

Report on the Youth Policy Dialogue with Commissioner Michael McGrath, European Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection

Title of Youth Policy Dialogue: Digital Fairness Act

Date: **June 17 and 18, 2026**

Location: BAZA Youth Centre, Ljubljana, Slovenia

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Introduction

The **Youth Policy Dialogue** brought together 28 **young people** from across **Europe and the Western Balkans** to discuss the **Digital Fairness Act** with **European Commissioner Michael McGrath**, the **EU Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection**.

The physical meeting took place on **17 and 18 June 2026**, in the **BAZA Youth Centre in Ljubljana (Slovenia)** and was moderated by Dylan Ahern & Jahkini Bisselink from De Kiesmannen.

1.1. Why is this topic relevant?

The topic is related to the work on the upcoming *Digital Fairness Act* which aims at addressing issues consumers encounter in the digital environment. It is particularly relevant for young people, who are among the most active users of digital services and are therefore directly affected when acting as consumers online.

1.2. The choice of the venue

The BAZA Youth Centre in Ljubljana was a well-suited venue for the event. It reflects the Youth Policy Dialogue event's spirit by offering a modern and inclusive setting that supports youth participation. As a recently renovated and active youth space, BAZA functions as a dynamic hub for social interaction, networking, cooperation, creativity, and engagement.

1.3. Selection of participants

Participants were selected based on recommendations from consumer organisations such as BEUC and the European Consumer Centres (ECCs), as well as European Commission Representations and Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture. The group brought together a wide range of profiles and experiences: while some participants work directly on digital and consumer rights issues, others are active in their local communities and engaged in youth work and civic participation. Six minor participants took part in the event, each accompanied by an adult.

1.4. Preparatory meeting

Prior to the main event in Ljubljana, an online preparation meeting took place on 8 June 2026 as a first contact between the participants and the Commission services. The organisers shared the agenda and logistics of the main event. The Commission expert also presented the five main topics of discussion, from which participants selected the main topics to focus during the dedicated group work sessions

2. Summary of the Youth Policy Dialogue

2.1. Overall Structure of the Youth Policy Dialogue

The Youth Policy Dialogue on Digital Fairness brought together **28 young people aged 16–30 from EU Member States and the Western Balkans** to contribute to the work on the upcoming Digital Fairness Act. The event aimed to ensure that young people's experiences, concerns and expectations are reflected in future EU consumer policy.

The first day combined welcoming activities and a structured overview of the work on the Digital Fairness Act. Ice-breaking activities supported initial interaction and a collaborative atmosphere. This was followed by an introductory session led by an EU representative, presenting possible elements of the Digital Fairness Act, which were also subject to [public consultation](#) in the second half of 2025. An interactive QR-based quiz with live results complemented the presentation. Participants then engaged in a rotating group-work format across five thematic stations, where they discussed issues and recorded ideas and recommendations on posters, ensuring contributions to all thematic areas.

The second day focused on direct dialogue with Commissioner McGrath where participants presented their actions and priorities for each of the five thematic areas (see below), highlighting their main findings and policy proposals. Each presentation was followed by comments and responses from the Commissioner, as well as an open discussion with other participants. The circular seating arrangement supported equal participation and facilitated an open and direct dialogue. Participants engaged actively and consistently, contributing perspectives based on diverse national and personal experiences.

In his closing remarks, Commissioner McGrath thanked participants for their active engagement. He **emphasized** the value of incorporating youth input into EU policy development and described the session as an example of direct and meaningful exchange between young people and decision-makers. Participants were informed that a follow-up online meeting will be organised after the EU Commission adopts its proposal, allowing them to see how their contributions are reflected in the Commission legislative proposal.

In addition to the core dialogue sessions, the programme included introductory group activities, informal networking opportunities, shared meals, a guided tour of Ljubljana, a group photo, and final reflection.

3. Main takeaways

3.1. Attention and spending maximising features

Participants discussed how digital services are increasingly designed to maximise user engagement and spending. Particular concerns were raised regarding features such as infinite scrolling, autoplay functions, lootboxes, and other mechanisms that encourage prolonged use and spending.

The discussion highlighted the impact of these practices on mental health, including information overload, reduced attention span, compulsive behaviour online, or “doomscrolling”. Young people stressed that children and other vulnerable users are particularly affected by these design features.

Key proposals and recommendations from participants included: requiring that spending and attention maximising features undergo formal assessment and approval processes before market release, particularly in cases where there is a risk of addiction, negative impacts on mental health, or other forms of user harm. Participants also emphasised the need for stronger user control mechanisms and clearer warning messages regarding excessive use. They also called for greater regulation of the use of virtual currencies.

Throughout the discussion, education and awareness-raising were repeatedly highlighted as important complementary measures alongside regulation. A proposal for simplified “one-click” sign-out processes was also raised.

Commissioner McGrath acknowledged the importance of addressing attention and spending **maximizing** features while maintaining an appropriate balance between regulation and personal freedom. He agreed that greater **transparency, and** stronger digital literacy measures are important.

3.2. Influencer Marketing

Influencer marketing emerged as one of the topics that generated the greatest interest among participants. The discussion focused on **transparency, and** accountability.

Participants expressed concerns about the difficulty of distinguishing between authentic content and paid promotion. Particular attention was given to hidden advertising, insufficient disclosure of sponsorships, and the promotion of potentially harmful products such as gambling or unhealthy food and drinks, especially to young audiences.

Key proposals and recommendations from participants included: increasing the visibility and standardisation of advertising labels (e.g. #ad) and ensuring clear disclosure of paid content within videos. Participants also called for stricter regulation of the promotion of products such as gambling services and unhealthy food and drinks, applying approaches similar to those used for tobacco and alcohol advertising. In addition, they **emphasized** stronger transparency requirements for influencer content, including disclosure of income on an annual basis, the

information about product-related risks, and clearer identification of the companies, organisations, or political actors behind the influencers' content.

The discussion also addressed enforcement challenges, with participants questioning how compliance with disclosure obligations can be effectively monitored and enforced. **One content creator** highlighted that transparency is already a key principle in the sector and noted that **for example Irish regulations** on “paid partnership” disclosures are relatively strict. Another participant argued that, while influencer marketing deserves **certain attention**, larger challenges arise from major tech companies (for example, their influence over algorithms) rather than from individual content creators.

Commissioner McGrath emphasised that influencer marketing is an important form of advertising and should be subject to clear and effective transparency requirements.

3.3. Ads and Price Personalisation

Participants highlighted the growing use of personalised advertising and pricing in digital markets. While acknowledging that personalisation can improve user experience and provide more relevant content, they also **pointed out to concerns** regarding fairness and transparency.

Participants also raised concerns about the role of personalised advertising in reinforcing consumer vulnerabilities and dynamic pricing.

Key proposals and recommendations from participants included: promoting educational awareness videos on television and social media to improve public understanding of digital practices. Participants also called for greater transparency in data collection practices, with clearer information provided to users. In addition, the group recommended banning advertising targeting children.

Commissioner McGrath recognised unfair personalisation as an important challenge. He also acknowledged concerns regarding dynamic pricing noting that these issues are closely linked to ongoing discussions in the framework of the upcoming DFA.

3.4. Age Limits and Age Verification for Social Media and Beyond

The protection of children online was identified as one of the most complex and sensitive topics discussed during the dialogue. Participants explored the benefits and challenges of **age limitation to access social media**, age verification tools and broader measures aimed at creating safer digital environments for children and young people.

The debate recognised that social media offer important opportunities for learning, communication and social participation. At the same time, participants expressed concerns about early exposure to harmful content, manipulative practices and age-inappropriate digital environments.

Key proposals and recommendations the participants focused on: developing dedicated child-friendly online spaces (such as YouTube Kids) to ensure age-appropriate access to digital content for younger users. They also **proposed to establish** clear criteria for age verification tools, with strong safeguards for data protection, privacy, and equality. In addition, the group emphasised the need to strengthen digital literacy for both children and adults on the risks and opportunities of social media.

Commissioner McGrath acknowledged that there is no single solution to the issue and stressed the importance of a balanced approach combining regulation, parental responsibility, education and technological safeguards. He also highlighted ongoing policy discussions at both EU and international levels concerning the protection of children online.

3.5. Dark Patterns, Price Marketing Practices and Digital Contracts

Participants highlighted that many online services rely on manipulative interface design, hidden costs and lengthy terms and conditions that users rarely fully **understand**.

A significant part of the discussion focused on the lack of clarity surrounding digital contracts and subscription models. Participants noted that users often face difficulties when attempting to cancel services, understand pricing structures or identify hidden fees.

Recommendations from the participants focused on: strengthening the legal framework for dark patterns by introducing a harmonised legal definition, developing a standard classification system, and enhancing enforcement mechanisms. Participants also proposed prohibiting certain manipulative interface designs. In relation to price marketing practices, the group called for prohibiting deceptive pricing strategies, introducing standard transparency requirements, and ensuring that, for example in video games, prices are displayed in real currency to avoid confusion or hidden costs. Regarding digital contracts, participants proposed establishing common standards for contracts and consent forms, and requiring explicit re-consent whenever material changes are made to terms and conditions. They also recommended ensuring symmetry between subscription and cancellation processes.

Commissioner McGrath agreed that a clearer legal framework is necessary. He also stressed that effective enforcement is essential to ensure compliance.

4. Communication

Influencers

The influencer campaign generated **13 social media publications**. Overall, the campaign reached **142,000 people** and achieved **156,000 views**, demonstrating solid visibility across the target audiences. The content generated **950 engagements** (likes, comments and saves). In addition, the campaign delivered an estimated **earned media value of €7,880**, reflecting the added value of the organic exposure generated through the creators' content.

Mary-Claire Fitzpatrick, Ireland

- **Mary-Claire Fitzpatrick** is an Irish TV presenter, comedian and digital creator known for her relatable comedy sketches and storytelling across TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. Her content often draws on everyday life, Irish culture, and personal experiences, using humour and character-driven skits to connect with a broad audience.
- [150k followers on Instagram](#)
- [179k followers on TikTok](#)

Ronan Mitchell, Ireland

- **Ronan Mitchell (Mitch)** is an Irish content creator and multimedia presenter known for lifestyle and entertainment content on TikTok and social media. Based in Galway, he creates relatable, personality-driven content and engages audiences through humour, everyday experiences, and interviews.
- [23.4k followers on Instagram](#)

Klemen Selakovič, Slovenia

- **Klemen Selakovič** is a Slovenian entrepreneur, content creator, and podcast host best known for AIDEA, one of the most popular podcasts in Slovenia, where he explores topics such as technology, society, and personal growth through in-depth conversations with experts and thought leaders. He is also the co-founder of the AI-powered learning platform Astra AI and the author of a book based on insights from his podcast.
- [23.6k followers on Instagram](#)
- [AIDEA Podcast \(@aidea_podkast\) • Instagram photos and videos](#)

Alex Cozma, Romania

- **Atentie, Cad Mere!** is a Romanian YouTube channel focused on educational and explainer-style content, covering topics such as history, politics, science, and popular culture. Through long-form videos and commentary, the channel breaks down complex subjects into accessible, engaging narratives for a broad audience.
- [1.19M followers on Youtube](#)
- [20.6k followers on Instagram](#)

Other promotion materials

A dedicated Reel was published on the Commissioner's official social media channels to further amplify the visibility of the initiative and highlight key moments from the collaboration. This content served as an engaging format to reach a broader audience and reinforce the campaign's messaging in a dynamic way.

5. Follow-up Activities

The ideas and recommendations developed during the Youth Policy Dialogue in Ljubljana will contribute to the ongoing work on the European Commission's proposal for the Digital Fairness Act. The dialogue was organised specifically to provide direct input from young people into the **policy making process**.

The recommendations were communicated directly to Commissioner McGrath during the dialogue and will be considered by the European Commission services responsible for preparing the legislative proposal. Participants were informed that, once the EU Commission adopts its proposal – later in the year, a follow-up online meeting with the participants will be organised to explain which recommendations have been reflected in the final proposal and how young people's contributions have influenced the legislative process.

Through this process, the dialogue ensured that young people's perspectives are formally brought to the attention of European policymakers and integrated into discussions on the future of digital fairness, consumer protection and the online environment in Europe.

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