
Communique

Global Age Assurance Standards Summit

The Global Age Assurance Standards Summit between April, 8 2024 and April, 12 2024, a project supported by [Safe Online](#) has worked in partnership with the British Standards Institution (BSI) to bring together over 700 interested parties including governments, regulators, international organisations, civil society, academia, industry, age assurance service providers, standards developers and technical experts to prepare this communique to reflect the position, state of the art and development of age assurance standards as at April, 12 2024.

Headline

Age Assurance can be done.

Age Assurance can be deployed, with the right process for the right use cases, in a manner that is privacy preserving, secure, effective and efficient.

Age assurance can be a valuable tool amongst a range of measures deployed to protect children in the digital environment.

This would be assisted by securing International Standards, which are implemented and respected by providers of services that are required to make age related eligibility decisions.

Laws and regulations can create the legal framework with robust enforcement procedures in place to secure the protection of children from harm.

If deployed proportionately and effectively, Age Assurance represents an opportunity to enhance the fundamental rights of children in a digital age, in addition to protecting anonymity and the freedoms of adults to enjoy online goods, content and services.

Definition

Age assurance is the process of establishing, determining and/or confirming an age assurance attribute, including age verification, age estimation and age inference. [ISO/IEC WD 27566-1]

Preamble

Whereas the UN Committee of the Rights of the Child outlined the range of rights at play for children in the digital environment in General comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment of March, 2 2021 (CRC/C/GC/25)

Recalling General Comment No. 20 on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence (CRC/C/GC/20), in which the United Nations recognized the importance of protecting children from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation in the digital environment.

Noting the work of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law, Working Group IV: Electronic Commerce addressing identity and trust services [UN/A/CN.9/WG.IV].

Acknowledging the recommendation CM/Rec(2018)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on [Guidelines](#) to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment.

The CEN CENELEC specification on age appropriate design makes reference to the need for all age assurance systems to protect the privacy of users in accordance with applicable laws, including human rights laws. [[CEN-CENELEC CWA 18016 Age Appropriate Digital Services Framework](#)]

The [EU Artificial Intelligence Act](#) follows a product safety approach, but with the new added element of a fundamental rights impact assessment. The first EU Commission standardisation request includes obligations related to fundamental rights and data protection. Standardisation bodies such as ETSI [STF 681(TCHF) Special Task Force on Age Verification] are already moving towards harmonised global standards on AI which are underpinned by the EU AI Act and are likely to include a requirement to consider fundamental rights impacts.

Noting that where age assurance tools are deployed that in many cases they will also be used by adults in order to determine that they are not a child (for example when accessing pornography sites, gambling sites, or when purchasing age restricted goods). The [9 core international human rights instruments](#) apply in this context to all adult and child users.

Noting the UN Guiding Principles (UNGPs) on Business and Human Rights set out the responsibility of companies to respect human rights and children's rights in the digital environment.

Recalling the [guide](#) on Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence from the European Court of Human Rights, updated on 31 August 2022.

Recalling the [EU Digital Services Act \(DSA\) Article 28](#) on Online protection of minors from October, 19 2022.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, as well as other relevant international human rights instruments, provide the legal framework for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child in the online context.

Acknowledging the benefits and opportunities that the digital environment offers for children's education, participation, creativity, expression and social inclusion, as well as the challenges and risks that it poses for their safety, privacy, well-being and development.

Noting with concern the increasing availability and accessibility of online services that may expose children to illegal or harmful content, such as pornography, violence, gambling, or products such as alcohol and tobacco, or that may collect, process or share their personal data without their consent, knowledge or understanding.

Noting with concern the existence of online platforms where children are exposed to the malice of adults.

Recognising the need for a global, coordinated and multi-stakeholder approach to ensure that online services are designed and delivered in a way that respects and protects the rights and best interests of the data subject, taking into account their evolving capacities and the diversity of their situations and needs.

Noting further the technical difficulties created by synthetic data and the need for any such standards to be responsive to developments in technology.

Welcoming the efforts of various actors, such as governments, regulators, international organisations, civil society, academia, industry and technical experts, to develop and implement age assurance regulations, mechanisms and standards for online services, which include specifications for self declaration, age estimation, age verification and age appropriate design.

Acknowledging the efforts of the International Standards Organisation through ISO/IEC JTC 1/SC 27/WG 5 to develop international standards for age assurance, most specifically:

- ISO/IEC WD 27566 - 1 - Age Assurance Systems - Part 1: Framework
- ISO/IEC WD 27566 - 2 - Age Assurance Systems – Part 2: Technical approaches and guidance for implementation
- ISO/IEC PWI 27566 - 3 - Age Assurance Systems - Part 3: Benchmarks for benchmarking analysis

Acknowledging the efforts of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers to develop a global standard IEEE 2089.1-2024 Standard for Online Age Verification.

Call to Action

Bearing in mind the principles of necessity, proportionality, transparency, accountability and non-discrimination in the application of age assurance measures, as well as the respect for the views and preferences of the child and the role of parents, guardians and caregivers.

The Global Age Assurance Standards Summit identified that relevant parties and stakeholders should:

1. Support the future adoption of age assurance standards as a voluntary and flexible framework for making age related eligibility decisions;

2. Encourage all States to consider these international age assurance standards complementing their national legislation, policies and practices and to promote their adoption and implementation by providers;
3. Invite decision makers on age related eligibility to apply the international age assurance standards in their design and delivery of services and to ensure that their controls are transparent, accountable and respectful of the rights of individuals;
4. Call upon relevant stakeholders, such as international organisations, civil society, academia, industry and technical experts, to support the dissemination, adoption and implementation of the international age assurance standards, and to foster cooperation, dialogue and exchange of good practice among different actors and sectors;
5. Encourage age assurance companies to engage in human rights due diligence throughout the lifecycle of their products, in order to prevent and effectively prevent and/or address any adverse impacts on the full range of human rights and children's rights caused by, contributed to or linked to age assurance tools. This will ensure that age assurance tools can be deployed in a way that maximises the protection of children, whilst also maximising privacy and data protection for both children and adults;
6. Request Governments to report to appropriate international bodies on the progress made in the implementation of age assurance policies and practices, including the challenges and opportunities encountered, the lessons learned and the recommendations for further action;
7. Decide to remain seized of the matter.

International Age Assurance Standards

The international age assurance standards are a set of principles and guidelines for the development and implementation of age assurance mechanisms and standards for age related eligibility decisions. They are based on the existing and emerging good practice and initiatives in this field, as well as on the relevant international human rights instruments, especially the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. They aim to provide a common reference framework and a shared vision for all actors involved in the design and delivery of online services, and to foster a global, coordinated and multi-stakeholder approach to ensure that online services are respectful and protective of the rights and best interests of the child.

The international age assurance standards are voluntary and flexible, and they do not intend to prescribe or impose any specific technical or legal solutions. They recognize that different contexts and situations may require different approaches and methods and that age assurance is not a one-size-fits-all solution. They also acknowledge that age assurance is not a panacea or a substitute for other measures and actions to protect children online, such as education, awareness-raising, parental guidance and support and effective law enforcement.

Guiding Principles

The Global Age Assurance Standards Summit has identified these four main principles and twelve guidelines, as follows:

Principle 1: Age assurance should be based on the rights and best interests of the individual

Guideline 1.1: Age assurance systems should aim to protect and promote the rights and best interests of the individual in the online environment, in accordance with relevant international human rights instruments.

Guideline 1.2: Age assurance implementation should balance the protection and the empowerment of the individual and should not unduly restrict or limit their access to online services that are beneficial or appropriate for their age, development and well-being.

Guideline 1.3: Age assurance implementation should take into account the evolving capacities and the diversity of situations and needs of children of different ages, backgrounds and circumstances and should respect their views and preferences.

Principle 2: Age assurance systems should be based on the principle of data minimization

Guideline 2.1: Age assurance systems should only collect, process and share the minimum amount of personal data necessary and proportionate to achieve the intended purpose of making an age related eligibility decision thus protecting and respecting the rights and best interests of the data subject. Data should not be retained unless absolutely necessary and justified.

Guideline 2.2: Age assurance systems should use non-intrusive and privacy-preserving methods and techniques, and should avoid the onward sharing of hard identifiers, such as passports or biometrics, unless absolutely necessary, proportionate and justified.

Guideline 2.3: Age assurance systems should ensure the security, confidentiality and integrity of the personal data collected, processed and shared, and should prevent any unauthorised or unlawful access, use or disclosure.

Principle 3: Age assurance systems should be based on the principle of transparency and accountability

Guideline 3.1: Age assurance systems should provide clear, accurate, comprehensible and accessible information to the individual and where this is a child, also to their parents, guardians or caregivers about the purpose, method, scope and duration of the age assurance process, and about the rights and obligations of the parties involved.

Guideline 3.2: Age assurance systems should ensure user awareness of the methods, processes and approaches to making age related eligibility decisions in a publicly available age assurance practice statement.

Guideline 3.3: Age assurance systems should provide effective mechanisms for the user and, where this is a child, also for their parents, guardians or caregivers to access, rectify, erase or object to the personal data collected, processed or shared, where applicable for the purpose of age assurance, and to lodge a complaint or seek a remedy in case of any violation of their rights.

Principle 4: Age assurance should be based on the principle of cooperation and participation

Guideline 4.1: Age assurance systems stakeholders involved in the design, development, implementation and evaluation of the system should ensure the participation and consultation of children and their parents, guardians or caregivers, as well as other relevant stakeholders, such as civil society, academia, industry and technical experts.

Guideline 4.2: Age assurance stakeholders should foster cooperation and coordination among different actors and sectors, such as governments, international organisations, civil society, academia, industry and technical experts, to ensure the consistency, interoperability and effectiveness of age assurance mechanisms, standards, privacy and security.

Guideline 4.3: Age assurance stakeholders should support the development and dissemination of good practice, guidance and tools for the implementation of age assurance mechanisms and standards, and should encourage innovation and research in this field.

As published in Manchester, United Kingdom at the conclusion of the Global Age Assurance Standards Summit on April, 12 2024.