

Better Internet for Kids (BIK) Policy Monitor Country Profile 2024: GERMANY

The Better Internet for Kids (BIK) Policy Monitor is a tool used to compare and exchange knowledge on policy making and implementation in EU Member States, Iceland and Norway on the pillars and recommendations of the [European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children \(BIK+ strategy\)](#). The 2024 edition of the BIK Policy Monitor report examines the implementation of the BIK+ strategy in 29 European countries, including all EU Member States, Iceland, and Norway.

The country profile outlines findings about the implementation of the BIK+ strategy based on BIK policies and BIK+ actions across the strategy's three pillars as surveyed in the BIK Policy Monitor (as per February 2024). Download the full [BIK Policy Monitor report 2024](#) from the Better Internet for Kids website.

BIK policies

Policy frameworks

Policy frameworks describe the overarching approach for a better internet, and establish the underlying goals, principles and guidelines that shape individual policies within this area.

- This topic is an **important and emerging policy priority**.
- There are **separate, dedicated policies** that address children and the digital environment (protection, empowerment, and participation).
- Although the BIK / BIK+ strategy is **not explicitly mentioned in national policies**, it has informed policy development on children and the digital environment.
- **Children's rights in the digital environment are not explicitly recognised** in national policy documents but receive implicit support in policies dealing with children's digital activity.

	High	Medium	Low	Other
Coverage of BIK+ issues in national policies		X		
Integration of policy provision		X		
Influence of the BIK+ strategy		X		
Recognition of children's rights		X		

Table 1: Topic summary - policy frameworks

Key national policy frameworks are:

- The **Youth Protection Act** (Jugendschutzgesetz - JuSchG) was amended in 2021. It is central to the protection of children and young people and is based on the three principles of protection, empowerment and participation.
- JuSchG increases protection in the digital world from risks of use such as communication and contact functions, purchasing functions or the promotion of excessive media usage. Since 1 January 2023, the risks of use have been considered in the joint procedure of the supreme state youth authorities with the self-regulatory body of the film industry (FSK) and the self-regulatory body of the computer games industry (USK) for the release and labelling of films and games.
- Due to German federalism, there is more than one policy which addresses the topic of children and the digital environment. At the federal level, it is the **Youth Protection Act** (Jugendschutzgesetz - JuSchG), the Länder (federal states) have concluded the **Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Minors in the Media** (Jugendmedienschutz- Staatsvertrag, JMStV), and at EU level, the Digital Services Act also addresses the protection of children in the digital environment.
- With regard to children's rights, **General Comment No. 25** was published nearly at the same time as the amendment of the Youth Protection Act. Therefore, there is no explicit reference in the Youth Protection Act, but the **Council of Europe Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the**

child in the digital environment are mentioned in the explanatory memorandum of the Youth Protection Act (Jugendschutzgesetz - JuSchG).

Policy design

Policy design asks whether evidence and research support BIK-related policies and whether systems are in place for monitoring and evaluating those policies.

- **There is a regular (e.g., annual or bi-annual) nationally representative survey** specifically focused on children’s digital activity which informs national policies on this topic.
- **A range of systems are in place at the government level** to inform policy development on this topic.
- **Existing national research funding is available** for research on children and the digital environment but this is not explicitly specified.
- **Policies undergo systematic and regular monitoring and evaluation** to assess the effectiveness of actions in different contexts and to take account of new technologies or emergent risks.

	High	Medium	Low	Other
Regular data collection	X			
Other information supports				X
National research fund		X		
Monitoring and evaluation	X			

Table 2: Topic summary - policy design

Recent national research studies include:

- **JIM Study:** Since 1998, this has been conducted annually as a basic study on the media consumption of 12- to 19-year-olds.
- **KIM Study:** Since 1999, a baseline study has also been conducted on the significance of media in the everyday lives of children aged 6 to 13.

- The **Youth Media Protection Index** (Jugendmedienschutzindex) examines how the protection of children and young people from negative online experiences is reflected in the concerns, attitudes, skills and actions of parents and children and young people themselves.
- The **Shell Youth Study** examines how the generation of 12- to 25-year-olds is growing up in Germany today. Data on the use of digital media is also collected. The study is conducted every 4-6 years.
- **Young and connected, children and young people in the digital society:** The digital association bitkom publishes the children and youth study on media use.
- Regarding evaluation, an evaluation of the **Youth Protection Act** (Jugendschutzgesetz - JuSchG) is planned five years after it enters into force to monitor the changes the DSA has brought to the system of the Youth Protection Act. The Federal Government (Bundesregierung) will report to the German Parliament (Deutscher Bundestag) on the results of this evaluation.
- There is also Youth Check (**Jugend-Check**), a tool for assessing the impact of the law. All government regulatory proposals, especially draft laws, are examined using a standardised methodology for possible effects on the living conditions of young people between the ages of 12 and 27. This makes the intended and unintended effects of the projects visible. The Youth Check acts as a testing and awareness-raising tool to increase political attention to young people's life situations and concerns.

Policy governance

Policy governance examines how policies are coordinated at the governmental level, whether other implementation bodies are involved in their delivery, and whether structured mechanisms are available to guide their implementation.

- **Policy development sits across a range of ministries, and there is no single lead overall** responsible for developing government policies, guidelines and programmes relating to children and the digital environment.
- **Coordination happens more informally across the different departments and entities** that contribute to government policies, guidelines, and programmes regarding children and the digital environment.
- **One or more programmes of action are underway** supporting children’s online safety and participation in the digital environment. However, these lack accountabilities such as defined timelines, assigned responsibilities or key performance indicators (KPIs).

	High	Medium	Low	Other
Lead ministry for policy development			X	
National coordination body		X		
National action plan or strategy		X		

Table 3: Topic summary - policy governance

While policy development occurs across ministerial bodies on the state and federal levels, the **Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth** is mainly responsible for laws relating to the protection of minors.

The work of all ministries responsible for children and families at the state level is coordinated by the Conference of Youth and Family Ministries of the Länder (**Jugend- und Familienministerkonferenz der Länder – JFMK**).

At federal level, the Federal Agency for Child and Youth Protection in the Media (**Bundeszentrale für Kinder- und Jugendmedienschutz – BzKJ**) is designed to promote the further development of child and youth protection in the media. It promotes a joint assumption of responsibility by the state, businesses and civil society. The BzKJ has received financial funding authority and will design this with a focus on child-friendly access to the internet. The BzKJ and the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth work closely together.

At state level, the Commission for the Protection of Minors in the Media (*Kommission für Jugendmedienschutz*, KJM) plays a coordinating role.

The Federal Government, under the leadership of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, has developed a youth strategy (*Jugendstrategie*), which is further developed with a National Action Plan for Child and Youth Participation (*Nationaler Aktionsplan für Kinder- und Jugendbeteiligung*, NAP).

Stakeholder involvement

Stakeholder involvement enquires how different stakeholders can participate in policy development. Children’s involvement in policy-making is one such key issue. Additionally, international knowledge exchange about children's digital participation is also relevant to this topic.

- **Various ad hoc multistakeholder groups exist** across different branches of government, in which stakeholders may contribute to policy deliberation and development.
- **Members of the public are consulted on occasion** in the course of the development of new policies. However, this is not always the case.
- Depending on the specific topic, **children and young people are involved in different ways in contributing to policy development**. This happens through active participation, through hearing or indirectly.
- **Policy makers actively participate in various EU-level** and other international inter-governmental groups related to the topic.

	High	Medium	Low	Other
Stakeholder forum		X		
Public consultation	X			
Involvement of young people				X
International knowledge exchange	X			

Table 4: Topic summary - Stakeholder involvement

The [Federal Agency for Child and Youth Protection in the Media \(BzKJ\)](#) coordinates an overall strategy to achieve the protection goals of the Youth Protection Act and further develop the protection of children and young people in the media. This strategy is implemented in collaboration with the community responsible for the protection of children and young people in the media, which consists of politicians, civil society, and providers.

NGOs or other organisations are regularly consulted during the legislative process. The lead federal ministry sends the draft to the Länder (federal states), the umbrella organisations and other organisations involved and asks for their comments. This process is also known as "state and association participation".

A good example for the involvement of young people is the Advisory Board at the [Federal Agency for Child and Youth Protection in the Media \(BzKJ\)](#). It supports the Federal Agency in further developing the protection of children and young people in the media. The Advisory Board also includes two members who are no more than 17 years old at the time of their appointment.

BIK+ actions

Pillar 1 – safe digital experiences

Safe digital experiences refer to actions taken to protect children from harmful and illegal online content, conduct, contact, and risks as young consumers and to improve their well-being online through a safe, age-appropriate digital environment created in a way that respects children's best interests.

Responses to EU laws:

- The [German Digital Services Act \(DDG\)](#) came into effect on May 14, 2024, creating the essential national framework required for the effective implementation of the EU [Digital Services Act \(DSA\)](#) in Germany, including adjustments in jurisdictions and duties of information.
- The [DDG](#) gives German authorities the powers to enforce the [DSA](#) for companies subject to German oversight. An independent coordination office for digital services will be created within the [Bundesnetzagentur](#). It will

ensure compliance with the requirements of the DSA and will be responsible for fines for infringements. Users can submit complaints directly to the office.

Addressing harmful online content:

- In Germany, many different laws regulate illegal content. However, these are not always aimed at online content. Overall, the regulations range from market surveillance regarding illegal or dangerous products to specific regulations on protecting young people in the media to criminal law regulations.
- Under the conditions of the [Youth Protection Act \(JuSchG\)](#), media that are harmful to minors can be indexed. There are also several legal remedies that are under the supervision of the states and are set out in the [Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Minors in the Media \(Jugendmedienschutz-Staatsvertrag, JMStV\)](#).
- There are several ways to report harmful online content to the various authorities. Article 16 of the DSA opens up the possibility of reporting the content to the relevant platform provider.
- The organisation [jugendschutz.net](#) checks internet content for violations of youth protection laws. The tasks of jugendschutz.net are defined in the [Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Minors in the Media \(Jugendmedienschutz- Staatsvertrag, JMStV\)](#) as well as the [Youth Protection Act \(Jugendschutzgesetz, JuSchG\)](#). Jugendschutz.net also operates a hotline where internet users can report illegal and harmful content and regularly search for potential risks on the internet. Internationally, jugendschutz.net works closely with the networks INHOPE and INACH.

Addressing harmful online conduct:

- Children and young people are protected from intimate image abuse through various criminal law provisions in the German Criminal Code. Pursuant to section 184 (Dissemination of pornographic content) of the German Criminal Code, anyone who offers, supplies or makes pornographic content available to a person under the age of eighteen is liable to prosecution.

- There are no laws, regulations or policies that specifically and exclusively address cyberbullying. However, according to the [Youth Protection Act \(JuSchG\)](#) and now the Digital Services Act, providers must introduce risk mitigation measures to better protect children and young people, including from cyberbullying.
- The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth promotes [JUUUPORT](#), a nationwide online counselling platform for young people who encounter problems online. Volunteer teenagers and young adults from all over Germany, the JUUUPORT scouts, confidentially help their peers with online problems such as cyberbullying and much more.

Age verification and digital identity systems:

- According to the [Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Minors in the Media \(Jugendmedienschutz- Staatsvertrag, JMStV\)](#), pornographic offers in telemedia are prohibited if the provider does not ensure that children and young people cannot access these offers. However, age verification systems can be used to ensure that children and young people do not consume this content. The [Commission for the Protection of Minors in the Media \(Kommission für Jugendmedienschutz, KJM\)](#) evaluates and reviews age verification systems.
- Age verification is also a possible measure to better protect children and young people under the Youth Protection Act (and in future under the Digital Services Act). The [Federal Agency for Child and Youth Protection in the Media \(Bundeszentrale für Kinder- und Jugendmedienschutz, BzKJ\)](#) checks whether providers have taken suitable measures in this respect. In addition, the [Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth](#) is working on a data-saving method for age verification.
- German nationals under the age of 16 receive their national ID card ([Personalausweis](#)) with the eID function switched off. Once they are 16, they can choose to have it switched on by the competent authority (free of charge). Citizens of the European Union and the European Economic Area

who are at least 16 years old can apply for an eID Card (includes eID function intended only for use of digital services).

	In place	In development	Not in place	Other
DSA legislation enacted		X		
Codes of practice of digital services	X			
Consumer code of practice				X
Definition of harmful content	X			
Children's complaints mechanism	X			
Bodies can order content removal	X			
Intimate image abuse laws	X			
Cyberbullying laws	X			
Age verification for adult content	X			
Digital identity systems	X			

Table 5: Topic summary - pillar 1: safe digital experiences

Pillar 2 – digital empowerment

Digital empowerment incorporates actions so that all children, including those in vulnerable situations, acquire the necessary skills and competences to make sound choices and express themselves in the online environment safely and responsibly.

Supports in formal education:

- The requirements for dealing with online safety are a matter for the states. The states base their requirements on the “Education in the Digital World” strategy agreed in December 2016 and the additional recommendation “Teaching and Learning in the Digital World” and in particular choose a pedagogical approach. The teaching design should not only inform students about the dangers on the Internet, but also develop skills for the safe use of the internet. Within the framework of cultural sovereignty, the states

implement the strategy on their own responsibility through appropriate curriculum requirements, and their scope varies.

- The [Association for Media Education and Communication Culture \(GMK\)](#) is a nationwide professional association for education, culture, and media. It promotes media education and media literacy, brings together interested and engaged people from research and practice, and ensures the exchange of information.

Informal education:

- The media guide "[SCHAU HIN! What your child does with media](#)" supports parents and guardians with age-appropriate, up-to-date recommendations for children's media use that are suitable for everyday use. "SCHAU HIN" provides information about information and entertainment options as well as the risks of media use. Parents and guardians can attend media courses to learn how to deal with digital media and support children and young people.
- [JUUPORT](#) is a nationwide peer-to-peer-based online counselling service for young people, specifically for internet-based problems such as cyberbullying. Volunteer teenagers and young adults, the JUUPORT scouts, advise their peers on online problems.

Empowering through digital skills:

- Many of the projects funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth provide tips and instructions on how to use digital media safely. A good example is [Gutes Aufwachsen mit Medien](#) ("Growing up well with media"). This initiative supports and pools the activities of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth in the area of protecting children and young people in the media to strengthen the media skills of children, young people, parents and professionals. The initiative is a nationwide association of various players and is supported by an initiative office
- Since 2015, with the federal programme "[Live Democracy!](#)", the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) has

been facilitating measures at the local, state and federal level to develop new and innovative approaches to promoting democracy, shaping diversity and preventing extremism.

- In the second funding period (2020-2024), the BMFSFJ has started to fund the **Competence Network on Hate on the Internet**. The Competence Network advises victims of hate speech, strengthens civil society networks and develops media-didactic concepts and formats. In addition, the accompanying project "**Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft (BAG) gegen Hass im Netz**" (Federal Working Group against Hate on the Net) has been established since August 2021 to forge a stronger link between civil society engagement and research - thus ensuring an evidence-based foundation for work against digital hate.

	In place	In development	Not in place	Other
Teaching online safety	X			
Online safety policies in schools	X			
Adequate teacher training	X			
Informal education about online safety	X			
Peer-to-peer training in online safety	X			
Support for digital literacy skills	X			
Children's media literacy		X		
Challenge hate speech/digital civil courage	X			

Table 6: Topic summary - pillar 2: digital empowerment

Pillar 3 – active participation, respecting children’s rights

Active participation, respecting children’s rights, refers to actions which give children and young people a say in the digital environment, with more child-led activities to foster innovative and creative safe digital experiences.

Active participation:

- **Quality standards for child and youth participation** where the German Federal Youth Council (DBJR) and the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) outline standards of quality of participation of children and youth with a view to varying areas of growing up.
- The topic is also addressed in the process of the **National Action Plan for Child and Youth Participation**.
- Since 2016, **TINCON** (Teenage Internetwork Conference) has been designing event and content formats with and for young people between the ages of 13 and 25. The target group is closely involved in the planning, conception and implementation. The central task is the organisation and implementation of nationwide youth conferences, in particular for young people to discuss the diverse topics of digital youth culture.
- At the national level, the Advisory Board at the Federal Agency for Child and Youth Protection in the Media is the first higher federal authority to implement child and youth participation in its Advisory Board in accordance with the Youth Protection Act. Regulations exist at the regional level. In some federal states, the participation of children and young people is regulated in local constitutions.

Inclusivity:

- Participation processes at regional and national levels ensure that the diversity of children and young people is included. This is also a specific focus of the **National Action Plan for Child and Youth Participation**.

Digital creativity:

- The Federal Agency for Child and Youth Protection in the Media is currently researching the topic of "Child-friendly online services and access to the internet". The main aim is to evaluate existing services for children and access routes in relation to existing needs in this regard. Once the evaluation has been completed, a funding programme will be drawn up so that it can be optimally tailored to actual needs.

Promoting media competence in youth work is the task of child and youth welfare. There are a variety of measures and projects in the respective federal states that qualify young people to participate independently in our digital world. Educational offers and concepts on media education are systematically developed, practical services are provided and educational institutions are also advised. Examples include: [Seitenstark](#) and [FragFINN](#).

	In place	In development	Not in place	Other
Activities to promote active participation	X			
Laws that mandate youth participation	X			
Awareness raising on children's rights	X			
Inclusiveness regarding active participation	X			
Child-friendly versions of policy documents				X
Positive digital content	X			
Activities encouraging digital creativity	X			

Table 7: Topic summary - pillar 3: active participation, respecting children's rights

BIK+ index 2024: Germany

The BIK+ index has been developed to provide an aggregated at-a-glance overview of the levels of implementation across the two dimensions, BIK policies and BIK+ actions, in Germany compared to the EU27+2 average. Values are shown in per cent.

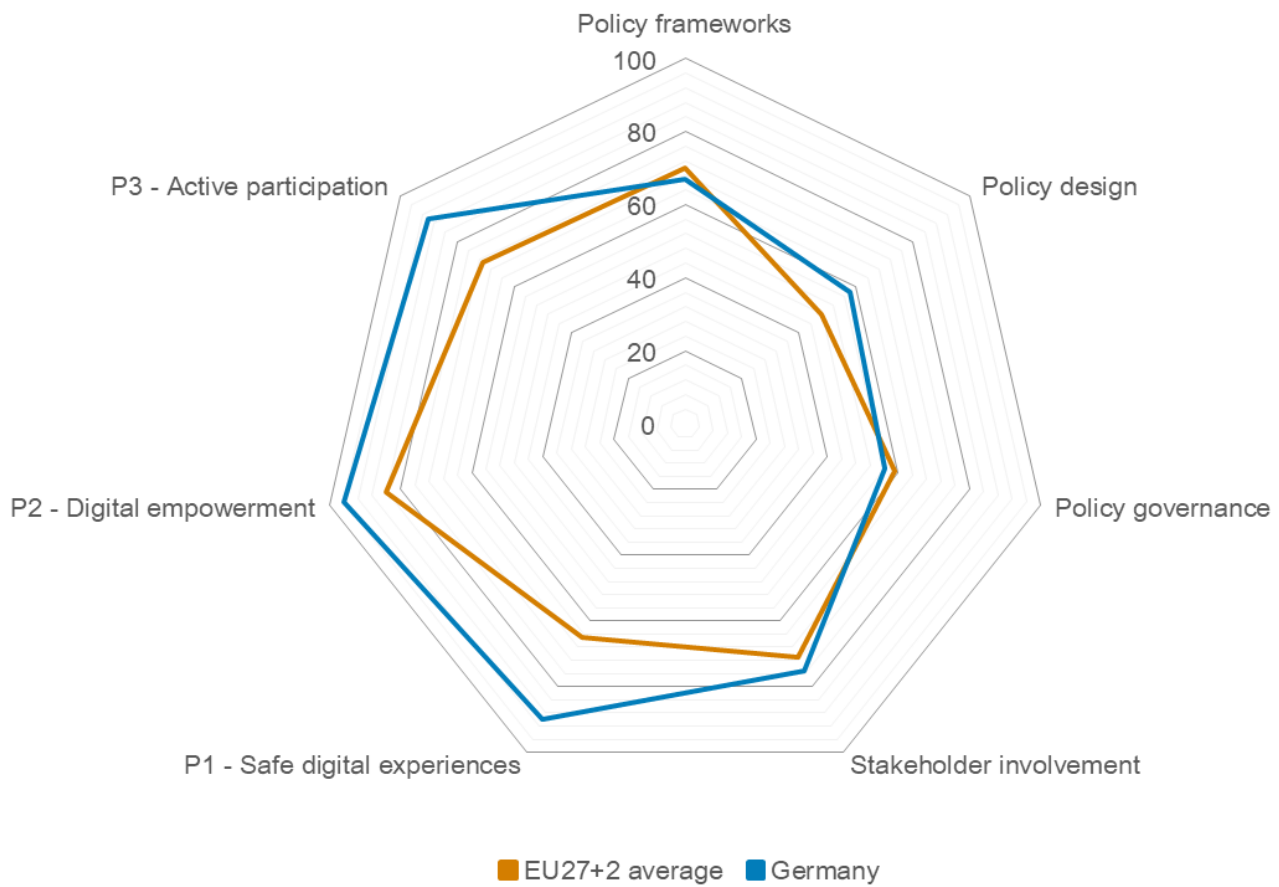


Figure 1: BIK+ index 2024: Germany - EU27+2 average comparison

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