

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000803/25
to the Commission
Vladimir Prebilič (Verts/ALE), Jaume Asens Llodrà (Verts/ALE)
(21 February 2025)**

Subject: Use of smartphones by children in primary schools

Studies confirm that excessive use of smartphones by children while attending primary schools (age 6 to 15) can have a serious negative impact on their mental health and well-being, as well as worsening their school performance and negatively influencing their social skills.

Upon her re-election as Commission President for a second term, Ursula von der Leyen vowed to tackle social media addiction and cyberbullying.

Given that EU Member States and regions regulate the use of mobile phones in primary schools differently, Commission guidelines on the issue could give much-needed guidance and help national and local authorities decide future arrangements in this area.

1. Is the Commission aware of the reported negative effects of children's use of smartphones while at school both on children themselves as well as the educational process?
2. Has the Commission already issued any guidelines/taken a position on this issue? Is the Commission planning to take up the issue, gather examples of good practices from around the EU and share them with relevant national and local authorities?

Submitted: 21.2.2025

**Answer given by Mr Micallef on behalf of the European Commission
(30 April 2025)**

The Commission is aware of the negative effects of digital distractions and excessive screentime, both in and outside of school. Time spent on smartphones during school hours is particularly concerning, as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) ⁽¹⁾ results show a strong link between digital distraction and learning outcomes.

The Commission published in January 2025 a literature review to explore the relationship between screen time and academic achievement ⁽²⁾.

With the help of ENESET Network ⁽³⁾ the Commission is gathering evidence and practices from around the EU on the impact of mobile phone bans in schools expected for end 2025.

Through initiatives such as the European Education Area and the Digital Education Action Plan ⁽⁴⁾, the Commission promotes digital literacy and online safety education and capacity building of both educators and learners to use these devices in responsible, healthy and respectful ways, while safeguarding proper attention to sleep, physical and outdoor activities to protect their mental health.

Recommendations for policymakers, and educators on wellbeing and mental health ⁽⁵⁾ were published by the Commission's expert group on supportive learning environments and wellbeing at school.

The communication on mental health ⁽⁶⁾ supports youth mental health including in the digital sphere ⁽⁷⁾. The Commission will conduct an EU-wide inquiry on the impact of social media and excessive screentime on mental health and wellbeing ⁽⁸⁾ and will publish an Action Plan against cyberbullying.

Children should be able to benefit from online opportunities in a safe digital environment. The Digital Services Act ⁽⁹⁾ and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive ⁽¹⁰⁾ contain dedicated rules to protect children online.

⁽¹⁾ https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/support-materials/2023/12/pisa-2022-results-volume-i_76772a36/PISA%202022%20Insights%20and%20Interpretations.pdf

⁽²⁾ <https://enesetweb.eu/en/resources/library/screen-time-and-educational-outcomes-of-children-and-adolescents-a-complex-multifaceted-relationship/>

⁽³⁾ <https://ppmi.it/news-insights/ppmi-lead-eneset-network-delivering-quality-advice-and-knowledge-evidence-based-education-policy-europe>

⁽⁴⁾ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/focus-topics/digital-education/action-plan>

⁽⁵⁾ <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/discover/news/guidelines-wellbeing-and-mental-health-school>

⁽⁶⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-of-life/european-health-union/comprehensive-approach-mental-health_en

⁽⁷⁾ https://health.ec.europa.eu/document/download/6317c605-5f5d-4d4f-9c8a-d5c93e869814_en?filename=ncd_tracking-framework-mh_en.pdf

⁽⁸⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/priorities-2024-2029_en

⁽⁹⁾ <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj>

⁽¹⁰⁾ <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2010/13/oj>

The European Strategy for Better Internet for Kids (BIK+) ⁽¹⁾ aims to ensure that every child is respected, protected and empowered online.

⁽¹⁾ <https://better-Internet-for-kids.europa.eu/en>