

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

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**.
- 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 explicitly recognised** in national policy documents.

	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:

- **Harnessing Digital:** The Digital Ireland Framework is the overarching national digital strategy to drive and enable the digital transition across the Irish economy and society.
- **Young Ireland: the National Policy Framework for Children & Young People 2023-2028** identifies the digital environment as a priority area among current issues impacting children and young people. It also highlights digital mental health and well-being.

Regarding the three BIK Pillars, the following are especially relevant:

- **Pillar 1:** The **Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022** establishes **Coimisiún na Meán** as an independent regulator for broadcasting, video-on-demand and online safety.
- **Pillar 2:** **Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027** aims to further support the school system and ensure that all learners have the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills they need to navigate an ever-evolving digital world successfully.
- **Pillar 3:** The **National Framework for Children and Young People’s Participation in Decision-Making** supports departments, agencies, and organisations in improving their participation practices with children and young people.

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 are monitored and evaluated but not systematically**. It depends on the needs at a particular time or when policies are being considered.

f	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:

- Report of a National Survey of Children, their Parents and Adults regarding Online Safety (2021)
- Growing Up in Ireland is the national longitudinal study of children and young people and provides insights into their development, including their digital lives.
- A range of systems are in place at government level to inform policy development. These include research functions within government departments and the relevant regulatory agencies including Coimisiún na

Meán and the Irish Data Protection Commission. As the newly established regulator with responsibility for online safety, Coimisiún na Meán incorporates a research function through which it will systematically gather evidence to support its work.

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 on 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

There is a well-structured system of governance in place regarding policies on children and the digital environment. The parent department at governmental level for implementation of the OSMR Act is the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media which oversees the development of national policy in this area, including broadcasting and media policy more general. Responsibility for implementation of the Digital Services Act is lies with the Department of Enterprise,

Trade and Employment while the Department of Justice oversees implementation of legislation deal with sexual offences against children and related EU policies on child online protection.

Coimisiún na Meán is Ireland's new independent online safety and media regulator, established under the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022 and is responsible for the regulation of broadcasting, video-on-demand and online safety and has a role in supporting media development. **Coimisiún na Meán** is the primary agency responsible for enforcing a new regulatory framework for online safety and for the regulation of broadcast media and video on-demand services.

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.

- While there is currently no single, overarching formal forum dedicated solely to this purpose, **Ireland has had several mechanisms to foster stakeholder collaboration** on policy concerning children and the digital environment.
- **Members of the public are regularly and routinely** consulted as part of the policy development process.
- **Children are actively involved in the design of policies** related to their participation in the digital environment. There are specially designed structures in place for this purpose.
- **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

Stakeholder involvement in children's online safety policy is currently in transition with the establishment of [Coimisiún na Meán](#). Coimisiún na Meán's inaugural [Work Programme](#) prioritises establishing advisory committees. This includes the [Youth Advisory Committee](#), which was established in 2023. Two meetings of this Committee have taken place to date, in December 2023 and January 2024. The Committee, comprises representatives of 9 organisations representing children and young people and 9 individual young people under 25. Coimisiún na Meán has consulted the Committee about its draft Online Safety Code. Section 19 of the OSMR outlines the creation of additional stakeholder advisory committees as envisioned in the Work Programme.

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:

- Ireland has passed the [Digital Services Act 2024](#) to provide for the implementation of the EU’s [Digital Services Act \(DSA\)](#).
- Ireland has also published a draft [Online Safety Code](#) to implement Article 28b of the EU [Audiovisual Media Services Directive 2018](#).

- Codes and regulations regarding commercial content labelling in Ireland fall into a mix of both statutory and non-statutory instruments with policies relating to online commercial content in the online worlds tend to be incorporated within broader policies that address commercial content in general.

Addressing harmful online content:

- Ireland's [Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022 \(OSMR\)](#), in addition to existing online offenses, classifies the following types of harmful online content:
 - content involving the promotion of self-harm and suicide;
 - cyberbullying or cyber-humiliation of another person; or
 - content involving the promotion of eating disorders.
- Under the OSMR, the media regulator, [Coimisiún na Meán](#), is empowered to investigate and issue notices requiring online platforms to take down specifically defined harmful content.
- Processes by which a child may complain to an administrative body about harmful online content are [currently in development](#).

Addressing harmful online conduct:

- Ireland was one of the first countries in the EU to outlaw intimate image abuse. The [Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act 2020 \(Coco's Law\)](#) provides for offences related to the non-consensual distribution of intimate images.
- Ireland also has several laws and policies in place to protect children and young people against cyberbullying. The [Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying](#) provides a roadmap for how the whole education community and society can work together to prevent and address bullying in schools.

Age verification and digital identity systems:

- There is no single policy on the use of age verification mechanisms for children’s online safety
 - Ireland's data protection authority, the Data Protection Commission (DPC), has published [Fundamentals for a Child-Oriented Approach to Data Processing](#) which includes broad principles regarding age verification.
 - Coimisiún na Meán’s draft [Online Safety Code](#) requires video-sharing service providers to establish and operate age verification systems with respect to content which may impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors. The code states that an age assurance measure based solely on self-declaration of age by users of the service is not an effective measure.
- There are currently no government-backed digital identity systems specifically designed for minors.

	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:

- Online safety is fully incorporated into the national school curriculum in Ireland at multiple levels, most specifically through the [Social, Personal and Health Education \(SPHE\)](#) curriculum.
- There are several national-level frameworks that support online safety in Irish schools, including [Oide.ie](#), the support service for teachers and school leaders.
- This also includes [Webwise.ie](#), the Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre funded by the Department of Education and co-funded by the European Commission.

Informal education:

Currently, there is no one single initiative to reinforce informal education about online safety.

- A public awareness campaign took place under the [Action Plan For Online Safety 2018-2019](#), centring on the [Be Safe Online](#) portal for online safety resources.
- [Coimisiún na Meán](#) also has a statutory role under the OSMR Act in carrying out, supporting and endorsing educational initiatives regarding online safety.
- [Media Literacy Ireland](#), a multistakeholder initiative operating under [Coimisiún na Meán](#), has an ongoing, wide-ranging public awareness campaign called Be Media Smart, which calls attention particularly to the risks of online disinformation.
- [Webwise.ie](#), the national online safety awareness node, makes available materials on online safety for parents and the general population. The National Parents Council (Primary) is also a member of [Ireland's Safer](#)

Internet Centre and contributes a range of awareness activities on online safety for parents.

- Voluntary youth organisations like Foróige also contribute to online safety education and awareness raising through programmes such as the [Connect Safely Programme](#), funded by the Department of Children, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Empowering through digital skills:

- Digital literacy skills training in the curriculum is in development and evolving rather than well-embedded. The Eurydice Report [Digital Education at School in Europe](#) (2019) found shortcomings in technical support and specific approaches to digital competence development.
- A 2022 Educational Research Centre (ERC) report, [Digital Technologies in Education: Ireland in International Context](#) found that Ireland was “substantially” below the EU and OECD averages on measures of student digital technology use for learning – both inside and outside the school, in part attributed to the lack of technical and training supports for teachers and for schools.
- At a policy level, the [Digital Strategy for Schools 2021-2027](#) champions embedding digital competencies across all levels - not just specific technology or computer-based classes. The strategy aims for every school to have a Digital Learning Plan focusing on skills and infrastructure.
- The 2023 edition of the [Media Pluralism Monitor](#) found high levels of media literacy availability, classifying Ireland as “low risk” under this heading.
- Ireland has several established peer-to-peer initiatives focused on developing online safety education, training, and support.

	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:

Various national/regional activities promote active participation, youth civic engagement and advocacy

- [Comhairle na nÓg](#), the national government initiative promoting child and youth councils in the 31 local authorities of the country, gives children and young people the opportunity to be involved in the development of local services and policies and bring issues forward of importance to them.
- The [Webwise Youth Advisory Panel](#) involves young people contributing ideas and insights on online safety issues. Through its [Ambassador Programme](#), Webwise trains secondary school students in Safer Internet Day-related topics, building their capacity to lead workshops and awareness activities for

younger students and even their own schools, fostering leadership and promotes a proactive approach to online safety.

- [ISSU](#), the union of students in secondary schools in Ireland, has initiatives to encourage the formation of student groups specifically focused on online safety and wellbeing, anti-cyberbullying campaigns, and positive uses of technology as "Digital Leaders".
- The [National Youth Council of Ireland \(NYCI\)](#) make extensive use of digital technologies for youth work and encouraging positive uses of online media. NYCI has been a leading member of [Screenagers](#), a collaborative international research project focussing on the use of ICT, digital and social media in youth work. Training and support for youth leaders are important areas of focus in each of these initiatives.

Inclusivity:

- The [National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making](#) (2021) was developed to supports departments, agencies and organisations to improve their practice in listening to children and young people and giving them a voice in decision-making. It is based on the [Lundy child rights model of participation](#) which provides guidance for decision-makers on the steps to take in giving children and young people a meaningful voice in decision-making.
- [Young Ireland: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028](#) aims to create an enabling environment to ensure that children and young people (and issues identified by them) are a central part of everyone's agenda.
- The framework also includes as an action to "Publish child-friendly versions of policies and strategies which are relevant to children and young people, for various age groups" (DCEIDY 14.4).

Digital creativity:

- There is no specific national strategy on stimulating the production and visibility of positive digital content for children.

- However, there are several awards schemes and competitions supporting media and digital content for and created by young people. These include the [FÍS Film Project](#) and the [Fresh Film Festival](#).
- School-based resources such as [HTML Heroes](#) foster safe, creative uses of digital technologies for younger children.
- [CoderDojo](#), the computer science workshop for kids, has been a notable feature of the national scene. It comprises a widespread network of volunteer-led clubs where children learn coding basics, but guided to make their own games, websites, etc.

	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: Ireland

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



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

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