

## **'Play Smart, Play Safe' Index Reveals 75% of Parents Feel Video Games Can Be Beneficial to Children and Their Families**

*Microsoft's second annual parents survey finds that parents would welcome tools and information to allow them to better manage their children's gaming and create a safer online environment*

**Brussels, Belgium, March 5, 2009** – The majority of parents throughout Europe and the US view video games positively, with 61% stating that games are a great social experience, and around half (52%) saying they felt that video games bring their families together. Furthermore, parents overwhelmingly want to take responsibility for ensuring their children are playing suitable video games, and are actively seeking information and support. In last year's survey, 60% of parents felt sufficiently informed about the built-in functions on game consoles or operating systems to control their child's access. This year, 75% said they are familiar with parental controls, with France showing that highest number of informed parents (81%), closely followed by Germany (75%), Italy (74%), the UK and the US (both at 73%).

### **Parents are looking for technology & tools to manage kids' time spent gaming**

Parents are most concerned about the amount of time their children spend playing video games, which corresponds with last year's survey findings that showed only half the parents surveyed felt in control of the amount of time their children spend video gaming. To address this, parents are looking for guidance. For example, 62% stated that they would welcome additional functions to help them manage the time their kids spend gaming, while 66% said they would be willing to use a parent-child discussion tool to help establish rules for media consumption around the house. Microsoft's Family Guide brochure aims to provide parents with such a tool. Other preferred sources of information are dedicated websites, age-ratings systems and other parents. This research has enabled Microsoft to share information – including the Family Guide - through parents' preferred method by creating the website [www.xbox.com/playsmartplaysafe](http://www.xbox.com/playsmartplaysafe). This website, being launched today, is a resource where people can find information about parental control tools and how to set them up at home.

*"Microsoft is committed to educating parents about the tools and resources available to help them manage their children's interactive entertainment experiences on both Xbox 360 and Windows Vista", states Richard Teversham ... "While we are delighted there is an increasing level of awareness of Microsoft's parental controls, including the Family Timer and video game age ratings such as the pan-European Game Information system known as PEGI and PEGI Online, we need to make it easier for parents to adopt and use these tools. As shown in our survey, parents strongly believe video games should have more functions to help them determine appropriate usage for their children (63%). Their main concerns are: knowing what games their children are playing, who they interact with online and being able to control for how long they do it. Addressing these concerns is the primary goal of our Play Smart, Play Safe initiative."*

**Age ratings are the favoured tool for parents to decide if a game is appropriate.**

The primary tool parents use to determine whether a game is appropriate for their child is the age rating symbol. The survey highlights that 96% of parents feel personally responsible for checking the age rating of the games their children play, with 85% frequently checking the suitability of offline games, and 81% checking online games.

*"We are very encouraged to see that so many parents are using the PEGI age rating system. The benefit of this pan-European system is that you can be sure that the same standards apply whether your child is playing at a friend's house down the road, or with a gamer online in another country", stated Simon Little, Managing Director, Interactive Software Federation of Europe (ISFE). "The ongoing success of the PEGI system relies on the continuing collaboration between industry, national associations, and companies such as Microsoft who can bring this message to the consumer."*

This data from this survey supports the statements recently issued in a report from the European Parliament's Internal Market Committee, which confirms that video games have a 'broadly beneficial effect on the mental development of children', and that 'video games do not only have a recreational value, but can also be used for educational and medical purposes'. The European Parliament report also went on to highlight the benefits of the PEGI and PEGI Online age rating system, as a truly pan-European approach to creating a safer online gaming environment.

### **Microsoft's Commitment to Families Is Ongoing**

Xbox was the first video game and entertainment system with built-in parental controls for both online and offline use. Known as Family Settings, these controls allow parents and caregivers to set guidelines for which games work for them, make informed choices about content, and decide with whom their children can play online. The new Xbox LIVE interface makes this function even more prominent by asking users, when they first connect the console for set up, if they want to activate family settings. Windows Vista launched with a similar set of parental controls that allows parents to guide children's game playing, Web browsing and overall computer use. These controls help parents determine which games their children can play, which programs they can use, which Web sites they can visit — and when. With more than 13 million Xbox 360 consoles sold, the company's drive to empower parents is a core Microsoft responsibility.

### **About Microsoft's annual '*Play Smart Play Safe!*' survey**

The independent survey of over 2500 parents in the UK, France, Germany, Italy and the US, gauged attitudes on a host of issues about video gaming. This is the second of Microsoft's *Play Smart, Play Safe* surveys, and is part of the *Play Smart Play Safe* parent education programme to empower and inform parents and other stakeholders on how to best deliver a fun, safe and balanced gaming experience for children of all ages.

### **About Xbox 360**

Xbox 360 is the most powerful video game and entertainment system, delivering the best games, the next generation of the premier Xbox LIVE online gaming service, and unique digital entertainment experiences that revolve around gamers. The system was first launched in North America, Europe and Japan in 2005 and then in Australia, Colombia, Hong Kong, Korea, Mexico, New Zealand, Singapore and Taiwan in 2006. More information can be found online at <http://www.xbox.com/xbox360>.

### **About Xbox LIVE**

Xbox LIVE is the first and most comprehensive unified online entertainment network seamlessly integrated throughout the entire console experience, making it easy for people to find the friends, games and entertainment they want from the moment they power on their Xbox 360 system. Xbox LIVE connects millions of members across 25 countries to enjoy hundreds of multiplayer games, downloadable games via Xbox LIVE Arcade, free and premium playable game demos, music videos and TV shows as well as new game levels, characters and vehicles for all their favourite retail games.

**About Microsoft**

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential.

**About the Interactive Software Federation of Europe (ISFE)**

The Interactive Software Federation of Europe (ISFE) represents the interests of the European interactive software sector to its main stakeholders, be they EU institutions, international organizations, academics, or the general public. Since 2003, ISFE has also developed the Pan-European Game Information (PEGI) system (see [www.pegi.info](http://www.pegi.info)) and, more recently, PEGI Online, its addendum for the online gaming environment (see [www.pegionline.eu](http://www.pegionline.eu)).

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