

# Account Enumeration Vulnerability: **geenius.ee**

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## 1 Introduction

Account enumeration is a security vulnerability enabling attackers to determine if specific user accounts exist on a service. The vulnerability usually lies in the account registration functionality of a service, where an error message is returned, indicating that a user with the specified account identifier is already registered. However, an online service can also leak this information in other, more subtle ways, which are often overlooked by software developers. For example, even without a direct message, small visual differences in responses, or slight variations in how the server behaves (like the exact data returned) for existing versus non-existing accounts, can still reveal if an account is registered.

On 2025-06-23, we reassessed **geenius.ee** and found that **the service is still vulnerable to account enumeration**.

If the account identifier of an online service is personal data (e.g. email address, personal code etc), then the fact, whether it is associated to an account, is also considered personal data. Any disclosure of personal data to third parties without a legal basis constitutes a data breach [1].

We advise you to investigate the potential data breach, and notify the supervisory authority and the affected data subjects, if necessary. Detailed guidelines for mitigating this type of flaw are available in [2].

## 2 Vulnerabilities Found

We tested the login form, password reset form and account registration form of **geenius.ee**. No issues appeared on the login form. However, we identified security issues on the password reset form and account registration form. The vulnerabilities found are described in more detail in subsections below.

## 2.1 Password Reset Form

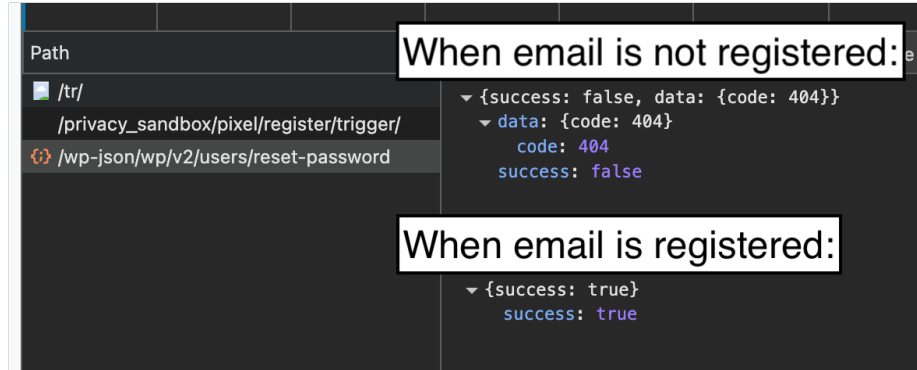


Figure 1: The vulnerability in the password reset form

The password reset form is susceptible to account enumeration attacks. This is because when a password reset is requested for an email address that is not registered with the service, the form shows an error message (see Figure 1). Additionally, the form appears to lack anti-bot measures such as CAPTCHA, enabling attackers to easily automate these attacks [3].

Moreover, no confirmation email is sent to the provided email address after this form is submitted. This allows the attacker to verify registered email addresses, ensuring that the email owner remains unaware of the potential attack.

It is also crucial to eliminate any side-channels that an attacker could exploit to differentiate between account existence and non-existence. For example, the response should not be faster for an existing account than for an email with which an account does not exist.

**To mitigate the flaw**, the response must be uniform for both registered and unregistered email addresses. This uniformity must apply to the message displayed to the user as well as the underlying HTTP response details (like status codes, headers, and body content).

For example, the indistinguishable user-facing message could be: “A password reset link has been sent if an account with this email exists”. [2]

## 2.2 Account Registration Form

The screenshot shows a web form titled "Registreeru Geeniuse kasutajaks". At the top, a pink banner says "Vabandust, see e-postiaadress on juba kasutusel!". Below the title, there's a section "Geeniuse registreerunud kasutaja" with a list of benefits: "Piiramatu ligipääs Geeniuse tasuta artiklitele." and "Igal argipäeval ülevaade päeva olulisematest uudistest." To the right is a cartoon illustration of a person standing on a wall, looking down at a group of people. Below this, there are three main sections: 1. "Nõustu kasutustingimustega" with a checked box for "Nõustun veebilehe kasutustingimustega." and an unchecked box for "Annan nõusoleku Geeniuse uudiskirjaga liitumiseks." 2. "Registreeru Google'i või Facebooki kontoga" with a button "Registreerun Google'i kontoga". 3. "Või loo uus konto" with a text input field containing "gregoreesmaa1@gmail.com", two password fields with masked characters, a "Success!" message with a green checkmark, and a "Registreerun" button. The bottom right corner features the "CLOUDFLARE" logo.

Figure 2: The vulnerability in the account registration form

The account registration form is also susceptible to account enumeration attacks. This is because when the provided email address is already taken, the form shows an error message (see Figure 2). Additionally, the form appears to lack anti-bot measures such as CAPTCHA, enabling attackers to easily automate these attacks [3].

Moreover, no confirmation email is sent to the provided email address after this form is submitted. This allows the attacker to verify unregistered email addresses, ensuring that the email owner remains unaware of the potential attack.

It is also crucial to eliminate any side-channels that an attacker could exploit to differentiate between account existence and non-existence. For example, the response should not be faster for an existing account than for an email with which an account does not exist.

**To mitigate the flaw**, the response must be uniform for both registered and unregistered email addresses. This uniformity must apply to the message displayed to the user as well as the underlying HTTP response details (like status codes, headers, and body content).

For example, the indistinguishable user-facing message could be: "We have sent further instructions to the provided email address". Send an email in both cases, but differentiate the content based on account existence. For example, for new registration, provide means for account activation, and for existing accounts, provide means for account recovery. [2]

**About** This vulnerability report is part of an ongoing study on user enumeration vulnerabilities in Estonian online services. The study is conducted by the University of Tartu master's student Gregor Eesmaa (supervised by Arnis Paršovs - arnis.parsovs@ut.ee). The findings of this study will be published in a master's thesis scheduled for defence in August 2025.

## References

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- [2] OWASP. *Authentication Cheat Sheet - Authentication and Error Messages*. Accessed: 2025-01-26. URL: [https://cheatsheetseries.owasp.org/cheatsheets/Authentication\\_Cheat\\_Sheet.html#authentication-and-error-messages](https://cheatsheetseries.owasp.org/cheatsheets/Authentication_Cheat_Sheet.html#authentication-and-error-messages).
- [3] OWASP. *Authentication Cheat Sheet - Protect Against Automated Attacks*. Accessed: 2025-01-26. URL: [https://cheatsheetseries.owasp.org/cheatsheets/Authentication\\_Cheat\\_Sheet.html#protect-against-automated-attacks](https://cheatsheetseries.owasp.org/cheatsheets/Authentication_Cheat_Sheet.html#protect-against-automated-attacks).