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E-002404/2024

Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen

On behalf of the European Commission

(21.1.2025)

Research on social media's impact on minors' mental health, indicates both potential risks from excessive use and benefits from moderate, responsible use<sup>1</sup>. Protecting and empowering children and young people online is a priority of the Commission, which will launch an EU-wide inquiry on the broader impacts of social media on well-being<sup>2</sup>.

The Digital Services Act (DSA)<sup>3</sup> contains provisions to ensure a high level of protection of minors using online platforms. In this regard, formal proceedings under the DSA have been initiated against TikTok<sup>4</sup>, Facebook and Instagram<sup>5</sup>. If the Commission finds that the investigated companies are non-compliant, it will take appropriate measures. An example of DSA's capacity to address addictive design is TikTok's commitment to permanently withdraw the Lite Rewards programme from the EU<sup>6</sup>.

The Commission is preparing guidelines to assist all online platforms in ensuring high levels of privacy, safety and security for minors<sup>7</sup>. To shield minors from age-inappropriate content, the Commission is developing a short-term, privacy preserving solution for age verification for use in certain high-risk scenarios that will be based on the EU Digital Identity Wallet framework<sup>8</sup> and be deployed by Member States in 2025.

These initiatives are in line with the strategy for a better internet for kids which aims to ensure that every child is protected, empowered and respected online<sup>9</sup>.

Children have the same rights online as offline. Current EU legislation and policies find the right balance between protecting children from online harm, while empowering them and ensuring their participation in the digital environment. It is important to ensure age-appropriate experiences, considering children's evolving capacity.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S245195882400037X>

<sup>2</sup> Political Guidelines 2024-2029, [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648\\_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029\\_EN.pdf](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32022R2065>

<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_24\\_926](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_926)

<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_24\\_2664](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_2664)

<sup>6</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_24\\_4161](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_4161)

<sup>7</sup> <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-launches-call-evidence-guidelines-protection-minors-online-under-digital-services-act>

<sup>8</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-building-blocks/sites/display/EUDIGITALIDENTITYWALLET/EU+Digital+Identity+Wallet+Home>

<sup>9</sup> <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/strategy-better-internet-kids>