



2023/2670(RSP)

15.6.2023

DRAFT MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

further to Question for Oral Answer B9-xxxx/2023

pursuant to Rule 136(5) of the Rules of Procedure

on The new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+)
(2023/2670(RSP))

Sabine Verheyen

on behalf of the Committee on Culture and Education

**European Parliament resolution on The new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+)
(2023/2670(RSP))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Article 165 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the “Charter”),
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989,
- having regard to Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography¹ (“Child Sexual Abuse Directive”),
- having regard to Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2010 on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (“Audiovisual Media Services Directive”),
- ***having regard to Directive 2005/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2005 concerning unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices in the internal market and amending Council Directive 84/450/EEC, Directives 97/7/EC, 98/27/EC and 2002/65/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council (‘Unfair Commercial Practices Directive’),***
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (“General Data Protection Regulation”),
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (“Digital Services Act”),
- having regard to the Commission proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down rules to prevent and combat child sexual abuse (COM(2022)209) and the opinion of the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT_AD(2023)737365),

¹ OJ L 335, 17.12.2011, p. 1.

- having regard to the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 11 May 2022 entitled ‘A Digital Decade for children and youth: the new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+)’ (COM(2022) 212),
- ***having regard to the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 9 March 2021 entitled ‘2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade’ (COM(2021) 118),***
- ***having regard to the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 24 March 2021 entitled ‘EU strategy on the rights of the child’ (COM(2021) 142),***
- ***having regard to the communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 30 Sep 2023 on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 (COM(2020) 625),***
- having regard to the joint declarations of the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission of 23 January 2023 entitled ‘The European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade’ (the “European Declaration”) (2023/C 23/01)
- having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 20 November 2012 on protecting children in the digital world (P7_TA(2012)0428) and the Commission follow up adopted on 20 February 2013 (SP(2013)110),
- having regard to the study entitled ‘The influence of social media on the development of children and young people’²,
- ***having regard to the study entitled ‘EU Kids Online 2020: Survey results from 19 countries’³,***
- ***having regard to the study entitled ‘How children (10-18) experienced online risks during the Covid-19 lockdown: Spring 2020’⁴,***
- having regard to the question to the Commission on The new European strategy for a better

² O’Neill, B 2023, Research for CULT Committee – The influence of social media on the development of children and young people, European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies, Brussels

³ Smahel, D., Machackova, H., Mascheroni, G., Dedkova, L., Staksrud, E., Ólafsson, K., Livingstone, S., and Hasebrink, U. (2020). EU Kids Online 2020: Survey results from 19 countries. EU Kids Online. Doi: 10.21953/lse.47fdeqj01ofo

⁴ Lobe, B., Velicu, A., Staksrud, E., Chaudron, S. and Di Gioia, R. (2020), How children (10-18) experienced online risks during the Covid-19 lockdown - Spring 2020, EUR 30584 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2021, ISBN 978-92-76-29763-5, doi:10.2760/562534, JRC124034

internet for kids (BIK+) (O-[000XXX/2023] – B[9-0XXX/2023],

- having regard to Rules 136(5) and 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the motion for a resolution of the Committee on Culture and Education,⁽¹⁾
- A. whereas a child is entitled to all the rights and values enshrined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the Charter and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including their digital rights, and the best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all digital actions and decisions concerning them and their physical and mental **health, safety and** well-being;
- B. whereas the General Data Protection Regulation, the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, the Digital Services Act **and the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive** recognise that children merit specific protection with regard to their **online experience in the constantly evolving digital environment**;
- Ba. whereas ensuring appropriate protection for children online requires specific measures and education programmes targeting not only children, but also their teachers, parents and caregivers; these measures should primarily seek the elaboration and implementation of prevention techniques and awareness raising and digital literacy campaigns; whereas parents and caregivers should be informed of the existence and the functioning of the digital tools to limit and direct their child's/children's experience online and limit access to age-inappropriate or harmful content online;**
- C. **whereas children should not be passive technology consumers but be actively in charge of the technologies they use**; whereas, **in this regard**, promoting digital education and enhancing the digital skills and competences, including media literacy, of children, parents and educators, particularly children from vulnerable groups, in line with the Charter, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles **and the 2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade**, are key to ensure safe digital experiences for children, **their** digital empowerment and active participation of children online.
- D. whereas **targeted measures to combat the digital divide and enhance equal opportunities should be available to offer** inclusive and accessible digital environments **for every child in the European Union**, and particularly those from vulnerable groups, such as children with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds, **including by equipping them with modern digital infrastructure, also in remote or rural areas**;
- E. whereas lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the educational and digital divides, impacting children's **access to digital education tools and information, as well as their social participation and inclusion, and have had negative effects on their** physical and mental health; **whereas it also caused** an increase of domestic and gender-based violence and child sexual abuse and exploitation online, on both the surface web and the dark web;

Ea. whereas several monitoring studies have shown evidence of children being active on

social media from an early age, with significant numbers under the minimum age set by most social media platforms;

F. *whereas the constantly evolving digital environment is hosting a big part of children's everyday life, including their education, communication and data sharing; whereas children's access to and experience on the internet and social media platforms have many benefits, but they also pose some risks and expose children to dangerous behaviours and contents, due to their pervasiveness, such as online child sexual abuse and solicitation ('grooming'), cyberhate, different forms of cyberbullying, sexualised content, violent images, content that promotes eating disorders, and disinformation; whereas this may affect children's physical and mental health, including increased aggression, problematic sexual behaviours, unhealthy eating habits, body image dissatisfaction and distorted values and attitudes;*

Fa. *whereas the EU Kids Online 2020 survey estimates that 23% of children between the ages of 9 and 16 have been bullied online, and the study on 'How children (10-18) experienced online risks during the Covid-19 lockdown: Spring 2020' found that 49% of children have experienced at least one form of online aggression or bullying; whereas even if there is no streamlined approach, some Member States have already taken measures like Coco's Law in Ireland;*

Fb. *whereas the new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+) is one of the cornerstone actions of the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child which, within its thematic areas, includes initiatives to ensure that children are protected and empowered online;*

1. Welcomes the Commission's new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+) and endorses it;
2. Stresses that **all children need protection online**, but certain children are **in a** more vulnerable **situation**, such as **those** with disabilities or from disadvantaged backgrounds, and **should be able to benefit from targeted** measures, **as appropriate** to bridge the digital divide and enhance their digital skills and competences, including media literacy;
3. Reiterates its call for the EU to step up its action to keep children safe online, raise awareness on and prevent child sexual abuse, including online solicitation of children ('online grooming');
4. Emphasises that digital skills and competences, including media literacy, should be recognised as a mandatory skill and **should be included in the school curriculum across the EU. They are** an essential part of education **and lifelong learning that should** focus on educating children, parents, carers and educators and the general public on online safety, including online parental control and how to recognize and report online solicitation of children;
5. Calls for the Union and its Member States to allocate more investment in education and training to ensure digital literacy, including protection from **peer to peer** bullying and cyberbullying in **and outside** schools, for children of different age groups, taking into consideration new technological developments, such as the metaverse;

6. Calls on the Member States and educational institutions to guarantee the right to inclusive education and to promote, in an age-appropriate manner, sex education, digital skills and competences, including media literacy, cyber safety, in formal, non-formal and informal education, targeting educators, parents, carers and pupils;
- 6a. Calls on the Commission to develop, in coordination with the European Education Area (EEA), a European strategy against bullying and cyber-bullying in schools, establishing a package of measures to improve data collection and to propose the necessary solutions in cooperation with the Member States;**
7. Stresses that the Strategy should call on the Member States to allocate all the necessary resources to strengthen the capacities of hotlines, helplines and Safe Internet Centres, and to develop and implement **meaningful** prevention and awareness-raising campaigns in their schools, **with demonstrable results as a vital part of their early education curricula**, and educational institutions; **believes that cooperation between researchers and practitioners is key in this regard;**
8. Stresses that it is important that the EU Strategy introduce measures to update the existing EU framework for action on mental health and well-being, which should be fully inclusive, in order to also meet the needs of children who experience online sexual abuse or solicitation, especially those from vulnerable groups; **calls for the assessment of the availability and adequacy of mental health care providers for children by conducting a thorough mapping of existing services in light of the worsening mental health situation, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the unique set of challenges posed by the online environment, including cyberbullying and exposure to harmful content;**
- 8a. Welcomes the creation of a European standard on online age verification by 2024 and the recent setting up of the special group on the EU Code of Conduct ('The Code') on age appropriate design; emphasises the importance of developing the Code in a timely manner, by ensuring its full alignment with the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR); stresses the importance of involving the civil society, academia, and young people in the Code development process; underlines the need for social media platforms to effectively prevent children under the age limit from creating an account; calls on the Members States to support effective age-verification methods such as the eID;**
9. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to scale up investments in providing support to victims of online child abuse or solicitation, including anonymous public reporting, as well as mental health and psycho-social services for victims and their families; calls for training for professionals and officials, including in law enforcement authorities, who deal with cases which involve children, on their specific needs;
10. Calls **on the Commission and Member States** for more systematic data collection on prevention measures and victim assistance programmes, including the number of children in primary education who are taking part in awareness raising campaigns and through education programmes about the risks of all forms of sexual exploitation of children, including in the online environment.

10a. Underlines the dearth of sufficient comparative research at European level, as well as studies on children's development in the context of digitalisation; in this regard, highlights that the fast pace development of technologies may rapidly overtake policies thus creating new vulnerabilities for children; therefore, recalls the need to develop a large-scale research activity at European level;

11. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the BIK+ Strategy is consistent with other priorities and legislative proposals, that information is presented to children in child-friendly language and that children of all ages are involved in the monitoring process and the effective implementation of the strategy ***and adequate follow-up to compare best practices and results across the Member States;***

12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.