



ICT Coalition position on self-regulation for the protection of minors in relation to the revision of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive

July 2016

The ICT Coalition for Children Online aims to help younger internet users across Europe to make the most of the online world and to deal with any potential challenges and risks. With the internet now one of the most important sources of information, education and entertainment for many people, it is vital that industry, government, schools and other relevant organisations work together to help children and young people use the internet in a safe and responsible way.

Members¹ of the ICT Coalition for Children Online have pledged to encourage the safe and responsible use of online services and internet devices among children and young people and to empower parents and carers to engage with and help protect their children in the digital world. In 2012, members of the ICT Coalition signed up to a set of guiding principles to ensure that the safety of younger internet users is integral to the products and services they develop.

The Principles for the Safer Use of Connected Devices and Online Services by Children and Young People in the EU² encourage best practice in the key areas of content, parental controls, dealing with abuse/misuse, child sexual abuse content or illegal content, privacy and control, and education and awareness.

As the first industry-led Europe-wide principles in the online safety arena, they provide a long term roadmap for the member companies within a self-regulatory framework backed up by regular reporting and independent review of member achievements. The ICT Coalition works closely with other stakeholders including the European Commission, European Parliament and children's charities, organising biannual Stakeholder Forums to allow the exchange of ideas and debate about emerging issues with an impact on children's activities online.

The ICT Coalition welcomes the European Commission's intention to make more use of self- and/or co-regulation as a means of ensuring the protection of minors in its recent proposal to revise the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD). In a fast-moving sector, self-regulation allows for the necessary flexibility to enable the different players in the market to tailor their products and services in the way which is best-suited and likely to be most effective in protecting their younger users.

¹ Ask.FM, BBC, bwin.party digital entertainment plc, Deutsche Telekom AG, Disney Club Penguin, Facebook, Google, Liberty Global, Orange, Portugal Telecom, Royal KPN N.V., skyrock.com, TDC, Telecom Italia, Telefónica, Telenor ASA, Telia Company, Twitter, Unibet, Vodafone

² <http://ictcoalition.eu/>

The Principles developed by the ICT Coalition are necessarily high-level, to allow for the diverse nature of Coalition members and of their activities within the online ecosystem, but they cover all activities of those members, including the provision of audiovisual content. In relation to online content which might not be appropriate for children and young people, signatories to the Principles have already committed to:

- Indicate clearly where a service they offer may include content considered not to be appropriate for children and display prominently options which are available to control access to the content. This could include, where appropriate for the service, tools to manage access to certain content, advice to users or a recognised system of content labelling.
- Display prominently and in an easily accessible location the Acceptable Use Policy, which should be written in easily-understandable language.
- State clearly any relevant terms of service or community guidelines (i.e. how users are expected to behave and what is not acceptable) with which user generated content must comply.
- Ensure that reporting options are in the relevant areas of the service.
- Provide notice about the consequences for users if they post content which violates terms of service or community guidelines.
- Continue work to provide innovative solutions able to support child safety protection tools and solutions.

Service and content providers who are members of the ICT Coalition have also committed to making available the necessary tools and settings across their services to enable parents to set appropriate levels of control. ICT Coalition members complement these measures by providing appropriate information on safer and responsible use of connected devices and the Internet and by engaging in awareness raising activities targeting children, parents and carers.

The Principles also serve as an example of best practice for smaller players or newer entrants to the market, and have recently been taken up by UK media regulator Ofcom and the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) as the basis for its own Guide for Child Safety Online³. The guide offers practical advice based on current good practice for social media and interactive services to adopt a culture of “safety by design”.

ICT Coalition members would welcome a similar approach from other Member States wishing to establish the national codes referred to in the AVMSD proposal, rather than re-inventing the wheel and developing new codes applicable to certain players only, and potentially imposing different rules in different countries. Many of the ICT Coalition members operate on a multi-national basis, and it is important that they can apply the same internal arrangements to safeguard children wherever they operate.

3

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/517335/UKCCIS_Child_Safety_Online-Mar2016.pdf