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Press release | 10.02.2010

Child safety on social networking sites

Press release by SNP MEP Ian Hudghton

MEP welcomes EU initiative to better protect children who use the internet

SNP President **Ian Hudghton** MEP has welcomed moves by the European Commission to make social networking sites safer for children who use them.

Mr Hudghton commented following the publication of a new EU study which revealed that 50% of European teenagers give out personal information on the web which is openly available to anyone.

Now the SNP MEP wants all social networking sites to sign up to the EU's Safer Social Networking Principles which aim to help protect children and young people from online predators. Mr Hudghton expressed concern after the study showed that less than half of social networking companies make profiles of people under 18 available only to their friends, whilst only one third reply to requests for help.

The SNP MEP commented:

"With an estimated fifty per cent of teenagers giving out personal information online, we need to make sure that robust measures are taken to protect young people from internet predators.

"Many young people find the internet absolutely invaluable for socialising and learning, and for most the experience will be a positive one. But there are clear risks involved in posting personal information online, and that's why I'm supporting the European Commission's Safer Internet Campaign.

"Their message to young people and their parents is straightforward: 'Think Before You Post'. We also need to see all social networking site operators sign up to the Safer Social Networking Principles, and make a clear commitment to improve the online privacy of minors.

"If they fail to do so voluntarily then legislation should follow."

Notes:

1. According to a European Commission study:

* 50% of European teenagers give out personal information online;
* Just 40% of social networking companies make profiles of under-18s only available to their friends by default;

* Only 11 out of 22 sites studied made it impossible for the private profiles of minors to be found through search engines;
* Only 9 out of 22 sites studied responded to complaints.

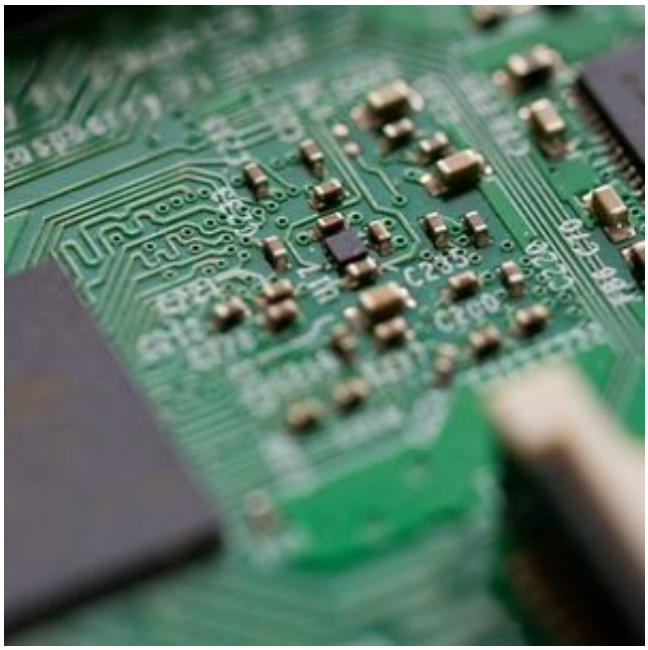
2. So far, 20 major social networking service providers active in Europe have signed up to the EU's Safer Social Networking Principles.

3. For more information see www.saferinternet.org

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