Principles for the Safer Use of Connected Devices and Online Services by Children and Young People in the EU

Following the launch of the "Principles", Ask.fm has been working in the last several months to implement the provisions according to its services and/or products.

 The Principles aimed to ensure that Signatories:

- Encourage the development of innovative approaches which enhance safe use of the technology by children and young people

- Encourage the empowerment of parents and carers to protect children and young people engaged in online activity through education and advice

- Promote users' awareness of information and tools to help keep themselves safer online and of their obligations to behave responsibly towards other users

- Encourage the provision of easily accessible, clear and transparent information to help users understand in a timely way the conditions of use for the service they are using, including what is permitted in terms of acceptable behaviour and user-generated content

- Seek to promote users' awareness of how – and to whom – to report abuse and concerns, including – where available – specialised external agencies and law enforcement bodies.

1. Content

The ICT Principles require under Section 1 – Content that signatories should:

- Indicate clearly where a service they offer may include content considered not to be appropriate for children and display prominently options which are available to control access to the content. This could include, where appropriate for the service, tools to manage access to certain content, advice to users or a recognised system of content labelling
- Display prominently and in an easily accessible location the Acceptable Use Policy, which should be written in easily-understandable language
- State clearly any relevant terms of service or community guidelines (i.e. how users are expected to behave and what is not acceptable) with which user generated content must comply
- Ensure that reporting options are in the relevant areas of the service
- Provide notice about the consequences for users if they post content which violates terms of service or community guidelines
- Continue work to provide innovative solutions able to support child safety protection tools and solutions.

Company measure	Status: indicate if completed, in progress or in planning	Documentation links/ screenshot/ examples
1. In April 2014 the company launched an online Safety Centre to help internet users develop online safety skills and educate parents and others close to users about how they can help keep them safe online. The Safety Centre is continuously developed to respond to emerging needs of our users and their parents. In addition, the Safety Centre outlines community standards and values expected from our users. The Safety Centre has incorporated user reader friendly policies and community guidelines including: - 'Do's and Don'ts'; - Safety and security essentials; - Abuse policy outlining what behaviour is acceptable on Ask.fm.	**Completed**	**http://ask.fm/about/safety/about-company** **http://ask.fm/about/safety/dos-and-donts** **http://ask.fm/about/safety/safety-security-essentials** **http://ask.fm/about/safety/abuse-policy**
2. As a social networking site predominantly used by young audience, we treat user safety as top priority. Ask.fm platform and mobile applications are equipped with easy and simple reporting tools to bring to our attention offensive content and users. Having in mind our young audience, we have put in place reporting tools, which are simple and manageable by children aged 13 years and over.	**Completed**	**Annex 1**
3. The company proactively moderates content posted on the platform. We employ software that detects and automatically removes offensive content. In addition, we have developed capacity to warn and ban offensive users from using our service. Furthermore, our teams of trained moderators work around the clock 24/7 to respond to user reports.	**Completed**	
4. Ask.fm is continuously investing in new user safety measures and developing partnerships with industry, civil society and academia to ensure that we integrate new ideas and solutions into our approach. Furthermore, we are working with Annie Mullins O.B.E., a leading expert on the impact of digital technology. As a consultant to Ask.fm, she advises us on all aspects of our policies and procedures.	**On-going**	**http://ask.fm/about/safety/letter-from-safety-expert**

5. In order to prevent young users from accessing inappropriate discussions Ask.fm has disabled search of certain terms.	**Completed**	**http://ask.fm/search/name**

2. Parental controls

Signatories of the ICT Principles have committed, as relevant for their products or services, to assist parents to limit their children's exposure to potentially inappropriate content and contact. It is recognised that parental controls have limitations and cannot replace parents' engagement in their children's online use. Measures that are available or appropriate to each service/product will vary, but may include:

- Manufacturers seeking to optimise hardware design to provide products which simply and clearly help parents to set appropriate levels of control on devices.
- Network providers seeking to provide necessary tools and settings across their services to enable parents to set appropriate levels of control
- Service and content providers making available the necessary tools and settings across their services to enable parents to set appropriate levels of control.

Company measure	Status: indicate if completed, in progress or in planning	Documentation links/ screenshot/ examples
1. This measure is not directly relevant for the Ask.fm as an online platform but the company recognizes the importance of parents developing online safety skills of young people. In response, our online Safety Centre provides information about the use of our platform and tips for parents on how to explore online safety with their children.	**Completed**	**http://ask.fm/about/safety/faqs-for-parents**
2. Ask.fm customer support unit is trained to address a wide range of questions from parents about the use of our site. We answer all questions and requests within 24 hours.	**Completed**	**Annex 2**

3. Dealing with abuse/misuse

The Signatories have committed, when relevant for their services or products, to deal with all abuse/misuse related to content or conduct which may be illegal, harmful, offensive or inappropriate e.g. under a company's Acceptable Use Policy. Signatories commit to:

- Provide a clear and simple process whereby users can report content or behaviour which breaches the service's terms and conditions
- Implement appropriate procedures for reviewing user reports about images, videos, text and other content or behaviour;
- Provide clear information to users on all available report and review procedures;
- Place and review regularly links to these reporting options in appropriate areas of the service;
- Place links to relevant child welfare organizations or specialist providers of advice and other confidential helplines/support services in appropriate areas;
- Ensure that moderators who review user reports are properly trained to determine or escalate content or behaviour presented to them.

Company measure	Status: indicate if completed, in progress or in planning	Documentation links/ screenshot/ examples
1. Ask.fm addresses misuse of the platform by employing two parallel processes. Firstly, we empowered users to decide, which questions to answer and what content to publish. All users have the ability to turn off questions from those wishing to remain anonymous, block unwanted users and report offensive content. User reporting tools are present all across of the site from where content is posted. Secondly, we have installed software to catch and automatically remove offensive content. In addition, the company reviews every picture and video uploaded on Ask.fm. They are assessed by independent moderators and if deemed inappropriate, are removed on average within 15 minutes. Moderators can also escalate serious reports to law enforcement and helplines if necessary.	**Completed**	**http://ask.fm/about/safety/safety-security-essentials**
2. In order to assist vulnerable youth Ask.fm is making available to it users country specific assistance resources such as helplines and NGOs. Our intention is to connect our users with appropriate online support resource. We have incorporated direct access to the INSAFE network in the Safety Centre and the IWF.	**In planning**	**http://ask.fm/about/safety/our-partners**

Company measure	Status	Documentation
3. Our team of in-house and outsourced moderators is continuously trained and monitored to respond appropriately to various user behaviors.	**Continuous**	

4. Child Sexual abuse content or illegal contact

Under this section, the ICT Principles require that signatories, if relevant for their services and products, cooperates with law enforcement authorities and other agencies, as provide for in local law, on child sexual abuse content or unlawful contact. The Signatories shall:
- Facilitate the notification of suspected child sexual abuse content to the appropriate law enforcement channels, in accordance with existing laws and data protection rules;
- Ensure the prompt removal of illegal child sexual abuse content once notified by national law enforcement agency
- Provide relevant additional information and/or links to users so they can make a report or obtain information about appropriate agencies or organisations that users can contact about making a report or obtaining expert advice, at national and EU level.

Company measure	Status: indicate if completed, in progress or in planning	Documentation links/screenshot/ examples
1. As a social networking site used by people across the world, Ask.fm has absolutely no tolerance for any material that promotes the harm of children and is committed to cooperate and assist law enforcement agencies with investigation of criminal and other violations. Ask.fm is also putting utmost attention to ensure that all of its operations comply with the applicable Latvian and EU legislation. The company has established a direct channel of communication with the relevant law enforcement agency in Latvia to submit necessary information about suspected child sexual abuse content. Ask.fm is also a member of the IWF and promotes this on the Safety Centre**.	**Completed**	**http://ask.fm/about/safety/our-partners**
2. On Ask.fm platform all users and visitors of the site have easy reporting options on both unacceptable content and profiles.	**Completed**	
3. Our team of moderators manually reviews every photo and video posted on the site. On average each photo is seen by at least two moderators and removed within 15 minutes, if deemed inappropriate.	**Completed**	

4. We constantly check links shared by our users to prevent and remove child exploitive content. We have developed software to detect and remove such content from our site.	**Completed**	

5. Privacy and control

The Signatories have committed, when relevant for the services and products, to continue compliance with existing data protection and advertising rules and privacy rights as set out in the relevant legal dispositions. In addition, the Signatories if appropriate to their service/product, may also:

- Manage privacy settings appropriate for children and young people in ways that ensure they are as safe as is reasonably possible;
- Offer a range of privacy setting options that encourage parents, children and young people to make informed decisions about their use of the service and the information they post and share with others online. These options should be easy to understand, prominently placed, user friendly and accessible;
- Take steps, where appropriate and in accordance with legal obligations, to raise user awareness of different privacy controls enabled by services or devices and enable users to use these as appropriate;
- Make reasonable efforts to raise awareness among all parties, service, content, technology and application providers, including public bodies, of industry good practice in relation to the protection of children and young people online.

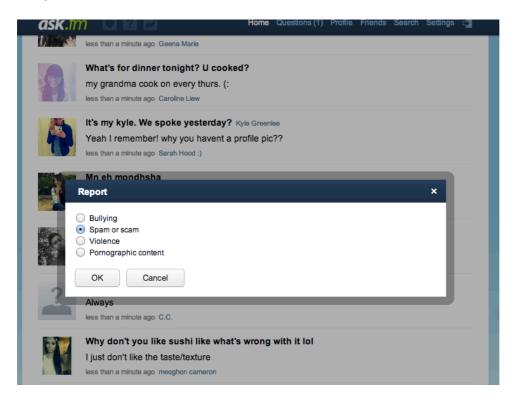| Company measure	Status: indicate if completed, in progress or in planning	Documentation links/ screenshot/ examples
1. Ask.fm is a public space of communication. Everything posted on Ask.fm platform is visible to all users and visitors of the site. We have explained the pros and cons of public online communication on our Safety Center.	**Completed**	**http://ask.fm/about/safety/dos-and-donts**
2. While ability to ask questions anonymously is an important aspect of our service, it is also optional. All users can choose to refuse receiving questions from people who wish to remain anonymous.	**Completed**	**http://ask.fm/about/safety/privacy-policy**
3. The company has started to proactively engage with industry, NGOs, media and individual citizens to share insights about online safety and discuss safety of children online. Currently Ask.fm has a partnership with INSAFE and promotes the hotlines across Europe via access through their website.	**Continuous**	**http://ask.fm/about/safety/our-partners**

6. Education and Awareness

The Signatories commit to raise awareness and provide appropriate information with the aim to:

- Educate children and young people and give them up to date information to manage their access and settings in relation to content, services and applications, adding support where possible to existing initiatives and partnerships;

- Provide advice about features of the service or functionality that are available to allow parents to improve the protection of children, such as tools to prevent access to certain types of content or service;

- Provide links to other sources of relevant, independent and authoritative advice for parents and carers, teachers, and for children;

- Provide access to information that will help educate parents, carers, teachers and children about media literacy and ethical digital citizenship, and help them think critically about the content consumed and created on the Internet;

- Encourage parents and teachers to use this information and talk to their children/pupils about the issues arising from the use of online services, including such topics as bullying, grooming and, where relevant, cost management.

Company measure	Status: indicate if completed, in progress or in planning	Documentation links/screenshot/ examples
1. Ask.fm Safety Centre provides necessary information about the use of the site, our Terms and Policies as well as general information to users, parents and those close to children about online safety matters.	**Completed**	**http://ask.fm/about/ safety/about-company**
2. The company is promoting its Safety Centre to our users by directing them to relevant information through daily questions.	**Continuous**	
3. Ask.fm is planning to offer external partners to post relevant questions about online safety to our users and to promote their educational materials.	**Planned**	
4. In order to further develop the Safety Centre, the company is planning to add relevant resources for parents and users as well as links to independent and authoritative institutions.	**Planned**	

Annexes

Annex 1

Annex 2