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

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**, with children's online protection, digital empowerment, and digital participation partially covered in national/regional laws, regulations and policies.

- It is **covered by broader policies rather than separate dedicated policies** that address the protection, empowerment, and participation of children and the digital environment.

- The BIK/BIK+ strategy **is not explicitly referred to in national policies** but has informed policy development on children and the digital environment.

- National/regional policies and policy documents **explicitly recognise to 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:

- Finnish Media Education Policy (2019)

- National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (2014)

- National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) (2022)

- Finnish Digital Compass (2023)

- Target state of digitalisation in early childhood education and care, pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education (2023)

- Child Strategy by the Ombudsman for Children (2021)

## 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.

- Quantitative data on some aspects of children's digital activity **is collected regularly as part of broader surveys**.

- There are **various systems in place to inform policy development.**

- There are **several actors and research projects** aimed at studying children and covering media use and digital environments.

- **There is no systematic monitoring or evaluation of policies** on children and the digital environment.

|  | 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:*

- The National Agency for Education collects data in its Oppika survey that maps students' information and communication technology skills and ways of using technology.

- The Ombudsman for Children releases a bi-annual Child Barometer, and the Finnish Youth Work Society publishes Youth Barometer as well as independent children and media-related studies. The government funds both organisations.

## 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 lead with specific assigned responsibility** for developing government policies, guidelines, and programmes related to children and the digital environment.

- **Responsibility is shared between several national actors**; no single body is responsible for overall coordination.

- **One or more programmes of action are underway to support children's online safety and participation in the digital environment.** However, these lack accountability mechanisms 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*

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for policy development and funding related to early childhood education, schools, higher education, research, youth work, and culture (incl. media literacy). Subordinate agencies include:

- The National Agency for Education is responsible for normative curricula and teaching development,

- The National Audiovisual Institute is responsible for promoting media education, children's media skills, and the development of a safer media environment. It also coordinates the Finnish Safer Internet Centre (SIC).

- The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is in charge of the planning, guidance and implementation of health and social policy (e.g. preventing violence against children).

- The Ministry of Justice maintains and develops legal order and legal protection and oversees the structures of democracy and the fundamental rights of citizens (e.g. hate speech prevention). In addition, the ministry funds the Ombudsman for Children.

- The Ministry of the Interior prepares legislation concerning the police. Its subordinate agencies include The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), which deals with child sexual abuse material (CSAM) notice and take-down.

- The Finnish Competition and Consumer Authority (FCCA), subordinate to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (MEAE), is responsible for consumer protection.

The National Audiovisual Institute KAVI promotes media education, children's media skills and a safer media environment for children in accordance with its statutory mission. KAVI reports to the Ministry of Education and Culture and coordinates Finland's Safer Internet Centre (SIC). However, KAVI's mandate does not cover all policies, guidelines, and regulations related to children and digital environments. Nevertheless, responsibility is shared between several national actors, and no single body is responsible for overall coordination.

The aim of the Non-Violent Childhoods Action Plan 2020–2025 by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is to prevent violence against children aged 0–17 in different growth and operating environments. This also includes digital environments.

## 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.

- **There are various multi-stakeholder groups** 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.

- **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 Finnish Child Advisory Board supports the Ombudsman. The government appoints the Child Advisory Board to promote children's positions and rights and cooperation between authorities related to them. The Ombudsman for Children chairs the Child Advisory Board. Among other things, different administrative branches, the regional and local level, and organisations are represented in the Child Advisory Board.

The consultation and participation of children and young people are regulated, in particular, by legislation that applies to them (e.g., the Youth Act, Child Protection Act, Basic Education Act, Early Childhood Education Act). Furthermore, all citizens can give their statements on proposals that are presented in public. A dedicated portal has been developed for this purpose.

# 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:*

- In Finland, the supervision of compliance with the Digital Services Act (DSA) has been split between Traficom, the Office of the Data Protection Ombudsman and the Consumer Ombudsman. The Data Protection

Ombudsman supervises the identifiability of ideological and societal advertising, the transparency of online advertising and recommender systems, and the protection of minors on online platforms. Articles 26–28 of the DSA provide these online platform providers' obligations.

*Addressing harmful online content:*

- The Criminal Code of Finland addresses solicitation of a child for sexual purposes, sexual abuse of a child and distribution of sexually offensive pictures (including CSAM). The law has been renewed and entered into force on the 1st of January, 2023.

- Finland has ratified The Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (16.9.2011) and developed the national implementation plan Lanzaroten sopimus: Kansallinen toimeenpanosuunnitelma vuosille 2022– 2025. The implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Finnish Treaty Series 53/2015) is also relevant.

- The Finnish Hotline Nettivihje, run by Save the Children Finland, is an NGO-based hotline service where anyone can make a report if they suspect they have come across material or activity related to sexual violence against children online.

*Addressing harmful online conduct:*

- The Finnish Criminal code contains a description of non-consensual dissemination of a sexual image which describes that an image, video or any other visual recording must not be shown or disseminated in such a way that it significantly violates another person's right to sexual self-determination. The act is a criminal offence regardless of whether the image was taken with the consent of the person who appears in it. If a sexual image is taken without the consent of the person who appears in it, the act may be punishable, for example, as sexual assault or harassment.

- Regarding cyberbullying, the Pupil and Student Welfare Act lays down provisions on the right to student welfare of pupils in education referred to in the Basic Education Act (628/1998) and students in education referred to in the Upper Secondary School Act (629/1998) and the Act on Vocational Education and Training (630/1998). It promotes the well-being, healthiness and safety of the educational institution community and study environment.

- The Finnish Agency for Education has guidelines for preventing bullying and harassment: Anti-bullying work in schools and educational institutions and Prevention of bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence. The National Development Programme for Youth Work and Youth Policy 2020-2023 also discusses youth empowerment and participation, as well as preventing bullying and grooming.

*Age verification and digital identity systems:*
- There are at least two laws concerning age assurance and online content: the Lotteries Act regulates the age limits of lotteries and gambling. Gambling is prohibited from minors (under 18) and a person needs to verify their age before using the services, as well offline and online.

- The Act on Audiovisual Programmes (710/2011) regulates the classification of audiovisual programmes. According to the Act, it is prohibited to provide an audiovisual programme that has an age limit of 18 to minors. A streaming service owned by the Finnish National Broadcasting Company does not have permission to offer audiovisual content with an age rating of 18.

| | 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:

- National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (22.12.2014); Pre-Primary Education (22.12.2014); Early Childhood Education (1.8.2022); General Upper Secondary Education (1.8.2021) and common units for Basic Vocational Education Curricula (1.8.2018) all include media literacy (incl. online safety) and are mandatory for education providers. English versions of the curricula are available from the National Agency for Education. In addition, a description of the target state of digital transformation in early childhood education and care, as well as pre-primary, primary, and lower secondary education, will be completed in autumn 2023.

- Media literacy (including online safety) is integrated into school curricula in all formal education levels. According to a 2017 study (conducted by KAVI) at least some media education (incl. online safety) content should be included in all teacher training curricula. However, the role of media education in teacher education courses varied widely between universities and fields of education.

- Between 2020 and 2023, the Ministry of Education and Culture funded the programme "Uudet lukutaidot" ("New Literacies"), which aimed to develop the skills of teachers in digital competencies. The programme developed descriptions of competence for media literacy, digital competences, and programming skills to enhance the quality and equality of teaching. Additionally, stakeholders, including the National Agency for Education and National Audiovisual Institute, offer in-service training for teachers at national and regional levels.

- The Ministry of Education and Culture's Media Literacy Policy in Finland aims to promote media literacy nationally and includes formal education. Regional authorities and school districts may have their own school policies or guidelines.

### Informal education:

- The National Development Programme for Youth Work and Youth Policy 2020-2023 discusses youth empowerment and participation as well as preventing bullying and grooming, while the Ministry of Education and Culture's Media Literacy Policy in Finland (16 December 2019) aims to promote media literacy nationally and includes also informal education. National Media Literacy Week (includes Safer Internet Day) has several partner organisations from the informal education sector that promote media literacy and online safety for their audiences.

### Empowering through digital skills:

- The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare has a peer student programme with around 11,000 peer support students reaching almost all schools in Finland. Online safety issues are included in the Peer student scheme.

- The Finnish Association for the Welfare of Older Adults and its SeniorSurf service is offering services and toolkits for peer-to-peer learning in digital environments.

| | 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:*

- The Centre of Expertise for Participation (Osallisuuden osaamiskeskus) promotes overall participation and youth engagement at the national level.

- The Ministry of Education and Culture's Media Literacy Policy in Finland aims to promote active participation of children and young people; The Mannerheim League for Child welfare also has active youth participation work directly promoting the BIK+ principles.

- The consultation and participation of children and young people is regulated in particular by legislation that applies to them (e.g. the Youth Act, Child

Protection Act, Basic Education Act, Early Childhood Education Act). In addition, the Municipalities Act obliges municipalities to set up a youth council and ensure that it operates properly.

- The Finnish SIC undertakes awareness-raising work on children's rights in digital environments, especially youth participation work. In addition, the Centre of Expertise for Participation and the Centre of Expertise for Digital Youth Work are also active in promoting awareness of digital rights.

### *Inclusivity:*

- The Media Literacy Policy in Finland aims to ensure that media literacy is comprehensive in terms of content, perspectives, target groups, and geographic distribution; KAVI has published instructional principles towards more inclusive media literacy. By implementing the BIK+ strategy, the Finnish SIC will promote media literacy and online safety of children in vulnerable positions. In addition, different actors and organisations have their own policies and rules to ensure inclusiveness.

### *Digital creativity:*

- The National Broadcasting Company YLE has a media literacy project, Uutisluokka ("News class"), and a journalistic branch, YLE Mix, that produces news for child audiences. YLE children's programs have offered content on online safety and media literacy. The largest daily newspaper in Finland, Helsingin Sanomat, also offers children's news (Lasten uutiset) every Friday as a video format and as online articles.

- Media literacy week is the main activity to promote both safe and creative use of media and digital technologies. Safer Internet Day is celebrated in Finland as Media Literacy Week. The aim of Media Literacy Week is to advance the media literacy skills of children and young people, as well as to support professional educators, guardians and other adults in their important media educational tasks.

| | 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*

# Best practices

## Example 1

Media Literacy Week (MLW) is a national awareness-raising campaign for media literacy and media education. The week is coordinated by the National Audiovisual Institute and is held in collaboration with around 60 to 70 partner organisations. Teachers and other professionals participate during the week. In 2024, it was the 12th MLW.

## Example 2

The Mannerheim League for Child Welfares YouthNet (YN) website and its social media channels provide a platform for online youth participation activities. In YN, young people can find awareness of information and tools, express their views and productions publicly, reach the Helpline services, and share peer support concerning their use of online technologies. The platform is utilised to get a youth perspective for awareness raising.

**Example 3**

The Finnish SIC's hotline main website is operated by Save the Children Finland. The Nettivihje website links to information and materials on how to protect children from sexual abuse and on safety skills. The website has sub-pages for professionals working with children, children and their caretakers, and general internet users. Furthermore, www.nettivihje.fi/ilmoita is a reporting website for internet users to report child sexual abuse material (CSAM), grooming of children for sexual purposes online, if a child's nude image is being spread online, and child trafficking related to sexual abuse. The hotline also has a reporting website designed specifically to encourage and alleviate the reporting of young people.

# BIK+ index 2024: Finland

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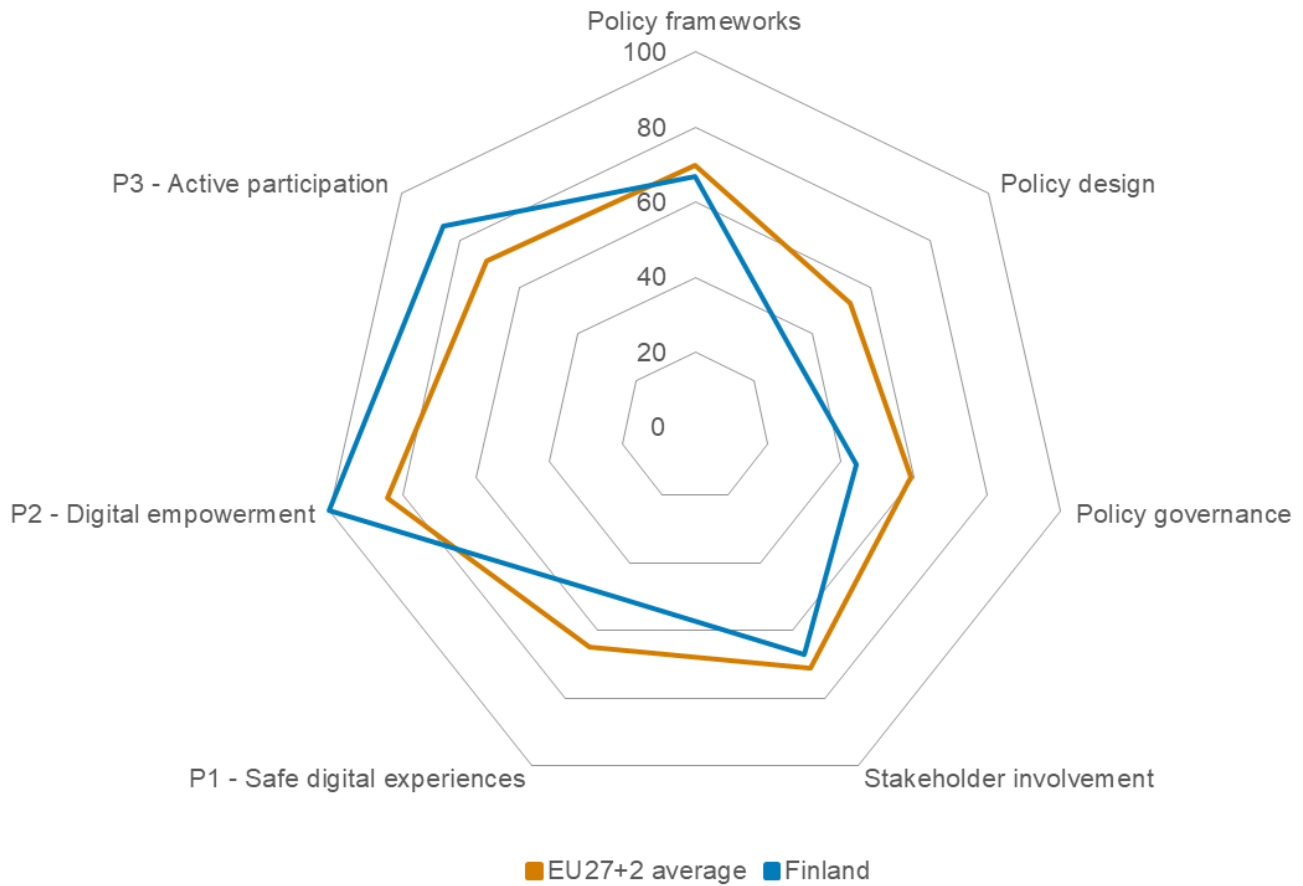


*Figure 1: BIK+ index 2024: Finland - EU27+2 average comparison*

www.betterinternetforkids.eu

@Insafenetwork
@safeinternetday

facebook.com/saferinternet
facebook.com/SaferInternetDay

linkedin.com/company/better-internet-for-kids

youtube.com/@BetterInternetforKids

info@betterinternetforkids.eu

Better Internet for Kids