



The Better Internet for Kids Policy monitor report 2026

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List of abbreviations

AI	Artificial intelligence
AVMSD	Audiovisual Media Services Directive
BIK	Better Internet for Kids
BIK+	The new European strategy for a better internet for kids
CoE	Council of Europe
CSAM	Child sexual abuse material
DFA	Digital Fairness Act
DSA	Digital Services Act
DSC	Digital Services Coordinator
EC	European Commission
eID	European Digital Identity framework
EUDI	European Digital Identity Regulation
EU	European Union
GC25	UNCRC General Comment No. 25
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GenAI	Generative artificial intelligence
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SIC	Safer Internet Centre
SID	Safer Internet Day
UCPD	Unfair Commercial Practices Directive
UNCRC	United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

Executive summary

The digital transformation has reshaped the environment in which European children grow and develop, providing wide-ranging opportunities to enhance their learning, skills and creativity. However, digitalisation also poses risks that may harm children's development. In response, the European Union has developed a broader policy and regulatory framework on children's digital rights, online safety and well-being, within which the Better Internet for Kids (BIK+) strategy plays a specific role by guiding actions on protection, empowerment and participation. The BIK Policy monitor is an annual reporting tool that assesses the implementation of the strategy across 29 European countries (EU27, Iceland, and Norway).

Key findings

The 2026 edition of the Policy monitor series finds that policies promoting safe digital protection, empowerment, and active participation are increasingly prioritised across European countries and continue to evolve in response to a changing digital environment. Amid rising concerns about the negative impact of digital technology and addictive design on children's mental health and well-being, as well as the prevalence of cyberbullying in online spaces, European countries have stepped up protection, prioritised digital literacy, and strengthened policies through more robust governance and institutional support. This year's report also notes an increase in efforts to strengthen the evidence base and to incorporate children's rights considerations.

National policy frameworks

The 2026 report highlights the greater institutionalisation of policy governance, with a noteworthy trend towards more structured, accountable frameworks.

- ▶ **Thirteen countries¹ now have formal national action plans** with defined timelines, assigned responsibilities, and key performance indicators (KPIs), up from ten in 2024.
- ▶ **A distributed leadership model for BIK policies** is the norm in eighteen countries², with responsibility shared across specialised ministries. The number of countries reporting ad hoc or no specific leadership has fallen from ten to five, indicating that child online safety is now a more consistent government priority.
- ▶ **Fourteen countries³ now explicitly recognise children's digital rights in their national policies**, using international standards such as the UNCRC General Comment No. 25 as a foundation.
- ▶ There has been a gradual increase in evidence-based policymaking, yet systematic data collection remains highly uneven across European countries. **Only eight countries⁴ conduct a regular, nationally representative survey focused specifically on children's digital activity.**

Progress across the three BIK Pillars

Pillar 1: Safe digital experiences

National efforts to ensure safe digital experiences primarily stem from the implementation of major EU legislative frameworks, particularly the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD).

1 BE, CY, DK, HU, IE, IS, LV, MT, NO, PT, RO, SI, SK.

2 BE, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, FI, FR, HR, IS, IT, LT, LU, MT, PL, RO, SE, SI.

3 BE, CY, DE, DK, ES, FR, HR, HU, IE, LU, MT, NL, NO, PT.

4 DE, HU, IS, IT, LU, NO, SE, SK.

- ▶ **Regulatory oversight.** Seventeen countries report that Digital Services Coordinators (DSCs) have implemented specific national measures to protect minors, including auditing platform risk assessments and designating “trusted flaggers”. Ongoing working relationships between DSCs and Safer Internet Centres (SICs) are also reported in eighteen countries⁵.
- ▶ **Strengthened protections to counter cyberbullying are evident.** Twenty-one countries now have national/regional laws, regulations, or policies in place which address cyberbullying, including measures that render it illegal, up from eighteen in 2024. Many countries have also implemented mandatory school-based prevention programmes.
- ▶ **Age verification has emerged as a key priority.** Thirteen countries⁶ report initiatives in this area, a significant increase from 2024, when only four did so. Eight further countries⁷ indicate this is currently in development.
- ▶ **Digital well-being is increasingly recognised as a public health priority.** Twenty-four countries⁸ report having implemented school policies governing smartphone use to reduce digital distractions and improve students’ mental health and well-being. Several countries are also considering age-based restrictions on social media.

Pillar 2: Digital empowerment

Digital empowerment remains the most mature dimension of BIK+ implementation, with near-universal integration of online safety and digital skills into formal education, matched by extensive activities in the non-formal education sector.

- ▶ **Online safety education** is integrated into the curricula of twenty-six countries. Twenty-one countries report incorporating information and data literacy, including AI/GenAI literacy, into core digital skills training.
- ▶ **Most countries report that adequate teacher training is in place**, with a shift towards larger-scale digital delivery and the integration of topics on emerging technologies such as AI.
- ▶ Twenty-seven countries have implemented **initiatives to combat disinformation, with a growing focus on youth-centred fact-checking and on identifying AI-driven manipulation.**
- ▶ **Most countries also provide general support for parents on online safety and digital literacy.** Twenty-four countries report programmes and activities in place for this purpose.

Pillar 3: Active participation, respecting children

While progress is evident, gaps remain in implementing consolidated approaches to children’s active participation and respecting their rights.

- ▶ **Support for youth civic engagement has increased** across twenty-four countries. Nine countries⁹ have now established dedicated mechanisms to actively involve children in policy design. These include permanent youth advisory committees and councils, special-purpose alliances and roundtables, and mandatory youth-informed policy checks.
- ▶ **Awareness-raising on children’s rights in the digital environment is widespread**, with twenty-six countries reporting initiatives (beyond the national SIC) that promote greater awareness of these rights.
- ▶ **Support for positive digital content has also increased**, with twenty-one countries reporting activities related to this topic. These include “quality labels”¹⁰, dedicated portals for educational content, and innovation support for companies developing positive

5 AT, BE, BG, DE, DK, EL, FI, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, RO, SE, SK.

6 BE, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, NO, PT.

7 BG, CZ, LU, MT, NL, PL, RO, SI.

8 AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PT, RO, SI, SK.

9 ES, HU, IE, IT, MT, NO, PL, SI, SK.

10 These include labels to help users identify high-quality digital content that explicitly safeguard the rights of children. For example, the Children’s Rights quality mark (KK) being developed in the Netherlands, or the “Mediamenu” in Belgium which includes a specific category for “ethical games”. Denmark has tasked its Media Council to examine a label that would promote content with positive value.

content¹¹.

- ▶ There remains a significant **gap in enabling children’s active involvement in shaping digital policies**: only nine countries¹² have dedicated mechanisms in place for this.

Recommendations

To further advance the BIK+ agenda, participating countries are recommended to:

- 1. Continue alignment around BIK+ goals to protect and empower young people online:**
All stakeholders are encouraged to further align on key EU priorities, particularly protecting mental health, tackling cyberbullying, and addressing addictive design. Continuous working relationships between DSCs and SICs should be prioritised to ensure the effective delivery of online safety and empowerment.
- 2. Member States should fully support the EU Action plan against cyberbullying:**
Member States should integrate BIK-related policies into their response to the [EU Action plan against cyberbullying](#), using the action plan’s common understanding of cyberbullying as a basis for national policy and response systems. This should support coherent action on prevention, reporting, victim support, research, and child participation in policy design.
- 3. Strengthen European and national longitudinal research:**
More robust and comparable evidence is needed on the safety and quality of the digital environment for children. This should include data on emerging risks like AI-driven manipulation, the psychological impacts of addictive design, and cyberbullying. Monitoring and evaluation of BIK-related policies should also be strengthened.
- 4. Support and prioritise EU-harmonised age verification solutions:**
Member States are encouraged to support the roll-out of the European Commission’s harmonised age verification solutions, based on the common blueprint and in line with the DSA guidelines on age assurance. National solutions should ensure high standards of privacy, safety and security, and remain interoperable with future EU Digital Identity Wallets.
- 5. Move towards integrating “participation by design”:**
Children’s involvement in digital policymaking should move beyond ad hoc consultation toward permanent, specially designed structures that enable their participation in the design, evaluation, and monitoring of such policies. Child-friendly documentation should form part of this approach.

The recommendations above summarise the main policy directions arising from this report. Fuller recommendations are provided in [Chapter 6](#).

¹¹ The Danish government is supporting a national innovation environment aimed specifically at helping develop alternative social media platforms or technologies that support minor safety online. The Malta Digital Innovation Authority (MDIA) is another example where a national agency plays a key role in overseeing the safe and ethical deployment of emerging technologies.

¹² ES, HU, IE, IT, MT, NO, PL, SI, SK.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The 2026 edition of the BIK Policy monitor report is the latest instalment in a [series of policy mapping studies](#) that monitor the implementation of the [European strategy for a better internet for kids \(BIK+ strategy\)](#) in EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. Established to facilitate the comparison and exchange of knowledge on policies and actions that promote children’s safety and well-being in the digital environment, the annual policy mapping exercise is a core component of the [BIK Knowledge hub](#) – a central resource for information, evidence, and policy insights on how digital transformation affects the lives of European children and young people. Alongside this report, outputs include an [interactive data portal](#), [individual country profiles](#), and a series of directories ([Rules and guidelines](#) and [Research and reports](#)) that provide a comprehensive overview of how BIK+ is being implemented across Europe.

1.1 About the BIK+ strategy

The BIK+ strategy is the overarching policy framework that sets out the EU approach to safeguarding children online, supporting their digital literacy, and ensuring their rights to participation. Adopted on 11 May 2022, BIK+ builds on its predecessor, the first [European strategy for a better internet for children](#), which dates from 2012, and was developed to ensure that children’s rights are respected online, that they enjoy safety and privacy, and that they are equipped with the necessary skills to avail of the many opportunities the online world affords.

The BIK+ vision is that children should be supported with “*Age-appropriate digital services, with no one left behind and with every child in Europe protected, empowered and respected online*” (BIK+, 2022, p. 9). BIK+ aims for accessible, age-appropriate and informative online content and services that are in children’s best interests, building on three key pillars:

- 1. Safe digital experiences** to protect children from harmful and illegal content, conduct, contact, and consumer risks and to improve their well-being online through a safe, age appropriate digital environment, created in a way that respects children’s best interests.
- 2. Digital empowerment**, so children acquire the necessary skills and competencies to make sound choices and express themselves in the online environment safely and responsibly.
- 3. Active participation**, respecting children by giving them a say in the digital environment, with more child-led activities to foster innovative and creative safe digital experiences.

BIK+ is described as the digital arm of the [EU Rights of the Child Strategy](#), reflecting the principle set out in the [European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade](#) (2022) that children and young people should be protected and empowered online.

Under the [Political Guidelines for the European Commission 2024–2029](#), which incorporates its current mandate, commitments to support young people online are focused on three key areas:

- ▶ Combating the growing trend of abusive behaviour online with an EU [Action plan against cyberbullying](#).
- ▶ Launching an EU-wide inquiry on the broader impacts of social media on well-being.
- ▶ Taking action on the addictive design of online services, such as infinite scroll, default auto-play, or constant push.

In her [2025 State of the Union Address](#), President von der Leyen once again underlined keeping children safe online as a top priority and has committed to establishing a [panel of experts](#) to advise on the best approach for Europe in respect of challenges such as online bullying, adult content, promoting self-harm, or exploitative algorithms and addictive design of digital services.

Underpinning the EU’s approach are a range of significant legislative and policy measures that

directly address children’s online protection and empowerment¹³.

These include the [Digital Services Act \(DSA\)](#), the revised [Audiovisual Media Services Directive \(AVMSD\)](#), the [Child Sexual Abuse \(CSA\) Directive and its Recast](#), the [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#), the [AI Act](#), the [Regulation for a European Identity Framework \(EUDI\)](#), and the [Unfair Commercial Practices Directive \(UCPD\)](#). Notably, in 2025, the Commission presented [Guidelines on measures to ensure a high level of privacy, safety and security](#) to support the implementation of the DSA’s obligations to protect minors (Article 28 Guidelines). This was also accompanied by the release of a [prototype for an age verification app](#) designed to be user-friendly and to protect privacy in the context of age assurance online.

Further work on legislation (the planned [Digital Fairness Act \(DFA\)](#)) to enhance protection for vulnerable consumers – particularly minors – is intended to address problematic practices such as dark patterns, the addictive design of digital products, unfair personalisation practices, and misleading marketing by influencers.

1.2 About the BIK Policy monitor

The BIK Policy monitor is an annual survey of policy developments and concrete initiatives carried out in EU Member States, Iceland, and Norway to implement the [BIK+ strategy](#). It draws on data compiled by a network of national contacts and coordinated by the BIK Knowledge hub team under the European Commission’s BIK platform contract, implemented by European Schoolnet (EUN). The Policy monitor aims to enhance awareness and understanding of the different approaches to developing and implementing better internet policies, thereby promoting knowledge exchange and supporting further development of this key policy priority.

The specific objectives of the Policy monitor are to:

- ▶ **Compare public policies, actions, and initiatives** related to implementing the BIK+ strategy in EU Member States, Iceland and Norway, including providing more contextual information for each country.
- ▶ **Identify trends and emerging issues** both in policy development and in implementation
- ▶ **Share good practices** related to the BIK+ strategy under its three pillars:
 - **Pillar 1:** Safe digital experiences.
 - **Pillar 2:** Digital empowerment.
 - **Pillar 3:** Active participation, respecting children.

Data for the BIK Policy monitor is compiled from an annually updated, standardised [questionnaire](#) completed by national contacts in each participating country. Contacts are nominated by the national representatives of the [European Commission’s Expert Group on Safer Internet for Children](#), which was created in 2019 to help improve coordination and cooperation between EU countries and to propose concrete actions to protect children online. Close liaison with the Expert Group and with contacts in each country ensures that the BIK Policy monitor is given priority at the national level and provides a crucial layer of validation.

1.2.1 The Policy monitor model

The guiding conceptual model of the Policy monitor (Figure 1) proposes that policy development (**Policies**) and the implementation of associated activities (**BIK+ actions**) take place in a specific national context shaped by infrastructure and services (**Digital development**) and by the experiences of children participating in the digital environment (**Children’s experiences**). These four dimensions frame the annual BIK policy mapping exercise and feature prominently in BIK-related policies and related contextual analysis.

¹³ A [Compendium of Legislation](#) published by the European Commission provides a detailed guide to related laws, legislative proposals, strategies, and measures, which add context to the BIK+ strategy.

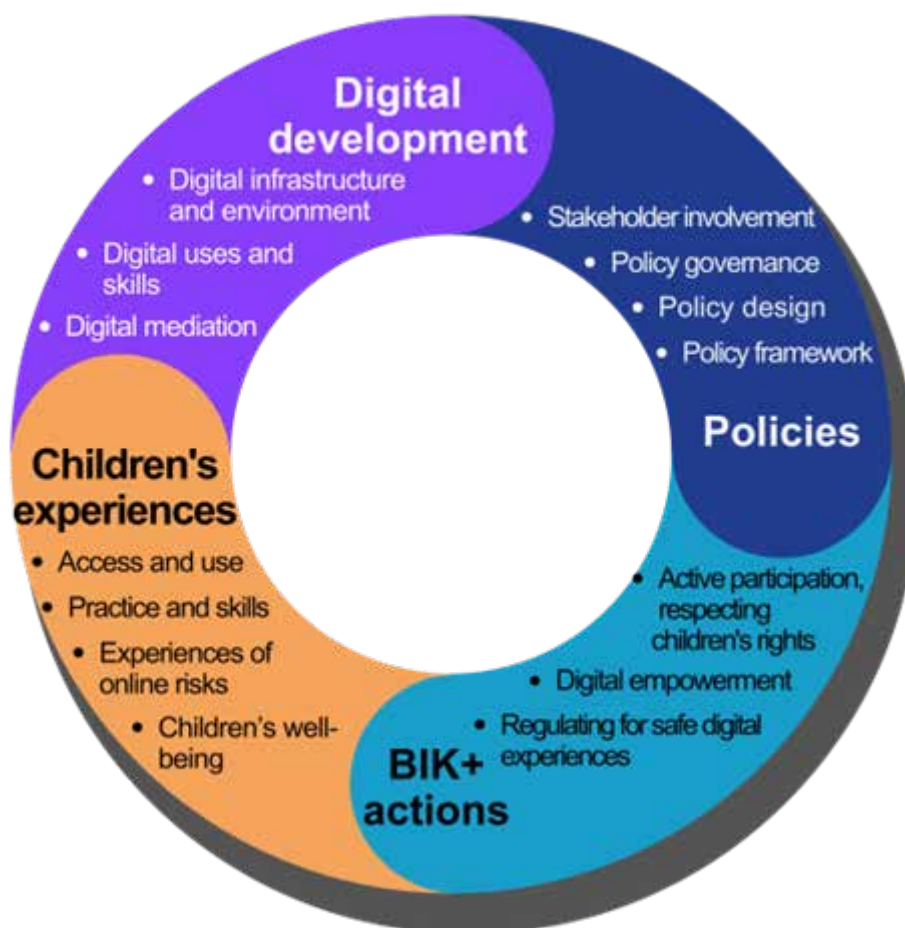


Figure 1: BIK Policy monitor model: four dimensions of the BIK environment

As with previous reports in this series, the Policy monitor report focuses on two key aspects of national-level BIK+ implementation: a) **Policies** and **policymaking** processes at the national level, and b) **Activities, initiatives and measures** implemented to support each of the three pillars of BIK+. These are referred to as the **Policies** and **BIK+ actions** dimensions of the overall model, findings for which are outlined in detail in this report. The dimensions of **Digital development** and **Children's experiences** are further considered in the individual country profiles, providing further context for the national state of development in BIK implementation.

1.2.2 The annual survey

The annual Policy monitor survey collects detailed information on policies and actions implemented in European countries that support the aims of the BIK+ strategy. This encompasses a broad range of topics, and as a result, several key areas are prioritised.

The survey for this year's report was administered via [EUSurvey](#), the European Commission's online survey tool, between October and December 2025. The questionnaire comprised 40 items, each with a structured, closed-response option for the level of implementation, along with open-text fields to provide explanation and context for each item. The questionnaire was organised into two main sections as follows:

- ▶ **Policies:** 15 questions addressing policy frameworks, policy design, policy governance and stakeholder involvement.
- ▶ **BIK+ actions:** 25 questions examining the implementation of actions relevant to the BIK+ strategy's three pillars - Pillar 1: Safe digital experiences; Pillar 2: Digital empowerment; and Pillar 3: Active participation, respecting children.

The [questionnaire of the 2025/26 data collection cycle](#) that feeds into the present report remains largely unchanged from previous years to maintain consistency with previous surveys and monitor ongoing trends. Some new items were introduced to address emerging developments and an evolving ecosystem. This particularly affected the section of the survey which asks about Pillar 1: Safe digital experiences. Items were updated in response to the full implementation of the Digital Services Act and the European Commission's prioritisation of actions to combat cyberbullying, addictive design in digital services, and youth mental health, as outlined in the [EC Political Guidelines 2024-2029](#). Where relevant, findings are compared with previous Policy monitor editions where the same indicator is available; because some items were introduced or adjusted in specific years, comparisons may refer to 2024, 2025, or both, depending on data availability and comparability.

1.3 Outline of the report

Following [Chapter 1](#), which introduces the BIK+ strategy and the annual BIK Policy monitor exercise, the remainder of the report is organised as follows:

[Chapter 2](#) focuses on the **Policies dimension** and presents findings on national-level policymaking related to BIK+. This section outlines how countries have incorporated children's online usage into their policies, how these policies are organised and administered, and the degree of significant stakeholder involvement.

Chapters 3 to 5 address the dimension of **BIK+ actions** or activities underway or planned in EU Member States, Iceland, and Norway to support the implementation of BIK+ goals:

[Chapter 3](#) presents findings under Pillar 1 of the strategy addressing **protection and safe digital experiences** for children and young people.

[Chapter 4](#) collates findings in relation to **digital empowerment**, or Pillar 2 of BIK+ strategy, encompassing such areas as online safety education, digital literacy skills and competences.

[Chapter 5](#) examines activities to support children's **active participation** and having their **rights respected online**, as covered by Pillar 3 of the strategy.

[Chapter 6](#) provides a broader discussion of the state of play across EU Member States, Iceland and Norway in relation to BIK+, highlighting new trends and developments. The report concludes with a number of recommendations for policy development from the perspective of BIK+, drawing on insights from this year's findings.

Alongside this report, the BIK Policy monitor is accompanied by individual [BIK Policy monitor country profiles](#), which provide additional detail and context for each of the participating countries.

Data for the Policy monitor can also be explored online via the [BIK Policy map](#), an interactive data dashboard that provides access to item-level data, and the [BIK Policy index](#), which provides an at-a-glance overview of the implementation of the BIK+ strategy across Europe, both hosted on the [BIK Knowledge hub](#).

Note that the text, charts and tables presenting the data throughout this report, particularly chapters 2 to 5, follow the guidance of the Statistical Office of the European Union (Eurostat) and use two-letter country codes to abbreviate ([Eurostat glossary: European Union country codes](#)).

Chapter 2: BIK policies across Europe

Chapter 2 presents the BIK Policy monitor 2026 findings on policies and policymaking in EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. This part of the survey examines processes underpinning policy development in European countries, including how national-level policies relevant to the BIK agenda are organised, managed, and supported by evidence and stakeholder input.

As in [previous editions](#) of the BIK Policy monitor report, the Policies dimension is structured around four main topics:

- ▶ **Policy frameworks:** The BIK Policy monitor examines the extent to which national-level BIK-related policies are guided or organised by broader policy frameworks covering the three BIK pillars – protection, empowerment, and participation. Indicators assess the level of priority, integration, reference to the BIK+ strategy, and the degree of recognition of children’s rights in relation to the digital environment ([section 2.1](#)).
- ▶ **Policy design and evidence-based policymaking:** This section looks at the extent to which policies are evidence-based. It asks about the availability of regular collection of statistics on children’s digital lives, specifically data on online risks, harms, and children’s well-being. There are also items which address the availability of support for researching children’s digital participation, as well as the prevalence of monitoring and evaluation of BIK-related policies ([section 2.2](#)).
- ▶ **Policy governance:** This section reports on the processes for coordinating and managing BIK policies at the governmental level, and the extent to which mechanisms, such as a coordinating body and a national action plan, are available to support their implementation ([section 2.3](#)).
- ▶ **Stakeholder involvement:** Finally, this section explores the extent of consultation with relevant stakeholders, including young people, in the course of developing BIK policies ([section 2.4](#)).

The Policies dimension of the BIK Policy monitor provides an overview of the BIK ecosystem at the national level, including policy frameworks, coordination mechanisms, evidence and information supporting policy development, and stakeholder involvement. While there is no single ideal approach, the underlying BIK Policy model emphasises the integration of these diverse elements to ensure the most cohesive delivery of policy objectives and – echoing the BIK+ strategy – prioritises upholding the rights of children in the digital environment and a collaborative stakeholder approach as prerequisites for a better internet for children.

2.1 Policy frameworks

For the purposes of the BIK Policy monitor, policies may take various forms, ranging from principles, standards and regulatory instruments, typically statutory in nature, to government plans of action that guide decision-making and seek to achieve desired outcomes for children’s digital experiences.¹⁴ A policy framework – as envisaged by the BIK+ strategy – encompasses structured collections of principles, ideas, and long-term goals designed to organise and shape policies or initiatives related to children’s digital activities.¹⁵

Four main aspects of BIK policies at the national level are assessed as follows:

- ▶ The manner in which children’s digital activities are addressed in national policies ([section 2.1.1](#)).
- ▶ The extent to which such policies are integrated in the form of a policy framework ([section 2.1.2](#)).

¹⁴ Cairney, P. (2020). *Understanding public policy: Theories and issues* (2nd ed). Bloomsbury Academic.

¹⁵ OECD. (2020). *Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance: Baseline Features of Governments that Work Well*. OECD. <https://doi.org/10.1787/c03e01b3-en>

- ▶ The degree to which the EU’s BIK+ strategy has influenced such policies (section 2.1.3).
- ▶ Whether such policies explicitly recognise children’s rights in the digital environment (section 2.1.4).

Findings from the 2026 BIK Policy monitor are presented for each item with selected national examples for illustration.

2.1.1 Policy priority

This first item examines the extent to which the BIK+ strategy (protection, empowerment and participation) is reflected in national policies. National contacts were asked to assess how comprehensively these issues are addressed and the extent to which they are treated as policy priorities.

As Figure 2 shows, all countries report that children’s online protection, empowerment and participation are addressed in some form within national policies. Children’s digital well-being, as envisaged in BIK+, is also deemed to be an important priority in most countries.

- ▶ Eleven countries reported that BIK-related topics are comprehensively addressed in national laws, regulations and policies (BE, CY, DK, HR, HU, IE, IT, MT, NO, PT, SE).
- ▶ Seventeen countries stated that BIK-related topics are an important and emerging policy priority, partially covered in national policies (AT, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IS, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, RO, SI, SK).
- ▶ In the case of one country (BG), the issues of the BIK+ strategy are described as present in national policy, though not a priority.

Q2.1: Are the issues of the BIK+ strategy (children's online protection, empowerment and participation) addressed in public policy(ies) in your country?

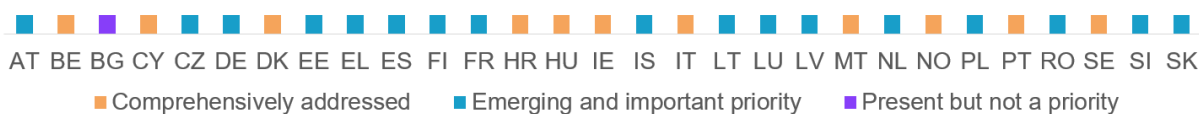
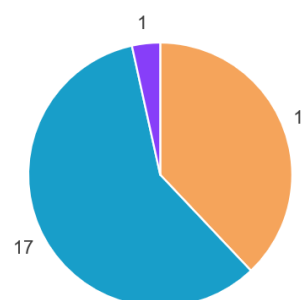


Figure 2: Issues of BIK+ as policy priority

The overall profile of how issues related to the BIK+ strategy are addressed in national policies is similar to that in previous editions of the BIK Policy monitor. However, as observed in many country submissions, policy at the national level continues to evolve, with many countries reporting that they are stepping up measures to promote online safety and to develop more comprehensive national legislative frameworks, driven in part by the implementation and enforcement of the EU Digital Services Act (DSA), as well as emerging concerns around AI and digital well-being. Selected examples of integrative policy frameworks are provided in Box 1.

2.1.2 Integrated policy

This continued evolution of national-level policies is reflected in item 2.2, which asks about the nature of policy provision for BIK-related topics. National contacts were asked to report on the extent to which the three BIK+ pillars – protection, empowerment and participation – are addressed within either a single integrated framework, or through separate policies.

Q2.2: Which of the following best describes policy provision for the topic of children and the digital environment?

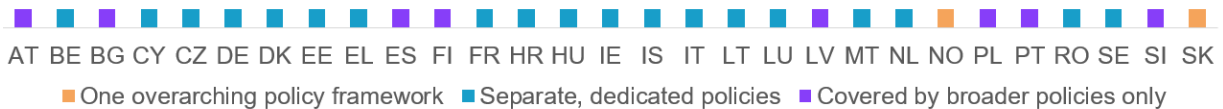
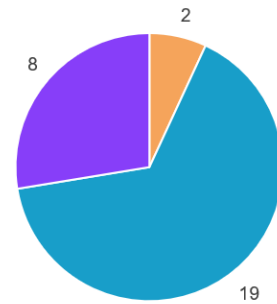


Figure 3: Policy integration

As shown in Figure 3, in most countries, the topic of children and the digital environment is covered by separate, dedicated policies at the national level.

- ▶ Just two countries (NO, SK) stated that there is a single overarching policy framework addressing children and the digital environment (protection, empowerment, and participation).
- ▶ Nineteen countries described their policy provision for BIK+ as separate, dedicated policies (BE, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, FR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, RO, SE).
- ▶ Eight countries reported that the topic of children and the digital environment is covered by broader policies (for example, in their national digital strategy) rather than in specific, dedicated policies, and that all aspects of digital protection, empowerment and participation may be covered (AT, BG, ES, FI, LV, PL, PT, SI).

Again, this overall profile is similar to previous editions of the BIK Policy monitor, though, as noted in [section 2.1.1](#), several significant developments in policy and regulation are evident at the national level.

2.1.3 The influence of the BIK+ strategy

While children’s online protection, empowerment and participation receive much attention in national policies, the BIK+ strategy is not always the primary influence.

Q2.3: Has the BIK+ strategy been considered in any of the national policies on children and the digital environment in your country?

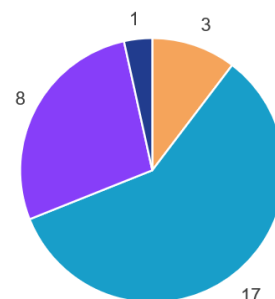


Figure 4: Influence of the BIK+ strategy

Figure 4 shows that most countries acknowledge some degree of influence from the BIK+ strategy in their national policies.

- ▶ In just three countries (CY, ES, PL), BIK+ is said to play a key role and is explicitly referenced in national policies.
- ▶ In the case of seventeen countries, BIK+ is acknowledged as an important influence that informs and guides national policies without explicitly referring to it (AT, BE, CZ, DK, DE, EL, IS, IE, IT, LV, LU, MT, NL, NO, PT, RO, SK).
- ▶ In eight countries, the BIK+ strategy is said to inform national policies but is not considered the main influence (BG, EE, FI, FR, HU, LT, SI, SE).
- ▶ One country (HR) reported that BIK+ has no influence on national policies.

There have been no major changes since the previous BIK Policy monitor cycle, reflecting a stable position in the role that BIK+ plays nationally.

2.1.4 Children’s rights in the digital environment

An important aspect of national policies related to BIK+ is the extent to which they recognise children’s rights in the digital environment, given its status as the digital arm of the [EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#). As shown in Figure 5, children’s rights continue to feature prominently in national legal and policy frameworks.

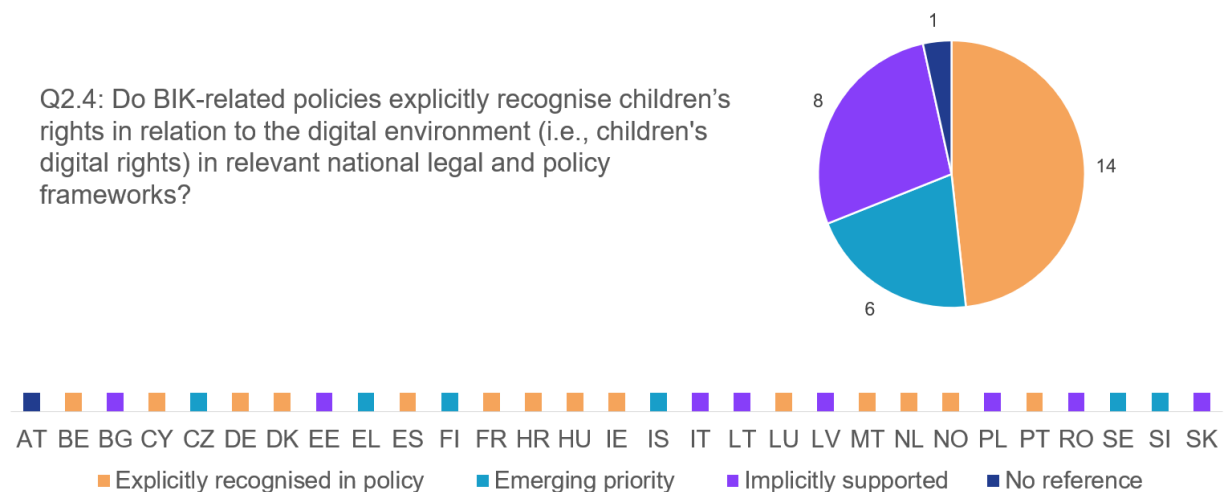


Figure 5: Children’s rights in the digital environment

Findings from this round of the BIK Policy monitor continue to show increasing attention to children’s digital rights.

- ▶ Just under half of countries, or 14 of the 29, reported that their national policies explicitly recognise children’s rights in the digital environment (BE, CY, DE, DK, ES, FR, HR, HU, IE, LU, MT, NL, NO, PT).
- ▶ A further six countries reported that children’s rights are an important and emerging policy priority with specific policies explicitly recognising children’s digital rights under development (CZ, EL, FI, IS, SE, SI).
- ▶ Eight countries said that children’s rights are implied but not explicitly recognised in policies on children and the digital environment (BG, EE, IT, LT, LV, PL, RO, SK).
- ▶ One country (AT) stated that its national policies do not refer to children’s rights in this context.

The progress noted in the [2025 BIK Policy monitor](#) on formalising rights-based frameworks has been maintained, with many of these frameworks referencing [UNCRC General Comment No. 25 \(GC25\)](#).¹⁶

¹⁶ See, for example, BE and NO. See also Box 1.

Policy frameworks focused on specific aspects of safe digital upbringing continue to evolve as the following selected examples show:

Belgium (Flanders): The Flemish Government approved the Action Plan “[Veilig Online](#)” (Safe Online) in December 2025. This plan follows the three BIK pillars of protection (platform responsibility), empowerment (media literacy in the curriculum), and participation (youth involvement through the Flemish Youth Council).

Denmark: The government launched a white paper titled “[A Safe Childhood in a Digital Reality](#)” followed by a political agreement on online protection of minors in November 2025. This proposes raising the age of digital debut, making devices safe by default, and reducing negative online experiences.

Ireland: The [Online Safety Code](#), fully adopted in July 2025, provides binding obligations for video-sharing platforms. Strategic goals are further defined in Coimisiún na Meán’s [Statement of Strategy 2025-2027](#).

Latvia: Digital safety and participation are integrated into the [Guidelines for the Protection of Children’s Rights 2022–2027](#), rather than being addressed as a separate, dedicated “digital-only” issue.

Norway: The Ministry of Children and Families published the first comprehensive [White Paper on children’s upbringing in a digital society](#) (Meld. St. 32 (2024-2025)). This overarching framework defines national goals for a safe digital upbringing and explicitly addresses protection, empowerment, and participation.

Portugal: The [Single Strategy for the Rights of Children and Young People \(2025-2035\)](#) and its subsequent Action Plan (2025-2030) were approved in 2025 and include “Security in the Digital Age” as a dedicated strategic area.

Spain: In 2025, the government advanced the [Draft Organic Law on the protection of minors in digital environments](#) and initiated a public consultation to develop a supporting national strategy, expected in early 2026.

Box 1: Examples of policy frameworks on children and the digital environment

2.2 Policy design and evidence-based policymaking

This section assesses the extent to which research and evidence inform policy development. The Policy monitor includes questions on the regular collection of data on children’s digital activity ([section 2.2.1](#)), online risks, harms and well-being ([section 2.2.2](#)), government-supported information systems ([section 2.2.3](#)), research funding for BIK-related topics ([section 2.2.4](#)), and monitoring and evaluation of BIK-related policies ([section 2.2.5](#)).

2.2.1 Collection of statistics on children’s digital activity

The availability of dedicated surveys to collect regular and systematic data on children’s digital activities is a key issue assessed by the BIK Policy monitor.

Across Europe, approaches to regular, systematic data collection vary. This ranges from countries with well-established annual survey cycles to those relying on irregular or project-based data.

Q2.5: Do national statistical systems or other competent authorities systematically and regularly collect data on children's digital activities in dedicated surveys?

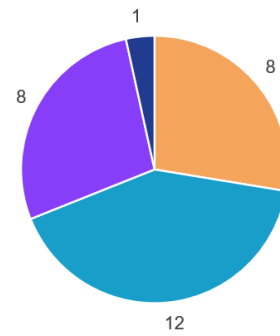


Figure 6: Collection of statistics on children's digital activity

As shown in Figure 6, while some countries organise national surveys, others continue to rely heavily on international studies such as [EU Kids Online](#), [Health Behaviour in School-aged Children \(HBSC\)](#), or [European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs \(ESPAD\)](#).

- ▶ Eight countries reported that there is a regular (i.e., annual or biannual) nationally representative survey specifically focused on children's digital activity, which informs national policies on this topic (DE, HU, IS, IT, LU, NO, SE, SK).
- ▶ Twelve countries reported that quantitative data on certain aspects of children's digital activity are collected as part of broader surveys (AT, BE, CY, CZ, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, MT, NL, PL).
- ▶ In the case of a further eight countries, surveys of children's digital activities were reported to be undertaken only irregularly (BG, FR, HR, IE, LT, LV, PT, SI).
- ▶ Just one country (RO) reported that there is no regular data collection on this topic.

Comparing findings with previous editions of the BIK Policy monitor, there is some evidence of a gradual increase in national data collection. The number of countries reporting regular national surveys has remained static at eight, while the number drawing on broader surveys, with some data related to children, has increased from eight in 2024 to twelve in the current report.

2.2.2 Data on online risks, harms, and well-being of minors

Countries were also asked to report on the availability of data specifically on children's experiences of risks and harms, and on their well-being in the digital environment.

Q2.6: Does national research collect evidence of children's experiences of risks, harms and their well-being in relation to the digital environment?

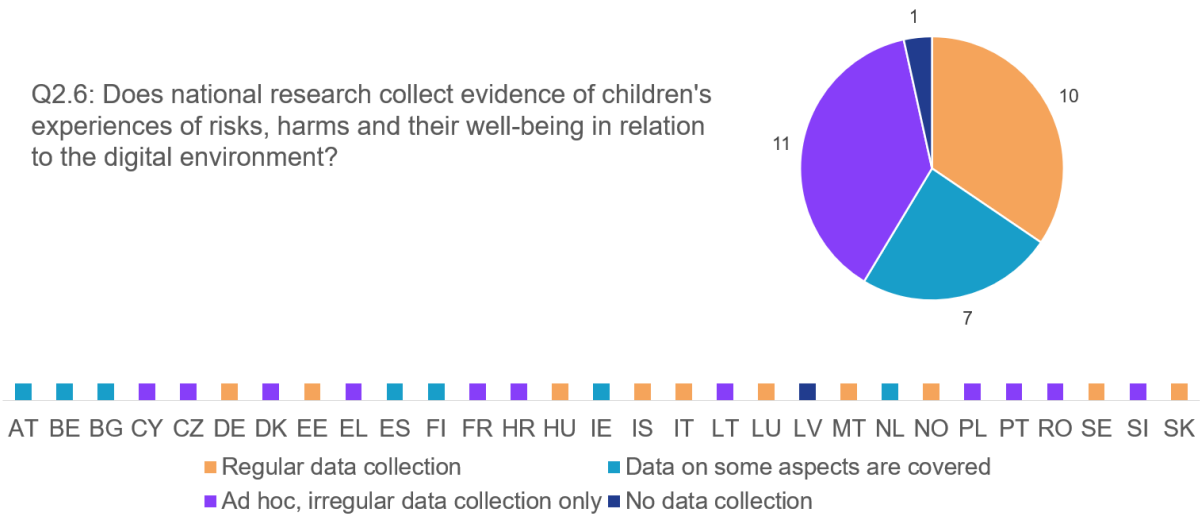


Figure 7: Data on risks, harms, and well-being

According to this year's Policy monitor, just one-third of countries collect evidence on children's experiences of online risks, harms, and digital well-being.

- ▶ Ten countries report regular national systematic research focused on children's digital safety with annual or biennial surveys that include specific measures of risks and digital well-being (DE, EE, HU, IS, IT, LU, MT, NO, SE, SK).
- ▶ Seven countries report that some, but not all, aspects of children's experiences of risks, harms and digital well-being are included in regular surveys (AT, BE, BG, ES, FI, IE, NL).
- ▶ Eleven countries state that surveys of children's experiences of risks, harms, and digital well-being are undertaken on an ad hoc and irregular basis (CY, CZ, DK, EL, FR, HR, LT, PL, PT, RO, SI).
- ▶ Just one country (LV) reports that there is no national-level research on this topic.

A trend towards thematic research on emerging technologies and their psychological impacts is a notable feature of this year's findings. Specific studies on AI are noted by three countries (EE, LU, SI), while addictive design and well-being also featured in several thematic studies (BE, LU, NO). A number of countries also refer to their participation in new EU Kids Online research, including a large-scale quantitative survey (AT, BE, EE, FI, HR, IE, LU, MT, NO, PL, ES, PT), as well as [new research on the use of AI](#) released as part of [Safer Internet Day 2026](#). Box 2 below provides further details on selected examples of research reported by countries.

2.2.3 Systems for evidence-based policy development on BIK topics

The availability of dedicated information systems at the government level to support and inform policy development is another element of the BIK ecosystem assessed by the BIK Policy monitor (Figure 8).

Q2.7: Are there dedicated systems in place at the government level to inform policy development?

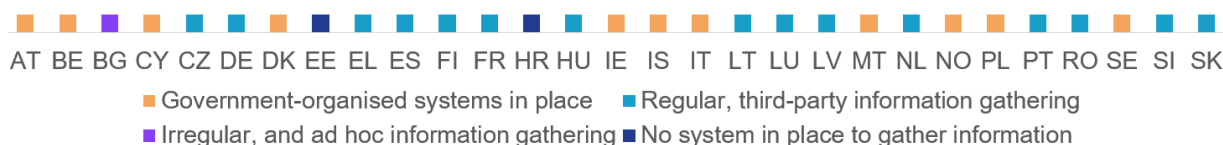
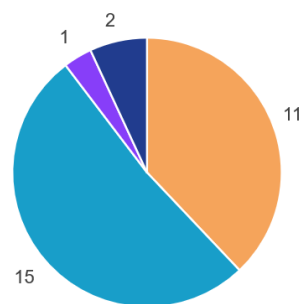


Figure 8: Dedicated systems for evidence-based policy development

Findings show that most European countries have dedicated systems in place to inform policy development, though the nature of these systems varies significantly.

- ▶ Eleven countries confirm the existence of formal, permanent structures, such as dedicated research units, think tanks, or permanent commissions (AT, BE, CY, DK, IE, IS, IT, MT, NO, PL, SE).
- ▶ A further fifteen countries regularly collect information to inform policy but rely primarily on external sources, such as NGOs or academic studies, with limited capacity to commission new, government-targeted data (CZ, DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, LT, LU, LV, NL, PT, RO, SI, SK).
- ▶ In one country (BG), information to support policy development is said to be irregular and ad hoc, while in two further countries (EE, HR) there is no government-level system to gather information on children and the digital environment.

As with the findings on data collection, there is some evidence of a shift towards greater integration of up-to-date information sources. While the number of countries with permanent structures has remained unchanged over the last three cycles of BIK Policy monitoring, more countries now conduct regular information gathering, including from third-party sources, increasing from eight in 2024 to the current fifteen. Box 2 lists some of the various research studies undertaken at national level, as reported in this year's Policy monitor. Further details are provided within the individual country profiles.

Figure 9 shows that while very few countries have established a single, central fund exclusively for this topic, many provide support through broader national research programmes or targeted special initiatives.

- ▶ Only two countries reported that there is such a research funding system in place (BE, NO).
- ▶ Twelve countries reported that existing regular national research funding is available for research on this topic, though this is not explicitly specified (CY, DE, EE, ES, FI, IE, IS, IT, LU, MT, RO, SE).
- ▶ A further thirteen countries reported that there are occasional special initiatives to gather evidence on children and the digital environment (AT, BG, CZ, DK, EL, FR, HU, LT, NL, PL, PT, SI, SK).
- ▶ Two countries (HR, LV) report that there is no funding available for this area.

Belgium and Norway are examples of new research programmes being introduced, with a specific focus on youth development in the digital age.¹⁷

2.2.5 Monitoring and evaluation of BIK-related policies

Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of BIK policies at the national level is a further key element of policy design. In this context, countries were asked about systems in place regarding BIK topics.

Q2.9: Is there a system in place for the monitoring and evaluation of policies relating to children and the digital environment?

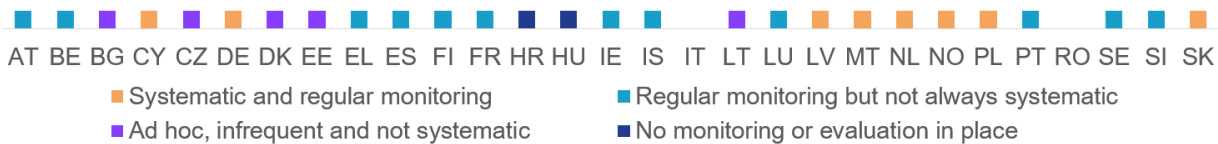
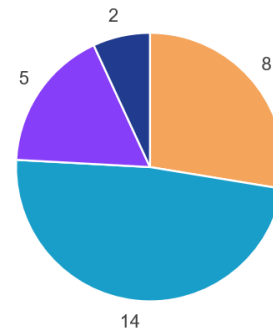


Figure 10: Monitoring and evaluation

Findings from the 2026 Policy monitor on monitoring and evaluation (Figure 10) indicate that while most countries have established mechanisms to review BIK-related policies, fewer have a fully systematic and regular national system for this purpose.

- ▶ In eight countries, policies undergo systematic, regular monitoring and evaluation to assess the effectiveness of actions in different contexts (e.g., to take account of new technologies or emergent risks) (CY, DE, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, SK).
- ▶ Fourteen countries reported that policies are regularly monitored and evaluated, but not in a structured, standardised way every time (AT, BE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IE, IS, IT, LU, PT, RO, SE, SI).
- ▶ In five countries, monitoring and evaluation are reported to be ad hoc, infrequent and not systematic (BG, CZ, DK, EE, LT).
- ▶ Two countries reported that there is no monitoring or evaluation of policies regarding children and the digital environment (HR, HU).

The number of countries reporting systematic, regular monitoring has not changed since 2024. However, in this cycle, countries refer more frequently to assessing the impact of newly

¹⁷ Examples include Belgium's JEZ! Research Projects (2024-2025) initiative and the research programme (2023-2026) to support the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir). See individual country profiles for further details.

introduced policies. Examples from Germany, Latvia and Luxembourg highlight various methods of policy impact assessment at the national level – see individual country profiles for further details.

2.3 Policy governance

Policy governance in the context of the BIK Policy monitor refers to the management and coordination of national-level policies, specifically across the different ministries, public agencies, and other policy actors involved. Three key aspects are considered: firstly, assigned leadership for policy development on BIK-related matters ([section 2.3.1](#)); secondly, leadership arrangements for BIK actions ([section 2.3.2](#)); and thirdly, the availability of a national action plan or similar framework to consolidate relevant initiatives and actions ([section 2.3.3](#)).

2.3.1 Lead for policy development on BIK topics

Countries were asked to report on whether a designated lead ministry or agency was mandated at the national level to lead on policy development, recognising that responsibility for children’s online safety and digital activity may sit across several ministries.

Q2.10: Is there a designated lead ministry or agency that is mandated to lead on policy development, recognising that responsibility for children’s online safety and digital activity may sit across several ministries?

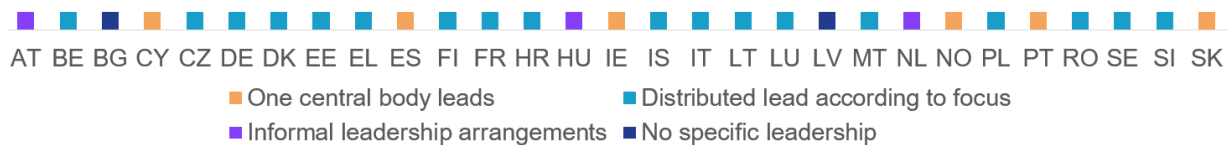
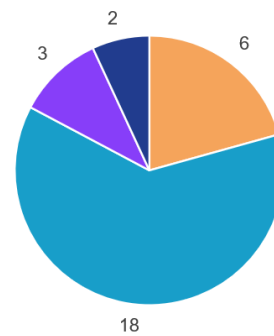


Figure 11: Lead for policy development

According to this year’s BIK Policy monitor, most countries adopt a “distributed leadership” model rather than a centralised body or a single agency overseeing policy development (Figure 11).

- ▶ Six countries stated that there is one designated central body, such as a central ministry office, public agency, or regulatory authority, formally mandated to lead and develop policies, guidelines, and programmes relating to children and the digital environment, and, if necessary, to consult with other departments (CY, ES, IE, NO, PT, SK).
- ▶ Eighteen countries reported that policy development sits across different ministries with leadership distributed according to the area of specialisation (BE, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, FI, FR, HR, IS, IT, LT, LU, MT, PL, RO, SE, SI).
- ▶ Three countries reported that the lead ministry, public agency, or regulatory authority operates informally and ad hoc, depending on requirements at any given time (AT, HU, NL).
- ▶ Two countries stated that there is no specific leadership for policy development on this topic (BG, LV).

As with other areas of the BIK Policy monitor, there has been no change in the number of countries with a centralised lead for policy development. However, more countries report formalising policy responsibilities by area of specialisation, rising from thirteen in 2025 to eighteen in the current report. The distributed approach to leading on BIK policies is hardly surprising given the complexity and the range of areas of focus. Positively, the number of countries reporting ad hoc or no specific leadership for BIK-related policies has declined from

ten in 2025 to five in this year's report.

2.3.2 Lead for implementation of BIK-related policies

Countries were also asked to report on the availability of a clearly defined national coordination body, agency or mechanism (e.g., a national Online Safety Task Force, Steering Committee or equivalent) for coordinating policies (rather than leading their development) and implementing programmes.

Q2.11: Is there a clearly defined national coordination body, agency or mechanism (e.g., a national Online Safety Task Force, Steering Committee or equivalent) that is mandated to coordinate policies, guidelines, and programme implementation?

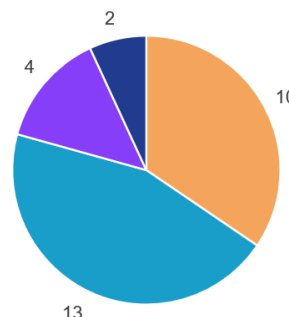


Figure 12: Lead for implementation

As shown in Figure 12:

- ▶ Ten countries reported that a clearly defined coordination function is in place, involving all relevant stakeholders and encompassing the cross-cutting policy issues relating to children and the digital environment (CY, EE, HU, IE, IS, IT, MT, NO, PT, SK).
- ▶ Thirteen countries reported that coordination occurs more informally across departments and entities that contribute to government policies, guidelines and programmes on this topic (AT, BE, CZ, DE, DK, EL, ES, FR, LU, LV, NL, SE, SI).
- ▶ Four countries reported that policy coordination and implementation are distributed across multiple entities, with no clear central coordination mandate or mechanism (BG, FI, PL, RO).
- ▶ Two countries reported that no coordination is in place (HR, LT).

The number of countries reporting a clearly defined, formal coordination function has increased slightly over previous cycles, rising from eight in 2024 and nine in 2025 to ten in the current report. There has also been a decrease in the number of countries reporting no coordination mechanism at all, from six in 2024 to just two in the current round.

It is also notable that the largest group of countries reporting an informal approach to coordination state that this still facilitates reasonably effective collaboration and alignment of efforts.

2.3.3 Availability of an action plan on BIK topics

The extent to which policy goals are translated into a plan for concrete, accountable implementation is a further element of policy governance assessed in the BIK Policy monitor.

Q2.12: Is there a national action plan, strategy or equivalent in place that gives government policy on children and the digital environment defined timelines, assigned responsibilities and key performance indicators (KPIs)?

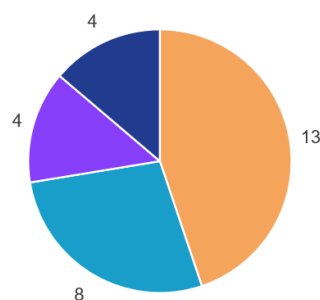


Figure 13: Availability of an action plan

Findings in this cycle regarding the availability of a national action plan (Q2.12) indicated a move towards more concrete, accountable frameworks, with several countries adopting formal action plans (Figure 13).

- ▶ Thirteen countries reported that a defined national action plan on children and the digital environment is in place, with accountabilities such as defined timelines, assigned responsibilities, or key performance indicators (KPIs) (BE, CY, DK, HU, IE, IS, LV, MT, NO, PT, RO, SI, SK).
- ▶ Eight countries reported that one or more programmes of action are underway to support children’s online safety. However, these are less formal in nature (DE, EL, ES, FI, FR, IT, NL, SE).
- ▶ In four countries, it is reported that government policy is not yet part of an implementable action plan, but that this is under development (AT, EE, LT, PL).
- ▶ Four countries stated that there is currently no action plan available or under development (BG, CZ, HR, LU).

There has been a steady increase in the number of countries establishing formal action plans with defined accountabilities over the last three policy monitoring cycles, rising from ten in 2024 to thirteen in this year’s cycle. The number of countries reporting no action plan of any kind has also declined from six in 2024 to four in this year’s report.

2.4 Stakeholder involvement

The BIK+ strategy recognises that effective implementation requires collective input from a diverse range of stakeholders, including policymakers and regulators (at EU and national levels), industry and tech companies, educators, civil society, parents and carers, and, crucially, young people themselves.

This section of the BIK Policy monitor addresses opportunities at the national level for stakeholders to contribute to policymaking. It assesses whether there are relevant forums or mechanisms to support this involvement ([section 2.4.1](#)), whether public consultation is facilitated ([section 2.4.2](#)), and the extent to which young people are involved in policy consultation and development ([section 2.4.3](#)).

2.4.1 Multi-stakeholder forum for BIK topics

Regarding stakeholder involvement in policymaking, country respondents were asked whether a formal, government-led multi-stakeholder forum exists for stakeholders to contribute to policy discussions and development on children and the digital environment.

Q2.13: Is there a formal, government-led forum in place for relevant stakeholders (e.g., various government departments, civil society, public agencies, law enforcement, industry, academia, etc.) to contribute to policy discussion and development regarding children and the digital environment?

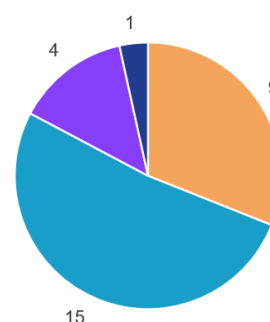


Figure 14: Multistakeholder forum in place

According to this year's cycle, while most countries support multistakeholder involvement, they rely on diverse platforms rather than a single, permanent government-led forum. As Figure 14 reveals:

- ▶ Nine countries reported that a designated multi-stakeholder forum is in place, facilitating the involvement of all relevant stakeholder groups (EE, ES, FR, IT, LV, MT, PT, SE, SK).
- ▶ Fifteen countries reported that stakeholders are engaged through various existing groups rather than through a single, centrally coordinated office (AT, BE, CY, CZ, DE, DK, FI, HU, IE, IS, LT, NL, NO, PL, SI).
- ▶ In four countries, there are occasional opportunities for stakeholders to participate in policy development, but these opportunities are infrequent (BG, EL, HR, RO).
- ▶ One country (LU) stated there is no mechanism at the government level for stakeholder groups to contribute to policy discussion and development.

There has been a small increase in the availability of formal mechanisms for stakeholder involvement over the last three cycles. In the 2024 report, seven countries reported that such fora were in place. This has now increased to nine countries, with France and Latvia reporting more structured engagement mechanisms. The number of countries reporting any form of stakeholder involvement mechanism has also risen from nineteen in 2024 to twenty-four in the current cycle.

A notable feature of this year's responses is the emergence of various special-purpose alliances convened by governments to facilitate stakeholder involvement (see Box 3).

SIC Advisory Boards also remain a common multi-stakeholder vehicle across successive BIK Policy monitor cycles. In Bulgaria and Romania, these remain the primary channels for stakeholder input, given the absence of a central government-mandated forum.

2.4.2 Consulting the public on BIK topics

Countries were also asked whether members of the public were consulted in the policy development process for BIK-related topics.

Q2.14: Are members of the general public consulted in the process of policy development?

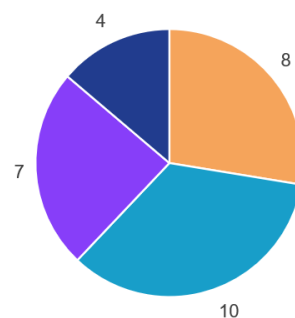


Figure 15: Consulting the public on BIK topics

As Figure 15 shows, public consultation on BIK-related topics is common but rarely routine. More specifically:

- ▶ Eight countries reported that members of the public are routinely consulted as part of policy development for BIK topics (DK, HU, IE, IS, LV, MT, NO, SI).
- ▶ Ten countries reported that the public is consulted only when new policies are being developed (BE, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, IT, PL, SE, SK).
- ▶ In seven countries, public consultation was reported to be infrequent and irregular (AT, CY, EL, FR, LT, NL, PT), while four countries stated that no public consultation is available on BIK-related topics (BG, HR, LU, RO).

Consistent with previous reports, most countries confirm that the general public is consulted primarily during the development of major new policies. This cycle's examples include consultations on smartphone bans in schools and social media restrictions (BE, ES, NO), recommendations on children's use of digital devices (FI), and regulatory approaches to age assurance and digital identity mechanisms (DE, ES, FI, FR).

2.4.3 Children's participation in policy development on BIK topics

The central role of active youth involvement in shaping policies for the online world is a notable feature of the BIK+ strategy. Youth participants are actively involved, for instance, in evaluating the BIK+ strategy, the annual Safer Internet Forum (SIF), and youth advisory groups attached to SICs. In this context, countries were asked to report on the nature and extent of youth participation in national policymaking.

Findings from this year's monitoring indicate that children are more systematically consulted in digital policy development through tailored mechanisms, although they are rarely formally involved in decision-making (Figure 16).

Q2.15: Which of the following best describes the involvement of young people in policy-making on the topic of children's digital activity in your country?

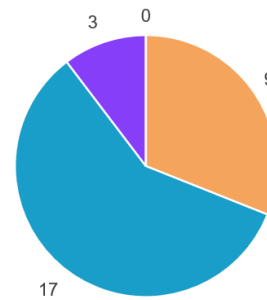


Figure 16: Children's participation in BIK policy development

- ▶ Nine countries reported that children and young people are actively involved in designing policies related to their participation in the digital environment, using dedicated structures for this purpose (ES, HU, IE, IT, MT, NO, PL, SI, SK).
- ▶ Seventeen countries reported that children are listened to directly in the policy development process, for instance, through hearings, consultations, and specific surveys, but are not formally involved in decision-making (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EL, FI, FR, HR, IS, LU, NL, PT, RO, SE).
- ▶ Three countries said that children's interests are considered indirectly, for example, through analysis of existing surveys or data collections (EE, LT, LV).

The overall trend shows a rise in the number of countries actively involving children in the design of digital policies, from five in 2024 to the current nine. The most common model, however, remains one in which children are listened to directly through hearings, surveys, or focus groups, but they are not formally involved in final decision-making. Examples of new deliberative approaches to youth involvement continue to emerge and offer useful models for innovative policy participation (see Box 3).

Major national recurring studies include:

Austria: The [Federal Youth Council](#) acts as the legally anchored representation of interests, and the "[Reality Check](#)" platform allows youth needs to be incorporated into the Austrian Youth Strategy.

Belgium (Flanders): The Flemish Youth Council ([Vlaamse Jeugdraad](#)) acts as the official advisory body to the government and conducted the "[Leefwereldbevraging](#)" survey (over 10,000 respondents) which directly prioritised youth privacy and human-centric algorithms in the "[Safe Online](#)" action plan.

Bulgaria: The Council of Children, operating under the State Agency for Child Protection (SACP), held special sessions in 2025 dedicated specifically to online safety and the challenges of AI.

Cyprus: The [CYberSafety Youth Panel](#) serves as a forum where youth representatives, including members of the Children's Parliament, exchange knowledge and contribute recommendations to improve policies on the digital environment.

Denmark: In June 2024, the Danish (DK) government launched the "Alliance for the digital well-being of children and youth". Led by the Prime Minister, this initiative brought together large youth rights organisations and resulted in 11 specific recommendations for political action on addictive design and screen time.

Finland: The [Digiraati](#) (Digital Council), launched by the Ministry of Justice, is an interactive digital service that offers everyone under 29 an equal opportunity to have their voices heard on social and policy issues.

Germany: The [Advisory Board \(Beirat\)](#) at the Federal Agency for Child and Youth Protection in the Media (BzKJ) includes members who were aged 17 or younger at their appointment to help develop protection standards.

Netherlands: A [Youth Council on Digitalisation](#), set up with UNICEF, brings together children aged 11–17 to advise the Minister for Digitalisation on topics encountered in their daily digital lives.

Slovakia: In 2025, a “[High-Level Roundtable Initiative on Online Child Protection in the AI Era](#)” was established. Led by the High Representative for AI, it seeks to bring together various actors – including the General Prosecutor’s Office and mobile operators – to map legislative gaps in child protection within AI-driven environments.

Box 3: Youth participation opportunities

2.5 Summary: BIK policies

Findings from this year’s BIK Policy monitor cycle show that issues under the BIK+ strategy feature prominently in national policies across EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. All participating countries address these issues, although coverage is not always comprehensive. This year’s report indicates a trend towards **more formalised structures and frameworks**. Children’s rights also feature more frequently in these frameworks. Fourteen countries now explicitly recognise children’s digital rights in their policies, and many have used UNCRC General Comment No. 25 as a legal foundation. While the BIK+ strategy remains a major influence for most countries, the national landscape is increasingly shaped by the implementation of the EU Digital Services Act (DSA) and emerging concerns about AI and digital well-being.

Polymaking is increasingly evidence-based, although **systematic data collection remains highly uneven across Europe**. While many countries still rely on international studies or irregular surveys, there is a notable trend towards thematic research addressing emerging issues, such as AI-specific risks and the psychological impacts of addictive design. There has also been a modest increase in regular policy monitoring, with fourteen countries now reporting that their BIK-related policies are regularly evaluated to assess their effectiveness against new risks.

Finally, policy governance, as shown in this year’s report, is maturing through the **formalisation of coordination and implementation mechanisms**. Most countries have adopted a “distributed leadership” model, with responsibility shared across specialised ministries. Thirteen countries now have formal national action plans with defined accountabilities and timelines. Stakeholder engagement is also becoming more institutionalised, although consultation is often prompted by new legislative proposals under development. There is also a promising rise in the number of countries (now nine) that **actively involve children and young people in the design of digital policies** through specially designed structures.

Chapter 3:

Pillar 1 - Safe digital experiences

Chapters 3 to 5 present findings on the “BIK+ actions” dimension of the BIK Policy monitor, namely the practical steps and initiatives undertaken by EU Member States, Iceland and Norway to implement the policy goals described in the previous chapter.

This chapter focuses on actions at the national level related to **Pillar 1 of the BIK+ strategy – Safe digital experiences**, while Chapters 4 and 5 report on Pillars 2 and 3, respectively.

For each annual cycle, Policy monitor questions for Pillar 1 are reviewed and updated to reflect key changes in the policy environment for online protection, as outlined in the BIK+ strategy and EU priorities for safe digital experiences. This year’s iteration comprises twelve questions grouped under the following headings:

- ▶ **Implementing EU laws:** Including the availability of actions at the national level regarding the classification of video games ([section 3.1.1](#)), measures taken at the national level by [Digital Services Coordinators](#) (DSCs) to support the protection of minors online ([section 3.1.2](#)), and whether there is a continuous working relationship between the SIC and the national DSC or other competent authorities in each country ([section 3.1.3](#)).
- ▶ **Addressing online harms:** Comprising national measures to address online harms affecting children, such as harmful online content ([section 3.2.1](#)), availability of complaint mechanisms ([section 3.2.2](#)), and laws regarding intimate image abuse ([section 3.2.3](#)) or cyberbullying ([section 3.2.4](#)).
- ▶ **Age assurance:** Including national laws or regulations to support age verification ([section 3.3.1](#)), digital identity systems ([section 3.3.2](#)), and actions to support the EU harmonised age verification blueprint ([section 3.3.3](#)).
- ▶ **Supporting digital well-being:** Incorporating measures to address online marketing practices targeting children ([section 3.4.1](#)), and measures to protect children’s mental health and well-being online ([section 3.4.2](#)).

3.1 Implementing EU laws

3.1.1 Content rating systems for online/video games

A new question in this year’s Policy monitor (Q3.1) asks whether countries have any law, regulation, or formal policy in place that governs the rating and classification of video games or online games using a content rating system (for example, PEGI (Pan-European Game Information), USK (Unterhaltungssoftware Selbstkontrolle/Entertainment Software Self-Regulation Body), or any other national equivalent). Recognising that online/video games have become complex social and commercial environments, and that rating systems such as PEGI are valuable tools to support BIK+ goals, this item explores the availability of national efforts to promote such content rating systems.

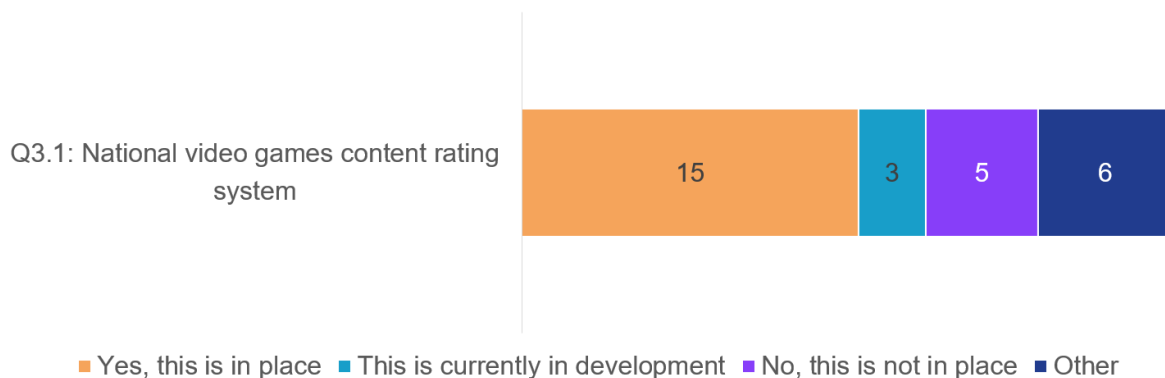


Figure 17: Content rating systems for online games

Findings on content rating systems for online games (Figure 17) indicate that just over half of countries have national laws, regulations or policies covering this area.

- ▶ Fifteen countries report that measures are in place for content rating systems for online video games (BE, BG, CY, DE, FI, FR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, MT, NL, PT, SK).
- ▶ Six countries refer to other relevant measures (AT, DK, EE, EL, NO, SE), while three countries state that this is currently under development (ES, PL, SI).
- ▶ Five countries state that there is currently no national provision for content rating systems for online games (CZ, HR, LU, LV, RO).

Most countries report that a content rating system is in place primarily through PEGI. In Slovakia, PEGI is formally recognised by government decree (Decree No. 78/2023 Coll.), making it the legally accepted system for determining age appropriateness. Similarly, in France, PEGI is the official age-rating system and applies to both physical and digital video games, including online and app-based games. Compliance with PEGI ratings is mandatory for publishers and distributors operating in the French market, including major online platforms and app stores. A co-regulatory approach applies in Germany, where the USK works with state authorities. Government representatives assign legal age ratings based on recommendations from independent youth protection experts.

Content rating systems are also widely used to foster greater parental awareness. In 2025, Flanders (Belgium) launched the “[Speel het slim](#)” (Play it smart) campaign to raise parental awareness of PEGI ratings, with a target of reaching 85% by 2027. In Norway, although video games are not covered by the general [Act relating to the protection of minors against harmful audiovisual programmes](#), the Norwegian Media Authority chairs the PEGI Council and provides the “[Snakk om spill](#)” (Talk about games) resource to help parents understand age ratings and in-game spending.

3.1.2 DSC measures regarding the protection of minors online

Countries were also asked whether the DSC or other competent authorities have implemented any specific measures at the national level regarding the protection of minors.

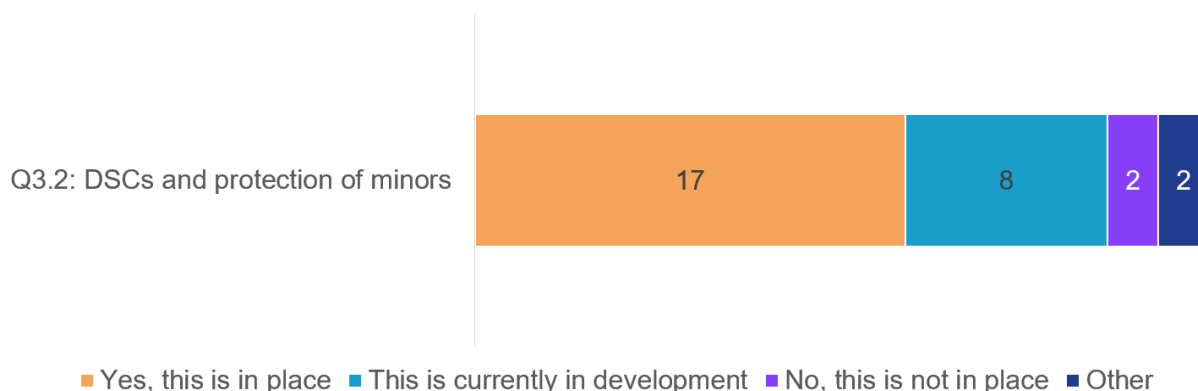


Figure 18: DSC measures on the protection of minors

As shown in Figure 18, the majority of countries report a range of actions taken by DSCs.

- ▶ Seventeen countries confirm that specific measures or actions have been implemented by DSCs at the national level (AT, BE, DE, DK, EL, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, SE, SK).
- ▶ In eight countries, national measures to protect minors are said to be in development (BG, CY, EE, ES, HR, PL, PT, RO).
- ▶ Two countries indicate other relevant measures (CZ, NO), while two further countries report that there are no such national measures at present (IS, SI).

Actions reported include supervisory measures under Article 28 of the DSA, which requires high levels of privacy, safety and security for minors. Among the examples mentioned are Germany’s KidD office, which has conducted administrative offence proceedings, and Slovakia’s Council for Media Services, which used DSA and AVMSD legislation to shut down a toxic video-sharing platform.

The designation and formal appointment of trusted flaggers – or organisations authorised to report illegal content (such as child sexual abuse material (CSAM) or cyber-harassment) – is another frequently cited measure. Belgium (Child Focus), France (e-Enfance/3018), Hungary, Malta, and the Netherlands each report formalising these roles.

France notes measures to implement binding technical standards for age verification on pornographic sites from January 2025. In Greece, the DSC has taken a leading role in standardising technical requirements for age assurance.

Other countries, such as Belgium and Italy, have established DSA Boards or Technical Committees that bring together DSCs, regional media regulators, and child protection authorities to ensure consistent oversight.

3.1.3 DSC-SIC working relationship

An additional item in this year’s Policy monitor asks whether there is a continuous working relationship between the national DSC (or other competent authorities for the DSA) and the relevant SIC. Such collaboration helps bridge the protection and empowerment pillars of the BIK+ strategy and helps inform regulatory actions through insights, for example, from SIC helplines and hotlines.

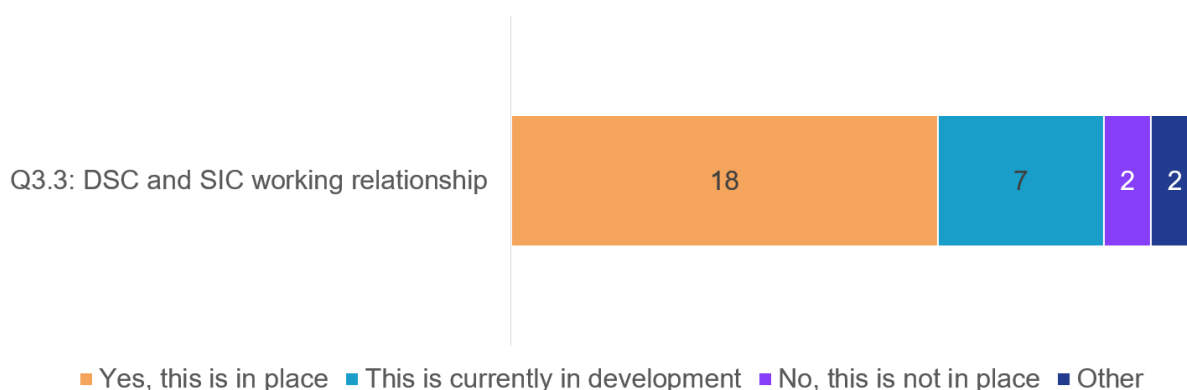


Figure 19: DSC-SIC working relationship

Findings in response to this item indicate that continuous, effective working relationships between DSCs and SICs are either well-established or emerging in most countries (Figure 19).

- ▶ Eighteen countries report a continuous working relationship between the DSC and the SIC at the national level (AT, BE, BG, DE, DK, EL, FI, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, RO, SE, SK).
- ▶ A further seven countries indicate that this is currently in development (CY, EE, ES, FR, PL, PT, SI).
- ▶ Two countries point to other relevant activities (CZ, NO), while a further two state that this is not in place (HR, IS).

The high level of working partnerships between DSCs and SICs in most countries is a positive indicator of engagement among key stakeholders. Among the activities noted, designating SIC partners as “trusted flaggers” under the DSA has been a primary driver of regular technical and legal exchange.

Moreover, in some countries, coordination is formalised through membership in the respective advisory boards. Examples include Finland, Luxembourg, and Slovakia, where the DSC body or its media literacy coordinator is a formal member of the SIC Advisory Board.

Cooperation on education and awareness raising also features in national reports. Austria’s DSC leads a project group with the national SIC to develop DSA teaching and learning materials for schools, while Slovakia participates in joint national awareness campaigns such as Media Literacy Week.

3.2 Addressing online harms

A key element of Pillar 1: Safe digital experiences – is protection against specific risks, such as illegal and harmful content and harmful conduct, including cyberbullying and grooming. In this section of the BIK Policy monitor, the landscape of safe digital protection is assessed by examining how these risks are defined and addressed at the national level.

3.2.1 Definition or classification of harmful online content

Countries were first asked whether a definition or classification of harmful online content was included in national laws, regulations or policies, thereby providing a basis for regulatory enforcement and/or supporting risk assessments under the DSA (Figure 20).

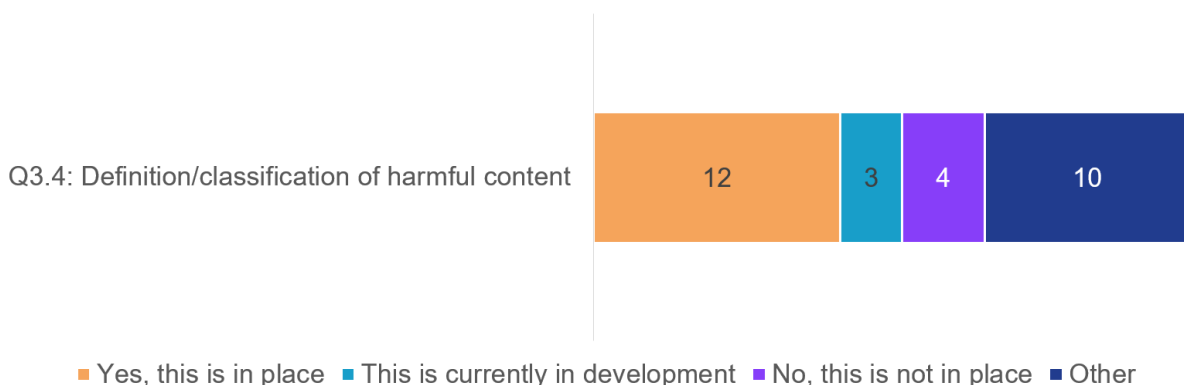


Figure 20: Definition of harmful online content

Responses indicate that most countries have codified classifications that distinguish between “illegal” and “legal but harmful” material.

- ▶ Twelve countries said they include a definition or classification of harmful online content in their national laws, regulations, or policies (BE, BG, DE, EL, FI, IE, IS, IT, LT, MT, RO, SI). Three countries said this is currently under development (ES, FR, NO).
- ▶ A further ten countries highlighted various elements of their national policies that address the definition of online content potentially harmful to children (AT, CZ, DK, EE, HR, HU, LU, NL, SE, SK).
- ▶ Four countries reported that this is not in place (CY, LV, PL, PT).

Regarding trends in defining harmful online content, most countries refer to definitions that distinguish illegal content in criminal codes (e.g., CSAM, hate speech, incitement to terrorism) from harmful content that is not necessarily illegal but may be detrimental to the physical, mental, or moral development of minors, such as “gratuitous violence” or pornography. These definitions are largely driven by the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD).

A number of recent additions to national approaches for defining online harms include:

- ▶ Romania’s new CNA Decision no. 573/2025 expands the definition of harmful content to include material capable of inducing “fear, intimidation, horror, or psychological terror”.
- ▶ Belgium’s 2025 “[Veilig Online](#)” action plan explicitly identifies “infinite scroll,” “autoplay,” and “push notifications” as harmful design features for minors. Similarly, Bulgaria and Denmark address “addictive design” within their policy discussions on online harm.
- ▶ Several countries have formally categorised AI-specific phenomena as harmful online practices. Belgium and Cyprus, for example, have updated frameworks to include “deepfake nudes” (AI-generated non-consensual imagery) and “doxing” (releasing an individual’s personally identifiable information) as online harms.

3.2.2 Complaints handling mechanism

Question Q3.5 addresses whether individuals (including children) and/or organisations can submit complaints to an administrative body. Such complaint mechanisms are important for promoting platform accountability and enabling redress, in line with children’s rights – including their rights as data subjects – to seek remedy and have their digital rights respected (Figure 21).



Figure 21: Complaints handling mechanism

Findings from the 2026 Policy monitor indicate an increase in positive responses compared with previous years.

- ▶ Twenty-four countries now report the availability of such mechanisms (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IS, IT, LT, LV, MT, PL, PT, RO, SE, SK); an increase from 21 in 2024.
- ▶ Three countries (IE, LU, NO) indicate that other facilities cover this, while a further two countries indicate that such mechanisms are currently in development (NL, SI).

With the implementation of the DSA, DSCs are increasingly recognised as administrative escalation points for complaint handling. Several countries, such as Belgium, use “dual-track” systems in which citizens can complain to media regulators about specific harmful content and to the DSC (Belgian Institute for Postal Services and Telecommunications (BIPT)) about platform negligence, such as ineffective moderation or ignored reports. The designation of “trusted flaggers”, including SICs and other specialised NGOs, is another way in which complaint handling has expanded.

Several countries have also introduced more accessible, age-appropriate channels to provide further avenues for children to seek help:

- ▶ In 2025, Bulgaria introduced the “Cyberkidz Patrol” mobile app, specifically designed for children to report violence or abuse they have experienced or witnessed online.
- ▶ The Greek SIC updated its reporting page to a child-friendly version that enables minors to report content that causes them “concern or discomfort” rather than just illegal material.
- ▶ Austria has ten Children and Youth Ombuds Offices where minors can report any matter of concern, including harmful online content.
- ▶ Luxembourg handles complaints through a dedicated public system via the MyGuichet.lu

portal.

- ▶ In the Netherlands, parents and children can lodge a complaint with NICAM (the Dutch Institute for the Classification of Audiovisual Media) if they believe a game or video classification is inadequate; the Dutch Media Authority handles cases in which service providers fail to comply with safety laws.

3.2.3 Laws regarding intimate image abuse

The availability of laws or other measures to address harmful conduct, such as cyberbullying and intimate image abuse, has featured in the BIK Policy monitor over the previous three cycles.

Countries were asked whether there are national or regional laws, regulations, or policies in place that address intimate image abuse, such as making it illegal.

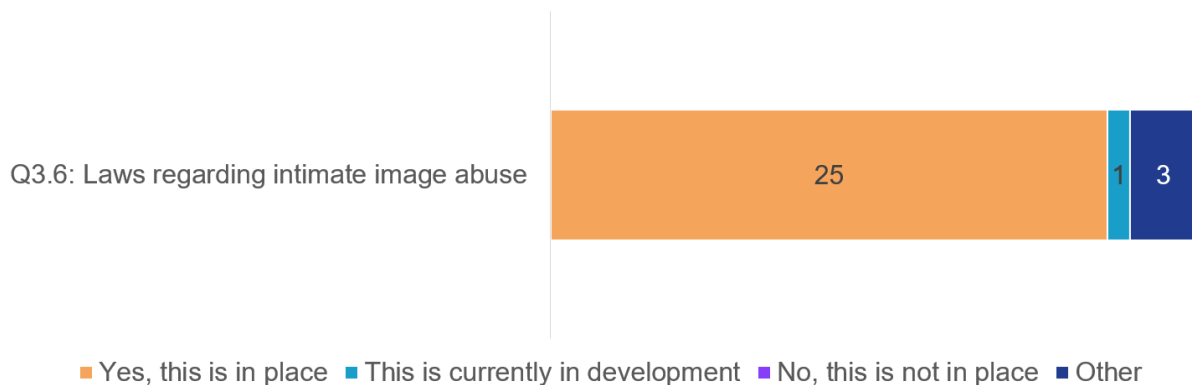


Figure 22: Laws regarding intimate image abuse

Findings from the 2026 Policy monitor indicate that legal frameworks continue to evolve across Europe (Figure 22).

- ▶ Twenty-five countries now report that there are national laws or policies in place that make intimate image abuse illegal (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, FI, FR, HR, IE, IS, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK).
- ▶ One country (ES) indicates that this is currently in development, while three countries point to other relevant measures (HU, LU, RO).

The explicit criminalisation of AI-generated non-consensual imagery is a notable development in this year's report. France, for example, adopted the SREN law in May 2024 to prohibit non-consensual deepfakes, while Cyprus amended its law in 2025 to criminalise the creation and possession of AI-generated child sexual abuse material (deepfake CSAM). Czechia also enacted Act No. 270/2025 Sb., which specifically targets the misuse of identity to produce pornographic deepfakes.

3.2.4 Laws regarding cyberbullying

With the increased policy focus on combating cyberbullying, notably with the launch of the EU [Action plan against cyberbullying](#), national laws to render cyberbullying illegal have increased in prominence (Figure 23).

Q3.7: Laws regarding cyberbullying



■ Yes, this is in place ■ This is currently in development ■ No, this is not in place ■ Other

Figure 23: Laws regarding cyberbullying

Continued development of legal and policy measures to address cyberbullying is evident in this year's report:

- ▶ Twenty-one countries now report specific laws in place that render cyberbullying illegal, an increase from the eighteen countries in last year's report (AT, BE, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, IE, IT, LT, LV, MT, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SK).
- ▶ Two countries report that this is currently under development (LU, SI), while a further two indicate that other relevant measures address this (DK, HU).
- ▶ Four countries indicate that there is no specific law or policy explicitly rendering cyberbullying illegal (BG, CY, IS, NL).

A growing trend towards specific criminalisation and the integration of digital violence into broader national safety frameworks is evident, though implementation methods remain diverse. Many countries, including Cyprus, Germany, Poland, and Sweden, report that rather than having standalone laws for cyberbullying, it is addressed through existing provisions for harassment, stalking, defamation, or coercion. In countries like Denmark and Romania, cyberbullying is legally prohibited through educational environment acts, which create binding duties for schools to implement anti-bullying protocols and treat digital violence as equivalent to physical bullying.

In practice, these legal routes are often accompanied by school procedures and broader prevention initiatives that support implementation on the ground. Box 4, therefore, combines examples of legislative and criminal law measures with illustrative school- and community-based approaches. Within the school-based examples, some measures are set out as formal requirements for schools (for example, Denmark's Teaching Environment Act and the requirements reported in Belgium), while others are programmes or initiatives that support prevention and early help-seeking (such as peer-support and community-based actions).

1. Legislative and criminal law measures

Austria recently amended Section 107c of its Criminal Code to rename the offence to "persistent harassment by means of a telecommunication or computer system" and deleted the requirement for "continued commission" to allow prosecution of single acts.

Italy's Law No. 70/2024 established a permanent technical board on bullying and cyberbullying at the Ministry of Education to coordinate an integrated action plan.

Luxembourg introduced a bill in May 2024 to add a specific article to its Penal Code to sanction "cyber-harassment".

Malta amended the Criminal Code Act in 2025, introducing cyberbullying and cyberstalking as specific offences with penalties of 1 to 5 years in prison.

2. School-based approaches and protocols

Denmark's Teaching Environment Act requires all schools to have local anti-bullying strategies that explicitly address digital bullying.

Belgium (Flanders) requires schools to appoint a digital safety referent for online safety incidents, while in the French Community, Circular 9212 required every school to have an internal cyberbullying reporting and management procedure in place by August 2024.

Germany's [JUUPORT](#) is a nationwide platform where volunteer “scouts” (teenagers and young adults) help peers with online issues such as cyberbullying.

Norway established the Ibelin Prize to reward role models in gaming communities who actively combat cyberbullying and promote inclusion.

Poland launched the “[RÓWIEŚNICY](#)” prevention programme, which includes diagnostic surveys for students to map the prevalence of cyberbullying in their own classrooms.

Box 4: Measures to tackle cyberbullying

3.3 Age assurance

Age assurance has emerged as a top policy priority in this year's Policy monitor, with a significant increase in regulatory activity and technical development compared with previous cycles. Questions in this section of the Policy monitor address age verification mechanisms ([section 3.3.1](#)), the European Digital Identity (EUDI) Wallet ([section 3.3.2](#)), and the harmonised EU age verification solution or equivalent ([section 3.3.3](#)).

3.3.1 Laws regarding age verification

Countries were first asked whether there was a national policy or law that requires age assurance, in particular age verification mechanisms, to restrict minors' access to adult (over-18) online content or other restricted services (Figure 24).

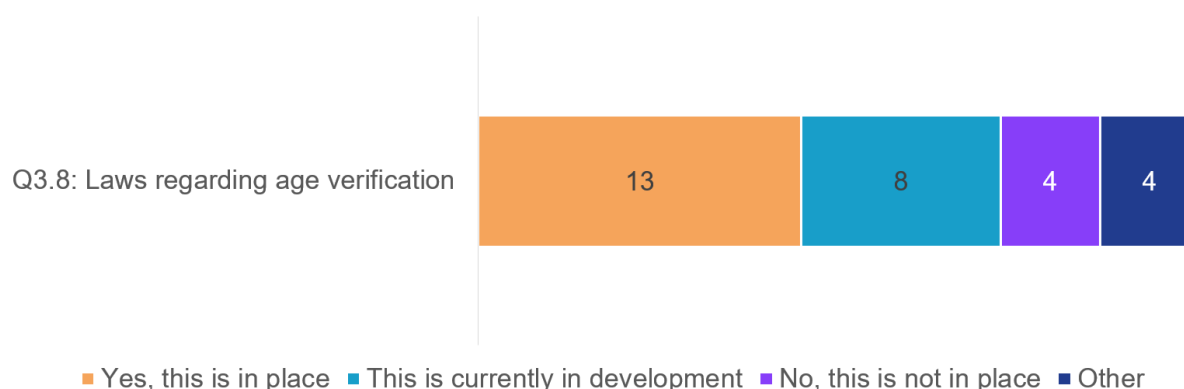


Figure 24: Laws regarding age verification

Findings from this cycle indicate that most countries have existing policies or are preparing policies to restrict access to online content through age verification.

- ▶ Thirteen countries report that they have specific national laws or policies requiring age-verification mechanisms to prevent minors from accessing adult online content (BE, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, NO, PT).
- ▶ Eight countries indicate that this is currently in development (BG, CZ, LU, MT, NL, PL, RO, SI).
- ▶ Four countries refer to other relevant measures (AT, FI, SI, SK), while a further four indicate that this is not currently in place (CY, HR, IS, LV).

The significant increase in regulatory activity and technical development on age assurance is striking compared with previous cycles. While only four countries reported having policies on age verification in place in 2024, this has risen to thirteen in the current cycle, with a further

eight countries reporting active development.

Measures for mandatory enforcement of age restrictions for adult content include France’s SREN Law (2024) and a subsequent binding technical standard adopted by ARCOM (January 2025), which requires online services distributing pornographic content to implement robust age verification. Similarly, Ireland’s Online Safety Code, fully adopted in July 2025, mandates that designated video-sharing platforms implement effective age assurance for adult-only video content. In Denmark, since October 2024, it has been mandatory for websites selling tobacco, nicotine, and alcohol to have an efficient electronic age-verification system. In Belgium, the Gambling Act was strengthened in late 2024, raising the legal age to 21 and requiring operators to use the EPIS system for formal identity checks via electronic identification (eID).

3.3.2 EU Digital Identity Wallet (EUDI) for minors

The [European Digital Identity \(EUDI\) Wallet](#) is a major initiative by the European Commission to provide every EU citizen and business with a secure, mobile-based digital identity. It is a cornerstone of the EU’s [Digital Decade](#) goals, with the aim of 80% of citizens using a digital ID by 2030.

Countries were asked whether there is a national plan to make the EUDI Wallet available to minors in their country.

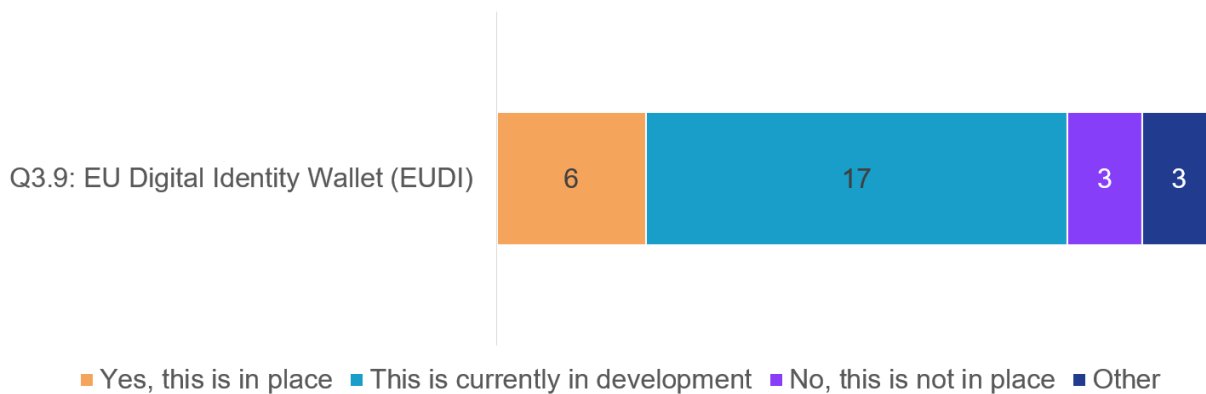


Figure 25: EUDI wallet for minors

- ▶ Six countries confirm that they have adopted plans at the national level to make digital wallets available to minors (DE, EL, FI, FR, LV, SK).
- ▶ Seventeen countries indicate that this is actively under development (AT, BE, BG, DK, ES, HR, IS, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PL, RO, SE, SI).
- ▶ Three countries refer to other relevant activities on this topic (CY, CZ, IE), while three further countries report that this is not currently in place (EE, HU, PT).

The method of implementation varies across countries, often linked to existing national identity frameworks and specific age thresholds. For example, in several countries, the EUDI Wallet is being developed using existing electronic identification (eID) infrastructures that already serve minors:

- ▶ In Belgium, the plan for the digital wallet aligns with the issuance of electronic identity cards (eIDs), which children can receive with digital certificates starting at age 12. Children as young as 6 can receive a “Kids-ID,” with more basic electronic functionality.
- ▶ In Austria, minors aged 14 and older who are registered in the country can already use the “[eAusweise](#)” app for digital proof of age in proximity cases, which serves as a precursor to the full wallet.
- ▶ In Greece, a “[KidsWallet](#)” mobile app has been created, which is being made interoperable with the EU’s age verification blueprint.
- ▶ Technical development in France has focused on [binding technical standards](#) requiring “double anonymity” mechanisms to ensure that the identity provider does not know which

site the minor is visiting, and the site does not know the minor’s identity.

3.3.3 EU-harmonised or recognised age verification solution

Countries were asked whether the [harmonised EU age verification solution](#) (or another recognised age verification solution) is planned or under consideration for integration into their national [EU Digital Identity Wallet](#), as recommended in the report on the [State of the Digital Decade 2025](#). In July 2025, the European Commission released the first version of a [blueprint](#), or prototype privacy-preserving age verification solution, and launched a pilot phase with Member States, online platforms and end-users. Denmark, France, Greece, Italy and Spain were the first Member States to take up the technical solution, later joined by Cyprus.

This pilot phase is separate from the Policy monitor survey results reported below, which capture national plans and developments more broadly.

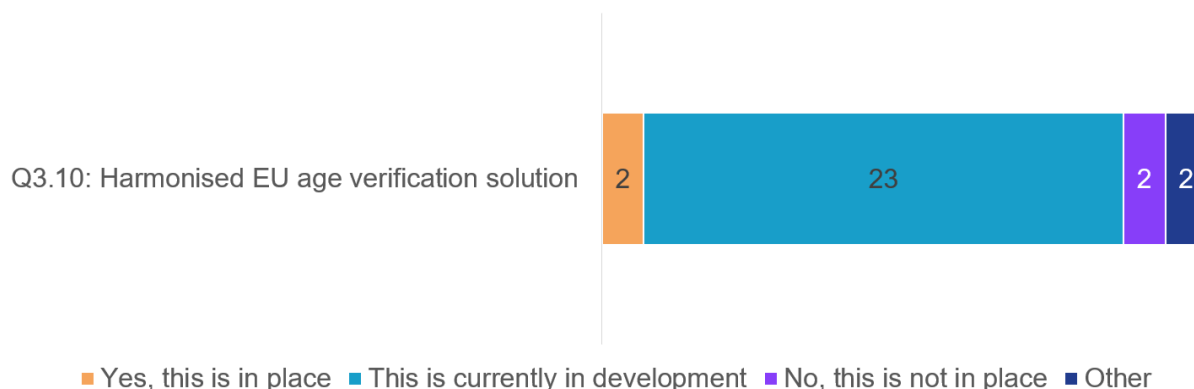


Figure 26: EU age verification system

Findings for this item show that this topic is being actively worked on in the majority of countries (Figure 26).

- ▶ Two countries confirm that age verification for the EUDI wallet has been implemented in their countries (CY, FI).
- ▶ Twenty-three countries report that this is currently in development or under active consideration (AT, BE, BG, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK).
- ▶ Two countries point to other relevant activity (CZ, HU), while a further two indicate that this is not in place (LV, SE).

Examples of technical integration with EUDI Wallets include Belgium, which began testing its national wallet, [MyGov.be](#), to incorporate these features. Denmark plans to launch its national wallet, [AltID](#), in Spring 2026, offering digital identification credentials and age verification credentials for citizens aged 13 and above. In France, building on the [France Identité](#) app, the government is exploring the use of age- or age-range-based credentials to facilitate secure and privacy-preserving use.

Examples of implementation approaches are provided in Box 5. These include general policy statements on the national approach to age verification, as well as specific forms of implementation, including those piloting the EU age verification blueprint.

1. Regulatory requirements for age assurance

Denmark: Since October 2024, it has been mandatory for websites selling tobacco, nicotine, and alcohol to use efficient electronic age verification.

France's SREN Law (2024) and a subsequent [ARCOM technical standard](#) (October 2024) require pornographic services to implement robust age verification while maintaining “double anonymity” for privacy.

Germany: Requirements are established through the [Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Minors in the Media \(JMStV\)](#).

Ireland's [Online Safety Code](#) (July 2025) requires video-sharing platforms to use effective age assurance for adult-only content, explicitly stating that self-declaration of age is insufficient.

Norway's [Broadcasting Act](#) (May 2025) requires platforms to use strict access controls like PIN codes or passwords for seriously harmful content.

Poland is currently debating a bill that would oblige providers of pornographic content to introduce effective verification mechanisms.

Spain's [Media Act](#) (Article 89.1.e) requires video-sharing platforms to establish age-verification systems for content that may harm minors' development. A [Draft Organic Law](#) advanced in 2025 also proposes default parental controls and age-related protections.

2. Harmonised EU age verification implementation

Austria: Plans to implement remote age verification according to EU standards in its national wallet. Digital proof of age is currently available for those aged 14+ via the "eAusweise" app.

Belgium is technically integrating the EU blueprint solution with the MyGov.be wallet. It is also testing zero-knowledge proof (ZKP) technology within its MyGov.be wallet to ensure age verification is effective yet pseudonymised.

Cyprus joined the pilot for the EU Age Verification App in October 2025 to verify age for restricted digital content.

Czechia plans to support the age verification use case via a PuB-EAA attestation that can be issued to the EUDI wallet upon user request, following EU technical specifications.

Denmark has committed to following the EU age verification specifications and implementation profiles. Its national wallet, AltID (launching in spring 2026), will support compliant "proof of age" attestations to ensure interoperability.

Finland is testing a feature that confirms a user is over 18 years of age without requiring any other personal data.

Germany reports that the solution is in place in terms of its national EUDI wallet strategy. The German solution will include age verification according to eIDAS requirements, though there are no plans to launch a separate "mini wallet" before the full EUDI wallet.

Greece is testing the European Commission's blueprint to publish a customised national app.

Box 5: Measures to support age assurance

3.4 Supporting digital well-being

Finally, in this section, two items in the Policy monitor focus on actions addressing online commercial practices affecting minors, and measures to protect children's mental health and well-being.

3.4.1 Laws regarding online marketing practices targeting minors

Countries were asked about national laws or regulations that specifically address online commercial practices, such as influencer marketing, dark patterns, or unfair practices targeting children.

Q3.11: Measures against manipulative design/commercial practices



■ Yes, this is in place ■ This is currently in development ■ No, this is not in place ■ Other

Figure 27: Laws on online marketing practices

As shown in Figure 27, most countries have laws or regulations in place addressing this topic.

- ▶ Seventeen countries report that there are national laws or regulations that specifically address online commercial practices affecting children (BE, BG, CY, CZ, DK, FI, HU, IS, IT, LT, LV, MT, NO, PL, RO, SE, SK).
- ▶ Five countries report that measures are under development on this topic (FR, IE, LU, NL, SI), while a further five countries point to other relevant activities in place (AT, DE, EE, EL, ES).
- ▶ Two countries report that there are currently no measures in place (HR, PT).

The scope of laws and policies on this topic is quite broad, given the wide range of practices addressed. Among these, policies targeting social media influencers are a noteworthy development, as countries move to ensure that commercial content is clearly distinguishable from content intended for children. Many countries now require explicit identifiers for advertising. For example, Belgium’s Flemish Media Regulator (VRM) updated its protocol in 2025 to mandate labels such as “Advertentie” or “Publiciteit”, stating that hashtags like #collab are no longer sufficient. Austria and Norway similarly enforce clear disclosure of commercial intent under their respective Media and Marketing Acts.

The regulation of “dark patterns” – design features that push consumers into unintended actions – has shifted from general consumer protection to more specific digital regulation in many countries. In countries such as Bulgaria and Italy, existing consumer law is being interpreted more strictly when children are involved, applying a higher standard for what constitutes an “unfair” practice. Meanwhile, regulators in Finland and Estonia have launched new resources and educational modules specifically to help citizens and young people identify “social engineering” and manipulative commercial algorithms.

The ban on targeted advertising to minors based on profiling (under Article 28 of the DSA) is also being actively monitored. In Spain, the CNMC (the Spanish independent competition regulator) and AEPD (the Spanish Data Protection Agency) coordinate to ensure that platforms do not use children’s browsing history to serve persuasive ads. Romania’s proposed “[Digital Age of Majority Law](#)” (adopted by the Senate in 2025) requires digital services to restrict personalised advertising for all minors under 16.

Regulating the monetisation of video games is also cited in some responses. Belgium, for example, classifies paid loot boxes as illegal “games of chance”. Spain’s 2025 Draft Organic Law also proposes a specific provision prohibiting minors from accessing random reward mechanisms. Meanwhile, the Swedish Consumer Agency is currently taking enforcement action against the gaming sector for “aggressive” practices, such as fake countdown timers that pressure children into making impulsive purchases.

3.4.2 Protecting children’s mental health and well-being online

Measures to protect children’s mental health and well-being while online are the topic of the final question in this section, which gauges national support for a key area of focus highlighted in the European Commission’s Political Guidelines for 2024-2029. Countries were asked if

there were any specific policies in place at the national or regional level on this topic (Figure 28).



Figure 28: Measures to protect mental health

- ▶ Twenty-two countries confirm that they have initiatives on mental health and well-being (BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, FI, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LU, LV, MT, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE).
- ▶ A further four countries also report that new initiatives are in development (ES, FR, SI, SK).
- ▶ Only two countries report that actions on this topic are not currently in place at the national level (LT, NL).

Given the broad and complex nature of the topic, a wide range of initiatives is referenced.

These include high-level strategic documents that provide an overarching framework for digital well-being. For example, Norway published its first comprehensive [White Paper on children's upbringing in a digital society](#) in 2025, setting goals to reduce digital risks to mental health, such as body image issues and harmful content. Denmark also concluded a [political agreement in November 2025](#), allocating 160 million DKK to initiatives, including guidelines for parents to protect children from addictive designs.

A prominent trend in many European countries has been the introduction of restrictions on the use of mobile phones in schools, including bans, as a policy tool to address student focus and mental health (see Box 6 below).

The issue of addictive design is increasingly treated as a public health matter rather than merely a safety concern. Belgium's [Superior Health Council issued Advice 9877](#) in December 2025, recommending that the government enforce stricter design standards for platforms to address sleep deprivation and social isolation. Slovakia's Ministry of Health launched the "[Recommendations for the healthy use of screen media 2025](#)" to help parents protect children from non-substance (digital) addictions. Similarly, Bulgaria's Council for Electronic Media adopted [non-binding guidelines](#) in December 2024 to help families balance screen time and social development.

Austria: A [legally established ban](#) was issued by the Federal Minister of Education as part of a regulation on orderly and safe school operations.

Belgium: As of 1 September 2025, a formal "[digital break](#)" policy was issued in new decrees across all language communities.

Luxembourg: As of May 2025, smartphones are fully prohibited in primary schools and daycare centres. In secondary schools, they are banned during lessons, though institutions can choose between levels of restriction.

Finland: The [Act on Basic Education](#) was revised in 2025 to include restrictions on school premises; mobile phone use is now forbidden during class time and mostly during recess as well.

Latvia: Effective in 2025, a new national law requires mobile phones to be locked away during school hours for all students up to 6th grade.

Slovenia: An [upgraded Act of Basic Schools](#) permits electronic device use only when strictly necessary for educational or health reasons; otherwise, they must be stored in a designated area.

Box 6: Restrictions on the use of smartphones in education

3.5 Summary: Safe digital experiences

In this year's Policy monitor, national efforts under Pillar 1: Safe digital experiences are increasingly defined by the implementation of major EU legislative frameworks, principally the **Digital Services Act (DSA)**. A step up in actions to promote safe digital protection is indicated by the finding that seventeen countries report specific measures implemented by DSCs to protect minors. **A strong, continuous working relationship between DSCs and Safer Internet Centres (SICs)** is also observed in eighteen countries. **Age assurance** has become a key priority in these efforts; the number of countries reporting specific national age verification policies has increased threefold since 2024, further supported by the active development of the European Digital Identity (EUDI) Wallet for minors in twenty-three countries.

Legal protections against online harms continue to strengthen and adapt to a rapidly changing technological landscape. **Twenty-five countries now explicitly criminalise intimate image abuse, while twenty-one have specific laws targeting cyberbullying.** A significant trend in this cycle is the inclusion of **AI-specific risks** into national legal frameworks, with countries moving to address emerging harms such as deepfake nudes, doxing, and manipulative commercial algorithms. Enhanced legal protections are supported by more accessible, age-appropriate complaint mechanisms, which are available in twenty-four countries to ensure platform accountability and provide children with various avenues for redress.

Finally, trends noted in last year's report continue to be evident: twenty-two countries are implementing initiatives that treat **mental health and digital well-being** as policy priorities. National actions are increasingly targeting the addictive design of platforms – such as infinite scroll and autoplay – as public health concerns rather than merely safety risks. One manifestation of this is the widespread movement across European countries to **regulate digital distractions in education**; twenty-four countries now have school policies in place that restrict smartphone use to improve student focus and mental health.

Chapter 4:

Pillar 2 – Digital empowerment

Pillar 2 of the BIK+ strategy focuses on equipping children and young people with the skills, knowledge and competencies needed to navigate the online world safely, responsibly and confidently. It goes beyond protection by building their digital literacy, enabling them to make informed decisions and express themselves effectively in digital environments. Key elements of Pillar 2 include developing digital skills and competencies (e.g., media literacy, digital literacy, online safety skills, and critical thinking) in both formal and non-formal education settings, ensuring inclusivity (also addressed under Pillar 3), promoting the integration of online safety and digital skills into education curricula, and helping teachers and caregivers to support digital empowerment.

The BIK Policy monitor focuses on two key aspects of this agenda, drawing on the wide range of activities outlined in the BIK+ strategy. [Section 4.1](#) summarises findings on digital empowerment in formal education across EU Member States, Iceland, and Norway, while [Section 4.2](#) examines actions to support digital empowerment more broadly.

4.1 Digital empowerment in formal education

Digital empowerment in education (formal education settings and curricula) is the focus of this section of the BIK Policy monitor, which covers findings from participating countries on the provision of online safety education ([4.1.1](#)), basic digital skills training ([4.1.2](#)), school policies on digital technology use ([4.1.3](#)), and the availability of adequate teacher training ([4.1.4](#)).

4.1.1 Online safety in primary and secondary level curricula

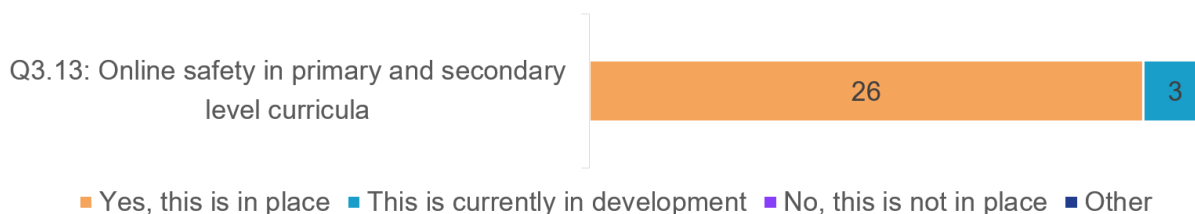


Figure 29: Online safety education

Findings from the 2026 Policy monitor indicate that online safety education has become almost universally established across Europe, with most countries now reporting that it is integrated into their national primary and secondary curricula.

According to Figure 29:

- ▶ Twenty-six of the twenty-nine participating countries report that online safety is incorporated into primary and secondary education (AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK).
- ▶ Three countries report that further development is currently taking place (CZ, DK, NL).

There has been a steady increase in the number of countries reporting the implementation of online safety education in schools, up from twenty countries that reported this in 2024.

The most significant change has been the increased formalisation of online safety within mandatory educational frameworks in several countries. Many countries refer to the use of standardised frameworks, such as the [European Digital Competence Framework](#) (DigComp), to define curriculum learning outcomes. Among new curriculum initiatives, Poland introduced “Health education” in September 2025, with “digital hygiene” included as a thematic area. In France, the PIX certification process, which assesses digital skills and online safety, has

become mandatory from year 8. In Belgium (both Flanders and the French Community), primary and secondary goals for 2025 have been updated to include algorithmic awareness and “Safety by design”. Denmark recently concluded a [political agreement](#) to integrate “Technology comprehension” into existing subjects, such as Danish and Mathematics, by the 2027/28 school year.

4.1.2 Basic digital skills training

Regarding digital skills training, countries were asked whether training in basic digital skills – including information and data literacy, AI literacy, and generative AI (GenAI) – formed a core part of their national curriculum.



Figure 30: Digital literacy skills

As shown in Figure 30, digital literacy skills have become firmly embedded as a core curricular requirement across the majority of countries.

- ▶ Twenty-one countries reported that this is in place (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, HR, HU, IS, IT, LU, LV, MT, NO, PL, PT, RO, SK).
- ▶ Five countries reported that some aspects of digital skills were currently under development (DK, EL, FR, IE, SI), while a further two highlighted other relevant activities (LT, SE).
- ▶ One country (NL) reported that digital literacy skills of this form were not currently in place.

The most notable trend in this year’s report is the inclusion of digital skills related to AI and GenAI literacy. Among the examples cited, the Belgian (Flanders) ministry launched the “[AI-wijs](#)” school programme, providing standardised lesson plans on large language models (LLMs) and algorithmic bias. Additionally, a national ethical framework for AI in education was released in 2025. In Germany, the Conference of Ministers of Education (KMK) published new “[Recommendations for dealing with AI in school education](#)” in October 2024, providing a framework for age-appropriate AI use. In Slovenia, a new national programme on AI is under development, targeting full curriculum updates by 2030.

4.1.3 School policies regarding digital technology use at school

Policies on the use of digital technologies in schools have prompted much debate in the past year. The BIK Policy monitor survey asks about relevant policies or strategies at the national or regional level, particularly regarding restrictions on the use of smartphones in schools, policies on expected online behaviour, and how to deal with cyberbullying incidents.

In this cycle, there has been a marked increase in the number of countries reporting formal strategies or regulations on the use of digital technologies in schools.

Q3.15: School online safety policies



Figure 31: School policies on digital technology use

- ▶ Twenty-four countries report that there are now national/regional policies in place (AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PT, RO, SI, SK).
- ▶ Two countries report that new policies are currently in development (IS, SE), while a further two indicate that there are other relevant activities covering this (CZ, HR).
- ▶ One country (PL) reports that such a policy is not currently in place.

The most noteworthy trend on this topic has been the movement across European countries to regulate digital distractions in educational settings, with many countries implementing policies to prohibit the use of smartphones in pre-primary, primary, and secondary schools during the school day (see also Box 6 above, which gives a sample of national policies). The number of countries reporting such policies increased from eighteen in 2024 to twenty-four in the current cycle.

4.1.4 Adequate teacher training regarding online safety

Finally, regarding provision in formal education, countries were also asked about the availability of national or regional activities to ensure adequate teacher training (pre-service or in-service) on online safety.

Q3.16: Adequate teacher training



Figure 32: Adequate teacher training

Findings from this cycle indicate that activities to support adequate teacher training are well established across most European countries (Figure 32).

- ▶ Twenty-four countries report that adequate teacher training activities are in place (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, HR, HU, IT, LT, LU, MT, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK).
- ▶ Three countries indicate that new measures are in development (FR, IE, LV), while one country (NL) points to other relevant activity.
- ▶ One country (IS) reports that this is not in place.

Notable trends in this cycle include a shift towards larger-scale digital delivery and the integration of emerging technologies such as AI. For example, countries such as Austria, Germany, Slovenia and Spain report using massive open online courses (MOOCs) and dedicated digital platforms to deliver teacher training. In Spain, the MOOC “[Una IA para Aprender](#)” (An AI to Learn) was rolled out to support the integration of AI into teacher training and pedagogical practice. Slovenia developed a MOOC dedicated to online safety, which has been delivered to over 15,000 teachers.

Accreditation of teacher training is also a noteworthy development noted by some countries. In Spain, more than 600,000 teachers have been certified in digital teaching competence based on the national reference framework. In France, teachers increasingly use the [PIX platform](#) to self-certify in the mandatory “Protection and safety” domain.

4.2 Digital empowerment and lifelong learning

Digital empowerment as part of lifelong learning is also a key focus of BIK+. The Better Internet for Kids portal and SICs, for instance, provide extensive tools, best practices, and educational materials for diverse target groups. This section of the BIK Policy monitor includes items on support for online safety education as part of lifelong learning ([4.2.1](#)), support for media literacy ([4.2.2](#)), fostering creativity in the use of technologies ([4.2.3](#)), and parents’ digital literacy ([4.2.4](#)).

4.2.1 Non-formal online safety education

Alongside the delivery of online safety education in formal school settings, countries were asked whether there were equivalent initiatives in the non-formal education sector (for example, in youth work or other activities outside the formal education system) on online safety.



Figure 33: Online safety in non-formal education

As shown in Figure 33, this year’s Policy monitor reports widespread implementation of national or regional measures for informal education and lifelong learning regarding online safety.

- ▶ Twenty-six countries report that policies are in place to support the non-formal education sector (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI).
- ▶ Two countries report that new initiatives are in development (DK, SK), while one country (IE) indicated other relevant activity.

As in previous editions of the Policy monitor, there is a strong trend towards using the non-formal sector to reach vulnerable or marginalised children, such as those in foster care, refugee centres, or living in poverty. SICs are also identified as the primary vehicles for delivery, providing resources, training toolkits for youth leaders, and public awareness campaigns.

4.2.2 Combatting disinformation and fostering critical media literacy

Combatting disinformation and fostering critical media literacy have been important focuses of BIK-related policies on digital empowerment, in both formal and non-formal settings. As in previous years, countries were asked to report on any special initiatives on these topics.



Figure 34: Disinformation and media literacy

As Figure 34 shows, disinformation and media literacy are extensively addressed in national policies.

- ▶ Twenty-seven countries confirm that initiatives are in place for media literacy (AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK).
- ▶ Two further countries report that new initiatives are in development (CZ, DK).

Reflecting the high profile of this topic, several countries report the expansion of media literacy initiatives to include AI and generative AI. Examples include efforts to identify deepfakes and AI-driven manipulation, such as Denmark’s [“Real knowledge about AI”](#) and Germany’s Klicksafe/ZDF [deepfake quiz](#).

In relation to countering disinformation, some countries are also establishing or expanding dedicated portals for youth-centred fact-checking. Examples include [idoubt.eu](#), an initiative of EDMO BELUX (Belgium/Luxembourg); [Fact-Check Cyprus](#); and Poland’s [Disinformation Analysis Centre](#). Norway’s [“Strategy to Strengthen the Population’s Resilience Against Disinformation \(2025–2030\)”](#) updates youth-friendly platforms like ung.no to include source-criticism modules. High-visibility media campaigns have also become more prominent, such as Bulgaria’s [“Check before you trust”](#) campaign, which was broadcast for three months across all public and commercial media.

4.2.3 Fostering creative digital skills

Fostering children’s digital creativity and promoting creative uses of digital technologies are key dimensions of digital empowerment, helping children to develop their skills, strengthen their digital citizenship, and access positive opportunities. Countries were asked about the initiatives available to support this activity.

Again, countries report that this aspect of digital empowerment is extensively addressed.

- ▶ Twenty-seven countries report on activities in place to support children’s digital creativity (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK).
- ▶ Two countries indicated that such measures were not available (DK, FR).



Figure 35: Fostering creativity

As illustrated in Figure 35, children’s digital creativity is increasingly regarded as a core element of digital empowerment, with policies shifting from technical skills towards creative problem-solving and digital content creation.

The use of AI is a notable trend across several initiatives in this area. Belgium’s [“Kids AI Coding”](#) initiative, for example, encourages children aged 9-13 to use AI tools to build their own apps, games, and digital art projects. In Spain, a range of school initiatives incorporate AI to support computational thinking. In Cyprus, robotics clubs and coding workshops serve as platforms for project-based learning.

FabLabs, Maker Spaces, and specialised centres that blend digital and physical creativity are also widely cited. For example, Germany launched new [TUMO centres](#), where teenagers participate in after-school programmes that combine digital technology with creative activities. Sweden reports on initiatives by municipalities and libraries to expand makerspaces, where

visitors use digital devices for creative production, including “[digilog](#)” (digital + analogue) reading methods.

National award schemes are also widely used to promote and raise awareness of best practices in digital creativity. Examples include Austria’s [Prix Ars Electronica – u19](#), Spain’s [National Awards for educational experiences fostering students’ digital competence](#), and Germany’s “[Multimedia Award mb21](#)” and the “[Youth Photo/Film Awards](#)”.

4.2.4 Parent supports for child online safety and digital skills

Finally, a new question in this section asks about initiatives that support parents in promoting online safety and in developing their digital literacy.



Figure 36: Parent supports

In addition to initiatives offered by SICs, support for digital parenting is widely represented among national BIK actions.

- ▶ Twenty-four countries report that there are programmes and activities in place to support parents in relation to online safety and digital literacy (BE, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK).
- ▶ One country (DK) states this is currently in development, while two other countries point to other relevant activities (AT, LU).
- ▶ Two countries report that there are no other activities outside of those offered by SICs in place (BG, CZ).

Overall, findings on this item indicate general support for parents in promoting online safety and digital literacy. Examples include the “[MediaDiamant](#)” in the Netherlands, a tool for starting conversations about digital media use, and Austria’s [digital skills workshops](#) focusing on “everyday digital family life”. Parent-child engagement on issues such as screen time is cited in examples such as Belgium’s “[Smartphone Pass](#)” developed by Orange Belgium. Poland refers to its updating of its “[Home Screen Rules](#)” campaign, offering ten specific rules for family device use. France introduced the inter-ministerial label “[Parents, parlons numérique](#)” (Parents, let’s talk digital), which emphasises empowerment over prohibition in digital use.

In Finland, the [drafting of national recommendations for digital media use](#), specifically aimed at parents and guardians, was a notable example of establishing official national guidance. Similarly, Norway’s Directorate of Health issued new [evidence-based advice](#) for parents to promote safe habits and safeguard sleep.

Support for digital parenting through collaborations with the private sector is also widely reported. In Latvia and Cyprus, the national telecommunications providers (Tet and Cyta) offer free presentations and campaigns to parent associations. Hungary’s “[Online Heroes](#)” campaign was launched by the media authority in partnership with an internet roundtable.

4.3 Summary: Digital empowerment

Consistent with previous editions of the BIK Policy monitor, a high level of maturity is evident across EU Member States, Iceland and Norway in promoting Pillar 2: Digital empowerment. According to this year's report, online safety education is integrated into the curricula of primary and secondary schools in twenty-six participating countries. Twenty-one countries report incorporating **AI literacy** into core digital skills training, reflecting a flexible and adaptive response to rapid technological change. Most countries confirm the availability of **adequate teacher training frameworks**, which are increasingly delivered through large-scale digital platforms and MOOCs to address a range of emerging topics such as algorithmic bias and "Safety by design".

Beyond formal schooling, digital empowerment is widely supported as a **lifelong learning priority** through diverse non-formal initiatives and parental supports. Twenty-seven countries have implemented special measures to combat **disinformation and foster critical media literacy**, with a growing emphasis on youth-centred fact-checking and on identifying AI-driven manipulation. Similarly, the focus on **digital creativity** has shifted from basic technical instruction towards creative problem-solving and AI-assisted content creation, supported by the expansion of makerspaces, competitions, and awards that encourage digital creativity. Parenting supports are reported to be available in twenty-four countries, employing a variety of empowerment-based strategies, such as gamified digital contracts and recommendations that encourage "digital hygiene" and parent-child dialogue.

Chapter 5: Pillar 3 - Active participation, respecting children

Pillar 3 of the BIK+ strategy promotes young people’s active participation and respect for their rights through activities such as fostering safe, innovative, and creative digital experiences and ensuring they have a say in policies governing the digital environment (2022, p. 9).

This edition of the BIK Policy monitor focuses on four key issues within this agenda. Firstly, efforts to promote civic engagement and active participation are examined in the context of the national framework for children’s participation in public decision-making (section 5.1.1). Secondly, children’s rights are examined in relation to awareness-raising and to facilitating their participation through child-friendly documentation (sections 5.1.2 and 5.1.3). Thirdly, activities to address digital inequalities that may negatively impact children’s ability to participate in the digital environment are assessed (section 5.1.4). Finally, support for positive online content is examined as an important contribution to facilitating children’s active participation and well-being (section 5.1.5).

5.1 Findings on active participation

5.1.1 Promoting youth civic engagement

Active participation and respect for children’s rights to be heard and involved in policy processes that affect them are key areas of focus for Pillar 3. In this context, countries were asked to report on activities at the national level – beyond the national SIC youth participation and ambassador programmes – that promote youth civic engagement and active participation in democratic processes and political life (item 3.21).

Findings on this item indicate strong support across Europe for civic engagement activities and for institutionalising youth voices in democratic processes (Figure 37).



Figure 37: Promoting active participation

- ▶ Twenty-four countries report active programmes in this area (AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, EE, ES, FI, HR, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK).
- ▶ Two countries (CZ, HU) indicate that there are currently initiatives in development, with one other country (DK) pointing to other relevant activity.
- ▶ Two countries (EL, FR) report that this is not in place.

There has been an upward trend in promoting active participation over the last three BIK Policy monitor reports, with the number rising from nineteen in 2024 to twenty-one in 2025 and twenty-four in the current report. This is also accompanied by greater formalisation of efforts to support civic engagement. For example, in Finland, the Municipal Act obliges all municipalities to establish youth councils to ensure young people can influence local decision-making. On the international level, youth representatives from Austria, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Serbia, and Czechia participated in the “YouPart” project, presenting a participatory demand catalogue to decision-makers in Brussels. See also Box 3 on youth participation opportunities above.

Despite these positive trends, a decision-making gap persists in many countries, limiting youth participation in policy processes. As the responses in [section 2.4.3](#) show, in 15 countries, children are “listened to” through surveys and hearings, but only eight countries reported that young people were actively involved in designing policies related to their participation in the digital environment.

5.1.2 Awareness-raising on children’s rights in the digital environment

Children’s rights in the digital environment are increasingly recognised as an essential component within policy processes relating to children’s online safety and well-being. The BIK+ strategy represents the “digital arm” of the [EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#), while new policy instruments such as the [DSA Article 28 Guidelines on the Protection of Minors](#) define their approach as rights-based.

In this section of the Policy monitor, countries were asked about national and regional activities, beyond the national SIC’s awareness-raising activities, to promote greater awareness of children’s rights in the digital environment (Figure 38).



Figure 38: Children’s rights awareness raising

Findings from this cycle indicate that awareness raising about children’s rights continues to grow in prominence.

- ▶ Twenty-six countries report active programmes to raise awareness about children’s rights (AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK).
- ▶ One country indicates that this is currently under development (FR), while two countries (CZ, EL) report that this is not in place.

The number of countries reporting active programmes to promote awareness of children’s rights online has increased steadily since the 2024 report, when only 19 countries had established such activities, rising to 23 in last year’s report.

Among the trends noted, in several countries, Children’s Rights Commissioners or Ombudspersons are actively leading children’s digital rights agendas. For example, the Flemish Children’s Rights Commissioner [explicitly addressed the “digital economy”](#) as a rights issue in late 2025, calling for stronger frameworks for minors acting as influencers. The French-speaking ombudsman (DGDE) in Belgium labelled mental health in the digital age a [“fundamental rights emergency”](#) in 2025, specifically citing addictive design as a violation of the right to rest and leisure. The Children’s Ombudsman in Poland published [several reports](#) in December 2025 regarding the right to privacy and self-determination of young people online, as a basis for future legislative planning.

More countries are also explicitly referencing the [UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No. 25 \(2021\)](#) as the legal foundation for their awareness campaigns. Norway’s [“ung.no”](#) portal now provides youth-friendly information specifically derived from UN standards. Germany’s [“children’s-rights.digital”](#) project includes a focus on empowering children to proactively exercise their rights online.

5.1.3 Child-friendly versions of policy documents

A recurring issue in previous editions of the BIK Policy monitor is the lack of child-friendly versions of policy documents that provide basic support to facilitate children’s active

participation and promote their rights. Countries were asked in this year’s survey whether a government system was in place to publish child-friendly versions of policy documents or policy initiatives relevant to BIK topics.



Figure 39: Child-friendly documentation

As shown in this year’s cycle, findings on this topic remain highly uneven.

- ▶ Only six countries report government-led initiatives to publish child-friendly versions of policy documents (BE, BG, ES, MT, PT, SK).
- ▶ Six further countries indicate that this is currently under development (HR, IE, IT, NL, RO, SI), while four countries point to other relevant developments (AT, DE, LU, NO).
- ▶ However, thirteen out of the twenty-nine countries (CY, CZ, DK, EE, EL, FI, FR, HU, IS, LT, LV, PL, SE) say that it is not in place.

The availability of formal government systems for this purpose remains largely unchanged, mirroring last year’s report. Some relevant trends from this year’s cycle include Belgium, where child-friendly versions are now a core requirement of the five-year policy cycle. For example, the Flemish Youth and [Children’s Rights Policy Plan \(JKP\) 2025–2029](#) was launched in a simplified-language version with visual storytelling. Several countries refer to the use of “plain language” (Leichte Sprache) on government portals to ensure accessibility. Austria, for example, uses this on its main government portal ([oesterreich.gv.at](#)) to explain digital safety and rights.

National Children’s Rights Commissioners or Ombudspersons often act as “translators” of complex legislation. In Belgium and Poland, Ombuds offices have published simplified versions of annual reports and specific advisories on AI ethics to help children hold governments to account. Portugal and Belgium produced child-friendly versions of UNCRC General Comment No. 25 to help children understand their legal standing in the digital world. Distributing child-friendly versions of European-level policies, such as the child-friendly BIK+ strategy and the Digital Services Act (DSA), were also relevant contributions to raising awareness of children’s rights.

5.1.4 Addressing digital inequalities

Supporting children to overcome digital inequalities that may limit their online participation is another central element of the BIK+ agenda, which aims to ensure that no child is left behind in a society increasingly shaped by digital participation. Countries were asked to report on national or regional activities addressing the digital divide, such as targeted measures to expand internet connectivity in rural areas or tailored digital literacy programmes for disadvantaged children.

Q3.24: Addressing digital inequalities



■ Yes, this is in place ■ This is currently in development ■ No, this is not in place ■ Other

Figure 40: Digital inequalities

Findings from this year’s cycle show that most countries have implemented some measures to foster digital inclusion, but significant gaps in evidence and outcomes remain.

- ▶ Twenty-four countries confirm that there are activities at the national or regional level on this issue (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK).
- ▶ Four countries indicate that activities are currently in development in this area (DK, FR, HR, NL).
- ▶ One country (EL) reports that such activities are not in place.

Most countries, as shown above, have targeted measures in place to address digital divides, including infrastructure expansion and tailored literacy programmes, reflecting the importance of this issue and the trend highlighted in previous reports.

Prioritising physical access is one of the main trends. Slovenia reports that internet connectivity and digital equipment have been prioritised since COVID-19 school closures. In Bulgaria, national initiatives focus on providing disadvantaged children access to devices and infrastructure. Belgium highlights projects such as Proximus’s efforts to close the digital divide through expanded fibre connectivity.

Targeting initiatives towards marginalised groups is another form of such initiatives. For example, Denmark’s [political agreement of November 2025](#) includes a commitment to study and improve the digital well-being of vulnerable children, such as those in foster care, who are at higher risk of online harm. Digital inclusion as a cross-cutting theme is also a feature of some national strategies. For instance, Romania’s 2023-2027 national strategy (“[Protected Children, Safe Romania](#)”) aims to ensure equal access to public services for all children, including digital aspects.

5.1.5 Quality positive online content

The final issue addressed under Pillar 3 concerns positive digital content. This critical aspect of the BIK+ strategy balances protection by emphasising the need to make high-quality educational and creative content available and by providing safe alternatives to digital services that may pose risks or harm to children’s development. For this reason, countries were asked about activities at the national or regional level to stimulate the production and visibility of positive digital content and services for children.

Q3.25: Quality online content



■ Yes, this is in place ■ This is currently in development ■ No, this is not in place ■ Other

Figure 41: Positive digital content

- ▶ Twenty-one countries report that there are activities nationally to promote and stimulate the production and visibility of positive digital content (AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FI, HR, HU, IT, LT, LV, MT, NO, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK).
- ▶ Three countries report that initiatives are currently under development in this area (DK, NL, RO).
- ▶ Four countries report that this is not in place (EE, FR, IS, LU).

Support for positive digital content has increased markedly, rising from sixteen in last year's report to twenty-one. In this context, there remains a continued reliance on public service media and SICs as the primary drivers of such activities and the main source of non-commercial, educational alternatives to mainstream content.

There is a move in some countries towards creating official “quality labels” to help users identify beneficial content. Denmark is [developing a label for content](#) that promotes positive values, while the Netherlands is developing a [Children's Rights quality mark \(KK\)](#) for services that explicitly safeguard children's rights. Similarly, Belgium provides the “[Mediamenu](#)”, a vetted list of digital tools for schools, which, in 2025, added a new category for “[Ethical games](#)” that avoid dark patterns and implement privacy by design.

Innovation and enterprise support for industry are also noted in some submissions. Denmark has promoted a [national innovation environment](#) to help develop social media platforms designed specifically for minor safety, and Germany is researching child-friendly access routes to inform a future funding programme. The Belgian “[Apenstaartjaren](#)” award scheme aims to reward digital enterprises that prioritise “inclusion by design” for neurodivergent youth.

5.2 Summary: Active participation

Active participation and the recognition of children's rights are strongly reflected in national BIK agendas. **Twenty-six countries report dedicated awareness-raising programmes to support children's rights in the digital environment.** The incorporation of youth voices in policy processes is becoming more widespread, with **initiatives to promote active participation** now present in twenty-four countries, up from nineteen in 2024. Awareness of international standards is stronger, with many countries adopting **UNCRC General Comment No. 25** as the basis for their frameworks, supported by key national agencies such as Children's Rights Commissioners.

Digital inclusion and the commitment to ensure “no child is left behind” are reflected in measures to tackle digital inequalities in twenty-four countries. These include a focus on both physical infrastructure and digital literacy for marginalised groups. At the same time, support for high-quality positive content has increased, with twenty-one countries now reporting initiatives to encourage its production, including quality labels and innovation support measures.

A number of persistent challenges remain, including the relatively low level of youth participation in “**decision-making**”. Most children are consulted through hearings or surveys in seventeen countries, and only nine have established specially designed structures to enable their involvement in policy design. Furthermore, age-appropriate access to information remains a gap. Only six countries report having formalised government systems for **publishing child-friendly versions of policy documentation**, indicating a lack of facilitation of children's holistic participation in the digital policy arena.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This edition of the BIK Policy monitor report provides an overview of progress in implementing the European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+) across EU Member States, Iceland, and Norway. The period covered by this report marks a transformative phase in the European digital landscape, with the full-scale implementation of legislative measures such as the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the adoption of important new instruments, including the Article 28 Guidelines on the Protection of Minors. As digital environments become more complex, national policies have sought to address their potential negative impacts in various ways while advancing more proactive, rights-based, and evidence-led frameworks.

6.1 BIK policies

BIK policies, as surveyed in this year's report, are an important priority for all European countries. All participating countries report that the core pillars of BIK+ (children's safe digital protection, digital empowerment, and respect for their rights online) are addressed in some form within national policies. In approximately one-third of countries, BIK+ is addressed comprehensively, while seventeen of the 29 countries say it is an important or emerging priority. The BIK+ agenda is primarily supported by separate, dedicated national-level policies. This provides mostly comprehensive coverage, though only two countries (NO and SK) report a single overarching framework that mirrors BIK+ at the national level. With this broad, overarching support for policies that advance a better internet for children, several noteworthy features stand out in this year's report, indicating a strengthening foundation for BIK priorities nationally.

Developing governance

A consolidation of national policy coordination related to BIK is a feature that stands out in this year's report. With the full implementation and enforcement of the DSA, new governance models have begun to emerge in Member States, bringing together organisations with longstanding policy investments in this area and more structured, formalised frameworks that lend greater visibility and coherence to this policy domain. Some aspects of this trend include:

- ▶ **Formal national action plans:** Arising from various initiatives at the national level, such as special government commissions, think tanks and expert review groups, there has been a stronger focus on coordinated national programmes of action. Thirteen countries have formal action plans that include defined timelines, assigned responsibilities, and key performance indicators (KPIs).¹⁸ This represents a steady increase from the ten countries reported in 2024. These strategic plans take a variety of forms, but many stem from specific national interventions on topics such as mental health and well-being, safety by design and the need for greater attention to AI literacy. Examples from this year's Policy monitor include Belgium (Flanders) "[Veilig Online](#)" (Safe Online), the Danish government's White Paper, "[A Safe Childhood in a Digital Reality](#)", the White Paper issued by Norway's Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, "[Safe upbringing in a digital society](#)", and Portugal's "[Single Strategy for the Rights of Children and Young People](#)" (2025-2035). These, among other examples, illustrate a more focused and strategic approach to policy regarding children and the digital environment.
- ▶ **Distributed leadership:** A distributed approach to leadership has emerged as the dominant model for managing BIK-related policies. Responsibility for BIK policy is spread across a range of ministries (e.g., education, justice, digital transformation, family & youth affairs). Crucially, the number of countries reporting no specific leadership for BIK policies has declined from ten in 2025 to just five in 2026. A third of countries have a clearly defined coordination function in place, and although thirteen countries report that coordination happens more informally, they also state that this facilitates reasonably effective

¹⁸ BE, CY, DK, HU, IE, IS, LV, MT, NO, PT, RO, SI, and SK.

collaboration and alignment of efforts. This trend has been evident since the first BIK policy mapping studies and confirms that, notwithstanding the emergence of integrative frameworks in some countries, the BIK agenda remains predominantly a transversal, cross-governmental policy issue.

- ▶ **Greater collaboration:** Collaborative ties between the newly established Digital Services Coordinators and Safer Internet Centres in participating countries demonstrate stronger inter-agency cooperation. Eighteen countries report a continuous working relationship between these bodies. Institutional ties are evident in countries such as Italy and Lithuania, where the DSC is part of the national SIC consortium. In countries such as Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, and Slovakia, the national DSC or the relevant competent authority is a formal member of the SIC's Advisory Board. In Norway, the authorities have established a "DSA Network" in which the proposed DSC and the SIC (the Norwegian Media Authority) meet regularly to coordinate enforcement and protective measures. DSCs in Belgium, France, Malta, and the Netherlands have also designated SIC-linked organisations (such as Child Focus, e-Enfance, or FSWS) as [trusted flaggers](#) under the DSA.

Increased recognition of children's rights

This year's Policy monitor also shows more explicit recognition of children's rights in the framing of policies related to their participation in the digital environment, a trend that is evident in both policy language and in some practical applications.

- ▶ **Greater recognition of children's digital rights:** Fourteen countries now explicitly recognise children's digital rights in their national policies.¹⁹ This trend has been influenced by the [UNCRC General Comment No. 25](#), which provides a legal foundation for initiatives in countries such as Belgium, Iceland, and Norway. In Belgium, the Children's Rights Commissioner ([Kinderrechtencommissariaat](#)) stated that digital rights are not "new rights" but the application of existing human rights (provision, protection, participation) to the digital sphere. In Denmark, the Danish Media Council is mandated by national legislation to focus specifically on children's digital rights. Spain also advanced its Draft Organic Law in 2025, which explicitly recognises children's rights in the digital sphere. In the Netherlands, the [Code for Children's Rights Online](#) and the [Children's Rights Impact Assessment](#) have been introduced to ensure that rights are respected throughout the lifecycle of digital products.
- ▶ **Integration into broader policy frameworks:** Some examples from the Policy monitor also illustrate the integration of digital rights into broader frameworks, pointing towards more mainstream recognition and adoption. For example, [Latvia's Guidelines for the Protection of Children's Rights 2022–2027](#) include digital safety as a component of overall welfare, while Croatia similarly integrates digital rights into its [National Plan for Children's Rights 2022–2026](#).

Evolving stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder involvement is widely supported, with twenty-four countries now maintaining some form of multi-stakeholder engagement. While only nine countries have a designated forum for this purpose, a further fifteen countries indicate a range of measures to facilitate stakeholder involvement.

- ▶ **Diverse forms of stakeholder involvement:** SIC Advisory Boards are the most frequently cited forum for multistakeholder dialogue on BIK-related issues. These typically bring together government agencies, civil society, industry, and academia. However, several countries have also established high-level, permanent bodies to coordinate children's rights and safety across different government departments. For example, Bulgaria's [National Council for Child Protection](#) is an inter-institutional body attached to the State Agency for Child Protection, comprising deputy ministers from all key ministries and civil society representatives. In Estonia, the [Cross-sectoral Prevention Council](#) includes members from

¹⁹ BE, CY, DE, DK, ES, FR, HR, HU, IE, LU, MT, NL, NO, PT.

various government agencies, law enforcement and civil society organisations to agree on prevention principles and well-being activities. In Lithuania, the newly established [Interdepartmental Child Welfare Council](#), established by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour, is expected to include a multi-stakeholder forum.

6.2 Actions to advance the three BIK pillars

The BIK+ strategy is organised around the three pillars of safe digital experience, digital empowerment, and active participation, respecting children's rights. In monitoring BIK actions across European countries, this edition of the Policy monitor shows high levels of implementation in most countries, with national developments increasingly shaped by emerging risks and concerns about the impact of the digital environment on children's well-being.

Pillar 1: Safe digital experiences

Pillar 1, which addresses provision for safe digital experiences, shows the most change, driven both by the implementation of major EU legislative frameworks as well as national own initiatives responding to challenges in the digital environment.

- ▶ **Step up in national enforcement:** Many of the actions recorded under Pillar 1 stem from the operationalisation of the DSA at the national level and from the consolidation of enforcement by national regulatory bodies under this framework. Seventeen countries report specific measures by DSCs to protect minors,²⁰ with DSCs moving towards active supervision and launching formal investigations and enforcement actions in several countries.

National DSCs in countries such as Belgium and France have designated organisations such as Child Focus, Unia/VMRI, and e-Enfance as trusted flaggers, thereby extending regulatory oversight, with SICs frequently serving in this role.

- ▶ **Age assurance as a priority:** Mandating age verification mechanisms also stands out as a key activity under Pillar 1. Thirteen countries report actions under this heading,²¹ up from just four in 2024. This trend is closely linked to the development of the European Digital Identity (EUDI) Wallet for minors, which is being actively planned or developed in twenty-three countries.
- ▶ **Actions to promote well-being:** Supporting youth mental health and well-being also features prominently under Pillar 1. Several countries have established dedicated task forces on the issue. Denmark's Commission on Wellbeing for Children and Youth issued 35 recommendations in February 2025, focusing on online well-being. Ireland's Online Health Task Force issued its final report in December 2025. In France, the government conducted a parliamentary inquiry and national public consultation (2025) specifically into the psychological impact of TikTok on young people and put forward plans to address the adverse impacts of digital technology.

In this context, several countries have introduced measures to restrict smartphone use in schools to improve mental health (now implemented in twenty-four countries),²² and have advanced plans to restrict access to social media services.

Pillar 2: Digital empowerment

Actions under Pillar 2: Digital empowerment are among the most implemented features in the BIK Policy monitor, indicating that this is the most mature dimension of BIK implementation.

20 AT, BE, DE, DK, EL, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, SE, SK

21 BE, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, NO, PT.

22 AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PT, RO, SI, SK.

- ▶ **Curriculum integration:** Online safety education is reported to be integrated into curricula in twenty-six countries.²³ Noteworthy developments include new minimum ICT attainment targets for primary education in Flanders to help identify online risks and understand privacy; an updated curriculum in Ireland that includes learning outcomes specifically for identifying the risks of sharing sexual imagery online and for summarising digital rights under the law; and mandatory domains addressing digital citizenship, human rights online, and media literacy in Portugal’s updated [National Strategy for Citizenship Education](#) (2025).
- ▶ **Inclusion of AI literacy:** Digital skills programmes have been updated to take account of new technologies in the majority of countries. Twenty-one countries report incorporating AI literacy into their core digital skills training, covering topics such as algorithmic bias and generative AI. Both Finland and Germany published national recommendations in 2024–2025 for the responsible use of AI in education. In 2024, Romania introduced [DigCompRo](#) (based on EU DigComp 2.2), which incorporates responsible and ethical use of AI. Slovenia introduced its revised national programme on AI and is currently updating curricula to include AI and GenAI aspects by 2030. In Luxembourg, “digital sciences” is a core subject that includes internet safety training and AI literacy.
- ▶ **Professional development:** Digital skills, including AI, have also featured in professional development programmes for educators. In Austria, a range of [AI MOOCs](#) have been developed to provide foundational knowledge and potential classroom applications. In Finland, [national recommendations](#) were published in 2025 to guide educators in the responsible use of AI in educational practice. Luxembourg’s national action plan, the [KI Kompass](#), provides schools and teachers with strategic guidance and practical support for the responsible use of AI. Delivery of teacher training has also evolved through the use of massive open online courses (MOOCs) and national certification frameworks, which include more complex topics such as “safety by design”.
- ▶ **Lifelong learning:** Digital empowerment is also widely supported across non-formal education. Twenty-six countries report active programmes in this area.²⁴ Media literacy initiatives feature prominently, including programmes to combat disinformation, with a growing focus on youth-centred fact-checking and on identifying AI-driven manipulation. In Poland, for example, NASK operates the [Disinformation Analysis Centre](#), which delivers training sessions for children to help them counter misleading information. In Austria, the [BAIT fact-checking channel](#) on TikTok targets young people, while the [Zukunft Medienkompetenz](#) initiative (a partnership between ORF and Der Standard) helps teachers integrate fact-checking into the classroom.
- ▶ **Supporting parents:** Twenty-four countries report programmes to support parents’ digital literacy and online safety skills.²⁵ Several countries have established centralised online hubs to provide parents with practical tools and advice. These include France’s [Je protège mon enfant](#) and Norway’s [Foreldrehverdag.no](#) website, which offers guidance, articles, and videos specifically on parenting in a digital age. Denmark also launched the [5 rules of thumb](#) for parents to streamline communication about supporting children online, while Germany’s [SCHAU HIN!](#) (Look!) guide provides parents with age-appropriate, everyday recommendations and courses to support children’s media use.

Pillar 3: Active participation, respecting children

Active participation and respect for children’s rights in the digital environment are distinctive features of the BIK+ strategy. Children are regarded not only as passive consumers in need of protection, but also as rights holders and digital citizens with a voice in the digital environment. This core tenet is illustrated by the child-led evaluation of the BIK+ strategy, conducted every two years. This year’s Policy monitor report finds evidence of continuous progress, including

23 AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK.

24 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI.

25 BE, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK.

explicit recognition of children’s rights in the digital environment (see [section 6.1](#)), but also significant untapped potential to advance active participation.

Among the areas where progress has been noted are:

- ▶ **More support for child and youth participation:** Twenty-four countries report active programmes to promote youth civic engagement, with new deliberative models emerging.²⁶ Nine countries also confirm that children are actively involved in the design of relevant digital policies and that dedicated structures exist for this purpose.²⁷ While this remains a relatively low base of one-third of participating countries, it is double the 2024 figure, when just four countries promoted such policies. Examples of institutionalised participation include the Flemish Youth Council, which acts as an official advisory body and contributed to the priorities of the “Safe Online” action plan. Ireland’s regulator, Coimisiún na Meán, established a permanent [Youth Advisory Committee](#) comprising representatives from nine national youth organisations and nine individuals under 25 to advise on the development of the national Online Safety Code. In Finland, the government launched “[Digiraati](#)” (Digital Council), an interactive online service that provides all young people under 29 an equal opportunity to have their voices heard on social and policy issues.
- ▶ **Digital rights awareness:** Nearly all countries report having programmes to raise awareness of children’s rights in the digital environment.²⁸ The influence of UNCRC General Comment No. 25 is widely acknowledged, with many campaigns explicitly referencing this international standard. However, the relative lack of child-friendly versions of policy documents, noted in previous Policy monitor reports, remains a gap in most countries. Just six countries report active programmes in this area, with a further six reporting that this issue is under development.
- ▶ **Addressing the digital divide and inequalities:** Most countries take action to address digital inequalities and tackle digital divides. Twenty-four countries report that programmes are in place to address this.²⁹ Provisioning primarily takes the form of targeted measures for connectivity and inclusion, with high-speed access for rural and underserved areas a key priority. Other programmes reported include hardware programmes and equipment upgrades (BE, BG, LV), and targeted financial support programmes for underserved or vulnerable groups (BE, SK). Promoting digital literacy to address skills gaps among marginalised or disadvantaged youth is another feature of programmes reported under this heading.
- ▶ **Positive digital content:** An increase in support for positive digital content is also a noteworthy feature of this year’s report. Twenty-one countries report programmes in this area,³⁰ including dedicated portals for children’s content (AT, BE, DE, SE), quality labels and certification programmes (AT, DK, NL), and various recognition and award schemes (AT, BE, NO). A focus on youth-led co-creation and innovation is also reported in initiatives such as the [AI for Youth](#) project in Belgium and the Danish government’s initiative to support a national innovation environment to help develop alternative social media platforms or technologies.

6.3 Challenges and gaps

While evidence of good progress across all three pillars of the BIK+ strategy is highlighted in this year’s Policy monitor report, a range of challenges and gaps persist and require ongoing attention at the national level.

- ▶ **Balancing children’s rights across the three BIK pillars:** The increased attention to children’s rights in the digital environment is a positive trend in this year’s Policy monitor. However, these efforts need to be strengthened and more widely adopted.

26 AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, EE, ES, FI, HR, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK.

27 ES, HU, IE, IT, MT, NO, PL, SI, SK.

28 AT, BE, BG, CY, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK.

29 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, ES, FI, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MT, NO, PL, PT, RO, SE, SI, SK.

30 AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EL, ES, FI, HR, HU, IT, LT, LV, MT, NO, PL, PT, SE, SI, SK.

Many of the significant policy initiatives highlighted in this year's report focus on restricting access to digital services and technologies, with much less attention to involving children in these policies or to providing high-quality digital content alternatives. As emphasised in the BIK+ strategy, realising children's rights requires a balanced approach across all three pillars of safe digital protection, digital empowerment and active participation. Ensuring that national policies respect children's rights in this way, therefore, remains a key priority.

- ▶ **The uneven evidence base:** Systematic data collection remains highly uneven across Europe. Many countries still rely on international studies or irregular, ad hoc surveys rather than on dedicated national longitudinal research. Just eight countries have nationally representative surveys focused specifically on children's digital activity.³¹ Only ten countries collect regular data that specifically includes measures for digital well-being and psychological impacts.³² While some increases in research activity are noted, this remains one of the persistent gaps in the BIK-ecosystem, both at the national and the European level.
- ▶ **Comprehensive digital empowerment:** Pillar 2 of the BIK+ strategy remains the most fully supported area of action under the BIK Policy monitor, with a wide range of activities reported across countries in online safety education, digital literacy and skills, and the promotion of non-formal education and lifelong learning for a variety of groups, including parents. Yet, as this year's Policy monitor highlights, digital empowerment continues to respond to growing needs such as fostering greater AI literacy, supporting digital skills for all, and addressing ongoing challenges of disinformation and the lack of media literacy. Digital empowerment, in other words, requires constant updating and reinforcement. In this context, data and evidence gaps also need to be addressed if programmes for digital empowerment are to be effective and scalable.
- ▶ **The "participation" gap:** A major disconnect exists between consulting children and involving them in policy design. While children are "listened to" in seventeen countries, they are involved in actual policy decision-making in only nine. Participation should move beyond advisory roles towards genuine co-creation.

There is a severe lack of child-friendly versions of policy documentation. Only six countries report having formal government systems for this purpose, which is a barrier to children's ability to access information and participate effectively in the digital policy arena.

- ▶ **Persistent digital inequality:** Evidence cited in various national submissions indicates that digital inequalities persist across several dimensions, including socio-economic status, geographic location, and varying levels of institutional capacity. While inclusion measures exist in twenty-four countries, disparities in physical access and digital literacy for vulnerable and marginalised groups, including children living in poverty, remain key challenges for the BIK goal of "no child left behind". Research cited³³ also highlights that vulnerable children, such as those in foster care or placed outside the home, are at a significantly higher risk of experiencing online harm, as are children with lower digital skills. As technologies advance, there is an increased risk of new gaps, such as an "AI gap", where less-supported children are more likely to be "passive users" rather than critical and informed users of technology.

6.4 Recommendations

To further advance the BIK+ agenda and support its continued implementation in EU Member States, Iceland and Norway, the following strategic actions are recommended:

1. **Continue alignment around BIK+ goals to protect and empower young people online:** This edition of the Policy monitor shows continued progress across participating countries, but also points to uneven implementation in how fully key BIK+ priorities are reflected in

31 DE, HU, IS, IT, LU, NO, SE, SK.

32 DE, EE, HU, IS, IT, LU, MT, NO, SE, SK.

33 BE, DK, NO.

national policy and governance. Member States and other actors in the BIK ecosystem should therefore continue to strengthen action on key EU priorities, particularly the protection of mental health, tackling cyberbullying, and addressing addictive design. In particular, effective continuous working relationships between DSCs and SICs should be prioritised to ensure the effective delivery of online safety and empowerment.

2. *Member States should fully support the EU Action plan against cyberbullying:*

The report points to stronger national attention to cyberbullying, including legal and school-based measures, but also to continuing variation in national approaches. As a key measure to advance children's safe digital protection, Member States are encouraged to integrate BIK-related policies into their response to the EU Action plan against cyberbullying, using the action plan's common understanding of cyberbullying as a basis for national policy and response systems. This includes aligning existing or establishing comprehensive cyberbullying plans, strengthening prevention and reporting pathways, developing response and victim support systems, improving research and data collection, and reinforcing child participation in policy design.

3. *Strengthen European and national longitudinal research:*

While more countries are integrating evidence-based approaches into policy development, this report finds that the evidence base on children's digital experiences remains uneven across Europe. More robust, comparative and longitudinal research is needed on the safety and quality of the digital environment for children, including emerging risks such as AI-driven manipulation and the psychological impacts of addictive design. In particular, efforts to support the collection of robust evidence to monitor cyberbullying, as outlined in the EU [Action plan against cyberbullying](#), should be prioritised. The monitoring and evaluation of effective BIK-related policies should also be a central component of the evidence base.

4. *Support and prioritise EU-harmonised age verification solutions:*

With the European Commission's age verification solution now technically ready for implementation, countries are encouraged to support and prioritise the roll-out of effective, privacy-preserving and interoperable age verification solutions in line with the common reference framework laid down in the EU age verification blueprint and the DSA guidelines on age assurance. National implementations, whether through dedicated applications and, in due course, integration with EU Digital Identity (EUDI) Wallets, should ensure high standards of privacy, safety, security, accuracy, reliability, robustness and non-intrusiveness.

5. *Move towards integrating "participation by design":*

This edition of the Policy monitor shows that children across Europe are frequently consulted on digital policies that affect them, but that such consultation is often ad hoc and not yet systematic. At the same time, the report highlights a persistent gap in more structured forms of participation and in the provision of child-friendly documentation. Efforts to facilitate children's active involvement should therefore be grounded in permanent, specially designed structures that enable children to participate in the design, evaluation and monitoring of such policies. Essential supports, such as the regular provision of child-friendly documentation, should also be prioritised.

As national policies and actions continue to evolve, in line with the risks, opportunities, and overall complexity of the digital environment, the BIK+ strategy remains an international framework that is balanced, holistic, and rights-based. Further collaboration, including EU-wide stakeholder collaboration, is vital to ensure its key principles are upheld and supported.



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