



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Information Society and Media Directorate-General

PUBLIC CONSULTATION
Age Verification,
Cross Media Rating and Classification,
Online Social Networking

Annex I

Public consultation questionnaires

Questionnaire 1

Cross media rating and classification

With the current trend towards platform and media convergence, the opportunity and feasibility of cross media rating systems need to be discussed. In its recent Communication on the protection of consumers, in particular minors, in respect of the use of video games¹, the Commission welcomes and supports further efforts to achieve a self-regulatory and co-regulatory cross media, pan European age rating system.

One session of the Safer Internet Forum 2008 (25-26 September) will be dedicated to this topic. In order to collect facts and views on this issue, the European Commission launches a public consultation with the following questions:

1. Of which media rating systems are you aware in your country. Has there been an attempt to implement a cross-media rating system? If yes, what are the positive outcomes of it and its success factors? If no, what could be used as a starting point towards a cross media rating system?

Saferinternet.cz combined node made the first steps to introduce the PEGI system to the public and to politicians during the 2007 year. We realised that we need to start a focused communication at the political level to implement it in the Czech juridical system. That is the reason we organised a meeting with members of the subcommittee of the Czech Parliament responsible for consumer protection. Representatives of PEGI came to participate at the consultation made at the end of [2007 in the Parliament](#). It was the first successful step raising an interest of participating MPs. The recommendation was to continue in our efforts in this direction.

The next step we decided to make as follow up was the organization of the [Internet & Law](#) conference. The scope of the event was wider – discussing PEGI, KWIJKWIZER but also a possible Czech way of the cross-media rating. The conference started real discussion with stakeholders – politicians, media, and industry. It is going on now on the regular base under the scientific supervision of the Charles university working granted by the Czech Ministry of culture ([Audio-Video classification](#)).

The Czech Saferinternet node is one of the key partners in the running discussion bearing in mind however that it is a long term run to achieve a real implementation of the cross media rating system in our country because of the complexity of the task.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/reg/minors/video/index_en.htm

2. What are the main obstacles moving towards a pan-European cross media rating system?

The main obstacle we consider fear of people of censorship. The other one is a complexity of the issue and lack of real Pan-European discussion involving stakeholders of media, industry, politicians and NGOs.

It seems to be many particular interests and parties involved but lack of real representative strategic straight forward pushing body. It might be EC but we are at the beginning of the discussion so far with unclear position of the EC towards PEGI, KWIJKWIZER, BBFC, Byron's report, German, Austrian and other national, local or other systems....

3. What role should the different stakeholders play (industry, public bodies, etc.), towards implementing a pan-European cross media rating system?

They shall clearly define their interest, describe state-of-the-art in each domain and prepare their own scenario including objectives and methods. When it is ready – they shall meet to discuss the issue and clearly define possible differences. The final step shall include ways on how to come over such obstacles to define common strategy, which shall be implemented at the Trans-European level.

4. Are you aware of relevant research, pilot projects, or national cross media rating initiatives? If published online, please provide us with the relevant URL.

In the Czech Republic it is the Saferinternet.cz project and the Safer Internet Institute who are trying to push the cross media rating initiative ahead together with the Charles University (Audio-Video classification) supported by the Ministry of culture.

Questionnaire 2

Age Verification

Various systems are used by internet, content and service providers, and mobile operators to verify the age of their users, and provide appropriate services linked to that age (e.g. access to adult content, access to social networking communities for adult only or above a certain age like 13).

One session of the Safer Internet Forum 2008 (25-26 September) will be dedicated to this topic. In order to collect facts and views on this issue, the European Commission launches a public consultation with the following questions:

1. Which age verification systems are you aware of? In which domains are they being used?

The electronic age verification on some commercial web sites is done through self proclamation of the age. Some systems ask for credit card number, some for an ID card number (for instance LindenLabs in the Second Life are trying to combine such methods of age verification). Other systems are trying to use mobile phone as a tool of the age verification.

The systems are used in commercial domain (including the porno business) and during electronic elections (for instance in Estonia: The system requires that a voter use a special ID card reader. The voter then uses a PIN number to access the electronic ballot and votes by marking the name of her or his preferred candidate).

2. Do you think that these systems are efficient? If yes, please state why. If no, why do you think they are unsatisfactory?

Those systems can be easily compassed and/or misused. Even the credit card access system is not efficient in many countries due to existing possibility to purchase anonymous credit cards.

Such systems are often breaking personal data protection law and are not secure enough.

3. Are you aware of legal requirements in your country for providers of online services to verify the age of their visitors/customers?

There is no any special law regulation of the age verification. Each service provider is trying to solve it his own way – using ID cards, personal Ids, credit card No., etc.

Most of the content providers are using just a self -proclamation of the age by user to access for instance adult sites. Such system is accompanied by some elements of self regulation – for instance a special article about social responsibility, etc.

Asking for personal ID is in general prohibited by the personal data protection law.

4. Are you aware of relevant research, pilot projects or national initiatives towards age verification on the internet? If published online, please provide us with the relevant URL.

Yes – see:

- <http://www.scribd.com/doc/2887234/Social-Networking-and-Age-Verification-ThiererPFF>
- <http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/palfrey/category/internet-safety-technical-task-force/>
- http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=844345

Questionnaire 3

Online Social Networking

Online social networking is a communication service typical of the “second generation” online world sometimes referred to as Web 2.0. Social networking sites (SNSs) are inclusive, participatory services which embody these principles fully. Users can place themselves in a social space of their own choice, engaging with others on their own terms whatever their physical or material circumstances. The popularity of SNSs, and the many opportunities for social interaction which they offer, must count as one of the most striking and potentially powerful benefits of the Internet.

SNSs are especially popular with young people, who represent the majority of users on many sites. Minors have been born into the digital age and are well equipped to grasp the opportunities which social networking offers. This raises safety issues which the Commission wants to explore in the next Safer Internet Forum (25-26 September). In order to collect facts and views on this topic, the European Commission launches a public consultation with the following questions:

1. What risks are minors most likely to encounter on SNSs? Are you aware of relevant research or statistics? If published online please provide us with the relevant URL.

In general the main risk is connected with breaking and misuse of personal data including the images of children.

The main threads:

- Bullying, stalking and harassment
- Sexual exploitation of children and young people online
- Creation of extremist, xenophobic and racist groups
- Creation of self-harm and destructive behaviour groups
- The use of webcams and other technologies to sexually exploit children and young people

A relevant document: [Social Networking Guidance](#) of the Home Office COI (UK).

2. What controls, if any, should be available to parents over their children's SNS accounts? Should parents be allowed to cancel accounts or change profiles of their children?

Parental prohibitions and restrictions lead to strengthening of interest of children and destroying mutual trust and overall climate in the family. Parents shall take more about

education and care of their children by playing and communication with them. Parents themselves shall care of basic ethical norms.

3. Which tools are the most appropriate to protect minors when using SNSs? What further steps should SNS providers take to reduce the risks to minors on their sites?

SNS shall care and control the content of the communication actively searching relevant key words/patterns of communication and checking where and why are those used. For such purpose a central database of such words and patterns in all the EU languages shall be prepared and operated, i.e. not censorship but some elementary control shall be provided.

Age verification systems are not efficient enough. That is why media/ethical education accompanied by a content control shall be provided. The content control will be used not to restrict or ban the communication but to explain how and why such communication is unwanted...

4. What should Members States do in order to improve the safe use of SNSs by minors? (E.g. legislation, co-regulation, awareness activities, introduction of the subject into the educational curricula, etc).

Education in general and media education in particulars shall be strengthened and made more efficient and attractive for children. No restriction no law regulation will help...

The most important according our experiences seem to be focused awareness activities. The introduction of the subject into the educational curricula – it is there formally but not efficiently running in the real school practise.

On behalf of the Saferinternet.cz project and the Safer Internet Institute:

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