

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-001916/26
to the Commission
Emmanouil Fragkos (ECR)
(8 May 2026)**

Subject: Increased risks of digital surveillance through age verification and the DSA

Recent statements by the Commissioner for Tech Sovereignty, Security and Democracy regarding age verification systems and the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the future integration of these mechanisms into the European Digital Identity Wallet are giving rise to growing concerns among many European citizens about the protection of anonymity and freedom of expression online.

Although the Commission has not announced a ban on VPNs, public debates on preventing age verification systems from being bypassed by using VPNs or other technical means are creating the impression of a digital system gradually being built to control Internet access.

Many citizens fear that mechanisms initially presented as tools to protect minors may in future be used to limit anonymous expression, enhance online censorship and monitor online activity more widely. Meanwhile, cybersecurity experts have already highlighted serious technical weaknesses in relevant prototype age verification systems.

In view of the above, can the Commission answer the following:

1. Is it considering measures to restrict or prevent the use of VPNs in the context of age verification systems or the DSA?
2. How is it ensured that these systems will not lead to the indirect removal of anonymous Internet access?
3. Who is legally and financially accountable in the event of a mass leak of personal data from such digital identification infrastructure?

Submitted: 8.5.2026

**Answer given by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen on behalf of the European Commission
(1 July 2026)**

The Commission is not planning any measures to restrict the availability of virtual private networks (VPNs) in the EU. It is essential to find a balance between ensuring the privacy of users while also protecting minors online.

Age verification measures remain valuable as barriers to easy or accidental access to age-restricted content by minors, even if VPNs could in certain circumstances make it possible to circumvent these age verification measures.

The principle of online anonymity, as established in the e-Commerce Directive ⁽¹⁾, remains unchanged under the Digital Services Act ⁽²⁾. The EU's Age Verification Blueprint is privacy-preserving and has been developed in line with guidance from the European Data Protection Board ⁽³⁾.

This device-based system does not store any personal data and only generates an anonymous attestation proving that the user is over a certain age threshold.

It also uses zero-knowledge proofs, a cryptographic technology that can securely prove that the user has a valid age credential without revealing the credential itself or any other information.

This significantly limits the risk of personal data being leaked. In the case of a data breach, the overall liability regime is governed in Article 13 of Regulation (EU) 910/2014 ⁽⁴⁾, while for identity systems it is Article 11 of Regulation (EU) 910/2014.

⁽¹⁾ See Recital 14 of the e-Commerce Directive, 'this directive cannot prevent the anonymous use of open networks such as the Internet', <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2000/31/oj/eng>.

⁽²⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj/eng>.

⁽³⁾ https://www.edpb.europa.eu/our-work-tools/our-documents/statements/statement-12025-age-assurance_en.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2014/910/oj/eng>.