GUIDELINES FOR INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS (ISPs) AND ONLINE GAMES PROVIDERS

The Council of Europe has created, in close cooperation with European online game designers and publishers and with Internet service providers, two sets of guidelines which aim to encourage respect and promote privacy, security and freedom of expression when, for example, accessing the Internet, using e-mail, participating in chats or blogs, or playing Internet games.

These guidelines offer simple and practical guidance to the operators concerned on how to make the Internet an open and safe place for users and to ensure their right to access, play and create.

Objectives

■ promoting greater respect for privacy, security and freedom of expression of users.

■ ensuring peoples' enjoyment of a maximum of rights and services, subject to a minimum of restrictions, while at the same time seeking to ensure the level of security that users are entitled to expect.

Human Rights guidelines for Internet service providers

The guidelines for ISPs encourage providers to:

■ inform users about potential risks on the Internet, in particular:
  – Risks for children such as encountering content that is illegal or may cause them harm (pornography, violence, demeaning or racist expressions) or of being subject to harmful behaviour from other users (grooming, bullying).
  – Security and data integrity risks, confidentiality (when making transactions), phishing or network security risks.
  – Privacy risks such as the collection, recording and processing of data (spyware, profiling).

■ ensure that information is available to their customers about filtering software that may block or restrict access to certain content.

■ ensure that the use of additional services such as chat, email and blog services is as safe as possible.

■ establish appropriate procedures and technologies to protect the privacy of users and the secrecy of content. For example, the interception or monitoring of email should only be undertaken if there is a legal duty, such as a court order to do so, or as necessary in order to protect users from unsolicited e-mail.

■ not to collect or store data about users unless this is necessary for specified and legitimate purposes complying with the law.

Human Rights guidelines for online game providers (designers and publishers)

These guidelines recommend to:

■ pay specific attention to the portrayal of violence - especially when targeting children - racist or xenophobic content, as well as content that may be advocating criminal or harmful behaviours such as the use of drugs.

■ apply independent labelling and rating systems to games, such as the Pan European Game Information (PEGI) system and the PEGI Online Safety Code (POSC), to help inform gamers, parent and carers about content that may affect the sensibilities and values of users.

■ provide appropriate information to the users, parents and carers on the risks in a user's guide in the language of the country where the game is marketed.

■ develop more in-game parental control tools, for example, for setting time-limits to prevent excessive use, and creating facilities to report information which may be illegal or harmful.

■ verify the unlawfulness of content generated by gamers by contacting the police and/or competent authority before removing it.

■ develop mechanisms for the automatic removal of content generated by users after a certain period of inactivity, in particular games targeting children and young people, to avoid prejudice to their dignity, privacy and security now or later in their lives.

■ clearly inform gamers about the presence of advertisements or product placements along the lines of Article 10 of the POSC.

www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/media

COUNCIL   CONSEIL
OF EUROPE   DE L'EUROPE