



The Better Internet for Kids Policy monitor report 2026 Executive summary

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Please note that this document only includes the Executive summary of the Better Internet for Kids Policy Monitor report 2026. You can [access the full report on the Better Internet for Kids portal](#).

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 of the full BIK Policy monitor report](#).

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.



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