a reasoning, or an effective subject.

A new rich and stimulating way to communicate

In short, children that until now had not known the pleasure to write, have not the opportunity to communicate to a higher quality level: writing an e-mail you make the effort to amaze and to favourably impress the other, you make use of quotations, you add images and important links; it's a various and rich way to communicate that sweeps through the virtual world extending individual prospects of the experience on the Internet. In short, it helps to develop the dialectic and the critical thought, it stimulates relationships and amuses constructively.

A personal expressive space

To tell something about ourselves to the others with creativity

We should not ignore or underestimate the importance of an opportunity that only the Internet can offer to our children: that of publish their own works, to create a personal showcase, or their Home Page as an expressive space without any (school) restrictions. An important occasion to tell something about us and our interests, to create links to our favourite sites, to express opinions, thus thinking and becoming aware of our identity, stimulating our self-esteem with constructive results on our personality. Furthermore the Internet is a space where young artists and authors (art, literature, graphics, music and any other creative form), find the way to be known and appreciated, without investing big capitals. A very considerable encouragement.

To pay attention to children helping them to create their own Home Page

You support, not only “moral”, but also practical (to help children to create their own Home Page, facing with them the eventual technical difficulties and contributing with ideas, advice and suggestions), will show your attention and esteem. It will be also an occasion to critically evaluate together what is opportune to insert, urging for responsibility and common sense to avoid the circulation of illegal or harmful contents, but also discouraging those stereotyped, or not respectful of the multi-ethnic and multicultural spirit of the Internet.

The Internet and the new equality

The Internet is a tool of democracy and tolerance

It is beyond doubt that the Internet has the great merit to shorten the distances, to bridge the gap between the social classes, to put at everybody’s disposal information, knowledge, experience and services. On the Internet we are all the same, with the same rights and the same potentialities, we feel as being members of the same virtual community, citizens of the cyberspace: traditional way of being (those of real life), become less important. From the centre of a big metropolis in the North, or from a secluded village in the South, who gets connected is first of all someone keen on the Internet. It’s for this reason that the personal qualities to show to be highly appreciated on the Internet are skills, knowledge, personal passions and human gifts. Everything, except the social status. The designer clothes instead of a pair of jeans, cannot be seen through the modem and this is not important for the world of the Internet.

The Internet as a tool of sociability, democracy and tolerance

Racism, xenophobia, ethnocentrism: these unpleasant feelings and attitudes that make people feel different and better than others, are naturally discouraged by the intrinsic nature of the Internet, that is, of a social space existing out of the national and international borders, a world promoting mutual acquaintance and tolerance. In short a place where cultures and languages meet to appreciate each others. Always on condition that you avoid sites of groups like the Skin Heads...or at least to visit this kind of sites rarely to make some critics without need of any taboo or prohibition.

To conclude

The Web: a friend or an enemy? It depends on us

Considering its expressive, educative and training potentialities, the Internet should be more a friend than an enemy for children. Basically, it is simply a tool of what children can make a good, or a bad use, depending also, and above all, on the quality of the intervention and support given by parents and teachers.

A didactic tool welcomed by children

Ways of use are infinite, so various and versatile to potentially allow to all the children to find their own approach with this mean of communication. As didactic tool, like the PC, the Internet too has an undeniable usefulness, especially if we think how much it is popular and welcomed by young people. An interactive and coloured tool, a magic box that contains knowledge, games, almost all our potential friends of the world.

A support to overcome learning difficulties

A particular reflection has to be done on the help that the Internet could give to students having difficulties in learning and that are departing from culture and a correct education. This is particularly true for those having psychological or physical handicaps, other disorders or troubles. The attractive side of the Internet can be used to show to young people how knowledge can be stimulating and even amusing, how curiosity is positive and how the real world has passed to the Internet many of its best things.

USEFUL ADVICE

- If we do not know how to use the Internet, let our children show it to us. Thus doing, we will show our esteem for them and we will learn new things without bringing our role of guide into question.
- The Internet is potentially a huge cultural, informative, educative resource for our children. Let's encourage them to use it in the best way, thus creating a positive approach with this very important tool for their future.
- Unfortunately on the Internet there are also unpleasant and harmful contents. Anyway, please remember that the prohibition to surf the Internet cannot avoid effectively the contact with these contents that exist also on TV, magazines and other. It is better to impose (and explain) reasonable limitations and assist our children while surfing.
- Internet, e-mails or chats, can be a mean to meet other cultures and to learn from people a thousands kilometres away. Besides opening cultural prospects of children, they surely help to avoid the onset of racial prejudices.
- On the Internet you can find also solidarity: let's visit with the children sites of voluntary associations to participate together to the solidarity initiatives on the Web
- If our son changes his identity while chatting, we do not have to worry because it is not necessarily a negative thing. Nevertheless, if he is in the habit of doing like that, it would be better to understand the reason why he feels the need to become another person. Please consider also that the fact that to declare to be older than you really are, could lead to sexual avances by unaware adults.

- Let's encourage our children to put on the Internet their works, projects etc. Also creating their own Home Page to tell something about them: it could be an important experience. Furthermore, this will allow us to show them our esteem and appreciation and to deal with the problem of responsibility for the contents put on the Internet that will not have to be nor offensive, neither harmful for anybody.

CHAPTER 2

To know and to prevent risks deriving from the contents of sites

Pornography has conquered the Internet too

An intrusive presence in our society

In the last few decades our society, for many complicated reasons too complicated to explain here, has given rise to a huge increase in the production of pornographic material making it easily available to kids and adolescents. Telecasts and movies are full of sex scenes very close to pornography. Newsstands and video libraries are full of it, advertising, the new heroes and myths proposed to new generations are always winking to sex and it has also become the final point of reference of messages promoting goods and services that have nothing to do with it.

The effects these contents have on children

The effects this situation has on the psychological and sexual growth of our children and adolescents have been deeply studied by psychologists and sociologists: it doesn't seem they cause attitudes or behaviours leading to sexual violence (physical or moral); however they have consequences on how they consider the other sex. A well-known problem is that of the woman considered as a good or as an object, but generally speaking, it has been noticed that the most common effect is a stereotyped vision of the male and female roles. The fact that adolescents develop a sound and serene sexuality and become adults aware of all these problems, depends on a series of other fundamental factors, but anyway it is better to neutralize, as much as possible, the effects of pornography and of the scenes of sex.

To talk with serenity to generate awareness and critical sense

It is not easy to protect children and adolescents from this arrogant and intrusive cultural colonization. First of all it is not possible to avoid that they come into contact with it. A good strategy could be that of starting a correct sexual education with a sound, constant and constructive dialogue between children and adults (parents and teachers). The objective and critical point of view of an adult, helps young people to destroy the myths and to understand what is this all about: an enormous business exploiting people and their weakness, pushing them to buy and to consume.

Once adults have transmitted to children the necessary awareness (a sort of barrier against these forms of aggression to his fragile sensitiveness), the final result should be that of being calm and sure allowing them to surf the Internet, to go to the newsstand and to watch TV, having trust in their critical ability.

To watch kids with the help of special software

To control the behaviour and the eventual circulation of pornographic material, could be useful for the youngest, who represent the high-risk category also because they do not own yet the above mentioned awareness. There are special software programs which record in a very detailed way all the Internet paths followed by the kid, revealing how often and for how much time he has entered harmful sites. E-mails too, (a mean to exchange pictures, or “prohibited” links among adolescents), can be read unbeknown to them. Please remember that these means are ineffective if children have grown up, or are quite skilled in technology.

Do not scold and make children feel guilty. A chat would be better

There is no need to dramatize if we find out that our child has visited a porn site or has done some “virtual” sex on a chat. Sometimes it is not even the need to inform him about what we have found out: his natural curiosity and his sensitivity could be mortified and we could cause a damage worse than the one due to pornography, generating in him a sense of shame, or making him feeling guilty, or loosing his trust having secretly controlled him. It would be better to talk about the subject in general, trying to follow him more while surfing.

Pedophilia on the Internet: the invisible monsters

The danger families feel the most

Surveys have shown how the danger families feel the most is pedophilia: 75% of parents is worried about that.

Actually, the alarm towards this threat is higher than the real possibility, for a kid or an adolescent, to meet a pedophile or a criminal organization.

The fact is that the indignation and the horror caused by recent cases have deeply shaken public opinion, who has always felt protection and affection towards childhood. Mass media have played an important role in arousing this excessive alarmism, exploiting these facts with a sensationalist spirit.

This deviance, that someone defines as a real psychological disease to be cured, while others as a cruel crime to be punished, has been always a part of our society. Being closed within families, or by a few well hidden people, this problem was simply less visible.

The work done by the associations in defence of minors

The risk that the Internet could be a mean of propagation of pedophilia, it’s not to be disregarded. This is the reason why associations in defence of children have always been asking for a more strict and effective control by authorities. A recent act (July 2000), has added new articles to the penal code to punish the sexual exploitation of minors, included the pornography on the Internet too. Some Hackers (not always so bad as they seem), have attacked and darkened some pedophilic sites. There are also many proposals to spread viruses that destroy Web pages containing pedo-porno material. The problem is the possibility to act against sites and authors that are in foreign countries and whose legislation is less strict towards this kind of crimes.

Available measures

As far as the measures to take to avoid any kind of contact (Web, e-mail, or chat), of our children with these dangerous people, it is important to remember the effectiveness of the direct presence of an adult while surfing, instead of the prohibitions. To surf together is an occasion to learn to know, identify and deal with this unwanted presence, talking about it with serenity and frankness. Don’t get anxious and try to face the problem in a positive way offering solutions to avoid it and encouraging confidence

between son and parent/teacher. Without scaring, or generating an excessive alarmism, we should explain the reasons why these people try to get in touch with very young people and the dangerous purpose of their “friendly” approach. A necessary recommendation for our children is that of keeping always informed parents about situations causing some uneasiness or embarrassment (sexual comments or references for example), or about someone asking for personal information (for ex. Name, surname, address and telephone number), appointments or pictures.

It is important to make our children understand that not always the person being on the other side is really what he declares to be, for example another kid or adolescent: to give information about the physical aspect is not important in a relationship between persons of the same age; on the contrary it is very important for a pedophile attempting to start an approach (so, it always better not to give personal information).

Trust and confidence by children: a precious help

In this case too, as for pornography, it is extremely harmful to scold the adolescent, or to make him feel guilty for having trusted an apparently friendly stranger, reproaching him for not having been prudent enough, or for having taken the risk to receive some avances. The problem has to be faced with the help of a psychologist able to minimize the consequences of this bad meeting and to avoid an emotional shock.

The charge: a dutiful civil action

If we run into a suspect pedophile, we have to report immediately to the competent authority (Postal Police), giving every useful information for his identification. The same is valid for sites containing pedo-porno material, that should be also reported to the associations (like Telefono azzurro), taking care of the black lists of the sites to be eliminated.

There is no need to feel to much anxiety about the problem: a correct education and a constant surveillance of the children, would allow them to surf freely and enjoy the happiness that the online friendship (the real one) can give.

Violent contents and racism

Representation of violence is almost tolerated

After the endless polemics about the representation of violence on TV, at the cinema, in the comics and by all mass media in general (videogames included), a certain tolerance and also resignation, has started to prevail.

Since many years every child witnesses tenths of homicides per day, plays at killing the small enemies of his Game Boy, plays with more and more realistic weapons and cultivate the myth of the physical force and of violence, even if he is convinced that they are necessary to keep order and peace in the world.

The risk is to become indifferent

Psychologists say that the risks, rather than an increase in violent behaviours by young people, are linked to the development of a certain tolerance and as a consequence to the exposure of more and more violent contents. It is not to be ruled out the possibility that this “tolerance” towards violence could be also transferred to real life.

The problem of the representation of violence is general and has to be faced in a total way during children education. From this point of view, the Internet is not for sure the danger number one. How

could we think that violent contents won't have invaded the Internet, so largely dedicated to young people?

On the Internet groups supporting violence and racism have found their place too

The problem concerns specifically those sites encouraging violence, racism, xenophobia and sex discrimination. Many groups supporting ideologies inspired to intolerance and other brutalities, have found an ideal showcase and through the Web they spread “manifestos” exhorting to violent solutions that in extreme cases instigates to crimes. They are not very diffused and common, but they represent a real threat for a serene growth of children.

To surf together to talk and to educate

Once more the filtering software stops some contents (not all of them being a mechanical mean), but it does not guarantee a total security. A software able to keep the visited pages is an help to make up for the adult absence when the young internaut is surfing the Internet, revealing nasty encounters. The most effective thing to do is, as always, prevention and education: dialogue is a fundamental tool that should be added to some hours of joint surfing, spent to discover together the marvels of the Internet and, if necessary, to unmask and condemn the shameful things hidden in it. To surf together in a racist site, to talk about it, and then to visit a site dedicated to that people and their culture, the same the first described in a negative way, it's an occasion to show how that cultural and ethnic characteristics can have also a positive value. Within the classroom, the debates suggested by these themes can be completed by observations and reflections on the specific problem of the spreading out on the Internet with suggestions to avoid these nasty sites.

Exhortation to the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco

The worst enemy is the bad example

Bad examples of the real world are already enough: parents always smoking, elder brothers praising soft drugs, TV heroes drinking alcohol and discotheque which is potentially one of the most misleading places.

In everyday life children and adolescents are constantly exposed to solicitations that we often disregard: advertising, TV, cinema, magazines and playmates. Unfortunately in our society the consumption of these products has always been associated to a certain mythology of personality, to an idea of maturity, of freedom, of being nonconformist. Of course this representation meets the many controversial needs for an identity typical of the adolescence.

The need to be desirable for the society increases the need for identification

This dangerous ideal association makes them attractive, not much for the intrinsic pleasure they promise, but for the guarantee of becoming socially desirable thanks to them. This is a difficult matter to deal with, but a strict good example within the family together with an “enlightened” education, not asking only for obedience to prohibitions, but also teaching awareness and self-responsibility, may be able to contrast such an external bombardment.

The problem is not only that of limiting the contact with nasty contents, but it consists also in limiting the harmful effects of an inevitable exposure.

The Internet is just another occasion

Once more the Internet is just another occasion, nothing more, to get in touch with people and ideologies that choose drugs, alcohol and tobacco as symbols and means of communication for themselves and the group identity. The identification with these representations can be introduced, or simply suggested in an implicit way through the exciting description of them. Anyway, from this psychological pressure, to an actual choice of the consumer, there is a great difference, like a direct and personal contact with consumers in person.

Talking helps to destroy myths

In this case too, the advice is that of controlling children while surfing with an extreme discretion and caution, without upsetting their relationships and friendships, but being present physically and morally. To talk and to surf together (in the classroom too), maybe to run into some “indicted” sites, it is a good occasion to show them the limits and the real purposes of those representations, to discuss about the damages caused by smoke and hallucinogens, to tell them in a constructive way, our personal experience. And, why not, explaining them the reasons why we smoke and the reasons why we would like them not to do it...

Betting and gambling on the Internet

A real danger for young people

If it is true that the betting fever is a spreading epidemic, above all among adults, it is important to consider the risk that children, while surfing the Internet, could run into sites exhorting and even proposing it.

Not to mention the gambling, a dangerous activity that tends to turn into a devastating vice (it is about a real psychological disease), and to drag the imprudent player towards a path without return and the economic ruin.

When gambling becomes a disease, consequences are heavy

The heavy consequences that an initial, simple attraction for gambling turned into an endless vicious circle can have, concern above all the psychological and social sphere of the person: depression, isolation from beloved friends and relatives, anxiety, alcoholism etc., not to mention the loss of interest for normal activities like study and work. All these symptoms are to be taken into the maximum consideration, never underestimated, but on the contrary, trying to identify possible causes, maybe with the help of a psychologist.

On the Internet it's easier to run into such things

Every parent feels the need to totally prevent this kind of risk. On the one hand, this eventuality takes place very rarely in real life, thanks to the fact that in Italy gambling and not authorized betting are against law. This does not mean they have disappeared, but only that they are managed in a clandestine way by the organized crime and so they are quite distant from children who do not keep bad companies. On the other hand, they (gambling and betting) are fairly accessible on the Internet (banners, virtual casinos), but it is necessary to have a credit card. So, be careful in managing it.

Prevention and information

In any case, attentive parents and scrupulous teachers will find the right occasion to talk about this with children, explaining them that the world of betting survives only thanks to the naivety of the weakest: a

big cheat, managed by criminals and people without scruples, maybe on the other part of the world. Please remember also that it's against law, with an important consequence: to bet you pay immediately, while not paid wins, are not recovered because gambling credits are not payable on demand. It would be a real mockery...

Be careful of videogames too

These arguments should produce their effects towards videogames and videopoker too, that are more and more looking like real machines for gambling, avoiding limits imposed by the law and that children have more handy than the gambling on the Internet. Furthermore they accept cash.

USEFUL ADVICES

- It is very important to have a good dialogue with our children. Spending time with them and surfing together, we can see how they react when running into misguiding or dangerous contents and understand if they use the Internet in a responsible way.
- To discuss with children about the reliability of the information found on the Internet and to teach them not to found their opinion on partial or preconceived information. Let them get used to critically value the reliability of information they find on the Internet. The critical sense is the base for a good self-management.
- If we have doubts on how to face these problems, or if we need advice, or explanations, we can address to experts of the family clinics, to our doctor, to teachers, to other parents.
- Trying to talk with our children about the “burning” questions too: thus doing we will show within the family, or the class, we can deal with every argument without prohibitions or taboos. It would be better to exploit the occasions that spontaneously occur at home or at school.
- If our son would like to meet his friend of the chat and we fear he could meet a dangerous person, try to avoid any categorical prohibitions: we can rather go with him
- If we find out that our son has visited porno or gambling sites, try not to scold, or making him feel guilty. He would shut in him self. Explain to him our worries and make him understand that a mature and responsible child sees those things exactly as they are: a few valuable business.

CHAPTER 3

When the online business represents a danger

Misleading advertising: old systems, new means

It is easy to get trust and attention from children

It is well-known the vulnerability of the very young people to winning advertising, to the supposed big occasions and to every kind of commercial trick, because of their natural naivety and inexperience, further to the lack of information on products' quality, on legislation etc. Then, if in the commercials they find some references to their favourites (singers, actors, athletes), or beloved groups, such as their favourite football team, every form of defence disappears and their trust is captured thanks to the automatic association of the personality with the product. All this, makes them to become victims of

traders without scruples and of an aggressive marketing that does not hesitate to use every element able to catch their attention and preference, often almost illegally.

Advertising is addressing more and more to young people

The young are more and more the ideal target for aimed and incessant advertising campaigns, both for their availability of money and for their bent to be influenced. Misleading advertising on the Internet is very common and diffused, also because of the intrinsic characteristics of this mean of communication: people are in a hurry, conditioned by time and costs of the connection; so, sometimes they examine the offer in a perfunctory way ignoring its integral conditions, or poor-quality images illustrating the product do not allow to examine important details. The supposed qualities, often miraculous, of the offered goods, are difficult to be checked online. So, to the scarce attention paid to the commercial, it should be added the difficulty to check the quality of the goods.

It is often difficult to punish online advertising

Another negative aspect to consider is the difficulty in prosecuting unfair traders having their registered offices out of the European Community, where, on the contrary, the legislation is clear and precise, as far as misleading advertising is concerned. Unfortunately, in other countries it is not like that and this subject has not even any kind of regulation.

Let's learn to act firmly against it

How to protect the vulnerability of our children from the misleading advertising on the Internet? First of all explaining them what is all about, the eventual tricks it hides, the exploitation of personal tastes, value and myths. Secondly, resisting firmly to continuous requests of buying products whose advertising is obviously misleading. Finally, avoiding that, on the spur of the moment, our children buy products online (maybe using your credit card, or his personal pre-paid one).

To report is a duty and it does not cost anything

Not to be left apart, is a charge to the Guarantee Authority for the Misleading Advertising, that is able to stop those misleading commercials. In fact, It is not enough to prevent our children from buying, or to write an indignant letter to the seller: the charge is a civil action, a support for all young consumers that were not so lucky to have an attentive parent by their side. The committal proceedings of the Authority, goes on autonomously and it does not have any cost or potential consequences for the accusator, even if it is not accepted. So, it very different from a charge presented to the Court, that can be done all the same to get a compensation for damages caused by the misleading advertising. Anyway, it is always worth doing it.

The traps of the online buying

The Internet is a huge virtual shop window

Today it is possible to buy online books, records, clothes and accessories, software and hardware, travels and every kind of service, in short, everything you can buy with the traditional commercial system.

Buying online is attractive because of the novelty of the mean, and because of the price that is often cheaper than the one of conventional sellers. Furthermore it makes available products coming from all parts of the world, at very lower costs than the ones deriving from importation. Furthermore delivery is directly at home.

You can buy also on favourites' sites and not only on the real shops on line

Furthermore the online buy is often proposed together with the activities of musical bands and other stars, sports clubs and fans, characters of cartoons and other favourites, taking place on the Internet sites. So, the buy of gadgets comes together with the free supplying of services such as: newsletters, SMS, chat, loading of songs etc. Then there are many griffes, among the ones children prefer the most, that decided, on the contrary, to put near their online commercial activity, some free games. These are clear attempts to get the fidelity of the public.

Suggestion has remarkable effects on the buy

With regard to the online buying, a first consideration to do is that the most hidden risk, that is the most dangerous one, lies in the solicitation to carry out some buys following an influence instead of a real need. The virtual world is attractive and coloured, it offers easy and reassuring occasions to cultivate the need for identification adolescents feel very much, it inhibits the critical sense and the natural wariness that conditions a traditional buy.

To teach to be cautious, but also to assist

So, it will be opportune to teach to children to be cautious and to stimulate their critical sense. Secondly, to assist them in every online buy, to prevent any possible mistake caused by inexperience, naivety, or poor knowledge of legislation.

What's the risk?

Among the most common problems linked to the so-called e-commerce there are:

- The already mentioned case, that is when the goods and services are proposed through misleading advertising
- When there is a demand for personal data without specifying what they are for
- When the payment with credit card is not safe and its data are intercepted to carry out frauds.
- When the seller accepts currencies different from the our own imposing an extremely unfavourable change, or if the bank carrying out the transaction charges heavy commissions. Today this problem is solved for the countries using the Euro.
- When the e-commerce site is not updated and presents obsolete products, offers and prices. The risk is to buy products the seller hasn't got anymore, or that today have a different price.
- When the product is not available in the model, type, or colour, you have chosen, it often happens that the seller replace it on his own initiative with another one "substantially equivalent".

Be careful of the "pyramidal" marketing systems

Please be extremely careful when receiving offers to enter the so-called "pyramidal" marketing systems because they do not offer suitable guarantees to consumers and are represented by remote sellers subject to the legislation of other countries.

Our personal data going around the world: privacy safeguarding on the Internet

Our personal data have always been wanted

It is quite normal that the Internet has enlarged such a hoary problem: the persistent and bad habit, that a certain kind of aggressive marketing has started, to collect, organize and use our personal data for promotional purposes.

Collected and sent through any kind of mean

Since a quite long time we have noticed an increase in companies specialized in the creation of lists of consumers, which are divided, classified and filed according to their tastes and preferences, buying habits, professional activities, hobbies, typology of family, residence...We could go on endlessly listing all the information we give without thinking about it, when interviewed, or while filling in an innocuous questionnaire to win a prize. All these data are used to identify a specific target which will receive advertising programs consisting in telephone calls, letters, visits at home and also...e-mails.

With the Internet is easier to bombard us with advertising

Since the moment advertising has invaded the Internet, someone thought about the e-mails as the ideal vehicle of spreading. So, today, further to the many advertising e-mails diffused through the spamming, our mailbox is blocked by messages addressed rightly to us, personally to us. This happens because, sometimes in the past, we gave our e-mail address (maybe to receive some newsletters, or services) and that company gave it to others, or to another marketing company: and that's it, our personal data going all around the world. With regard to this, it is useful to know that personal data have a remarkable economic value and so they are sold to outside parties every time it is possible. Their value is due to the saving of energies and researches for advertising campaigns, helping companies to reach only potential customers and not the public in general. The success of many companies of the New Economy is due exactly to this: offering attractive free services they were able to collect huge quantities of data containing every sort of information about their public. As far as the stock exchange quotations are concerned, these database were very important during the evaluation phase, a real fortune.

In Europe the law protect us, but the Internet is worldwide

All over Europe the protection of personal data is assured by a quite right legislation: Italian Act (L.675/96) has established a Guarantee Authority whose task is to watch over the correct enforcement of the established provisions, has decided the need for an authorization to the data collection, diffusion and use by the involved person, has fixed a list of rights and obliging those who own personal data to inform the Guarantee. So, each of us has the right to get (free of charge) information on who owns and use his personal data and can object.

The problem is when these data have been given to an extra-European company, subject only to the legislation of its own country and difficult to prosecute.

It is necessary to always remember that it is better no to give our personal data in order to prevent that they are used in an unfair way. This rule is valid both in an hotel of the Caraibi and on an Internet site. A specific risk of the Internet consists in the not guaranteed security of their transmission, or of their permanency on the database of the servers, that somehow can be violated.

It is useful to explain to children that prudence is necessary

It is useful to recommend to our children to be extremely cautious. Actually they are particularly exposed to this kind of risk because of their naivety and inexperience. We have to explain them that personal data diffused imprudently could be the cause of an advertising bombardment, but also of being traced by ill-intentioned persons.

USEFUL ADVICES

- Explain to children what is misleading advertising and how they can identify it. Exhort them to use critical sense and wariness.
- Always reporting an advertising looking like a misleading one. It does not cost anything and there aren't any kind of consequences for us.
- It is better to choose sellers of the European area, better if they have a legal representative in Italy: in case of controversy it will be easier to have recourse to legal proceedings. For all that, we do not want to underestimate the guarantees offered by traders and legislations of extra-community countries, but it is useful to remember that legal problems with those countries are difficult to be solved.
- Print all the pages of the site we are buying from, in particular those illustrating or describing the product/service offered, the price and other expenses. This will serve to demonstrate what we intended to buy, in case what we receive, or the amount should not correspond.
- Opt for e-commerce sites using safe payment systems, or better if entrusting the transaction to the server of a bank: the transaction carried out by a third person, guarantees the correctness of the debit and the secrecy of the credit card data (not communicated to the seller)
- If there is a written confirmation of the order via e-mail, it is better to specify, in the space dedicated to the notes of our order, that we do not want our credit card data to be written
- Use the maximum of caution and carry out strictly the so-called "principle of precaution", if all the conditions of the buy are not clear (for example if the site is in a language different from the Italian).
- Be careful of the so-called "virtual supermarkets": sometimes the order and the credit card data are carried out in the correct way and on a safe server, but then the order is transmitted to the concerned seller with the risk that they are intercepted
- Never let children free to buy online with our credit card, but we have to assist them and check personally every detail of the sale contract
- If we have some doubts as far as the result of the transaction is concerned, do not try again immediately, but ask for a confirmation to the seller and to the eventual bank managing payments
- Do not give our personal data if it is not really necessary to get a product or a service
- If they ask us our authorization to the use of our personal data outside the demanded service, do not give it. Our data would go around the world from a company to another.
- We have the right to ask for the elimination of our data and obtain the authorization for their us. To do this, it is necessary to address to the guarantee Authority.

CHAPTER 4

The risks connected to the use of the Internet in general

Viruses

Viruses existed already; but with the Internet they are more contagious

The problem of viruses bothers PC users even before the Internet became such a wide and used network. What happened with its coming is that now it's very much easier to transmit them and there are some new ones specially created to afflict the virtual community obliging it to surf in less safe waters.

Viruses cause heavy damages and errors

It is not useless to remember the destroying potential of some viruses: in fact, they can not only cause the malfunctioning of some programs and the loss of data, but they can also damage the PC making it unusable, to transmit to thousands of users our confidential documents without we realize it and finally to use our telephone line to let surfing, at our expenses, very far users, debiting on our telephone bill their visits to porno sites...

Prevention helps, but there are also some remedies

Possible remedies to this disaster of the cyberspace are well known: antivirus software are produced by many specialized companies and distributed via Internet too. The Web sites of these companies offer news, software updating (free of charge for at least one year) and often the last remedies for brand new viruses. Then the Internet community has developed its solidarity in this sector too: there are many sites where experts and persons fond of the Internet publish alarms, suggestions, “manual” remedies to destroy one particular virus, or to repair damages, lists of FAQ and much more. It is often possible to ask questions to the authors of these sites, or insert them within a Forum obtaining answers by the most experts among the participants.

The golden rules to avoid the contagion

Anyway there is a series of adjustments to always adopt as a good prevention rule that have to be carefully taught especially to children. The following technical chart gives a detailed illustration of problems and precautions. To conclude, it has to be said that, as for cold, it does not exist a method to be sure not to take viruses; if someone guarantees you that with his method any kind of risk is eliminated, please distrust him.

When surfing is not free of charge

Payment consultation sometimes passes unobserved

It can happen to find Web pages asking for a payment to be visited. They could contain data, or confidential information that the author intends to make available under payment, but more often it is about pages for “adults” only that after a free preview, promise an amazing continuation for the ones who give the credit card data. Unfortunately, it sometimes happen that the payment takes place through a debit on the telephone bill: in this case a kid (or a inattentive adult) could not realize the economic loss that that particular surfing is causing.

It is a good thing to jealously keep the credit card

The advice is that of attentively keeping the credit card (to prevent a naive and harmful use by children and adolescents), and to teach to young surfers to be attentive.

The problem of responsibility for what is put on the Internet

We are responsible for all that we exchange via e-mail or we publish on the Web

It is a problem generally ignored by most of the Internet users. And yet, all subscriptions to the Internet Service Providers are very clear about this subject: the responsibility for contents put on the Internet and exchanged via e-mail is of the user. Of course, there is the immediate revocation of the service,

more than the compensation for damage caused to the operator. This concerns the introduction and the exchange on the Internet of any illegal material (slandorous, violation of the secrecy of committal proceedings, violation of acts on the copyright, not authorized betting, etc.).

Let's watch the lawfulness of the use children make of the Internet

The anonymity on the Internet is very more difficult to obtain than people think (unless you are expert Hackers), so impunity is almost a mirage...

So, be careful of the exchange of songs, software, but above of all contents of eventual Web pages published by children: to use the Internet for jokes or little "revenges", publishing images and texts referred to real persons, can cost more than you think. Finally, it is good thing to do to get carefully informed on the lawfulness of every initiative of exchange and trading on the Internet.

Lost in the cyberspace: limits of a reasonable dedication to the Internet

Sometimes you go very far

As everybody knows, the Internet, thanks to its richness and variety, excercises a remarkable attraction on adults and children. Surfing from one link to another you can go very far. The result? You may loose the knowledge of passing time. So we can spend some hours on the Internet without realizing. This is a more serious problem when it is about children.

Do not waste time and teach to be responsible

Apart from the loss of precious time, taking it away from other more useful activities like to meet friends, to study, to play sports, we have to remember that surfing involves an economic cost that in most cases depends on the length of the connection. In this sense it is better to teach the very young to become responsible.

To prevent the effect isolation and alienation

As we consider a good thing to limit the time spent to watch TV, it is good to fix too the limits of a reasonable dedication to the Internet. If it is true that the time spent by children with video games and with the PC is time stolen to TV and not to other activities, nevertheless it is right to make some considerations . In both cases it is about a form of a mainly "solitary" escape, whose excessive aspects should be discouraged in order to prevent the alienating effect and the risk of isolation. If anything, it has to be encouraged the search for "group" occasions for a more stimulating, amusing and useful surfing.

USEFUL ADVICES

- The destroying potential of some viruses can cause the malfunctioning of some programs and a loss of data and damages to the PC making it unusable. And also the spreading of confidential documents, the stopping up of the e-mail system, the appearance on the PC display of some strange and irritating objects, the exploitation of an infected PC to damage other users.
- Be careful when loading files from the Internet to our PC and to the exchange of floppy disks and e-mails. Through these systems it is possible to transmit computer viruses.

- When you receive an e-mail check, before opening it, if there are the sender and a known object. Otherwise it is better to cancel the message. If you know the sender, but not the object, it is better to contact the sender to have some explanations.
- When you carry out a download procedure, it is always advisable to check the site we are loading from. Actually, there some sites more risky than others.
- If you think that the Internet is a source of alienation and isolation for your children, or the cause for a scarce interaction with children of the same age, let's talk about it and about your fears. An organization of their time can be "negotiated".
- Please never forget that the Internet too is subject to the control of authorities (Postal Police): anonymity does not exist, and we are responsible for all the illegal and slanderous contents, for every violation of the copyright, for not authorized commercial initiatives, etc. It will be better to explain this to our children.
- Let's teach to our children to be responsible as far as the cost of the Internet is concerned, for example calculating with them how much costs one hour surfing and agreeing with them the hours they can get connected.

Comparative test on filtering software

“The content filtering: results of the comparative test on filtering software”

Analysis of Content Filtering products for the Friendly Internet Project (summary file card)

Issued and filed by : Security and judicial Authority Relationships

<i>SOFTWARE</i>	<i>Norton Internet Security</i>	<i>Cyber Patrol</i>	<i>BajEje</i>	<i>Cyber Sitter</i>	<i>N2H2</i>	<i>X-stop</i>	<i>We-blocker</i>	<i>Activator Desk</i>	<i>Net Nanny</i>	<i>Pure Sight</i>
<i>EVALUATION STANDARDS</i>										
Technical Quality	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	/	/	5
<i>Communicative Quality</i>	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	/	/	4
<i>Structural Quality</i>	5	5	3	4	5	2	4	/	/	2
<i>Documentation Quality</i>	5	3	3	3	5	4	2	/	/	4
<i>Use</i>	3	2	2	4	5	2	5	1	/	3

Sometimes the presence of parents is not possible, sometimes you want to leave the children free to use the internet, to play with it by themselves, but with the right limitations.

In this case, technology can help adults offering a wide range of technical solutions having all the same limit: that of being mechanical means without good filtering, critical ability and discernment. So it happens that a mechanical filter stops absolutely innocuous contents and vice versa does not stop totally harmful contents. Filtering effectiveness, concerning at least the most common unwanted contents like pornography, vulgarity, violence, depends on functioning mechanisms and principles, on the possibility to personalize and other characteristics we will examine later on.

The analysis of security technologies for content filtering, included in the Friendly Internet Project, was carried out with the aim to give useful indications on the specific qualities of principal protection systems now existing onto the market.

In particular, the security technologies we took into consideration are those “client based”, that is those software programs that, once installed on your computer, make a filtering of unwanted and harmful contents existing on the web. So they prevent the opening of web pages, or parts of them (for example the images), that the set filtering parameters classify as unacceptable.

Some of the examined programs ask for a payment, while others are free. The level of technical functionality, facility of use and the completeness of filtering actions, are very different if we consider the sample of examined products, even including their cost.

It is obvious to have some perplexities on the real guarantee these means offer, above all because for some software it is easy to avoid the installation protection, that is a child quite good at computer, could easily put it out of use.

Now we are going to examine a brief review of the filtering products we took in exam: we remember you that the whole report on the comparative test (more detailed and technical), is published on Webscuola.it.

First of all we must say that all the examined software are able to stop a list of “unbecoming” sites, that can be updated through the internet and sometimes also personalized by the user (parents can decide to include a site visited by their son that they do not consider right or other sites not included in the list and are not stopped by the other filtering mechanisms of the program). Apart from this basic function common to all these filtering systems, the functioning mechanisms are quite different. Some of these programs stop the access to sites whose content includes “suspicious” words or images, making a preventive exam of the requested pages; others only stop the sites whose URL address (that is the suffix following the www.), includes “suspicious” words. It is clear that the protection level is not the same. Let’s see a more detailed description of the characteristics.

One of the more complete is the N2H2 program for Home, able to prevent the display of single images associated to a forbidden content inside a web page, without influencing the quality of other images existing in the page. It can stop the chats using the browser, it offers a very good protection of the installation (that is very difficult to avoid) and is simple to set. The communicative quality guarantees a simple access to the menus and a good comprehension of the general working.

The Norton Internet Security software presents a good filtering capacity. It allows to enable and to disconnect the access to the Internet for every single application (that is software program), thus preventing the use of chats or messaging programs. Furthermore it also makes it difficult to send private contents such as personal data, credit card number etc... The security of installation guarantees a good level of protection, in spite of some difficulties in its configuration. The updating of sites to censor can be set automatically and with a daily deadline, but it does not include many sites. Considering the extent of the Internet and its rapidity of expansion, it is not possible for these lists to be exhaustive. It is also indispensable to carry out an effective check on the contents of sites taken into consideration.

On the contrary the Cyber Patron program carries out only the filtering of words included in the URL (the addresses of internet sites), or typed in the newsgroups and in the chats, but it does not make the filtering of contents of the pages. This is not a very effective filtering, because many sites can be reached through not suspected URLs, or simply recalling an IP address (numerical). Even if the disconnection from the menu Programs is protected by a password, the program can be easily deactivated by a quite good user by erasing an opportune key. For this reason it is better to use protection measures for the installations, such as for example specific software which block the computer configuration, thus preventing installations or deactivations of programs, changing in the configuration, etc... An alternative solution could be the using of multi-users operative systems (which allow a differentiated access to many users, for example parents and sons), like WinNt and W2000. In this case it is the system itself to be configured in the way that a user cannot install or deactivate programs, modify the content of the files used by the program and the browser.

The software Cyber Sitter has proved itself to be very effective in stopping the newsgroups and the file transferring. It allows the filtering on e-mail messages with the possibility to check and eventually eliminate part of the e-mail content, like specific image format (GIF and JPG) and Web pages. In some operative systems it allows the block of the access to the register and to the browser configuration. It is less effective in the filtering of sites in non-latin languages and alphabets (for ex. Japanese, Cyrillic, etc...).

On the contrary the software Bajeye Filter Console, shows a poor own functionality in filtering the contents and it made some mistakes during the tests. The updating functionality of the lists and sites to be blocked, described by the supplier as daily and automatic, is available only for the registered (paying) users.

Other examined programs, such as X Stop, Pure Sight, or We Blocker, carry out the filtering only for sites with a pornographic content. They are very simple to install and to set.

It is worth noticing that We Blocker does not carry out any filtering on chats and on the sending of data. Anyway it allows the daily updating of the lists of sites to be blocked automatically, or by inserting the URL to be blocked, or to be authorized. The protection of installation, for these three programs, can be easily avoided by an user with a quite good technical knowledge.

Partner countries and participating organizations:

- **Italy:** ADICONSUM (Italian Association for Consumer protection), TIN.IT (ISP owning Webscuola virtual community for Italian schools), UCIIM (Italian Union of Secondary Teachers), AGE (Italian Parents Association), CAETANI Institute (secondary School)
- **Sweden:** SCC (Swedish Consumer Coalition)
- **Austria:** VKI (Consumer Association)

Both in Austria and Sweden the project was carried out in co-operation with ISPs, parents and teachers associations, content providers from the educational field (see the full activity reports of VKI and SCC)