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## NOTE

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
To: Delegations

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Subject: AOB for the meeting of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council on 11 and 12 May 2026:  
Coordinated Action for Child Online Safety  
*- Information from Slovakia supported by Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain*

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### **Coordinated Action for Child Online Safety**

*Information from Slovakia supported by Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain*

Slovakia, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain consider the protection of children in the online environment a shared European responsibility and a key priority for education, youth, digital and mental health policies. Creating a safe and empowering digital space for children is not only a regulatory task, but also a long-term investment in prevention, resilience and societal wellbeing.

Digital technologies and social media are an integral part of young people's lives, offering important opportunities for learning, creativity and participation. At the same time, they expose children to significant risks, including cyberbullying, harmful and age-inappropriate content, online grooming, privacy violations, negative impacts on mental health, and increasing radicalisation and polarisation.

Effective protection requires a balanced and comprehensive approach. While the debate on age-appropriate access to social media is relevant, it must be embedded in broader preventive, educational and supportive measures. Restrictions alone are not sufficient. Prevention through education must remain central to our efforts.

The role of Ministers of Education is not complementary – it is fundamental. Education systems are the first and most strategic line of defence in protecting children in the digital environment. It is within schools that children systematically develop digital literacy, critical thinking, media literacy and social and emotional competences. It is through education policy that prevention can be mainstreamed, teachers properly equipped, and cooperation with families structurally strengthened.

Children and young people need strong digital literacy, critical thinking skills and social and emotional competences to navigate online spaces safely and responsibly. They must be equipped to recognise manipulation and misinformation, protect their privacy and engage respectfully with others.

Slovakia, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain therefore welcome the European Commission's Action Plan against cyberbullying, which provides an important framework focused on prevention, resilience-building, victim support and the responsibility of online platforms. We see clear added value in addressing these issues in a coordinated, cross-sectoral and evidence-based manner, ensuring coherence between education policy, digital regulation, child protection systems and mental health strategies.

At European level, we believe there is a need for an in-depth and structured discussion among Member States on how to further strengthen our common framework for the protection of minors online.

Slovakia, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain therefore call for joint and coordinated European action. Through closer cooperation, exchange of best practices and aligned policies, we can ensure a safe, inclusive and healthy digital environment for all children and young people. The best interests of the child must remain at the centre of our common efforts. Ministers of Education have a decisive responsibility in shaping resilient generations who can navigate online spaces safely, recognise manipulation and harmful content, and contribute positively to digital society.

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