

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000564/25
to the Commission
Liesbet Sommen (PPE)
(7 February 2025)**

Subject: Negative impact of social media on vulnerable groups

There has already been extensive research into the negative impact of social media platforms on the mental health of vulnerable groups, such as young girls and people from the LGBTQ community. Ninety-six percent of young people in the EU use the Internet daily; for the population as a whole, the figure is 90%. In addition to addictive algorithms and negative effects on self-image and self-esteem, these platforms also run potentially life-threatening algorithms. Last November, two young girls committed suicide after being exposed to content about suicide and self-harm. Platforms such as TikTok contain a myriad of videos that promote eating disorders and suicide. A year and a half ago, Amnesty International published reports highlighting the negative effects on young TikTok users. The research shows how manipulative and addictive TikTok is and how its algorithm recommends life-threatening content, such as romanticising suicide, to children and young people with mental problems.

Will the Digital Fairness Act also focus on vulnerable groups, and when can the Commission's proposal be expected?

Submitted: 7.2.2025

**Answer given by Mr McGrath on behalf of the European Commission
(2 May 2025)**

Protection of vulnerable groups in the digital sphere is of great importance for the Commission. The communication on mental health supports youth mental health including in the digital sphere ⁽¹⁾.

The Political Guidelines for the Commission 2024-2029 ⁽²⁾ point to the launching of an EU-wide inquiry on the impacts of social media on mental health and wellbeing, focusing on young people.

The Guidelines also point to the adoption of a renewed lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) equality strategy post-2025 and to an action plan against cyberbullying ⁽³⁾. In addition, the Roadmap for Women's Rights stresses the objective of protecting women and girls online ⁽⁴⁾.

Children are active online consumers and often early adopters of new technologies. The Digital Services Act ⁽⁵⁾ requires the providers of online platforms accessible to minors to put in place appropriate and proportionate measures to ensure a high level of privacy, safety, and security of minors on their service.

It also requires designated providers of very large online platforms and very large online search engines to diligently identify, analyse and assess systemic risks stemming from their services, including negative effects on minors and to adopt reasonable, proportionate and effective measures to mitigate such risks.

In addition, EU consumer protection laws protect minors as vulnerable consumers, for example when they are subjected to advertisements or make in-game purchases in video games. A forthcoming proposal for a Digital Fairness Act that the Commission aims to present in the second half of 2026 will focus on strengthening the protection of minors.

It will tackle matters such as dark patterns, addictive design, misleading influencer marketing and unfair personalisation practices ⁽⁶⁾.

⁽¹⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-of-life/european-health-union/comprehensive-approach-mental-health_en

⁽²⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/document/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en

⁽³⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/e6cd4328-673c-4e7a-8683-f63ffb2cf648_en?filename=Political%20Guidelines%202024-2029_EN.pdf

⁽⁴⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/7d965089-e332-473a-88a9-e246f214e3bf_en?filename=Gender%20Equality%20Roadmap%20-%20Annex.pdf

⁽⁵⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj/eng>

⁽⁶⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/707d7404-78e5-4aef-acfa-82b4cf639f55_en?filename=Commission%20Staff%20Working%20Document%20Fitness%20Check%20on%20EU%20consumer%20law%20on%20digital%20fairness.pdf