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

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 **comprehensively addressed** with children's online protection, digital empowerment and digital participation incorporated into national/regional laws, regulations and policies.

- There are **separate, dedicated policies which address the topic of children and the digital environment** (protection, empowerment, and participation).

- The BIK/BIK+ strategy **is explicitly referenced in national policies** on children and the digital environment.

- National/regional policies and policy documents **explicitly recognise children's rights in the digital environment**.

	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 Digital Strategy for Cyprus 2020-2025 (adopted in June 2020) is the key policy document to accelerate Cyprus's digital transformation. The implementation of the Digital Strategy is coordinated by the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy (DMRID).

- The National Cybersecurity Strategy of Cyprus 2020. This document reviews the previous national strategy (2013) and focuses on seven areas identified as priorities in the Cypriot response to cyber threats.

- Digital Skills – Cyprus National Action Plan 2021-2025 - a comprehensive and comprehensive action plan to enhance digital skills, which is developed in three (3) main axes: upgrading the digital skills of the general population, enhancing the skills of the public and private workforce, with particular reference to ICT specialists, and developing expanded digital competence within the education system.

- The Strategy for a Better Internet for Kids in Cyprus (2018). This was developed in the framework of Action 14 of the Cybersecurity Strategy of the Republic of Cyprus and the cooperation of the members of the Working Group that dealt with the National Education/ Information Program specifically for children, teachers and parents. The Strategy was approved by the Council of

Ministers on December 19, 2017 (Decision date 12/19/17 and Decision No. 83.979).

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.

- Surveys of children's digital activities **are undertaken but only irregularly**.

- **Systems are in place at the government level** to gather information on children and the digital environment (e.g., dedicated research units, think tanks or commissions).

- **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:

- In Cyprus, quantitative data on some aspects of children's digital activity is collected regularly as part of broader surveys, which informs policymakers about the trends and patterns of children's online behaviour.

- One of the relevant surveys is the Cyprus Safer Internet Center's (SIC) research, which often includes elements focusing on children's digital activities, online behaviour and experiences. The Cyprus SIC conducts

research and collects data to better understand the online landscape and the challenges children face in the digital environment.

- Evaluation Report on Identifying Needs, Perspectives, and Experiences for Crafting a National Strategic Internet Policy – This report was compiled within the framework of formulating a national strategy in the Republic of Cyprus for enhancing Internet security and use among students, teachers, and parents. The strategy also encompasses assessing the requirements of various demographics, including teachers, parents, and children. A working group was established under the coordination of the Pedagogical Institute of the Ministry of Education and Culture and the General Coordination of the Office of the Electronics Regulatory Commissioner Communications and Posts (GERIET).

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.

- **There is one central body** (e.g., a central ministry office, public agency, or regulatory authority) formally mandated to lead and develop policies, guidelines, and programmes related to children and the digital environment.

- **A clearly defined coordination function is in place**, involving all relevant stakeholders and encompasses the cross-cutting policy issues relating to children and the digital environment.

- **There is a defined national action plan** for children and the digital environment with 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

An inter-ministerial committee has been formed in Cyprus to promote and monitor the National Strategy for a Better Internet for Kids. This committee comprises the Minister of Education and Culture, the Minister of Justice and Public Order, the Minister of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism, the Minister of Transport, Communications and Works, and the Commissioner of Electronic Communications and Postal Regulations.

A consortium with 37 stakeholder members was established to serve as the Advisory Board in supporting and advising on the European project: Cypriot Safer Internet Centre – CYberSafety and on promoting and implementing the National Strategy for a Better Internet for Kids in Cyprus.

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.

- **Children are listened to directly in the policy development process** (e.g., through hearings, consultations, specific surveys) but are not formally involved in decision-making.

- **Policymakers actively participate in various EU-level and other international inter-governmental groups** focused on 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

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 Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cyprus designated the Cyprus Radio Television Authority (CRTA) as the DSC in the Republic of Cyprus; the decision was taken on 2 February 2024 and published in the Official Gazette of the Republic on 1 March 2024. The CRTA issued a public announcement about its designation as the Cypriot DSC, noting that adopting the relevant legislative framework is still pending.

Addressing harmful online content:

- Cyprus has definitions of harmful online content included in its laws, regulations, or policies at the country level. These definitions encompass various categories of harmful online content, such as content promoting violence, hate speech, pornography, or content that poses risks to children's safety and well-being.

- The legal framework that governs the prevention and combating of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation of children, and child pornography is established in Law 91(I)/2014.

- The Helpline and Hotline 1480 offers a direct, easily accessible, and responsible point of contact for users to report illegal content or actions on the Internet.

Addressing harmful online conduct:

- In Cyprus, protection against intimate image abuse, also known as "revenge porn" and "non-consensual sharing of personal images," is covered by various laws and regulations related to privacy protection, data protection, and prevention of bullying.

- Relevant laws include:

  - Law 138(I)/2012: Prevention and Combating of Family Violence Law.

  - Law 144(I)/2007: Regulation of the Provision of Electronic Services Law.

  - Law 38(I)/2014: Protection of Children from Sexual Abuse and Exploitation and Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children in Pornography Law.

Age verification and digital identity systems:

- Digital identity systems available for minors are not currently available in Cyprus.

	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:

- Teaching online safety has been fully incorporated into the national/regional school curriculum.

- The topic New Technologies (Harnessing digital technologies for learning) is spread over 16 teaching periods in grade 5 and 16 teaching periods in grade 6 and includes 3 teaching units: i. Computational Thinking, ii. digital skills; and
  iii. Digital Literacy.

- In Cyprus, there are national strategies to support online safety policies in schools. These include a clear policy for cyberbullying incidents.

Informal education:

- In Cyprus, several national and regional activities reinforce informal education about online safety. These include public awareness campaigns, workshops and training programmes, online resources and guides, and partnerships and collaboration. The Cyprus Safer Internet Centre, operated by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute and other partners, is one of the main supporting bodies.

- The CYberSafety partners, including the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, Cyprus University of Technology, University of Cyprus, Digital Security Authority, Cyprus Telecommunication Authority, and Pancyprian School of Parents, offer a range of national activities to develop and promote peer-to-peer training and support programmes in online safety. These include workshops, conferences, seminars, trainings and experiential activities in summer camps.

Empowering through digital skills:

- As part of the European project CYberSafety IV, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute offers a variety of educational games, comics, and other materials to empower young people with digital skills.

- The Youth Coaches programme is an initiative that aims to empower children to take the lead in promoting online safety and digital awareness in their communities.

- The University of Cyprus (UCY) organised, prepared, and executed the eFollowMe digital footprint game competition for the school year 2023-2024.

- The game Happy Onlife was designed and developed by the Joint Research Centre of the European Union (as a tool to educate and inform, both children aged 8-12 years, as well as parents/guardians and teachers, to raise awareness on the creative use of digital media and the internet

- The University of Cyprus a game on data privacy. Specifically, the GDPR game includes basic questions and scenarios around GDPR and personal data protection issues. The game is based on real-life incidents and scenarios thus

offering realistic and applicable situations that provide guidance to parents. The game is accessible via the web without the need to install any add-ons.

	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:

- Children in Cyprus have opportunities to express their views and opinions on policies related to their digital activity through consultations or surveys. Their input is considered, but policymakers and relevant authorities typically make ultimate decisions.

- The Cyprus Youth Council supports young people with opportunities to participate in formal decision-making bodies at various levels of governance, including local councils, advisory committees, and national youth councils.

- The CYberSafety Youth Panel of Cyprus, which operates as part of the European project 'Cyprus Safer Internet Centre - CYberSafety – Better

Internet for Kids', aims to enable knowledge and experience sharing among participants, make suggestions and take actions regarding the creative and safe use of digital technologies and the internet.

● The CYberSafety Youth Panel Cyprus team for 2023-2024 was composed of 40 members of the Cyprus Children's Parliament, members of the Teenage Advisers' Group of the Commissioner for Children's Rights, and students from the Young Coaches for the Internet programme. The Children's Parliament consults children on BIK policy issues and activities. However, there are no specific arrangements for children to participate in the design of BIK policies.

Inclusivity:

• Cyprus doesn't have specific laws mandating youth participation in decision-making bodies at the national or regional level. However, efforts to involve young people in decision-making processes have been growing globally, including in Cyprus. efforts to promote better awareness of children's rights in relation to the digital environment have been ongoing.

Digital creativity:

• The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth) implements, several actions aiming to contribute to the development of digital skills for in-service teachers and students. These include the Innovative Schools and Educational Coaches programme, the Young Coaches for the Internet programme, eSafe Schools, and Recording Memory.

• A CyberSafety Video Production Contest aims to build knowledge and shape attitudes regarding the responsible, creative and safe use of the Internet through creative production.

	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: Cyprus

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 Cyprus compared to the EU27+2 average. Values are shown in per cent.
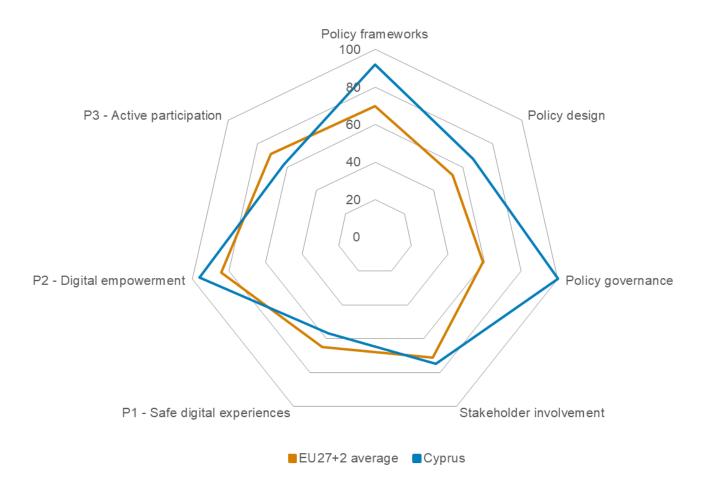

Figure 1: BIK+ index 2024: Cyprus - EU27+2 average comparison

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