Check List & Concrete Criteria for Positive Content

www.positivecontent.eu

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INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are primarily aimed at producers and providers who design, develop and distribute online content and services for children from 4 to 12 years of age:
> Producers or providers of online content/services that target children and/or young people
> Producers or providers of online content/services that are not necessarily targeted to young people yet are popular amongst youngsters.

Online content includes text, image, audio and/or video material. Online content is accessible through various online services such as websites, games, web radios and TV, media (video/image) sharing platforms, blogs, social networks, browsers, search engines and apps. Online content and services complement traditional channels for learning and entertainment such as school, family, peers, linear broadcast and other traditional media.

These guidelines apply to all forms of online content and services as mentioned above but are not limited to these.

HOW CAN WE PRODUCE AND PROVIDE QUALITY ONLINE CONTENT AND SERVICES TARGETED AT GIVING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POSITIVE EXPERIENCES?
In order to support children and young people online, there is a need to produce and provide high quality online content and services from which children can benefit when they go online[1]. These guidelines address current needs and challenges within a discourse on what positive online content and services are.

Online content and services can enable children to actively participate in civic or political activities[2] as well as empower them to express their thoughts and opinions as active providers of online content themselves, demands expressly formulated in Article 13 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.[3]

[1] The EU Kids Online Survey showed that children and young people are going online at increasingly earlier age, but only 37 % of the European 9-12 year olds feel that there are a lot of good things for kids of their age online. See EU Kids Online „Risks and Safety on the Internet. The perspective of European children" (2012): http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/1/Risks%20and%20safety%20on%20the%20internet%28lsero%29.pdf, p.35

[2] Livingstone / Bober / Helsper: "Active participation or just more information? Young people's take-up of opportunities to act and interact on the internet": http://www2.scedu.unibo.it/roversi/SocioNet/livingstone.pdf

[3] http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx

WHAT ARE HIGH QUALITY ONLINE CONTENT AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN?

These guidelines elaborate key aspects to consider when producing or providing online content and services for children: target group and age-appropriateness, attractiveness, usability, reliability, safety and privacy issues as well as specifics if social media communication and/or commercial elements are present.

Postive online content and services enable children to:
> learn and develop
> have fun and enjoy themselves
> acquire and retain life skills
> stretch or stimulate imagination
> enhance and enable creativity
> discover new possibilities and abilities
> enhance social/cultural understanding
> develop a positive view of themselves and a respect for their identity
> build up positive relationships with their family and friends
> encourage their sense of self, community and place
> enhance their participation in society
> produce and distribute their own positive online content

Note: The European Commission has launched the competition "European Award for Best Content for Kids" which aims at highlighting existing quality content for 4 - 12-year-old children as well as encouraging the production of new positive online content and services for children all over Europe. In 2010 it was launched for the first time, the second competition is taking place in 2013. After a national competition in all participating European countries, the national winners will compete on European level in order to award the European winners.

The guidelines for positive content and services for children have formed the basis for the list of criteria that guides the national organisers, the national juries as well as the European jury when judging the entries.[4]

THE TARGET GROUP OF CHILDREN

What is attractive to children and young people can be very different to what is attractive to adults. However, input from researchers working with the toy industry and producers of online and interactive audiovisual content for youngsters, gives an indication of elements that need to be taken into consideration.

From the toy industry, we learn that content for children and young people giving them positive experiences is "open" – enabling children to play and learn in their own way. As such, content

Article 13
1. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.
2. The exercise of this right may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:
(a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others; or
(b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.

[4] See all information on the European competition on http://www. bestcontentaward.eu/.

should be aimed at developing life skills, increasing positive feelings and avoid predetermination of how they should act – they should be encouraged to make open choices and to interact. **Position:** The actual age or age range of the target group, the development of cognitive abilities and capabilities are important for how the content is perceived and should guide the preproduction and production process. Parents are also an important target group, since they are often the gate-keeper for younger children. Designing online content which ensures the trust of parents enables your content to stand out.

STRUCTURE OF THE GUIDELINES

The guidelines are structured to provide advice that producers/providers might consider in a production or dissemination process. They provide eight key topics as well as a final chapter specifically focusing on apps:

1. Target groups are clearly defined and addressed
2. Content and services are attractive
3. Content and services are usable
4. Content and services are reliable
6. The privacy of children is ensured
7. If social media communication features are present: social networks, chat rooms, forums, guest books, video platforms etc.
8. If commercial elements are present: advertising, sponsoring, online shopping etc.
9. Guidelines for Apps

The key topics bear equal weight – the chosen structure does not prioritise any topic over another.

Note: There is a short checklist document "Criteria for Positive Content and Services" accompanying these elaborate guidelines. The checklist provides these eight key topics in a short overview of two pages (chapter 11).[5]

[5] See document "Checklist: Criteria for Positive Content" attached to these guidelines or on http://www.positivecontent.eu/.

1.
TARGET GROUPS ARE CLEARLY DEFINED AND ADDRESSED

- Define and analyze your target group by age range.
- Have a vision and strategy for your content/service:
  - > Develop a strategy of why you are producing and providing this content/service and why is it relevant.
  - > Define the objectives of your online content/service.
  - > Be clear about which are the potential actions and reactions that you aim to produce in your target group.
  - > Define what the core use of the content/service should be.
  - > Make sure you have the sufficient time and resources to create the high quality content/service you aim at.

- Make the target group or recommended age range transparent and comprehensible.
- The cognitive development of the target group (physical and mental skills, emotions) is taken into account regarding content, design and navigation:
  - > Know the abilities, skills and needs of your target group.
  - > Keep in mind what makes children and young people vulnerable.

- The content/service is understandable for the target group:
  - > The language used is well written, without mistakes and suitable for the target group
  - > The content is available in the target group's native language. If text has been translated from another language, it has been proof read by a native speaker to avoid misspellings and errors.
  - > The content/service is meaningful for the users and it meets its specific and current interests.
  - > The different cultural and linguistic contexts and the users' socio-cultural development have been taken into account.
  - > Story-line, text, dialogues and images are adapted to the target audience.

> Instructions are clear and simple and intuitive to the target group as well as their parents and educators.

• Engage the target group in the development and testing of content/services in order to make it as age-appropriate, relevant and user-friendly as possible.

The international co-productions My Friend Boo (www.myfriendboo.com), In Search of Sara J (www.insearchofsaraj.eu) and Boys and Girls (www.boysandgirlslabs.eu), backed by the European Union, have all piloted an innovative methodology to engage the target group in the development and testing of content and visuals in order to make it as age-appropriate and relevant as possible. Producers can be inspired by looking at the methodology used in each of the mentioned productions on their websites.

• Take into account the context in which the content/service will be used:
> e.g. is the user alone, guided by his/her parents, together with peers, in busy surroundings or in a quiet place?
> Which experiences is the user likely to have?

• Information for parents, teachers and other professionals is provided, especially when the target group is young children.

• Seek out information about relevant organizations who could support you
> Safer Internet Programme
> National Safer Internet Centres[6]
> National regulators
> Thematic network POSCON

[6] http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/sip/projects/centres/index_en.htm

2.
CONTENT AND SERVICES ARE ATTRACTIVE

- The content/service is presented in an attractive way to the target group through use of creative, interactive, innovative, entertaining and/or educational features.
- Know what is attractive to children and which elements you should consider when creating content/services targeted at them:
    > Put yourself in the place of your target group in order to get attuned to how they might use the content.
    > Get a clear idea about what would stimulate a child, which are his preferred learning styles and which consequences does it have for the content you want to develop.
    > Establish what would motivate the child to engage with your content/service, to enjoy it, to wish for similar experiences and to feel satisfied when it ends.

Examples: www.coolfoodplanet.org

- Stimulate the user group to have positive experiences and effectively avoid encouraging physical or psychological violence, bullying and other harmful behavior towards other people or animals, or harm to the children using it.

- Capture the users' attention in a pleasant way, using stimulating, original, and amusing approaches and formats:
  > Create meaningful content/services to the target group, including graphics, video and audio content.
  > Create content/services that is/are fun, enjoyable and entertaining.
  > Foresee interactivity and offer possibilities to be challenged and to visit the content/service on a regular basis.

Oddizzi Africa Home Page (www.oddizzi.com): Shows how child-friendly written content can be, with graphics, video clips and hyperlinks to other content areas within Oddizzi.
Fun with Justin mobile game (http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/justins-house/games/play/justins-house-fun-with-justin/) to be played on a mobile device

- The visuals are of high quality, properly attributed and labeled:
  > Consider which impact images and videos have on the user group (images and sounds have stronger visual impact than text).

- Interactivity: Children get the opportunity to actively interact with the content/service or others.
  - > The content/service seeks for user's reaction and is responsive to user's actions.
  - > The users can influence the way the content/service evolves.
  - > The content/service encourages the user to experiment and find new solutions.
  - > Positive online interaction and/or offline interaction with peers and family is stimulated.

- Make the content/service environment appropriately challenging:
  - > The user is able to easily select the level of engagement and participation and he/she is suitably rewarded for his/her efforts.
  - > The content/service creates a learning curve that gives the user a feeling of mastery and control over the actions/evolvement of the actions.
  - > Rules are appropriately challenging on the one hand and simple enough to master on the other hand.
  - > Give the user an appropriate and consistent feedback on his/her actions, so that he/she knows if a mistake is made and is guided in the right direction.
  - > When suitable, keep track of the user's work and give feedback suitable for the individual user.
  - > Produce content/services which has/have something to offer for different types of users: e.g. realistic or imaginative users, active or receptive users, dreamers, thinkers, actors or achievers, etc.

- Construct a good balance within the content/service: try to create playful movements between activities, interaction, playful handling of online content and objects, construction, fantasy and role play, success and team play.
- Consider whether the content/service allows the child to move smoothly from stage to stage (e.g. experimentation, through functional use, variation and integration) in order to let the interaction develop naturally and fluently.
- If the content/service aims at providing education/learning opportunities, it enhances the experience by providing appealing graphic, video and audio content:
  - > There is clear information about the learning goals and how they can be reached?
  - > The status of achieving each learning goal and/or parts of it is/are available at any point to the user.

3. CONTENT AND SERVICES ARE USABLE

KEY ELEMENTS OF USABILITY

How easy are the content and services to use? Children's favorite sites and apps are often sites that are very easy to use.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. **LEARNABILITY: How easy is it for users to accomplish basic tasks the first time they encounter the design?**
2. **EFFICIENCY: Once users have learned the design, how quickly can they perform tasks?**
3. **Memorability: When users return to the design after a period of not using it, how easily can they reestablish proficiency?**
4. **ERRORS: How many errors do users make, how severe are these errors, and how easily can they recover from the errors?**
5. **SATISFACTION: How pleasant is it to use the design?**

Usability is defined by these 5 quality components according to the Nielsen Norman Group.[7]

Note: For children the same rules apply. If children get lost on a site or within an app, they leave. If the information is hard to read, children also go away. Children have a short attention span online and they want to find answers to their questions and wishes instantly. Research shows that children (teens especially) are overconfident in their web abilities, but on online performing they score worse than adults. That makes it necessary to create simple, very usable online content and services for them.[8]

You need to help them the best you can, if you want to have them stay on your content or service and have them back again.

[7] http://www.nngroup.com/articles/usability-101-introduction-to-usability/

[8] http://www.nngroup.com/articles/usability-of-websites-for-teenagers/

GUIDELINES ON NAVIGATION

- The navigation structure is user-friendly and adapted to children. Children always know where they are.
- The design and navigation is targeted at increasing the positive experiences of the users and it meets the needs and behaviors of children.

Ask yourself these two questions:

1. **Is it easy to navigate through the content/service, so that the user does not get lost within but always knows where he/she is?**
2. **Is the navigation predictable and stable over time, making it easy for a user to come back to the same content/service?**

Note: The cognitive development and skills of the target audience been taken into account: Realize there are big differences between age groups. For example, young children like animations and sounds, older children like them less.[9]

Ask yourself these questions:

1. **Is the design is intuitive for children so that they can use the content/service on offer independently after first time use.**
2. **If the content/service is for younger age groups does it use visuals (like screenshots and animation) and speech instead of text to explain the content or show links to other content available?**
3. **Have you tested with children?**

Also, consider specifics for your content/service, such as these for websites:
1. **If the content/service is for younger age groups, are the icons are large and easy to select with a moving cursor, and does it sustains the "pound on the keyboard" test?**
2. **Is the URL/domain name simple and easy to reach and does it avoid involuntary access to unwanted or age-inappropriate content. Children often make spelling mistakes and mistype your site-url.**

[9] http://www.nngroup.com/articles/usability-of-websites-for-teenagers/

ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY

- The content/service is accessible from different platforms and devices (desktop computers, mobile phones, tablet PCs, browsers: Internet Explorer, Firefox, Opera, Safari, Chrome, operating systems: Android, iOS, Windows Phone etc...). Many children use content on a tablet (computer or mobile). A site in flash isn't working on a tablet, and that is a huge turn off.
- The content/service follows the W3C WCAG 2.0 guidelines[10] ("Web Access Guidelines to make it accessible to target groups with different resources and needs.
- It is downloadable also with low bandwidth connections.

BACKGROUND: UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF ACCESSIBILITY[11]

In order to understand the WCAG 2.0 guidelines it is important to understand the underlying four principles, because they were formulated as the foundation necessary for anyone to access and use Web content.

Anyone who wants to use the Web must have content that is:

1. **PERCEIVABLE – Information and user interface components must be presentable to users in ways they can perceive. This means that users must be able to perceive the information being presented (it can't be invisible to all of their senses).**
2. **OPERABLE – User interface components and navigation must be operable. This means that users must be able to operate the interface (the interface cannot require interaction that a user cannot perform).**
3. **UNDERSTANDABLE – Information and the operation of user interface must be understandable. This means that users must be able to understand the information as well as the operation of the user interface (the content or operation cannot be beyond their understanding).**
4. **ROBUST – Content must be robust enough that it can be interpreted reliably by a wide variety of user agents, including assistive technologies. This means that users must be able to access the content as technologies advance (as technologies and user agents evolve, the content should remain accessible).**

- The content/service
  > promotes awareness and appreciation of other cultures and expressions.
  > is accessible to a diversity of social groups (e.g. socially disadvantaged or marginalised groups).
- Does the content/service show links to other positive content available to make positive content visible and create a safe surfing environment?

[10] http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/ - Reliance technologies such as Flash, JavaScript and HTML5 Canvas sometimes present accessibility problems and makes the content more difficult to be properly indexed by search engines)

[11] http://www.w3.org/TR/UNDERSTANDING-WCAG20/intro.html

The search engine for children www.fragFINN.de in Germany is based on a whitelist providing a huge surfing environment of now 11.000 domains which have been checked by media pedagogues if they are secure for children. Websites specifically addressing children are shown first in the search results.

"Meine Startseite" www.meine-startseite.de ("My homepage") in Germany provides an easy access for children to lead them to "their" websites. It offers a variety of widgets – based on feeds of the best kids sites – that can be selected to create an own homepage.

4. CONTENT AND SERVICES ARE RELIABLE

Content and services for children and young people have the responsibility to offer them a safe and reliable place to evolve. Providers need to be aware of the potential risks to children and young people[12], and how they can be dealt with or avoided. Finding the right balance is the key: letting children communicate, play and create without borders and let them do that in safe and reliable environment.

- The content/service abides by relevant legislation or regulation: Seek out information about relevant legislation and regulations[13], e.g. on youth protection, privacy, commercial communication etc.
- The producer/creator and provider (organization or individual) is clearly identified and information is offered.[14]
- Contact details are easily accessible in order to enable parents or children to get in touch in case of problems.
- The offered content is true, up to date and/or topical (where relevant).
- Clear information about the goals of the content/service you provide/produce (e.g. long-term motivation, educational, commercial, entertainment, etc...) is provided.
- If access to third party content is provided:
  > The producer/provider has made sure that the content does not infringe upon the copyright of other people/organizations.
  > The content indicates acceptance of, or exemption from, responsibility for content that is not controlled by your service, like forums, links etc.
  > References to content from other sources are given, and the internet address of the entity or of the document is cited.
  > The destination of links is indicated, e.g. by providing a brief description of the source in small text alongside the link.
  > If the content is informative or educational: there is reference to author, bibliography, dates of publication and updates etc.

[12] EU Kids Online "Risks and Safety on the Internet. The perspective of European children" (2012): http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/1/Risks%20and%20safety%20on%20the%20internet%28lsero%29.pdf

[13] For example www.coppa.org in the US/CA or the Audiovisual Media Services Directive http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:095:0001:0024:EN:PDF in the European Union

[14] E.g. in Germany it is the law for the provider to have a "web imprint" which clearly indicates: name of the provider/company; first and last name of a contact person (or CEO, communication office etc); full address (post box is not acceptable), telephone number and contact form or e-mail.

- New content is periodically uploaded and services are regularly maintained and reviewed to ensure high quality:
  - \> Frequent and coherent updates and quality controls are carried out, by:
    - \> Where relevant, keeping information up to date.
    - \> Providing information on publication dates/ the date of the last update made to the content/service.
    - \> Regularly checking for abuse/misuse of the brand/URL.
  - \> Regularly checks are carried out
    - \> for broken links or dead ends.
    - \> that links from the content/service do not contain viruses or other malware and efforts are made to ensure that a high level of security is maintained.
  - \> If installation of a programme or game is required, it is straight-forward and easy to do so.

- The content and services are accurate and reliable:
  - \> Correct, rigorous and unequivocal information about the production/selection of content is provided, so that the users know what to expect from the content/service.
  - \> If the content deals with sensitive topics (eg. public health), it is made sure the information is scientifically sound and includes author reference for informative content.
  - \> An assessment of which features are being offered and which are appropriate to the intended audience and established mechanisms for reviewing content/conduct on the service or the kind of content/conduct that the service allows for has been made.

5. CONTENT AND SERVICES ARE SAFE

Content and services have to be safe to use for the target group. Apart from them not offering harmful content or experiences and the need to monitor the service, children should be given the tools to report content and actions which frighten them in order to feel secure.

- The content is not harmful to minors: it does not contain offensive material or other harmful elements (i.e. pornography, racist/violent/offending content, pictures or videos).
- The content/service is safe for children to use and maintains this level of safety over time.
- It has been taken into consideration how the service may be associated with potential risks to children and young people and the provider has acted upon these considerations.
- The content/service gives children and young people the tools, knowledge and skills to use it in a safe way.
  - > Clear, targeted guidance and educational material is made available in a prominent, accessible, easy-to-understand and practical format.
  - > It is clearly indicated which content is appropriate for different age groups and/or where a minimum registration age applies.
  - > The provider/producer has made certain that content unsuitable for children under a certain age group is not accessed by this group, for instance through implementing an age verification system.
- Easy to use and find reporting mechanisms are provided:
  - > i.e. an alarm button, in case children need help or advice or need to report potentially harmful content or contact.
  - > The users are provided with the information they need to make an effective report, and, where appropriate, an indication of how reports are typically handled, including response time.
  - > Reports are acknowledged and acted upon expeditiously (e.g. 48 hours).
- The content/service limits exposure to potentially inappropriate content[15] and contact.
  - > Measures are in place to ensure that there is no access to content that might be harmful to

[15] The definition of online content which can be deemed harmful for children varies across European countries and regions. Content which in general fall under the heading of harmful content may include: pornography/nudity, violence, racism and xenophobia etc. Harmful content may cause moral, mental or physical detriment to children or encourage them to self-harm or to inflict harm on other people or animals.

children and young people.
> Measures ensure that the content does not link to unsuitable content, either directly or indirectly and that it aims to take such content off the service if identified.
> If possible content is labeled under an existing content labeling system (eg. PEGI and PEGI Online for games[16], age-de.xml).
> If a search function is provided, safety measures are provided to limit access to harmful/ inappropriate content if it delivers free web results.
> Support staff and moderators receive specific training in relation to online child protection and safeguarding issues.
• Mechanisms for allowing parents and guardians to be engaged in their children's use of the content have been introduced.

[16] www.pegi.info

6.
THE PRIVACY OF CHILDREN IS ENSURED

This chapter refers to data of children which may be actively collected or processed by the provider of the content/service. Especially it is focusing on personal data which may be asked for when registering for services such as a social network or signing up for a newsletter, using entry forms for guest books or message boards, when sending e-cards or using provided contact forms. Also it refers to data which are processed while using the content/service. However, it does not cover aspects of children themselves giving access to personal data deliberately or voluntarily for example via status posts, uploaded pictures or in guest books. The aspect of educating children to keep their personal data private and be careful of what to share with others online is covered by specific criteria on rules and security information regarding social communication features (chapter 7).

If the content/service collects personal data:
- Privacy laws are respected.
- Consider whether it is truly necessary for the content/service to function properly to collect the user's personal data (mobile numbers, birth date, full name, address etc).
- Provide an effective security and privacy policy which is easily accessible to users and their parents, in particular regarding the target groups' personal information.
- Provide information in a clear and adapted manner about which data is collected and why, in compliance with privacy legislation at EU and national level, preferably in a way children will also understand.
- Provide transparent information on:
  > which information is being collected
  > how it is collected
  > who is collecting it
  > what it is used for
  > the confidentiality of personal data
  > a data protection point / report mechanism

why in which cases personal data might be transmitted to a third party (e.g. with the purpose to receive a prize).

- Collect privacy sensitive information in a transparent (e.g. non-aggressive or forceful) way.
- If the visitor's data is processed while using the site, this should be made transparent, e.g. through a privacy policy.
- Take measures so that children are not requested to submit personal data of other people (e.g. a friend or family).
- Get parental consent whenever sensitive data (e.g. name, contact details) is requested from a minor, according to national legislation, e.g. through e-mail validation by parents, for instance:
  > If the child is encouraged to participate in a competition and allowed to win a prize where he/she has to give up personal details to win a prize.
  > If the data is due to be disclosed to a third party, for instance with the purpose of delivering a prize.

7.
IF SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION FEATURES ARE PRESENT: SOCIAL NETWORKS, CHAT ROOMS, FORUMS, GUEST BOOKS, VIDEO PLATFORMS ETC.

Interactive communication possibilities or possibility to post user-generated content might encompass social networking services, chat rooms, guest books, forums, video platforms etc. The Safer Social Networking Principles for the EU, developed and signed by 20 social networking services providers provide a framework for ensuring the safety of children and young people.[17] It is important to ensure that user-generated content and interactive communication services are safe and secure for children and young people to use.

- If you provide chat rooms, forums etc. or allow for the publication of user-generated content and interactive communication does the content show that steps have been taken towards ensuring that the services are safe for children and teens to use?
    - > Age and identification of users:
        - > The service clearly states the age from which children and teens can use the communication facility, and measures are in place to identify and delete under-age users, when required.
        - > Parental consent is asked for if registration is required.
        - > A system for validation of users and/or to get parental consent for registration (valid e-mail address, registration via SMS etc) is implemented.
    - > Constant and active monitoring and moderation of user contributions ensures that all content that may be harmful to children is deleted:
        - > The provider monitors these services, also where the user has the opportunity to become "part of the story" via chat or message boards.
        - > User contributions are monitored before they are published and/or there are measures in place to ensure that content which may be harmful to the target group is not posted?
    - > A reporting opportunity easy to access and use is available in the chat room/forum/website

etc. to notify the providers of abuse of the services, potentially harmful content and negative incidents and there are measures in place to acknowledge the receipts of the reports and act upon them expeditiously, i.e. alarm button, contact form, moderator is present with personal profile or avatar.

Seitenstark-Chat (www.seitenstark.de/chat/) is a safe chat room for children which is constantly moderated. There are two moderators present, one deciding on each chat post if it is allowed to go through and one communicating with chatters who do not abide by the rules or helps out with problems.

- Specific rules and security information on how to use the services safely are offered (i.e. guidance on netiquette while communicating with others, protection of personal data, protection against cyberbullying etc.).
- Easy to use and find reporting mechanisms are provided in case children need help or advice or need to report potentially harmful content or contact.

Video-sharing platform juki (www.juki.de) for children with social media communication features: Users can watch and upload videos, also they can create their own cartoon film. Every video is checked before it is visible to the public. Users can interact via commentaries and rate videos of others. User profiles do not include personal data of children and have to be validated by the parents.

8.
IF COMMERCIAL ELEMENTS ARE PRESENT: ADVERTISING, SPONSORING, ONLINE SHOPPING ETC.

Advertising and sponsorship is a common source of revenue for online content/service providers and producers. However, children and young people are generally more susceptible to manipulations than adults and are not necessarily trained in recognizing what is advertising and what is not. Therefore, special consideration needs to be taken to how commercial communications[18] are integrated or appear on websites providing content targeted to children and young people.

- If your content/service contains commercial elements, make sure the commercial aims are easily recognizable to the target audience:
  > The age, knowledge and level of maturity of the target audience been taken into account.
  > It is clearly stated to both the users and his/her parents, in an appropriate manner in an open, honest article on the service what the commercial aims are.
  > Measures have been taken so as not to incite children to spend money or enter into contracts by themselves.
  > Measures have been taken to avoid surreptitious commercial communications.
  > Make sure that you accept commercial communications only from reliable and credible partners.
  > Make efforts to stay in control of the commercial content and do not allow anybody to influence it.

- Be sure to avoid commercial communications inappropriate to children (e.g. no advertising or shopping for alcohol, tobacco, erotic products, gambling, lotteries etc.).
  > Make efforts not to:
    > directly encourage minors to buy or hire a product or service by exploiting their inexperience or credulity.
    > directly encourage them to persuade their parents or others to purchase the goods or services being presented.
    > exploit the special trust minors place in parents, teachers or other persons.
    > contain images/content that may be considered harmful to the target audience

[18] The Audiovisual Media Services Directive http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:095:0001:0024:EN:PDF in Art. 1 (h) considers "images with or without sound which are designed to promote, directly or indirectly, the goods, services or image of a natural or legal entity pursuing an economic activity" as "audiovisual commercial communication". "Such images accompany or are included in a programme in return for payment or for similar consideration or for self-promotional purposes. Forms of audiovisual commercial communication include, inter alia, television advertising [Art. 1 (i)], sponsorship [Art. 1 (k)], teleshopping [Art. 1 (l)] and product placement [Art. 1 (m)]."

(see section on safety, chapter 5).
> unreasonably show minors in dangerous situations.

- Implementation of commercial elements:
  > Make them clearly recognizable and identifiable and separate them from the content the target audience is likely to use so that they do not think it is part of the content.
  > Commercial elements do not restrict the user's control of actions.
  > Sponsored parts are clearly made visible.

- Implementation of online shopping facilities
  > Make the shop, fee-based content or subscription clearly identifiable.
  > Make sure that you do not place any kind of demand or actively attempt to persuade children or teens to shop online.
  > Provide clear and detailed information about all goods and services on offer as well as the transaction process, including:
    > price, shipment, geographical restrictions
    > types of payments and implications (extra charges/discounts), billing time, updated availability
    > rights of withdrawal, return policy and costs of return
    > consequences if the site suspects fraudulence etc.
  > Provide sufficient information about the fact that they are about to enter into a contract by accepting any of the offers made.
  > There is a financial limit to what children can spend on the service.
  > Payment methods require parental control.

9.
GUIDELINES FOR APPS

The market of mobile devices and apps is growing. The guidelines for positive content in general work for apps as well. In addition it is necessary to look closer at specific features of apps which complement the previous guidelines:

APPS AND RELIABILITY

- It informs parents about the educational value and developments which apply to the app. This kind of relevant communication is on a website, newsletter or in the app itself in an extra menu only for parents/educators.
- If the app contains advertisement, it is clearly marked and separated from the content.
- The publisher of the app is a responsible party. It gives the user no possibility to spend money in the app (unless it is in a good protected area and it is clear for the educators or older children that you should ask permission to an adult).
- The app protects the user of any influences from outside. It gives no opportunity to have contact with other users or gives access to unsuitable messages.
- The app is 'closed' and gives no possibilities to leave the app and go to an external website, app store, application, e-mail programme, advertising area or sharing button. For example provide different interactions for external services, i.e. swipe random with two fingers – or more fingers – to the left or right, and only communicate them to parents.
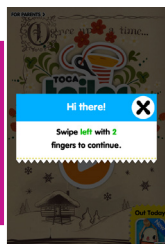
TOCA BOCA (Sweden, www.tocaboca.com) introduced the random function Two Finger Swipe Up / Down / Left / Right to go to the purchase page. Toca Boca develops apps for children between 3 and 6 years old, who do not have skills in reading. This function makes sure that this feature is for the exclusive use of parents.

APPS AND USER-FRIENDLY DESIGN

- The publisher of the app is reserved in making contact with the user and doesn't send any 'pushrequests'.
- It does not give messages to review the app in the App Store or Google Play store.
- The navigation takes into account that (young) children have limited motor skills (think of the size of the buttons etc.). Children don't get lost within the app and can easily go back to the home screen or to the previous chapter.
- The app gives the opportunity to keep track of where you are in the story (by marking a point in the story for example). It is easy for a child to find this point again if it wants to continue his/her reading or game.
- The app is standing on its own. It doesn't need (permanent) access to the internet, uses software that has to be downloaded separately or uses difficult techniques that are not understandable for children and educators.
- Settings where children or parents can set and customize functions and activities proposed by the app should be simple and ensure that if accidentally changed, it will not greatly affect the app's performance.

10. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

These guidelines build on, among others, a number of already existing guidelines/lists:

- Inventory "Producing and providing online content for children and young people. An inventory": http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/sip/docs/competition/final_draft.pdf
- Social networking principles for the EU: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/social_networking/docs/sn_principles.pdf
- fragFINN Whitelist criteria: http://www.fragfinn.de/download/fragFINN_whitelist_criteria.pdf
- Children's technology review, evaluation instrument: http://childrenstech.com/evaluation-instrument/
- Judging criteria for the Prix jeunesse international: http://www.prixjeunesse.de/
- MyBee evaluation criteria for children's sites: http://www.mybee.nl/downloads/MyBee-verantwoording_EN.pdf
- Next Level: Dossier on online games for children, Remco Pijpers and Justine Pardoen, 2009: http://mijnkindonline.nl/uploads/NextLevelEnglish.pdf
- Quatro Vocabulary for trustmark schemes: http://www.quatro-project.org/vocabulary
- Council of Europe: Human rights guidelines for online games providers: http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/media/Doc/H-Inf(2008)008_en.pdf
- "Children's online charter" as developed by Sonia Livingstone in "A rationale for positive content for children"[19]
- Criteria for evaluations for the Dutch competition Gouden Apenstaart: http://www.goudenapenstaart.nl

[19] In Communication Research Trends, Vol 28, 2009

11.
CHECKLIST:
CRITERIA FOR POSITIVE CONTENT AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

TARGET GROUPS ARE CLEARLY DEFINED AND ADDRESSED
- Target group or age range is transparent and comprehensible.
- The cognitive development of the target group (physical and mental skills, emotions) is taken into account regarding content, design and navigation.
- The content/service is understandable for the target group.
- Information for parents is provided, especially when the target group is young children.

CONTENT AND SERVICES ARE ATTRACTIVE
- The content/service is presented in an attractive way to the target group through use of creative, interactive, innovative, entertaining and/or educational features.
- The visuals are of high quality, properly attributed and labeled.
- The language used is well written, without mistakes and suitable for the target group.
- Positive online interaction and/or offline interaction with peers and family is stimulated.

CONTENT AND SERVICES ARE USABLE
- The navigation structure is user-friendly and adapted to the target group. Users do not get lost within the site: they always know where they are.
- The URL is easy and simple to reach. Typo-errors will not land the children in unwanted or harmful domains filled with viruses and advertising.
- The design of the content channel facilitates navigation and enables children to easily find their way through the content/site.
- The content/service is accessible through different platforms and devices (browsers, mobile devices etc.).

CONTENT AND SERVICES ARE SAFE
- The content/service is not harmful to minors: it does not contain offensive material or other

harmful elements (i.e. pornography, racist/violent/offending content, pictures or videos).
- Children are not directed to other unsuitable content/services like external websites with content that is not appropriate for children.

CONTENT AND SERVICES ARE RELIABLE
- Information about the provider/creator is offered.
- Contact details are easily accessible, in order to enable parents or children to get in touch in case of problems.
- Where relevant, the offered content is true, up to date and, where relevant, topical.
- The content does not infringe on the copyright of others.

THE PRIVACY OF CHILDREN IS ENSURED
- Privacy laws are respected.
- No more data than necessary is gathered.
- Personal data is treated confidentially and exceptions (i.e. for the purpose of delivering a prize) are made transparent and it is stated clearly that the data is deleted afterwards.
- Information about privacy measures and policies are clearly visible and in a language suitable for the target group and his/her parents.
- If the data of visitors is processed while using the site, this should be made transparent.
- If children can share their personal data, they have to actively confirm parental consent.

IF SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION FEATURES ARE PRESENT:
SOCIAL NETWORKS, CHAT ROOMS, FORUMS, GUEST BOOKS, VIDEO PLATFORMS ETC.
- Specific rules and security information on how to use the services safely are offered: (i.e. guidance on netiquette while communicating with others, protection of personal data, protection against cyberbullying etc.).
- Parental consent is asked for if registration is required.
- Easy to use and find reporting mechanisms are provided, (i.e. an alarm button, in case children need help or advice or need to report potentially harmful content or contact).
- Constant and active monitoring and moderation of user contributions ensures that all content that may be harmful to children is deleted.

IF COMMERCIAL ELEMENTS ARE PRESENT:
ADVERTISING, SPONSORING, ONLINE SHOPPING ETC.
- Commercial elements, advertising and online shopping facilities are clearly set apart from the content, easily recognizable, labeled as such and not age-inappropriate to the target group (e.g. no advertising or shopping for alcohol or cigarettes).

- Commercial elements do not restrict the user's control of actions.
- There is a financial limit to what children can spend on the site or in the game.
- The commercial proposition is openly communicated.
- Payment methods require parental control.

ABOUT POSCON

With more and more children being online at a young age, concepts and ways to accompany and support them in their first and further steps on the internet are needed more than ever. One important keyword here is "positive content and services" where children can easily and safely enjoy the internet and mobile devices. This issue has been addressed on several levels before – on national level with initiatives bringing forward the production and promotion of positive content, and on European level e.g. with the EC focus group on positive content, the European Award for Positive Online Content, as well as sessions at the EC's Safer Internet Forum dedicated to the topic.

THE NETWORK
The Thematic Network POSCON (www.positivecontent.eu) is meant to make a substantial contribution to the topic of child online safety on European level. It brings together players and stakeholders in the field for the first time in such a way and make possible exchange of expertise, concepts and content that has not taken place like this up to now.

OUTCOMES

The network will provide concrete recommendations for content providers European-wide and thus contribute to an enhanced landscape of positive online content for children. It will furthermore provide a unique repository of the European landscape of positive content, an important basis for further whitelists, children's browsers, search engines for children, and which will offer broad opportunities as a sustainable, extendable and open-access tool for diverse future utilisation.

PROMOTING POSITIVE CONTENT

Also, POSCON will raise awareness among producers, providers, stakeholders, parents for the topic and ideally lay the foundation for further projects which will establish the topic of positive content even more intensively on national as well as transnational level. Especially, the thematic network will ideally be able to contribute to further perspectives and developments as well as offer new approaches for future work and focus of the Safer Internet Programme of the European Commission.

The project started in October 2012 and runs until November 2014.

funded by the European Commission