



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear Chair,

The Commission would like to thank the Poslanecká sněmovna for its Opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions — A Digital Decade for Children and Youth: new European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children {COM(2022) 212 final}.

The vision of the new European strategy for a Better Internet for Kids (BIK+) is to foster age-appropriate digital services, with no one left behind and with every child in Europe protected, empowered and respected online.

The Commission is pleased that the Poslanecká sněmovna shares the view that action at the European Union level, as envisaged in the BIK+ strategy, is required to ensure a safer environment for children and young people in the digital space with age-appropriate digital services and products.

The Commission agrees that parents and educators play a key role in influencing, supporting, educating and protecting their children, both offline and online. Through the Better Internet for Kids agenda, the European Commission works with Safer Internet Centres and other stakeholders strive to support parents and carers in this role, ensuring children and young people use the internet in a responsible, respectful, critical and creative way. A treasure trove of dedicated resources for children, parents, carers, teachers and educators is available on the betterinternetforkids.eu portal. The strategy will further promote media and digital literacy activities, also for teachers and parents.

With children facing a greater risk of being exposed to harmful and age-inappropriate content, there is a need for EU-wide response in term of verifying users' age online. Age verification is one of Commission's priorities with the new BIK+ strategy.

Mr Ondřej BENEŠÍK
Chair of the Committee on European Affairs
of the Poslanecká sněmovna
Sněmovní 4
CZ – 118 26 PRAGUE 1

Cc Ms Markéta PEKAROVÁ ADAMOVÁ
President of the Poslanecká sněmovna
Sněmovní 4
CZ – 118 26 PRAGUE 1

Building on ongoing work such as the EU-funded pilot project euCONSENT and the new Digital Services Act rules for online platforms, the Commission will support EU-wide recognised methods to prove age in a privacy-preserving and secure manner. In this regard the Commission will also work with Member States. Additionally, the Commission will issue a standardisation request for a European standard on online age assurance/ age verification.

The Commission fully recognises the need for action against online violence and cyber bullying. The Digital Services Act includes obligations on all 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. The Digital Services Act sets out additional obligations for providers designated as Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) & Very Large Online Search Engines (VLOSEs). In particular, these service providers will be required to assess any systemic risks in the Union stemming from the design, functioning or use of their service and its related systems which could affect, among others, the rights of the child and which could create negative effects in relation to the protection of minors and gender-based violence. In addition to that, VLOPs and VLOSEs are required to take targeted measures to mitigate any such risks, such as age verification and parental control tools.

The BIK+ Strategy will ensure that cyberbullying is addressed via the harmonised number 116 111, in cooperation with the EU co-funded SIC helplines. In addition, the Commission's Proposal for a Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence also covers forms of cyber violence, such as cyber harassment, non-consensual sharing of intimate material, cyber stalking and cyber incitement to hatred or violence. The proposal seeks to strengthen legislation pertaining to the access to justice and support to victims of cyber violence and to its prevention. Moreover, as announced in the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, the Commission will facilitate the development of a Code of Conduct for cooperation between internet platforms to address violence against women online.

Through the Digital programme, the EU continues to co-fund the Czech Safer Internet Centre (CZ.NIC), which coordinated national activities aimed at improving online child safety and prevention in the Czech Republic since 2019. Among its various activities, CZ.NIC provides on-line and in person lectures, workshops and seminars (accompanied with supportive materials) for both children and adults (teachers, carers, parents) on various Safer Internet topics.

In addition, as part of the Safer Internet project, CZ.NIC also supports the operation of a special parental line, operated by 'Linka bezpečí', where parents can communicate with trained professionals about topics related to risky behaviour on the Internet and the effects of digital technology on themselves and their children.

The Commission values the Poslanecká sněmovna's active engagement at this stage of the policy-making process and will take into account its Opinion and other contributions received while working on the implementation of the BIK+ strategy.

The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply address the issues raised by the Poslanecká sněmovna and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue with it in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*

*Thierry Breton
Member of the Commission*