|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Document CWG-COP-21/INF/9** |
| **18 September 2024** |
| **English only** |
|  |  |
| Contribution from Armenia (Republic of), Belarus (Republic of), the Russian Federation, Tajikistan (Republic of), and Uzbekistan (Republic of) | |
| ADVANCING DIGITAL LITERACY AND ONLINE PROTECTION FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS | |
| **Purpose**  The purpose of this contribution is to highlight the best practices of the Russian Administration and to draw the attention of the Council Working Group on Child Online Protection to the critical issue of digital literacy and online protection for children and adolescents with disabilities and special needs.  **Action required**  The Council Working Group on Child Online Protection is invited to **consider** this document and take necessary action, as appropriate.;  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  [*https://beelineforkids.ru/*](https://beelineforkids.ru/)*;* [*https://beeinclusion.ru/en/*](https://beeinclusion.ru/en/)*;* [*https://internetforkids.ru/en/*](https://internetforkids.ru/en/)*;* [*https://evland.ru/*](https://evland.ru/)*;* [*Resolution 139*](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/opb/conf/S-CONF-PLEN-2022-PDF-E.pdf) *(Rev. Bucharest, 2022);* [*Resolution 175*](https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itu-s/opb/conf/S-CONF-PLEN-2022-PDF-E.pdf) *(Rev. Bucharest, 2022);* [*Resolution 179*](https://www.itu.int/en/council/Documents/basic-texts-2023/RES-179-E.pdf) *(Rev. Bucharest, 2022)* | |

# 1 Example of best practices

In today's world, there is growing emphasis on inclusion, accessible education for people with disabilities, and their protection online. However, despite global efforts, individuals with disabilities continue to face social isolation and digital inequality.

A key factor contributing to this challenge, particularly in the field of digital literacy, is the lack of specialized programs and teaching methods tailored for children with disabilities and special needs. Additionally, there are significant gaps in the professional training of teachers and specialists who work with these children.

To address the need for enhanced digital literacy and protection for children and adolescents with disabilities and special needs, the Digital Literacy Platform for Blind Children was launched in Russia in 2023. This initiative, developed by Beeline (PJSC VimpelCom) in collaboration with the [Everland inclusive project](https://evland.ru/), is part of the [Alliance for the Protection of Children in the Digital Environment](https://internetforkids.ru/en/). The platform offers materials on Internet safety, along with advice for children, adolescents, and their parents, developed with the expertise of Kaspersky Lab. For further details, please refer to Annex 1: "Information about the Digital Literacy Platform for Blind Children."

This initiative aims to address the need for equal educational opportunities and the development of digital literacy skills for children and adolescents with visual impairments, musculoskeletal and movement disorders, while also ensuring their future protection in the online environment.

The digital literacy courses offered on the platform cover fundamental skills in using computers, mobile phones, and the Internet for children with visual impairments. They include exercises designed to develop safe and effective digital technology use and provide tailored materials and instructions for children and adolescents with musculoskeletal and movement disorders.

Since its launch, by early January 2024, the platform has reached 12 372 users. Of these, over 6 924 blind individuals have completed the courses, with 944 receiving personalized consultations from curators. Additionally, more than 1 500 teachers have explored the platform's resources to incorporate them into their own educational practices.

# 2 Rationale

Resolution 179 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference on ITU's role in child online protection invites ITU Sector Members "5 to inform Member States about modern technological solutions for child online protection, taking into account the best practices of the sector and of other relevant stakeholders".

Resolution 139 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on the use of telecommunications/information and communication technologies to bridge the digital divide and build an inclusive information society also recognizes "i) that, in turn, the WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS beyond 2015 reaffirms that the objective of WSIS is to bridge the digital, technology and knowledge divides and create a people-centric, inclusive, open and development-oriented information society where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge" and considers "e) that it is necessary to study and analyse the social, demographic, economic and technological context of the communities in which it is necessary to deploy telecommunication/ICT infrastructure and services, as well as to implement plans for capacity building, training and digital skills development, in particular for persons with disabilities, persons with specific needs and indigenous peoples".

In turn, Resolution 175 (Rev. Bucharest, 2022) of the Plenipotentiary Conference, on telecommunication/Information and communication technology accessibility for persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs recalls "e) Goal 10 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in line with which all people, including persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs, should have equivalent access to and use of ICTs" and invites Member States and Sector Members "3 to promote the development of learning opportunities in order to train persons with disabilities and persons with specific needs to use ICTs for their social and economic development, including through train-the‑trainer courses and distance learning ".

Initiatives aimed at developing digital literacy for children and adolescents with disabilities and special needs are crucial for their social adaptation and integration into society, ensuring equal opportunities for all. These initiatives equip them with essential knowledge and skills to navigate modern technologies, enabling their participation in public life and professional activities while educating them on how to protect their data in the online environment.

Moreover, such initiatives foster a tolerant attitude in society towards people with disabilities and special needs, enhancing their self-esteem and psychological well-being.

Given that the digital environment is now an integral part of modern life, the project described in Section 1 (Example of best practices) represents a significant step toward supporting, adapting, and integrating children and adolescents with disabilities into the digital world, while also teaching them how to stay safe online. The inclusive project led by the Alliance for the Protection of Children in the Digital Environment and its partners exemplifies the successful implementation of such initiatives.

# 3 Proposal

Given the above, to advance and promote initiatives focused on digital literacy for children and adolescents with disabilities and special needs, and to ensure their safe participation in the online environment, members of the CWG-COP are invited to:

1 share their national experiences in developing digital literacy programs for children and adolescents with disabilities and special needs, as well as in ensuring their online safety. Discuss these practices during meetings of the Working Group on Child Online Protection to foster more effective collaboration;

2 if needed, implement measures to establish requirements for websites and digital services of government agencies and other platforms, ensuring they are fully accessible to individuals with disabilities and special needs;

3 collaborate with government agencies and educational institutions to integrate the developed methods and programs into the education system. This includes organizing events for children and their parents or guardians to promote and ensure the safe online presence of children and adolescents with disabilities and special needs. Additionally, focus on implementing technologies that enhance information access for children with visual or movement impairments, such as specialized applications, enlarged print, and adaptive design features;

4 if needed, develop recommendations for the ITU Council based on the submitted proposals;

5 recommend adding this experience of developing a digital literacy platform for blind children to the ITU repository.

***Annex: 1***

Annex 1

Information about the Digital Literacy Platform for Blind Children

In today's world, digital technologies play an increasingly vital role in our daily lives. They offer new opportunities for learning, communication, and work, while also empowering people with disabilities and special needs to become more independent and integrate into society.

One notable initiative aimed at supporting and protecting children and adolescents with disabilities and special needs is the Digital Literacy Platform for Blind Children, developed by [Beeline](https://moskva.beeline.ru/customers/products/)[[1]](#footnote-1) ([PJSC VimpelCom](https://moskva.beeline.ru/about/about-beeline/)[[2]](#footnote-2)) in collaboration with the [Everland inclusive project](https://evland.ru/)[[3]](#footnote-3), as part of the [Alliance for the Protection of Children in the Digital Environment](https://internetforkids.ru/en/)[[4]](#footnote-4).

Given the significance of the digital environment in modern life, this project represents a major and responsible effort to support, adapt, and integrate children with disabilities and special needs into the digital world. It also focuses on their online safety and future employment opportunities.

In 2023, courses on digital literacy for children and adolescents with visual and movement impairments were launched through the [BeeInclusion platform, a Russian-language website](https://beelineforkids.ru/). In its first year, 12 372 people accessed the platform's materials, with over 6 924 blind individuals completing the courses. Additionally, 944 participants received personalized consultations from curators, and more than 1 500 teachers explored the platform's resources to enhance their work with children and adolescents with disabilities and special needs.

The training project has been expanded to include a section on games, recognizing that they are an integral part of modern childhood. This addition aims not only to provide education and comprehensive development in the digital space but also to allow children to enjoy computer and mobile games, engage with peers, and integrate seamlessly into everyday life, free from environmental barriers or social stereotypes. The project's outcomes over the past year confirm its relevance, with participant feedback highlighting its significance for children and adolescents with disabilities and special needs.

The digital technologies offered on the platform enhance the quality of life and independence for visually impaired users. These tools support safe navigation in urban environments, communication on social networks, shopping, financial management, and improve the quality and speed of learning.

Key areas of training also include reviews of the most accessible smartphones based on the Android operating system, devices with Braille keyboards, and music services tailored to visually impaired users.

In summary, the platform and its technologies represent a significant initiative aimed at supporting, protecting, and integrating children and adolescents with disabilities and special needs into the digital world. Through this project, they have the opportunity to develop their skills, learn new things, and communicate with peers, aiding their social and psychological adaptation and eventual full integration into society.

The platform continues to evolve, reaching more participants and offering new opportunities for learning and development, demonstrating both the demand for and the importance of the project to society.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Beeline is a trademark of PJSC VimpelCom, used by its subsidiaries to offer telecommunications services across Russia and the CIS countries. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. PJSC VimpelCom is one of the leading telecommunications service providers in Russia. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Everland is an inclusive social entrepreneurship project. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Alliance for the Protection of Children in the Digital Environment is a coalition of nine leading Russian technology, digital, and media companies committed to creating a safe and supportive digital environment. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)