

ONE.LT

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Introduction

ONE.LT is a SNS in Lithuania operating in Lithuanian and Russian languages. The total number of users is not known, however, statistics show that by December 2010, ONE.LT had 709,200 active users¹. ONE.LT was founded in 1999. It is an online community where members can find and communicate with others as well as to browse and share user-generated content. Users must be 14 or older to use the service. Users interact with friends' profiles, send messages to other users, join groups, upload and share photos and videos. Each member creates their own personal page called a *profile*, on which they can post their own content. Among other functionalities, users can create profiles containing personal photos, establish friends' connections with other users on the site, exchange private in-site messages, post notes to forums attached to individual user profiles or user groups, rate user photos, etc.

The following is a report of the findings of the analysis of the self-declaration provided by ONE.LT and the testing of the Lithuanian version of its website. The test was conducted in December, 2010 – January, 2011.

Summary of main findings

Minors younger than the minimum age requirement of 14 years old were able to sign on ONE.LT and were not restricted to any (adult) information available on the website (including sexual content, violence, descriptions of human abnormalities, etc.). Moreover, they could be contacted by unknown adults and there were no restrictions to add adults to their “friends”.

Minors' profiles are not set to “private by default” as defined by the Safer Social networking Principles and so practically any user of ONE can have access to their profile information and even contact minors (e.g. by writing in their forum). The main problem is that ONE.LT demands a considerable amount of personal information during the registration process including details of the user's real name, age, place of residence and mobile phone number. All this information is automatically inserted into the profiles of minors and is made available beyond the user's approved contacts list.

ONE.LT provides some privacy setting options. Privacy settings include the option to choose if personal information such as the telephone number is visible to everyone, to friends only or to nobody, and if the person can be reached by friends only or by anyone.

Seeking help because of inappropriate contact, content or conduct is possible only via e-mail. However, as the test on the site shows the reporting mechanism is not really efficient. Only ten days after having contacted the provider to report a test “bullying” situation the “victim” received a reply from ONE.LT stating that her message had been received and that the photo album with offensive pictures had been removed. However, the nasty comments posted on the minor's profile remained on the site and no actions were taken against the “bullies”.

¹<http://w27.ONE.LT/welcome?language=lt&tkn=6851> (Retrieved on Dec. 15 2010)

ONE.LT provided basic safety information for Internet use for children and parents, but the available information for parents is mostly focused on basic principles of good parent/child communication and health issues related to computer use rather than on effective and concrete safety measures.

Analysis of Results by Principle

Principle 1: Raise awareness of safety education messages and acceptable use policies to users, parents, teachers and carers in a prominent, clear and age-appropriate manner

Main findings in relation to the self-declaration

According to its self-declaration ONE.LT provides plenty of textual and audio-visual guidance and safety information for its users and their parents on how to navigate the website safely, for instance it claims to maintain a dedicated “Your Safety” section easily accessible from every page on the site. ONE.LT also claims to provide educational video materials (in prominent positions on the site) as well as sending its users “periodic safety reminders” containing tips on key safety issues.

The self-declaration does not specifically refer to the existence of “Terms of Use” or any other specific document containing the rules that govern the site. However, it does specify what is considered as inappropriate behaviour on the site (e.g. attempts to distribute or collect child pornography or any other type of “age-inappropriate content”). Besides, it provides information on the consequences of inappropriate behaviour on the website including the temporary suspension or permanent removal of user accounts and the reviewing and eventual removal of inappropriate or illegal visual content, user groups or their components.

The self-declaration does not mention if the website offers parents and/or teachers any types of technical controls to support the safety of children online apart from the general safety and privacy information aforementioned which, by the way, is not specifically targeted at teachers, but at general users and their parents.

Main findings in relation to the website

Testing found that not only the “Your Safety”, but also the “Privacy” section and the “Terms of Service” ([Naudojimo Taisyklės](#)) are accessible from a hyperlink in the footer of the homepage (and also on every page of the site).

Confirming the analysis of the self-declaration, testing shows that ONE.LT provides safety information for parents and young users, but it does not provide educational materials for teachers. ONE.LT maintains an easily accessible “Your Safety” section where concrete tips and advice are given to users on how to ensure their safety online. The general safety information is easy-to-find and easy-to-understand. The same cannot be said of the Privacy and the Terms of Service information, though. This information is quite dense and is full of legal and technical jargon. However, adapted child-friendly information concerning the rules governing the site was found in an especially dedicated section for Youth. These rules include information on what constitutes inappropriate behavior on the site and the consequences of breaching such terms.

The information for parents is very basic and is only related to general (safe) Internet. In particular, parents are neither informed about the types of personal information children are required to provide in order to register on the site nor are they given any explanations about the (personal) data their children might be able to post on the portal or any other potential contact or conduct risks associated to using SNSs in general. The safety information for

parents and youth is text-based only. Links to external safety information (“Safer internet”, <http://www.draugiskasinternetas.lt/en>) are also provided in the safety information section devoted to parents.

Principle 2: Work towards ensuring that services are age-appropriate for the intended audience

Main findings in relation to the self-declaration

In its self-declaration ONE.LT states that the minimum age requirement to create an account on this SNS is 14. In relation to the steps taken by the provider to prevent users from attempting to re-register with a different age if they have previously been rejected for being below the minimum age, ONE.LT demands users to provide a valid mobile phone number during the account registration stage. ONE.LT claims that this mechanism would “limit the ability of young users to create multiple profiles at will” and would facilitate “parental control”. Apart from this no other mechanisms to promote the uptake of parental controls are mentioned in the self-declaration.

In its self-declaration ONE.LT refers to diverse mechanisms through which the service provider ensures limited exposure to potentially inappropriate content and contact for children, for example by means of the “collaborative peer review” process of profile pictures, by not allowing “adult-oriented” content/advertising on the site (although it is not clearly stated what is considered as “adult-oriented” content), or by filtering inappropriate words/expressions in user messages and forum posts.

Main findings in relation to the website

ONE.LT relies on the self-declaration of age by the user in the registration process as the key mechanism for ensuring that the services they provide are age-appropriate for their audience. ONE.LT self-declaration indicates that users must be 14 or older to use ONE.LT. However, the test on the site demonstrated that children below the minimum age requirement can still register on the site without any trouble, even by providing their real age. Thus, it was possible to sign up as a 9 and as a 13 year old. Indeed, while creating these profiles, age was calculated and automatically inserted into the underage user profile so that their real age (9 and 13) was displayed on their profiles in spite of the minimum age requirement of 14.

During registration a valid telephone number is required. This telephone number is automatically inserted into the user profile and is, by default, only made available to the users’ accepted contacts list. Although, this information could, eventually, be made available to users who pay for the “search for all” functionality, explained in detail under Principle 3.

Once registered, the user may change their age in the profile as many times as they wish and they can display their age to “friends only”, or to nobody. During the period the test lasted no (visible) steps were taken by the provider to delete the “under-age” users (created for this test) from its services. Besides, no effective parental control tools were found on the site, either. Indeed, during the test it was observed that users are asked to use a valid mobile phone number account at the registration stage. Theoretically, and as stated in the self-declaration, this control mechanism should limit the ability of young users to create multiple profiles and could make parental control easier. However, in practice it is not fully effective because, as demonstrated by this test, minors could still buy cheap pre-paid mobile phone cards to create multiple profiles.

In relation to the type of information accessible, when signed in as a minor (13 and 15 year olds) minors have access to the photo albums of all (adult) registered users, including “top” photo albums which usually contain highly sexy photos and not always appropriate comments about them. Regarding advertising displayed on the site no potentially inappropriate content for minors (e.g. alcohol, cigarettes, etc.) was observed. Eventually, users have the possibility to (temporarily) block advertising (including banners) if they pay a certain amount of money.

The mechanism offered by ONE.LT to filter inappropriate words/expressions was also tested. Swear words in Lithuanian were submitted to one of the minors’ forum (created for this test). Immediately, this message appeared in the victim’s forum. However, the offensive language was neither banned nor removed from the site, what suggests that the filtering mechanism to detect inappropriate words/expressions is not really effective.

Principle 3: Empower users through tools and technology

Main findings in relation to the self-declaration

According to the self-declaration, ONE.LT stipulates that all user profiles can be searched by using the internal profile search, but that the actual content of user profiles (not only of minors) can *only* be viewed by “people belonging to the user’s extended circle of trust (friends, friends of friends). Clearly, the “extended circle of trust” involves more than only ‘friends’ on the minor’s contact list and thus, we can conclude that the profiles of users younger than 18 are not set to “private by default”² as defined in the Safer Social Networking Principles³.

The self-declaration refers to some mechanisms employed by ONE.LT to assist children and young people in managing their experience on their service, particularly with regards to inappropriate or unwanted content or conduct, for instance, users can control their personal data and can decide who can view/access their personal information, “collaborative peer review process” to identify and spot potential inappropriate content, new friend connection invitations submitted by users who have been previously blocked by a user are ignored and not displayed to the user. Furthermore, the self-declaration also mentions that “apart from the front page (login screen) no section on the site can be viewed by an unregistered user regardless of his/her age which would make profiles unsearchable from external search engines, and would, thus, limit the risk of children being contacted by strangers.

The self-declaration does not provide any further information on how ONE.LT supports parents be aware of the existence of other available safety tools (such as filtering tools or parental controls) to help them protect young people online. However ONE.LT claims to offer parents, carers and/or teachers targeted links and educational materials.

Main findings in relation to the website

Regarding the searchability of minors’ profiles, and as stated in the self-declaration, it is not possible to avoid being found via the internal search engine of the SNS, however, the information made available to other ONE.LT users depends on the personal privacy settings set by the user. The default profiles of minors (or of any other ONE.LT user) are not searchable via search engines such as Google, Yahoo, etc. When searched inside the SNS,

² “Ensuring that setting a profile to private means that the full profile cannot be viewed or the user contacted except by ‘friends’ on their contact list”.

³ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/social_networking/docs/sn_principles.pdf

"not friends" cannot get immediate access to a user's personal profile because the internal search engine only offers, by default, the option to "search among friends". However, there is an "alternative" paid search option called "search for all" that allows registered users (who pay approx. 0.58 €) to search for as many contacts as they wish for during a 30 day period. This "search for all" engine enables registered users, even adult strangers, to see the whole minor's profile (which by default includes personal information such as the minor's telephone number) plus photo albums and messages in the minor's forum. However, if the minor has set additional privacy settings to protect their personal information, then this information is kept as "private" even for users who have paid to "search for all".

Furthermore, minors can always be contacted by any user via posting a message in their forum or via e-mail (if their e-mail address is not set to "private"). On ONE.LT it is possible to "reject" friends' requests. However it is not possible for users to configure their account to allow only "friends" to post comments on their profiles or to pre-moderate or to delete unwanted content/comments before they are published onto their profile. However, users may choose to change their settings to more private or public at any time.

It is possible to block a user, to delete a posted message, and to report unwanted contact/content via e-mail to ONE.LT. Besides, it is also possible to delete own/others messages in the forum; however, what the self-declaration does not mention is the fact that ratings and comments on photos can be deleted only by paying a specific amount of money (charged via the telephone account).

Confirming the analysis of the self-declaration, we can conclude that full profiles of minors in ONE.LT are not set to "private by default" because minors can be viewed and even contacted by people beyond their approved contacts list.

Principle 4: Provide easy-to-use mechanisms to report conduct or content that violates the Terms of Service

Main findings in relation to the self-declaration

The self-declaration refers to several mechanisms to report inappropriate content, contact or behaviour. In particular, ONE.LT claims that uploaded images can be reported by simply clicking on the corresponding reporting button placed close to every picture. This would initiate a review of the reported image(s). In relation to reporting other types of content, the self-declaration indicates that users are encouraged to send a message to the customer service whenever they "suspect inappropriate behaviour or content". In their message they should include a link to the "inappropriate" content in question.

The self-declaration does not explicitly mention if the reporting procedures are *easily understandable* for children and young people or if they are *age-appropriate*. But it does mention that reports are *efficiently* handled. Finally, users are provided with the information they need to make an effective report via periodic reminders sent to them in the form of administrative messages or as internal banner ads.

Main findings in relation to the website

ONE.LT provides a mechanism for reporting inappropriate content, contact or behavior. Seeking help because of inappropriate contact or conduct (e.g. bullying in the case of this test) is only possible via e-mail.

As part of this test a bullying situation was created where one of the “minors” (created for this test) was “bullied” by another one by posting nasty comments in the forum of the “victim”. It was not possible for the “bully” to upload abusive pictures on the “victims’ forum”, however, the “abuser” created a photo album on her own profile including the offensive pictures and shared the link with others. As the “victim” could not cope with the nasty comment put on her profile and the embarrassing pictures, she contacted the provider. The only way for her to reach ONE.LT was to send an e-mail to administration. The report message appeared in the “victim’s” “sent” messages folder indicating that the report had effectively been sent. Only ten days later, the “victim” received a reply from ONE.LT stating that her message had been received and that the photo album had been removed. However, the nasty comments remained on the site and no actions were taken against the “bullies”. In sum, the test shows that the reporting mechanism is not really efficient.

Principle 5: Respond to notifications of illegal content or conduct

Main findings in relation to the self-declaration

In the self-declaration ONE.LT claims to have designed and implemented efficient internal procedures for responding and acting upon notifications of illegal or inappropriate content or conduct observed within the site environment. They also claim to efficiently review and verify the received reports and the potential offending content and to take appropriate actions accordingly. These may include, for instance, removing the verified inappropriate or illegal visual content, suspending or eventually permanently removing user accounts, etc. Finally, direct hotlines connecting ONE.LT customer service staff on duty with appropriate safety-related networks such as INHOPE, Cyberpolice unit, etc. have been installed.

Because of ethical reasons, Principle 5 was not tested in the website.

Principle 6: Enable and encourage users to employ a safe approach to personal information and privacy

Main findings in relation to the self-declaration

According to its self-declaration, users of ONE.LT are provided with a range of privacy setting options and with supporting information to help them make informed decisions about the information they post online. For instance, at any time ONE.LT users can easily customize their privacy settings and determine which part of their data (including the user’s age, phone number and email address) to share with whom (everyone, just first-level friends, or no one). In the “Your Security” section ONE.LT offers “accessible” information and advice for users on how to safely manage and protect their personal information and privacy while using the site (e.g. how to protect the user’s passwords, how to properly log out of the site after finishing a usage session, etc.).

The self-declaration does not mention if the service provider automatically maps information provided by users (during registration) onto their profiles or if users are made aware when this happens.

Main findings in relation to the website

On its website ONE.LT provides some privacy setting options. Privacy settings include the options to choose if private information such as age, telephone number and the e-mail address

are visible to friends only, to nobody or to everyone. Minor users can also set their profile to be contacted by friends only or by anyone. Disclosing of mobile phone number and e-mail address is optional. Users are able to access and alter their privacy settings at anytime. There is a possibility to show or hide online status, but this option (as well as several other functionalities on the site) is not free. It is also possible to choose which actions will be seen by others or not, e.g. when a person starts a new group, writes messages, starts a friendship, and joins a new group.

ONE.LT asks for a considerable amount of personal information during the registration including details of the user's gender, age, place of residence, and mobile phone number. This information is automatically inserted into their profiles of minors without making them aware that this is happening. However, the site also provides accompanying safety information and gives users advice on the importance of protecting their personal data (e.g. Tips on how to protect one's password or how to properly log out from the site).

In conclusion, default privacy settings do not secure that private information will only be made available to the "extended circle of trust", therefore minor users will need to perform additional steps to acquire real privacy. These steps may include changing one's privacy settings or acquiring VIP status (for extra money). VIP status allows users to protect themselves from "Invisible guests" and to become a "guest" (i.e. a privileged user who can see any profile on ONE.LT, rate the personal albums of any person visited on this SNS, etc.). During the testing it was discovered that once a user pays, it is possible to see any person's photos and online/offline status, including those of minors. However the VIP user could eventually be blocked, thus preventing them from having access to one's profile.

Principle 7: Assess the means for reviewing illegal or prohibited content/conduct

Main findings in relation to the self-declaration

ONE.LT claims to ensure the continuous improvement of its reporting mechanisms for inappropriate and illegal content/conduct by means of the feedback gathered from relevant stakeholders such as users, NGO's, government regulators and law enforcement.

As mentioned in Principle, ONE.LT claims their Customer service staff to efficiently review and verify the received reports and if potential offending content is identified, they take appropriate measures accordingly. ONE.LT also claims to continually track their staff and record their performance internally "to ensure that they are able to identify actionable cases and have the knowledge required for taking appropriate action in every case". Besides, this tracking system would also ensure the "optimization of respective procedures and policies." It is not clear from the self-declaration if these employees are in real-time contact with children or young people or if they only review the reports.

Principle 7 was not tested in the website.

Summary of Results and Conclusions

According to its self-declaration, ONE.LT has implemented Principles 1 and 4 rather satisfactorily, and Principles 2, 3 and 6 unsatisfactorily on its website. The testing on the website revealed problematic areas such as the following:

- Even though the minimum age requirement is 14, visitors younger than this age can easily register on the site.
- Minors’ profiles are not set to “private by default”. The main problem is that ONE.LT asks for a considerable amount of personal information during the registration including details of the user’s real name, age, place of residence and mobile phone number. All this information is automatically inserted into the profiles of minors and can be made available, without the minor user knowing, beyond the user’s approved contacts list.
- Seeking help because of inappropriate contact, content or conduct is possible only via e-mail. However, as the test on the site shows the reporting mechanism is not really efficient. Only ten days after having contacted the provider to report a test “bullying” situation the “victim” received a reply from ONE.LT stating that her message had been received and that the photo album with offensive pictures had been removed. However, the nasty comments posted on the minor’s profile remained on the site and no actions were taken against the “bullies”.
- Minors younger than 14 years old were able to sign up and were not restricted to any information available on the website (including sexual content, descriptions of human abnormalities and violence).

Assessment of all the Principles in the Self-declaration

<i>Principle</i>	<i>Very satisfactory</i>	<i>Rather Satisfactory</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>
1		x	
2		x	
3		x	
4		x	
5	x		
6		x	
7	x		

Implementation of the Self-declaration on the SNS

<i>Principle</i>	<i>Very satisfactory</i>	<i>Rather satisfactory</i>	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>
1		x	
2			x
3			x
4		x	
6			x

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