

Better Internet for Kids (BIK) Policy monitor country profile 2025: BELGIUM

The [BIK Policy monitor country profiles](#) summarise findings about the implementation of the BIK+ strategy's three pillars (protection, empowerment, participation) across each of the EU's Member States as well as Iceland and Norway. Download the full [BIK Policy monitor report 2025](#) from the [BIK Policy monitor](#) on the new [BIK Knowledge hub](#) and access the [Belgian country profile online](#) on the BIK Knowledge hub.

Introduction

In April 2024, Belgium designated four competent authorities to monitor the enforcement of the DSA. The [Belgian Institute for Postal Services and Telecommunications](#) (BIPT) serves as the national coordinator at the federal level, while the [Flemish Regulator for the Media](#) (VRM), the [Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel](#) (CSA), and the [Medienrat](#) oversee compliance in their respective communities. In 2024 also, the City of Brussels developed a [Digital Rights Charter](#) addressing challenges of digitizing the city while prioritising citizens' rights. The charter encompasses commitments and an action plan covering digital inclusion, accessibility of online services, digital education, data ethics, participation in the digital public space, privacy, data protection, and sustainability. Notably, it includes guidelines for parents and children to ensure responsible use of digital technologies, thereby promoting children's online protection and empowerment.

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** which address the topic of children and the digital environment (protection, empowerment, and participation).
- **The BIK+ strategy is an important influence on policy development** on children and the digital environment (i.e., it informs and guides national policies even if they do not directly refer to BIK+).
- **Children's rights in relation to the digital environment are an important an emerging policy priority** with specific policies in development on this topic

	High	Medium	Low	Not present
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:

- In 2023, in the Belgian federal parliament approved a **Resolution to Ensure Children's Online Safety**. The resolution aims to create an overarching framework and will establish a national coordinating body focusing on the BIK+ strategy. As of February 2025, work is ongoing.

- In February 2025, Flemish Welfare Minister Caroline Gennez **called for a societal and governmental debate** on banning social media access for children. This proposal aims to address rising concerns about the mental health impact of social media on minors, including increased suicide rates and exposure to cyberbullying. While this initiative is in the proposal stage, it signifies a potential policy shift towards stricter regulations on children's access to social media platforms.

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.

- **A regular nationally representative survey specifically focused on children's digital activity** informs national policies on this topic.
- **Systems are in place at the government level** to gather information on children and the digital environment
- There is a **dedicated research fund/research programme** on children and the digital environment.
- **Policies are monitored and evaluated, but not systematically.**

	High	Medium	Low	Not present
Regular data collection	X			
Data on risks, harms and digital well-being	X			
Information systems	X			
National research fund	X			
Monitoring and evaluation		X		

Table 2: Topic summary - policy design

Recent national research studies include:

- A biannual study called [Apenstaartjaren](#) is conducted in Flanders. This study by Mediaraven, Mediawijs, the research group imec-mict-Ugent and Link in de Kabel, investigates the media use and media literacy of 6 to 18-year-olds every two years. Média Animation and the Higher Council for Media Education (CSEM) oversee the major French-speaking survey on the digital practices of children and adolescents [#Generation2024](#).
- The King Baudouin Foundation released the [Digital Inclusion Barometer](#) in 2024, highlighting that 40% of Belgians remain in a vulnerable position regarding digital technology usage. This report underscores the necessity for policies enhancing digital skills and access, indirectly supporting children's digital empowerment and participation by fostering a more inclusive digital society.

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 different ministries** with leadership distributed according to the area of specialisation.
- **Coordination of policies and their implementation is distributed across multiple entities.**
- **Government policy has yet to be developed into an implementable action plan** but this is under development.

	High	Medium	Low	Not present
Lead ministry for policy development		X		
National coordination body			X	
National action plan or strategy			X	

Table 3: Topic summary - policy governance

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 **occasional opportunities for different stakeholders to participate in policy development**, but this is infrequent.
- **Public consultation is infrequent and irregular.**
- **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.

	High	Medium	Low	Not present
Stakeholder forum			X	
Consulting the public on BIK topics			X	
Involvement of young people		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.

Implementing EU laws

Four competent authorities have been designated in Belgium to monitor the enforcement of the [Digital Services Act \(DSA\)](#).

- The regulatory authority, the [Belgian Institute for Postal Services and Telecommunications](#) (BIPT), was designated at the federal level by the [Act of 21 April 2024](#), and is the national coordinator.
- The [Flemish regulator Voor De Media](#) (VRM) was designated by the Flemish Community ([Decree of 27 March 2009](#)).
- The [Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel](#) (CSA) was designated by the French Community ([Decree of 4 February 2021](#)).
- The [Medienrat](#) was designated by the German Community ([Decree of 01/03/2021](#)).

Harmful online content

- National legislation does not define harmful online content beyond what is contained under the [Audiovisual Media Services Directive \(AVMSD\)](#) Art28b.
- Children may complain to an administrative body, i.e., a government ministry or agency, about the availability of potentially harmful online content with the help of the national helpline [Child Focus](#).
- In 2022, the [Flemish Media Regulator](#) (VRM) published a new [Content Creator Protocol](#). This protocol contains rules influencers must follow when sharing commercial video communication. This new regulation comes in addition to the existing [Influencer Marketing Guidelines](#) and the advertising rules from the Belgian Code of Economic Law.

Harmful online conduct

- On July 1, 2020, Belgium introduced new legislation directly addressing the non-consensual sharing of intimate images of 'revenge porn.' The amendment also introduced provisions allowing for the removal of images from the web in cases where the infringer is under Belgian jurisdiction. Also, in 2022, a [new sexual penal code](#) came into effect.

- Under the amendment, the legal competence of the [Institute for the Equality of Women and Men \(IEFH\)](#) was extended to support victims of revenge pornography.
- National/regional laws, regulations and policies are also in place under the penal code to protect children and young people from cyberbullying

Age verification

- Policies regarding age verification to restrict minors from accessing adult online content services are currently under discussion.
- As of February 2025, Belgium has made significant progress in implementing a national digital identity wallet, known as [MyGov.be](#), which was launched in May 2024. This wallet allows citizens to access various public services and store official documents digitally. While MyGov.be is available to all citizens, including minors, there is no specific information indicating a distinct plan to implement the EU Digital Identity Wallet (EUDI) exclusively for minors in Belgium. However, the existing MyGov.be platform does provide functionalities that are accessible to younger users

Commercial content

- In October 2018, the Belgian Advertising Council introduced the '[Influencer Guidelines](#)' to provide clarity and legal certainty for online influencers, advertisers, agencies, media, and platforms. These guidelines emphasise the importance of transparency, requiring influencers to clearly disclose any commercial relationships by using terms such as 'advertising,' 'sponsorship,' or hashtags like #ad, #spon, or #prom. The guidelines also mandate that such disclosures be prominent and easily understandable to consumers. While these guidelines are non-statutory, compliance is overseen by the [Jury for Ethical Practices in Advertising](#) (JEP), which can handle complaints and request modifications or removal of non-compliant content.
- Additionally, the Flemish Regulator for the Media (Vlaamse Regulator voor de Media, VRM) offers the '[Content Creator Protocol](#)' to assist content creators, vloggers, and influencers in adhering to regulations when posting videos on

social media platforms. This protocol addresses themes such as commercial communications on social media, content aimed at minors, and the prohibition of hate speech and violence. It serves as a resource to ensure that online video content complies with existing media regulations in Flanders.

- At the federal level, the [FPS Economy \(FOD Economie / SPF Économie\)](#) monitors and enforces consumer protection laws, including regulations against unfair commercial practices that could mislead or exploit children online. They provide guidelines on advertising and digital marketing, particularly concerning children.
- Belgium was one of the first countries to ban loot boxes in video games, considering them a form of gambling. The Belgian Gaming Commission deemed loot boxes as [addictive gambling mechanisms](#), particularly harmful to minors. This ban aims to protect children from manipulative in-game purchases and addictive gaming features.
- The Belgian Advertising Council developed the non-statutory [Belgian Code of Conduct for Advertising and Marketing Communication to Children](#). This sets guidelines on marketing and advertising directed at children, including digital environments. It addresses manipulative advertising techniques and prohibits content that exploits children's inexperience or credulity.

Mental health and well-being

- The [Belgian Safer Internet Centre](#), known as [Betternet](#), offers awareness-raising activities through partners like Child Focus, Média Animation, Mediawijs, and the Conseil Supérieur de l'éducation aux Médias. These activities provide children, parents, teachers, and professionals with advice and tips on mitigating online challenges and risks while promoting positive internet use.
- Since 2011, [Child Focus](#) has operated the 116 000 e-safety helpline, offering 24/7 support to children, young people, parents, and the public on issues such as sexting, sextortion, and grooming. This service is accessible via

phone, SMS, email, and their website. More details are available on the Better Internet for Kids website:

- To ensure inclusivity, Child Focus developed [Star+](#), an online pedagogical tool designed to promote safe and informed digital media use among children with intellectual disabilities.
- [CyberSquad](#) is an initiative that empowers young people to become digital heroes by equipping them with skills to handle online risks and support their peers. It encourages peer-to-peer education on digital well-being and safe online practices.
- [Awel](#) and [Écoute-Enfants](#) are helplines that provide children and young people with a safe space to talk about their concerns, including online-related stress or mental health issues. They offer confidential support via phone, chat, and email.
- [Tejo](#) offers accessible, free, and anonymous therapeutic support to young people. It includes counselling sessions aimed at addressing mental health challenges, including those

	In place	In development	Other activity	Not in place
Codes of practice		X		
DSC implemented		X		
Definition of harmful content	X			
Bodies can order content removal	X			
Children's complaints mechanism	X			
Intimate image abuse laws	X			
Cyberbullying laws	X			
Age verification requirements	X			
Digital identity systems (EUDI)	X			

Consumer codes of practice	X
Mental health measures	X
Addressing unfair commercial practices	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 for online safety education

In Belgium, online safety has been integrated into the national and regional school curricula, both in Flanders and the French-speaking community.

- In Flanders, digital literacy, including online safety, is embedded within the ICT curriculum as a cross-curricular competence. It is taught at both primary and secondary education levels. Topics include safe internet use, understanding digital footprints, cyberbullying prevention, and media literacy. The [Leerplan ICT](#) (ICT Curriculum) encourages schools to integrate these skills across various subjects.
- In the French-speaking community, online safety is part of the [Education aux Médias](#) (Media Education). This curriculum covers responsible internet use, online privacy, cyberbullying, and critical thinking about digital content.
- In Flanders, the School Decree ([Het Schooldecreet](#)) encourages schools to create a positive digital learning environment and establishes a framework for addressing cyberbullying and promoting digital well-being.
- The French-speaking community also encourages schools to set clear policies regarding students' online behaviour. The [Digital and Media Education Plan](#) outlines various strategies for schools, including setting clear guidelines for internet use, protecting students from harmful content, and addressing inappropriate online behaviour.

- Regarding informal education, the [Cyber Security Coalition](#) runs various programs aimed at increasing digital safety awareness among vulnerable groups, such as marginalized youth and disadvantaged communities.

Digital literacy skills to empower young people

- In Flanders, the 'Digital Literacy' (Digitale Geletterdheid) programme integrates skills such as data literacy, AI understanding, online safety, and responsible digital tool use. The [Digital Pact for Schools \(Digipact\)](#) also focus on enhancing the digital infrastructure in schools and supporting the integration of these skills into everyday learning.
- Similarly, the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles has outlined specific competencies in the Digital Competence Framework ([Cadre de Référence des Compétences Numériques](#)) to guide schools in incorporating these digital skills into education.
- Regarding media literacy, in Flanders, the government has implemented the [Mediawijsheid](#) programme, which focuses on developing digital and media literacy and is embedded in school curricula. Flanders also launched the [Media Literacy Week](#) (Mediawijsheid Week), an annual event that includes workshops, educational materials, and campaigns aimed at raising awareness of disinformation and promoting critical media skills among young people.
- In [Wallonia-Brussels](#), initiatives to combat disinformation and promote critical media literacy are often run by local organisations in collaboration with schools. CLEMI, for instance, organizes workshops and educational resources to improve students' understanding of media and their ability to discern reliable information.

	In place	In development	Other activity	Not in place
Teaching online safety	X			
Online safety policies in schools	X			

Informal education about online safety	X
Adequate teacher training	X
Basic digital skills training	X
Critical media literacy	X
Creative digital skills	X

Table 6: Topic summary - pillar 2: digital empowerment

Pillar 3 – Active participation, respecting children’s rights

Belgium has several national and regional initiatives that promote youth civic engagement and participation in the digital environment.

Active participation

- In Flanders, [Mediawijsheid](#) is a key initiative that not only focuses on media literacy but also encourages youth civic engagement in the digital space. Flanders supports various youth councils that facilitate the participation of young people in decision-making processes.
- The French-speaking community encourages young people to engage in civic and political discussions online through programmes such as [Jeunesse et Démocratie](#) that highlight the importance of informed participation.
- The [Vlaamse Jeugdraad](#) is an important platform where young people from Flanders are actively involved in discussions related to digital rights, online safety, and their digital participation. They contribute to policy development on topics such as internet governance, digital inclusion, and youth engagement in digital spaces.

Supporting children’s rights

- While there is no government system for publishing child-friendly versions of policy documents or initiatives relevant to BIK+ topics, this is supported through the [Belgian Safer Internet Centre \(SIC Belgium\)](#).

Digital inclusion

- The [Belgian SIC](#) supports activities to stimulate the production and visibility of positive digital content and services for children.
- Similarly, the [Belgian SIC](#) also promotes activities to encourage children's digital creativity and promote creative uses of digital technologies.
- Activities to ensure inclusiveness regarding children's active participation (e.g., ensuring a balance of age, gender, urban/rural, inclusion of seldom-heard and hard-to-reach youth populations, etc.) are in place at the national level.

	In place	In development	Other activity	Not in place
Promoting active participation and civic engagement	X			
Involvement in policymaking	X			
Awareness raising on children's rights	X			
Child-friendly versions of policy documents	X			
Addressing digital inequalities	X			
Supports for marginalised groups	X			
Positive digital content	X			

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

Best practices

Example 1

CyberSquad

CyberSquad is an online platform developed by Child Focus, designed to educate young people about safe online behaviour. Aimed at children aged 10-14, educators, and parents, it uses interactive content, including videos, quizzes, and challenges, to teach children about digital safety, cyberbullying, privacy, and responsible social media use. The platform is highly engaging, using relatable scenarios and language tailored to young audiences. CyberSquad effectively combines entertainment with education, making complex digital safety topics easily understandable and relevant for children.

Example 2

VRT Edubox Sexting

VRT Edubox Sexting is an educational tool developed by the Flemish public broadcaster VRT, aimed at helping teachers discuss sensitive topics like sexting, digital privacy, and online reputation with teenagers. It includes lesson plans, videos, and discussion guides to facilitate open and safe conversations in schools. VRT Edubox Sexting addresses a sensitive yet crucial topic in a responsible and age-appropriate manner, empowering both teachers and students to navigate digital challenges with confidence.

BIK+ index 2025: Belgium

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

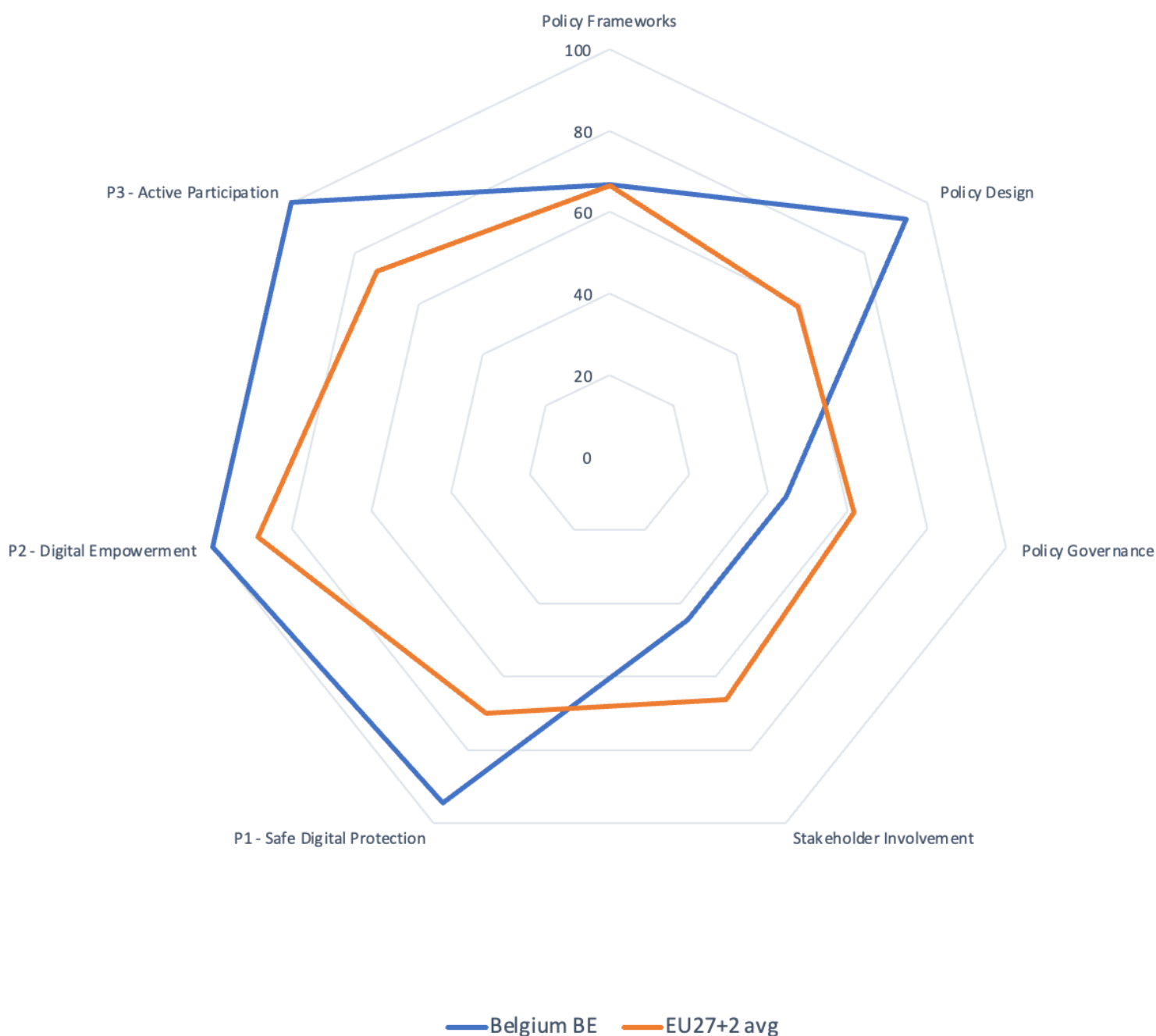


Figure 1: BIK+ index 2025: Belgium - EU27+2 average comparison



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