2019 Technical Report: a Review of Age Verification Mechanism for 10 Social Media Apps

Engl. transl.: 2019 Technical Report: a Review of Age Verification Mechanism for 10 Social Media Apps

# Details

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## Language

English

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## Type

Short report

## Topics

Access, inequalities and vulnerabilities

## Sample

10 most used apps among children aged 8-12: Snapchat, Instagram, Tiktok, Viber, Skype, Facebook, HouseParty, Discord, Messenger, WhatsApp.

## Implications For Stakeholders About

# Abstract

"This technical report analyzes the 10 most used apps among children aged 8-12: Snapchat, Instagram, Tiktok, Viber, Skype, Facebook, HouseParty, Discord, Messenger, WhatsApp. For each application we assess whether the terms of use specify a minimum age that is compliant with the GDPR and whether the specified age is the same across all EU countries. We also verify whether each app provides mechanisms to verify the age of the user and how easy is to circumvent the verification mechanisms. The remainder of this report discusses the results of our study providing evidence to support the answers provided for each question"

# Outcome

"All social networks have an age limit for using the service: 13 years. Only WhatsApp has
changed the age limit to 16 as a response to the EU GDPR (General Data Protection
Regulation) which was enforced on May 25 2018. The other social networks have followed
a law in the USA. The COPPA law or Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act states that
any organizations or people operating online services (including social media services) are
not allowed to collect personal information of anyone under the age of 13, without parental
permission. With respect to this law, all social networking services (with the exception of
WhatsApp) prefer to write this rule into their Terms and Conditions. The age limit is written only in the terms of use. However, these terms are too complicated
and take a long time to read. The language adopted in the terms of use is too complex for
underage users. A violation is found not only of the age limit of the GDPR but also the
violation of article 12 of the GDPR: "concise, transparent, intelligible and [in an] easily
accessible form, using clear and plain language, in particular for any information
addressed specifically to a child"