

ELEVATING YOUTH VOICES TO SHAPE
DIGITAL REGULATION IN EUROPE

OUR 
 **FEED**
OUR 
FUTURE

A  Meta & *Think*Young COLLABORATION



I'm really proud of the Youth Network Meta launched with ThinkYoung, made up of young leaders from across the EU. The members will regularly contribute their thoughts on digital youth regulation. The Network is the next step in ensuring young creators' voices are at the heart of the discussion around safe online spaces.



**NICK CLEGG, PRESIDENT,
GLOBAL AFFAIRS, META**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our Feed Our Future, supported by Meta and ThinkYoung, brings together a network of young people from across Europe. Together with parents, industry leaders, and experts, we want to elevate youth voices to help shape our digital future for the better.

The Network's mission is to bring an honest, fresh, and unique perspective about teen's online experiences and help shape regulation to ensure safer digital spaces for all of us. They deliver on this mission by connecting with parents and guardians, meeting experts, hosting webinars, and hosting in-person events with the aim of inspiring, informing, and mobilizing this growing youth movement.

As digital natives, young people shape and have been shaped by the digital world. They use social media to discover and re-imagine their identity, to create economic opportunities for themselves, and to advocate for social change whether it's about climate, civic engagement, or civil rights. The digital world also creates a new set of challenges for young people. Youth online safety and wellbeing is critical for governments, online platforms, parents, and guardians to prioritize. But young people need to be front and center when addressing these challenges, so they can bring their unique insights on the fair and inclusive regulatory measures of the future that can balance empowerment and safety.

At Meta, we are committed to raising the standard for protecting teens and supporting families online and we continue to invest in tools and products to help teens have a safe experience on our platforms. We believe a cross-industry, multi-stakeholder approach with parents, youth representatives and mental health experts is essential to build strong youth standards that protect young people's online participation. This is why we are proud to support the Our Feed Our Future Campaign.



Nicole Lopez

Global Director, Youth Safety Policy

 Meta

CONVERSATIONS ON YOUTH ONLINE
WELLBEING AND SAFETY



SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR THE BETTER



We're the first generation to grow up online. That's where we create, run our social lives, we share our highs, our lows, show the world who we are.





ARIANNA

A 21 year old celebrity news reporter uses social media to provide insights on celebrity related content. Her personal posts frequently focus on fostering like minded communities, uniting individuals, and emphasising the value of being heard and appreciated. Her primary audience comprises young people who not only enjoy his unique approach to celebrity news but also resonate with the idea of being part of something bigger.



CHIARA

Chiara is an inspiring video creator with a significant presence on Instagram and TikTok. She is currently working on her book, "Think Loud," which is a glimpse into her personal experiences and life's journey. With a dedicated following, Chiara has cultivated a supportive community that deeply connects with her. Through her interactive account, she fearlessly addresses important topics such as self love, mental health, empowerment and nutritional disorders.



GAETAN

Gaetan transformed his experience with bullying into a successful career as an influencer, specialising in comedy sketches.

He believes young people shouldn't have to bear the brunt of harassment alone and champions the creation of safe spaces for open discussions. Having received countless messages from those unable to confide in teachers or parents, he recognises the potential of online platforms to provide much needed support.



MOLLY

Molly (they/them) is an activist who focuses in online safety. Their main aim is to make the online world a place where everyone feels welcome. They have attended events such as safer Internet forums and speaks out on the issues young people face online and the pressure young people are put under to look a certain way and fit into society. They also talk a lot about their own journey with their mental health and the struggles they faced growing up been queer and learning to accept themselves.

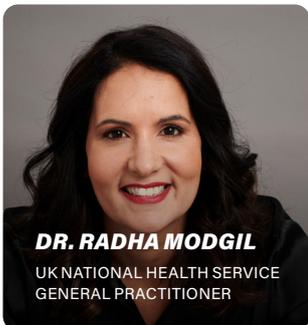
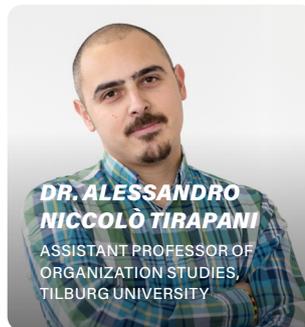
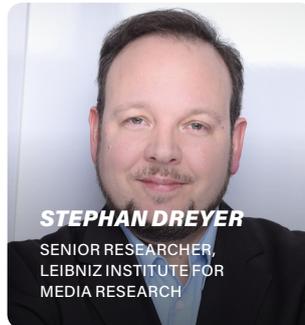
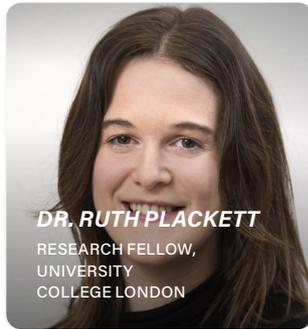


LOULOU

Loulou João is an Afro Belgian visual artist. By making use of 3D software (blender), she visualizes her own reality. A world that consists of candy coated squishy objects. All while using hyper femme cuteness as her visual language to create a safe space called the Focketverse. One where she is able to focus on the expression of her authentic self without any constructs weighing her down. Giving her the opportunity to reflect and create a platform to harbor new and meaningful connections.

**YOUTH NETWORK OF THE
OUR FEED OUR FUTURE
CAMPAIGN**

**INTRODUCING THE
FOUNDING MEMBERS OF
THE OUR FEED OUR FUTURE
CAMPAIGN NETWORK**



We are very proud to take our partnership with Meta to the next level, empowering young people to have their say in the future of the digital world. Since our foundation, one of ThinkYoung's core objectives has been to make sure decision-makers are aware of young people's opinions. Our Feed Our Future will do exactly that, making young voices heard to make sure we build safe and empowering online experiences that work for young people.



**ANDREA GEROSA, FOUNDER,
THINKYOUNG**

EMPOWERING PARENTS & GUARDIANS ON TEEN'S SAFETY AND WELLBEING

1. Work with online tools, not against them.

While the prevailing discourse on screen time currently focuses on “how to deal with the digital world,” we should be encouraging a much more pertinent question: “How to work WITH” digital worlds, so they can be a source of benefits?

2. Take stock of existing tools, and what is still needed. It's essential that parents collectively take stock of social media's role today, including parental control tools. A government digital hub is essential for centralizing this information and communicating with citizens.

3. Encourage joint dialogue on online habits. Engaging in dialogue with young people is the key to reducing potential risks and proposing appropriate frameworks and limits. It's especially important not to stigmatize online time as a waste of time, when adults also spend a considerable number of hours online, even if the practices and content are different.



DR. ANGÉLIQUE GOZLAN

PHD IN PSYCHOPATHOLOGY

“So, when it comes to social media, let’s go back to what we know: let’s inform ourselves as parents, let’s take an interest in our children’s practices, and accompany them in their first steps on social networks.”



HOW DO YOU FOCUS ON THE WELLBEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN YOUR WORK?

The wellbeing of young people is at the heart of my work as a psychologist. Every day I see young people in mental distress and I help them to make sense of what they are going through, to find the resources they need to get better. Cultural artifacts, like social media, help young people express themselves and, by discussing them, can often launch the therapeutic process.

HOW CAN PARENTS STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN ALLOWING THEIR CHILDREN TO EXPLORE AND LEARN INDEPENDENTLY WHILE ENSURING THEIR SAFETY?

There’s nothing new about this question. Letting your child safely explore is a basic principle of education. So, when it comes to social media, let’s go back to what we know:

1. Inform ourselves and accompany them in their first steps on social networks.
2. Co-define our frameworks.
3. Open space for dialogue, not only on prevention and settings, but also on our respective browsing habits.
4. Reaffirm your availability and willingness to listen to your child if anything confusing or shocking happens in these spaces.

WHAT EMERGING TRENDS OR TECHNOLOGIES COULD IMPROVE YOUTH SAFETY, AND HOW CAN PARENTS AND POLICY-MAKERS KEEP ABREAST OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS?

It’s essential that parents collectively take stock of social media’s role today, including parental control tools. A government digital hub is essential for centralizing this information and communicating with citizens.

WHAT ARE THE MYTHS ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE’S WELLBEING AND SOCIAL MEDIA?

Their supposedly addictive quality, but no studies currently support the diagnosis of social media addiction. Secondly, that it encourages risky online behavior, which could make young people vulnerable. These vulnerabilities are often already present, and the use of social networks only highlights this suffering.



Dr. Angélique Gozlan is a PhD in psychopathology, teacher, and researcher with over 15 years of experience in child psychiatry.

VANESSA LALO

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST,
TRAINER AND SPEAKER



“Social networks are at a turning point in their maturation, and all we have to do is join in.”

HOW DO YOU SEE THE INTERSECTION OF YOUTH WELLBEING AND THE ONLINE WORLD?

Social media allows young people to maintain social ties with their friends, build their identities, develop their creativity, break down taboos around mental health, and experiment together. In all cases, it's essential to guide them towards safe spaces and content adapted to their age, interests, and needs.

BASED ON THE RESEARCH, HOW CAN WE SUPPORT PARENTS AND GUARDIANS TO PLAY A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S ONLINE EXPERIENCES?

Despite many clichés, research shows that being a “good parent” doesn't mean focusing on your child's screen time, but emphasizing support for their digital practices. The aim is not to protect children from all potential bad experiences, but to accompany them in the digital world in the same way as in the real world. While the prevailing discourse on screen time currently focuses on “how to deal with the digital world,” we should be encouraging a much more pertinent question: “How to work WITH” digital worlds, so they can be a source of benefits?

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR PARENTS OR GUARDIANS AND TEENS TO BUILD SAFE AND EMPOWERING EXPERIENCES TOGETHER ONLINE?

Engaging in dialogue with young people is the key to reducing potential risks and proposing appropriate frameworks and limits. It's especially important not to stigmatize

online time as a waste of time, when adults also spend a considerable number of hours online, even if the practices and content are very different.

My advice is:

1. Pool the family's social media experiences together by discussing everyone's favorite posts
2. Engage in dialogue, encourage critical thinking, and strengthen trust through open communication
3. Find accounts with quality content that you can recommend to your child to follow, including reliable explanations of current events, cultural accounts, supplements to school subjects

HOW CAN PRIVATE COMPANIES, POLICY-MAKERS, AND CIVIL SOCIETY SUPPORT THE SAFE USE OF ONLINE PLATFORMS?

Social networks are at a turning point in their maturation, and all we have to do is join in.

1. Algorithms should prioritize positive content and suggestions for help when user queries seem to lock them into a negative cycle, and in particular for minors
2. Platforms should make moderation more extensive and humanized to encourage users to report harmful content
3. Civil society and companies should co-design resources to develop critical thinking and digital literacy skills
4. Society overall should move towards decentralized, community-based platforms where users feel responsible for each other.



Vanessa Lalo is a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist specializing in video games and digital practices and their impact at cognitive, educational, and cultural levels. Vanessa's expertise lies in young people and adults' digital practices, their challenges and limits, and parenthood in the 21st century.

DIGITAL SPACES AS EMPOWERING SPACES



- 1. Prioritize a collaborative approach.** A collaborative approach across many agencies towards common goals is key, and must be led by the voices and opinions of young people themselves.
- 2. Provide young people with key online skills.** It is our collective responsibility to provide young people with the skills they need to benefit from social media as a place to express themselves, and ensure systems for safe online experiences are in place on all platforms.
- 3. Manage negative aspects through safety controls.** We must collectively put controls in place to manage those more negative aspects. Look into the safety settings of your apps and try things like turning off notifications, setting time limits, limiting sensitive content exposure, and turning off likes.

DR. RADHA MODGIL

UK NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE
GENERAL PRACTITIONER



“Social media allows young people to create, to connect, and to feel understood and valued.”

HOW DOES JOINING META'S YOUTH EXPERTS NETWORK BUILD ON YOUR PAST WORK?

I have been an advocate for young people since I started my media career 15 years ago, and before that as a medical doctor. Social media is integral to young people's and all of our lives. It is our responsibility to provide young people with the skills they need to benefit from social media as a place to express themselves, and ensure systems for safe online experiences are in place on all platforms.

WHY DO YOU FOCUS ON THE WELLBEING OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN YOUR WORK?

Our wellbeing is everything – it impacts how we see the world, how we interact with others and what we feel able to be involved and say yes to. Our psychology and our belief systems, our ability to be self-aware and notice how we feel, what we are thinking and to make an active choice in how to respond to the ups and downs of life determines so much. For me, our mental and emotional wellbeing in a truly holistic sense of the words is the foundation stone and the first building block of everything. Without this we have nothing, we cannot do anything and we definitely cannot thrive and flourish. The earlier we start teaching life skills and emotional skills to young children and people, the better.



Dr. Radha Modgil is an NHS GP, a television, radio, and podcast broadcaster, and author. Radha is the medical expert for numerous BBC shows and was the presenter of the CBeebies show, *Feeling Better*, which highlighted the importance of talking to young children about their feelings. She is a member of the Youth Expert Network, a joint initiative by Meta and ThinkYoung to bring together key European youth experts to help young people shape their digital future.

HOW CAN SOCIAL MEDIA POSITIVELY IMPACT YOUTH WELLBEING?

There are many things to be discussed and improved, but we mustn't overlook its benefits. Social media allows young people to create, to connect, and to feel understood and valued. It can provide a space to campaign for things they care about and bring about positive change, or show young people that their counterparts in different countries or cultures are more similar to them than different.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU SEE FOR GOVERNMENTS AND POLICYMAKERS IN ENSURING YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

For anything to improve there needs to be a clear intention, beyond any one person's or organization's ambition. A collaborative approach across many agencies towards common and shared goals is key to effectiveness. Above all, any approach must reflect and be led by the voices and opinions of young people themselves.

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP TIPS FOR GUARDIANS TO SUPPORT TEENS' MENTAL HEALTH?

One of my top tips is to be a caregiver who that young person feels they can tell anything to without judgment. The key to supporting a teens' mental health is to make them feel safe enough to open up and show you are there for them. Try to listen actively, respect their pace, give them autonomy to tell you what responses might help, and encourage them to see friends and spend time on hobbies. It is helpful to offer support in seeking professional input if needed.



DR. RUTH PLACKETT

RESEARCH FELLOW,
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

“The online world is always changing, and so is young people’s relationship with things like social media.”



HOW DO YOU SEE THE INTERSECTION OF YOUTH WELLBEING AND THE ONLINE WORLD?

The online world is always changing, and so is young people’s relationship with things like social media. Young people are using social media all the time but there is little robust research to say that this in itself is directly affecting their mental health, but many people are concerned about the way it has shaped how we socialize and interact with others.

WHAT IS ON YOUR RADAR FOR YOUTH ONLINE SAFETY AND YOUTH WELLBEING LOOKING AT THE NEXT YEAR?

Creating greater awareness of safety features and settings for parents and guardians of younger children, adolescents, and young adults, as well as among the young people themselves, and looking at the effects of different policies to regulate social media, such as the UK’s Online Safety Bill.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR ADVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR GUARDIANS WHEN IT COMES TO A SAFE AND HEALTHY USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA?

Have an open conversation about social media use. Think about the activities that make you feel good or bad on social media and maximize doing what makes you feel good. Put controls in place to manage those more negative aspects. Look into the safety settings of your apps and try things like turning off notifications, setting time limits, limiting sensitive content exposure, and turning off likes.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU SEE FOR TECH COMPANIES IN CONTINUING TO BETTER YOUNG PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

Tech companies can play a role in creating safer spaces online by continuing to improve on the removal of harmful content and creating safety features enabling young people and their guardians to control the content they see. Companies can also play a greater role in raising social media digital literacy for parents and young people.

WHAT TYPES OF SOCIAL MEDIA HABITS DO YOU SEE AS MOST RESEARCH-BACKED IN THEIR IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH?

There is very little research on this topic. However, some studies have suggested that spending a lot of time on social media can be harmful and that passive uses, such as “doomscrolling,” have a more negative impact than using social media more actively, say for messaging.



Dr. Ruth Plackett has a background in psychology and completed her PhD in applied health research at University College London (UCL) in 2019. Her research interests are in social media and young people’s mental health, mixed methods research and evaluations of digital interventions. Ruth is currently a research fellow at UCL and is funded by a NIHR Three Schools’ Mental Health Programme fellowship at UCL. She has published research on the impacts of social media on young people’s mental health.

PROFESSOR OF DIGITAL RESILIENCE,
ERASMUS UNIVERSITEIT ROTTERDAM

ESTHER ROZENDAAL



“When they are allowed to decide, one of youth’s most basic needs is recognized: the feeling of having a voice and influence.”

WHY DO YOU THINK INITIATIVES LIKE META’S YOUTH EXPERTS NETWORK ARE IMPORTANT?

Youth are still rarely asked to participate when it comes to developing such initiatives, though their views and experiences can enrich the perspective of adult professionals and policymakers. When they are allowed to decide, one of youth’s most basic needs is recognized: the feeling of having a voice and influence. It is an essential part of positive development and also a fundamental right according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

LOOKING BACK ON 2023, WHAT IS THE MAIN CHALLENGE YOU SAW WHEN IT COMES TO YOUTH ONLINE SAFETY?

One of the major challenges was (and is!) AI and other emerging technologies, like smart algorithms that determine what they consume on social media, what music they stream, or what online ads they see. This can make online experiences more personal and relevant, but also carries the risk of developing echo chambers, invasions of privacy through data collection, and deception through disinformation. Moreover, a new digital divide threatens to emerge where some children benefit from the digital skills associated with access to AI-driven online services, while others’ engagement is limited due to low knowledge.

WHAT DOES “DIGITAL RESILIENCE” MEAN TO YOU AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOUTH?

Digital resilience is a dynamic process in which users and creators apply strategies that help them mitigate the online world’s risks and make the most of its opportunities. Strategies include:

1. Preventative for before using digital media: Setting a strong password, screen time limits
2. Mitigating risk during use: Critically reflecting on the trustworthiness of information
3. And rebounding after use: adjusting negative feelings created by online experiences, seeking help from others

HOW IS THAT SOMETHING WE CAN FOSTER IN OUR YOUTH THROUGH EDUCATION, POLICIES, AND OTHER METHODS?

Research shows that young people not only need media-related skills, but also the necessary cognitive skills to self-regulate, be motivated to apply resilient strategies, and be enabled by platforms and their social environment. For interventions, such as media education programs in schools, this means focusing not only on media-related knowledge and skills, but also on strengthening executive skills, and especially encouraging autonomous motivation. Policy should focus on rules and guidelines that facilitate youth’s digital resilience.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU SEE FOR TECH COMPANIES IN CONTINUING TO BETTER YOUNG PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

Research shows digital literacy can only go so far in helping children make the most of social media and guard against risks, as it’s challenging for children to fully grasp the technology and use it safely. Tech companies should develop products and services that consider children’s development and comprehension, on which the Dutch Code for Children’s Rights provides practical guidance.



Esther Rozendaal is full professor of Digital Resilience at the Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences at the Erasmus University Rotterdam and co-lead of the Erasmus Movez Lab, a research team with a shared interest in young people, digital media, and wellbeing. She is an expert on empowering children and young people as resilient participants in today’s digital society.

DIGITAL REGULATION, YOUTH SAFETY AND WELLBEING

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- 1. Push for EU regulation.** EU politicians must work with stakeholders and develop clear and consequential regulation, to avoid resorting to private regulation.
 - 2. Gather diverse stakeholders to sufficiently support youth and their guardians.** Policymakers alongside diverse stakeholders should co-create robust policies and monitoring and evaluation processes deeply rooted in systems of accountability. Actors like policymakers, platforms, safer internet centers, counseling services, and schools must cooperate and invest the necessary time and resources to support awareness-building among children and caretakers.
 - 3. Ensure technology is understood.** Having a strong (independent) monitoring system is the first step to avoid bad outcomes. Platforms should explain changes to algorithms promptly and in basic terms to all users.

DR. YANSIE ROLSTON

ANTHROPOLOGIST
AND SOCIAL ACTIVIST



“When we take [youth wellbeing issues] into account alongside social and economic inequalities, their impact is intensified.”

HOW DO YOU SEE THE INTERSECTION OF YOUTH WELLBEING AND THE ONLINE WORLD?

The promotion of resilience and emotional and mental wellbeing is at the heart of this intersection. Sleep hygiene, friendships and relationships, re-triggering trauma, and mental health challenges are some of the issues impacting youth wellbeing in the online world. When we take these into account alongside social and economic inequalities, their impact is intensified, hence the need to address them so youth are aware cyberbullying is not the only factor affecting their wellbeing.

LOOKING BACK ON 2023, WHAT IS THE MAIN CHALLENGE YOU SAW WHEN IT COMES TO YOUTH ONLINE SAFETY?

1. Socio-economically vulnerable youth, who have endured harm online, have insufficient access to support systems that are culturally relevant to them.
2. Inadequate access to wellbeing support services for content creators whose mental health has been compromised by the trauma-triggering process of creating content on negative world news.
3. The lack of acknowledgement of the scale of real threats via digital means, such as racist abuse that migrant or displaced young people endure.

WHAT IS ON YOUR RADAR FOR YOUTH ONLINE SAFETY AND YOUTH WELLBEING IN 2024?

Further prevention of access to inappropriate content that increases incidents of self harm and suicide, as well as sharing information on safeguarding neurodivergent youth and migrant or displaced young people, and the ethical challenges that go alongside that.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU SEE POLICYMAKERS PLAYING IN YOUTH ONLINE SAFETY?

Policymakers should co-create robust policies and monitoring and evaluation processes deeply rooted in systems of accountability. This work should be in partnership with a diverse range of stakeholders, an example being the UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Issues Affecting Men and Boys, and community-based third sector organizations, as well as with young people.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU SEE FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY IN YOUTH ONLINE SAFETY CONVERSATIONS? WHAT ARE POINTS THAT PEOPLE ARE MISSING WHEN NOT CONSIDERING INCLUSIVITY?

Understanding the complexities of family structures and relationships, for example migrant or displaced youth who are used to taking risks and who have been used to little or no adult guidance, as well as circumstances where young people are the main carers of younger siblings, while themselves having limited understanding of safeguarding.



Dr. Yansie Rolston has a depth of experience and expertise in health equality development. She is an anthropologist, a creative, and a social activist. Yansie creates, affects and sustains change in order to improve physical, mental and social wellbeing. Her areas of expertise are mental health, disability, sexual health, menopause and race equity. She presents her work internationally at conferences and empowerment workshops and works inter-generationally to co-create interventions that are holistic, impactful and sustainable.



STEPHAN DREYER

SENIOR RESEARCHER,
LEIBNIZ INSTITUTE FOR
MEDIA RESEARCH

“The [EU Digital Services Act] represents a significant step in harmonizing children’s online safety regulations across online platforms, but it also poses challenges in its vagueness, especially in regard to the nature of the minimum standards, platforms’ task to balance safety with the rights to empowerment and participation, and the preservation of freedom of expression..”

WHY DO YOU THINK INITIATIVES LIKE META’S YOUTH EXPERTS NETWORK ARE IMPORTANT?

One of the main tasks of the Youth Experts Network is to support selected influencers who produce content regarding digital wellbeing and online safety. This is vital: Firstly, they represent the increasingly important and historically excluded voice of young people. Secondly, influencers can demystify complex risks using accessible language. Thirdly, they serve as role models, encouraging followers to adopt healthy or safe online behaviors.

LOOKING BACK ON 2023, WHAT IS THE MAIN CHALLENGE YOU SAW WHEN IT COMES TO YOUTH ONLINE SAFETY?

The adoption of digital services by increasingly younger audiences, leading to inexperienced users prone to harmful content and exploitative actions like privacy violations or cybergrooming. The ongoing shift has outpaced both parental understanding and regulatory responses when it comes to under-13s that use services aimed at teens and adults.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU SEE FOR TECH COMPANIES IN CONTINUING TO BETTER YOUNG PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

Tech companies must prioritize safety and wellbeing in their platform design systematically (“positive platform governance”). Here, age-appropriate design is a current approach, but, to fully understand the skills, assets, needs, and expectations of children, it is crucial they participate in the product development cycle.

WHAT’S YOUR VIEWPOINT ON THE DIGITAL SERVICES ACT AND ITS APPROACH TO HARMONIZED YOUTH REGULATION? HOW DOES IT BENEFIT AND HOW DOES IT POSE A CHALLENGE TO YOUTH ONLINE SAFETY?

The DSA represents a significant step in harmonizing children’s online safety regulations across online platforms, but it also poses challenges in its vagueness, especially in regard to the nature of the minimum standards, platforms’ task to balance safety with the rights to empowerment and participation, and the preservation of freedom of expression. Finally, implementing due diligence measures means policymakers, platform providers, safer internet centers, counseling services, and schools will have to cooperate to support awareness-building and to provide assistance to children and their caretakers which takes time and needs significant resources.



Stephan Dreyer is a Senior Researcher at the Leibniz Institute for Media Research focusing on the legal dynamics underpinning digital childhood. His expertise resides at the nexus of youth media protection, regulatory and technical strategies for children’s safety, privacy and security, and empowering and participatory approaches.

DR. ALESSANDRO NICCOLÒ TIRAPANI

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF
ORGANIZATION STUDIES,
TILBURG UNIVERSITY

“Driving towards endlessly stimulating content creates twisted incentives. It alienates creators, damages the public discourse, and hampers youngsters’ mental health.”



HOW DO YOU SEE THE INTERSECTION OF YOUTH WELLBEING AND THE ONLINE WORLD?

Digital natives are immersed in social media. While allowing for incredible opportunities, they are also dangerous in so far contents are not mediated in the same way as TV or magazines used to be. Unrealistic body images, fake news, and ‘doom scrolling’ have dire effects on the psyche, especially in developmental years.

WHAT IS ON YOUR RADAR FOR YOUTH ONLINE SAFETY AND YOUTH WELLBEING IN 2024?

AI-generated content is here to stay and will quickly evolve. While waiting for overarching solutions, it is imperative to develop quick tools to help young people apply critical thinking. Equally, the mass use of chat bot indistinguishable from humans, and continued exposure to new information, hamper the ability to reflect on what happened and process it (or even remember it).

WHAT ROLE DO YOU SEE POLICYMAKERS PLAYING IN YOUTH ONLINE SAFETY?

It is high time for regulation. We see a deluge of local, sectorial, and voluntary regulations. This is not sufficient. In Europe, only the EU has the power, weight, and expertise to craft consequential laws. The UN should step up as well. Too often smaller attempts are aspirational but ineffective or have even unintended consequences. It is paramount that this process involves many stakeholders, like programmers and software engineers so that key technical issues are faced from the start.



Dr. Alessandro Niccolò Tirapani is an Assistant Professor of Organization Studies at Tilburg University. He studies the impact of platforms using Artificial Intelligence on society. His expertise is on the adaptation and implementation of technological regulations, and on the translation of academic knowledge into policy making, including progressive or democratic business practices. He has published on the gig economy, corporate social responsibility, and science denial.

WHAT ROLE DO YOU SEE FOR TECH COMPANIES IN CONTINUING TO BETTER YOUNG PEOPLE’S EXPERIENCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

Platforms should disclose as much information as possible in all areas where no opacity is needed. Second, having a strong (independent) monitoring system is a key step to avoid bad outcomes. Platforms should explain changes to algorithms promptly and in basic terms to all users. What is more, social media have to move away from the attention economy which is damaging to quality, business innovation, and young users alike. Driving towards endlessly stimulating, yet not deep, contents, creates twisted incentives. It alienates content creators, damages the public discourse, and hampers youngsters’ mental health.

WHAT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES DO YOU SEE FOR EU POLITICIANS IN BETTER UNDERSTANDING YOUTH AND LEVERAGING THAT UNDERSTANDING IN REGULATION?

The opportunity for EU politicians is to ensure Europe becomes a leader in safe and useful technologies; and the threat, to crystallize oligopolies. The EU should not allow the market of harmful tech products just because it is unable to assess responsibilities and chains of causality. Innovation should not be stopped, but without guardrails the attention economy of big data (not least due to the emergence of large language models) will suffocate good ideas. EU politicians must work with stakeholders and develop clear and consequential regulation, to avoid resorting to private regulation.

OUR FEED OUR FUTURE



*Think*Young **ENGAGE WITH THE NETWORK**



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