



Letter to the President of the European Commission

8 September 2025

**Subject: Enforcing EU digital regulations for children**

Dear President von der Leyen,

We write to you as 18 organisations and experts and as Members of the European Parliament and Members of the Intergroup on Children's Rights, united in our commitment to building a safer and rights-respecting digital environment for the millions of children living in Europe. In light of the unprecedented threats being made against European democratic sovereignty, **we call upon you to reiterate your unwavering commitment to upholding and enforcing children's rights through EU digital regulations.**

In Europe, one in five internet users is a child. These young Europeans are early and extensive users of digital services, including social media, online gaming services, and artificial intelligence tools. While they believe the online environment adds significant value to their lives, they consistently report feeling addicted, manipulated and unsafe. Living in a new reality of unchecked datafication and persuasive design, young people report plummeting levels of happiness amid denuded relationships, loneliness, anxiety, abuse and what they call "brainrot".

Dear President, you were right when you said last year that protecting the mental health of our children – especially online – is one of the greatest challenges of this decade. If we don't get it right, and fast, the costs children are bearing now will carry through to fundamentally reshape our societies for decades to come. Now, more than ever, the EU must stand by children, and safeguard our collective future.

The European Union can be rightfully proud of its leadership in this area. The Digital Services Act, with its requirement that platforms ensure a high level of privacy, safety and security for minors, and the AI Act, with its ban on systems that exploit the vulnerabilities of age – reflect established international norms and commitments, and global consensus. Firmly grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – the most ratified human rights treaty in history – their provisions are mirrored in law and regulation from the UK to California, the African Union to Indonesia and beyond.

The ability to implement and enforce corporate accountability is, however, not evenly distributed. Who, if not the EU, will stand for the most vulnerable against the interests of the world's most powerful corporations? Who, if not the EU, will demonstrate that most basic of fundamental rights – to a safe and fair childhood – is non-negotiable?

Europe is asked to make a choice, and that choice must be to stand on the side of children, and future generations.

We trust, dear President, that the children of Europe, and the world, can count on your courage and continued visionary leadership in improving their digital environment. We look forward to your upcoming State of the Union address, which will be a defining opportunity to renew your commitment to uphold and enforce children's right to a digital environment that prioritises their best interests and enables them to thrive.

We are yours gratefully,

## Signatories

### Members of the European Parliament :

1. Evin INCIR, MEP, Co-Chair of the Intergroup of Childrens' Rights Online, Socialists and Democrats
2. Veronika CIFROVÁ OSTRIHOŇOVÁ, Vice-Chair of the Intergroup of Children's Rights Online, Renew Europe
3. Laura BALLARIN CEREZA, MEP, Socialists and Democrats
4. Sandro RUOTOLO, MEP, Member of the Intergroup of Children's Rights Online, Socialists and Democrats

### Civil Society Organisations and experts :

1. 5Rights Foundation
2. Børns Vilkar
3. CCDH - Center for Countering Digital Hate
4. Child Helpline International
5. ChildX Foundation
6. Coface Families Europe
7. ECPAT International
8. Eurochild
9. Missing Children Europe
10. Protect Children, Suojellaan Lapsia ry
11. Save the Children
12. Stiftung Digitale Chancen / Digital Opportunities Foundation
13. Sveriges Konsumenter (The Swedish Consumer Association)
14. Terre des Hommes Netherlands
15. Thorn
16. Dr. Ingrida Milkaite, Ghent University and Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)

17. Dr. Mie Oehlenschäger , Founder of Tech and Childhood, Member of the Danish Council on Ethics, External Lecturer AI, Ethics and Public Policy
18. Dr. Verónica Donoso, Media Culture & Policy, KU Leuven.