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**THE CHILD AND THE INTERNET: SAFE LIVING TECHNOLOGIES**

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**Abstract**

The authors have conducted a study of the main factors that ensure the information security of minors on the Internet, as well as have offered the classification of today's threats to information security, and measures aimed at ensuring the information security of minors. The conducted analysis has allowed identifying measures of an organizational, legal, and technical nature, as well as considering the dissemination of best social practices. Considered threats concern the information content, discommunications, consumer, and electronic risks. A comparative analysis of foreign legislation has allowed providing a typology of countries based on the principle of differences in value indicators, and concluding that it is necessary to take into account national peculiarities in terms of two aspects: forming a national system of information security for minors and determining the category of information, dangerous for a child.

**Keywords**

Information security – Communication risk – Electronic risk – Content risk – Secure content

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## Introduction

The life of a contemporary child both in Russia and in other countries is unthinkable without using Internet resources. Thus, according to the Federal State Statistics Service, in Russia in 2016, 94% of children aged 15 to 18 years constantly (more than once a week) went on the Internet. At that, the structure of search queries was as follows: communication in social networks to maintain personal contacts and exchange information, correspondence with family and friends (90.2%); spending time downloading movies, music, and games, playing online games, etc. (73.1%); and distance learning according to the mandatory or additional program, use of electronic libraries, encyclopedias, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, more recent official statistics are unavailable, but unofficial sources give more frightening figures. Thus, according to K. Ignatiev, Head of Content Analysis Research – Kaspersky Lab<sup>2</sup>, while considering children in general, the main functions of the Internet and gadgets used were games (74%), communication (73%), and receiving entertainment content, namely, videos (69%) and listening to music (55%), as well as learning (45%), and searching for information about something (40%). Special attention should be paid to the analysis of the popularity of search queries revealed in the same study. Thus, YouTube and the VKontakte social networks are ranked second and third, respectively, while searches containing the words "porn" and "sex" are ranged fourth and sixth, respectively. The search for the CHW site, containing completed homework in different school subjects is only in the eighth place.

The organizational and legal measures taken by the state in recent years in the field of information security in general, and information security of minors, in particular, have allowed ensuring fairly complete control over the activities of minors when using fixed access points to network resources both in public space (schools, computer clubs, libraries, etc.) and at home in the family. However, the widespread use of mobile gadgets significantly complicates the control of individuals, responsible for ensuring safe behavior for minors in the virtual space.

All this makes it necessary to constantly monitor the effectiveness of measures taken to ensure the information security of minors, including monitoring positive practices for preventing violations of the rights of minors on the information and telecommunications network.

## Methods

The synthesis method was used to identify positive practices for preventing violations of children's rights when using Internet resources. Based on the results of the study, the authors proposed to optimize the structure of controlling bodies, namely, assigning authority for information security of minors to a single body – Government Commission on Minors' Affairs and Protection of Their Rights.

Special attention is paid to the study of scientific works of recent years conducted in the field of information security of minors. Based on the method of analysis of current

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<sup>1</sup> Federal State Statistic Service. Retrieved from: <https://www.gks.ru/search?q=2016>

<sup>2</sup> K. Ignatiev, Uchitelya, roditeli i deti v zifrovom prostranstve. Retrieved from: [https://tat-istomina.ucoz.net/sentabr/vebinar\\_prosveshhenie-converted.pdf](https://tat-istomina.ucoz.net/sentabr/vebinar_prosveshhenie-converted.pdf)

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legislation in this area, law enforcement practice, as well as analysis of current conditions and factors of both social and technological nature, various organizational and legal measures were proposed to improve the effectiveness of activities aimed at protecting minors against negative impacts associated with the use of the Internet.

The method of comparative legal analysis was used to study the international and foreign experience of legal regulation of information security of minors. The conclusion is drawn that it is impossible to unify the notion of "dangerous information" because its content is completely determined by the religious and cultural traditions of different types of countries.

## Results

Problems related to the information security of minors are actively discussed in the Russian and foreign press and scientific literature. One can distinguish three groups of proposals to improve the package of measures aimed at ensuring information security of minors: measures of an organizational and legal character, technical measures, and dissemination of best social practices.

The study of scientific publications and publicly available sources on various Internet resources allows identifying the following groups of current threats to the information security of minors. Some of these threats have received their names in foreign legal practice, supplemented by statistical information from specialized companies working in the field of information security. These include content risks, communication risks, consumer risks, and electronic risks.

The conclusion is made about the need to develop technical measures in Russia, following the best practices of the European countries. It is proposed to introduce the obligation of the provider and site owners to filter the posted content, with liability for its violation. At that, when determining the content of information harmful to minors, one needs to take into account the typology of countries. The typology should be determined by national cultural, religious, and social characteristics. Also, the harmful consequences of receiving negative content information can be completely or partially offset by the influence of parents and the surrounding people.

## Discussion

The activities of civil society institutions in the field of ensuring the safety of children on the Internet in EU countries are encouraged by the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA). Thus, nongovernmental organizations, such as the European NGO Alliance for Child Safety Online (eNACSO), European Youth Panel, and European Parents' Panel work with the support of ENISA. Social practices in the field of information security of children and adolescents implemented in the EU countries have a common goal to raise awareness of citizens in European countries about the rules of safe use of the Internet, implemented by specially established Insafe European network of national Safer Internet Centers, whose authorized Russian member is the Center for Safe Internet in Russia<sup>3</sup>, which publishes information resources intended for various categories of users (children, teenagers, and adults).

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<sup>3</sup> Center for safe internet in Russia. Retrieved from: <https://www.saferunet.ru>

As noted in the literature, "children and adolescents in the context of information explosion and transformation of the social situation of development experience extraordinary stress, including deformation of mental processes and personality traits"<sup>4</sup>. The entire world community is concerned about identifying the risks that the Internet information network poses to the child's psyche, as well as developing measures to minimize them and protect the younger generation.

A large number of works in various fields of science have been devoted to analyzing the content of threats to minors caused by their use of various means of communication. These problems are studied by information technology specialists, sociologists, psychologists, and lawyers, who offer various variations to classify these threats.

In particular, E. Staksrud, R. Olafsson, and S. Livingstone identify the following risks: dangerous content (content risks); malware (electronic risks); threat, bullying, harassment of a child (communication risks); and risk of unacceptable virtual or real contact of a child with virtual acquaintances<sup>5</sup>. A similar classification is followed by A.Yu. Gubanova<sup>6</sup>.

Content risks are understood as a variety of resources containing malicious (dangerous), illegal, and unethical information. Thus, according to Kaspersky Security Network, children's Internet interests concern the following information: means of Internet communication (43.26%); software, audio, and video content (28.34%); e-Commerce (15.8%); computer games (4.24%); alcohol, tobacco, narcotic substances (2.48%); porn and erotic (1.32%); coarse language (3.51%); and other (1.76%)<sup>2</sup>.

Communication risks include several types of risks.

- Oversharing, i.e. excessive publication of information about the child that may later be used against him, or for other illegal purposes;

- Establishing friendly relations with a child to commit rape, depraved acts with him, or receiving intimate images of a pornographic nature by an attacker posing as a peer or a child a little older, by direct communication via email or messengers (text messages called in the foreign legal practice a cyber-grooming). Thus, according to the information provided by K. Ignatiev<sup>7</sup> at the Conference on Child Safety on the Internet held on February 28, 2020, almost half of the Russian schoolchildren admitted that they met new people in social networks. More than half of school children in social networks received invitations to make friends from strangers. At that, regardless of age, 34% of these schoolchildren received invitations from unfamiliar adults. More than a third of children got

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<sup>4</sup> A. K. Polyanina, "Granicy kreativnosti: social'nyj kontrol' eticheskikh aspektov reklamy v kontekste informacionnoj bezopasnosti detej", Bulletin of the Tomsk State University. Philosophy. Sociology. Political Science Vol: 51 (2019): 140-148.

<sup>5</sup> E. Staksrud; K. Ólafsson y S. Livingstone, "Does the use of social networking sites increase children's risk of harm?", Computers in Human Behavior Vol: 29 num 1 (2013): 40-50.

<sup>6</sup> F. Yu. Gubanova, "Elektronnyj kontent dlya detej: riski ili novye vozmozhnosti?", Bulletin of the Russian State University for the Humanities. Philosophy. Sociology. Art Criticism Vol: 2 num 4 (2016): 92-98.

<sup>7</sup> K. Ignatiev, Uchitelya, roditeli I deti v zifrovom prostranstve. Retrieved from: [https://tat-istomina.ucoz.net/sentabr/vebinar\\_prosveshhenie-converted.pdf](https://tat-istomina.ucoz.net/sentabr/vebinar_prosveshhenie-converted.pdf)

together with people they met on social media. As noted by parents, over the past year, unfamiliar adults have tried to wriggle into favor with 11% of children aged 11-14 years.

- Cyberharassment, which can take forms, such as bullying a child (cyberbullying), obtaining intimate images from a child or taking such images by taking control of the child's computer (device) with subsequent blackmail, intimidation (cyberstalking), imitation, bullying and social boycotting (trolling). According to Ignatiev, every tenth parent notes that the cyberbullying is more or less familiar to them. According to the responses of children, the proportion of those who have experienced cyberbullying or heard about it increases significantly and currently equals to 33%<sup>2</sup>.

- involvement of minors in anti-social and sometimes criminal activities;

- other destructive influences on the child's psyche and manipulations of his consciousness, carried out, for example, by adepts of pseudo-religious organizations.

Consumer risks are another group of risks. They are associated with the monetization of threats to the information security of children, in particular, cyber-fraud (causing material or other damage by stealing personal information of the user (bank account numbers, passport data, codes, passwords, etc.)<sup>8</sup>.

Electronic risks (various malicious software, such as viruses, worms, Trojan horses, spyware, bots, etc.) are inherent in any content, including those used by adults. However, in the case of minor users, such risks are significantly higher.

Various measures are proposed in Russian and foreign literature to overcome these risks.

Measures of an organizational and legal nature consist in reforming the system of state bodies whose powers include ensuring information security. Thus, T.M. Zanina and E.I. Lukina point out that in the current conditions, two systems of bodies implement the same goals in the field of ensuring information security of minors: bodies and institutions of the system for preventing neglect and juvenile delinquency, headed by Government Commission on Minors' Affairs and Protection of Their Rights, and subjects of information security. According to the authors, such duplication leads to misalignment of their efforts and a decrease in the effectiveness of their activities<sup>9</sup>. The authors of the present article suggest making changes to the current legislation to create the necessary conditions for coordinating their activities.

Law enforcement officers dealing with children must undergo specialized training<sup>10</sup>.fi The United Nations Standard<sup>11</sup> Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules), adopted by General Assembly resolution No. 40/33 of November 29, 1985, establish the minimum required amount of professionally significant

<sup>8</sup> A. Neznamova; G. Kuleshov y M. Turkin, "International experience in personal data protection", *Jurídicas CUC* Vol: 16 num 1 (2020): 391–406.

<sup>9</sup> T. M. Zanina y E. I. Lukina, "Formirovanie gosudarstvennoj sistemy zashchity nesovershennoletnih ot vredonosnoj informacii v Rossijskoj Federacii", *Scientific Bulletin of the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia* Vol: 3 num 62 (2016): 40-44.

<sup>10</sup> A. L. Shilovskaya and L. B. Sitdikova, The use of restorative justice for juveniles in Europe. *Russian Journal of Criminology* Vol: 12 num 1 (2018): 141-151.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Website. Retrieved from: <https://www.un.org>

qualities, and indicate the need to match the professional training of police officers working with minors, with the contemporary level of science development. Ensuring this condition is possible only if the authority in the field of information security will be assigned to a body that specializes in working with minors.

The integration of these entities into a single system should be based on simultaneous amendments to Federal law No. 120-FZ of June 24, 1999 "On the fundamentals of the system of juvenile neglect and delinquency prevention", and Federal law No. 436-FZ of December 29, 2010 "On protection of children from information, harmful for their health and development", which will also require a certain correction to be made to Government Resolution No. 995 of November 6, 2013 "On the approval of an approximate provision on commissions for minors and the protection of their rights".

Filippov V.M., V.V. Nasonkin, and Ch. Papacharalambous come to conclusions about the inconsistency of certain provisions of the Federal law to the current needs of society, and its inconsistency with other legislation, in particular provisions of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation and the Federal law of July 27, 2006, No. 149-FZ "On information, information technologies and protection of information"<sup>12</sup>.

Technological aspects of ensuring information security of minors include the development and distribution of technical and hardware-software tools that provide children with access to information appropriate to their age. Similar systems exist in several European countries. In particular, Internet providers in the UK offer Internet traffic in tandem with the "Clean line", "WebMinder", and similar services, which use data from the Internet Watch Foundation to identify pages containing indecent photos of children. When such pages are found, the system reports the error "URL page not found".

The Commission for the protection of young people from the harmful effects of the media has been established in Germany, which has the right to recognize particular content as violating the rights of the child. The responsibility for the content is assigned to Internet service providers, who are obliged to guarantee the security of provided information, and if the content is considered harmful to the children – to ensure the inability of children to access it.

China took a slightly different path. To protect children from negative information, China has developed the concept of the Great Firewall of China, which is enshrined in the law on the protection of minors of 1992. The main subjects responsible for implementing the law are not only the state but also parents. Parents are required to prevent children's Internet addiction and monitor the content they view. In Russia, a Unified register of domain names and (or) universal indexes of sites and Internet site addresses containing information prohibited for distribution in the territory of the Russian Federation has been created, which is under the jurisdiction of a state body of Roskomnadzor<sup>13</sup>. However, practice shows that a measure such as entering domain (site) of infringers in the unified register is ineffective because after a while they appear again under a different name.

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<sup>12</sup> V. M. Filippov; V. V. Nasonkin y C. H. Papacharalambous, "Prava i interesy detej v informacionnoj sfere: reformirovanie zakonodatel'stva", Bulletin of St. Petersburg University. Right Vol: 10 num 2 (2019): 362-372.

<sup>13</sup> Federal executive body responsible for control and supervision in the field of media, including electronic media and mass communications

So far, the Russian legislation does not prescribe the mandatory use of filters against prohibited information. The international policy of Facebook and Youtube assumes mandatory filtering of porn content, and such recourses are considerably restricted, while the Russian VKontakte and Yandex and Google search engines do not apply this kind of filtering. Besides, no penalties apply for the late blocking of resources by a communications provider.

Another problem raised in the literature is the nature of the very information that poses a threat to the child.

As noted by S. Livingston, E. Stacksrud, and J. Mascheroni, it is not incontrovertible that there is a direct relationship between risk factors (such as exposure to pornography) and evidence of harm. Depending on the age of the child, as well as the educational impact of adults, negative information itself can lead to the opposite result, for example, forming a liberal attitude to sexual norms or healthy sexual self-confidence<sup>14</sup>. Muižnieks N. adheres to a similar position, pointing out as a problem that "some EU member states, under the pretext of protecting children, block content related to LGBT issues, and this even though the European Court of Human Rights has found that there is no scientific evidence that such resources have dangerous impact on the well-being of children"<sup>15</sup>.

Tsukanov A.N. and G.E. Vakhrushev believe that "it is necessary to develop common standards for what is considered harmful information for the child, establish a certain system of sanctions for the dissemination of harmful information, and develop a common approach to solving this problem"<sup>16</sup>.

The authors of the present study believe that the development of international standards in this area is impossible due to different cultural traditions. The most correct attitude seems to be that of researchers who suggest taking into account existing national differences. Thus, V. Magun and M. Rudnev grouped all respondents based on their value indicators into three classes. The authors revealed that respondents attributed to the first class, prefer to follow authorities, whether they are religious dogmas or state power. On the contrary, third-class representatives prefer the value of independent decisions, personal initiative, and self-expression. The respondents who make up the intermediate second class show a lack of orientation to activity stimulated both "from above" by authorities and "from within" (personal orientation)<sup>17</sup>. Representatives of the first value class, as noted, attach great importance to external authority (religion, state, and power), as well as obedience, strive for being subordinated and subordinate (taking leadership) of their inferiors, to an order understood widely and within the framework of traditions. For example, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Cyprus, Asian countries, and the Middle

<sup>14</sup> S. Livingstone; G. Mascheroni y E. Staksrud, "European research on children's internet use: Assessing the past and anticipating the future", *New Media and Society* Vol: 20 num 3 (2018): 1103-1122.

<sup>15</sup> N. Muižnieks, *Zashchita prav detej v cifrovom mire: postoyanno rastushchij vyzov*. Retrieved from: <https://www.coe.int/ru/web/commissioner/-/protecting-children-s-rights-in-the-digital-world-an-ever-growing-challen-1>

<sup>16</sup> A. N. Tsukanov y G. E. Vakhrushev, "Mezhdunarodnye standarty zashchity rebenka ot negativnoj informacii", *Gaps in Russian Legislation* Vol: 3 (2013): 149-155.

<sup>17</sup> V. Magun and M. Rudnev, "Cennostnaya geterogenost' naseleniya evropejskih stran: tipologiya po pokazatelyam R. Ingkharta", *Bulletin of Public Opinion* Vol: 3-4 num 113 (2012): 12-24.

East are more commonly referred to as the countries of the first value class<sup>18</sup>. The countries of Western and Northern Europe are characterized by a large proportion of the population belonging to the third value class with its inherent desire for personal autonomy, self-expression, and rationalism<sup>19</sup>. The predominance of representatives of the second value class indicates a transitional stage of social development, where people are focused neither on external power nor on internal sources of activity, yet having no confidence in the effectiveness of their initiative but already abandoning the authority of external instances (state, religion). Distrust to external (state) regulators of the information and lack of confidence in the citizens' own ability to prevent or suppress negative information lead to an information security model that is more declarative than effective. These countries include, in particular, Russia, Estonia, and Lithuania<sup>20</sup>.

The existing differences affect the content of information risks for the child. For example, resources containing information about marijuana or LGBT communities will be censored in most European countries, and access will not be prohibited for children. At the same time, it is difficult to imagine free access to such content in the Middle East countries.

## Conclusion

The study of the scientific publications on the subject under study allows asserting that during the last ten years in the Russian Federation, the institution has been formed to ensure the information security of children and adolescents. At the present stage, permanent improvement of legislation in this area and the mechanism of legal regulation in the field of information security in general, are underway.

In various countries, technical tools, such as blocking and filtering lists are used to combat the dissemination of illegal resources, abusing and violating, in particular, children. However, in the absence of a clear legal framework, sufficient transparency, and effective safeguards against abuse, including judicial oversight, the use of such tools may lead to disproportionate restrictions on freedom of expression. Indeed, blocking imposed through providers can sometimes extend to sites that are not related to child harassment, such as sites that post information about the sexual and reproductive health of a human.

The decision on the nature of resources that are prohibited or restricted for a child to access must be made at the state level. International law can only establish general principles and requirements for this type of information. At that, the nature of information risks as well as measures to ensure information security, have a transnational universal character.

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<sup>19</sup> M. Volkova, Z. Nedelko, *Analysis of life satisfaction degree in Russia and European countries (Economic and Social Development Book of Proceedings, 2018)*, 174-179.

<sup>20</sup> A. K. Polyanina, "Issledovanie modelej fil'tracii vrednoj dlya detej informacii na osnove sravneniya podhodov, ispol'zuemyh v zarubezhnyh stranah", *Bulletin of the Lobachevsky University of Nizhny Novgorod. Social Sciences* Vol: 4 num 52 (2018): 70-80.

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