

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

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 2023, the Bulgarian government adopted the [National Programme for the Prevention of Violence and Abuse of Children 2023-2026](#), a comprehensive programme, outlining strategies to combat violence against children, including online threats. It emphasises coordination among institutions and the development of integrated services for victims. In November 2023, Bulgaria also hosted its [First National Conference on Online Safety and Digital Skills for Children](#) focusing on children's online safety and digital skills. The event fostered dialogue among stakeholders to enhance national efforts in creating a safer digital environment for children.

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 **present** in national/regional laws, regulations and policies **but is not a priority**.
- 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+ strategy informs national policies but is not the main influence.**
- National/regional policies and policy documents **do not refer 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:

- BIK-related topics are partly covered in several strategic documents, action plans and legal acts such as the [National Child Protection Programme 2018](#) and the [National Programme for the Prevention of Violence and Abuse of Children 2023-2026](#).
- Policy and legal updates to the Child's Rights Act are planned. However, no timeline has been set.

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.

- There is **no data collection on children's digital activity at the country level** on children's digital activities or regarding online risks, harms and digital well-being. The **Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre** is the only organisation gathering specific data about children's digital experiences on a daily basis. UNICEF has awarded funding to the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre for conducting a national research study on children's experiences in the digital realm, which will be carried out in 2024-2025.
- There is **no system in place at the government level** to gather information on children and the digital environment.
- There is **no funding available for research** on children and the digital environment.
- There is **no monitoring or evaluation of policies** on children and the digital environment.

	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

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.

- According to the country submission, **there is no specific leadership in policy development on this topic.**

- There is **no coordination mechanism in place**: policies, guidelines and programmes relating to children and the digital environment tend to be implemented independently of one another.
- There is **no action plan available or** under development at this time.

	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

The Bulgarian **National Council for Child Protection** is a body under the State Agency for Child Protection and has advisory and coordination functions. The chairman of the council is the chairman of the State Agency for Child Protection, who organises and directs its activities, coordinates the implementation of its decisions, and represents it.

The **Safer Internet Centre (SIC)** in Bulgaria was established in 2005 by the **Applied Research and Communications Fund (ARC Fund)** with the mission to protect, support and educate children in order to empower them to use digital technology for learning, communicating, socialising and entertainment in a safer and positive way. Since 2023, the **Association Roditeli** coordinates the Bulgarian SIC under a new consortium.

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 **no mechanism in place at the government level for** stakeholder groups to contribute to policy discussion and development.

- There is **no public consultation available on BIK topics**.
- **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

Examples of youth involvement include:

- The **Youth Council of the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP)** serves as an advisory body where children and young people provide opinions and recommendations on policies affecting them. The council holds regular consultations with policymakers and government institutions.
- The **Youth Panel of the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre (SIC)** consists of young people actively engaged in discussions and initiatives related to online safety. Panel members contribute to the development of educational materials, awareness campaigns, and recommendations for safer digital environments.

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

- Legislation to implement the [Digital Services Act \(DSA\)](#), e.g., designate competent authorities, and provide necessary powers for its enforcement, is currently in development.
- Draft proposals outline the role and authority of the Bulgarian Digital Services Coordinator (DSC) and designate the [Communications Regulation Commission \(CRC\)](#) as the national DSC. The CRC monitors non-video-sharing intermediary service providers to ensure compliance with the DSA, while video-sharing platforms fall under the control of the [Council for Electronic Media \(CEM\)](#).

Harmful online content

- Definitions of harmful online content included in laws, regulations or policies at the country level are included in the relevant sections of the Bulgarian Criminal Code dealing with child sexual abuse material, pornography, and radicalisation.
- The Ministry of Interior's Cybercrime Directorate has the power to order the removal or disabling of access to online content that is potentially harmful to children.
- Children may complain to the following administrative bodies about harmful (illegal) content: the Ministry of Interior, the Cybercrime Directorate, the Safer Internet Centre, including its Hotline and Helpline, or the national helpline 116 111.

Harmful online conduct

- Non-consensual sharing of intimate images is covered under the Criminal Code. Prevention activities are assigned under Child Strategy, which is currently under development. Prevention activities are also part of the Action Plan for Child Protection, which is in the process of implementation.
- Currently, there are no national/regional laws, regulations or policies in place to protect children and young people from cyberbullying, although online bullying is a significant risk and a widespread problem for Bulgarian Children. The Safer Internet Centre is the primary organisation that responds to reports of online bullying and provides expert assistance. It continues to play a pivotal role in promoting digital literacy and online safety.
- UNICEF also supports Bulgaria's implementation of the [National Programme for the Prevention of Violence and Abuse of Children 2023-2026](#), which includes strategies to engage children directly in raising awareness about their rights and mechanisms for reporting violence, encompassing online abuse and cyberbullying.

Age verification

- There are no national/regional laws, technical standards or policies in place regarding age verification mechanisms to restrict minors from accessing adult online content services.
- Bulgaria does not currently have a plan to implement the EU Digital Identity Wallet for minors. The focus remains on adult citizens, with future considerations for minors yet to be detailed.

Commercial content

- Bulgaria regulates online commercial content, including influencer-based marketing, primarily through non-statutory codes of conduct established by the [National Council for Self-Regulation \(NCSR\)](#). The [National Ethical Standards for Advertising and Commercial Communication](#) serve as the foundational framework guiding ethical practices in advertising and marketing communications within the country.

Mental health and well-being

- The [National Strategy for Mental Health](#) (2021-2030), developed by the Ministry of Health aims to enhance mental health services, including those for children and adolescents. It emphasizes integrating cross-sectoral policies across healthcare, education, and social services to address mental health challenges, including those related to online environments.
- Additionally, [UNICEF](#) collaborates with Bulgarian authorities to expand access to specialized services for children affected by violence, including online abuse. Through its [Child Advocacy Centres](#), UNICEF provides psychological and legal support to child victims and runs educational programmes to strengthen children's digital resilience.

	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

- Online safety education has been integrated into the national curriculum as part of broader digital literacy and citizenship programmes.
- The [Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre](#) (SIC) also conducts educational programmes on respectful online communication and responsible digital engagement, integrated into school activities. Through awareness campaigns like Safer Internet Day, Teacher-Leader in the Digital Era, and Back to School, SIC reached thousands of children, parents, and educators with key messages on online safety. The [Cyberscouts Programme](#) trained children aged 11-13 to educate their peers on digital risks, fostering a youth-led approach to online safety
- [UNICEF and FANTASTICO's 'Steps Together'](#) initiative aims to enhance children's online safety and digital literacy by reaching 2,000 children, including those outside the formal education system. The programme focuses on teaching safe online practices, addressing hate speech, and identifying fake news. Additionally, it plans to train 500 education specialists and 300 parents on digital literacy and online safety, ensuring a supportive environment for children's digital education.

Digital literacy skills to empower young people

- National/regional activities are in place to support young people's digital literacy skills for online communication and collaboration. Bulgaria has made progress in enhancing digital skills among its population. According to the [2024 edition of the Digital Decade report](#), 35.5% of Bulgarians possess basic digital skills, reflecting a 6.7% annual growth from the previous year.
- The [Safer Internet Centre](#) implements a range of activities in partnership with the Ministry of Education. The '[Digital Bulgaria 2025 National Programme](#)'

also aims to modernise education by enhancing digital competencies at all levels.

- The Ministry of Education and Science issued '[Guidelines for the Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Education System](#)' in January 2024. These guidelines aim to raise awareness and provide a vision for the proper and ethical use of AI in the learning process, emphasizing the development of competencies and digital literacy to use AI effectively.
- The [Bulgarian-Romanian Observatory of Digital Media](#) (BROD) was established as a multinational, multi-stakeholder hub, BROD focuses on detecting, analysing, and combating disinformation in Bulgaria and Romania. In 2024, BROD organized the BG MIL Conference 2024, which mapped media and information literacy (MIL) initiatives across Bulgaria, highlighting efforts to counteract disinformation and promote critical thinking among youth.

	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

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

- A Regulation under the Chairperson of the State Agency for Child Protection stipulates the creation of the [National Children's Council](#), which ensures youth participation in decision-making bodies at the national and regional levels, including the National Child's Assembly.
- The [Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre's Youth Panel](#) is a voluntary structure that has been a successful form of youth participation since 2010. Its members are young people aged 14-18 who meet face-to-face regularly to develop their digital and media skills and play an important role in the initiatives and events organised by the Bulgarian SIC and its partners.

Supporting children's rights

- The [National Child Assembly Initiative](#) and Child's Ombudsman in Schools cover children's inclusiveness and participation. Under these initiatives, children are trained in the role of the Ombudsman in more than 50 schools in Bulgaria.
- The [new Strategy on Child Protection](#), currently under development, contains more than 10 measures relevant to BIK+ topics and will be published (when ready) in a child-friendly version.
- A new Strategy for the Rights of the Child and Child Protection is in the process of being submitted for approval to the Council of Ministers.

Digital inclusion

- Bulgaria's [Equal Access to School Education in Times of Crisis Project \(2021–2023\)](#) aimed to improve digital access, support teachers, enhance distance learning, and foster parental involvement, particularly for disadvantaged students. Funded through [REACT-EU](#), it sought to close technology gaps and strengthen basic digital skills among students. While progress was made in these areas, challenges remained in transforming teaching methods and increasing parental involvement, indicating the need for ongoing efforts to fully bridge digital inequalities.

- The [Digital Transformation Strategy \(2024–2030\)](#) aims to bridge the digital divide, strengthen digital inclusion, and enhance digital literacy, ensuring equal access to digital technologies for all citizens, including marginalised groups.

	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

BIK+ index 2025: Bulgaria

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

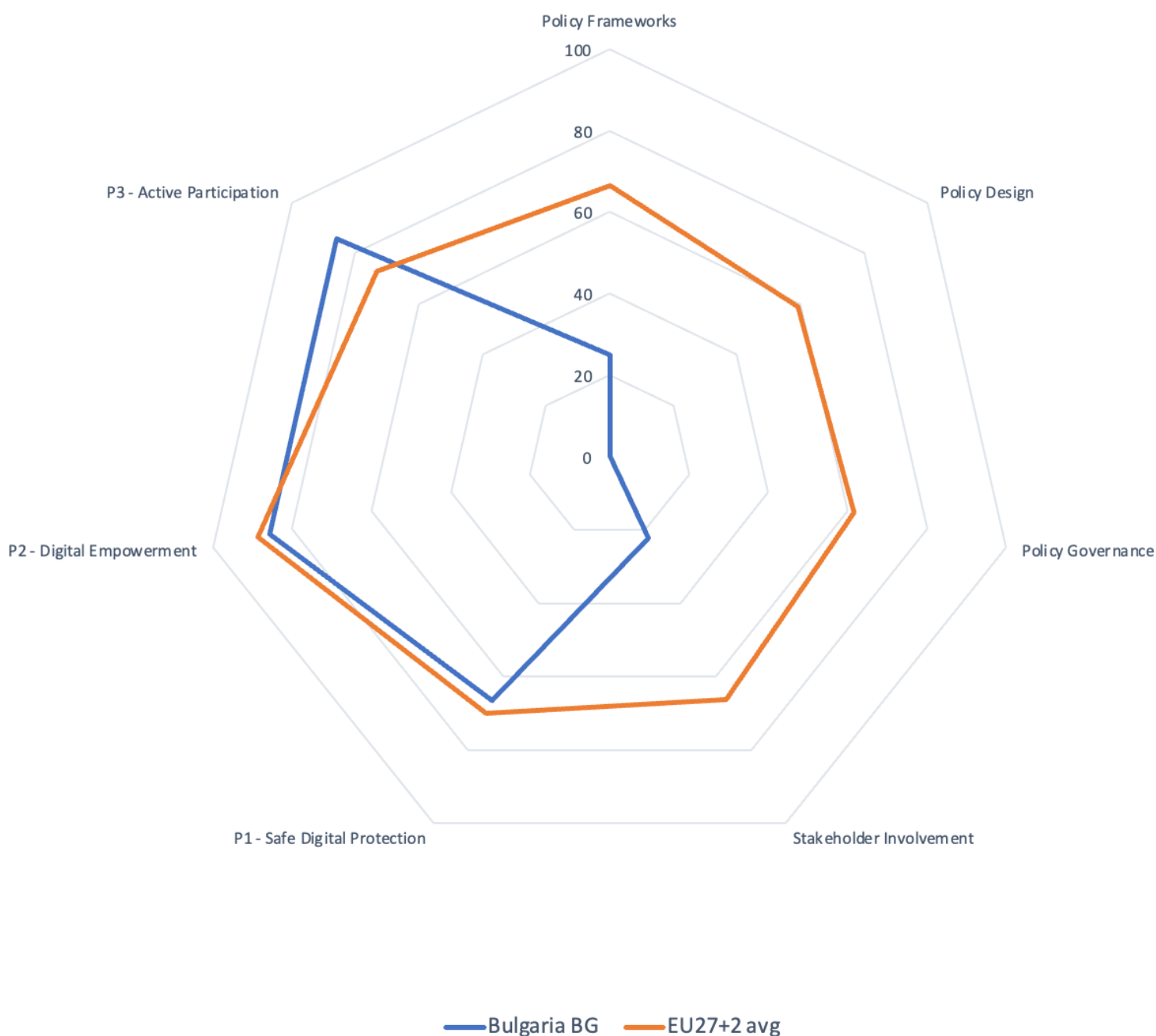


Figure 1: BIK+ index 2025: Bulgaria - EU27+2 average comparison



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