



Resolution 2498 (2023)¹

Youth and the media

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Through new media, young Europeans are developing social relationships and expressing their concerns, aspirations and expectations in a way that is quite different from previous generations. The Covid-19 pandemic and measures taken to combat its spread had a huge impact on their lives: they suffered, probably more than adults, from social distancing and lockdowns; at the same time, they showed greater readiness to turn to the digital world and new media to communicate with close family, friends and peers.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly considers it vital to ensure safe social media use for young people and to promote youth participation in social, economic and political life via the media.
3. Whether people use traditional media or non-mainstream digital media, their habits and practices in accessing news and seeking information are largely influenced by their age. Online and social media platforms are the prime sources of information for young people. There are two new patterns of news consumption: on the one hand, and more often than not, an accidental exposure to news, which is consulted in a piecemeal fashion on digital platforms; on the other hand, deliberate news consumption on social networking sites, with a degree of interest and engagement that varies greatly from person to person.
4. With regard to the news, the major challenge is to ensure that all sources – whether digital media, non-mainstream news platforms or traditional media – provide young people with high-quality news reporting and encourage them to play an active and deliberate part in civic and political life.
5. By design, technologies are likely to trigger addictive user behaviour, especially among the young. For the latter, constant connectivity and immediate responsiveness have become the norm, leaving them vulnerable to problems such as digital stress, fear of missing out and “technoference” – constant interruptions in interpersonal interactions caused by technological, digital and mobile devices.
6. Children and young people face information overload on the internet. They are exposed to a multitude of narratives and material promoted on social networks by influencers, TikTokers, YouTubers and video bloggers with sway over young audiences facing a complex world. Such social network influencers are often disseminators of misinformation, toxic advertising and harmful, or even unlawful, content.
7. Some young people may also be drawn in by online incitement to violence and radicalisation, although many are quick to speak out against hate speech and discrimination. Abusive and harmful content for young people also includes non-consensual pornography, which must be tackled through regulation.
8. The challenge of a sustainable regulatory approach is not only to strike a balance between minors’ safe social media use and digital self-determination, but also to protect them from potentially harmful behaviours and other dangers.
9. One major source of concern relates to digital identity and online reputation, namely the need for safety measures and data privacy protection for young people, who are not always aware of the risks linked to digital technologies. In this respect, it is crucial to take into account minors’ cognitive abilities and to effectively uphold the right to have one’s personal data erased (“right to be forgotten”).

1. *Assembly debate* on 28 April 2023 (14th sitting) (see [Doc. 15726](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Ms Fiona O’Loughlin; and oral opinion of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Ms Ruth Jones). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 28 April 2023 (14th sitting).



10. Young people's participatory and collaborative culture is influenced by their internet, social network and digital technology usage patterns. Young people's degree of trust in the media affects their interest and engagement.

11. Through new media, young people are networking, thinking and acting together, building their own identity and shaping our societies. Participatory media have created a context that is conducive to participatory politics in which young people do not just follow elite-driven information. Media platforms create opportunities for young people to express their views on today's crucial issues, such as human rights, environmental protection, sustainable development and peace. Young people have a legitimate desire to be influential in making crucial choices.

12. However, there is a substantial disconnect between institutional politics and the daily lives of certain groups, especially young women and young people from minorities, which is reflected in their perceptions of politicians. Some young people do not feel listened to or represented in institutional politics and there is a "technological disjunction" between traditional political media and other types of information technology.

13. New approaches need to be found to make young people's voices more audible in traditional media too, to converse with them in order to tap into their way of contributing to the social fabric, to better protect those who may be more exposed and vulnerable to harmful content online and to empower the many young people who are seeking to build a better future.

14. In the digital environment, young people are the main drivers behind both the dissemination and the production of information. The digital ecosystem thus provides young people with the tools and spaces to be both active and creative consumers and producers of culture. Their data, attention, culture, labour and creativity, however, are being commodified to generate profits that media market operators do not share equitably. Such participation in the digital economy entails power relations: through "aspirational labour", young people create and produce content for free in the hope of a future career, thereby forming a class of information workers who are subject to asymmetrical relationships and even exploitation of their skills.

15. The Assembly therefore calls on member States to develop a media ecosystem that ensures the provision of high-quality information and digital safety for young people and strengthens their democratic engagement. In this respect, member States should:

15.1. better protect the media's editorial independence and enhance the role and visibility of professional journalists;

15.2. support public service media and independent and local media outlets by providing them with adequate financial resources so that they can encourage conscious news consumption and democratic engagement among young people;

15.3. support the presence of news media on social networks to disseminate news that takes into account the diversity and specific needs of certain groups of young people, in particular those from minority backgrounds, for example young migrants;

15.4. fund and promote research on safety and well-being online;

15.5. provide financial support for fact-checking initiatives to counteract mis- and disinformation;

15.6. promote (publicly and privately run) media literacy programmes aimed at countering the trend among young people for intermittent "news snacking" and at strengthening young users' digital and critical thinking skills so that they are better equipped to tackle information disorder and harmful content and to identify and challenge abusive content and advertising practices on the internet;

15.7. strengthen the role of data protection and competition authorities; in particular, ensure compliance with data protection rules for young people under the age of 18 and enforce appropriate measures to make corporate platforms comply with all the relevant requirements in terms of the protection of privacy and surveillance;

15.8. consider a voluntary or compulsory digital identity system and strengthen the means for young people to protect their own online reputation;

15.9. align their national legislation with the standards set by the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (ETS No. 108, "Convention 108") and its modernised version (CETS No. 223, "Convention 108+"); in particular, introduce strict penalties for major social media platforms when they engage in unfair commercial practices and collect and use data about minors for commercial purposes, including targeted marketing and personalised advertising;

15.10. enhance the role of national media and advertising regulatory authorities and ensure compliance with measures to protect users, especially the most vulnerable, from online harassment and harmful content on video-sharing platforms and social networks;

15.11. step up efforts to prevent and combat online harassment by disseminating research and education on media ethics and by requiring healthcare professionals and educators working with children and young adults to routinely screen for online harassment while ensuring that they receive specific training and are given time to analyse the situation;

15.12. regulate pornography platforms in Europe and impose harsher penalties on intermediary services that do not comply with the requirement to remove non-consensual imagery, including revenge porn and fake porn;

15.13. organise information and awareness-raising campaigns concerning deepfakes, particularly as they are part of political disinformation, frauds and revenge porn, and implement appropriate measures to counter harmful deepfakes and to ensure their removal from digital platforms;

15.14. implement appropriate measures to ensure that advertisements on video-sharing platforms comply with specific advertising requirements in terms of transparency, bans or restrictions relating to certain products and other general advertising requirements; promote uniform approaches to social media regulation on limiting or banning advertisements aimed at children, including those for harmful foods.

16. The Assembly also calls on member States to promote the participation of young people in social and economic life via the media, bearing in mind that digital transformation may lead to structural inequalities and reproduce existing ones, including through the invasion of privacy, exploitation of free labour and surveillance. In this respect, member States should:

16.1. stimulate the development of young people's civic sense and political engagement by tackling incivility in online political discourse and by adapting the way politicians engage with young people;

16.2. develop metrics to measure online economic value created by young people and fund research on the development of their economic understanding;

16.3. adopt regulations to tackle the new forms of youth labour exploitation that have emerged in digital economy ecosystems;

16.4. ensure that educational programmes teach and raise awareness of digital financial literacy and promote young people's digital contribution to the changing digital economic landscape.