



TEXTS ADOPTED

P10_TA(2026)0313

Impact of social media and the online environment on young people

European Parliament resolution of 17 September 2026 on the impact of social media and the online environment on young people (2025/2081(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 2, 3, 114 and 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the Charter), in particular Articles 1, 21, 23 and 24 thereof,
- having regard to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women's general recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19, published on 26 July 2017,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted on 12 December 2006,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 18 December 1979, and to the general recommendations made by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women,
- having regard to the UN International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 21 December 1965,
- having regard to UN General Assembly Resolution 78/187 of 19 December 2023 entitled 'Rights of the child', which focuses on the rights of the child in the digital environment,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989 and to General comment No. 25 (2021) of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child of 2 March 2021 on children's rights in relation to the digital environment,
- having regard to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing

and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) of 11 May 2011,

- having regard to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse of 25 October 2007,
- having regard to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recommendation of the Council on Children in the Digital Environment, adopted on 16 February 2012 and amended on 31 May 2021,
- having regard to the OECD Digital Economy Outlook 2024 (Volume 1), published on 14 May 2024, particularly the 'spotlight' chapter thereof on mental health and digital environments,
- having regard to the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe entitled 'Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment', adopted on 4 July 2018,
- 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)¹,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2024/1183 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 amending Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 as regards establishing the European Digital Identity Framework²,
- 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)³,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2022 on contestable and fair markets in the digital sector and amending Directives (EU)

¹ OJ L, 2024/1689, 12.7.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj>.

² OJ L, 2024/1183, 30.4.2024,
ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1183/oj>.

³ OJ L 277, 27.10.2022, p. 1, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj>.

2019/1937 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Digital Markets Act)⁴,

- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2021/784 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 on addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online⁵,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2017/2394 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 December 2017 on cooperation between national authorities responsible for the enforcement of consumer protection laws and repealing Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004⁶,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation)⁷,
- having regard to Directive 2005/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2005 concerning unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market and amending Council Directive 84/450/EEC, Directives 97/7/EC, 98/27/EC and 2002/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council ('Unfair Commercial Practices Directive')⁸,
- 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 violence⁹,
- 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 realities¹⁰,

⁴ OJ L 265, 12.10.2022, p. 1, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/1925/oj>.

⁵ OJ L 172, 17.5.2021, p. 79, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2021/784/oj>.

⁶ OJ L 345, 27.12.2017, p. 1,
ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2017/2394/oj>.

⁷ OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/679/oj>.

⁸ OJ L 149, 11.6.2005, p. 22, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2005/29/oj>.

⁹ OJ L, 2024/1385, 24.5.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1385/oj>.

¹⁰ OJ L 303, 28.11.2018, p.69, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2018/1808/oj>.

- having regard to Directive 2002/58/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 July 2002 concerning the processing of personal data and the protection of privacy in the electronic communications sector (Directive on privacy and electronic communications)¹¹,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 20 June 2025 on promoting and protecting the mental health of children and adolescents in the digital era,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 13 May 2025 on the assessment of the legal framework for audiovisual media services and video-sharing platform services¹²,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 25 May 2020 on media literacy in an ever-changing world¹³,
- having regard to the Jutland Declaration: Shaping a Safe Online World for Minors, signed on 10 October 2025,
- having regard to the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade, signed on 15 December 2022¹⁴,
- having regard to the joint communication from the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 12 November 2025 entitled 'European Democracy Shield: Empowering Strong and Resilient Democracies' (JOIN(2025)0791),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 6 February 2024 for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child sexual abuse material and replacing Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA (COM(2024)0060),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 24 March 2021 entitled 'EU strategy on the rights of the child' (COM(2021)0142),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 5 March 2020 entitled 'A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025' (COM(2020)0152), and to the priorities set out in the Commission communication of 5 March 2026 entitled 'Gender Equality Strategy 2026-2030' (COM(2026)0113),

¹¹ OJ L 201, 31.7.2002, p. 37, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2002/58/oj>.

¹² OJ C, C/2025/2954, 26.5.2025, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/2954/oj>.

¹³ OJ C 193, 9.6.2020, p. 23.

¹⁴ OJ C 23, 23.1.2023, p. 1.

- having regard to the Commission communication of 30 September 2020 entitled ‘Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 – Resetting education and training for the digital age’ (COM(2020)0624),
- having regard to the Commission report of 24 March 2025 on the implementation of the EU Youth Strategy (2022-2024) (COM(2025)0117),
- having regard to the 2025 policy brief by the Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC) entitled ‘Social media usage and adolescents’ mental health in the EU’,
- having regard to the 2022 report by the JRC entitled ‘Artificial Intelligence and the Rights of the Child’,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 14 July 2025 entitled ‘Guidelines on measures to ensure a high level of privacy, safety and security for minors online, pursuant to Article 28(4) of Regulation (EU) 2022/2065’¹⁵,
- having regard to the Commission’s 2024 guidelines for school leaders, teachers and educators entitled ‘Wellbeing and mental health at school’, and to its 2024 guidelines for education policymakers entitled ‘Wellbeing and mental health at school’,
- having regard to the Commission’s 2022 ethical guidelines on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and data in teaching and learning for educators, which were revised in 2026,
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 3 October 2024 entitled ‘Executive summary of the fitness check of EU consumer law on digital fairness’ (SWD(2024)0231),
- having regard to its resolution of 26 November 2025 on the protection of minors online¹⁶,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 January 2024 on virtual worlds – opportunities, risks and policy implications for the single market¹⁷,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 December 2023 on addictive design of online services and consumer protection in the EU single market¹⁸,

¹⁵ OJ C, C/2025/5519, 10.10.2025, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/5519/oj>.

¹⁶ OJ C, C/2026/1708, 24.4.2026, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2026/1708/oj>.

¹⁷ OJ C, C/2024/5723, 17.10.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/5723/oj>.

¹⁸ OJ C, C/2024/4164, 2.8.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/4164/oj>.

- having regard to its resolution of 5 October 2023 on the new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+)¹⁹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 10 November 2022 on esports and video games²⁰,
 - having regard to its resolution of 14 December 2021 with recommendations to the Commission on combating gender-based violence: cyberviolence²¹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 25 March 2021 on shaping digital education policy²²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 11 March 2021 on children's rights in view of the EU Strategy on the rights of the child²³,
 - having regard to its resolution of 11 December 2018 on education in the digital era: challenges, opportunities and lessons for EU policy design²⁴,
 - having regard to the study requested by Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education entitled 'The influence of social media on the development of children and young people', published by its Directorate-General for Internal Policies in February 2023²⁵,
 - having regard to Rule 55 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the opinions of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Culture and Education (A10-0220/2026),
- A. whereas in 2024, the share of young people in the EU using the internet daily reached 97 % on average; whereas global screen time data from 2025 show that teenagers aged 11-14 spend around 9 hours per day on screens and children aged 8-10 around 6 hours per day;

¹⁹ OJ C, C/2024/1190, 23.2.2024, ELI:
<http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2024/1190/oj>.

²⁰ OJ C 161, 5.5.2023, p. 2.

²¹ OJ C 251, 30.6.2022, p. 2.

²² OJ C 494, 8.12.2021, p. 2.

²³ OJ C 474, 24.11.2021, p.146.

²⁴ OJ C 388, 13.11.2020, p. 2.

²⁵ Study - 'The influence of social media on the development of children and young people', European Parliament, Directorate-General for Internal Policies, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, February 2023.

- B. whereas social media use among children and young people in the EU aged 9-16 has more than doubled since 2010, now averaging 3 hours per day, with over 80 % using social media platforms daily;
- C. whereas the 'online environment' refers broadly to internet-connected platforms, services and devices used for communication, entertainment, education and access to information;
- D. whereas minors can be both victims and perpetrators of digital harms;
- E. whereas gender-based online violence in all its forms, including sextortion, hate speech, stalking, image-based sexual abuse, grooming, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate material or sexts, represents a severe violation of fundamental rights and human dignity;
- F. whereas children and young people from vulnerable groups, including those living in poverty, those with disabilities, those in residential or institutional care, and those with limited family supervision, as well as Roma, LGBTIQ+ and migrant children and young people, and those from racial or ethnic minority backgrounds, face inequalities that are often exacerbated in the online environment; whereas they are disproportionately exposed to risks such as cyberbullying, hate speech, grooming, discrimination, algorithmic bias and addictive platform design, which can lead to serious mental health harms; whereas the available data indicate a systematic underestimation of the problem, as many victims refrain from reporting due to fear, shame, lack of trust or limited knowledge of support mechanisms^{26, 27}; whereas disparities in internet access, digital and media literacy, and access to relevant support services, particularly in rural and remote areas, further deepen exclusion and inequality;
- G. whereas young women and girls from marginalised groups, such as those with disabilities or those from marginalised racial and ethnic backgrounds, face intersectional forms of discrimination that increase the risk of physical violence offline;
- H. whereas hostility harms young people even if they are not directly targeted, fostering a culture of intolerance; whereas the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights has highlighted that detecting illegal and harmful online hate is very difficult, as no single

²⁶ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Online content moderation - Current challenges in detecting hate speech', Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2023.

²⁷ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey - Main Results' (EU-MIDIS II), Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2017.

methodology can reliably capture its full scale; whereas without independent research and monitoring, the prevalence of online hate speech is systematically underestimated²⁸;

- I. whereas conduct that is unlawful or harmful offline should not be tolerated online; whereas the digital environment must uphold the rule of law, fundamental rights and child-protection standards, without imposing disproportionate restrictions on freedom of expression or innovation;
- J. whereas digital service providers should ensure that their services are age-appropriate by design and adhere to high standards of ethics, privacy and safety, including by setting minors' profiles to private by default, preventing unwanted contact from strangers, and ensuring that profiling-based recommender systems are not enabled by default;
- K. whereas the online environment provides young people with opportunities for learning, creativity, civic participation and social connection, enabling them to exercise their rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression, the right to education, the right to access information, and the right to participate in political and public life;
- L. whereas the online environment can also expose young users to a wide range of illegal and harmful content, including cyberbullying, grooming, sexualised material, child sexual abuse material, online gambling, harassment and abuse; whereas this can also include disinformation, extremism and incitement to dangerous behaviour, with a significant number of European children reporting having been disturbed or upset by negative online experiences;
- M. whereas digital platforms often do not offer effective protection mechanisms; whereas there is an urgent need for the effective implementation and enforcement of existing EU legislation and a need to clarify possible interlinks and overlaps among those legislative acts; whereas minors should enjoy a higher level of protection when using all online services, with proportionate obligations according to the providers' size, role and risk profile;
- N. whereas the current EU legal framework, including the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Digital Services Act (DSA), the Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act) and the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (UCPD), provides a solid foundation for protecting children online, including through content moderation, transparency in recommender systems and data minimisation; whereas persistent

²⁸ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Online content moderation – Current challenges in detecting hate speech', Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2023.

gaps and inconsistencies in enforcement remain, demonstrating the need for a harmonised EU approach;

- O. whereas the Commission has committed to strengthening the protection of children online through the upcoming Digital Fairness Act;
- P. whereas under the AVMSD, the Member States must ensure that audiovisual media service providers and video-sharing platforms put in place measures to protect minors from content that may impair their physical, mental or moral development; whereas under the AVMSD, the personal data of minors must not be processed for commercial purposes, profiling and behaviourally targeted advertising;
- Q. whereas under the DSA, online platforms are not allowed to show ads based on personal data profiling if they know the user is a minor;
- R. whereas the GDPR's principle of data minimisation strictly applies to both the direct collection and the indirect behavioural tracking of minors' data;
- S. whereas digital services that process the personal data of children, including for recommender systems, and for photo or video filters that adjust children's physical appearance, do not request the 'explicit consent' of a parent or guardian, and opt for another legal basis to collect and process the personal data of minors;
- T. whereas the AI Act includes specific safeguards for children, by prohibiting AI systems that exploit their vulnerabilities and by establishing obligations for high-risk AI systems;
- U. whereas minors increasingly interact with AI-driven tools, including conversational agents and recommender systems, which play an increasing role in shaping online experiences and interactions;
- V. whereas young people use social media, content-sharing platforms, online aggregators and AI assistants for news consumption to an increasing extent; whereas many users experience challenges in assessing the reliability of information encountered in the online environment;
- W. whereas cyberbullying happens wherever children interact online, including on social media, video-sharing platforms, messaging platforms, online forums and gaming platforms;
- X. whereas cyberbullying affects a significant proportion of children across all online environments; whereas cyberbullying rates have increased in nearly all EU countries, with studies showing that approximately 1 in 6 children in Europe has experienced cyberbullying, and that between 13 % and 29 % report frequent

bullying both online and offline; whereas online and offline bullying are intrinsically linked and must be treated holistically, as digital harassment often extends from school-based conflicts and vice versa, leading to long-term consequences for the mental health, self-esteem and educational outcomes of children and young people; whereas a majority of children indicate that cyberbullying is one of the biggest challenges to their mental health;

- Y. whereas platform designs and algorithmic amplification, which prioritise engagement over safety, can lead to the normalisation of hateful and misogynistic content; whereas online gaming environments may expose minors to harassment and gender-based violence, while certain persuasive design features may increase the time and intensity of such exposure;
- Z. whereas in March 2026, a Los Angeles jury found Meta and Google liable for harms linked to addictive and manipulative design features of social media platforms used by children and young people; whereas this ruling constitutes a significant development in the growing international debate on the responsibility of online platforms to ensure a safe digital environment for minors; whereas several European countries are also stepping up judicial, regulatory and parliamentary actions to address addictive design features and other online harms affecting children and young people;
- AA. whereas, according to General Recommendation No. 1 on the digital dimension of violence against women, adopted on 20 October 2021 by the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, manifestations of gender-based violence perpetrated in the digital sphere fall within the scope of the Istanbul Convention;
- AB. whereas 1 in 10 women have experienced cyberviolence since the age of 15, and 52 % of young women and girls have experienced online abuse – 68 % of which took place on social media platforms; whereas reports from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and the European Institute for Gender Equality indicate that women and girls are the primary victims of online sexual harassment and blackmail, which often leads to severe psychological impacts, including fear and anxiety, as well as lasting damage to reputation, and a withdrawal from online spaces and public life;
- AC. whereas studies carried out in several Member States show that minors have access to pornographic content, sometimes involuntarily, at a very young age, which might trigger harmful sexual behaviours, and increase aggression and sexual violence; whereas pressure to share intimate images, and the non-consensual sharing of such images through mainstream platforms, may shape attitudes towards relationships and consent in ways that disproportionately perpetuate violence against women and girls;

- AD. whereas access to health education, including age-appropriate sexual education, can contribute to the well-being and autonomy of young people, while fully respecting national competences;
- AE. whereas excessive social media use, exposure to harmful content and the ability to construct and disseminate hyperrealistic bodies through filters and avatars may be associated with elevated risks of depression, anxiety, loneliness, poor sleep and sedentary behaviours; whereas fast-paced online environments and algorithmic designs favouring instant gratification can lead to the deterioration of cognitive and interpersonal skills, negatively affect academic performance and hinder the development of critical thinking;
- AF. whereas excessive screen time may limit free play, participation in sports and face-to-face interactions, which are essential for overall well-being; whereas research indicates that digital self-harm significantly increases the likelihood of suicidal thoughts and attempts;
- AG. whereas the Commission's 2024 fitness check of EU consumer law on digital fairness reveals that only 20 % of influencers systematically indicate the commercial nature of their content; whereas social media influencers significantly affect and shape young people's behaviours, consumption habits and opinions, and therefore bear responsibility for ensuring transparency regarding paid partnerships and accountability for the content they promote; whereas content creators, while often distinct from influencers in that they primarily produce informational, educational, cultural or entertainment content, rather than commercially driven endorsements, play an increasingly important role in fostering creativity, access to information, cultural diversity and educational content online, particularly among minors and young audiences;
- AH. whereas the phenomenon of 'kidfluencers' involves early public exposure and commercialisation, risking economic and emotional exploitation without consent; whereas minors below minimum age requirements often operate as 'kidfluencers' on platforms where legal safeguards may be insufficient or inconsistently applied, raising serious concerns regarding their privacy and commercial exploitation;
- AI. whereas for the purposes of this report, 'sharenting' describes the practice of parents or caregivers broadly and systematically sharing information and images of their children online, with the objective of monetary gain through the generation of user engagement; whereas such practices raise serious concerns about consent and the child's right to privacy, as it may expose children to grooming, identity theft or reputational harm, and may have lasting psychological impact;
- AJ. whereas it is crucial to raise awareness among parents regarding the

fact that posting pictures of their children online may involve significant risks, as once such images are shared publicly, they may be used in ways that are entirely beyond their control; whereas sharing photos without commercial intent is not, however, in itself harmful, and parents should retain the freedom to decide what to share;

- AK. whereas there is an urgent need for a clearer legal framework to address the use of minors' images by 'parent influencers' and 'family influencers', in order to prevent exploitation and protect children's privacy;
- AL. whereas a clear distinction should be maintained between the terms 'age assurance', 'age verification', 'age estimation' and 'self-declaration'; whereas age assurance serves as an umbrella term encompassing methods such as self-declaration, age estimation and age verification; whereas age estimation may rely on probabilistic methods, including AI-based or behavioural analysis, while age verification methods require evidence of age, which may include official documents or digital identity solutions, while ensuring privacy-preserving and proportionate approaches;
- AM. whereas several mechanisms introduced by online platforms to control access are easily circumvented, and children below the official age limits hold social media accounts by misrepresenting their age; whereas such widespread access to age-inappropriate content, fake profiles and anonymous accounts increases the risk of harmful conduct;
- AN. whereas minors should enjoy equal levels of protection regardless of where they live; whereas several Member States have already adopted national laws and called for a common European approach regarding digital majority – a minimum age limit for accessing social media and other online services;
- AO. whereas age verification is not a 'silver bullet' for ensuring the protection of minors online, and should not be contemplated in isolation, but rather in line with children's rights and a safety-by-design approach, and on a risk-based and case-by-case basis; whereas there is a need for reliable, privacy-preserving and proportionate solutions that comply with the principles of personal data protection;
- AP. whereas safety, privacy and age-appropriate-by-design approaches should be the norm, including, among other things, the setting of profiles to private by default, thereby hindering contact from strangers, and the deactivation of the profiling recommender system by default;
- AQ. whereas parental control tools are an important complement to platform and policy measures in protecting minors online; whereas

the market currently offers a wide variety of parental-control apps and device settings with differing functionality and usability;

- AR. whereas video games constitute a major social interaction space; whereas certain monetisation models such as 'loot boxes' present risks comparable to gambling by replicating randomised reward mechanics, which can foster compulsive behaviour in minors; whereas the Pan-European Game Information (PEGI) system remains a key tool for age-appropriate decision-making regarding video game content;
- AS. whereas live video game streaming platforms frequently fail to implement effective age verification mechanisms, allowing minors to access adult-oriented, sexualised or gambling-adjacent content; whereas this represents a distinct regulatory gap;
- AT. whereas, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 11 % of adolescents show signs of problematic social media behaviour and 12 % are at risk of problematic gaming, with boys (16 %) being significantly more likely to be affected than girls (7 %); whereas gaming disorder is officially recognised as such by the WHO;
- AU. whereas social media features such as infinite scrolling, autoplay, recommender systems or profiling-based algorithms, compulsive notifications and reward-based mechanisms are designed to maximise engagement and monetise attention; whereas 97 % of the most popular apps used by EU consumers employ at least one dark pattern;
- AV. whereas exposure to such features is driven by deliberate targeting by online platforms and exacerbated by algorithms that can boost harmful content, and must therefore be subject to risk assessments and transparency obligations under the DSA and the AI Act;
- AW. whereas certain digital practices undermine consumer autonomy by manipulating choice architecture, including through deceptive default settings, false urgency and misleading interface design;
- AX. whereas the Commission has committed to a Digital Fairness Act in order to tackle unethical practices, including dark patterns, influencer marketing and addictive design, which exploit the vulnerabilities of consumers, including those who are minors;
- AY. whereas online platforms do not always provide effective safety features; whereas certain tracking and profiling practices raise serious privacy concerns; whereas tackling addictive design and dark patterns requires coordinated EU action; whereas media service providers, particularly audiovisual media services providers, are subject to more stringent obligations; whereas the level of protection of minors varies, depending on the source and location of content;

- AZ. whereas digital, media and AI literacy, including an understanding of algorithms and algorithmic biases, is crucial for empowering young people to make good use of digital services; whereas such literacy provides the necessary skills and tools to understand risks and opportunities, fostering critical thinking to navigate online spaces responsibly and withstand manipulation, misinformation, disinformation and profiling;
- BA. whereas digital and media literacy education should extend to parents, guardians, educators, youth workers and social service providers, who often lack the support and training to address these issues; whereas such training should incorporate critical thinking, resilience and AI awareness to help young people manage online interactions;
- BB. whereas school-wide approaches to digital balance, including clear policies on smartphone use, can create calmer learning environments, protect students' attention and strengthen social cohesion; whereas the ability to consciously disengage from digital tools is recognised in the European Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (DigComp 2.2) as a core competence for well-being and safety, supporting concentration, healthy sleep and social connection;
- BC. whereas digital citizenship education is essential for equipping young people with the knowledge and skills necessary to participate responsibly and critically in democratic life; whereas this supports resilience against disinformation, hate speech and manipulation online while strengthening democratic engagement, informed trust in institutions, fundamental rights and shared European values;

General principles

1. Stresses that addressing the impact of social media on young people requires an integrated European strategy, which combines safety and privacy-by-design, safety by-default, age-appropriate design, algorithmic transparency and privacy-first age verification mechanisms, and which strengthens mental well-being, digital and media literacy that involves families, schools and educators, and participatory governance and evidence-based evaluation to ensure equal protection and empowerment for all;

EU legal framework

2. Stresses the need to ensure effective and coherent implementation, enforcement, consistency and complementarity across key EU legal instruments, such as the AVMSD, the GDPR, the DSA, the UCPD, the

Digital Markets Act²⁹, the AI Act and the forthcoming Digital Fairness Act (DFA), in order to build an integrated framework for protecting children online; calls for the alignment of national measures so as to prevent the fragmentation of child protection in the EU, and to strengthen cooperation and information sharing between national competent authorities and the Commission;

3. Stresses the need to allocate adequate resources, in the context of the 2028-2034 multiannual financial framework, in order to guarantee that the competent authorities and the services within the Commission in charge of implementing and enforcing the relevant digital legislation, have the necessary resources to effectively carry out their work; urges the Member States to increase financial and human resources for Digital Services Coordinators, the European Board for Media Services and other national competent authorities, in order to ensure the effective implementation and enforcement of the relevant EU legislation; stresses the need to provide the staff of the competent authorities dealing with harmful and illegal content with a well-defined framework, and psychological support and assistance;
4. Stresses the importance of the timely appointment of Digital Services Coordinators in all Member States, as a prerequisite for the effective implementation of the DSA; notes, in this regard, the infringement proceedings initiated against some of the Member States; calls on the Commission to support the effective and consistent implementation of the DSA across all Member States, including through guidance, coordination and monitoring and, when necessary, by applying fines and corrective actions, while ensuring a harmonised approach and avoiding market fragmentation;
5. Calls on the Commission, the European Board for Digital Services and the competent national authorities, particularly the Consumer Protection Cooperation Network, to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of measures taken to protect minors on online platforms, while ensuring coordinated enforcement against unfair, misleading or aggressive commercial practices, including social media and influencer marketing, in cases where risks are clearly identified;

Audiovisual Media Services Directive

6. Reiterates that the AVMSD acknowledges the protection of minors as an important policy objective of the EU and contains key provisions, such as Article 28b(1), (2) and (3), to safeguard the better protection

²⁹ Regulation (EU) 2022/1925 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 September 2022 on contestable and fair markets in the digital sector and amending Directives (EU) 2019/1937 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Digital Markets Act) (OJ L 265, 12.10.2022, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/1925/oj>).

of minors online, in particular on video-sharing platforms (VSPs); highlights that the AVMSD requires VSPs to take appropriate measures to protect minors from content that may harm their physical, mental or moral development, e.g. through age verification and parental control tools, and to ensure the protection of the general public from illegal content, as well as harmful and illegal commercial communications; reiterates, furthermore, that VSPs must inform users where content contains advertising, by providing a functionality allowing users to declare such information, and must provide effective media literacy measures and tools;

7. Considers the upcoming revision of the AVMSD a timely opportunity to strengthen the protection of young people against illegal and harmful content on VSPs, including social media platforms, notably by specifying the obligations under Article 28b; stresses, also, the need to reinforce provisions ensuring the prominence of media services of general interest, including by clarifying that such prominence rules can also apply to VSPs to promote access to trustworthy, high-quality and age-appropriate online content; calls, furthermore, for this revision to consider targeted and proportionate measures for detecting, reporting and preventing live streams containing violence, humiliation, incitement to self-harm or other forms of harmful content; underscores the need to evaluate the obligations set out in the AVMSD for Member States to promote and take measures to develop media literacy skills, and determine if such measures need to be further reinforced and expanded;
8. Calls, furthermore, on platform operators hosting live streams, including of video-game content, to require streamers to explicitly label when content includes gambling-like mechanisms, real-money wagering or other age-restricted elements; urges platforms to implement protective defaults for users who are likely to be minors, such as blurring before showing adult-flagged streams, hiding donation or paid gambling overlays from minors' accounts, and reducing the discoverability of adult-flagged streams on the feeds of minors' accounts, while ensuring that such measures are proportionate and respect freedom of expression;
9. Calls on the Commission to assess whether current AVMSD definitions fully cover relevant audiovisual media services, especially those provided by influencers and professional content creators on VSPs; requests, in this regard, clarification on the status and responsibilities of such creators to ensure they are subject to the same obligations on advertising transparency and protection of minors as media service providers; calls, furthermore, on the Commission to assess the 2020 Commission guidelines on the practical application of the essential functionality criterion of the

definition of a ‘video-sharing platform service’ under the AVMSD³⁰, evaluating whether it is fit for purpose in covering all services providing audiovisual media content and their obligations to protect minors online;

10. Stresses the need to assess the implementation of the AVMSD and consider extending its key provisions, such as those on advertising transparency and the protection of minors, to major VSPs; underlines that aligning VSPs’ responsibilities with those of media service providers would help to close regulatory gaps affecting young audiences;

Digital Services Act

11. Welcomes the July 2025 Commission guidelines pursuant to Article 28(4) DSA as a key step in strengthening child protection online, particularly on VSPs and social media, offering practical measures for Digital Services Coordinators and the Commission to enforce the DSA rules effectively, and calls on online platforms to implement high levels of privacy, safety and security for minors online; calls on online platforms to ensure, and calls on the Commission to monitor, the swift implementation of the guidelines; urges, in particular, the simplification of terms and conditions, the implementation of clear, simple and easy-to-use reporting processes, and the provision of appropriate, child-friendly, confidential guidance for younger users on all available tools for privacy, reporting and data protection; stresses the need for privacy-preserving age verification; notes that although the guidelines are not binding, the Commission will use them to evaluate compliance with Article 28(1) DSA; calls for their regular review to address, where appropriate, emerging issues, with additional steps to be taken at EU level, following an assessment by the Commission’s expert group;
12. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the cohesive and synchronised implementation of the AVMSD and the DSA for the protection of minors on VSPs and on social media platforms, and to examine the coherence and clarity of their application for audiovisual content, bearing in mind the need to ensure an adequate level of protection for users of VSPs;
13. Urges the Commission to clarify the interplay between existing legislation regulating dark patterns, such as the UCPD and the DSA, and to consider reviewing the list of unfair commercial practices under Annex I to the UCPD, in order to close further legal gaps;

³⁰ Commission communication of 2 July 2020 entitled ‘Guidelines on the practical application of the essential functionality criterion of the definition of a “video-sharing platform service” under the Audiovisual Media Services Directive’ (OJ C 223, 7.7.2020, p. 3).

General Data Protection Regulation

Data protection and the right to privacy

14. Recalls that the GDPR forms the cornerstone of data protection in the EU, laying down strong safeguards and obligations for the processing of personal data, including important principles such as purpose limitation, data accuracy, data minimisation and accountability, as well as key rights such as the right to erasure ('right to be forgotten') enshrined in Article 17 GDPR, while granting children a particularly high level of protection;
15. Stresses that existing GDPR instruments should be duly implemented by service providers; calls for their reinforcement via the application of explicit age-appropriate standards: default maximum privacy settings; the prohibition of targeted profiling of, or advertising to, minors, including for political advertising; minimalist data collection; and terms and conditions explained in a way that minors can understand; encourages the development of guidelines and best practices for safe default settings for minors, including measures such as the deactivation of the 'autoplay' function, limitations to infinite scrolling, the enabling of a 'reset feed' option, the setting of time limits, periodic prompts to take a break and the restriction of notifications, in order to ensure the digital well-being of children and young people;
16. Urges the Member States to allocate sufficient resources to data protection and consumer protection authorities, in order to effectively investigate and sanction practices that use the personal data of minors, in violation of EU law;
17. Asks the Commission to evaluate existing gaps in the prohibition of targeted advertising, and to consider a comprehensive ban, in order to eliminate a major driver of manipulative design and behavioural profiling;
18. Regrets that, since the GDPR's entry into force, many providers have inadequately implemented its requirements; underlines the urgent need for stronger enforcement of the GDPR and to consider additional guidance, by Member States' data protection authorities and the Commission, on its application to AI systems targeting or accessible to minors; recalls that AI systems must ensure that, in line with the GDPR, users can easily exercise their right to have personal data erased, including personal data inferred;
19. Calls on the Commission to ensure the enforcement of existing transparency obligations, under the GDPR and the DSA, regarding data permission for accessing photos or automatic location sharing, which may increase the risk of privacy violations and stalking, disproportionately affecting women and girls;

Upcoming Digital Fairness Act

20. Welcomes the Commission's fitness check of EU consumer law on digital fairness; calls on the Commission, within the framework of the forthcoming DFA, to identify and close existing relevant regulatory gaps, particularly regarding addictive and manipulative design features of digital services, including dark patterns, personalised advertising practices, neuromarketing, loot boxes, in-app currencies in video games and unfair commercial practices by influencers; stresses that the main objective of the new legislative initiative should be to strengthen the protection of children and young users online, while avoiding overlaps with existing legislation; stresses the need for dedicated research into neuromarketing and its effects on children and young people; calls on the Commission to ensure that the forthcoming DFA addresses this issue;

AI Act

21. Recognises the potential of AI to enhance learning, creativity and entrepreneurship among young people, including through personalised guidance, innovation in the arts and media, and access to new forms of economic participation;
22. Stresses that minors' increasing ease of access to, and use of, generative AI tools, including AI tools specifically designed for minors, and AI-driven youth-facing services, such as chatbots, personalisation engines, recommender systems, deepfake technologies and algorithmic content filters, present new risks to children's mental health and cognitive and social development, due to integrated bias, manipulation or purposely manipulative techniques, privacy intrusion, and the spread of misinformation;
23. Calls on the Commission to enforce the AI Act's obligations, specifically on transparency, including by watermarking and labelling AI-generated content, and calls on online platforms to implement swift procedures for the removal of falsified or harmful content; underlines, furthermore, the need for protective default settings against engagement-driven design in such services and for explanations of how automated systems work;

Emotional companions

24. Highlights the risks posed by 'AI companions' that simulate virtual friendships, warning that they can exploit minors' emotional vulnerability, foster dependency and harvest sensitive psychological data; recalls that the AI Act prohibits, under certain conditions, AI systems capable of deploying manipulative techniques or exploiting the vulnerabilities of natural persons; warns that interactions with these tools, in a number of cases, have contributed to suicides; stresses the need for clear regulation and mandatory ethical standards on the design and use of these systems in order to prevent

manipulation, including prominent disclosures that the interlocutor is an AI, default safety modes for minors, requirements to direct users expressing self-harm ideation to helplines, strict age-verification mechanisms for chat interfaces and to ensure that those safeguards specifically consider girls' increased exposure to emotional manipulation and grooming; calls on the Commission to assess the impact of these technologies in the framework of any future strategy for the digital safety of children and to bring forward, if necessary, an EU code of conduct on conversational AI for minors;

AI systems integrated into toys and smart devices

25. Recalls that AI systems integrated into toys and smart devices for children are classified as high-risk under the AI Act when they are safety components, or when those systems are the toy itself; stresses that these systems are often used without an adequate understanding of the risks involved; notes that, where such AI is used, it must comply with strict requirements regarding transparency, data governance, safety and oversight;

Social risks relating to AI-generated content

26. Calls on the Member States and online platforms to ensure that AI product evaluation and labelling frameworks adequately reflect the impact on young users' rights and their mental health; calls on online platforms to carry out dedicated child and youth impact reviews for AI systems likely to affect minors, in line with the best interests of the child; urges the Member States and the Commission to ensure that AI risk classification mechanisms and risk management obligations under the AI Act and the DSA systematically take into account the impact on young users' rights, mental health and social inclusion, including through mandatory child-focused evaluations, complementing existing audit and redress mechanisms;

Gender bias and discrimination in AI systems

Gender-biased training datasets

27. Notes that AI training datasets often reflect entrenched stereotypes, resulting in biased recommendation algorithms and content-ordering systems, including the promotion of misogynistic communities, sexualised AI-generated images, pro-anorexia and self-harm content, as well as discriminatory moderation practices; calls for the systematic auditing of training data and algorithmic outputs using gender-sensitive indicators, as well as for scenario testing to examine how recommender systems expose minors to such content, and for platforms to demonstrate measures that prevent harmful content escalation;
28. Calls for improved transparency regarding the training of AI models, including clear information on the datasets and materials used,

particularly for AI systems used or likely to be accessed by children and young people; stresses that such transparency should be accompanied by child safeguarding measures to prevent exposure to harmful, biased or inappropriate content; calls for the establishment of a code of conduct setting industry standards for transparency, accountability and child protection in the development of these technologies; recalls that the AI Act requires providers of high-risk AI systems to ensure that their training, validation and testing datasets are relevant, sufficiently representative, and to the best extent possible, free of errors and complete, in view of the intended purpose of the high-risk AI systems;

Inclusion: biased algorithms and discrimination

29. Highlights the need to prevent algorithmic bias and discrimination affecting young people; calls on online platforms to commission regular independent audits and implement transparent reporting mechanisms to monitor and correct systemic bias in AI-driven educational, employment and social media systems;

Obligations, transparency and possible solutions

Safeguard measures

30. Calls on the Commission, in coordination with the Member States, to develop guidelines on the use of AI systems impacting children, in order to prioritise precautionary measures against engagement-driven design, including protective default settings and understandable explanations of how automated systems work, while ensuring that AI used by children remains safe and available for use;
31. Voices concern about AI assistants regularly misrepresenting news content in their outputs; calls on providers of AI assistants to collaborate with the media sector to improve AI assistants' responses and outputs; calls on the Commission, the Member States and relevant regulatory authorities to effectively apply relevant EU media and digital laws with a view to promoting public interest objectives in AI, such as media pluralism, and to prevent AI-assisted searches from undermining the general public's trust in news and its access to reliable information;

Scams and fraud: specific measures against 'celebrity scams'

32. Expresses concern over the proliferation of AI-generated content impersonating media professionals and brands, for commercial gain or for the dissemination of disinformation or 'celebrity scams'; urges online platforms to increase mitigation, in this regard, and urges the Commission to classify celebrity scams as a systematic risk and intensify ongoing investigations under the DSA; encourages the Commission to consider adopting more efficient measures, including legislation, to protect minors from deception, while also ensuring

effective redress for media organisations and their employees affected by these unlawful practices;

33. Expresses concern over dangerous online challenges and disinformation targeting minors; calls for an EU-level rapid alert mechanism in this regard, in cooperation with Safer Internet Centres; calls for better enforcement, based on the current risk assessments by very large online platforms; demands more robust and data-driven systemic assessments to accurately identify and mitigate specific threats to children's safety;

AI-generated content and deepfakes

34. Expresses concern about the growing spread of AI-generated sexualised images, manipulated content and deepfakes designed to deceive, bully, body-shame and manipulate young people, thereby eroding their trust and safety in digital environments;
35. Calls for the explicit ban of AI systems generating, manipulating or altering realistic images or videos depicting sexually explicit activities or intimate parts of an identifiable natural person without that person's consent, and synthetic child sexual abuse material (CSAM), since they are listed explicitly in the prohibited practices under the AI Act; notes that such systems disproportionately target girls and young women, including those in the public sphere, and calls for their deployment, placement on the market or use to be aligned with an 'unacceptable risk' classification, so as to ensure consistent enforcement across the EU;
36. Calls for the development of comprehensive, accessible and child-appropriate reporting mechanisms and support services that are proportionate, compliant with children's rights and fundamentally centred on education, prevention and accountability, specifically for minors affected by image-based abuse;
37. Calls for specific actions to be taken to prevent intimate partner violence, among and affecting young people, in the digital environment, encompassing acts such as revenge porn, deepfake pornography, hacking, impersonation, and the use of technology to control or limit a partner's online behaviour; calls on the Member States to better educate young people about this threat;
38. Stresses, furthermore, that legislation on gender-based violence must explicitly apply to immersive technologies, such as virtual reality, online gaming platforms and the metaverse, to address non-consensual sexual acts and coerced interactions in virtual spaces;
39. Recalls that tackling online sexual abuse and exploitation is essential to addressing the impact of social media on young people; stresses the importance of reinforcing the legal framework, in this regard,

and recognises the recast of Directive 2011/93/EU³¹ as a key measure for strengthening child protection online;

40. Reiterates its position of 16 November 2023 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse (COM(2022)0209), which underlines that detection measures put in place should be targeted, proportionate, subject to judicial oversight and undertaken in respect of fundamental rights, without undermining or circumventing the end-to-end encryption and confidentiality of the communications of all users by automatically and generally scanning encrypted communications; highlights that weakening encryption would undermine trust and security in digital services;
41. Highlights that the Member States' legal systems do not keep up with the development and emergence of new types of CSAM, including synthetic, AI-generated CSAM as well as non-consensual intimate deepfakes, and calls for the criminalisation of the creation, possession and distribution of all types of CSAM regardless of the method of creation, and to require the swift takedown and cross-platform hashing of known abuse material, to stop it from reappearing;
42. Insists that tackling online sexual abuse and exploitation must also be done through prevention, reporting tools, education and appropriate law enforcement methods; urges the Commission and the Member States to ensure that victims have access to victim-centred and effective legal remedies; highlights the importance of accessible, confidential and child-friendly reporting channels that are based on safety and privacy by design, and that include specialised psychological and legal assistance for young victims and their parents; recalls that privacy is necessary for victims of abuse to protect their safety and increase their ability to seek help;
43. Highlights that all young people are affected by social media harms, including exposure to unrealistic body ideals, harassment, grooming and the non-consensual sharing of intimate material; underlines, however, that girls and young women are more exposed to social media harms, and are therefore disproportionately affected, particularly by body image pressure, harassment, misogynistic content and gender-based pressures, which can contribute to eating disorders, anorexia, self-harming behaviours and, in severe cases, extreme actions; stresses, therefore, the need for gender-sensitive digital safeguards to ensure safe, inclusive and empowering online

³¹ 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/JHA (OJ L 335, 17.12.2011, p. 1, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2011/93/oj>).

environments for all young users; calls on online platforms to implement swift mechanisms for reporting and removing misogynistic content, to prevent algorithmic recommendations that amplify gender stereotypes, and to support positive campaigns on body image and gender equality;

Cyberbullying and online harassment

44. Stresses the importance of cyberbullying prevention and response tools, including awareness programmes, educational resources for teachers and families, and peer support structures, such as anti-bullying programmes; highlights the need to treat online and offline bullying holistically, recognising their interconnected nature;
45. Stresses the importance of understanding the phenomenon of the online disinhibition effect, which refers to the reduction of social restraints and empathy in online communication due to anonymity, physical distance and the absence of non-verbal cues; notes that this effect can lead to increased aggression, insults and cyberbullying; highlights the need to provide targeted and, where possible, individually tailored support for young people in school, at home, in institutional care and in other communal and social environments;
46. Urges online platforms to ensure a swift and proportionate response to cyberbullying-related content and conduct, and to transparently report on its prevalence, and the response times and enforcement actions taken in countering it; stresses that content moderators play a crucial role in addressing online hate, and encourages online platforms to engage with independent civil society experts and researchers in developing and delivering their training, in this regard; underlines that transparency is essential to reveal the true extent of online hate, to identify potential algorithmic biases in detection systems and to ensure platforms' accountability; calls on online platforms to cooperate with civil society organisations, educational institutions, child protection services, parents and caregivers in developing effective cyberbullying-prevention campaigns and in raising awareness of existing reporting mechanisms;
47. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure long-term and sustainable funding, as well as systematic national visibility, for helplines and hotlines operating within the Safer Internet Centres network; stresses that these are key tools for providing immediate, professional and anonymous support to children and parents facing abuse or exposure to inappropriate online content;

Action plan against cyberbullying

48. Welcomes the Commission's action plan against cyberbullying and its common definition of cyberbullying at EU level; calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that online platforms

are held responsible for preventing and countering cyberbullying, and to establish a European mechanism for the exchange of best practices among the Member States; underlines the importance of multidisciplinary cooperation between educational institutions, law enforcement authorities and relevant child protection services in the prevention and early detection of cases of cyberbullying; calls on the Commission to require online platforms to provide minors with an accessible reporting interface, and to ensure that platform design is safe by design and by default, including the possibility to block and report harmful contact and conduct;

Mental health

49. Stresses that social media can cause addiction and thus serious mental health harms, particularly for minors, with links to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and body image issues;
50. Encourages awareness-raising campaigns targeting young people, families and schools, similar to initiatives such as Safer Internet Day, to prevent digital addiction, promote critical thinking, foster peer support skills and encourage healthier and more responsible social media habits; urges the Commission to develop comprehensive, evidence-based guidelines on healthy technology use and appropriate digital content, tailored by age group, focusing on usage patterns and screen time; stresses that such guidelines should serve as a reference for the design and safety features of digital services accessible to minors; calls on the Commission, in coordination with the Member States, to encourage online platforms to implement default user-friendly measures for minors' accounts, including periodic prompts to take a break, configurable time-outs, and regular, unobtrusive notifications to users indicating the duration of their activity;
51. Highlights the positive role of sport and physical activity and community engagement in promoting the mental and physical well-being of young people; encourages the Commission and the Member States to promote regular offline activities, such as community-based arts, sports and civic engagement, as part of a broader strategy to reduce the excessive use of social media among young people and support their healthy development;
52. Calls on the Member States to ensure rapid access to mental-health support and psychological assistance for all young people, including by investing in grassroots, peer-led and community-driven psychosocial services; calls for psychological counselling in schools, dedicated support lines and awareness campaigns; calls for the implementation of suicide-prevention protocols on major online platforms, including the visible display of helpline numbers and support resources; warns that online tools, such as AI companions and chatbots, cannot replace mental health professionals and may be

dangerous if used as a means of solving serious mental health issues;

53. Calls on online platforms to mitigate the impact of addictive and persuasive design features on the well-being of children and young people by implementing risk-based safeguards for recommender systems, and measures to effectively address, phase out and ban the most harmful addictive practices;
54. Calls for accessible and child-appropriate support services, including counselling, reporting mechanisms and legal assistance, for minors affected by AI-generated sexualised images and deepfakes;

Influencers and targeted advertising

55. Highlights the fact that social media influencers play an increasingly significant role in shaping the perceptions, aspirations and social attitudes of children and young people; welcomes the Commission's efforts to ensure influencers' compliance with existing legislation, including by setting up the Influencer Legal Hub; calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop a code of conduct for influencers, agencies and online platforms at EU level, including commitments to advertise responsibly towards minors, the clarification of responsibilities at different points of the value chain – such agencies representing influencers, and the brands whose products and services are being promoted – and the avoidance of harmful or misleading content;
56. Stresses the need for legislative action, including by establishing a harmonised definition of 'influencer marketing', and to strengthen, where appropriate, the prohibition of unfair commercial practices, in order to ensure full transparency in influencer advertising and influencer marketing that targets young people, as they have particular difficulty distinguishing between commercial and non-commercial content; underlines the importance of sponsorship disclosures and ethical standards, and highlights the risks presented by misleading marketing whereby advertisements are hidden as organic content, such as the consumption of unhealthy foods or engagement in gambling-like practices;
57. Calls on the Commission to protect minors from being commercially exploited in the context of 'sharenting' and 'kidfluencing' activities; calls on the Commission to take into account the progress made by some of the Member States in addressing sharenting, and to consider measures to limit this practice in order to protect children's rights to their own images and to prevent their digital overexposure;

Harmful content, age verification and the protection of minors

58. Regrets the fact that several mechanisms used by online platforms to control access to their services, such as self-declaration, are easily bypassed, and that minors still have widespread access to age-

inappropriate content;

59. Stresses the need for effective, privacy-preserving age and child-rights compliant verification tools to verify a user's age when required, without the collection or retention of personal data, in line with EU data protection standards, the AVMSD and the DSA;
60. Welcomes the development of the EU Digital Identity Wallet framework, which sets the standards for age-verification features; underlines that any age verification tool must strictly comply with the GDPR principles of data minimisation and purpose limitation, and should enable proof-of-age without revealing identity; supports models using trusted third parties with double anonymity mechanisms, in which the verifier cannot identify the service, and the service cannot identify the user, as provided for under the Regulation on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market³² (which established the electronic Identification, Authentication and Trust Services (eIDAS) framework); calls on the Commission and the Council to promote coordinated investments and incentives for the deployment of the age-verification app across the Member States;
61. Calls, therefore, on the Commission to ensure that any age assurance mechanisms are supervised by public authorities, and comply with the privacy-preserving, non-intrusive and non-discriminatory-by-design architecture, interoperability and security requirements of the EU Digital Identity Wallet;
62. Calls on the Commission to establish, in coordination with the Member States, an EU mechanism for monitoring the effectiveness of child online protection policies, including the implementation of age restrictions, age-verification tools and safety settings on platforms, making use of existing capacities, in particular Eurostat data and methodologies; notes the current fragmentation across the Member States, and the fact that some of the Member States have implemented advanced measures to enhance the protection of minors online; encourages strong coordination at EU level, in this regard;

Minimum digital age

63. Welcomes the favourable consideration expressed by Commission President Ursula von der Leyen regarding the introduction of a harmonised, EU-wide minimum age limit for access to social media (a minimum digital age); takes note of the initiatives already

³² Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market and repealing Directive 1999/93/EC (OJ L 257, 28.8.2014, p. 73, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2014/910/oj>).

undertaken by certain Member States, in this regard; stresses the need for a harmonised EU approach to establishing a minimum digital age and, in this context, welcomes the conclusions of the Commission's special panel of experts on child safety online, which provides guidance on this matter; welcomes, furthermore, the announcement made by President von der Leyen about a legislative proposal on the matter;

64. Recalls that Article 8 GDPR establishes age thresholds for valid consent between the ages of 13 and 16, which can be determined nationally; underlines the lack of implementation of Article 8(2) GDPR, which stipulates that the controller should make reasonable efforts to verify that consent is given or authorised by minors' guardians; stresses that existing instruments should be duly implemented by service providers, including privacy-by-design and privacy-by-default, data minimisation and purpose-limitation principles; recalls that the Commission guidelines under Article 28 of the DSA emphasise that access restrictions and age-assurance mechanisms alone cannot be substitutes for other, more structural measures recommended in the guidelines; stresses that Article 28b(3), point (f) AVMSD provides for the establishment of age-verification systems on VSPs to protect minors from content that may impair their physical, mental or moral development; underlines that the effective implementation of such systems should lead to a safer online environment for children and young people, while fully respecting their privacy;

Parental control

65. Commends existing parental control tools and calls on the Commission to develop a non-prescriptive, technology-neutral EU framework of minimum functional standards for such tools, accompanied by an EU certification scheme to increase uptake and cross-device effectiveness; stresses that these tools must be user-friendly, privacy-respecting by default and accessible to all parents and guardians;
66. Expresses concern that parents and guardians often lack the knowledge or tools to effectively monitor their children's online activities, and that even when parental controls exist, they are frequently difficult to find or easily circumvented; urges platforms to take greater responsibility for the effectiveness and visibility of these systems, and calls on them to publish data on their uptake and performance;
67. Urges online platforms to take greater responsibility for protecting children and young people from harmful or manipulative content; encourages, furthermore, the Commission to consider introducing personal liability in cases of serious and persistent non-compliance with the protection provisions concerning minors set out in Articles

34 and 35 DSA, in order to incentivise better compliance;

68. Underlines that regulated media service providers, in particular independent public service media providers regulated in line with the principles of the European Media Freedom Act³³, offer a broad range of content and services for children and young people that are adapted to their development needs; calls on online platforms to ensure their recommender systems and content moderation mechanisms give more visibility to reliable and age-appropriate content and services provided by such professional media organisations;
69. Calls on the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, relevant bodies, platforms and experts, to develop specific guidelines and tools to combat the spread of disinformation targeting young people online; stresses the need to integrate the labelling of suspicious content, the removal of false information that may endanger children's health or safety, and the promotion of reliable sources through educational tools and algorithmic recommendations;

Safeguarding tools for young people in online platform designs

70. Calls on the Commission to clarify the interplay between existing legislation regulating targeted advertising and manipulative design, including dark patterns, in order to close further legal gaps in the rules and their implementation, and, where appropriate, to address the practices that target children and young people; calls on online platforms to provide users with the functionality to choose between different recommender systems, including trustworthy, child-focused options; calls, furthermore, for the establishment of mandatory safe default settings for recommender systems;

Video games

71. Recognises that video games constitute a major part of young people's online leisure and social interaction, and combine creative, social and competitive elements; points out that video games fall under the scope of the DSA when they qualify as an intermediary service or platform; stresses, however, that providers of video games that do not meet these criteria are not bound by the rules set out in the DSA; calls on the Commission, where applicable, to ensure minimum DSA-equivalent obligations for all online video games, regardless of whether or not they qualify as an online platform under the DSA;

³³ Regulation (EU) 2024/1083 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market and amending Directive 2010/13/EU (European Media Freedom Act) (OJ L, 2024/1083, 17.4.2024, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1083/oj>).

72. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to regulate online games and applications that incorporate paid purchase or reward systems (loot boxes and other randomised content, such as wheels of fortune, prize wheels and packs of cards), which induce compulsive behaviour in minors and expose them to forms of digital gambling; calls for the evaluation of potential measures, such as the mandatory disclosure of odds and the explicit labelling of randomised reward mechanics as a means of protection for minors;
73. Encourages the adoption of the PEGI age-rating system across online storefronts, platforms and consoles, and calls for its increased visibility; calls on the Commission to work with PEGI and the competent national authorities to ensure that age ratings are prominent in digital storefront metadata and that age controls are interoperable across platforms;
74. Encourages the video game industry to develop a voluntary code of conduct for online multiplayer games and streaming services, in consultation with children, educators, researchers and civil society, covering moderation standards, child-friendly reporting mechanisms, escalation procedures and recommended technical safeguards, such as default chat muting for minors and keyword filters;
75. Calls for collaboration among video game designers, publishers, platforms, national competent authorities and the Commission, to help mitigate the risks of gaming disorders; calls on the Commission and the Member States to develop awareness-raising campaigns to ensure that parents and guardians are equipped to identify risks and provide support;

Civic engagement and democratic participation

76. Notes that online platforms may serve as important channels for civic education and critical thinking, enabling young people to engage in civic and political life; highlights the need to maintain a free and pluralist social and digital environment; warns, however, of the risks posed by disinformation, fake news and online harassment, which could hinder engagement;
77. Emphasises that, according to several academic studies, some recommender systems of major online platforms have been shown to favour extreme content, as such content leads to increased user engagement and therefore increased profits, which increases the risk of youth radicalisation, e.g. through an 'echo chambers' effect; calls on the Commission to prioritise the enforcement of the DSA and to strengthen its corresponding guidelines against engagement-based algorithms driven by clicks, views and interactions, which fail to sufficiently protect users against addiction, radicalisation and disinformation; stresses that criminal networks, extremists, terrorists and traffickers exploit online environments to target, manipulate or

recruit minors; calls for the detection, reporting and removal of such illegal content to be strengthened, in full respect of the DSA and the Charter;

Inclusion, equity and accessibility

78. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to adopt targeted and inclusive measures to protect children and young people in vulnerable situations in the digital environment, including by ensuring safe, accessible and inclusive online spaces, promoting fair representation, developing and supporting awareness-raising campaigns, and guaranteeing rapid, affordable and geographically accessible mental health and psychological support services; stresses the need to ensure that digital, media and AI literacy programmes are equally accessible to all children and young people, paying particular attention to those most at risk; underlines the importance of collecting disaggregated data in full respect of privacy safeguards, when conducting research, in order to better understand differential impacts on vulnerable groups and inform targeted policy responses;
79. Stresses that anti-gypsyism constitutes a specific form of racism, rooted in the historical discrimination and social exclusion of Roma and Traveller communities; underlines that anti-gypsyism often remains undetected, as it is not always recognised as a form of discrimination by institutions or the wider public; stresses, therefore, the need to provide regular and comprehensive training for online platforms, content reviewers and relevant stakeholders on the detection, recognition and effective response to anti-gypsyism, in order to ensure equal protection and accountability; stresses that organisations representing groups with limited resources, including minority and marginalised communities, such as the Roma community, should not be disadvantaged in efforts to combat online hate;

Education, digital skills and media literacy

80. Recalls that the Member States have an obligation, under the AVMSD, to promote media literacy and take such measures at national level; emphasises, furthermore, that the Member States have an obligation to report to the Commission on these measures, and to determine if those need to be further reinforced and expanded; calls on the European Board for Media Services to intensify cooperation on the exchange of best practices, and to foster the development and use of effective measures and tools to strengthen these competences; notes that efforts to empower users through media literacy and content labelling vary widely across online platforms and result in a lack of transparency on geographic scope, user engagement and measurable outcomes; calls on audiovisual media service providers and VSPs to comply with their obligations under the AVMSD and the EU Code of Practice on

Disinformation;

81. Calls on the Member States and online platforms to establish regular consultations with children, young people and parents when designing age-appropriate safety features, reporting tools and educational materials, ensuring that such solutions reflect their actual needs and patterns of technology use;
82. Highlights the key role of both formal and non-formal education in equipping children and young people with the digital, media and AI literacy skills needed to navigate social media and online environments safely and effectively, including critical thinking, reading comprehension and the ability to protect themselves in digital environments from manipulation, disinformation and profiling;
83. Highlights the importance of reinforcing financial literacy in formal and non-formal education systems, in order to mitigate risks linked to emerging digital and AI-driven environments;
84. Underlines the need to provide continuing digital, media and AI literacy programmes for professionals working with children and young people on online safety, disinformation, AI, cyberbullying, critical engagement with digital content, awareness of persuasive, addictive and manipulative design, and emotional profiling, in order to strengthen digital pedagogy and promote safe classroom practices, and to enable informed professional judgements on when and how to make the best use of digital tools in education and youth work; encourages schools and youth organisations to make digital, media and AI literacy a mandatory component of school curricula from an early age;
85. Highlights the importance of ensuring that young people have access to reliable, evidence-based and age-appropriate information on sexual and reproductive health and rights; stresses that, in the absence of trustworthy sources, young people may turn to social media content that is inaccurate, misleading or harmful;
86. Calls on the Member States to consider introducing clear rules on the use of mobile devices in schools, particularly at early and primary education levels, which may include exceptions for educational purposes, and to ensure secure internet networks and safe device storage; stresses the need to monitor the effects of such measures on learning, concentration and peer-related online violence;
87. Underlines the importance of providing easily accessible education for parents, guardians and caregivers, in order to foster resilience against misinformation and disinformation; stresses that such education should cover technical aspects, such as privacy settings, to build trust and open communication with children about their online experiences, risk awareness and reporting mechanisms;

88. Invites the Member States to promote regular dialogues between parents, guardians, schools and youth organisations, on daily routines such as device-free time, bedtime practices and notification management, in order to support healthier social media use;
89. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to reinforce and implement existing digital literacy programmes, including the EU Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 and the EU's Better Internet for Kids (BIK+) strategy, by supporting Safer Internet Centres and campaigns such as Safer Internet Day, and the development of new age-appropriate programmes and interactive educational tools, co-designed with educators and civil society; highlights the importance of a stronger role of Erasmus+ and other EU youth programmes in this context, as they promote democratic engagement and cross-border dialogue among young people; welcomes the upcoming European school alliances pilot and calls on the Commission to prioritise digital and media literacy within this framework to foster innovative teaching methods, curricula and competence frameworks;
90. Urges the Commission to deliver on the actions set out in its action plan on basic skills and its inclusion therein of digital skills, in particular the guidelines and best practices on advancing the assessment of digital skills in education and the updating of the European Digital Competence Framework to take into account emerging technologies; stresses the need to support local community centres for children and young people, in order to provide safe offline spaces and alternatives to excessive social media use;

Transparency and algorithmic accountability

91. Stresses the need for increased transparency around social media algorithmic systems, as opaque algorithms and content moderation hinder the ability of young users to comprehend why certain content is recommended, suppressed or removed, thus undermining their capacity to navigate online content in accordance with their own intentions; calls for robust external auditing mechanisms and strengthened oversight through the European Centre for Algorithmic Transparency;
92. Recalls that Article 27 DSA requires that users should be given meaningful control over recommender systems, including the possibility to choose alternative systems not based on profiling, and encourages platforms to make such options prominent and accessible, particularly for minors; calls for the establishment of mandatory safe default settings for recommender systems for minors' accounts;
93. Calls on online platforms to grant accredited researchers access to aggregated data on the exposure of minors to algorithmic systems, in

compliance with data protection rules, to enable the independent analysis of the impact of algorithms and persuasive platform design on minors, and stresses the importance of transparency, in this regard;

94. Supports the introduction for online platforms of a 'youth mode', disabling targeted advertising and limiting addictive design features for minors;

Monitoring and policy implementation

95. Calls on the Commission to assess the effectiveness of the BIK+ strategy and, where relevant, the EU Youth Strategy, in addressing current online risks for young people, and to align the implementation of those strategies with evolving challenges, such as algorithmic harms and persuasive design; stresses the need for systematic monitoring across the Member States, including through the development of comparable indicators on children's digital habits, access to education and the effectiveness of protection measures, including the implementation of age restrictions, age-verification tools and safety settings;
96. Urges the Commission, the European Board for Digital Services, the European Board for Media Services and the relevant national authorities to strengthen coordination, and monitor and assess the effectiveness of measures taken by online platforms; stresses the importance of ensuring continuous monitoring and rapid-response capabilities to address disinformation and harmful content, including through the development of an EU monitoring mechanism with common indicators on online child protection measures, such as age-verification tools and safety settings, and on the impact of these measures on children's well-being and privacy; calls for the involvement of children, young people and parents in the design, implementation and monitoring of policies related to the protection of minors in the digital environment;
97. Welcomes the EU-wide inquiry into the broader impacts of social media on the well-being of young people; emphasises the need for comprehensive, cross-disciplinary research into the long-term neurological and psychological impacts of digital consumption; calls on the Commission and the Member States to support longitudinal studies to develop evidence-based guidelines for digital platform design; calls on the Commission to issue European, evidence-based, state-of-the-art health guidelines on screen-use for minors and for digital platform design;
98. Stresses the need to strengthen and coordinate existing EU research capacities, including within the Commission's Joint Research Centre, to monitor the impact of online platforms and algorithmic systems on the well-being of children and young people, and to support

evidence-based guidance for the Member States;

99. Calls on the Commission to regularly report on progress made in protecting minors on social media; encourages the establishment of specialised training for law enforcement and judicial authorities on social media dynamics to improve the detection of harmful and illegal activities, such as grooming and cybercrime, while strictly respecting the principles of legality, proportionality and judicial oversight;

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