Citizen Cybersecurity: Developing Awareness Raising Initiatives in Civil Society

- Area: ROADMAP FOR THE FURTHER EVOLUTION OF THE INTERNET GOVERNANCE ECOSYSTEM
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Abstract

The vertiginous development of new Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the past twenty years set the pace for a global technological revolution which caused deep changes in society. Specifically, the Internet has significantly widened the scope of possibilities and opportunities to access any kind of information, express opinions, meet other people or engage in multiple online transactions. Our proposal is to create a website with necessary information readily available to citizens, so that they can report cybercrime and consult educational materials, etc. This helps bridge the digital gap and enables access to legal remedies for specific - and yet global ? issues such as cybercrime.

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The vertiginous development of new Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the past twenty years set the pace for a global technological revolution - comparable to the discovery of steam or the invention of electricity – which caused deep changes in society. Practically all areas in the realm of ICT have rapidly and deeply become an integral part of people's behaviors and perceptions in all social strata, thus configuring the features of the so-called Information Society.

This becomes manifest, on the one hand, in the changes experienced in the realms of work, education, media and online transactions, among others. Here is a case in point: it seems only natural that in today's world everyone should have a mobile phone, at least one TV set per household with access to channels from all over the world, instant access to almost any kind of online information and contact with people we have never met in person or on the phone. This situation was unheard of twenty years ago; today, it is our everyday reality.

ICT penetration has also had a strong impact both upon people's perception of their own place in contemporary society - leaving behind the concept of "country citizen" and embracing the idea of being a "citizen of the world" - an upon their own understanding of the Information Society. The new globalized world, "visible and small" as depicted in *mass media,* new electronic communication devices and means of transport.

On the other hand, one of the core values enhanced and strengthened by ICT is, undoubtedly, the value of freedom. There is many an example of this, such as the possibility to liaise with anyone on this planet irrespective of where they are, engage in online business transactions with no time or location constraints, access information on any topic and share our own uncensored views on cyberspace with any interested stakeholders.

Of course, it almost goes without saying at this point that all of these advantages - and disadvantages - of the Internet are tied to a fundamental condition, i.e. that all people have access to ICT, starting with a computer with online connectivity. In this sense, it is worth noting the compelling policy to bridge the digital gap currently implemented by the Dominican government to accomplish the social inclusion of all its citizens.

However, these certain possibilities of expanded individual and collective freedoms brought about by the Internet -and turned into State policies by governments - can also lead to the perception that the Web, just like any other tool, may also be used for purposes that are even contrary to those initially conceived upon its creation.

Although some technological devices are better regulated in terms of protecting children

and minors, e.g. there are children protection times on TV, movies are rated for different audiences according to their content, and minors may not engage in e-commerce transactions, the speed of Internet expansion and the multiplication of all kinds of web pages, applications and functions has outpaced the perception of implicit risks and - even worse - the measures put in place to prevent or fight them.

In terms of the issue at hand, this situation means that the protection of minors is, indeed, lagging behind. Although there are efforts in place to this end, the way in which the Web works makes it complex to put these measures into practice, be it because children sit in front of a computer by themselves, because access to all sites is free and subject to no restriction, or because there are people with a criminal intent at the other end. We should not overlook the lack of interest and knowledge on the part of parents and teachers regarding the way the Internet and online platforms are operated. It is fundamental to create content to reach out to this audience as well.

In view of the prior considerations, the main reason underlying the absence of actions to prevent and fight cybercrime targeting children and minors is the overall lack of knowledge in the adult and youth populations. Hence, the main beneficiaries of policies to prevent and fight these crimes must be the parents of children and teenagers, since they are the ones with the concrete possibility to make their children understand this situation, and implement the necessary prevention and control measures.