

New strategy for a better internet for kids

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*Justine Radel-Cormann
European Audiovisual Observatory*

On 11 May 2022, the European Commission published a new strategy for a better internet for kids. Announced in March 2021 as part of the European Union strategy on the rights of the child, the strategy falls under one of the priorities of Ursula von der Leyen's presidency of the Commission (2019-2024), entitled "A new push for European democracy". Although it is not legislative in nature, the Commission's communication is no less important, since it lists the different ways in which the Commission intends to better protect children and young people online by empowering them to use the Internet safely while enhancing their digital skills and competences.

After summarising the actions it has taken so far, the Commission outlines the reasons why such a strategy is needed: children use digital devices from a very young age, lead a more sedentary lifestyle and are vulnerable to the dangers of the Internet, sometimes developing attention disorders as a result. Moreover, they are often confronted with products and services designed for adults, as well as inappropriate or unsuitable marketing techniques. Although legislation on digital services partly deals with the issue by prohibiting the profiling of minors for advertising purposes, further action and protective measures are needed.

To this end, in accordance with the Commission's vision, digital services should be "age appropriate, with no one left behind and with every child in Europe protected, empowered and respected online".

Children will be better protected online (privacy, safety and security) thanks to a comprehensive EU code of conduct on age-appropriate design. This code will be facilitated by the European Commission and drafted in collaboration with the digital services at which it is aimed. Protection will also be provided through the development of certified and interoperable online age verification methods.

Digital empowerment will enable children to acquire basic digital skills from an early age. Children will be taught media literacy skills so they understand the information they see and read online and thus develop critical thinking skills and the ability to identify possible disinformation campaigns. Teachers, parents and educators will therefore need to enhance their own knowledge so they can raise children's awareness.

Finally, children will actively participate in democratic debate so they can advocate for their goals through a new EU Children's Participation Platform.

The Commission will begin to implement its strategy in 2022 and continue its efforts in 2023. In the meantime, it has invited the European Parliament and the Council to endorse the strategy and take steps to ensure its success.

European Commission, Communication “A Digital Decade for children and youth: the new European strategy for a better internet for Kids (BIK+), COM(2022) 212 final

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