

Report on the Youth Policy Dialogue with Henna Virkkunen, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for Technological Sovereignty, Security and Democracy, and Glenn Micallef, European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport

Title of Youth Policy Dialogue: How to Protect Young People Online

Date: 22 September 2026

Location: DG CONNECT premises (L-51), Brussels, Belgium

Introduction

The Youth Policy Dialogue took place on 22 September 2026 at the Directorate-General for Communications Networks, Content and Technology (DG CONNECT) premises at Rue de la Loi 51 in Brussels. It brought together 21 participants, including young content creators from 10 different EU Member States, to discuss how to protect young people online with Henna Virkkunen, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for Technological Sovereignty, Security and Democracy, and Glenn Micallef, European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport. It was livestreamed to online audiences on the [DigitalEU YouTube channel and the @DigitalEU Instagram page](#). Online youth protection is a prominent EU policy issue in 2026 with significant actions including the EU Action Plan on Cyberbullying, well as the Special Panel on Child Safety Online and subsequent report on the protection of youth online. The latter led to the 2026 EU Kids Act proposal. As Commissioner Micallef coordinates the Action Plan on Cyberbullying and Executive Vice-President Virkkunen is leading on the EU Kids Act, DG CONNECT invited both to ensure that the full breadth of the European Commission's work on online youth safety would be represented at the Youth Policy Dialogue.

Two content creators were selected to be moderators on the basis of their expertise and that they are both parents and Digital EU Ambassadors. They had been present for the release of the special panel report which led to the EU Kids Act. The 21 young people participating in the Dialogue were selected to ensure diversity in the countries, age ranges and occupations represented (particularly between students and young professionals). Three are also EU Better Internet for Kids (BIK) ambassadors – young people who had participated in the annual BIK Youth Panel and expressed interest in the EU's activities in making the internet friendlier and safer for children.

Prior to the Dialogue, an online preparation meeting took place on Friday 11 September 2026, from 11.30-12.30. It introduced participants to Youth Dialogue format, gathered their initial input on the key topics and provided an opportunity to ask questions about the event's logistical arrangements.

Summary of the Youth Policy Dialogue (In person-meeting)

Participants were seated in rows facing the front of the room, where the Executive Vice-President and Commissioner were placed between the two moderators.

To introduce the two EU Commission speakers, the moderators asked each of them one question on their understanding of the issues facing youth online.

After these introductory questions, the moderators alternated between two different sets of cards, one for each topic of discussion. The cards contained questions related to their respective topics. The Executive Vice-President and the Commissioner started the discussion by randomly picking cards from their respective sets – first leaving space for participants to speak, then joining in with their own comments and answering participant questions with details about existing or upcoming policies where relevant. The

discussion dynamic was conversational. The moderators frequently participated by offering their own comments on the issues discussed.

Main takeaways

Participants commenting on the 2026 Kids Act proposal were positive. They welcomed age assurance, private-by-default accounts and stronger protections while repeatedly raising concerns about potential privacy and age assurance issues, circumvention, migration to less-regulated services and difficulty recognising evolving forms of cyberbullying. The Executive Vice-President highlighted that online platforms must submit compliance plans explaining their safety measures, which would enable the EU to assess the measures platforms take to comply with the rules.

Shared responsibility for young people's online experience was a central theme. This was noted early on by Commissioner Micallef who specifically named parents, educators, policymakers and digital platforms as actors that bear this responsibility. Some participants questioned whether adults were themselves digitally literate enough to help young people navigate online issues. While the Kids Act shifts more responsibility for minors' safety onto the online platforms, the Executive Vice-President and Commissioner shared that they would continue to provide resources like Safer Internet Centres (hubs that provide awareness services and hotlines to help young people stay safe online) and educational tools to improve the ability of parents and educators to act effectively. Some participants raised the idea of same-age ambassadors who could discuss and raise awareness of online issues with their peers while circumventing barriers young people might have in sharing their issues with adults.

The design of the platforms and their systemic risks was a recurring concern throughout the Dialogue. The participants, the Executive Vice-President and the Commissioner all repeatedly shared concerns about addictive algorithms, the future role of AI, the spread of disinformation and other harmful content and the impact on users' physical health. In the case of AI, Executive Vice-President Virkkunen emphasised that humans should remain in control of how the technology is used. Some participants expressed positive memories of the early internet era and highlighted the educational and network-building aspects of the internet, asking for a balanced approach to regulation.

Follow-up Activities

Participants actively engaged during the session with EVP Virkkunen and Commissioner Micallef. The main takeaways from the conversation will be included in the [Citizens' Engagement Platform](#), where participants and other young people from across the EU will be able to get involved and add their own ideas, reflections and experiences.

Examples of proposals contributed by the young participants during the Dialogue itself include:

- Putting in place a ‘peer-to-peer’ or ‘same-age’ ambassador’ system in schools where students can volunteer to be part of awareness-raising on online issues and bullying and to check in on their colleagues and offer support
- Digital literacy for adults responsible for young people like parents
- Raising awareness of existing support systems as well as what bullying can look like
- Apply strong privacy settings to minors’ accounts online as a default without being overly restrictive on their ability to use the connective and educational benefits of the internet

Social media content has been posted on the DigitalEU, european_youth_eu accounts and on the accounts of EVP Virkkunen and Commissioner Micallef. The content shared by DigitalEU generated 47 000 impressions, and the live streams reached over 350 views.

A photographer was present and captured the highlights of the event, now available at this [link](#).

Annex

- [Social media post: wrap up of the Youth Policy Dialogue](#)
- [News Item on the Youth Policy Dialogue](#)
- [Link to the recording of the event \(YouTube\)](#)