Laboratory for Childhood Protection Online Charter

A free, open and secure internet is a powerful tool to promote connectivity, enhance social inclusiveness and foster economic growth.

Yet, due to misuses of digital tools and the lack of proper safeguards, children continue to experience insidious forms of violence, exploitation and abuse online every day and in every country. Therefore, children's protection online remains a challenge.

Several tragedies befalling young people and families across the globe have highlighted the need to address the risks of violence against children such as inter alia sexual exploitation and abuse, including those leading to self-harming behaviors, technology-facilitated solicitation and grooming, cyberbullying, cyber harassment, cyber procuring, human trafficking, exposure to harmful and violent content, manipulation of information as well as the risks associated to the use of technology itself such as overuse and self-depreciation.

Appreciating the benefits of the digital revolution for the youth and the improvements it brings in the right to education, access to information and knowledge, and the exercise of freedom of expression.

Recognizing that protecting children effectively against online risks is complex and though there are many initiatives in this field, there is no single quick fix.

Acknowledging that those solutions must not call into question fundamental rights online and the rights of the child and their promotion as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its three Optional Protocols.

Asserting that along other human rights principles, the protection of privacy must be a core consideration of any solution aiming at improving the quality of the digital environment.

Considering the efficiency of multi-stakeholder and balanced methods to address complex digital issues such as illustrated by the success of the Christchurch Call to Action to Eliminate Terrorist and Violent Extremist Content Online.

Affirming the importance of evidence-based approaches and a rigorous evaluation process of policies, regulation and standards with regard to their benefits and costs.

The signatories of this initiative decide to collectively form a Laboratory to promote, develop and evaluate solutions aiming at improving the safety of minors in the digital environment including safety and privacy by design products and features to minimize the potential harm.

The Laboratory will aim at addressing themes relevant to the improvement of the online environment for youth such as adequate age for adequate content; harassment; digital literacy; parental

support; privacy protection; transparency and moderation with a particular focus on gender based risks.

The Laboratory will start as a coalition of the willing, with the immediate outcome of breaking down existing silos between governments, platforms and solution providers. The process governance as described in the Annex will be refined throughout the first year of operation.

All signatories intend to benefit from their implication with respect to their diversity in models and capabilities to propose concrete improvement based on sound evaluation, to gather key information to help design public policies and to participate in the elaboration of industry best practices and develop new features to make digital services safer for the most vulnerable users.

Objectives

Through the creation of the Lab the parties agree to pursue the following objectives to the extent of their respective resources:

- *Share knowledge, information, practice and expertise by engaging with each other and with non-governmental organizations, small and medium enterprises, researchers to develop new initiatives and build upon existing ones in order to move toward more efficient policy and best practices.*

- *Encourage research and evidence based approaches to address more efficiently the issues affecting children online for regulators and corporations.*

- *Identify technical, organizational or educational tools that are both demonstrated to be efficient and to preserve fundamental rights.*

Commitments

To that end, we, civil society, governments, researchers and service providers decide to:

Participate in the activities of the Laboratory, by taking part in the sourcing, selection and evaluation processes of the experiments the Laboratory will be conducting.

Sponsor some relevant experiments by directly or indirectly providing resources in the appropriate form such as expertise, facilitation or funding, on the basis of a voluntarily agreed evaluation protocol established in conformity to the lab's processes.

Take appropriate consideration of the experiments' results in the elaboration of policies and good practices.

Support the development of framework, industrial best practices, safety and privacy oriented design principles or tools that demonstrate their efficacy through the activities conducted by the lab.

Annex to the Laboratory for Childhood Protection Online Charter

Governance

Steering committee:

All stakeholders supporting the Lab will be meeting in plenary sessions **3 times a year** to validate orientations for the projects of the lab, choose the topic of the year's call for project and validate any new member application.

Members also have the role of outreach and sourcing of projects that can be run through the lab.

Executive committee:

Composed of a dozen members: companies, civil society, researchers and States, the executive committee is to meet **once a month** to assess and select the applications fit for the Lab within the priorities set by the steering committee. Executive committee decisions are taken by unanimous consensus.

Although there is no obligation in taking part in any particular project's protocol, executive committee members are expected to sponsor at least a project every 2 years.

Scientific committee:

The scientific committee provides feedback on the projects and a critical analysis of the results of the experimentation in the form of a report at the end of a cycle. Relevant experts can be invited by the Executive Committee to be part of it from academic and other relevant fields such as education, health, social workers and law enforcement.

Ethical Committee

The Ethical Committee advises the Laboratory on the risk of conflicts of interests that may arise in the course of its activity. The Ethical Committee may be consulted by the Secretary or at the request of any stakeholder. The recommendations of the Ethical Committee are not binding. The Ethical Committee publishes an annual transparency report.

The Ethical Committee consists of at least 3 members and at most 10 members, appointed for 2 years.

Secretary:

France will manage the everyday operations of the Lab, insure proper communication between members as well as with the public.

The Secretary will be responsible for developing the governance of the Laboratory, including the Ethical Committee

Priority themes for the year:

The Steering committee will be in charge of setting priority themes each year for the experimentations of the Lab.

A call for projects follows this decision to gather applications to address those priorities within the year-cycle.

Project application:

Any member or non-member organization (company, public entity, international organization or civil society) can submit a project within one of the priorities set by the steering committee.

There is no obligation in the nature of the project proposed to the lab, it can be technical, educational or organizational.

Any project application must contain at least the following elements:

- A description of the project explaining in particular in which way it addresses one the priority problematic

- A protocol to evaluate its efficiency

- A statement of needs, a list of requested resources from members that they are expected to provide to run the experiment including the data to be provided by members that are deemed necessary to the evaluation.

Project selection:

After the end of the call for projects, the submissions are reviewed by the Executive committee. The committee selects projects in consideration of the potential benefits and the adequacy of requested resources and what can be provided by members, those projects can then move through the process of experimentation, benefit from the support of members of the lab and potentially receive an expression of appreciation. Three to five projects are to be selected each year.

Project experimentation:

After a pool of selected projects is formed, they can be distributed to voluntary and relevant members with the appropriate capacities.

They are expected to help carry on the evaluation in accordance with the agreed upon protocol.

There is no obligation for members to help with any particular protocol though members are encouraged to show implication in the lab in good faith by regularly helping with the projects they deem the most promising, in particular with ones that they have not submitted themselves.

Project evaluation:

For every edition, after the experimentation phase is closed. The data and reports of the experiments produced by members and applicants are to be shared with the scientific committee in charge of emitting an opinion on the efficacy and limits of the project in the form of a public final report.

The results of the experiments will be showcased at the end of every cycle during the Paris Peace Forum.