European Framework for Safer Mobile Use by Younger Teenagers and Children

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European mobile providers and content providers have developed national and corporate initiatives to ensure safer use of mobiles including by younger teenagers and children. These already cover most EU Member States.

Signatory European mobile providers, with support from signatory content providers, now propose an EU-wide common framework to reflect these developments and to encourage all relevant stakeholders to support safer mobile use. This framework will be subject to national implementation by signatory providers.

We recognize:

- mobile services offer an additional way to consume content (still and video images, music, chat, etc.) already offered in other ways - typically by the same providers.
- the importance of parental oversight: accordingly, mobile providers should endeavour to empower parents with information and tools to facilitate their oversight.
- any initiatives to classify content should be based on national societal standards regarding decency, appropriateness and legislation.
- a framework-based approach to industry self-regulation will be effective in adapting to the fast moving environment of mobile technology and services – it will be future proof.

European Mobile Providers – A Responsible Approach

It should be noted that:

Mobile providers only control commercial content they produce themselves or which they commission from professional third parties.

They exert indirect and retrospective control over commercial content in certain other situations, provided there is a contractual relationship with professional third parties.

They are not in a position to control content which is freely accessible on the internet, since there is no relationship between the mobile provider and the content provider.

However, as responsible companies, mobile providers recognise the need to work with customers, parents and other stakeholders, including child protection organizations, in order to promote the safety of younger teenagers and children using mobile services.

Mobile providers offer content which may use pre-pay, post-pay or hybrid approaches to billing. This framework is intended to provide for safer mobile use by younger teenagers and children across different billing approaches.

Recommendations on Safer Mobile Use

Access Control Mechanisms

1 Mobile providers should not offer any own-brand commercial content which would be classified as only suitable for adult customers in equivalent media, without providing appropriate means to control access to such content under parental control.

2 Appropriate means to control access to content should also be applied where content is supplied by contracted providers of third party commercial content which would be classified as only suitable for adult customers in equivalent media.

3 Additionally, individual mobile providers should offer capabilities which can be used by parents to customize access to content by children using mobiles. These may include specific services, phones, barring or filtering, and/or billing control.

Raising Awareness & Education

4 Mobile providers should provide advice and effective access to information regarding the use of mobile phone services and measures which can be taken by parents to ensure safer use by their children.

5 Mobile providers should encourage customers who are parents to talk to their children about how to deal with issues arising from the use of mobile services.

6 Mobile providers should ensure customers have ready access to mechanisms for reporting safety concerns.

7 Mobile providers should support awareness-raising campaigns designed to improve the knowledge of their customers, through organisations such as the INSAFE[1] network.

8 For these measures to work effectively policy makers should play a role in improving childrens' awareness through updated educational material and approaches. This should include parent and child-friendly information on safer use of mobile and the internet.

Classification of Commercial Content

9 Mobile providers and content providers support classification frameworks for commercial content based on national societal standards and consistent with approaches in equivalent media. Classification of content, whether accessible through telecommunications or not, should be consistent with national societal standards regarding decency, appropriateness and legislation. Classification frameworks should consist of at least two categories: content which is suitable only for adult customers and other content.

10 Mobile providers should ensure that their own-brand commercial content is appropriately classified based on existing national classification standards in the markets where they operate.

11 Through their contractual relationships with professional third party content providers, mobile providers should ensure, after consultation, that these providers classify their commercial content under the same national classification approach.

12 For these measures to work effectively policy makers, trade associations and other interested parties should support mobile provider initiatives to ensure commercial content providers classify their content against national societal standards.

Illegal Content on mobile community products or on the Internet

13 Mobile providers will continue to work with law enforcement authorities in executing their legislative obligations regarding illegal content.

14 Mobile providers will support national authorities in dealing with illegal child images and, through the INHOPE[2] hotline network or equivalent approaches, will facilitate the notification of this content where hosted on mobile community products or on the internet.

15 Mobile providers will adopt, or support the creation of, appropriate legally authorized national take-down procedures for such illegal content, including a commitment to liaise with national law enforcement.

16 For these measures to work effectively there should be legal clarity on the nature of content which is illegal and law enforcement authorities (or delegated organizations) should be able to confirm where individual items of content are illegal. This will require the allocation of proportionate law enforcement priority and resources. National governments' support for this is vital.

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1 INSAFE is a network of national nodes that coordinate Internet safety awareness in Europe.

2 INHOPE is the International Association of Internet Hotlines.

Implementation, Stakeholder Consultation & Review

17 Signatory mobile providers and signatory content providers will work towards implementation of this common European framework through self-regulation at national level in EU Member States. The target for agreement of national self-regulatory codes, consistent with this framework, is **February 2008**

18 Mobile providers will regularly review child safety standards on the basis of the development of society, technology and mobile services in cooperation with European and national stakeholders such as the European Commission, INHOPE and INSAFE.