



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
Information Society and Media Directorate-General

# **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

## **Age Verification, Cross Media Rating and Classification, Online Social Networking**

This document has been prepared by the Commission's services for consultation purposes. It does not in any way prejudge, or constitute the announcement of, any position on the part of the Commission on the issues covered.

## 1. Public Consultation

This year's Safer Internet Forum 2008 (25-26 September) will be dedicated to age verification, cross media rating and classification and online social networking. The purpose of the public consultation is to gather the knowledge and views of the relevant stakeholders. The consultation is structured around 4 questions covering each of the above topics (Annex I).

## 2. Practical information

- ❖ The consultation is being launched in English, with an electronic version of the document. If you have received the document by mail and wish to reply electronically, please go to the website indicated below or send an e-mail to the address given below.
- ❖ Interested parties are invited to send their comments and replies to the following questionnaires to the Commission **by 31 July 2008 at the latest** using one of the following means of communication:

- Internet: <http://ec.europa.eu/saferinternet>
- E-mail: [saferinternetconsultation@ec.europa.eu](mailto:saferinternetconsultation@ec.europa.eu)
- Post:

*European Commission  
L-2920 Luxembourg  
Directorate-General for Information Society and Media  
Unit E-6 Safer Internet and eContent  
For the attention of Mr Richard Swetenham*

You can submit your comments and replies to either one of the questionnaires, or to several of them. You can reply in any official language. However if you submit your comments in another language than English, we kindly ask you to submit also a summary in English.

- ❖ Electronic contributions received in reply to the consultation will be published on the Internet at the above-mentioned address. Publication online will be regarded as acknowledgement of receipt of your contribution by the Commission. For replies sent in paper form, an acknowledgement of receipt will be sent within 15 working days of receipt.

If you do not wish your contribution to be made public, please indicate this clearly at the beginning of your reply. In that case, your reply will also not be mentioned in future documents which may refer to this consultation.

- ❖ If you are replying on behalf of an organisation, please state your name, address and official title in your reply. Any reply on behalf of an organisation which does not state the interests which it represents or the extent to which it is representative of the sector (number of members, size of organisation in relation to the sector to which its members belong) will be regarded as an individual reply and not a collective one.

At the end of the period during which contributions are accepted, after reading and analysing all the replies received, the Commission will prepare a report summarising how the consultation was carried out and the main points emerging. Contributions that you do not wish to be made public will not be mentioned in this document.

# **Annex I**

## **Public consultation questionnaires**

Name of the organisation:

# 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 games<sup>1</sup>, 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?
2. What are the main obstacles moving towards a pan-European cross media rating system?
3. What role should the different stakeholders play (industry, public bodies, etc.), towards implementing a pan-European cross media rating system?
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.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/reg/minors/video/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/reg/minors/video/index_en.htm)

Name of the organisation:

# 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?
2. Do you think that these systems are efficient? If yes, please state why. If no, why do you think they are unsatisfactory?
3. Are you aware of legal requirements in your country for providers of online services to verify the age of their visitors/customers?
5. 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.

Name of the organisation:

## 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.
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?
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?
4. What should Member 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).