Question for written answer E-000256/2026
to the Commission
Rule 144
Brando Benifei (S&D), Kim Van Sparrentak (Verts/ALE), Emma Rafowicz (S&D), Elio Di Rupo (S&D), Dan Barna (Renew), Alessandra Moretti (S&D), Pierre Jouvet (S&D), Veronika Cifrová Ostrihoňová (Renew), Krzysztof Śmiszek (S&D), Maria Guzenina (S&D), Adnan Dibrani (S&D), Hannes Heide (S&D), Stéphanie Yon-Courtin (Renew), Biljana Borzan (S&D), Alex Agius Saliba (S&D), Cecilia Strada (S&D), Kristian Vigenin (S&D), Laura Ballarín Cereza (S&D), Nathalie Loiseau (Renew), Sandro Gozi (Renew), Pierfrancesco Maran (S&D), Lucia Annunziata (S&D), Marco Tarquinio (S&D), Nicola Zingaretti (S&D), Giuseppe Lupo (S&D), Ştefan Muşoiu (S&D), Birgit Sippel (S&D), Irene Tinagli (S&D)

Subject: AI companion chatbots: protecting minors under EU law

Recent tragedies involving adolescent users of AI companion chatbots show that platforms such as Character.AI and ChatGPT have deepened minors' emotional dependence, failed to escalate crisis disclosures, and, in documented cases, provided guidance on suicide methods. Independent testing of Meta's AI chatbot found that it role-played a joint suicide plan with a test teenager account[1]. These cases reveal systemic failures involving anthropomorphic design features that foster attachment, weak age-verification processes, an absence of crisis routing and prolonged, uninterrupted usage sessions without safeguards.

EU legislation requires that platforms mitigate risks to minors. Article 5 of the AI Act prohibits manipulative practices causing psychological harm and exploitation of children's vulnerabilities. General-purpose AI (GPAI) providers with systemic risk must mitigate mental health harms under the GPAI Code of Practice. Yet there is only fledgling enforcement of AI companion systems.

The GDPR requires age verification checks prior to the processing of children's data, but only minimal efforts persist, as evidenced by the Italian Data Protection Authority's fining of Replika[2]. Guidelines under Article 28 DSA addressing age-assurance for minors remain non-binding and currently exclude AI chatbots.

1. What concrete actions is the Commission, in tandem with national authorities, taking to ramp up enforcement of Article 5, while leveraging the GPAI Code of Practice?

2. Does the Commission intend to propose binding EU legislation establishing harmonised, privacy-preserving, risk-tiered age-assurance with anti-circumvention measures?

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[1] Common Sense Media, 'AI Risk Assessment: Meta AI', 15 August 2025, available at: https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/featured-content/files/csm-ai-risk-assessment-metaai-08152025.pdf.

[2] Italian Data Protection Authority (*Garante per la protezione dei dati personali*), Decision of 10 April 2025 [10130115], https://www.garanteprivacy.it/home/docweb/-/docweb-display/docweb/10130115#english.