

Make social media and the on-line environment safer, say MEPs



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- Ban harmful addictive practices and mitigate the impact of persuasive design
 - Algorithmic transparency and a “youth mode” disabling targeted advertising
 - An EU code of conduct for influencers
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On Thursday, Parliament adopted proposals to oblige platforms, EU countries and the Commission to guarantee a safe online environment for young people in the EU.

With 395 votes in favour, 136 against and 80 abstentions, MEPs call for “an integrated European strategy” involving legislators, families, and schools to make sure that social media and the internet are safe, particularly for younger users. Noting that the online environment provides opportunities for learning and developing creativity, they also stress the risks of addiction to social media and exposure to cyberbullying, which can result in mental health problems.

Parliament wants platforms to take greater responsibility for protecting young people from harmful or manipulative content and to mitigate the impact of addictive and persuasive design by implementing risk-based safeguards for recommender systems, as well as measures to ban the most addictive practices.

Practical measures for a safer online environment and social media

MEPs ask companies to:

- introduce age verification without the collection or retention of personal data;
- increase transparency around social media algorithmic systems;
- offer a ‘youth mode’, that disables targeted advertising for minors;
- implement mandatory ethical standards for ‘AI companions’;
- improve transparency for the training of AI models, and
- ban AI systems from generating, manipulating or changing images or videos depicting sexual content of a person without consent.

Protection against illegal and harmful video content

MEPs see the upcoming revision of the [Audiovisual Media Services Directive](#) (AVMSD) as an opportunity to protect young people better against illegal and harmful content on video-sharing platforms (VSPs). They ask the Commission to assess whether services provided by influencers

and professional content creators are covered by this law. They also want more clarity on the status and responsibilities of influencers and professional content creators on VSPs, to ensure they abide the same obligations on advertising transparency as media service providers.

EU code of conduct for influencers

Given the increasing impact that social media influencers have in shaping perceptions, also in terms of young people's body image, MEPs ask the Commission and EU countries to set up a code of conduct for influencers, agencies and online platforms at EU level. A legal definition of 'influencer marketing' and the prohibition of unfair commercial practices would also contribute to more transparency, say MEPs, advocating for disclosure of sponsorships.

Quote

"President von der Leyen's EU Kids Act is a welcome step and follows the direction of our report on social media and young people. Algorithms do not stop at borders: Europe needs common rules. No social media under 13, supervised access from 13 to 15, including a one-hour daily limit, and greater autonomy thereafter. Responsibility cannot fall on children and families alone: platforms must make their products safe. We are not only discussing what young people do with social media, but what social media does to young people", said rapporteur [Sandro Ruotolo](#) (S&D, IT).

Background

According to [Eurostat data](#), 98% of young people aged 16 to 29 in the EU use the internet every day, compared with 90% of the total population. Participation in social networks was the most common internet activity among young people in 2025, with the creation of profiles and posting messages as a routine for an average of 89% of the EU's young people.

Further information

[Adopted text \(17.9.2026\)](#)

[Press conference with the rapporteur Sandro Ruotolo \(15.9.2026\)](#)

[Procedure file](#)

[Press release: Better enforcement of rules needed for a safer social media and online environment \(14.7.2026\)](#)

[Committee on Culture and Education](#)

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