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Protection of Minors Online: Key Takeaways from the Informal meeting of
Telecommunication Ministers (Nicosia, 29-30 April 2026)

- Information from the Presidency

**Protection of Minors Online: Key Takeaways from the Informal meeting of
Telecommunication Ministers (Nicosia, 29-30 April 2026)**

Recognising the growing importance of strengthening the protection of minors online, the Presidency facilitated an exchange of views during the Ministerial Telecommunications Informal Council held in Nicosia on 29–30 April 2026. This discussion aimed to contribute to greater political alignment on key priorities and future actions in this area. Delegations exchanged views on the protection of minors online, with particular attention to age verification, platforms' responsibilities and the broader EU regulatory framework. The discussion took place against the backdrop of the ongoing implementation of existing legislative instruments, as well as the emerging challenges in the digital environment.

The exchange was introduced by Executive Vice-President Virkkunen, who recalled the existing regulatory framework, notably the Digital Services Act (DSA), and referred to ongoing enforcement actions, including investigations and proceedings involving Very Large Online Platforms. Reference was also made to ongoing work under the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), preparations for its forthcoming review later this year, as well as to transparency obligations applicable to artificial intelligence systems, particularly chatbots deployed in consumer-facing contexts. The Commission further provided updates on its work around age verification. This included an assessment of the potential for a harmonised Union-level approach, combined with awareness-raising initiatives directed at relevant stakeholders. Reference was also made to the development of the EU age-verification blueprint which is available on an open-source basis, with a view to supporting the implementation of technical solutions by Member States and industry. The discussion also took note of the work of the Special panel on child safety online convened by European Commission, which is expected to issue recommendations during the summer of 2026. The Commission also noted that implementation at national level of age verification tools is expected to start in the coming months, alongside ongoing reflections at EU level following the adoption of the Commission recommendation on establishing a common framework for EU wide Age Verification technologies.

In the subsequent exchange, ministers reflected on possible approaches to strengthening the protection of minors online within the digital ecosystem, with a particular focus on age limits. A number of interventions pointed to the cross-border nature of the challenge and referred to the limits of purely national initiatives. In this context, several delegations highlighted the potential added value of enhanced coordination at European level approach. At the same time, it was underlined that any such approach should allow for an appropriate degree of national flexibility, including as regards age thresholds and implementation modalities.

Attention was also drawn to the risk of fragmentation with several ministers noting that divergent national approaches may create uncertainty for users, parents and service providers, and could impact the effective functioning of the internal market. The importance of ensuring interoperability of the various solutions and of developing common approaches, notably by building on existing EU instruments, including the DSA, the AVMSD and the European Digital Identity Wallet, was also highlighted. Several delegations expressed support for ongoing enforcement activities under the DSA and highlighted the need to continue enforcing existing instruments such as the DSA, the AVMSD and the AI Act.

Ministers also emphasised the importance of privacy-preserving solutions, data minimisation and secure technologies, as well as the need to maintain technological neutrality. In this context, some interventions underlined that enforcement measures should be evidence-based and carefully assessed, with a view to avoiding unintended consequences or disproportionate burdens.

The discussion focused on the importance of combining regulatory approaches, supporting actions and practical tools. Several interventions highlighted the role of effective age assurance or verification solutions, alongside awareness-raising and digital literacy efforts. At the same time, different views were expressed regarding the degree to which the use of such tools should be mandatory, with some delegations favouring more prescriptive approaches, while others referring to voluntary or risk-based models.

The exchange also highlighted the importance attached maintaining momentum and advancing work in this area. Several interventions underlined the need for timely progress at European level, while also pointing to the importance of ensuring that any future legislative proposal is operational and proportionate.

In conclusion, the exchange in Nicosia highlighted the multifaceted nature of the challenges associated with the protection of minors online in the digital environment. It pointed to a broad interest among delegations in exploring coordinated solutions at European level, while maintaining an appropriate balance between regulatory action, the protection of fundamental rights and the functioning of the internal market. In this context, the ongoing work of the Commission, including the contributions of the special panel and the development of technical solutions, was noted as an important element in informing further reflections. The Presidency remains firmly committed to advancing work on the protection of minors online and to sustaining the political momentum achieved in this area, and considers that these elements may provide a useful basis for future discussions at Union level.