



Protecting Children and Young People Online Update from the European Parliament

Letter from Regina Doherty, MEP

« Hello,

As your organisation advocates for the welfare of young people, I am pleased to share with you an important update from Brussels this week. The European Parliament's Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO), of which I am a member, has agreed our draft report on the Protection of Minors Online. I was very pleased to be able to contribute to the drafting of this report through my amendments. This report marks a step forward in our shared effort to make the digital environment safer, healthier and more accountable for young people across Europe.

Since joining the European Parliament, I have been campaigning to strengthen protections for children and teenagers online. Too many young people are still exposed to addictive content, harmful algorithms and manipulative design features that exploit their attention, emotions and data. For years, we have known these risks exist but have lacked effective enforcement to tackle them effectively. This report puts that issue of enforcement centre stage.

Importantly, the report highlights that the minimum age to be on social media should be 13 years and that children between 13 and 16 years should have parental consent in order to be on social media. It calls for stronger enforcement of the Digital Services Act, ensuring that all platforms accessible to minors implement real safeguards for privacy, safety and wellbeing. It urges the European Commission to act swiftly in issuing clear guidance to platforms and to strengthen oversight of the largest online operators.

The report also underlines the need for effective age assurance systems across the EU. Current national approaches are fragmented and often easy to bypass, leaving children exposed to inappropriate or dangerous content. It calls for EU-wide standards that work in practice and are supported by intuitive parental control tools that empower families without shifting all responsibility onto parents.

The report takes aim at addictive and manipulative digital design; including features like AI algorithms, AI chat bots, endless scrolling, auto play and loot boxes that encourage compulsive use or spending. It calls for stronger regulation of influencer marketing and targeted advertising, particularly where commercial content is aimed at young audiences.

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This work reflects a growing recognition across Europe that protecting children and young people online requires systemic change, ensuring that platforms and service providers take real responsibility for how their products are designed and monetised.

The next step is the full vote in the European Parliament plenary, expected in the weeks ahead. If the report passes at this point it will become the official position of the European Parliament and will be sent to the Commission for a response. Between now and then, I will continue to work closely with colleagues, stakeholders and Irish partners to ensure that our experience and priorities are reflected in the final outcome.

Thank you to all who have supported this campaign so far, from children's rights advocates and educators to parents, experts and industry partners working for a safer digital environment. Together, we are making real progress toward an online world where children can learn, connect and thrive without fear of exploitation or harm.

You can find more details, including the draft report in its current form, here:
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20251013IPR30892/new-eu-measures-needed-to-make-online-services-safer-for-minors>

Warm regards, »
Regina Doherty MEP