

The Digital Services Act must deliver for children

Children and young people have long-established rights and protections offline¹ and a life mediated by tech must be held to the same standards. Our digital world is a purpose-built environment, shaped through conscious choices. We must choose to build a digital world that supports and empowers young people and upholds their rights. The Digital Services Act represents a singular opportunity to ensure that children's rights are respected, embedded and upheld online.

Technology (or its absence) is now a defining feature of childhood. Yet children – who make up one in five users of digital services in the EU – live in a digital world designed by adults, for adults, and driven by commercial interests.

The problems children face from the digital world are systemic. They are not restricted to technical bugs or bad actors but are also present in the features and architecture of the products and services on which children rely for access to education, health, entertainment, civic engagement and to manage their relationships with family and friends. Children are routinely presented with information, behaviours and pressures that they do not have the developmental capacity to negotiate. They are introduced to unknown adults, nudged to make in-game purchases, targeted by dangerous or harmful content, bombarded with targeted advertising and misinformation, and subjected to invasive, extractive data gathering.

We need a better deal for children online, and in order to achieve this, children need to be recognised in the digital environment. The protections, privileges and rights which empower and support young people offline need to be upheld online.

5Rights Foundation, supported by the broader children's rights, human rights, digital rights and consumer protection communities, calls upon the European Parliament and Council of Ministers to include a children's clause in the Digital Services Act requiring *all* providers of services likely to be accessed by or impact on children uphold their rights, undertake child impact assessments and mitigate systemic risks to children's rights, based on statutory standards.

Now is the time to build the digital world that young people deserve.

¹ Children have specific rights codified in the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and reflected in EU and national law. How their rights should be interpreted in the digital environment is set out in [UNCRC General comment No. 25](#).