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Optenet, Optenet Web Filter PC 9.4

The Optenet Web Filter PC provides filtering and blocking for most of the popular protocols. Optenet also offers an integrated suite with web filtering, firewall, antivirus, antispam and email filtering. Our tests only included the Optenet Web Filter PC.

Its support of platforms and languages is summarised in the table below:

| Type | Client | Server | Service | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|-------|--------|
| Platforms | Win95 | Win98 | WinME | Win2k | Win03 | WinNT | WinXP | Linux | MacOS |
| Protocols / Applications | browser | instant msg | chat | e-mail | news | file transfer | peer2peer | VoIP | Stream |
| Languages User Interface | Czech German Polish | Danish Greek Portuguese | Dutch Hungarian Slovak | English Italian Slovenian | Estonian Latvian Slovenian | Finnish Lithuanian Swedish | French Maltese | | |
| Languages Filtering Criteria | Czech German Polish | Danish Greek Portuguese | Dutch Hungarian Slovak | English Italian Slovenian | Estonian Latvian Spanish | Finnish Lithuanian Swedish | French Maltese | | |

The feedback given by the User Reference Group is summarised as follows:

| Test domain | Score | Actual score | Average all tools | Best tool |
|--|-------|--------------|-------------------|-----------|
| (Un)installing and updating the tool | ●●○○ | 2,2 | 2,3 | 2,8 |
| Tailoring and monitoring the filtering | ●●●○ | 2,7 | 2,5 | 3,2 |

The scores of the Lab tests are summarised as follows:

| Test domain | Score | Actual score | Average all tools | Best tool |
|---|-------|--------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Local language support | ●●●● | 4,0 | 2,6 | 4,0 |
| Effectiveness for kids | ●●●○ | 2,5 | 2,0 | 4,0 |
| Effectiveness for adolescents | ●●○○ | 2,0 | 1,8 | 2,5 |
| Effectiveness for kids (porn only) | ●●●● | 4,0 | 2,6 | 4,0 |
| Effectiveness for adolescents (porn only) | ●●●● | 4,0 | 2,5 | 4,0 |
| Speed of filtering | ●●●● | 4,0 | 3,2 | 4,0 |
| Security Integrity | ●●●○ | 3,0 | 2,7 | 4,0 |
| Legal Compliance | ●●○○ | 2,0 | 2,4 | 3,5 |

1. Configurability

Optenet Web Filter comes with a useful default filtering policy, providing several harmful content categories. These categories are predefined and cannot be fine-tuned.

It is possible to block the download of certain file-types, and the child carer can also maintain a white list (allowed access) and black list (denied access) of websites.

The tool allows creating new users and applying specific filtering policies to each of them. It is however not possible to create user groups with the same filtering policy assigned.

Software updates can only be done manually.

2. Usability

Optenet Web Filter PC can be configured using a web interface on the computer. The user interface is available in six languages, is clear and easy to understand and can be controlled with only the keyboard.

The help information is easily accessible, but not very detailed.

3. Filtering Algorithm & Effectiveness

The scores of the Lab tests for the individual effectiveness tests are:

| Content Type | Score |
|------------------------|---------|
| Web ICRA filtering | 4 |
| Instant Messaging | N/A |
| Chat | Disable |
| Email | Disable |
| Newsgroup | 1 |
| File Transfer Protocol | N/A |
| Voice over IP | N/A |
| Streaming media | N/A |
| Peer-to-peer | Disable |

Web filtering: URL based filtering

Optenet Web Filter provide URL-based filtering, which can be supplemented by the child carer entering a white list (allowed access) and a black list (denied access) of website URLs.

Web filtering: Content filtering

Optenet Web Filter PC provides the option to block pages based on different content categories. It supports ICRA filtering.

Instant messaging MSN

Optenet Web Filter PC allows blocking instant messaging traffic from MSN Messenger, AIM AOL, ICQ and Yahoo IM. Although this blocking function was activated, we were still able to open MSN Messenger, sign in and have conversations.

Chat IRC filtering

Optenet Web Filter PC allows blocking chat application IRC. When this option is activated, every connection to an IRC server is closed.

Email filtering

Optenet Web Filter PC allows blocking email. When the option to block email is activated, every connection to an email server (POP3, IMAP ...) is closed. When allowed, email messages are downloaded without their content being filtered.

It is also possible to deny browser based email services. When activated, websites containing email services are blocked.

Newsgroup filtering

Optenet Web Filter PC allows blocking news. When this option is activated, every connection with a newsgroup server is closed. Furthermore, when news is allowed, some harmful newsgroups are blocked. It remains possible to access browser based newsgroups.

File Transfer (FTP) filtering

Optenet Web Filter PC does not allow blocking FTP, but it is possible to block the FTP-port, although another port can be used for FTP traffic. When using browser based FTP services, it is possible to add certain ftp-sites in the black (denied) list. It is also possible to deny the download of certain types of files (e.g. .exe, .mp3, .zip ...)

Voice over IP, streaming media, peer-to-peer blocking

Optenet Web Filter PC does not provide an option to block VoIP applications nor traffic. However, it is possible to block the VoIP-port.

Optenet Web Filter PC does not provide an option to block streaming media. Although it is possible to block the download of certain video file types (avi, mpg, wmv ...) it is not possible to block streaming media.

Optenet Web Filter PC provides an option to block peer-to-peer traffic. When activated, peer-to-peer traffic is blocked.

4. Performance

Based on the values observed during our tests, we determined that the impact on memory consumption for the tool Optenet Web Filter PC was very low. The results of the tests on CPU usage were very close to those of the base system, thus demonstrating a low consumption of CPU resources.

Based on the HTTP loading tests for this tool, it scored a 4, meaning that there was a very low impact in terms of delays and therefore was almost not noticeable.

5. Transparency

When logging in, the user is not informed that Internet filtering, blocking or monitoring software is running.

When a user tries to access a blocked page, he is redirected to another local page, which mentions that the page "belongs to a forbidden category". Users can submit a request to Optenet to re-evaluate the page so access can be granted.

Optenet logs which web pages have been visited and reports the 1000 most recent URLs in the child carer's user interface, indicating whether the page has been blocked or not. For blocked pages, the blocking content category is indicated.

Except for this log file, we have not found any other reporting.

6. Security Integrity

Network tests

The network scans did identify a listening web service enabled by the tool. This port is remotely accessible and provides access to the management interface of the tool.

Local tests

The full log of all web pages that have been visited and blocked is stored in clear text on the hard drive, which makes it possible for any PC users, including children, to read and change it. No other security issue was identified with the local tests.

7. Legal Compliance

Optenet's sales terms & conditions align with the EU's basic e-commerce rules. For instance, the vendor guarantees the product for 30 days and takes up liability with a rational limitation. Users are asked to express their consent to these terms (by clicking on a button) before launching the electronic buying process.

Nevertheless, we were unable to locate any privacy statement or other information on the website discussing the protection of users' data.