

How to protect and empower children and young people online?

Update from the European Commission

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New priorities – protection of minors

Key concerns:

Alarming rise of cyberbullying
Decline in mental health and well-being
Addictive design of online services

Driven by:

growing digitalisation of young people's
social interactions, increased use of social
media etc.

Effects:

profound impact on healthy relationships
among minors, their mental health and
trust in the digital environment

PRIORITIES as per Political Guidelines:

- ✓ Action Plan on cyberbullying
- ✓ Inquiry on impact of social media on mental health
- ✓ Tackling unethical techniques used by online platforms such as the addictive design of online services

Protection of minors – EU toolbox

Digital Services Act
(DSA)

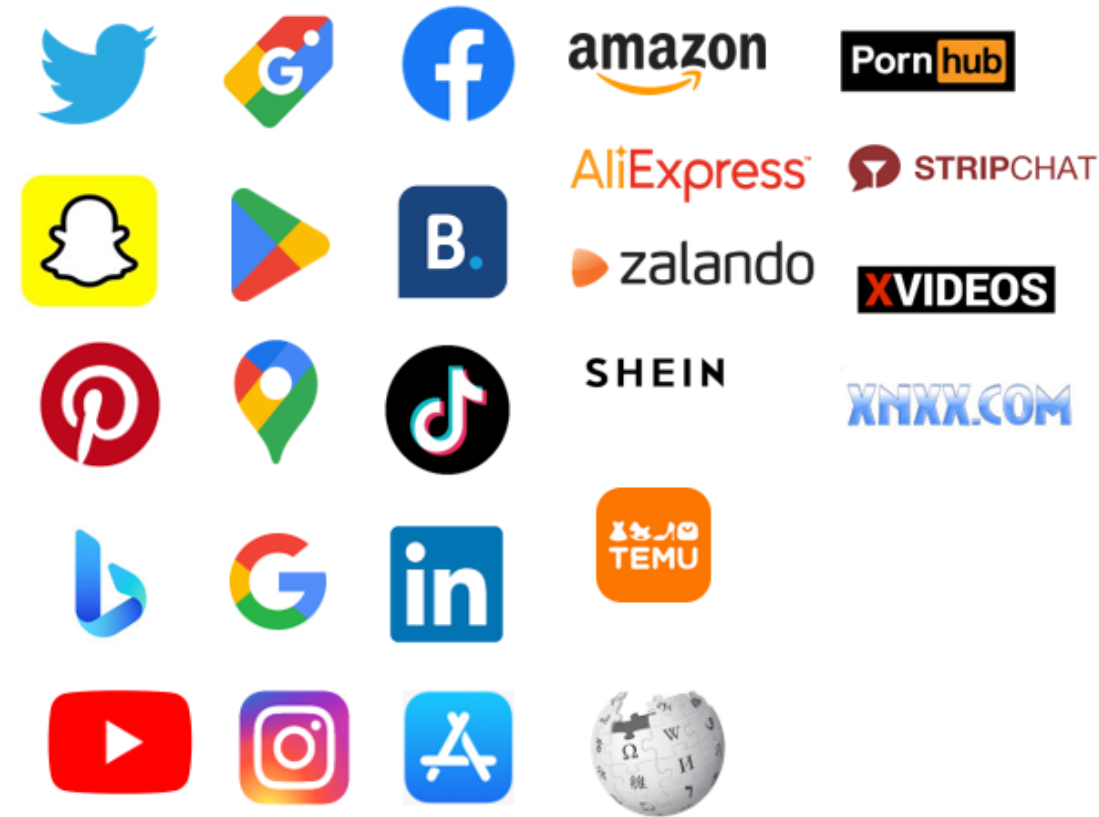
Better internet for kids
strategy (BIK+)

Age assurance & age
verification



Digital Services Act

- Effective, Union-wide, horizontal and fully harmonised regulatory solution for the protection of minors online.
- Online platforms with less than 45 million users in the EU.
- 25 very large online platforms and search engines with more than 45 million users in the EU.
- 17 February 2024



Protection of minors in DSA – all platforms

- All platforms must ensure a **high level of privacy, safety and security** for minors.
- **Ban on targeted ads** based on minors' personal data.
- Terms and **conditions must be easily understandable**.
- Simple mechanisms to **flag illegal content**.
- **Trusted flaggers**.
- **Ban on dark patterns**.
- **Contact point** so users can communicate directly with the platform.
- Possibility to **modify the recommender system**.



Protection of minors in DSA – Very Large Online Platforms

- **Analysis of systemic risks** for example:
 - Spread of **illegal content**
 - Negative impact on **children's rights**
 - **Adverse effects** on the physical and mental **well-being** of persons
- Put in place **effective measures** against these risks.
- Annual independent **audits**.



Guidelines on the protection of minors under art. 28 DSA

Aim to:



- Assist providers of internet platforms to **ensure a high level of privacy, safety and security** for minors.
- Ensure **harmonised application** across the EU.
- **The best interests** of the child at the core when designing internet platforms' products, services and policies.
- **Risk-based approach** with **child rights impact assessment**.
- **Non-exhaustive list of** recommendations.
- Summer 2025

Protection of minors - key enforcement priority

- Investigations against TikTok, Facebook and Instagram focusing on addictive design, harmful content and age verification tools.
- 105 days after the start of the investigation, TikTok committed to permanently withdraw its reward programme in TikTok Lite in the EU.
- Requests for information to Pornhub, Xvideos and Stripchat related to the protection of minors.



EU Better internet for kids strategy (BIK+)

Age-appropriate digital services, with **no one left behind** and with **every child** in Europe **protected, empowered & respected** online



PROTECT

- Safe digital experiences
- A comprehensive EU code of conduct on age-appropriate design
- Supporting a secure EU-wide proof of age system

SIC+
programme



EMPOWER

Safer Internet Centres (SICs)

- National awareness centres
- Helplines
- Hotlines
- Youth Panels

betterinternetforkids.eu Portal

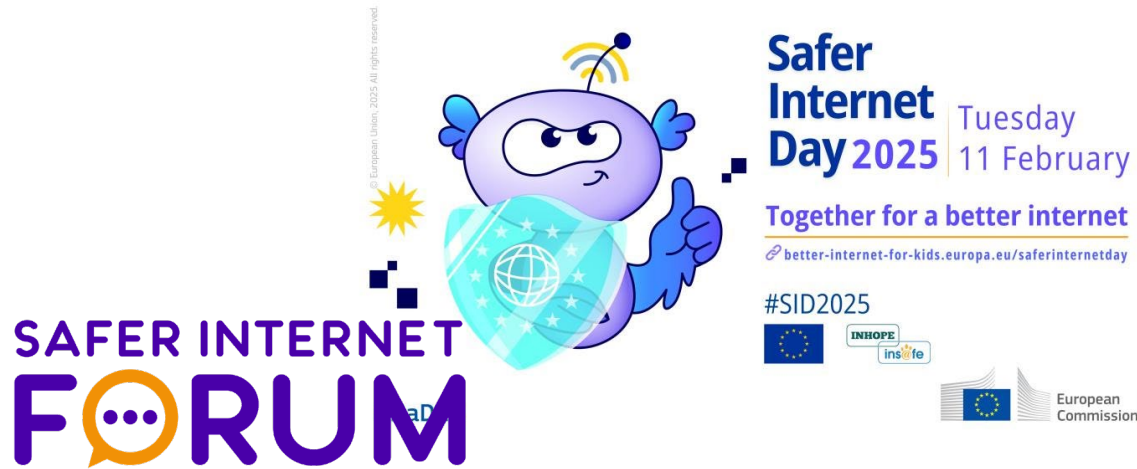
- EU-wide coordination
- Public awareness hub (children, teachers, **parents**, carers)



RESPECT

- Support children in developing and practising citizens skills
- Get children's view on policies that affect their (online) lives
- Involve children in the development of digital programmes and services
- Support peer-to-peer training and child-to-adult teaching

Activities and resources under BIK+

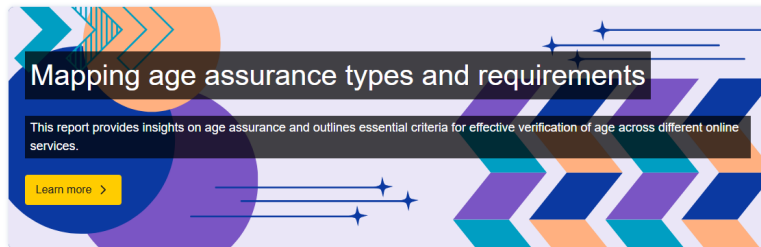


[DSA explained](#)
in EN, FR, DE
more language
to come soon



[BIK+ is also available in child-friendly language in all EU official languages](#)
(and many more, including Ukrainian)

Activities and resources under BLK+



Age assurance explainer
In this new series of resources, key messages, terms and approaches to age assurance are explained in an easy-to-read way.



Age assurance for digital service providers
An age assurance self-assessment tool manual and questionnaire are available for digital service providers.



Age verification

Principles:

- A risk-based EU-approach to age verification
- To avoid national fragmentation and ensure interoperable solutions
- In cooperation with Member States, EDPB, ERGA.

Solutions:

- **Short-term solution** in the form of an Age Verification App before European Digital Identity Wallet is available to all EU citizens & residents by 2026
- Age verification long-term solution implemented in the **European Digital Identity Wallet** from 2026



Age verification – short term solution

- Contract to **develop an age verification solution** that will allow users to access age-restricted online services by verifying their age, without requiring them to share additional personal data:
 - support to the Member States to ensure uptake and publication of **localised versions** of the age verification application in app stores.
 - the development and integration of **Zero-Knowledge Proof (ZKP)** functionality into the age verification solution to provide a fully privacy preserving method to exchange a proof of age attestation.
- Compatible with the EU Digital Identity Wallet.
- Available tentatively by mid-2025 for localisation and publishing by Member States.



EU toolbox on age verification & age assurance

- Guidelines on protection of minors under article 28 DSA (Q2 2025)
- Enforcement of non-compliance under DSA (ongoing)
- Implementation of age verification rules for video-sharing platforms under article 28b AVMSD (ongoing)
- Age assurance toolkit for families via BIK platform and Safer Internet Centres

Way ahead?

- Strict **application** of the DSA.
- **Guidelines on the protection of minors** in mid- 2025
- **Action plan against cyberbullying** under BIK+ strategy and with Safer Internet Centres
- **A privacy-preserving AV solution** to check age (18 +).
- **EU-wide inquiry on the impact of social media** on well-being.



Questions?

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