

Safer social networking: the choice of self-regulation

Misuse of new technologies can present many risks to children and young people, such as cyber-bullying, grooming, privacy violation or exposure to harmful content (pornography, racism, etc). European legislation already exists to protect young people online (**protection of personal data**). And yet, technology is changing our societies so fast that it is difficult for legislators to keep up. The adoption of new rules takes time, especially when they have to be agreed by 27 countries.

This is why, in the interest of online child safety, the European Commission encourages those who create new interactive tools to adopt rules and principles themselves (self-regulation). The Commission's role is to bring all the relevant players (industry, associations, etc) together for them to agree on these rules and principles.

Safer Social Networking Principles for the EU

In 2008, the Commission convened 18 of Europe's major social networks as well as researchers and child welfare organizations, to form a European Social Networking Task Force to discuss guidelines for the use of social networking sites by children. These guidelines were to be adopted voluntarily by the European industry.

"The Safer Social Networking Principles for EU" will be signed February 10, 2009 during Safer Internet Day, in Luxembourg.

*"The Safer Social Networking Principles for the EU" have been developed by social networking services providers in consultation with the European Commission, as part of its Safer Internet Plus Programme, and a number of NGOs, to provide good practice recommendations for the providers of social networking and other user interactive sites, to enhance the safety of children and young people using their services." **Read full text of the Principles***

Signatories

- **Arto**
- **Bebo**
- **Dailymotion**
- **Facebook**
- **Giovani.it**
- **Google**

- **Hyves.nl**
- **Microsoft Europe**
- **MySpace**
- **nasza-klasa.pl**
- **Netlog**
- **One.lt**
- **Piczo**
- **Skyrock.com**
- **StudiVZ.de**
- **Sulake/Habbo.com**
- **Yahoo!Europe**
- **Zap.lu**

Next steps

- All signatories will provide the Commission with a self-declaration on their individual safety policies, specifying how they implement these principles, by April 2009.
 - For transparency, they will also make public the non-confidential part of this information.
 - The Commission will evaluate this agreement in one year's time from signature.
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