



Parents International's Response to the Public Consultation on the EU KIDS Act

Proposal COM(2026) 681 final – EU Keeping Internet Digital Spaces Accountable and Trustworthy

Submitted by Stichting International Parents Alliance (Parents International)

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1. Executive summary: Protect children by empowering families, not restricting their rights

Parents International welcomes the European Commission's commitment to protecting children in digital environments. We share the objective of ensuring that children can explore, learn, communicate and participate online in relative safety.

However, we strongly disagree with the approach taken in the proposed EU KIDS Act, particularly its age-based restrictions on digital participation and its limitations on parental decision-making.

Our concerns are grounded in three complementary sources of evidence:

- Our own research, particularly through the EFFEct, DRONE and PARTICIPATE projects.
- Our extensive experience consulting and working with parent organisations and representatives in 24 of the 27 EU Member States.
- International research and the legal obligations established by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Our research and consultations do not support the assumption that parents need governments to make ordinary digital parenting decisions on their behalf.

Quite the contrary: parents generally recognise their responsibilities, consider themselves capable of making decisions about their children's digital participation, and want to exercise that responsibility.

What they consistently ask for is not additional prohibition, but better support. They want accessible, reliable, comprehensible and up-to-date information about new digital services and technologies, enabling them to make informed decisions. They also want schools to fulfil their educational responsibilities by helping children develop digital literacy, critical thinking, resilience and the competences necessary to navigate an increasingly hybrid world.



These are reasonable demands. They are also consistent with the UNCRC's recognition of parents as primary caregivers and educators, and with children's rights to protection, participation, information and progressively increasing autonomy.

The Commission must demonstrate that the proposed restrictions are necessary, proportionate and justified, and that less restrictive alternatives would not achieve the intended objectives. Based on our research and our extensive engagement with European parents, we have serious reasons to doubt that this burden of justification has been met.

We therefore call for substantial revision of the proposal, with priority given to parental choice, meaningful consent, accessible information, digital competence development, school-family cooperation and universal safety by design.

2. The Commission is responding to a problem that parents describe differently

Parents International has spent years researching and supporting families navigating the digital transformation of childhood. Our work across European countries consistently reveals a considerable difference between the public discourse through mass media surrounding digital parenting and the everyday experiences of families. In much of the public debate, parents are portrayed as unaware of the risks, incapable of making appropriate decisions, or unwilling to take responsibility for their children's digital lives.

This deficit-based portrayal is not supported by our experience. Through our engagement with members in 24 EU Member States, we encounter parents who are aware of the challenges associated with digital technologies and actively seek to address them. They recognise that children need guidance, but they also understand that digital participation is an ordinary and increasingly indispensable part of contemporary life. Parents do not generally ask policymakers to decide whether their children may use a particular digital service. They ask for the information and support needed to make that decision themselves.

Two needs emerge particularly clearly:

1. Parents want accessible information about digital services and emerging technologies.

Digital technologies change rapidly. New platforms, AI tools, communication applications and digital environments are constantly introduced. Parents cannot reasonably be expected to investigate every technical feature, privacy policy, commercial practice or potential risk independently. They need tech companies to provide information as well as independent, trustworthy and understandable information about what these services do, what opportunities they offer, what risks they present, and how families can use them responsibly. This information should be available in accessible formats, in different languages, and without requiring advanced technical knowledge.

Parents also need balanced information that presents opportunities and benefits as well as risks. A resource that focuses exclusively on potential harm is no more balanced than commercial marketing that ignores risks.

2. Parents want schools to play a meaningful role in preparing children for digital life.

Parents recognise that digital competence cannot be developed exclusively at home. Schools have an educational responsibility to support children's critical thinking, information literacy, digital citizenship, cybersecurity awareness, resilience and ability to respond to harmful experiences.

This does not mean transferring parental responsibilities to schools. It means recognising that education is a shared responsibility and that schools should complement, rather than undermine, family learning.

Our research and experience indicate that parents frequently feel left alone in this task. What schools currently offer in digital literacy education is too little too late, and teachers often lack these skills themselves, thus unable to facilitate their development in their students.

These findings point towards a clear policy direction: support families and improve relevant schooling provisions rather than introduce restrictions that diminish parental choice.

3. Our research challenges the assumptions underlying the proposed legislation

3.1. EFFEct: Children's digital participation is already a family decision

Research undertaken by our organisation through the EFFEct project in Hungary and the Netherlands, involving a representative sample of 1,472 respondents, provides important insights into children's digital participation and the role of parents.

Our findings indicate that digital technologies are already widely integrated into children's lives, frequently with parental knowledge and approval. In the relevant groups of 10- and 15-year-olds examined in our research, more than 80% were using smartphones or participating in social media with parental approval. These findings challenge the assumption that children's digital participation is generally occurring against parental wishes or without parental involvement.

In practice, many children aged 10–12 already use social media accounts registered with inaccurate dates of birth. Parents mostly know about, consent to, or assist with these arrangements. This is a consequence of a system in which global technology companies impose a minimum account age of 13 globally, derived from the US Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) that should not be implemented outside of the USA, the only country that is not protecting child rights by ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The current system has not prevented younger children from participating. It has instead created circumstances in which families may feel compelled to provide inaccurate information to access services they consider appropriate. Replacing this arrangement with a stricter statutory prohibition risks making the situation worse.

3.2. DRONE: Parents have competences that policymakers frequently underestimate

Our DRONE project has explored digital literacy, disinformation, critical thinking, cybersecurity, bullying and digital resilience among parents, teachers and school leaders across various EU



Member States. The research challenges the widespread assumption that parents, especially those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, are incapable of guiding their children in digital environments. Parents from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have demonstrated confidence in their role as digital literacy educators, and their children agreed that they receive sufficient support from their parents.

This finding is particularly important because public policy often starts from the assumption that disadvantaged parents lack the necessary knowledge, motivation or competence to support their children. Such assumptions can lead to interventions that replace parental agency rather than strengthen it. Our experience suggests that parents need practical information and opportunities to develop their knowledge, not policies based on a presumption of incompetence.

The DRONE work also highlights the importance of digital literacy as a competence that develops through experience, questioning, dialogue and reflection. Children do not become digitally resilient simply by reaching a particular birthday. They develop resilience by encountering manageable challenges, learning to evaluate information, understanding their own reactions, seeking support when necessary, and gradually exercising judgement. Restricting access may delay some experiences, but it does not automatically develop the competences needed to navigate them.

The DRONE research also identified the lack of teacher skills as a problem, especially in the area of transversal skills, namely critical thinking, problem-solving and resilience.

3.3. PARTICIPATE: Vulnerability cannot be determined by simplistic categories

Our PARTICIPATE research further challenges common assumptions about which children are vulnerable and what support they need. Some children from higher socioeconomic backgrounds report having nobody to turn to when they experience difficulties. This demonstrates why vulnerability should not be equated automatically with poverty, limited parental education or presumed lack of digital competence. A child who has access to expensive devices, well-educated parents and a prestigious school may nevertheless lack trusted relationships or meaningful support.

Conversely, a child from a less advantaged background may benefit from strong family relationships and effective parental guidance.

Policy should recognise these differences. Uniform age restrictions do not address the relational and contextual factors that often determine whether children can navigate digital challenges successfully.

3.4. Independent European research confirms the need for differentiated approaches

The EU Kids Online 2026 comparative study surveyed 28,465 children aged 10–16 in 19 European countries between April 2025 and April 2026. It found that 87% of children used a smartphone or mobile phone to access the internet daily, while approximately two-thirds regularly used AI tools.

The study also identified substantial differences between countries and between children's digital experiences. It found that children generally demonstrated stronger operational and



communication skills than critical evaluation skills, including understanding algorithms and assessing information. Only 48% reported feeling safe online, demonstrating that genuine risks require attention. However, these findings do not establish that exclusion is the appropriate response. Instead, they reinforce the need for better education, meaningful support, safer services and differentiated approaches.

The research highlights that there is no single European digital childhood. A uniform legal threshold cannot capture the considerable differences in children's needs, capacities, experiences and support systems.

The existence of risks establishes a need for action. It does not establish that any particular restriction is necessary or proportionate.

4. The proposed restrictions raise serious concerns under the UNCRC

Parents International considers the UNCRC the essential legal and ethical framework for legislation affecting children. The Convention recognises children as rights holders while acknowledging the essential responsibilities of parents in guiding their development.

- Article 5 requires States to respect parental responsibilities, rights and duties to provide appropriate direction and guidance, consistent with children's evolving capacities.
- Article 18 recognises parents' primary responsibility for children's upbringing and development and establishes the State's responsibility to provide appropriate assistance.
- Article 12 protects children's right to express their views and have them taken seriously.
- Articles 13, 15 and 17 protect freedom of expression, association and access to information.
- Article 16 protects privacy.
- Article 3 requires the best interests of the child to be a primary consideration.

These provisions must be interpreted together.

The Convention does not support an approach in which the State automatically replaces parental judgement whenever a child encounters potential risks. Nor does it support treating all children of a particular age as having identical capacities. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No. 25 (2021) explicitly recognises the importance of digital environments for children's education, communication, participation and exercise of rights. It also emphasises parental guidance and the need to consider children's evolving capacities that cannot be provided for in a legislative act as every child develops differently.

The proposed EU KIDS Act would prohibit social media accounts for children under 13, allow only restricted guardian-managed accounts for those aged 13–14, and permit autonomous accounts from 15. Although this recognises some parental involvement, it does not offer meaningful parental discretion for younger children, even when a parent has carefully assessed a particular service and considers it appropriate. For children aged 13–14, the proposed model similarly replaces individual family decisions with centrally determined restrictions on features, contacts and usage time. Parents International questions whether these arrangements adequately respect Articles 5 and 18 or children's evolving capacities. We also question



whether restrictions on children's access to communication and information can be justified without a detailed assessment of their effects on Articles 12, 13, 15 and 17.

We therefore call on the Commission to demonstrate, for each proposed restriction, that it is suitable, necessary, proportionate and justified under the UNCRC and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The Commission should specifically demonstrate why parental consent, improved information, digital education and safer service design would be insufficient. Our own research and consultations provide substantial reasons to question that conclusion.

5. Parents International calls for an end to COPPA-derived age restrictions and meaningful recognition of parental consent

Parents International has repeatedly called on digital technology companies to abandon the automatic application of the age threshold of 13 derived from COPPA. COPPA is a US law concerning children's personal data. Its age threshold is not a scientifically established measure of readiness for social media participation. It should not determine family decisions throughout Europe.

We believe that parents should have the opportunity to authorise their children's access to digital services, including social media, when they consider it appropriate, while respecting the child's views and evolving capacities. This requires meaningful parental consent mechanisms to replace age limits.

Parents should be able to access understandable information about the service, its functions and risks, and then make an informed decision together with their children. Parental consent should not simply mean accepting a predetermined, heavily restricted account that offers little room for family judgement. We also emphasise that parental responsibility must evolve as children grow older. A parent deciding whether an eleven-year-old may join a particular online community faces a different situation from a parent supporting a seventeen-year-old's increasing autonomy. A rights-based framework should accommodate these differences rather than impose a single model on all families.

The EU has an opportunity to engage with technology companies and develop a better approach than the existing COPPA-derived threshold. Instead, the proposed legislation risks reinforcing that threshold and adding further restrictions. We consider this at least a missed opportunity.

6. Remove blanket screen bans for children under three: Digital communication is also family life

Parents International also calls for the removal of blanket prohibitions on screen use by children under the age of three, whether introduced through legislation or promoted as universal public policy. Such restrictions are another example of replacing parental judgement with an arbitrary age-based rule that fails to recognise the diversity of children's circumstances, needs and family relationships.



Screens are not a homogeneous category, and screen use cannot meaningfully be evaluated without considering its purpose, content, context and the involvement of adults. A toddler passively watching automatically recommended videos for extended periods is not in the same situation as a toddler sharing a video call with a grandparent, listening to a story read by a parent working abroad, or interacting with relatives living in another country.

For many children, particularly those growing up in transnational families, digital communication is an essential means of maintaining relationships with loved ones. Video calls may be the only practical way for young children to see, hear and interact regularly with grandparents, parents, siblings or other family members living far away. Prohibiting such interactions in the name of child protection would be particularly difficult to reconcile with the UNCRC's recognition of family relationships, parental responsibilities and children's right to maintain personal relations with family members.

Articles 5, 8, 9, 16 and 18 of the Convention are especially relevant in this context. The right to family life should not be undermined by measures that treat all screen use as inherently harmful, irrespective of its purpose.

Research on early childhood digital experiences also supports distinguishing between passive, solitary screen consumption and interactive, adult-supported activities, including video communication with family members. Evidence about potential developmental risks associated with excessive or inappropriate screen exposure cannot automatically be generalised to all forms of digital interaction.

Parents International therefore rejects universal screen bans for children under three and calls for the withdrawal of such restrictions wherever they are proposed or imposed. Instead, parents should receive accessible, evidence-informed guidance on the different forms of screen use, their potential benefits and risks, and ways to make appropriate decisions for their own children. A screen that separates a child from meaningful human interaction is not equivalent to a screen that enables meaningful human interaction across geographical distances. European policy must recognise this fundamental distinction.

Protecting young children should never mean preventing them from maintaining relationships with the people who love and care for them, nor should it mean depriving parents of their responsibility to decide how those relationships are supported.

7. The proposed restrictions may make parenting more difficult and encourage circumvention

One of our greatest concerns is the potential for the legislation to produce consequences opposite to those intended. Parents already encounter digital services that prohibit children from creating accounts despite parental approval. Many families respond by entering inaccurate ages. More restrictive legislation could increase incentives for families to continue this practice or use VPNs and other technical means to circumvent geographical or age-related restrictions. This may create several problems.

1. Inaccurate age declarations undermine the reliability of age-dependent safety features, especially when the child reaches adulthood on the platform, but not in real life.
2. Children using accounts that do not reflect their actual age may receive inappropriate recommendations or settings.
3. Parents may have greater difficulty obtaining support from providers when account information is inaccurate.
4. Prohibitions may discourage open discussion within families if children and parents feel they must conceal ordinary digital activities.
5. Children may move towards less transparent services or informal methods of access.

These consequences are not inevitable, but they are foreseeable and require serious assessment.

A policy that encourages families to provide inaccurate information or routinely circumvent restrictions cannot automatically be considered an improvement in digital safety. We are particularly concerned about the prospect of VPN use becoming an ordinary necessity for European families wishing to access legitimate global services. VPNs are useful privacy and security tools. However, needing them to circumvent ordinary geographical restrictions is not a desirable feature of an open digital society.

A free society should not make ordinary family decisions unnecessarily dependent on technical circumvention.

8. Parents need information, not instructions about every new technology

We urge the Commission to redirect its attention towards one of the clearest needs identified through our work with parents: access to reliable information. Parents do not need governments to decide whether every new digital tool is appropriate for their children. They need the information required to make that decision themselves. This is especially important as AI systems become increasingly integrated into everyday life.

New AI chatbots, educational tools, creative applications, communication platforms and digital assistants create opportunities and challenges that cannot be adequately addressed through age thresholds alone. We propose a European approach to independent, accessible information about digital technologies.

For each widely used service, parents should be able to obtain clear explanations of its purpose, functionality, privacy practices, potential risks, safety features, commercial incentives and opportunities for learning and participation. Such information should be available in all EU official languages and designed for accessibility, including for parents with limited digital experience or literacy. It should be regularly updated as services change.

Most importantly, this information should not take the form of fear-based warnings that focus exclusively on potential harm. Parents need balanced information that enables proper judgement.



We also recommend developing opportunities for parents to share experiences, ask questions and learn from each other. Peer learning and community-based support can be especially valuable when digital technologies evolve faster than formal guidance.

These measures together would genuinely improve children's safety by strengthen parental agency.

9. Schools must contribute to digital literacy and resilience

Parents International's research repeatedly indicates that schools are not fulfilling their potential role in supporting children's digital development. In the EFFEct research in Hungary and the Netherlands, none of the 1,472 respondents reported school-based teaching of the basic digital safety, netiquette and critical content evaluation competences covered by the relevant survey questions. This finding should be interpreted within the scope of that research, but it raises serious concerns about the support families experience.

Children spend a substantial part of their lives in school. Schools cannot reasonably regard digital literacy as an exclusively parental responsibility. At the same time, parents should not be expected to compensate for every gap in formal education.

We call for a stronger commitment to developing digital literacy and resilience through education. This should include information literacy, critical evaluation of sources, understanding disinformation and manipulation, cybersecurity, digital citizenship, responsible AI use, respectful online communication, and the ability to respond to bullying and other harmful experiences. Digital resilience should not be replaced by avoiding risks. It involves developing the competence and confidence to respond to challenges, seek support, recover from negative experiences and make informed decisions. These competences are best developed through meaningful participation, experiential learning, dialogue and reflection.

Our DRONE work has demonstrated the value of approaches that involve teachers, school leaders and parents as learners themselves. Teachers should not automatically be assumed to possess greater digital competence than parents or students. Our research shows the opposite. Professional development must therefore support professional educators in developing their own skills before expecting them to guide others.

Schools should also provide opportunities for mutual learning among students, parents, teachers and other members of the community.

We strongly recommend that the Commission treat digital literacy and resilience development as central components of children's digital safety, rather than secondary measures accompanying restrictions.

10. Safety by design should be universal and developed through cooperation

Parents International supports safety by design. We welcome improvements in privacy protection, transparent recommendation systems, meaningful user control, reporting mechanisms and safeguards against exploitation, manipulation and harmful conduct.

However, these principles should benefit all users. Adults also deserve protection against manipulative design, unwanted contact, opaque algorithms and misuse of personal data. At the same time, safety by design should not become a justification for excluding children from services or overriding parental decisions, nor should it be treated as an issue that can only be addressed through increasingly detailed statutory regulation. We favour structured cooperation between technology companies, independent researchers, parents, children, educators and civil society organisations. Such cooperation should involve transparent commitments, independent evaluation, shared standards and mechanisms for responding rapidly to emerging problems.

Before creating additional restrictions, the Commission should demonstrate why existing obligations, more effective enforcement and cooperative improvements would not achieve the same objectives.

We recognise that voluntary cooperation alone may not address every harmful practice. Nevertheless, the preferred approach should be collaborative, targeted and proportionate, with additional legal intervention justified by demonstrated gaps rather than assumed to be necessary.

11. The Commission's interpretation of public opinion deserves closer scrutiny

Parents International is concerned about how public opinion has been used to justify restrictive approaches to children's digital participation. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights published findings in March 2026 from a Eurobarometer survey of 26,453 respondents. The findings show genuine concern about children's online safety. They also show substantial support for some form of age restriction. We do not dismiss these results.

However, public concern about online harm does not, by itself, establish that respondents support the particular arrangements proposed in the EU KIDS Act. For example, the FRA survey asked respondents how concerned they were about children encountering specific online risks, including exploitation, violent content and addiction. These questions legitimately measure concern. They do not establish whether respondents are able to provide the necessary support or would prefer statutory prohibitions over parental consent, stronger safety features, digital education or better enforcement of existing law.

The survey also asked about legal age limits, but the reported findings do not demonstrate that respondents had evaluated the full range of less restrictive alternatives against the proposed model. The Commission's April 2026 consultation with 4,786 children aged 12–17 is particularly revealing. According to the published results, 78% suggested some age limit for joining social



media, although the proposed ages ranged from 12 to 18. At the same time, 203 children explicitly suggested alternative approaches, including parental decision-making, staged access and restrictions based on particular content or features. Furthermore, 72% supported some form of age checking, but this included 30% who supported checks only in certain circumstances. These distinctions matter.

Support for some age limits or occasional verification cannot automatically be interpreted as support for the specific EU KIDS Act provisions. The children's consultation also reported that young people wanted safer digital services without necessarily banning every potentially problematic feature, and that many wanted children and parents to retain choices.

We therefore call on the Commission to publish and critically assess the full questionnaires, answer options, sampling procedures and analytical methods used to support the proposal. In particular, we ask whether respondents were offered meaningful alternatives such as parental consent, independently assessed safety information, digital literacy education, universal safety by design and stronger school-family cooperation.

We also ask the Commission to distinguish clearly between support for protecting children and support for particular restrictive legislative measures.

The question is not whether European parents want their children to be safe. The question is what kind of support they want, what decisions they wish to retain, and which restrictions they consider acceptable.

Our consultations with members in 24 EU Member States indicate that parents want support for their decision-making, not the replacement of their judgement.

These consultations should not be presented as a statistically representative opinion poll of all European parents. Nevertheless, they constitute important stakeholder evidence that deserves consideration alongside population surveys.

We are concerned that the public debate has been disproportionately influenced by highly visible campaigns and media narratives focused on prohibition, while the everyday experiences of families seeking practical support have received insufficient attention.

We therefore question whether the proposal was developed with adequate consideration of the diversity of parental perspectives and the full range of available policy alternatives.

12. The risk of Europe's increasing digital isolation

We are concerned about the cumulative effects of European digital regulation on access to global services. The EU's regulatory framework already influences when and how technology companies make new features available to European users. For example, in June 2026 Apple announced that it would delay the introduction of Siri AI on iOS 27 and iPadOS 27 in the European Union, attributing its decision to difficulties concerning compliance with the Digital Markets Act. The European Commission disputed Apple's interpretation and stated that the legislation did not prohibit the launch. This disagreement illustrates the importance of considering how regulatory obligations, commercial decisions and legal uncertainty can affect



service availability. It does not establish that regulation alone caused every restriction, but it demonstrates that European users can experience delayed access amid disputes over compliance.

We are also concerned by experiences in which users resort to VPNs to access geographically restricted AI and other digital services. Europe should avoid creating a digital environment in which families, professional educators and researchers increasingly encounter barriers to globally available technologies.

The proposed EU KIDS Act should therefore be assessed not only for its direct child-protection effects but also for its potential impact on accessibility, innovation, competition and participation. European children should not be systematically disadvantaged in accessing emerging technologies.

13. What Parents International asks the European Commission to do

Parents International calls on the Commission to reconsider the proposal and adopt an approach that more effectively supports children and families.

Our recommendations are:

1. **Remove the absolute prohibition on social media accounts for children under 13**, replacing it with a framework that allows meaningful parental consent and appropriate safeguards.
2. **Reconsider the restrictions imposed on children aged 13–14**, allowing greater family discretion and recognising differences in children's evolving capacities.
3. **Engage technology companies in replacing automatic COPPA-derived age thresholds** with flexible, transparent and rights-respecting approaches to children's digital participation.
4. **Reject blanket screen bans for children under three**, recognising that digital technologies can enable essential relationships with parents, grandparents and other family members living far away. Such bans disregard the fundamental difference between passive screen consumption and meaningful, adult-supported interaction, undermine parental decision-making, and may interfere with children's right to family life. Parents should instead receive accessible, evidence-based guidance enabling them to make informed decisions about their young children's screen use.
5. **Create accessible, independent and regularly updated information resources for parents**, explaining the benefits, risks, functions and safety features of digital services, including emerging AI technologies.
6. **Strengthen schools' responsibility for developing digital literacy and resilience**, including critical thinking, information evaluation, digital citizenship, cybersecurity and responsible AI use.
7. **Invest in professional development for teachers and school leaders**, recognising that educators also need opportunities to develop their digital competences.

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8. **Support meaningful school-family-community cooperation**, including opportunities for mutual learning among parents, students and educators.
9. **Promote universal safety by design through structured cooperation with technology providers**, supported by transparency, independent evaluation and effective implementation of existing obligations.
10. **Undertake a comprehensive rights-based proportionality assessment**, explicitly addressing children's evolving capacities, parental responsibilities, access to information, privacy, freedom of expression and participation.
11. **Assess the foreseeable consequences of circumvention**, including inaccurate age declarations, VPN use, migration to less transparent services and reduced openness in family communication.
12. **Review the interpretation of survey evidence**, ensuring that support for child protection is not incorrectly equated with support for particular restrictions.
13. **Undertake genuine consultation with parents and children about alternative approaches**, including parental consent, information provision, digital education and cooperative platform safeguards.

13. Conclusion: Parents need to be supported, not overruled

Parents International believes that the EU KIDS Act, in its present form, reflects an approach to digital childhood that gives insufficient weight to parental responsibility, children's evolving capacities and the realities of family life. The proposal acknowledges the importance of parents but restricts their ability to make decisions. It recognises children's rights but risks limiting their opportunities to exercise them. It seeks to promote safety but encourages circumvention, inaccurate declarations and reduced transparency. It responds to genuine concerns but does not sufficiently demonstrate why less restrictive alternatives would be inadequate.

Our research and our experience working with parents in 24 of the 27 EU Member States lead us to a different conclusion. **Parents are not asking to be relieved of responsibility for their children's digital lives. They are asking to be better equipped to exercise that responsibility.** They want trustworthy information about new technologies. They want accessible support. They want schools to help children develop the competences and resilience needed to navigate digital environments. They want technology companies to offer safer, more transparent services. Above all, they want their role as parents to be respected.

We therefore urge the Commission to demonstrate that its proposed measures are necessary, proportionate and justified, including why the alternatives advocated by parents would not be sufficient. In our assessment, the evidence presented so far does not adequately establish that case.

The EU should move away from a model based primarily on age-based restrictions and towards one that supports family decision-making, invests in education, strengthens digital resilience and improves the safety of services for everyone.



Protecting children should not mean excluding them from the digital world. Supporting parents should not mean taking decisions away from them. And ensuring safety should not require sacrificing fundamental freedoms.

Europe needs digital policies that trust families, respect children's rights and prepare the next generation for meaningful participation in a hybrid world.

That is the approach Parents International calls on the European Union to adopt.

Parents International research

Parents International and project partners. *EFFEct research on children's digital participation and parental engagement*, Hungary, Italy, Belgium, Ireland, the Netherlands (N=1,472).

Parents International and project partners. *DRONE project: Digital literacy, disinformation, critical thinking, cybersecurity and digital resilience research and handbooks for parents, teachers and school leaders*.

Parents International and project partners. *PARTICIPATE research on children's experiences, trust, support networks and digital participation*.

Parents International. *Consultations and engagement with parent organisations and representatives across 24 EU Member States*.

Full bibliographic details and links to the relevant project reports can be provided upon request.