

Better Internet for Kids

Review of the year **2022**



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FOREWORD by the European Commission

During 2022, the European Year of Youth, young people showed their commitment to building an environmentally friendly, safe, and inclusive future. Their optimism was in stark contrast to the war on Europe's borders and the upheaval for the world caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. As part of a wide-ranging response, the European Commission and the Member States assisted the *nearly four million Ukrainian refugees seeking safety in the European Union, many of whom were minors.*

Against this backdrop, 2022 nonetheless saw positive developments for child safety online. A landmark piece of legislation was adopted in record time: the *Digital Services Act (DSA)* introduces stricter rules for all online platforms, including measures to safeguard the privacy, safety and security of minors, and a ban on profiled advertising to children. And in May, the Commission adopted the new *European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+) strategy*, which will support implementation of the DSA and better protect, empower and respect children and young people online.

The *Better Internet for Kids (BIK) platform* and the Insafe and INHOPE networks are crucial in

implementing the BIK+ strategy. Their actions help children and young people to become empowered and responsible digital users, and they offer a wealth of resources and support for parents, teachers, and others interested in this aim. The **Safer Internet Forum (SIF)**, organised and led by young people in October, was the perfect example of the positive impact on all participants of actively involving the under-18s.

In December, the European Union adopted the interinstitutional *European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles*, emphasising the EU's commitment to a safe, secure, and sustainable digital transformation. The declaration stresses the importance of having control over your digital life, with a particular focus on protecting the rights of children and young people. As *President Von der Leyen stated*: "Europe is embracing a digital transition grounded in our values. From safe digital spaces for children to affordable high-speed connections for everyone, your rights will always come first."

We can be proud of all that has been accomplished in 2022, but there is still much work to be done! In 2023 and beyond, there will be a lot of effort needed to implement the BIK+ strategy in Europe. Among the first actions, the



Renate Nikolay

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Commission will facilitate a comprehensive **Code of conduct for the age-appropriate design of digital products and services** and a focus on **effective age verification**.

Conscious of the need to address Europe's shortage of skilled workers and match individuals' aspirations with the needs of the job market, President Von der Leyen proposed designating 2023 as the **European Year of Skills**. The BIK+ strategy will play its part in supporting children's digital skills from an early age, in collaboration with the BIK platform and the network of **Safer Internet Centres**, which will continue to support schools and families across Europe.



BACKGROUND TO BETTER INTERNET FOR KIDS

Building on a succession of Safer Internet programmes, Better Internet for Kids (BIK) is a European Commission initiative aiming to create a better internet for Europe's children and youth, funded under the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) instrument. This report provides an insight into some of the key achievements and areas of focus during 2022.

The Better Internet for Kids (BIK) platform and related activities is managed on behalf of the European Commission by European Schoolnet (EUN), which coordinates the Insafe network of awareness centres, helplines and youth participation actions, in partnership with INHOPE (the International Association of Internet Hotlines), dedicated to the removal of illegal online content. These combined strands are commonly referred to as *Safer Internet Centres (SICs)*, operating in 26 EU Member States, plus Iceland and Norway, in the drive to keep children and young people safe online.

**12.5 MILLION EURO
IN 2022**

With EU co-funding to the level of 12.5 million euro in 2022 for this programme of work – representing the two service contracts (for EUN and INHOPE respectively) and grant agreements with Safer Internet Centres on a pro-rata basis (for SICs in EU member states and EEA countries) – this work is clearly of continuing strategic importance to the European Commission.

What is a Safer Internet Centre?

Insafe and INHOPE work together through a network of Safer Internet Centres across Europe, typically comprising an awareness centre, helpline, hotline and youth participation actions.



National awareness centres focus on raising awareness and understanding of safer internet issues and emerging trends. They run campaigns to empower children, young people, parents, caregivers and teachers with the skills, knowledge and strategies to stay safe online and take advantage of the opportunities that the internet and mobile technologies provide.



Helplines provide information, advice and assistance to children, young people, and those that care for them on how to deal with harmful content, harmful contact (such as grooming), harmful conduct (such as cyberbullying or sexting) and, increasingly, contract issues (where the child is a consumer in the online space). Helplines can be accessed via a variety of means such as by telephone, email, web forms, and online chat services.



Hotlines exist to allow members of the public to report illegal content anonymously. Reports are then passed on to the appropriate body for action (for example, an internet service provider (ISP) or law enforcement agency (LEA) in the country, or the corresponding INHOPE hotline).



Youth participation activities allow young people to express their views and exchange knowledge and experiences concerning their use of online technologies, as well as tips on how to stay safe. They also advise on internet safety and empowerment strategy, help create innovative resources, and disseminate online safety messages to their peers.

There has been an increased focus on youth participation during 2022 complementing the European Year of Youth, with many youth-led activities across a number of activity lines. Read on to discover more.

Find out more about the work of European Safer Internet Centres on the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) platform at www.betterinternetforkids.eu.



Jointly, European Schoolnet and INHOPE support Safer Internet Centres in responding to the latest online issues, helping to promote the many opportunities the online world offers, while also addressing the challenges. And while Europe's children and youth are the main benefactors of this work, the Better Internet for Kids initiative also reaches out to, and collaborates with, a range of other stakeholders – parents and caregivers, teachers and educators, researchers, industry, civil society, decision-makers, and law enforcement – reflecting the fact that we all have a role to play in creating a better internet.

Additionally, the actions conducted in the framework of Better Internet for Kids frequently reach beyond Europe, impacting upon safer and better internet approaches right across the globe.

After the many sacrifices of recent years, 2022 started with a new sense of positivity. With many pandemic-related restrictions easing, the [European Union designated 2022 as the European Year of Youth](#) in recognition of the difficult situations faced by young people, especially, during COVID times: their education, employment, social life, health and well-being were all heavily impacted.

In announcing the year, European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen said: *“The pandemic has robbed young people of many opportunities – to meet and make new friends, to experience and explore new cultures. While we cannot give them that time back, we are proposing today to designate 2022 as the European Year of Youth. From climate to social to digital, young people are at the heart of our policymaking and political priorities. We vow to listen to them [...] and we want to work together to shape the future of the European Union.”*

This aim sits perfectly with the youth participation models which have been a key feature of Better Internet for Kids actions for several years, continually seeking ways to consult with and involve young people to help shape online spaces and experiences. As you will read throughout the pages of this report, the focus on youth participation has been further magnified this year, with young people at the centre of almost every action.

Exemplifying this positive spirit, the annual celebration of Safer Internet Day in February 2022 again saw stakeholders across the world unite with the common aim of creating a better digital world for children and young people. Once again, youth voices were heard loud and clear, with Vice-President Šuica and Commissioner Breton joining with young people online to discuss children's digital rights and online safety, outlining the EU's commitments in those areas.

Significantly, 2022 saw the launch of a [new European strategy for a better internet for kids \(BIK+\)](#). Ten years on from the original BIK strategy and founded on extensive consultation with multiple stakeholders – including children and young people themselves – this new strategy frames the steps needed to ensure that all children and young people are protected, empowered and respected online. Many of the actions carried out in the second half of 2022 under the umbrella of the BIK project already uphold the aims of the strategy, or indeed lay down solid foundations for more work to come.

In stark contrast with such positivity, however, 2022 also saw the Russian invasion of Ukraine; an act which shocked the world. Here, within the framework of BIK, the European network of Safer Internet



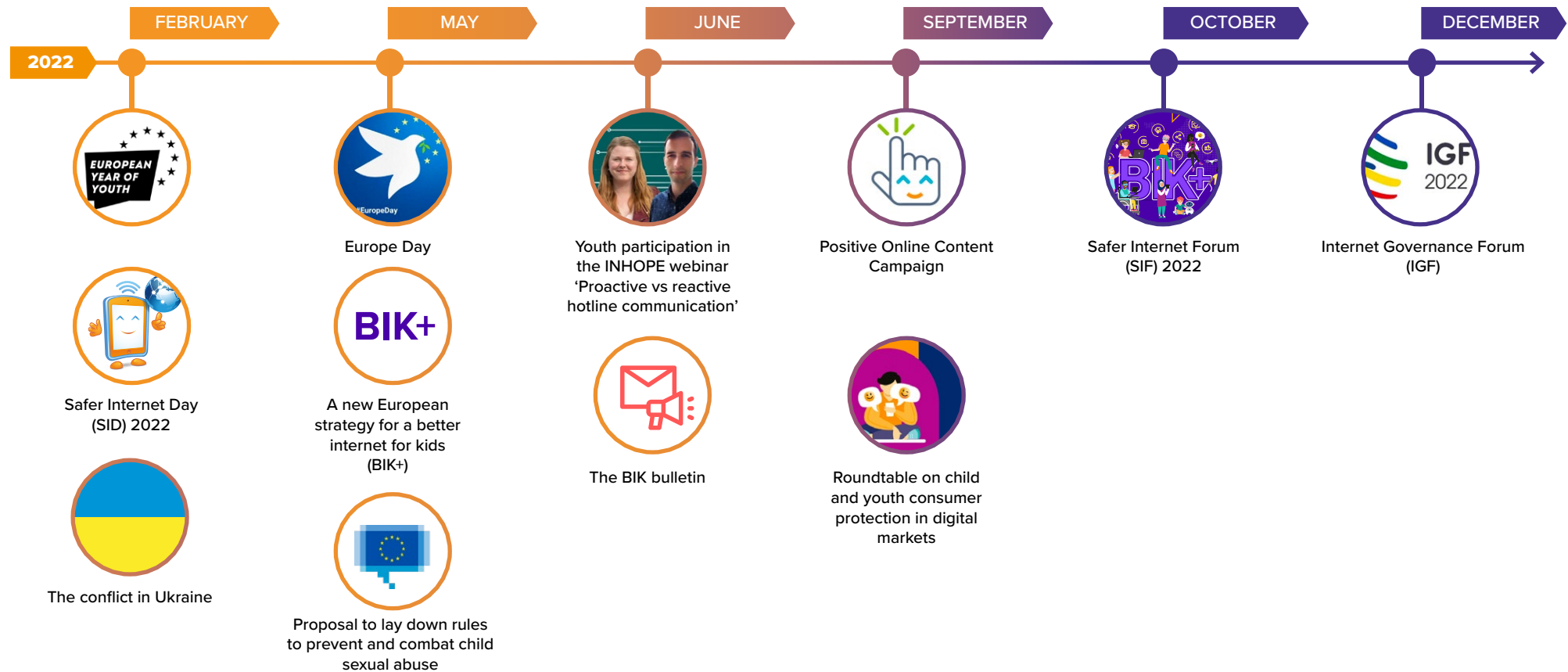
Centres rallied to support all those affected by the situation, whether that be supporting families displaced by war and finding themselves in new, unfamiliar countries, or helping parents, caregivers, and educators to find age-appropriate ways of explaining the events and answering questions children might have, while at the same time protecting them from harmful media experiences.

The polar situations outlined above perfectly illustrate the need for flexible approaches to online safety. While policy and technological safeguards are clearly needed, we must also ensure that children and young people (and those that care for and support them) know how to use the online content and services at their disposal safely and effectively, have opportunities to develop good media literacy skills, and have a robust support network to fall back on should things go wrong.

Discover more about some highlights of the year in the interactive timeline and articles which follow.



2022 IN REVIEW



The European Year of Youth 2022

2022 was designated as the *European Year of Youth* by the European Union, placing a spotlight on the importance of empowering youth to build a better future – and one that is greener, more inclusive, and digital. Within the context of the year, young Europeans were encouraged to share their visions, meet with decision-makers, and engage in activities all over Europe, providing a post-pandemic perspective to help Europe move forward with confidence.

The scope of the European Year of Youth was broad in order to cover all policy areas that concern young people, be it employment, education, health, climate, digital, and so on. Throughout the year, young people were invited to participate in various activities at all levels. Strengthening young people's democratic participation and providing dedicated youth spaces in all areas of society is key to maintaining a vibrant civil society in Europe and promoting common values. Correspondingly therefore,

the *European Youth Portal* highlighted the many opportunities for young people to get involved and, importantly, to make their voices heard.

Children and young people have always been at the very core of Better Internet for Kids actions as we unite across Europe, and beyond, to provide a safer and better internet for them, and seek to equip and empower them with the skills, knowledge and support to benefit from all of the wonderful opportunities that the online world has to offer. Children and young people are, ultimately, the main benefactors of work delivered under BIK but, essentially, they are key stakeholders in influencing and shaping the digital work of the future.

Youth involvement was very prevalent throughout BIK actions in 2022. Read on to discover more.



Safer Internet Day 2022: Spotlighting youth voices (February 2022)



Safer Internet Day was celebrated on Tuesday, 8 February 2022 in almost 190 countries and territories around the world

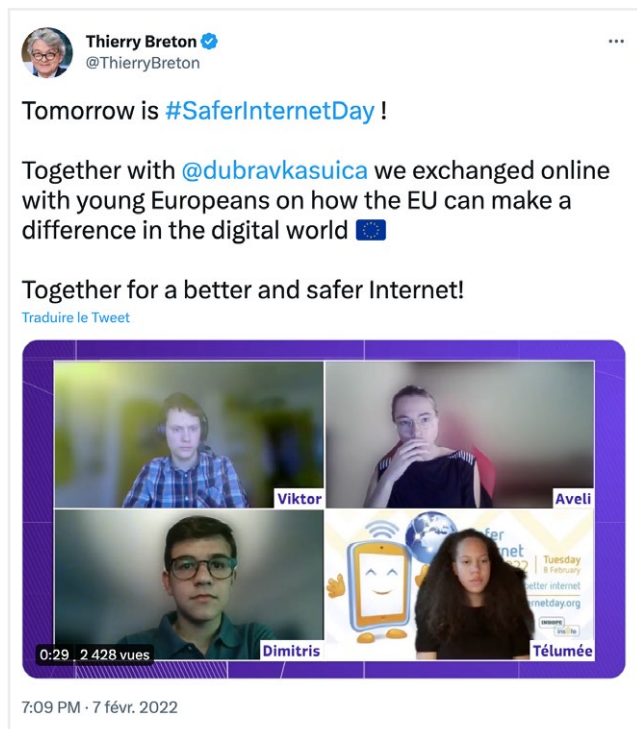
On Tuesday, 8 February 2022, the 19th edition of Safer Internet Day (SID) took place under the continuing campaign slogan of “Together for a better internet”. This annual celebration aims to raise awareness of the importance of both a safer and a better internet, where everyone is empowered to use technology responsibly, respectfully, critically, and creatively. Through a diverse array of actions, across Europe and the globe, the campaign aims to reach a wide range of benefactors and stakeholders – children and young people, parents and caregivers, teachers, educators, and social workers, as well as industry, decision makers and politicians – with a call to action to encourage everyone to play their part in creating a better internet.

Organised within the framework of Better Internet for Kids (BIK) activities on behalf of the European Commission, Safer Internet Day 2022 – like the previous edition – was still impacted by restrictions to a certain event caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Despite this, SID supporters demonstrated exceptional flexibility and creativity in marking the day, with many again opting for fully digital celebrations from the outset of their planning activities, while others organised hybrid events. Additionally, many SID stakeholders took the continuing limitations on face-to-face interaction as an opportunity to develop new types of interactive online resources, or lesson modules to be delivered at a distance if school visits were not possible. Equally, many SID stakeholders reported far better attendance at virtual events than could ever be achieved with a physical presence, noting particular benefits for reaching certain target groups with better internet messaging, such as parents and caregivers.



Youth in conversation with Commissioners

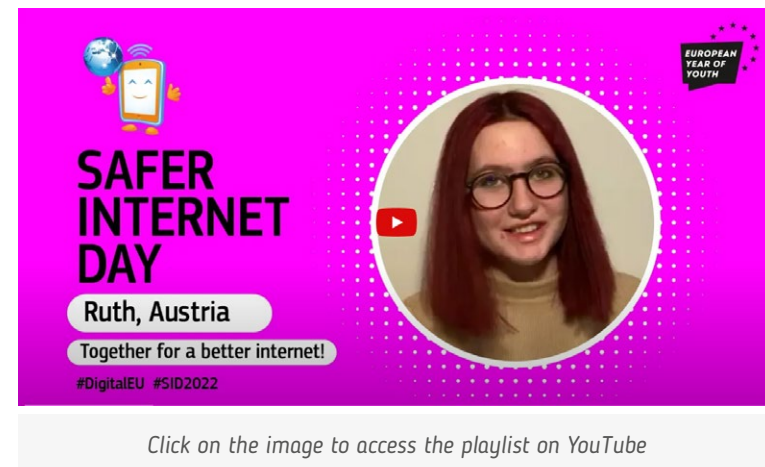
To kick start the celebrations, and in line with the European Year of Youth, the European Commission marked the day with several special activities on social media. On the eve of Safer Internet Day, a couple of video clips were published on Twitter (in English and French) in which [Vice-President Šuica and Commissioner Breton discussed children's digital rights and online safety with several BIK Youth Ambassadors](#), specifically focussing on the EU's actions in those areas.



[Click on the image to view the Tweet and watch the video clip](#)

Youth-led videos

Additionally, a series of youth-led videos were published featuring [BIK Youth Ambassadors and Youth Panellists](#) from different countries in Europe exchanging views on their priorities online, the importance of digital skills, and their perspectives on how to ensure better online experiences in the future.



[Click on the image to access the playlist on YouTube](#)



Twitter Spaces event

Moreover, on the morning of SID itself, DG HOME (the Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs) and DG CONNECT (the Directorate General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology) of the European Commission hosted a live Twitter Spaces event, providing an overview of how the EU is helping young people feel safer online through legislation and awareness raising. Kathrin, a long-standing BIK Youth Ambassador, contributed her views alongside representatives of the European Commission and representatives from the awareness and helpline strands of European Safer Internet Centres. More than 450 listeners joined the live broadcast.



A live Twitter Spaces event on the morning of SID discussed initiatives to protect children and young people online

Youth at the heart of country-led actions

As always on SID, the network of Safer Internet Centres across Europe marked the day in many diverse ways, with children and young people often at the heart of country-led activities. Some examples include:

- ▶ In **Bulgaria**, the main SID event took place online and was livestreamed on the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre's Facebook page. The event was led by members of the Bulgarian Youth Panel who decided to focus on three main areas of discussion: cyberbullying and online violence, disinformation online, and video gaming. Experts and representatives of state institutions and NGOs, including members of the Advisory Board, as well as young people from various youth networks and organisations, participated in the discussions.
- ▶ **Cyprus** hosted a conference under the title of "Together for a better internet". Four members of the CYberSafety Youth Panel, together with the Speaker of the Parliament of Cyprus, the Citizen's Commissioner and others, participated in a roundtable discussion. During the discussion, the youth panellists raised concerns and questions about how Europe's Digital Decade could be shaped for children and young people. In particular, they cited issues which had been highlighted in the [European Commission's #DigitalDecade4YOUth consultation](#), from national statistics from the 1480 Helpline and Hotline services, as well as from their own personal experiences. They shared their concerns about how to ensure that the State promotes, protects, respects, and fulfils the rights of all children and young people on the internet. The participation in this year's conference was unprecedented, with around 10,000 students from all levels of education and training, along with teachers and parents, attending remotely from all over Cyprus.



- ▶ Schools, kindergartens, and youth centres in **Estonia** were invited to organise awareness-raising events for children and students to raise their digital competence as part of Safer Internet Day celebrations. Altogether, more than 12,600 children and students participated in the resulting initiatives. Many teenagers delivered Smartly on the Web school lessons for younger students in their schools using new educational material provided by the Estonian Safer Internet Centre. Schools and kindergartens reported a wide range of activities, including delivering thematic lessons and workshops for students, carrying out online and offline quizzes and tests, watching thematic videos, making posters, and so on.
- ▶ In **Ireland**, as part of a range of activities delivered under a “#TalkListenLearn” campaign, a new topic generator tool was launched to help families have conversations about online experiences in a fun, non-judgemental way. The tool provides children and their parents with broad questions about the online world to help them to talk about the opportunities it provides, the challenges that may have to be navigated, and how to seek support. A complementary talking points resource for parents was also developed by Irish teenagers, based on their own online experiences, to help parents approach conversations in a way that will encourage their child or teen to open up about their life online.
- ▶ As a kick-off to a campaign called “Stop the online hate” in **Norway**, a digital event was organised featuring one of Norway’s most popular young YouTubers and influencers: Herman Dahl. Herman hosted an event where new research was presented, including other stakeholders such as the police and the helpline. Young people were offered insights and advice on what online hate is, and what to do if they encounter it.

Celebrations beyond Europe, facilitated by Safer Internet Day Committees and organisational and industry supporters of SID right across the globe were equally vibrant and varied, again amplifying the voices of youth.

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Discover more in the [full public campaign report](#), or learn more about Safer Internet Day generally at www.saferinternetday.org.



Youth voices in industry activities

Shortly after Safer Internet Day, on Thursday 10 February, Twitter held an EMEA (Europe, Middle East, and Africa) Safer Internet Day Summit with a strong focus on online safety. The event was open not only to organisations representing youth and young people themselves, but also to organisations representing underrepresented or historically marginalised groups. The aim of the Summit was to empower all participants to speak their minds about online issues that matter most to them, and to be included in the public conversation about how to improve everyone's digital experience. The event included a session on online safety, where new tools and policies recently implemented by Twitter were illustrated. Participants then split into smaller breakout sessions where they could discuss online safety issues more freely and voice concerns they were experiencing on the platform so that Twitter could listen, learn and improve their experiences.

In total, 24 BIK Youth Ambassadors from various European countries participated in the Summit. During the breakout sessions, they had the chance to share their views on what safety tools they find have been working well for them on Twitter (for example, the mute and report tool, conversation controls, and more), and to discuss what opportunities for policy growth they see and what mechanisms should be prioritised for implementation. Among the most reported opportunities for further development was the strengthening of misinformation and hate speech detection, especially when occurring through coded language or by using regional dialects currently not covered by the platform. Other suggestions included a network of trusted fact checkers to better verify the context of any reported content, and to better educate users of the reporting options available to them when using the social network.

[Read more on the Summit here.](#)



The conflict in Ukraine

The whole world has been shocked by Russia's attack on Ukraine and the ongoing war. What stuns adults is even more difficult for children and young people to comprehend, but it is hardly possible to keep children away from the current news and, with it, exposure to dreadful images and videos. Parents, caregivers, and educators face the difficult task of finding age-appropriate ways of explaining what is happening and answering questions children might have, while at the same time protecting them from harmful media experiences. For those displaced by the war, the challenges are many, not least because of language barriers in the host country which may prevent them from accessing the help and guidance they need whether generally or on online safety issues.

Within the framework of BIK activities, the network of Safer Internet Centres has rallied over the last year to provide support for all those affected.

- ▶ From the outset of the war, the network quickly responded with articles and resources on how to help children and young people deal with war-related content: discover more in articles from the [Austrian](#), [Czech](#) and [Greek](#) Safer Internet Centres. Recognising the importance of directing children to high-quality online content, the network also compiled a [guide to child-appropriate news and background information](#).
- ▶ In June 2022, the Insafe network of European Safer Internet Centres held a two-day training meeting online with more than 140 network colleagues registering to participate. These regular meetings provide

an opportunity to facilitate sharing of experiences and good practices between network countries, exploring areas of common ground and occasions for closer working between awareness raising, helpline, and youth participation strands. The second day of the meeting was dedicated to discussions on the conflict in Ukraine. It especially focused on how to support Ukrainian children and young people (and their families) which had been displaced across Europe as a result of the war, as well as how to best navigate the dis- and misinformation found in news sources reporting on the war. The network also heard from social media platforms on the protections they have put in place to limit the spread of false narratives, and explored the role of fact-checkers and end-users themselves in preventing the viral spread of inaccurate information. Capitalising on the capacity-building nature of the Insafe network, Safer Internet Centres also shared thoughts and resources on how to deal with challenges related to the conflict based on national experiences. [Learn more about the discussions of the day.](#)

- ▶ Also in June 2022, the Polish Safer Internet Centre organised a [Digital Youth Forum](#), dedicated to promoting safe, creative and positive use of the internet and digital technologies. Participating students and young people gained inspiration and knowledge about online safety issues from both adult experts and peers. This year, the Forum was fully translated into Ukrainian so that both young Ukrainian refugees in Poland and students in Ukraine could participate, in person or remotely. Additionally, some young Ukrainian speakers were included in the programme. The event was a huge success, counting 180 registered schools from nearly all regions of Ukraine.



In a similar way, the Polish Safer Internet Centre's 16th annual edition of the international conference "Keeping children and young people safe online" took place in hybrid format in September 2022, and also included full translation to allow Ukrainian teachers to take part.

Additionally, the [Polish Safer Internet Centre](#) has translated many resources into Ukrainian and has launched a helpline service in Ukrainian for refugee children in Poland.

- ▶ During the last days of summer, in August 2022, hundreds of Ukrainian children who have found a new home in Lithuania as a result of the conflict gathered for an open-air picnic in Vilnius. Titled "[Goodbye, summer!](#)" (in Lithuanian „Ate, vasara!“ and in Ukrainian Пікнік “До побачення, літо!” Для дітей України), this unique event offered lots of educational activities for Ukrainian children, and their parents and guardians, including dancing, soap bubble blowing, mastering of tricks, tasting delicacies, and even an open-air cinema.

The [Lithuanian Safer Internet Centre](#) took part to raise awareness of its services using a combination of discussion, interactive exercises and quizzes, to help visitors to reflect on the importance of media literacy skills, especially at this time. Childline, the Lithuanian Safer Internet Centre's helpline, was also present, hosting activities to help develop children's emotional literacy, alongside raising awareness on ways to access emotional support.

- ▶ Moreover, throughout the year, the Insafe and INHOPE networks have maintained strong links with Ukrainian counterparts, despite often-difficult working circumstances for them.

In the June 2022 Insafe Training meeting, colleagues from the Ukrainian Better Internet Centre joined online and spoke about their work, the support they are able to offer to all those affected by the current conflict, and the range of challenges they are currently facing.

Colleagues from Ukraine have participated in BIK-related actions, such as Safer Internet Day (SID), for a number of years. Significantly, since 2020, they have also participated in the [SIC+ programme](#). The SIC+ programme has three key objectives, namely:

- to foster knowledge sharing and capacity building on successful initiatives on online safety for children and young people.
- to promote the development and implementation of innovative actions to increase the participation of third-country organisations in online safety initiatives and best practices.
- to address common challenges in the field of online safety for children and young people by promoting cooperation with the Insafe-INHOPE network.

In addition to taking part in a number of webinars across the course of the year, in October 2022, as part of the SIC+ programme, a Ukrainian colleague was able to join the Safer Internet Forum and an additional SIC+ focus group in person, in Brussels, to further forge bonds with supportive networks and learn from European – and global – experiences.



Europe Day (May 2022)



Better Internet for Kids messages were shared at a Europe Day event

Europe Day - 9 May - marks the signing of the Schuman Declaration which, in 1950, created the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC); the first of a series of steps that would ultimately lead to today's European Union. To celebrate Europe Day in 2022, EU institutions planned a wide range of online and onsite activities for Saturday 7 May across EU Member States, as well as in the home of the EU institutions in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg.

In line with the European Year of Youth, the 2022 edition of Europe Day was the perfect opportunity to shine a spotlight on Europe's children and young people, and to encourage European citizens to come together, discuss the challenges we are currently facing, and envision a better future for Europe. As such, representatives of the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) platform, alongside colleagues from the Belgian Safer Internet Centre, hosted a dedicated stand at the Berlaymont building in Brussels, Belgium. After several years of COVID-19 restrictions, the event provided a great opportunity to meet face-to-face with stakeholders to highlight the continuing efforts of the joint Insafe and INHOPE networks in ensuring a safer, better online experience for children and young people.

Visitors to the stand - young and old alike - had fun with online safety quizzes and other interactive activities from the European network of Safer Internet Centres, and learnt more about the annual global SID celebration.



A new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+) (May 2022 – onwards)

In May 2022, the European Commission adopted a *new European strategy for a better internet for kids*. Known as BIK+, its aim is to improve age-appropriate digital services and to ensure that every child is protected, empowered, and respected online. Ten years after the first BIK strategy, BIK+ wants to spotlight the voices and opinions of European youth.

The updated BIK+ strategy aims to complement and support the practical implementation of the existing measures to protect children online, develop children’s skills, and empower them to safely enjoy and shape their life online. The vision for a Digital Decade for children and youth contemplates “*age-appropriate digital services, with no one left behind and with every child in Europe protected, empowered and respected online*” and proposes three main pillars to achieve this vision:

- ▶ **Ensuring safe digital experiences:** protecting children and young people from harmful and online content, conduct, and online risks and improving their well-being in an age-appropriate digital environment.
- ▶ **Digital empowerment:** children and young people must acquire the necessary skills and competences to make informed choices and express themselves in the digital environment safely and responsibly.
- ▶ **Active participation:** children and young people must be respected by giving them a say in the digital environment, with more child-led activities to foster innovative and creative safe digital experiences.

Moreover, BIK+ considers the European Parliament Resolution on children’s rights, the Council Conclusions on media literacy and the Council Recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee. This new strategy is based on an extensive consultation process with children, complemented by targeted consultations with parents, teachers, Member States, ICT and media industry, civil society, academics, and international organisations.

Through the BIK+ strategy, the European Commission proposes a series of ambitious and far-reaching actions to build on and reinforce the existing infrastructure and to deliver the vision for a Digital Decade for youth. More specifically, BIK+ aims to:

- ▶ encourage and facilitate a comprehensive EU code of conduct on age-appropriate design, covering topics including age assurance, data protection and clear and accessible information.
- ▶ support the development of an EU-wide digital proof of age, and effective age assurance and age verification tools.
- ▶ ensure that the harmonised “116 111” European helpline phone number provides assistance on cyberbullying.
- ▶ support reporting of illegal and harmful content through Safer Internet Centre helplines and hotlines.
- ▶ involve children in the creation of an EU code of conduct on age-appropriate design.



- ▶ support peer-to-peer training on online opportunities and risks.
- ▶ organise media literacy campaigns for children, teachers, parents and caregivers.
- ▶ develop teaching modules for teachers via the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) platform.
- ▶ strengthen the support for children and young people in vulnerable or marginalised situations and seek to address the digital divide.

Through the BIK+ strategy, the European Commission also invites Member States and industry to be key agents in the process of change.

BIK Youth Ambassadors discuss the BIK+ strategy at the Digital Assembly

On 21-22 June 2022, the *Digital Assembly* took place in Toulouse, France. The Digital Assembly is an annual event hosted jointly by the European Commission and the holder of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. It is a key forum for members of the European digital ecosystem to gather and discuss important issues. The two-day conference included workshops, panel discussions and plenary sessions focusing on issues related to EU sovereignty and autonomy.

In particular, a workshop on day one focused on the newly adopted BIK+ strategy. BIK Youth Ambassadors Sina (from Luxembourg) and Dimitris (from Cyprus) were there to highlight the youth perspective and voice their needs and views on the new strategy. The workshop consisted of two panels – the first one discussing the protection of children and young people online; the second one addressing the empowerment and participation of minors in the online environment.

During the discussions, moderated by June Lowery-Kingston (Head of Unit, Accessibility, Multilingualism and Safer Internet, DG CONNECT at the European Commission), the BIK Youth Ambassadors stressed the importance of involving youth in the decision-making process and encouraging their participation in such initiatives for change. They also commented that it should be mandatory for young people to learn about online risks, misinformation and disinformation, and other key online safety concerns.



BIK Youth Ambassadors Dimitris and Sina participated in the Digital Assembly

[Read more about BIK+ at the Digital Assembly on the Better Internet for Kids \(BIK\) platform.](#)



Launch of the child-friendly version of the BIK+ strategy

Also at the Digital Assembly workshop, a child-friendly version of the BIK+ strategy was launched. The child-friendly version was developed for young people, and with the invaluable contribution of young people themselves on the most child-appropriate vocabulary, tone and design to include in the guide.

The child-friendly resource has since been translated into all EU languages and is available for [free download from the Publications Office of the European Union](#).

Access the full text of [A Digital Decade for children and youth: the new European strategy for a better internet for kids \(BIK+\)](#) (available to download in all EU languages).

The European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+)

La stratégie européenne pour un internet mieux adapté aux enfants

De Europese strategie voor een beter internet voor kinderen

Die Europäische Strategie für ein besseres Internet für Kinder

Europska strategija za bolji internet za djecu

Strategia europeană pentru un internet mai bun pentru copii

La strategia europea per un internet migliore per i bambini

La estrategia europea para conseguir una Internet mejor para la infancia

A child-friendly version of the BIK+ strategy is now available for free download in all EU languages



Proposal to lay down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse (May 2022)

Child sexual abuse and its spread online is a big problem, and its scale is intensifying. In 2021, there were 85 million photos and videos reported worldwide that depicted child sexual abuse... and many more go unreported. The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, has exacerbated the problem.

Like all other places in the world, the digital world should be safe for children and that means protections should be in place. Consequently, in May 2022, the European Commission announced a dedicated new proposal to urgently address the problem of child sexual abuse online and the spread of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). The proposal was announced together with the new BIK+ strategy (see above) and follows the [EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse](#), which was launched in 2020 and calls for a strong legal framework.

At the present time, over 60 per cent of child sexual abuse materials worldwide are hosted on EU servers, and Member States are among the global top ten hosting countries. However, most reporting by online service providers is done on a voluntary basis and US service providers detect and report most of the abuse. In 2020, for example, up to 95 per cent of all reports received of child sexual abuse materials came from just one company, Meta.

The new proposal includes obligations for companies to detect and report CSAM to public authorities. This step is necessary, as voluntary action has proven insufficient and the effectiveness of such efforts

varies greatly from company to company, and current action lacks harmonised safeguards, including transparency. This may interfere with users' rights, including those of privacy and data protection.

The central element of the proposal is to impose uniform obligations on service providers to prevent child sexual abuse online by assessing and mitigating risks and, where needed, adopt targeted orders to detect, report and remove online child sexual abuse. The proposed rules introduce an obligation for relevant online service providers to assess the risk of their services' misuse for the dissemination of child sexual abuse materials or for the solicitation of children ('grooming').

The proposal sets targeted detection obligations, based on a detection order: Member States will need to designate national authorities to be in charge of reviewing risk assessment and the mitigating measures proposed by the service provider to prevent child sexual abuse online.

The new proposal also defines the role of a new EU Centre to prevent and combat child sexual abuse. The centre could have three major roles: support efforts on prevention, improve assistance to victims, support detection, reporting and removal of CSAM online. The EU Centre will facilitate the work of:

- ▶ companies in detection, reporting and removal of child sexual abuse online;
- ▶ law enforcement in following up with the reports from companies;



- ▶ Member States in prevention and assistance to victims;
- ▶ partners outside of the EU, given the global nature of these crimes, working closely with similar centres around the world.

Read [more about the proposal on the Better Internet for Kids \(BIK\) platform](#).

INHOPE will be working to support the EC in the implementation of the proposal in line with its core activities to rid the world of child sexual abuse material. Discover more about the work of INHOPE at www.inhope.org.



Youth participation in the INHOPE webinar ‘Proactive vs reactive hotline communication’ (June 2022)

In June 2022, INHOPE organised a webinar on proactive versus reactive hotline communication. Two senior BIK Youth Ambassadors, João Pedro (from Portugal) and Kathrin (from Germany), were asked to share their opinions on campaigns that aim to reach young people.

The webinar was organised in the framework of the European Year of Youth. During the webinar, Sabrina Vorbau (Project Manager at European Schoolnet, responsible for leading on youth coordination activities within BIK) highlighted the importance of youth participation as stated in the new BIK+ strategy: *“The young people and children of today are the users of tomorrow, and it is therefore crucial that they have a firm seat at the table. Youth participation is not only nice to have, but should be enforced in a meaningful way.”*



BIK Youth Ambassadors shared their views on hotline communications

The webinar was a great example of truly engaging youth in important conversations. Both João Pedro and Kathrin critically discussed the communication strategies that aim to reach young people focussing on how to ensure a successful campaign, dealing with sensitive topics like CSA (child sexual abuse) and CSAM (child sexual abuse material), and how to effectively involve youth.

Following a fruitful discussion, the webinar ended with the advice of Kathrin: *“Interact with young people in campaigns, use easy language, make sure the campaign is repeated, and have low barriers for youth participation. There is a great network within Better Internet for Kids (BIK); use this network!”*

João Pedro concluded that a successful campaign must be meaningful and understandable by young people. A campaign should be tangible to the life and age group that is targeted, and be sure to include a call to action so that combined efforts are made to combat CSA and CSAM.

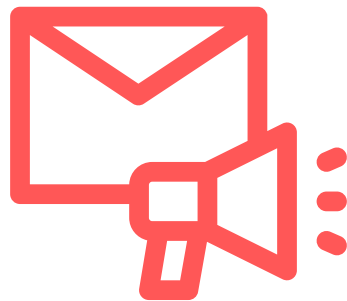
Read more about the [webinar](#) and [discover key takeaways on the Better Internet for Kids \(BIK\) platform](#). Discover more about the work of INHOPE at www.inhope.org.

A key feature of the new BIK+ strategy is to ensure that large-scale awareness-raising campaigns on key online safety issues target children, young people, and those that support them (such as parents, caregivers and educators).



The BIK bulletin

The Better Internet for Kids (BIK) bulletin is a quarterly electronic newsletter which aims to keep readers informed on better internet issues. Each edition provides a topical focus article looking at the latest trends in online life, with features from youth, industry, and the research community, along with a mix of news and resources from key stakeholders in the field, including the European network of Safer Internet Centres, operating under the banner of Insafe and INHOPE. The typical publishing cycle for the BIK bulletin is each March, June, September, and December.



Read past editions of the BIK bulletin – and subscribe to receive future editions – at www.betterinternetforkids.eu/bik-bulletin.

The **March 2022** edition considered the **sexualisation of culture, and of children and young people online**. In recent times, there's been a heightened awareness among Safer Internet Centres in Europe about issues regarding the increasing sexualisation of culture and of young people online. These include issues such as the hypersexualised culture shown in the mass media and the impact this has on minors, alongside sexually motivated behaviours such as online sexual harassment, non-consensual sharing of intimate content, sextortion, or transactional sexting. The focus article in this edition of the BIK bulletin explored some of these issues and offered tips and resources for building awareness and resilience against them.

The **June 2022** edition focused on the **new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+)**. Adopted by the European Commission in May 2022, the strategy builds on previous work to improve age-appropriate digital services and to ensure that every child is protected, empowered, and respected online. Ten years after the publication of the first BIK strategy, BIK+ aims to spotlight the voices and opinions of European youth.

The **September 2022** edition of the BIK bulletin provided a roundup of the **Roundtable on child and youth consumer protection in digital markets**. This online multistakeholder event considered the main risks online for children and young people as consumers, and how child and youth protection in digital markets in Europe is being addressed through existing and planned regulation.

The **December 2022** edition looked back on the main highlights of the year, and especially the **youth-led edition of Safer Internet Forum (SIF)** and other activities to amplify young voices during the **2022 European Year of Youth**.



Positive Online Content Campaign (September 2022)

September 2022 was dedicated to a positive online content campaign (POCC). Various activities took place throughout the month to raise awareness about the importance of positive online content for children, and to encourage a fruitful discussion among industry, content and service producers, parents, caregivers, teachers, and youth to encourage the production of more positive, playful, safe online experiences for children.



Since the last POCC focus group took place in 2019, the landscape has changed significantly. Transformations include the launch of the new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+) (see above), and new ways of framing online activities for younger children. This edition of the campaign therefore focused on investigating how positive online content concepts need to evolve and adapt in the future

focusing on the development of more advanced technology (especially with regards to online gaming, virtual and augmented reality (VR and AR), AI and playful-by-design concepts), while also taking into account developments in legislation.

Additionally, more than two years on from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was relevant to also assess its impact on the digital lives of children and young people. As many young children were 'forced' to spend increased amounts of time online to continue education and social activities while in lockdown, it was important to explore how this – as well as other emergency situations such as wars and conflicts – affected industry and content producers/providers and the services offered, and how this might affect service provision in the future.

During the awareness month, daily posts were shared on social media highlighting positive online content resources and quick, interactive polls. In addition, a Twitter conversation, a Twitter Space, and a focus group were hosted to draw on a variety of different perspectives as they relate to positive online content.

The youth perspective: a Twitter conversation

When discussing positive online content and playful-by-design concepts, it is essential to involve young people themselves in the design of such products, and be willing to listen to their opinions and experiences. For this reason – and in celebration of the European Year of Youth – BIK Youth Ambassador Matěj (from Czechia) took part in a Twitter conversation, voicing opinions and challenges regarding safer/better internet issues



from the youth perspective. Several topics were addressed, ranging from examples and good practices of positive online content, what kind of content he would like to see available for a younger audience, and what feedback and suggestions he has for industry representatives and content providers.

Read the Twitter conversation with BIK Youth Ambassador Matěj here.

Discussing online experiences for children: a Twitter Space

Twitter Spaces are a longer, podcast-like format that are used to tackle a different topic or target a specific group. During the POCC awareness month, a Twitter Space was hosted from the Insafe Twitter account, gathering a range of content and service providers, Safer Internet Centre representatives, a BIK Youth Ambassador voicing the opinions of young Europeans, research experts and other stakeholders to discuss concepts, best practices, challenges, and future dreams for positive online content.

Listen to the recording of the Twitter Space here.

A focus on the future

Awareness month activities culminated with a focus group where representatives of industry, institutions, research and academia, and Safer Internet Centres, along with small content and service providers, gathered online for a morning packed with conversation on the opportunities and challenges of providing safe, educational, and entertaining content for children moving forward.

There were many takeaways from the focus group: every participant agreed on the need to consult and include children and young people from the earliest stages in the development of new content or services aimed at a younger audience, instead of assessing whether they are age-appropriate only once the product is finished. Other aspects to be considered during the design process include ensuring accessibility and inclusion of all children, as well as their parents, caregivers, and educators, regardless of their socio-economic background or the cultural context they find themselves in, in order to cater to everyone's needs and be able to reach the target audience. Moving forward, a balanced combination between different factors such as safety, playability and enjoyability, accessibility and inclusion should be pursued to ensure high-quality online content.

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Find more information about the Positive Online Content Campaign at www.positiveonlinecontentforkids.eu.

The new BIK+ strategy will drive forward the ambition of creating high-quality online content, services and experiences for all children and young people.



Roundtable on child and youth consumer protection in digital markets (September 2022)

In September 2022, Better Internet for Kids (BIK) hosted an online Roundtable on child and youth consumer protection in digital markets on behalf of DG Communications Networks, Content and Technology (CONNECT) and DG Justice and Consumers (JUST) of the European Commission. There were over 270 registrations for the Roundtable from 42 countries across and beyond the European Union, evidencing the strong global interest in this topic. The event was organised with both the [New Consumer Agenda](#) (published in 2020) and the new BIK+ strategy in mind, seeking to place a spotlight on how consumerism can impact children and young people's online experiences. Its conclusions will feed into the awareness-raising action to empower children and youth, which is due to start in spring 2023.

The New Consumer Agenda acknowledges the requirement to address specific consumer needs and the needs of children and young people who are exposed to misleading and aggressive commercial practices online. It also stresses the importance of investing more in lifelong consumer education and awareness raising for people at all stages of life from school onwards. Similarly, BIK+ aims to complement and support the practical implementation of the existing measures to protect children online, develop young people's digital skills, and empower them to safely enjoy and shape their life online.

The Roundtable was introduced by Commissioner Reynders who is in charge of consumer protection throughout the EU. He stressed the role of EU consumer protection law in guaranteeing that consumers make informed choices, and that the vulnerability of children is taken into account when applying the law.

The keynote session set the scene for the Roundtable by identifying a number of consumer risks faced by children and youth online, and by exploring which regulatory initiatives are being put in place to address these risks. Children and youth are avid users of both social media platforms and video games. While the digital environment has great potential for play, entertainment and creativity, the commercial stakes are high and different monetisation strategies are deployed, many of which are difficult to detect for children. The lines between different types of online content and services (for example, editorial and commercial, or videogaming and gambling) are becoming increasingly blurred, and these are accompanied by a plethora of commercial practices that have led to a new type of consumer risk for children in the digital environment, sometimes called 'contract risks'. Several children's rights could be potentially violated due to these practices.



Focus was placed on three practices which are of particular concern: influencer marketing, loot boxes and dark patterns:

- ▶ **Influencer marketing** is an extremely popular online marketing strategy. Influencers are perceived by children as relatable, accessible, and credible and, as such, are ideal to influence children's consumption behaviour. Influencers sometimes use controversial content (for example, glamourising gambling or drug use) to generate views and revenues, and the content they produce contains both editorial and commercial content, making it difficult for children to use their advertising literacy skills. A wide variety of (legal) instruments can be applied to this practice, such as advertising (self-) regulation, media law, consumer protection, data protection law, and even labour law.
- ▶ **Loot boxes** are mystery boxes containing randomised virtual items that are obtained either through gameplay or by purchasing them with real money. Due to its close resemblance to gambling, the European Commission has stated that the presence of paid random content should be clearly disclosed to the consumer, including an explanation of the probabilities of receiving a random item, and that the sale of loot boxes in video games must comply with the information obligations under the Consumer Rights Directive and the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive.
- ▶ **Dark patterns** refer to techniques incorporated in the design or structure of websites, platforms or apps that make users/consumers do things or take decisions that they did not mean to. These patterns use a variety of techniques, such as visually designing buttons to

make the desired option more attractive, using trick questions and ambiguous language, creating an artificial sense of urgency for the user, or using emotional language to discourage certain choices. Studies have found that these techniques can lead to financial or other harm for children and youth, especially considering the susceptibility of children to behaviour-altering practices.

Then two panels took place, the first one on social networks, and the second one on gaming platforms. The conclusions included, among other suggestions, empowerment actions, age-appropriate design codes, and regulation.

.....
Read the [full roundtable report \(which includes a four-page executive summary and key priorities for social media and gaming platforms\) on the Better Internet for Kids \(BIK\) platform.](#)

The new BIK+ strategy will place a spotlight on child and youth consumer protection in digital markets.



Safer Internet Forum 2022 – a youth-led edition (October 2022)

The Safer Internet Forum (SIF) is a key annual international conference in Europe where policy makers, researchers, law enforcement bodies, youth, parents and caregivers, teachers, NGOs, industry representatives, experts and other relevant actors come together to discuss the latest trends, opportunities, risks, and solutions related to child online safety and making the internet a better place. This year's edition took place in a hybrid format in Brussels, Belgium and online on Thursday, 27 October 2022 with a theme of *A Digital Decade for children and youth: BIK+ to protect, empower and respect!* Approximately 150 people were present onsite and more than 400 participants registered online, together representing more than 70 countries across and beyond the European Union.

Following the recent launch of the new BIK+ strategy, the 2022 edition provided an opportunity to discuss the strategy in detail, identifying its key objectives and priority actions. It explored the roles and responsibilities for public and private stakeholders, along with how to monitor its impact and effectiveness. Significantly, given the strategy's key focus on youth participation and empowerment and to also mark the European Year of Youth, the event was organised in a youth-led manner, with young people playing an active role in the planning, preparation and delivery of the Forum.

SIF Youth Advisory Group

To help prepare for this edition of the Safer Internet Forum, a SIF Youth Advisory Group (YAG) was convened, composed of ten experienced BIK Youth Ambassadors. From May 2022, the SIF YAG met regularly with the BIK Coordination Team and voiced their opinions, shaped the focus and agenda of SIF, made recommendations on the format of the deep dive sessions, and suggested a shortlist of young influencers to deliver keynote speeches. They also decided on their own roles as moderators and co-hosts for the main event. In addition, the SIF YAG members were kept regularly updated on the preparations of the BIK Youth Panel, whose preparatory meetings were taking place in parallel, to ensure cohesion across the two youth groups in the delivery of the event.

Read [more about the SIF Youth Advisory Group and meet its members](#).



*Safer Internet Forum 2022 focused on
A Digital Decade for children and youth: BIK+ to protect,
empower and respect!*



BIK Youth Panel

Youth participation is a key strand running throughout the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) project, ensuring that the voice of youth is represented, heard, and acted upon in resource development and policy approaches. Each year, therefore, a BIK Youth Panel is organised prior to and during the Safer Internet Forum (SIF), encouraging a group of young people to voice not just their personal opinions and challenges regarding safer/better internet issues, but also those of their peers who they are representing at European level. Youth panellists work collaboratively to come up with principles and activities for a better internet, first debating issues in online meetings and brainstorming over youth participation activities as preparation for meeting face to face.



The BIK Youth Panel meetings kicked off during the summer of 2022 when young people gathered online in regular meetings and further divided into three groups focusing on various areas of work. On the day before SIF, 27 youth panellists from 18 European countries met in Brussels to rehearse and finalise their planned interventions.



The BIK Youth Panel 2022 allowed young people from across Europe to come together to share their views



At the Forum, the young people led table discussions on cyberbullying, consumer rights, age verification, and non-consensual image sharing, among other topics. This year, the BIK Youth Panel also performed a musical surprise – a song, *With or Without You* – that left a big impression on both the onsite and online audience.

A ‘Behind the scenes’ video gives a flavour of the BIK Youth Panel’s preparations and performance at the Safer Internet Forum.



BIK Youth Panel 2022 – Behind the scenes video

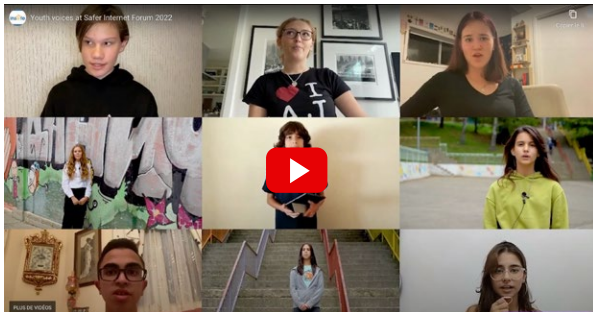
Beyond SIF, BIK Youth Panellists are typically involved in other activities too, at both national and European level. Following successful completion of the annual Youth Panel programme, participants are invited to become BIK Youth Ambassadors to further enhance their knowledge and participation in the BIK agenda. Many former panellists have taken on this challenge, and have continued to represent BIK at high-level events such as the annual Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and in high-level policy discussions, ensuring that the voice of youth continues to be heard across multiple activity lines and by multiple stakeholders.

Find out more about the BIK Youth programme generally at www.bikyouth.eu.



Safer Internet Forum: the main event

To kick off this youth-led edition of the Safer Internet Forum, young people – from across and beyond the European Union – shared their thoughts on the BIK+. This is what they said...



To kick off this youth-led edition, young people – from across and beyond the European Union – shared their thoughts on the new BIK+ strategy

A video address by Commissioner Thierry Breton for the Internal market and Commissioner Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President for Democracy and Demography set the scene for the day, following which two members of the SIF Youth Advisory Group led an interactive discussion with European and national policy makers to underline the importance of BIK+.



Molly (from Ireland) and George (from Malta) introduced MEP Catharina Rinzema from the Netherlands, and June Lowery-Kingston from the European Commission

The first keynote session, introduced by SIF YAG member Dimitris (from Cyprus) focused on the experiences of two young online influencers. First up was Jacob, a 21-year-old content creator from Ireland, with over 1.2 million followers on TikTok. Jacob is a transgender man, female to male, and has been creating content, mainly on TikTok, for over seven years, promoting self-love and the importance of living life as who you truly are without any fear or shame. Lijana Risen, 25, is a mindset influencer. She was a contestant on Germany's Next Top Model and voluntarily dropped out of the final to make a statement against cyberbullying. Since then, she has started the non-profit organisation Love Always Wins (L.A.W.), where she's fighting for more self-love and respect, and less hate.

To conclude the session, the BIK Youth Panel performed a song (*With or Without You*) and then led interactive table debates with Forum participants, providing feedback in a plenary format on the topics discussed. Topics included manipulation on the internet, data issues, cyberbullying, moderation and policies and harassment.



As is typical of the SIF, participants had the opportunity to take part in a number of deep dive discussions, across two sessions, each focusing on the pillars of the BIK+ strategy. Discussions further explored some of the opportunities and challenges as they relate to protecting, empowering, and respecting children and young people online, and how these can be addressed by various stakeholders. Parallel sessions took place for onsite and online participants. The first deep dive discussion was around the topic of safe digital experiences and the second deep dive discussion was on digital empowerment and active participation.

The final session included a broad and international input from a variety of panellists from across the globe, including video addresses from various industry stakeholders. SIF YAG member Billie (from Ireland) also contributed to the panel, reiterating the importance of involving young people in discussions on shaping the future of the internet. Discussion also placed a spotlight on industry's responsibility to protect their (young) users through safety-by-design approaches, and the need to involve governments to ensure that legislations are passed that regulate the safety of their users.

The discussion concluded that change should stem from three main domains: discussions among all stakeholders (including industry, parents and caregivers, education professionals, and so on); awareness-raising activities to be carried out beyond the Safer Internet Forum; and personal growth. As child online safety has become a transnational issue, cross-border collaboration, communication, coordination, and sharing responsibilities remain critical ingredients to inform the discussions in the years to come.

The final word of the day was given to BIK Youth Panellist Daria (from Romania). Daria expressed the gratitude of the BIK Youth Panel and SIF YAG to everyone who had supported them in the process of making Safer Internet Forum 2022 a truly youth-led event. Moreover, she hoped that everyone present would commit to making the changes needed, alongside youth, to create a better internet for kids... and for everyone.

Find further information on [Safer Internet Forum 2022](#) on the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) platform, including presentations, recordings of many of the sessions, and a summary report.

The new BIK+ strategy will expand the role of BIK Youth Ambassadors and BIK Youth Panels to support peer-to-peer activities at national, regional and local level.

Moreover, a child-led evaluation of the BIK+ strategy will take place every two years to ensure that adequate progress is being made.



Internet Governance Forum (IGF) (December 2022)

The annual *Internet Governance Forum (IGF)* serves to bring people from various stakeholder groups together, as equals, in discussions on public policy issues relating to the internet. This year's edition - the 17th annual IGF meeting - was hosted by the Government of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa in a hybrid format. Its focus was on *Resilient internet for a shared sustainable and common future*.

As in previous years, an Insafe delegation participated to promote the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) agenda in Europe on behalf of the European Commission, organising several informative sessions. Two BIK Youth Ambassadors, João Pedro (from Portugal) and Kathrin (from Germany), joined the event in person, while BIK Youth Panellist Marina (from Greece) participated online.

A pre-event session, titled *Cyber hygiene: Best practices from the Insafe network*, provided an opportunity to present the work of EU Safer Internet Centres and to introduce the new BIK+ strategy to a global audience. Representatives from the Greek, Maltese, Polish and Portuguese Safer Internet Centres shared interesting resources and information campaigns, followed by an interactive panel discussion and Q&A with the audience.

João Pedro moderated a workshop session titled *Blurred lines between fact and fiction: Disinformation online* which explored how the spread of false information on the internet and in private groups can disrupt democratic processes. All panellists emphasised the need to invest in the development of media literacy skills across the entire population as a means of equipping citizens with the tools to critically evaluate the



A network delegation represented Better Internet for Kids (BIK) activities at the 2022 Internet Governance Forum

information they receive, and hence be in a position to make informed decisions, thus countering mis- and disinformation. One specific action that was called for was to increase awareness about online safety and media literacy, with a particular focus on youth. This was considered to be especially important because young people can tend to overlook the negative impacts of disinformation on democratic societies and only address the surface level issues. One way to counter disinformation is to support credible, fact-based journalism and uphold journalistic ethical standards.



Greek Youth Panellist Marina also joined online during this session, commenting on ways in which youth can be empowered to balance the narrative in online spaces, along with ways in which young people can support other groups to tackle disinformation online by identifying new trends.



Greek Youth Panellist, Marina, shared her views on disinformation online

Kathrin moderated a workshop titled *The good, the bad and the ugly; online gender violence* which sought to challenge online violence, and especially that which is aimed at women and girls. The session considered why online gender violence is not yet adequately challenged or addressed in the right way when it occurs. Key takeaways from the session included that more data is needed to train AI (artificial intelligence) tools to help tackle this issue. A key concern is that society is normalising males as perpetrators, so more resources are needed to educate boys and men on this matter. Current approaches tend to focus on women and girls making extra efforts to be safe online rather than addressing the root of the problem, so placing an even greater burden on the victims.

Find out more about network participation at the [Internet Governance Forum](#) on the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) platform, including an [article from João Pedro and Kathrin outlining their experience](#).

The new BIK+ strategy aims to ensure that all children and young people are protected, empowered and respected online, irrespective of their personal circumstances.

To support all children, the digital environment must be diverse, inclusive, non-discriminatory and free of stereotypes.



2022 IN FIGURES

Safer Internet Day



On Safer Internet Day 2022, over **20,500 schools** were reached and nearly **1,000 other organisations** were involved across Europe alone. Many more were reached across the globe, with almost **190 countries and territories** participating in celebrations in some way.

Resources



Throughout the year, more than **31 million European citizens*** were reached, providing them with more than **1,300 new resources**.

Network resources continue to respond to various online opportunities and challenges, including topics such as achieving a **balanced use of technology**, using **social media** and **gaming platforms** safely, **how to talk to children about war and make them feel safe**, and how to respond to **cyberbullying** and **sexual harassment** online, alongside many others.

* This figure is based on data from 28 Safer Internet Centres.

BIK Youth



More than **470 events** involved youth participation throughout 2022.

Reporting



In 2022*, a total of **587,852 content URLs** were processed in ICCAM** by INHOPE hotlines from which **497,001 content URLs were seen for the first time**. From these content URLs, a total of **384,748 were determined to be illegal** and, subsequently, national law enforcement agencies (LEAs) were informed and a notice and takedown was issued to the hosting internet service provider (ISP).

* These figures represent all INHOPE member hotlines, not just those which are EU funded.

** ICCAM is INHOPE's secure software solution to collect, exchange and categorise reports on child sexual abuse material (CSAM), funded by the EU. ICCAM is used by INHOPE hotlines in different jurisdictions (countries) and INTERPOL. The name ICCAM is derived from the phrase "I see child abuse material".



WHAT'S NEXT FOR BETTER INTERNET FOR KIDS?

This report is launched on Safer Internet Day (SID) 2023 when Safer Internet Centres (SICs), Safer Internet Day Committees and supporters across the globe are once again joining “Together for a better internet”, highlighting the importance of a truly multi-stakeholder approach to creating a safer and better internet.

Significantly, 2023 marks the 20th edition of Safer Internet Day. With the recently adopted *Digital Services Act package* and the *European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles*, we are keen to see how safer, secure, empowering and protective online experiences for everyone will develop over the next twenty years. Evidencing the European Union’s commitment to ensuring that children and young people are at the heart of the initiatives and conversations, on the occasion of SID 2023, the European Commission has published a child-friendly version of the Digital principles.

Moreover, 2023 has been designated as the *European Year of Skills*, providing a perfect backdrop to highlight the learning opportunities available to all in the digital world, and the importance of ensuring that the largest possible number of users, and especially children and young people, are adequately prepared to handle digital technologies responsibly, respectfully, critically and creatively. Only then can they experience the online world as a place of knowledge, culture and personal growth.

While Safer Internet Day may provide a single day of focus for our work, it also allows us to look towards the future priorities for driving the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) agenda forward and, especially, making the vision of the new BIK+ strategy a reality. Throughout this report, we have highlighted just a few of the planned actions embedded within the BIK+ strategy, many of which will be initiated this year.

Already on Safer Internet Day 2023, in the framework of BIK+, a new *BIK Teacher corner* has launched on the Better Internet for Kids platform. This new resource for teachers, educators and other adults who work with children and young people provides access to free information, advice, and suggested resources to help to educate and support youth to safely and positively navigate their digital world. Its overall objective is to become a one-stop shop and a point of reference for European primary and secondary teachers and educators, providing a mix of easy-to-digest topical information and hands-on tips and guidance on the evolving nature and range of potentially harmful content, contact, conduct and contract risks that children and young people may experience in the digital world. The resource will be regularly

updated with new topical deep-dive articles, reflecting emerging issues.

As 2023 progresses, a number of **large-scale awareness-raising campaigns** will be scoped and delivered, working with stakeholders across the **better internet, media literacy and child protection domains**, to ensure that children, young people, and those that support them better understand some of the opportunities and issues at stake, and receive current, clear and actionable guidance on key online safety topics.

Furthermore, at the time of writing, the European Commission is in the process of convening a special group, formed of industry, civil society and academia representatives, to drive forward the creation of a comprehensive **Code of conduct for the age-appropriate design of digital products and services**. Work will commence imminently during the first months of 2023, with the aim to make the code public by mid-2024. Importantly, in line with the BIK+ aim of encouraging youth participation, children and young people will be involved in the process, ensuring that the various stakeholders are continually challenged to truly deliver online experiences in the best interests of youth.

We also look forward to the **2023 edition of Safer Internet Forum (SIF)**, taking place towards the end of the year, which will provide an opportunity to review progress against the BIK+ strategy so far and further prioritising actions to come. Building on the success of the 2022 edition, we hope that it will again be very much a youth-led event.

This is just a taster of what’s to come for **Better Internet for Kids** in the coming year; stay tuned for plenty more!

Stay up to date via the [Better Internet for Kids platform](#), the [quarterly Better Internet for Kids \(BIK\) bulletin](#), and project [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) profiles. There, you’ll find the latest news and developments across all strands of activity, and areas where you can get involved too.

Additionally, [connect with your national Safer Internet Centre](#) for localised news, initiatives and resources.



Better Internet for Kids

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