

Statement on the Assessment of the EU Safer Social Networking Principles

We would like to thank the Commission for its detailed assessment of the safety materials found in our self-declaration and on the Facebook site.

The safety of our users is paramount to us, and we have implemented numerous safety and privacy controls part of our goal to enable people to share and connect comfortably on Facebook. However, we continue to improve the safety information we provide our users as well as the internal systems that we use for identifying and removing inappropriate content and people from the site. The following highlights some of the significant safety improvements made in the past months.

Raising Safety Awareness

A. On the Safety Page of the Facebook Help Center

Principle 1 of the Commission's report, "Raising Awareness," describes the safety education messages and acceptable use policies available for all users, including parents, educators, and children. While the Commission noted that Facebook currently provides safety tips and information for these audiences, we recently added even more information for each group to the safety page of our Help Center (www.facebook.com/safety). We developed new FAQs for educators such as "What should I do if I am aware of abuse on Facebook involving students?" and "How can I maintain a professional presence on the site separate from my personal profile?" We have grouped FAQs for teens into sections that detail how to manage privacy, security, Friends on the site, and that describe how high school "networks" work on Facebook. We also augmented the list of external organizations that we provide for parents in the "For Parents" section of the page.

Additionally, we have scheduled a total overhaul of our Help Center's safety page with the goal of making it even easier for specific audiences to access the safety information they seek. As part of this overhaul, we plan to a) create a simpler user interface with increased navigability, b) further supplement the FAQs that can be found on the page, c) provide information for users on how we interact with law enforcement, and d) include links to educational safety videos. The new safety page will be made available to users in early 2010.

B. On the Facebook Site

The Commission's report highlighted the information we currently provide users on how to prevent or address cyberbullying if it occurs on Facebook. However, in the fall we also partnered with external organizations to raise awareness about bullying and to provide educational resources on the dangers of digital abuse. In the United Kingdom we worked with BBC Radio 1, BBC 1Xtra, and other social networking sites like Bebo, Habbo, MSN, MySpace and YouTube on the "Bullyproof" campaign during anti-bullying week (November 16-20). In October, we partnered with the National Crime Prevention Council in the United States to educate users about National Crime Prevention Month, and in December, we worked with MTV on a campaign to stop the spread of digital abuse. We promoted these educational initiatives across the Facebook site, including on the Facebook Blog (www.facebook.com/blog). The Facebook Blog reaches over 6.5 million users, and we were pleased to be able to use this platform to educate so many users on a safety topic as important as cyberbullying.

Apart from cyberbullying, we leveraged the Facebook Blog to invite guest authors to contribute posts on safety. In November, we invited Liz Perle from Common Sense Media (www.commonsensemedia.org) to author a post for parents entitled “Parents Have Rules to Follow Online, Too,” that provided practical tips for parents on discussing digital citizenship with their children.

C. As an Organization

We have always been committed to working with public and private organizations to create the most robust safety environment possible. In December, however, we created a Global Safety Advisory Board to formalize the relationships we already maintained with e-safety organizations and as a way to gather even more feedback about our safety practices.

The Safety Advisory Board is comprised of five leading safety organizations from North America and Europe that serve in a consultative capacity to Facebook on issues related to online safety. We plan to regularly meet with board members to review the existing safety resources we provides our users, to leverage the board’s input in developing new materials, and to seek advice on general safety best practices on an ongoing basis. The members of the inaugural board are Common Sense Media, ConnectSafely, WiredSafety, Childnet International and The Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI). The first task of the board will be to oversee the overhaul of the safety page of our Help Center.

Separately, in December we joined both the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) and the Family Online Safety Institute (FOSI) as members. The IWF is an independent, self-regulatory body that works tirelessly to prevent the spread of criminally obscene and potentially illegal content online, and FOSI is a leading international nonprofit dedicated to protecting youth on the Internet. We know that our users will benefit from the wealth of tools, resources, and educational materials that both organizations possess and we believe that joining these organizations is a further demonstration of our commitment to promoting safety on Facebook.

Providing Easy-to-Use Mechanisms to Report Violations

In Principle 4, “Providing Easy-to-Use Mechanisms to Report Conduct,” the Commission assesses the manner in which Facebook users can report violations of the site’s Statement of Rights and Responsibilities (www.facebook.com/terms.php). While the Commission noted that we currently provide contextual links on content throughout the site and maintain aggressive response times to user reports, we recently modified our abuse reporting procedures to make it even easier for users to send detailed reports of abuse. We added reporting options to better capture the range of content that violates our policies, and created a way for users to tell us exactly where abuse exists within the content being reported so that it can be expeditiously reviewed, and if necessary, removed.

As the Commission’s report described, Facebook’s mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. Promoting a safe environment for our users is integral to this mission, and the improvements highlighted above are only the latest components of our aggressive global safety agenda. We look forward to reporting on safety advancements made during 2010.