

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

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.
- There are **separate, dedicated policies that address children and the digital environment** (protection, empowerment, and participation).
- 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 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 National Programme for Children in the Digital Environment 2024-2026 is currently being drafted. This programme will address all measures of protection, empowerment, and participation of children in the digital environment, following the BIK+ strategy. Children's recommendations will also be included in the programme. (Digital Croatia Strategy for the period until 2032)

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** (e.g., the EU Kids Online survey data from 2020 is the only available source on a national level).
- There is **no system in place at the government level** to gather information on children and the digital environment.
- There is **little or no funding available for research on children and the digital environment.**
- 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:

- EU Kids Online in Croatia is the latest available study. It is available on the [national website - hrkids.online](http://hrkids.online).
- When developing the National Programme for Children in the Digital Environment 2024-2026, the [Central State Office for Demography and Youth](#) was designated as the government body to coordinate the drafting of the document. The office collected information on children in the digital environment that formed the basis for the drafting of the document. Once in place, this programme is envisaged to allocate dedicated research funds in this field.
- Within the scope of its legal powers, the [Ombudsperson for Children](#) monitors child protection in the digital environment.

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.

- **There is no coordination mechanism in place:** policies, guidelines and programmes relating to children and the digital environment tend to be implemented independently.

	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 **Central State Office for Demography and Youth** coordinates the development of the National Programme for Children in the Digital Environment for 2024-2026. A working group of key stakeholders was established to develop the National Programme. It is composed of stakeholders from relevant state bodies, academia, the civil sector, information exchange agencies and jointly agree on measures

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 is a designated multi-stakeholder forum in place** which facilitates the involvement of all relevant stakeholder groups.
- **A system has yet to be established whereby members of the public are routinely consulted** when developing new policies.
- **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 related to digital policies for children.

	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

A public consultation is foreseen when drafting the Republic of Croatia's regulations and sending them to Parliament for voting. This consultation will also be for the National Programme, during which the public will be able to submit their proposals, opinions, and comments.

The [Ombudsperson for Children](#) strongly supports the participation and inclusion of children in the creation and drafting of regulations, policies and practices and has its advisory body - a network of young counsellors that consists of 20 children aged 12 to 17 years, who are consulted before sending recommendations and proposals of laws and programmes. The network of young advisors is also involved in developing the National Programme for Children in the Digital Environment for 2024-2026.

BIK+ actions

Pillar 1 – safe digital experiences

Safe digital experiences refers 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 final draft legislation for the implementation of the [Digital Services Act \(DSA\)](#) has been prepared by the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development and is about to enter parliamentary procedure.

- The Croatian Implementation Act, among other provisions, designates the [Croatian Regulatory Authority for Network Industries \(HAKOM\)](#) as the Digital Services Coordinator. Furthermore, the Implementation Act outlines the coordination among Croatian regulatory bodies for the enforcement and supervision of the DSA.

Addressing harmful online content:

- The definition of 'harmful online content' does not exist as a definition in Croatian laws. However, the essence of harmful online content is contained in various country-level laws and regulations, which may penalise wrongdoing.
- The online reporting mechanism for child abuse—[Red Button](#)—is an official police application and website that allows the reporting of any form of abuse or inappropriate content online ("If you see inappropriate content or abuse of another person, report it immediately").
- The [Safer Internet Centre \(SIC\) Croatia](#) Online operates a [hotline](#) for reporting child abuse material and other illegal content.
- CARNET has the service of a [content filtering system](#) that disables the display of certain category websites on some or all computers in a CARNET member institution. Each page on the Internet is categorised with respect to the content it offers, and traffic is filtered by choosing categories that are not to be displayed. Pages are continually categorised, and new versions of the database are automatically checked every few hours. At the request of CARNET users, specific pages can also be manually approved or prohibited. Based on the Decision of the Ministry of Science and Education, all primary and high schools in Croatia connected to the CARNET network are automatically included in the filtering system.

Addressing harmful online conduct:

- National/regional laws, regulations or policies in place to protect children and young people from intimate image abuse are covered under the Criminal Code, Article 144a "Misuse of a recording of sexually explicit content" (Chapter Fourteen (XIV) - Criminal offenses against privacy). The Criminal

Code, Chapter Seventeen (XVII.) – separately defines the criminal acts of sexual abuse and exploitation of children, which also include the aforementioned forms of sharing or misuse of intimate photos of children.

- Regarding cyberbullying, there is a Protocol on the treatment of violence among children, which includes cyberbullying, under which all employees of educational institutions are obliged to report violence to the competent services and take measures of protection in relation to the child.
- The [SIC Croatia](#) has developed [guidelines](#) for handling cases of electronic violence, noting that this is not a public policy measure but rather a manual developed by an NGO to support educational staff.

Age verification and digital identity systems:

- Currently, there are no legal regulations that include age verification mechanisms. Internet service providers, as standard on their sites and services, ask for confirmation of the user's age.
- According to the law on Identity Cards "All Croatian citizens have the right to a Croatian electronic identity card, regardless of their age and regardless of whether or not they have a residence in the Republic of Croatia." The [AAI @EduHr](#) system is an authentication and authorisation system of science and higher education in the Republic of Croatia in which every member of the academic and research community in the Republic of Croatia receives his [AAI @EduHr](#) electronic identity, i.e., user tag and password, so students of primary and secondary schools and students of higher education institutions.

	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:

- In 2019, the Ministry of Science and Education issued a [decision](#) to adopt a curriculum for the cross-curricular topic of the use of information and communication technology for primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Croatia.
- CARNET and National CERT provide their expertise to teachers in cooperation with the [Agency for Education](#) and two times a year give different lectures on topics of cyber security in education for primary and secondary curricula.
- CARNET has also organised a [CTF \(Capture the Flag\)](#) competition in knowledge and skills in cyber security since 2000. This competition is open to

all high school teams. Also, for the continuous learning on cyber security topics, CARNET has developed and is maintaining the learning platform

- Croatia is one of 15 countries that participated in this major project, which, in addition to research, will include a new edition of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), an Online school games course for teachers and instructors, and a new edition of the teacher's manual on the possibilities of using video games in the classroom.

Informal education:

- The [Croatian SIC](#), in cooperation with the Faculty of Law in Zagreb, has launched a lifelong education programme titled “benefits and risks of modern technologies.” This year, the programme is expanding to professionals working with older people, who are a particularly vulnerable category when it comes to cybercrime.
- Furthermore, with the support of A1 Croatia, the [Croatian SIC](#) has launched a school of responsible influencers. The aim of this online school is to raise influencers' and content creators' awareness of the importance of responsible behaviour in the online world, the importance of recognising and reporting inappropriate content on the Internet and how to report it, and the importance of creating positive online content and positive influence.

Empowering through digital skills:

- The [BrAIn project](#) is developing a curriculum for seventh and eighth graders in primary school and second and third graders in secondary school. The curriculum will include extracurricular activities and an optional course focused on enhancing students' digital competencies, particularly in the context of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence. The activities will involve critical reflection on the impact of emerging technologies and practical application in digital programs and applications, with a focus on cyber security and ethical considerations.
- CARNET's [e-universities project](#) develops digital competencies for implementing hybrid teaching and digital technologies in higher education.

The project will create educational content such as e-courses, videos, webinars, and lectures for use in educational activities at higher education institutions.

	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 Network of Young Advisers of the [Ombudsperson for Children \(MMS\)](#) is a constant advisory and cooperation body that brings together children and young people from all over Croatia. MMS consists of 25 members, children and young people aged twelve to 18 years. The Ombudsperson for children makes a public call and publishes a competition for MMS members to which every child at least twelve years of age can apply. Their choice is decided by the current MMS members and the Ombudsperson's Office for Children expert team. During the selection of MMS members, children from all parts of

Croatia and from various living conditions and situations are represented. MMS members are elected as individuals, not as representatives or representatives of their school, city or county. Membership of the Network (term of office) shall be three years. Members of the Network of Young Counsellors also actively participate in the European Network of Young Counsellors (ENYA).

- As part of its activities, the Ombudsperson for Children raises awareness about and promotes [children's rights in the digital environment](#) among children, educators and other professionals who take care of children in the media through various professional gatherings, round tables and meetings with children and experts. Each year, Safer Internet Day is celebrated by a large number of children, educators, and other important stakeholders promoting children's rights in the digital environment.
- The [Croatian Data Protection Authority](#) actively organises educational initiatives, specifically workshops, focusing on online safety and safeguarding personal data within the digital realm. These workshops are tailored for children aged ten to 14 years. Additionally, the Croatian Personal Data Protection Agency organises educational activities aimed at teachers and school employees to teach them how to comply with processing personal data with the General Data Protection Regulation. These sessions place a particular emphasis on underscoring the significance of safeguarding children's data in both the physical and virtual spheres.

Inclusivity:

- [ATTEND – Bridging Gaps for Pupils with Disabilities](#). The Enhanced Tools for Creating Equal Opportunities in Education for Pupils with Disabilities – ATTEND project addresses the unique needs of students with disabilities in Croatia. By equipping Centres for the upbringing and education of students with disabilities with assistive technology, ATTEND aims to provide a high-quality and inclusive education. The project, worth 4.2 million Euro, spans three years (2021-2024) and encompasses key segments such as technology deployment, staff training, and a public awareness campaign.

	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

The [Safer Internet Centre Croatia](#), with the support of its long-term partner [A1 Croatia](#) (a telecommunications company), launched the [School of Responsible Influencing](#) (Croatian “Škola odgovornog influensanja”).

The purpose of this online school is to make influencers and content creators aware of the importance of responsible behaviour in the online world, raise awareness of the importance of recognizing and reporting inappropriate content on the Internet and how to report it, and recognise the importance of creating positive online content and creating a positive impact.

It is intended for influencers and content creators who are followed by children and young people, but also for all those who are willing to hear and learn something new, be part of change, and [#odgovornoginfluensanja](#) (Engl. [#responsibleinfluencing](#)).

The School of Responsible Influencing is a digital platform through which registered users will have the opportunity to listen to six educational modules on the topic of Internet security. Each module is followed by a knowledge check consisting of five to ten questions related to the module listened to.

After the participants have listened to all six modules and successfully solved the knowledge tests, they will receive a Certificate of Responsible Influencing from the Safer Internet Centre Croatia.

Example 2

The main purpose of the [HAKOM Privacy Calculator](#) is to inform the end users of the Internet access service about the possible dangers that can be caused by providing personal data on the Internet. It is usual that in most situations registration is required, during which the user must submit his personal data, most often e-mail address, first and last name. Through the privacy calculator application, we can educate ourselves and encourage thinking about security and privacy issues on the Internet.

BIK+ index 2024: Croatia

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

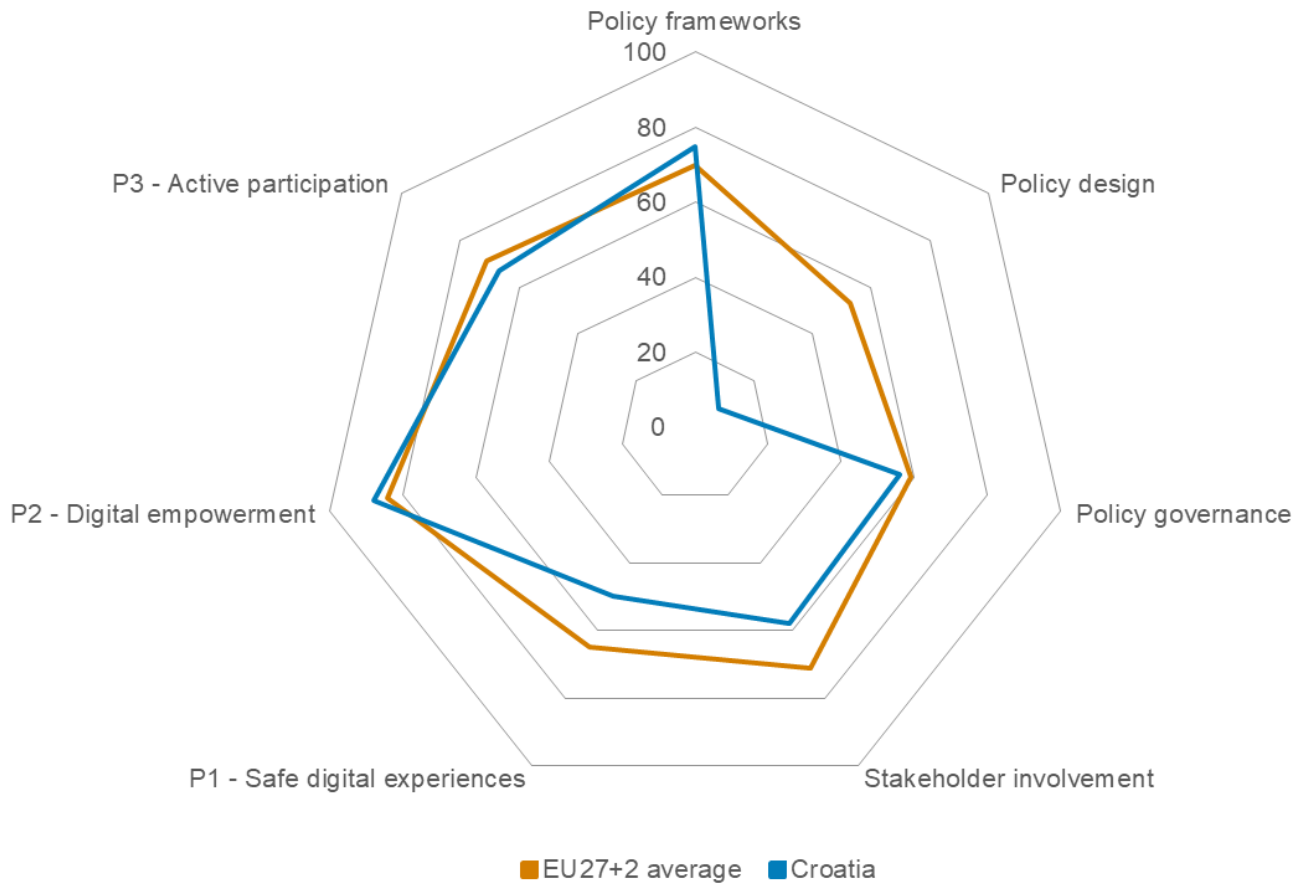


Figure 1: BIK+ index 2024: Croatia - EU27+2 average comparison

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