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Putting children at the heart of Europe

Strengthening Children's Rights Online – Perspectives on Advocacy work in Europe

RECLAIM THE SPACE!
AGJ and National Coalition Germany Event

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16 October 2026

Agenda Breakout Session

- Eurochild insights into European advocacy work to strengthen Children's Rights Online followed by Q & A

- Discussion with participants on how civil society actors can effectively shape political processes

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What are children's rights online?

Children's rights apply **everywhere** – at home, at school, and also online





Our work is based on the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** and the **General Comment No.25** on children's rights in the digital environment

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Eurochild's work

Monitoring and influencing key legislation regarding children's rights online, **from the negotiations to the implementation**:



- **Follow developments** in EU institutions
- **Exchange views** with policymakers and tech companies bringing a **child rights perspective**
- **Raise awareness**: events, campaigns, publications
- **Taskforce on children's rights in the digital environment**
- **Child participation**

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Eurochild's Digital Members' Taskforce

- **Taskforce on children's rights in the digital environment**
- 31 civil society organisations that are members of Eurochild - open to all members
- Both from EU and non-EU countries
- **We build the capacity** of civil society organizations at national level to do **advocacy at national level**
- At the same time **build on their insights** from the national level to inform EU policy making

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The NOVA Council

- **Group of 8 children from 6 EU Countries** (Malta, Croatia, Ireland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania)
- Want to make the digital environment a safer place for children
- The Council was created in April 2025 and has a two years mandate



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The NOVA Council

- Goal: **to inform digital policy with children's views and needs**, for example by making recommendations to policymakers, participating in public events and meetings with members of EU institutions

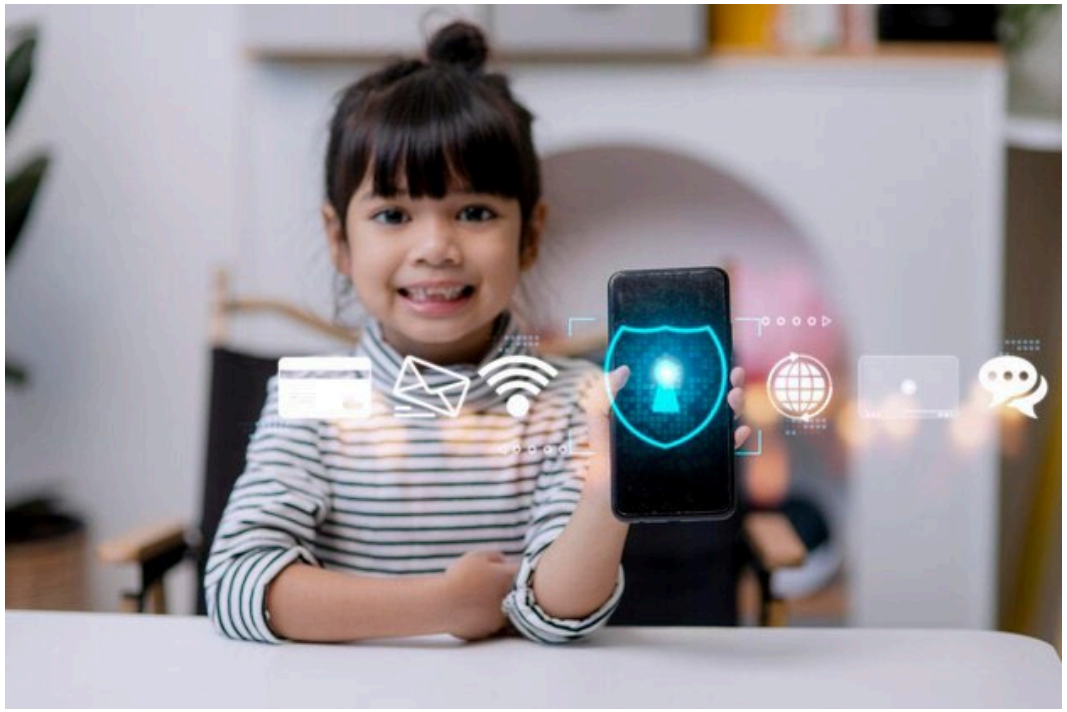




How does the EU protect children's rights online

This topic is a **priority** for the EU:

- Digital Services Act (2022)
- Guidelines on the Protection of Minors Online (2025)
- Regulation to Prevent and Combat Child Sexual Abuse - currently under negotiation
- Interim Regulation (2021 derogation to the 2002 e-Privacy Directive) – until April 2028
- **Recast of the** Child Sexual Abuse Directive (2011) – currently under negotiation
- AI Act (2024)



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Digital Services Act (DSA)

- The DSA contains rules to make online platforms and service providers more **responsible for children's safety**.
- Platforms have to guarantee **high levels of privacy, safety and security** for children
- The European Commission adopted the **Guidelines on the protection of minors online**







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Digital Services Act (DSA)

- **Provisions apply to all platforms** – e.g. the prohibition of profiling for advertisement
- **For very large online platforms there are stricter provisions**
- They have to **assess risks to children** on their services and **mitigate them**, by adopting measure to prevent and address those risks







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Child Sexual Abuse Regulation

- Regulation proposed in 2022 – negotiations are ongoing
- **Aims at protecting children from sexual abuse and exploitation online and offline**
- Strong focus on **prevention**



!!!

Current debate: concerns about privacy violation and mass surveillance

The proposal respects all fundamental rights

Campaign: 'Choose to see them'

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Child Sexual Abuse Directive

- **Criminal law tool** to combat child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children
- Originally **adopted in 2011**
- **Revision in 2024** to reflect new technological developments
- Negotiations are ongoing
- Defines crimes, increases penalties and support for victims



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Age Restrictions on social media

- **Social Media Ban** proposed in several EU countries
- Eurochild policy position based on input
- members, children and desk-research
- Special Expert Panel on child safety online – President Von der Leyen of the EC
- **Eurochild reaction to Report Special Expert Panel** – published on 10 Sept
- **State of the Union Speech Von der Leyen**
- **EU Kids Act** proposal – 17 September



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What is covered in the EU Kids?

- Social networking services
- Video-sharing platforms
- Online games, including video gaming platforms
- AI companions
- General conversational chatbots
- App stores
- Operating systems - specific duties on sharing age signals

- **Protects all children under 18**
- Can cover providers outside the EU offering services within the EU.
- No general exemption for small businesses.
- Certain narrowly defined educational, scientific, nonprofit, open-source and public-authority services are excluded

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What does the proposal aim to achieve?

- A safer and more age-appropriate digital environment for children across the EU
- Establish common EU rules and reduce fragmentation in the internal market
- Establish harmonised, privacy-preserving age-assurance requirements
- Delayed autonomous accounts
- Safety by design and default
- Age assurance and parental responsibility
- Enforcement
- Common EU rules also aim to reduce fragmentation between national approaches.

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How children’s feedback was reflected in the proposal

What children told us	How the EU Kids Act Responds	What can be strengthened in the act
“TikTok keeps showing you more and more, and it keeps you hooked."	The proposal focuses on making online services less addictive by reducing features like endless scrolling.	Children would like stronger enforcement action against features such as endless scrolling, autoplay, and other tricks that keep people online longer than they want to be
“Maybe they could implement something where, once in a while, the algorithm tells you: 'It's time to stop - you've been here for a while.'"	The proposal supports screentime management tools and proposes to set an hourly limit.	Children would like key safety settings to be switched on automatically and easy to find without having to search through settings menus.

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How children’s feedback was reflected in the proposal

What children told us	How the EU Kids Act Responds	What can be strengthened in the act
"Time management/time limits are often hidden in menus; they should be more visible."	The proposal encourages providers to offer safety and screen-time tools.	The proposal strengthens privacy protections and includes additional safeguards for younger users, but it does not require all under-18 accounts to be private by default. Children would like private accounts to be the default for all minors, especially younger teenagers.
"You want people you know to see your information, not everyone around the world."	The proposal aims to better protect children's privacy online including safeguards minimising online risks and harmful interactions.	Children would like stronger protections against strangers viewing their information or contacting them including restrictions on DM

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How children’s feedback was reflected in the proposal

What children told us	How the EU Kids Act Responds	What can be strengthened in the act
"I believe children under 15 should have their accounts set to private by default."	**Under 13:** No social media accounts. Child-friendly video services can be used with a parent or guardian's help. **Ages 13–14:** Social media can be used through a parentmanaged account with limited features and a 1-hour daily limit. **Age 15 and over:** Young people can open and manage their own social media account.	Children would like clearer age-based privacy protections, including private-by-default accounts for all users under 15, as well as stronger safeguards as children transition to managing their own accounts.
“Even when I say 'not interested', new videos still promote unhealthy diets."	The proposal requires platforms to consider risks to children's wellbeing. Proposal requires providers to assess and mitigate risks to children’s rights, wellbeing, health and development.	Children would like platforms to stop recommending harmful content once they have clearly indicated they do not want to see it and to give users greater control over recommendations.

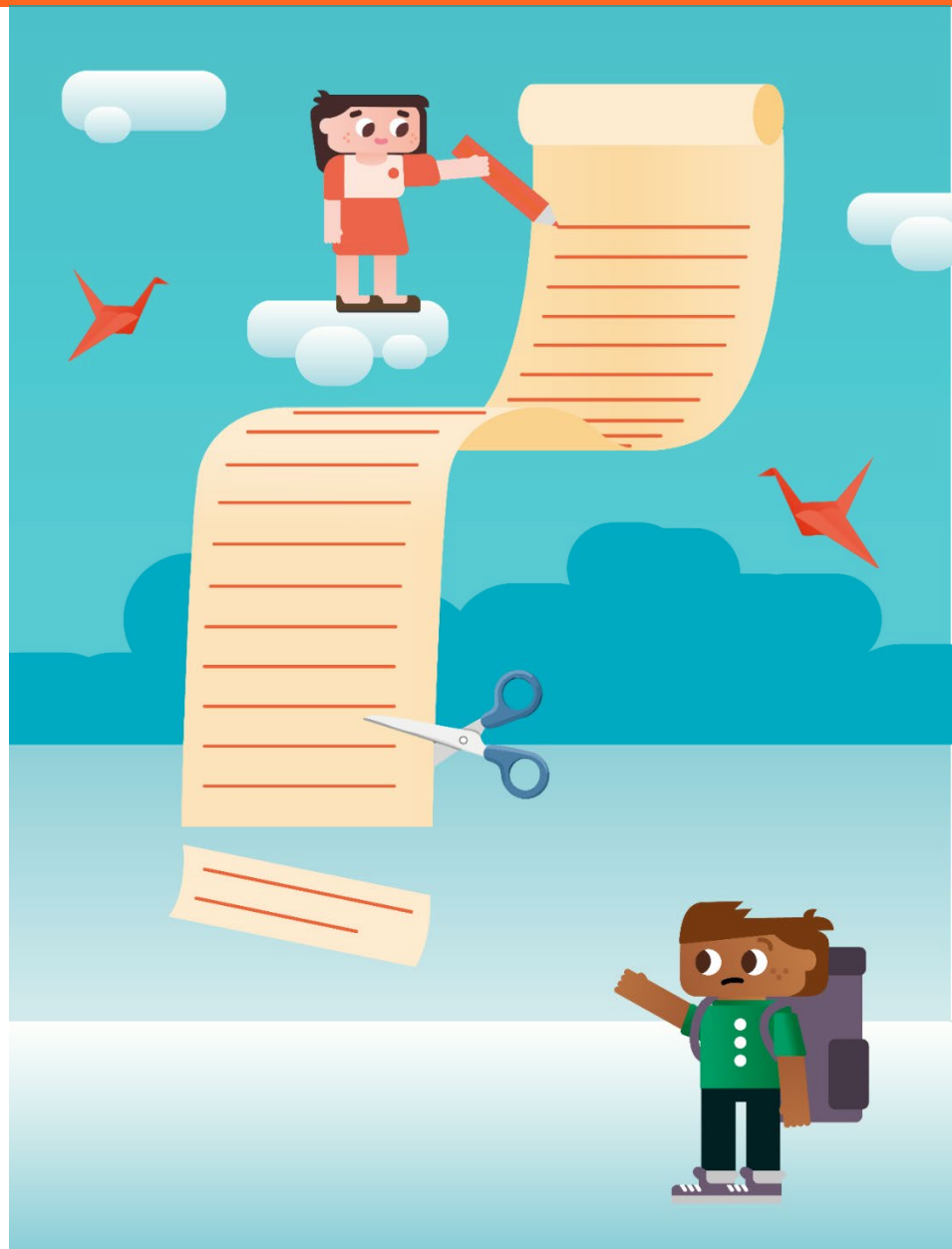
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Q & A

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Discussion

Questions to be discussed:

- **Ask participants to introduce themselves and can they name one activity where they have successfully influenced a German policy or law (in the digital environment or another area) and why was it successful?**
- **What challenges do you identify in your advocacy work on safe digital spaces in Germany that urgently need to be addressed?**
- **How can we overcome these challenges?**
- **Where do you see opportunities for action?**

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