

EN
E-002143/2023
Answer given by Mr Breton
on behalf of the European Commission
(26.9.2023)

The Digital Services Act (DSA)¹ obliges providers of online platforms to ensure a high level of privacy, safety, and security for minors. In addition, providers of very large online platforms (VLOPs) or search engines (VLOSEs) must perform specific risk assessments aimed at protecting minors and their rights and put in place mitigating measures. On 25 April 2023, 19 online platforms or search engines have been designated as VLOPs and VLOSEs and had to comply by the end of August 2023. Providers of smaller-scale intermediary services must comply from 17 February 2024.

In parallel, the Commission is gathering information from platforms, experts, and stakeholders. The report quoted by the Honourable Members provides useful input.

Social media companies will thus be held accountable through the supervisory mechanisms set out in the DSA. This includes mandates for external independent audits, transparency, and investigatory powers, as well as the possibility for users or representative bodies to lodge complaints. The Commission will cooperate with Member States to ensure a well-functioning enforcement framework.

Under the DSA, the obligation of balancing risks to different rights and freedoms falls first on VLOPs and VLOSEs².

Under the Better Internet for Kids (BIK+) strategy³, work has started on the Code of conduct on age-appropriate design⁴ so minors under the age of 18 no longer use adult services by default.

Even with better designed services, digital skills and media literacy efforts remain crucial. The EU co-funded network of Safer Internet Centres (SICs)⁵ and the EU-funded BIK platform⁶ offer ongoing awareness raising and support, and a variety of multilingual resources on online risks and opportunities.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2022/2065, OJ L 277, 27.10.2022, p. 1–102.

² Pursuant to article 35(1) of the DSA, the providers of very large online platforms and very large online search engines must put in place reasonable, proportionate, and effective mitigation measures, with particular consideration to the impacts of such measures on fundamental rights.

³ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/strategy-better-internet-kids>

⁴ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/group-age-appropriate-design>

⁵ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/safer-internet-centres>

⁶ <https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu>