Your voice on a fairer online world: What young people told the EU

A child-friendly report on the Youth Policy Dialogue with Commissioner McGrath about the Digital Fairness Act

💡 You'll find a guide to some of the words and phrases used (marked with *) at the end of this document.

What is this report about?

On 17 and 18 June 2026, 28 young people aged 16 to 30 met European Commissioner* Michael McGrath in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Six of the group were under 18.

Commissioner McGrath is responsible for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection at the European Commission*. His work includes protecting people when they buy or use products and services online.

The meeting was called a **Youth Policy Dialogue**. This is a discussion where young people can speak directly to EU decision-makers about policies and decisions that affect them.

The dialogue focused on the **Digital Fairness Act***, or DFA for short. This is a new EU law being prepared to address unfair or confusing things that can happen when people use digital services or shop online.

💡 What is the Digital Fairness Act?

It is a law that the Commission works on and looks at how people are treated when they:

- use apps, games, websites and social media
- shop or pay for things online
- see online adverts or
- sign up for or cancel subscriptions

The EU already has rules to protect people online.

However, technology changes quickly, so some rules may need to be updated so that when people buy things online or use digital services, they are protected.

Note that the Commission works on the DFA. It will come up with a proposal by the end of this year. However, it is for the co-legislators, the Council and the European Parliament, to transform it into an actual law.

Being online brings opportunities and challenges

Apps, games, websites and social media are a big part of many young people's lives. They can help you:

- learn new things
- have fun
- talk to friends and family
- be creative
- share your ideas

But some online design can also be unfair or confusing. They may encourage people to:

- stay online longer than they planned
- spend more money than they wanted or
- click on something without fully understanding it

The EU wants to make the online world fairer and safer. This is why it is preparing the Digital Fairness Act.

Why your views matter

Decisions about the online world affect young people directly. By sharing their experiences, young people can help EU decision-makers understand what they enjoy and value online, what feels confusing, unfair or unsafe, and what should change.

Young people may notice problems or suggest solutions that adults have not considered. Taking part also gives young people an opportunity to ask questions, listen to different points of view and speak directly to the people preparing policies that may affect them.

The dialogue brought their experiences, concerns and expectations into the European Commission's work on the Digital Fairness Act.

Why have we created this report?

Young people have a right to receive information about decisions that affect them in a way they can understand. This report explains what happened during the dialogue, the five topics discussed, what young people suggested and what will happen next. It is a shorter, child-friendly version of the full report.

What happened during the dialogue?

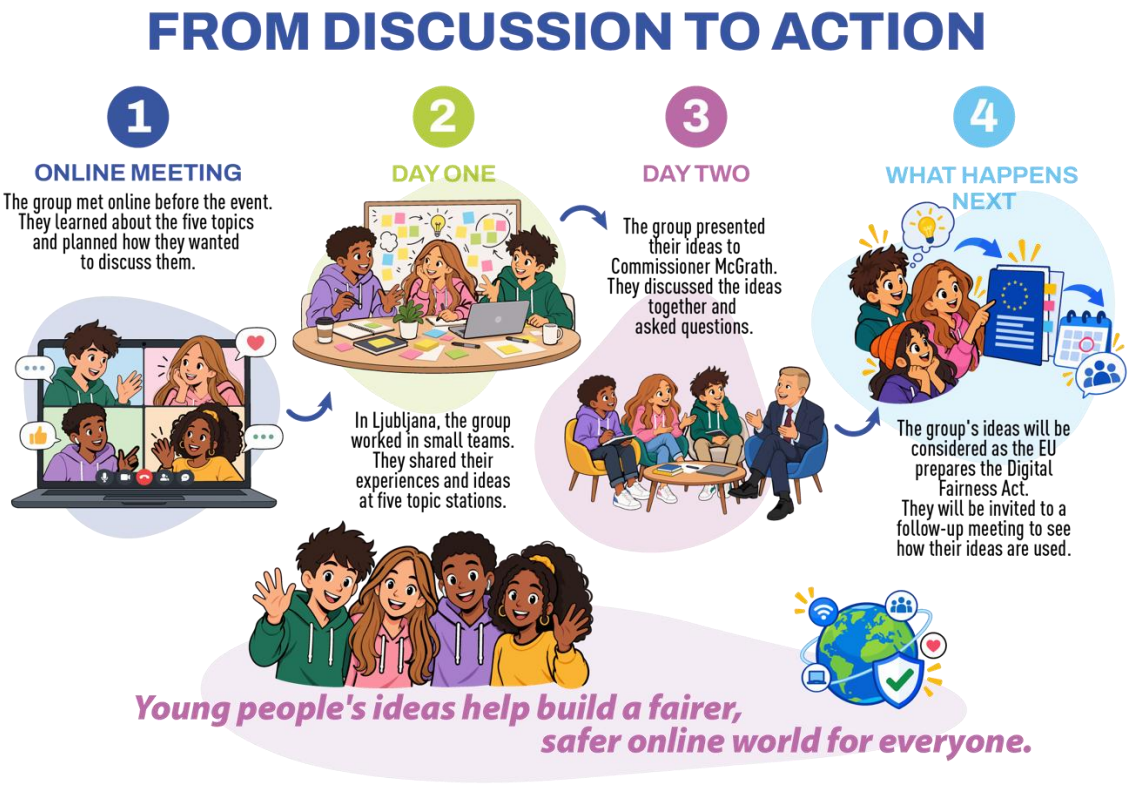
Before the event, the group joined an online meeting on 8 June 2026. The organisers explained what would happen in Ljubljana and introduced the five topics for discussion:

1. Features that encourage people to spend more time or money online
2. Influencer marketing*
3. Personalised* adverts and prices
4. Age limits and ways of checking people's ages online
5. Online design tricks, pricing and digital contracts

The young people then chose which topics they particularly wanted to explore during the group sessions.

> 💡 Why hold a Youth Policy Dialogue?
>
> Young people use digital services often and are directly affected by online rules. The dialogue gave them a way to tell EU decision-makers about their experiences, concerns and ideas.

The main dialogue took place in Ljubljana over two days. The participants first worked together in groups to discuss the five topics and develop their ideas. They then presented their ideas directly to Commissioner McGrath.



Day one: Sharing experiences and ideas

The first day began with activities to help the group get to know each other. A European Commission representative explained the Digital Fairness Act and some of the issues it may address, then the children discussed their experiences and ideas, recording their suggestions on posters.

Day two: Speaking to the Commissioner

On the second day, the young people met Commissioner McGrath. They presented their main concerns and ideas for each topic, the Commissioner responded, and the group had an opportunity to ask questions and continue the discussion.



Ideas for a fairer online world

During the dialogue, the young people worked in groups, shared their concerns and suggested ideas for making things fairer and safer for each topic.

The following sections explain what they said about each of the five topics.

1. Features that keep people online or encourage spending

Many companies online use features that encourage people to stay online longer or spend more money. These can include:

- videos that play automatically
- infinite scroll*
- rewards for using an app or game every day
- loot boxes*
- virtual coins, gems or tokens*

The group was concerned that these features can make it difficult for people to stop using an app or understand how much money they are spending.

They also discussed possible effects on attention and mental health, including having too much information to process and feeling unable to stop scrolling. Children and other people who may be more easily affected by these features could face greater risks.

What needs to change?

- check features that could harm people's health or wellbeing before an app or game is released
- give people more control over these features
- provide clear warnings about spending too much time online
- introduce stronger rules for virtual money in games
- teach people how these features work and how they may affect them

> 💡 Where does the scrolling end?
>
> **Infinite scroll*** means that new posts, videos or images keep appearing as you scroll. There is no clear stopping point. This can make it difficult to notice how long you have been online or decide when to stop.

2. Influencer marketing

Influencers* share content with people who follow them online. Sometimes they are paid to promote a product.

> 💡 Look for the label
>
> Tags such as **#advertising** or **#commercialcollaboration** show that someone has been paid to promote something. These labels should be clear and easy to see.

The group was concerned that it is not always easy to tell when an influencer is sharing their own opinion and when they are being paid to advertise something. They also discussed influencers promoting things that could be harmful to young people, such as gambling services and unhealthy food and drinks.

What needs to change?

- make labels such as **advertisement** and **paid partnership*** clearer and easier to see
- clearly show when part of a video is an advert
- have stronger rules about influencers advertising gambling* services and unhealthy food and drinks to young people
- check that influencers clearly label paid content* and take action when they do not
- ask influencers to share how much money they earn from advertising and paid partnerships each year

3. Personalised adverts and prices

Apps, websites and online shops can collect information about what people do online. They may use this information to choose the adverts people see or the prices they are offered.

The group recognised that personalised adverts* can sometimes show people products that interest them. However, they were worried that it is not always clear what information is collected or how it is used.

They also discussed personalised prices*. This is when different people may be shown different prices for the same product or service. The group was concerned that this could be unfair, especially if it takes advantage of someone's personal situation.

> 💡 **The same product, a different price**
>
> An online shop may use information about what you have searched for, clicked on or bought before when choosing the price you see. This could mean that one person sees a game for €5, while another person sees the same game for €7.
>
> If information about each person is used to choose the price, this is called a **personalised price**.

What needs to change?

- create videos for television and social media that explain how personalised adverts and prices work
- stop adverts from targeting children



4. Age limits and age checks

Social media can help children and young people learn, communicate and take part in society. But the group was concerned that younger users may see harmful content or experience unfair practices online.

The group shared that many social media platforms have age limits. Apps and websites may use age checks* to find out whether someone is old enough to use them. The group agreed that these checks should protect children without collecting too much personal information.

> 💡 How can an app check your age?
>
> An age check can help stop children from seeing or using things that are not suitable for them. But it should not ask for more personal information than it needs. It should keep that information safe and treat everyone fairly.

What needs to change?

- create clear rules for online tools that check how old someone is
- those tools must keep people's information safe, private and fair for everyone
- teach children and adults about the risks and benefits of social media

5. Online tricks, prices and digital contracts

Some apps and websites use designs that push people towards choices they may not have made on their own. These are sometimes called dark patterns*. Examples include hiding extra costs, using confusing buttons or making it easy to sign up* for a subscription* but difficult to cancel it.

The group was also concerned about long terms and conditions* that are difficult to understand. People may not know what they have agreed to, how much they will pay or what to do if the service changes.

💡 Does the choice feel fair?

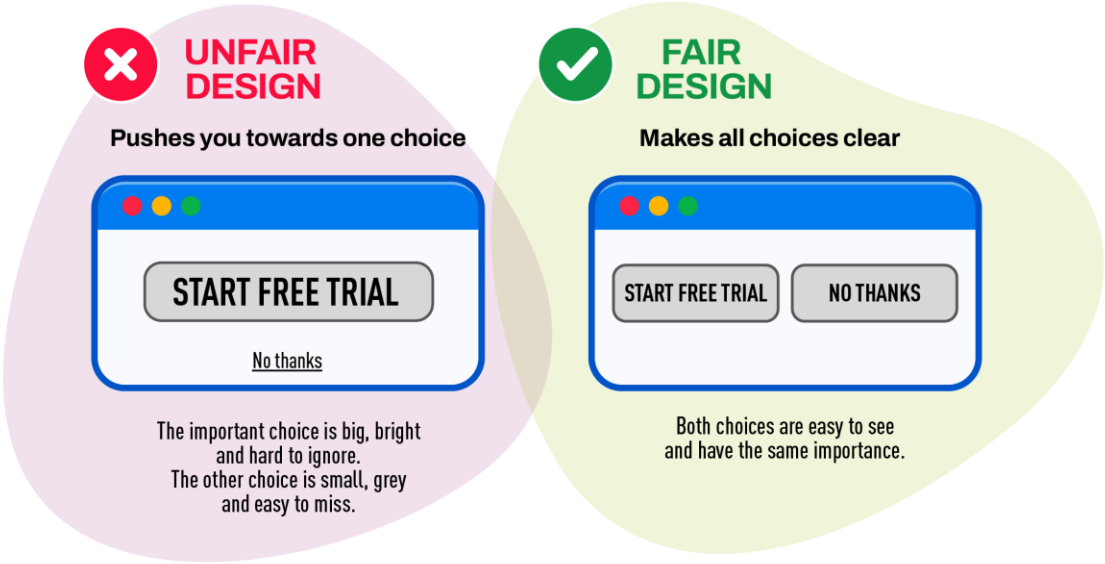
Some apps and websites are designed to push you towards a particular choice. For example, they may:

- use a bright button for the choice they want you to make
- make another option difficult to find
- hide extra costs until the end
- make it easy to sign up but difficult to cancel

These are called **dark patterns.**

What needs to change?

- create a clear definition of what dark patterns are
- stop using unfair dark patterns
- show prices in games using real money, instead of only virtual coins, gems or tokens
- make contracts and consent forms* clearer
- ask people to agree again when important parts of a contract change
- make it as easy to cancel a subscription as it is to sign up



What did Commissioner McGrath say?

Commissioner McGrath thanked the young people for sharing their experiences and ideas and said that their views are important when the EU is preparing new policies.

He listened to the group's ideas and spoke about:

- clearer information about how online services work
- better education about the digital world
- clear rules for influencer marketing
- ways to deal with unfair personalised adverts and prices
- clearer rules for online design tricks and digital contracts*

He also said that these issues need a balanced approach. Rules should protect people from harm while respecting personal freedom a d privacy. Everyone has a role to play in keeping children safe online. Parents and carers, schools, technology companies and lawmakers should work together with children.

💡 What the young people asked for:

Across the five topics, the main ideas that came out of the dialogue were the need for:

- clearer information
- more control over online choices
- stronger protection for children online
- fairer prices
- rules that companies must follow

What happens next?

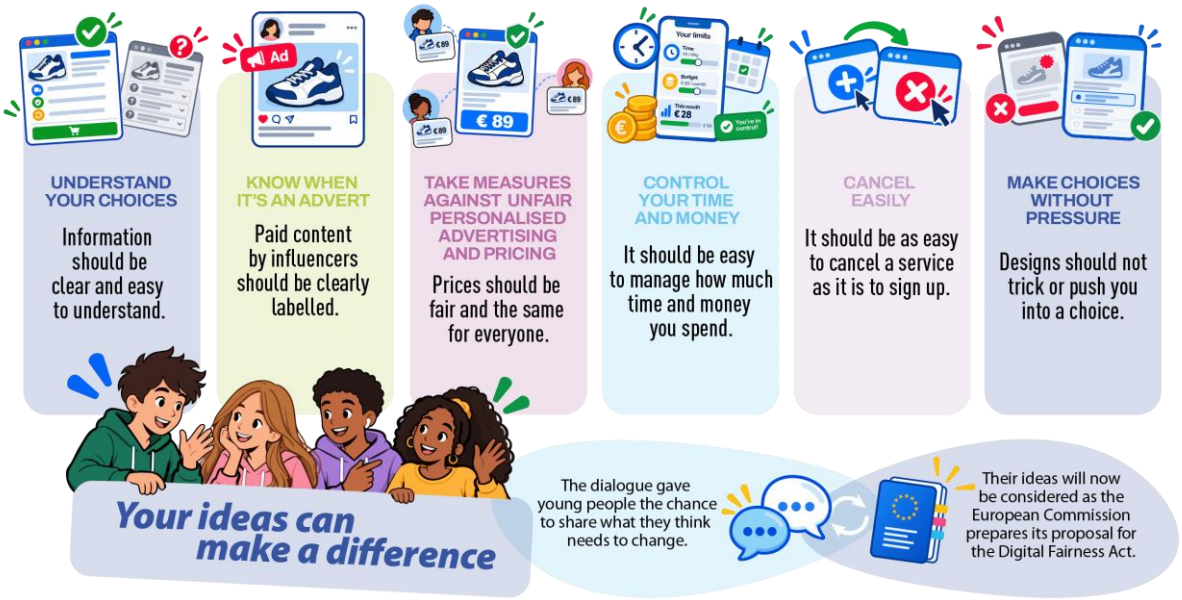
The ideas from the dialogue will be considered by the European Commission teams preparing the proposal for the Digital Fairness Act. An online follow-up meeting would take place after the Commission adopts its proposal. At the meeting, they will find out which of their suggestions appear in the proposal and how their ideas were used.

💡 Where do the ideas go?

At the follow-up meeting, the young people will find out:

- which of their ideas appear in the Commission's proposal
- how their contributions were used
- what will happen next with the Digital Fairness Act

This gives them a chance to see what changes after the dialogue and how their ideas can make a difference to the proposal.



Words used in this report

Word or phrase	What it means
Age check	A way for an app or website to check how old someone is before letting them use something or see something.
Consent form	A form that asks you to agree to something after you have been given information about it.
Dark pattern	A design trick used by an app or website to push you towards a choice you may not have made on your own.
Digital contract	An agreement you make when you buy, join or use a service online.
Digital Fairness Act (DFA)	A new EU law in preparation by the Commission to help make the online world fairer and safer.
European Commission	The part of the European Union that helps create new laws and makes sure they are followed.

European Commissioner	A person responsible for a particular area of the European Commission's work.
Gambling	Risking money on a game or activity when you do not know whether you will win or lose.
Infinite scroll	Scrolling that continues without stopping.
Influencer	A person who shares content online with people who follow them. They may be paid to promote products and services.
Influencer marketing	A type of advertising that is made by an influencer.
Loot box	A mystery box in a game that you pay for without knowing what you will get.
Paid content	A post, video or other online content that someone has been paid to create or share.
Paid partnership	An agreement where a company or organisation pays an influencer to promote something online.
Personalised advert	An advert chosen for you based on information about what you do online, such as what you watch, search for or click on.
Personalised price	A price offered to you using information about you or what you do online. This may mean that another person sees a different price for the same thing.
Privacy	Your right to keep information about yourself safe and control how it is used.
Sign up	To create an account or agree to start using a service.
Social media	Apps and websites where people can share content, communicate and connect with others.
Subscription	A service you sign up for and usually pay for regularly, for example every month.
Terms and conditions	The rules you agree to when you use a product or service.
Virtual coins, gems or tokens	Money used inside a game or app. It may look like game money, but it is often bought with real money.