



TEXTS ADOPTED

P10_TA(2026)0163

The need for targeted criminal provisions and platforms' responsibility to effectively address cyberbullying and online harassment

European Parliament resolution of 30 April 2026 on the need for targeted criminal provisions and platforms' responsibility to effectively address cyberbullying and online harassment (2026/2693(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in particular its articles on human dignity, the right to life, freedom of expression, the rights of the child, victims' rights, privacy of communications, and the protection of personal data,
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,
- having regard to Articles 83(1) and (2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA¹,
- having regard to Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/220/JHA² (Victims' Rights Directive),

¹ OJ L 335, 17.12.2011, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2011/93/oj>.

² OJ L 315, 14.11.2012, p. 57, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2012/29/oj>.

- having regard to Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 amending Directive 2010/13/EU on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) in view of changing market realities³,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence⁴,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act)⁵,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act)⁶,
- having regard to the Commission guidelines of 10 October 2025 on measures to ensure a high level of privacy, safety and security for minors online, pursuant to Article 28(4) of Regulation (EU) 2022/2065⁷,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 February 2026 entitled ‘Action Plan against cyberbullying “Safer online, stronger together”’ (COM(2026)0071),
- having regard to the Commission report of 25 November 2025 entitled ‘Cyberbullying – Insights from science, policy and legislation’,

³ OJ L 303, 28.11.2018, p. 69, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2018/1808/oj>.

⁴ OJ L, 2024/1385, 24.5.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1385/oj>.

⁵ OJ L 277, 27.10.2022, p. 1, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj>.

⁶ OJ L, 2024/1689, 12.7.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj>.

⁷ OJ C, C/2025/5519, 10.10.2025, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/5519/oj>.

- having regard to the Commission communication of 11 May 2022 entitled 'A Digital Decade for children and youth: the new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+)' (COM(2022)0212),
 - having regard to the Commission communication of 9 December 2021 entitled 'A more inclusive and protective Europe: extending the list of EU crimes to hate speech and hate crime' (COM(2021)0777) and the proposal for a Council decision annexed thereto,
 - having regard to its resolution of 18 January 2024 on extending the list of EU crimes to hate speech and hate crime⁸,
 - having regard to national legislation against cyberbullying, including Ireland's 'Coco's Law',
 - having regard to the speech by Jackie Fox, Coco Fox's mother, at the European Parliament on 10 March 2026 on the occasion of International Women's Day,
 - having regard to the Commission LGBTIQ+ equality strategy 2026-2030 of 8 October 2025 (COM(2025)0725),
 - having regard to its resolution of 26 November 2025 on the protection of minors online⁹,
 - having regard to Rule 136(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas cyberbullying refers to behaviour carried out through digital technologies with the primary intention or effect of repeatedly or continuously humiliating, socially excluding, abusing, harassing or harming people, in particular children or young people;
- B. whereas cyberbullying is a growing problem, as recognised in the Commission's action plan against cyberbullying; whereas 18,3 % of children worldwide have experienced cyberbullying through electronic messages or social media posts; whereas in Europe, around 1 in 6 children aged between 11 and 15 report being victims of cyberbullying; whereas between 2018 and 2022, the number of adolescents being cyberbullied rose by a quarter for boys and almost a quarter for girls; whereas over the past five years, cyberbullying has consistently been the main reason for contacting the Safer Internet Centres' helplines;
- C. whereas the 2025 Digital Decade Eurobarometer found that 92 % of EU citizens consider there to be an urgent need for public

⁸ OJ C, C/2024/5733, 17.10.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/5733/oj>.

⁹ OJ C, C/2026/1708, 24.4.2026, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/1708/oj>.

authorities to act to protect children online from cyberbullying and online harassment, underscoring the urgent need for coordinated action to prevent, address and mitigate the harmful effects of cyberbullying across the Member States;

- D. whereas cyberbullying disproportionately affects those at the intersection of multiple vulnerabilities, including women and girls, LGBTIQ+ people, young people, children with disabilities, those from minority backgrounds, migrants and racialised young people, and whereas these overlapping grounds for discrimination compound the harm experienced;
- E. whereas cyberbullying and online harassment, including image-based abuse, have severe and lasting consequences for victims, particularly minors, including psychological harm, social alienation and, in extreme cases, loss of life;
- F. whereas cyberbullying must be understood, in many cases, as a form of gender-based violence, including the non-consensual dissemination of intimate images, coordinated hate campaigns and attacks against women in public life; whereas artificial intelligence is giving cyberbullying a new, dangerous dimension, primarily targeting women and children;
- G. whereas cyberbullying has a cross-border dimension as it frequently occurs across social media platforms, messaging applications, gaming environments and other online spaces; whereas it has emerged as one of the most significant threats to the online safety and well-being of minors and young people in the EU;
- H. whereas there is no commonly agreed legal definition of cyberbullying at EU or international level; whereas significant legal fragmentation persists across Member States with regard to the definition of and penalties for cyberbullying, resulting in unequal levels of protection for victims and legal uncertainty for law enforcement authorities;
- I. whereas several Member States have introduced targeted criminal provisions addressing cyberbullying; whereas national legislation such as Ireland's 'Coco's Law' attempt to address harmful online behaviour, including the non-consensual distribution of intimate images and serious online harassment; whereas on 9 December 2021, the Commission proposed adding 'hate crime' to the list of EU crimes laid down in Article 83(1) TFEU; whereas this proposal did not garner the necessary unanimous support among Member States;
- J. whereas the Commission President announced in her 2025 State of the Union address that she would convene a panel of specialists to advise on child safety online and potential age restrictions for accessing social media; whereas the co-chairs are expected to report

their findings and recommendations to the Commission President by summer 2026;

- K. whereas the business model of certain online platforms incentivises the spread of hateful content, contributing to an unsafe online environment for minors, women, LGBTIQ+ people and other minorities; whereas the Commission has initiated a number of investigations under the Digital Services Act (DSA) against very large online service providers in relation to cyberbullying and harassment;

Commission action plan against cyberbullying

1. Welcomes the Commission action plan against cyberbullying as a framework to tackle cyberbullying, including its proposed definition enabling coherent statistical assessment and the exchange of best practice, and the stricter implementation and enforcement of current legislation;
2. Welcomes the focus of the action plan against cyberbullying on prevention and digital literacy as effective long-term tools; calls on the Commission and the Member States to invest in age-appropriate digital education and media literacy, in order to ensure that these resources reach children in all socio-economic contexts;
3. Reiterates its call on the Member States to establish comprehensive national anti-cyberbullying plans and to provide for effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties for cyberbullying offences, taking into account the seriousness of the conduct and the vulnerability of the victim;
4. Believes that victims should be able to report cyberbullying in an easy way; notes that the action plan against cyberbullying provides for an online safety app against cyberbullying, as a user-friendly and EU-wide interoperable reporting mechanism, to centralise reporting, coordinated support and the collection of evidence;

Criminal law

5. Expresses concern that despite the legislative and policy measures taken at EU and national level, cyberbullying and image- or video-based abuse are continuing to increase across the EU, indicating that existing instruments, including obligations under the DSA and harmonisation under the directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence, may not be sufficient to address the full scale and severity of the problem;
6. Notes that the action plan against cyberbullying does not provide for measures in the field of criminal law at EU level;

7. Invites the Commission to assess the need for a more harmonised approach at EU level to define cyberbullying; invites the Commission to examine whether cyberbullying, including the non-consensual dissemination of intimate material, should be recognised as a particularly serious crime with a cross-border dimension at EU level; reiterates its support for adding hate crime, which could cover the most severe forms of cyberbullying, to the list of EU crimes under Article 83(1) TFEU;
8. Highlights that well-resourced law enforcement authorities, including adequate staffing, technical expertise and IT infrastructure, are an indispensable part of effectively tackling cyberbullying; invites the Commission and Europol to increase the investigative capacities of Member States, including for combating cross-border cyberbullying;
9. Invites the Member States to share best practice on their legal approaches; emphasises that efforts should prioritise prevention, education and awareness-raising measures targeting children, parents and educators, as well as digital literacy and restorative approaches, particularly when minors are involved;
10. Calls for the swift implementation and transposition of the revised Victims' Rights Directive;

Online platforms and the DSA

11. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that platforms are held accountable to prevent and counter cyberbullying;
12. Points out that the business model of certain online platforms incentivises the spread of hateful content and therefore contributes to an increasingly unsafe online environment, particularly for minors, women and members of the LGBTIQ+ community or other minorities; highlights the role of hyper-personalised recommender systems that push hate speech and down-rank less divisive content;
13. Underlines that the DSA addresses some aspects of harassment and cyberbullying, in particular Article 28 thereof, which already obliges providers to ensure a high level of privacy, safety and security for minors; highlights, in this regard, the Commission guidelines under the DSA, which specify how platforms can ensure that minors are safe when using their services; notes that very large online platforms have, to a considerable extent, failed to implement these measures; calls on the Commission and the Member States to step up enforcement of Article 28 DSA and of the notice and action provision of the DSA, which impacts the protection of victims of cyberbullying;
14. Calls on the Commission to conclude pending enforcement cases, open investigations into any violations of Article 28 DSA, including systemic risks posed by recommender systems, and rigorously

enforce the notice and takedown obligation of platforms; strongly rejects any attempts to reopen the DSA; points out that access for researchers under the DSA is crucial to ensure evidence-based lawmaking;

15. Calls on the Commission to follow up on its announced guidelines for trusted flaggers on cyberbullying, in order to clarify their role in tackling illegal content;
16. Regrets the current lack of a legal framework to allow for the detection of child sexual abuse material online and calls on the Commission to take swift action to ensure that voluntary reporting mechanisms of child sexual abuse material are put in place; underlines the obligations of platforms to ensure a safe digital space for children that respects their fundamental rights and data privacy for every user;

Other measures

17. Expresses concern about the growing use of AI for abusive purposes, including generating deepfakes, voice cloning and non-consensual intimate content; reiterates the need to ban 'nudifier applications' under the AI Act as part of the AI omnibus negotiations; calls on providers to comply, without delay, with Article 50 of the AI Act on transparency and watermarking, so as to ensure that AI-generated content is clearly labelled to mitigate the harmful impact of deepfakes, most notably on minors;
18. Calls on the Commission to assess whether existing risk assessment and mitigation obligations under EU law adequately cover online gaming operators, in particular those offering real-time communication features that may expose minors to cyberbullying;
19. Recalls the obligations under the revised Audiovisual Media Services Directive to protect minors from illegal and harmful content and all users from content inciting violence or hatred; calls on the Commission to monitor the implementation of this directive by the Member States;
20. Recalls the need to strengthen protection of and support for victims of cyberbullying; is concerned that victims' organisations are increasingly under threat owing to a lack of funding; calls for increased and sustainable EU funding for civil society organisations, helplines and victim support services, and for the integration of cyberbullying prevention and response measures into national mental health strategies, with particular attention to minors and other vulnerable groups;

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21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.