

## Education

### EU Project klicksafe.de: "We're Strengthening Media Competence."



Sex, violence, rip-offs: banned and indecent content on the Internet is often only a few clicks away. Whoever is aware of this can protect himself. The European project klicksafe.de wants to promote the required media competence – especially for children and young people.

At the Bonk family's front door, the bell rings. Outside stand young men with shaved heads, combat boots and bomber jackets. "Is your son there?" asks one of them. The clueless-seeming mother replies amiably: "Yes, he's upstairs in his room. Why don't you come in!" The bell rings again and she happily also sends the next group of visitors upstairs: a film crew with a porn actress who would "like to try out a few new positions with Klaus".

So begins a provocative video clip that can be seen frequently in the movies, on television and on Web pages. It is part of the public awareness campaign klicksafe.de. On behalf of the EU Commission, the initiative has been teaching Internet users in Germany since 2004 a critical approach to new media. "The Internet is a great thing", says Peter Widlok, spokesman for the Media Authority of North Rhine-Westphalia which, together with the Media Authority of Rhineland-Palatinate, is in charge of klicksafe.de. "But the Net not only offers new forms of communication; it also involves risks and dangers." Klicksafe.de wants to sensitize users to this: "Our initiative is committed to more safety on the Net by strengthening media competence". The emphasis thereby lies on encouragement, says Widlok, not on exhortation. "Only those who deal with the Net with awareness and responsibility can protect themselves and others."



#### Teacher's guide and Russian flyer



The target group of klicksafe.de is ultimately every Internet user. But first and foremost it is children and young people because they are particularly vulnerable to problematic content and fraudulent offers. The way to do this is primarily through parents and teachers who can act as mediators in their daily work and

closeness to children and young people. At klicksafe.de, adults will find information on topics such as chatting, social networking, computer games and copyright on the Internet. "For example", says Widlok, "last year teachers put together a guide on cyber-bullying that provides concrete assistance and materials for classroom use".

Since about twenty percent of the German population has an immigrant background, klicksafe.de has developed foreign-language content designed to strengthen media competence. "The German-language offerings didn't reach all parts of the population", explains Widlok. Beginning in autumn 2008, the portal therefore added a Turkish-speaking area, and at the end of 2009 information in Russian. It also printed flyers in the respective languages. "Publications in foreign languages", says Widlok, "offer special assistance in competent handling of the Net for the parents' generation".



#### Hub of diverse engagements



Klicksafe.de implements its projects together with diverse partners such as Microsoft, T-Online, RTL, ProSieben and ScülerVZ, the Protestant church, the German Child Protection Association and the Consumer Advice Center of North Rhine-Westphalia. "In the spirit of the EU commission, we see ourselves as

a hub that bundles together the activities of various actors", explains Widlok. The partners bring their experience and resources. For the spot *Where's Klaus?*, for example, the Frankfurt advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather donated their services for free. "Such engagement is always good for the company's own image", says Widlok.

Klicksafe.de in turn uses its contacts with its two sponsoring organizations: "The Media Authorities of North Rhine-Westphalia and Rhineland-Palatinate", explains Widlok, "are in charge of supervising the private media and thus have a direct line to broadcasters such as RTL and SAT1, which broadcast our spots". Klicksafe.de has no collaboration, however, with ARD and ZDF, apparently for reasons of competition: "The public broadcasters, unfortunately, have been reserved about cooperating with us".

#### Non-commercial and state independent

From klicksafe.de's point of view, however, such a structured network need not create dependency: "We aren't subject to the commercial interests of our partners", say Widlok. Klicksafe.de has an annual budget of one million euros. One half is paid by the EU; the other half is contributed by the Media Authorities of North Rhine-Westphalia and Rhineland-Palatinate, which in turn are funded by license fees. The project is therefore not dependent on government agencies or tax revenues. Thus Klicksafe.de, according to Widlok, can concentrate on content. "We must give an account of our work only to the EU."



And so far successfully: since 2004, the project has been continually extended. "We have competed successfully for the commission at each tender", says Widlok. The achieved growth of media competence in Germany, however, cannot be measured exactly in percentages. "But in 2009 we were invited in North Rhine-Westphalia alone to 850 parent-teacher evenings at schools, which is a clear sign." The many awards won by the spot *Where's Klaus*, which can now be seen throughout Europe, also testify to a broad response. Whether in Icelandic, Slovenian or Greek, all versions conclude with the request: "You would protect your children in real life – then do so too on the Internet".

In 1999, the European Union launched an action plan to combat illegal, undesirable and harmful content on the Internet. This included educating the population and fostering the cooperation of various social groups. With passage at the end of 2008 of the "Safer Internet Program 2009 – 2013 Act" by the European Parliament and Council, the program went into its third round and was extended for another four years.

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- ▶ [klicksafe.de. Initiative for more safety on the Net](#) 
- ▶ [Media competence – information from the Media Authority of North Rhine-Westphalia](#) 
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