Council of the European Union

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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Draft Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on empowering young people in an evolving information environment - *Approval*

The Youth Working Party has examined the draft Conclusions on the above-mentioned subject. The attached text meets with the agreement of all delegations.

The Permanent Representatives Committee is invited to confirm that there is an agreement in principle on the attached text and submit it to Council (EYCS) for approval at its session on 19 November 2026 and subsequent publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

ANNEX

Draft Conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on empowering young people in an evolving information environment

THE COUNCIL AND THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

RECALLING THAT:

1. The Resolution on the European Union Youth Strategy 2019–2027, including Annex 1 (EU Youth Dialogue) and Annex 3 (European Youth Goals)[1], promotes the enhanced participation of young people in decision-making processes and underscores the importance of engaging young people from diverse backgrounds. Through its three core pillars—Engage, Connect, and Empower—it highlights the importance of meaningful participation, fostering mutual understanding, and equipping young people in Europe with the competences and opportunities necessary to actively contribute to a resilient and inclusive society.

2. The European Pillar of Social Rights recognises the rights of young people to access education and training, equal opportunities and protection against discrimination, supporting the creation of inclusive, resilient communities in which young people are actively engaged and economically and socially safe.

[1] Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027, OJ C 456, 18.12.2018, pp. 1–22, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A42018Y1218%2801%29

RECALLING THE POLITICAL AND LEGAL BACKGROUND SET OUT IN:

3. The European Democracy Shield[2], which presents a coherent and strategic set of measures to empower, protect, and promote strong and resilient democracies across the EU, including steps to improve citizens' collective capacity to counter Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI) and disinformation and strengthen societal resilience through a whole-of-society approach.

4. The European Strategy for a Better Internet for Kids (BIK+)[3], EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child[4] and the relevant Council Conclusions[5], the Action Plan against Cyberbullying[6], and the Digital Services Act[7] aim to protect, empower and respect children and young people and their privacy, safety, security, mental health and wellbeing online, including via initiatives aimed at raising awareness of their rights.

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2 Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: European Democracy Shield: Empowering Strong and Resilient Democracies', JOIN(2025) 791 final, Council document 15387/25.

3 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: the new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+), COM(2022) 212 final, Council document 9071/22.

4 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - EU strategy on the rights of the child, COM(2021) 142 final, Council document 7453/21.

5 Council conclusions on the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child (June 2022), doc. 10024/22.

6 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Action plan against cyberbullying "Safer online, stronger together", COM(2026) 71 final, Council document 6361/26.

7 Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market For Digital Services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act), ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2022/2065/oj.

5. The European Union's robust legal framework, that includes but is not limited to the Audiovisual and Media Services Directive[8], the Digital Services Act and its Guidelines on the protection of minors[9], the European Media Freedom Act[10], the Political Advertising Regulation[11] and the Artificial Intelligence Act[12] providing the necessary mechanisms to ensure compliance by all actors in the digital ecosystem.

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8 Directive 2010/13/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 March 2010 on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) (OJ L 95, 15.4.2010, p. 1) and Directive (EU) 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 November 2018 amending Directive 2010/13/EU on the coordination of certain provisions laid down by law, regulation or administrative action in Member States concerning the provision of audiovisual media services (Audiovisual Media Services Directive) in view of changing market realities (OJ L 303, 28.11.2018, p. 69–92).

9 European Commission, Communication from the Commission - Guidelines on measures to ensure a high level of privacy, safety and security for minors online, pursuant to Article 28(4) of Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 (C(2025) 6826 final), OJ C, C/2025/5519, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/5519/oj

10 Regulation (EU) 2024/1083 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 April 2024 establishing a common framework for media services in the internal market and amending Directive 2010/13/EU (European Media Freedom Act), ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1083/oj

11 Regulation (EU) 2024/900 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 March 2024 on the transparency and targeting of political advertising, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/900/oj

12 Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 laying down harmonised rules on artificial intelligence and amending Regulations (EC) No 300/2008, (EU) No 167/2013, (EU) No 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1139 and (EU) 2019/2144 and Directives 2014/90/EU, (EU) 2016/797 and (EU) 2020/1828 (Artificial Intelligence Act), ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2024/1689/oj

EMPHASISING THAT:

6. The evolving information environment and increasing challenges to information integrity are matters of growing concern, with a wider societal impact, that are consistently voiced by young people.[13] There is a need for coordinated action by the Member States at local, regional and national levels, the European Commission and all relevant stakeholders to ensure that young people are equipped to participate actively and meaningfully in democratic and civic life, thereby strengthening the foundations of a fair and resilient society, including for generations to come.

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT:

7. The digital transformation of society has fundamentally reshaped how citizens, and in particular young people, engage in public discourse.

8. There is a rapidly transforming digital ecosystem, including in the context of artificial intelligence (AI) and AI technologies, which not only shapes how young people access and interpret information but also how they produce, consume and share information.

9. All young people have a right to access accurate, reliable and youth-friendly information. Youth organisations[14] and youth information services play a key role to support young people to exercise this right, fostering a culture of critical thinking and media literacy that benefits the whole of society.

10. Significant new opportunities and challenges are faced by young people when accessing, consuming, interpreting, sharing and producing information, expressing their opinion and participating in public and democratic debate.

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13 Bárta, O., & Moxon, D. (2025). EUYD11 EU Youth Conference in Lublin, Poland. Conference Report. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15118224

14 For the purpose of these Conclusions, youth organisations are considered to be youth work organisations and organisations that work primarily with young people.

11. The information environment offers opportunities for civic engagement but also exposes young people to misleading and polarizing content. It is therefore appropriate to strengthen young people's resilience and to support their active contribution to shaping the wider information environment.

12. Local, regional, national and European structures supporting youth information, such as National Youth Councils, youth organisations, ERYICA, Eurodesk and the European Youth Portal, play an important role in promoting accurate, reliable, youth-friendly and accessible information.

13. Online platforms provide an important mechanism for young people to express their views and connect with others who share similar interests, helping young people to build social skills, confidence and a sense of community.[15]

14. Young people from an early age are increasingly exposed to cyberbullying, online harassment and other forms of harmful online behaviour, including cyber incitement to violence or hatred, which can negatively affect their wellbeing, mental health, social lives, democratic participation and engagement in the digital information environment, especially for girls and young women disproportionately affected by all forms of cyberviolence.[16]

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15 European Commission, Communication from the Commission - Guidelines on measures to ensure a high level of privacy, safety and security for minors online, pursuant to Article 28(4) of Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 (C(2025) 6826 final), OJ C, C/2025/5519, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2025/5519/oj

16 Council conclusions on promoting and protecting the mental health of children and adolescents in the digital era (June 2025), document 10430/1/25 REV 1.

15. Young people must have the opportunity to develop the necessary skills and competences, including digital, media and AI literacy, to engage critically when accessing, consuming, interpreting, sharing and producing information online. As such, these skills and competences are of the utmost importance for their protection and empowerment in the information environment.

16. Youth work, youth workers, youth organisations and other relevant experts and stakeholders such as youth information services and the Safer Internet Centres play an important role in supporting young people to acquire the necessary skills and competences and to exercise their rights in the information environment.

HIGHLIGHTING THAT:

17. Coordinated and systematic foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI), including by certain state or state-sponsored actors, seeks to undermine young people's trust in democratic institutions, weaken social cohesion, confuse and foster division in our societies. The targeted spread of FIMI, disinformation and misinformation exploits vulnerabilities and poses a significant threat to information integrity and democratic resilience.

18. Continued exposure to FIMI, disinformation, misinformation and online harassment can lead to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, loneliness and other health or behavioural issues, especially amongst young people.[17]

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[17] Council of the European Union, Council conclusions on promoting and protecting the mental health of children and adolescents in the digital era (20 June 2025), doc. 10430/1/25 REV 1; Council conclusions on strengthening women's and girls' mental health by promoting gender equality (2 December 2024), doc. 16366/24.

19. Promoting and safeguarding information integrity will empower young people to exercise their right to produce, access, consume and share information, by increasing their ability to make informed choices, navigate the digital ecosystem with autonomy and by strengthening their critical thinking and civic awareness.

20. Increasing young people's trust in democratic institutions at all levels can promote democratic resilience, reinforce solidarity, contribute to peacebuilding, and prevent demotivation, disengagement and political alienation.

21. The increasing use of AI and AI technologies require safeguards and human oversight. Adequate AI literacy among users is needed so that they can interact with and use such systems ethically, critically, safely and transparently and with full awareness of their potential impact on young people.

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THAT:

22. The digital ecosystem holds significant power in shaping democratic discourse, public opinion and civic engagement among all European citizens.

23. Responsible decision-making and critical thinking skills, together with digital, media and AI literacy serve as valuable tools for combatting the spread of disinformation and misinformation by enabling young people to assess critically the source of information and thus avoid being deceived by false or misleading content.

24. Promoting the understanding of and learning about emotional intelligence as part of the formal, non-formal and informal learning has the power to improve young people's personal and social development by helping them to increase their emotional resilience, build empathy and create meaningful social relationships.

25. Barriers to meaningful online engagement continue to persist for many young people, including those arising from socioeconomic disadvantage, disability, limited access to or lack of infrastructure, and insufficient skills to engage online.

26. Lifelong learning is essential to enable citizens, especially young people, to continue to learn about the information environment and build on their skills in response to technological change.

27. At the EU Youth Conference in Dublin 27-30 September 2026 young people proposed the following recommendations:

1. Co-create trusted youth spaces for national and European dialogue

   EU member states should create strengthened national iterations of the EU Youth Dialogue framework, informed by local youth priorities and connected to national and European decision-making. This should include permanent, inclusive, and co-created local youth participatory spaces, ensuring diverse and underrepresented young people are involved. National governments and municipalities should ensure meaningful, accessible, financially supported, and sustainable participation, by partnering with civil society organisations.

2. Introduce an Information Literacy Framework

   The EU should introduce an Information Literacy Framework, empowering young people to navigate today's information landscape, co-created by young people, the EU and relevant stakeholders. The Framework should support young people to find and assess reliable sources, recognise bias within information, understand how content reaches them, and foster accountability in reporting mechanisms. Relevant stakeholders should share the accessible and applicable Framework through diverse channels.

3. Establish a European Quality Label for Transparent and Verified Information Providers

   Establish a European Quality Label, issued by an independent third-party institution with national branches, providing a clear and recognisable indicator of verified, trustworthy, transparent, and accountable information providers. The Quality Label is a safety tool to be used on media platforms to verify the transparency of the processes they follow, including sources, AI use, funding, and automated text corrections used without human oversight.

4. Mandate the design of digital platforms to have young people's best interests at heart

   The EU should ensure that digital platforms are user led instead of driven by profit. More transparency is needed on what content is shown to young people so that they can understand where the content is coming from and make informed choices (e.g., through embedded fields identifying sources). Better tools are needed to address features like infinite scrolling. These tools must be embedded by design in the platforms. Digital platforms must promote opportunities for young people to engage outside of online spaces.

5. Develop regulations on algorithms of online platforms to reduce polarisation

   Building upon existing policy such as the Digital Services Act, the EU should combat recommender algorithms and their ranking systems, without censoring content itself. These algorithms and ranking systems prioritise incendiary content to maximise user engagement. Furthermore, all platforms should provide users with a more accessible way to customise the way their algorithms function, as well as provide transparency on what data has been collected.

The recommendations do not impose any formal requirements as regards youth policies at relevant levels. However, they can serve as a source of inspiration for Member States and European institutions.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES TO:

28. Consider developing a strategic approach across relevant policy areas at local, regional and national levels to address key complex challenges posed by the information environment and continue to promote youth mainstreaming, including through the meaningful involvement of young people in the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of such an approach.

29. Promote the EU Youth Dialogue as an important mechanism for systematic consultations with young people, including on their interaction with the information environment, and use their input and recommendations to inform relevant decision-making processes and policy development.

30. Recognise and support the unique role of young people as peer educators and ambassadors, who can reach and influence their peers outside of the formal, non-formal and informal learning, as well as the role many of them play in intergenerational learning.

31. Support and resource educators, youth workers, and youth organisations, in cooperation with other relevant experts, families and stakeholders, to develop methodologies and tools that strengthen young people's resilience to disinformation, misinformation and online manipulation with a view to empowering them and helping them make informed and responsible decisions[18].

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18 European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training – Updated*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2026, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/5220136

32. Strengthen efforts to ensure that young people understand their rights in the information environment through local, regional, national and European structures which support youth information, such as National Youth Councils, youth organisations, ERYICA, Eurodesk and the European Youth Portal.

33. Encourage and facilitate dialogue between young people, education providers, youth workers, youth organisations, parents, families, caregivers, legal guardians and wider civil society to address opportunities and challenges arising from the information environment.

34. Promote a lifelong learning approach to enable citizens of all ages to develop skills and competences for the evolving information environment.

35. Take full advantage, where appropriate, of existing EU funds, cooperation tools and programmes to support developments, initiatives and approaches related to skills and competences for the evolving information environment.

INVITE THE MEMBER STATES AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY AND WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE SPHERES OF COMPETENCE, TO:

36. Continue to exchange views and evidence-based information, facilitate cooperation and share best practices on the political and legal commitments that seek to combat the spread of misinformation and disinformation, counter FIMI, and to strengthen the democratic resilience across all age groups, especially among young people and including vulnerable groups.

37. Improve knowledge and public awareness of FIMI, disinformation and misinformation processes through, for instance, multidisciplinary research, the compilation of data on information consumption patterns and awareness-raising activities. In that context, utilising existing structures and relying also on the expertise of non-institutional stakeholders such as the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)[19] and the European network of fact-checkers, could be drawn on.

38. Continue to promote and develop critical thinking, digital and media literacy initiatives, knowledge of digital hygiene[20] and other relevant skills and competences required by young people, youth workers and other stakeholders to actively participate in the evolving information environment.

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19 https://edmo.eu/

20 The term 'digital hygiene' refers to the healthy balance of digital and non-digital activities in everyday life, focusing mostly on behavioural practices such as reducing and effectively managing screen time as well as improving online safety. (Council Conclusions on promoting and protecting the mental health of children and adolescents in the digital era (June 2025), doc. 10430/1/25 REV 1).

39. Continue to promote and develop AI literacy as an integral component of digital and media literacy among young people, youth workers and other stakeholders, and support them in co-developing AI literacy methodologies with and for young people.

40. Promote the implementation of the 2026 Updated Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation through education and training[21] as well as the EU-OECD AI literacy framework for primary and secondary education[22].

41. Support young people through youth organisations and other forms of meaningful youth participation with the aim of fostering European Union values and democracy, and where applicable National Youth Councils, with a view to enabling their active contribution to the design, implementation and evaluation of policies that affect their lives. Increase opportunities for youth-led initiatives that promote European Union values, solidarity, intergenerational fairness, active citizenship and democratic resilience.

42. Support youth work, youth workers, youth organisations, and youth information services, and other relevant experts and stakeholders such as the Safer Internet Centres in their role as providers of information and support to young people and enable them to disseminate quality, youth-friendly and accessible information to equip young people with the competences required to navigate the modern information environment.

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21 European Commission: Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy through education and training – Updated*, Publications Office of the European Union, 2026, https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2766/5220136

22 OECD / European Union (2026). Empowering learners for the age of AI: An AI literacy framework for primary and secondary education. OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/65cd27d4-en

43. Use the opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ programme and the European Solidarity Corps, as well as other relevant EU programmes such as the Creative Europe Programme, Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme, and the Digital Europe Programme, to support projects aimed at strengthening young people's digital and media literacy and developing initiatives to tackle disinformation.

INVITE THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY, TO:

44. Facilitate the continued exchange of best practices, research and evidence on youth resilience to FIMI, disinformation and misinformation between the Member States and all relevant stakeholders through existing networks, structures and platforms[23].

45. Promote cooperation and knowledge-sharing on empowering young people to navigate the information environment safely among all relevant stakeholders.

46. Create further opportunities to utilise, expand and continue to strengthen the Youth Check in the legislative and policymaking processes and increase its transparency.

[23] Such as the European Commission's Media literacy expert group.

47. Continue to facilitate meaningful Youth Policy Dialogues between young people and Commissioners on the implementation of the European Democracy Shield and all relevant policy areas relating to the digitalisation of our societies and continue to strengthen and further develop the EU Youth Dialogue as a key mechanism for structured youth participation in policymaking at EU level, and strengthen the EU Children's Participation Platform.

48. Encourage and support the exchange of best practice for community building, digital media and AI literacy initiatives and democratic resilience through existing networks, structures and platforms.