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Open Source

Poesia 3.6

POESIA is short for “a Public Open-source Environment for a Safer Internet Access”. It is an open-source project supported by the European Commission, focusing on web filtering.

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	Danish	Dutch	English	Estonian	Finnish	French	German	Greek
	Polish	Portuguese	Slovak	Slovenian	Spanish	Swedish	Maltese		
Languages Filtering Criteria	Czech	Danish	Dutch	English	Estonian	Finnish	French	German	Greek
	Polish	Portuguese	Slovak	Slovenian	Spanish	Swedish	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	●●○○	2,2	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	●●○○	2,0	2,6	4,0
Effectiveness for kids	●●●○	2,5	2,0	4,0
Effectiveness for adolescents	●●●○	2,5	1,8	2,5
Effectiveness for kids (porn only)	●●●○	2,5	2,6	4,0
Effectiveness for adolescents (porn only)	●●●○	2,5	2,5	4,0
Speed of filtering	●●●●	4,0	3,2	4,0
Security Integrity	●●●○	3,0	2,7	4,0
Legal Compliance	●●●○	3,0	2,4	3,5

1. Configurability

The installation of Poesia proved to be very difficult, as it has many dependencies (e.g. Java version, specific version of C compiler, etc). Even computer literates had important difficulties in order to setup an operational system. Furthermore, when we used it for our tests, it appeared to become congested and unstable. As Poesia mostly aims at educational institutions who want to provide safer internet access to children, this type of congestion is an important issue.

2. Usability

There is no graphical interface to configure and install any of the Poesia modules. All modules have to be installed separately and most configurations/setup have to be done from the command line interface (UNIX shell) and in English only.

A web interface is available to view the log files and perform very few configuration changes (e.g. update black list).

3. Filtering Algorithm & Effectiveness

Considering the instability during the test runs, it has been impossible to obtain reliable results for Poesia.

4. Performance

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5. Transparency

The filtering system should be keeping traces of all rejected/blocked connections. However on the system we configured for our tests, logs were cleared/lost every time the service (re)started.

A specific message is displayed to the user with every blocked/denied page.

6. Security Integrity

Network tests

We noted several security issues on the Poesia setup. The default install does not protect the systems against attacks. Services were not sufficiently protected.

Local tests

The page shown when a page is blocked has been found vulnerable to cross-site scripting attacks. This way, the users can be subject of hackers stealing their cookies, phishing and executing malicious code on the user's PC.

7. Legal Compliance

There is a clear description of the solution's functionalities and filtering possibilities, as well as of the entity responsible for running the project. Given that the tool is not a commercial project, commercial terms and conditions or other legal information, apart from these specifying the use of the website, are not applicable.

The information about the processing of personal information is provided through the hyperlink Confidentiality Policy. It is positive that the notice defines in clear wording the purposes for which personal information will be used, the duration of storage and the possibility for users to access their data. However, the notice reads that users may receive information not only in relation to the supply of the specific service but also about all activities of the entity in charge of the project. In this respect, users are not really offered any possibility to "opt out" from receiving this kind of communications. On the other hand, the statement informs users that their data will be "cancelled" when they are no longer necessary for the service, a clause which can be improved in terms of legal wording.