



Minor wellbeing & online safety: the voice of the Belgian internet industry



ISPA Belgium is the professional association representing companies operating within the Belgian internet ecosystem. Through its three core activities, the association **informs** members about digital policy and industry trends, **defends** their interests, and **promotes** the strength of Belgium's internet sector. ISPA ensures that the **voice of the internet community is heard** by policymakers and the general public, and enables the creation of digital-friendly, future-oriented, and coherent policies in Belgium.

Growing up in a digital world

For younger generations today, the internet has become an indispensable tool in developing their identity, communicating with peers, and discovering, creating, and sharing content. As a result, their digital and non-digital environments in everyday life are increasingly becoming one integrated reality. At the same time, the growing role of digital technologies in everyday life brings new challenges for minors, underscoring the need for a collective effort by parents, educators, policymakers, platforms and internet service providers (ISPs) to support their digital wellbeing.

ISPA Belgium is committed to making the **internet a safe space** for everyone, with **particular attention to youth**. As a professional association, **our members actively protect young people online, support parents in safely guiding their children's internet use, and engage as a constructive dialogue partner with policymakers and governments**.

What the internet industry is doing

ISPA Belgium emphasizes that the industry's approach to the online wellbeing of minors is guided by a set of core principles. Rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all solution, it focuses **on targeted measures tailored to specific needs, avoiding policies that outpace the available scientific evidence**.

1. Education and media literacy

Education and media literacy are at the heart of ISPA members' efforts to support youth online wellbeing. Since 2010, members have contributed to the development and delivery of workshops reaching tens of thousands of pupils, addressing topics such as privacy, cyberbullying, and responsible online behaviour. In this context, collaborations with organisations such as Child Focus and Mediawijs have played an important role. In addition, teaching materials for educators and parents further support these efforts by guiding children and fostering informed conversations about online safety.

2. Parental control by design

Technological solutions and thoughtful product design can complement media literacy efforts. When available, parental guidance tools can help parents support their children's online experience, for example through screen time management or content filters. These tools should be applied in an age-appropriate manner, taking into account children's evolving autonomy and right to privacy. It is essential

that these tools are developed in close collaboration with youth, parents, and experts, and that they serve as supportive instruments alongside education, dialogue and media literacy.

3. Combating harmful content

At the same time, the industry takes active measures against the most serious online risks, including child sexual exploitation and abuse imagery, grooming, extremist material, and non-consensual intimate images, often in cooperation with international partners. Content policies have also been strengthened to limit the visibility of harmful material related to self-harm, eating disorders, or bullying, particularly for younger users.

A strong European regulatory foundation

-In addition to these initiatives, the existing **European framework** for the protection of youth online is of crucial importance. When it comes to matters as important as the protection of minors, it is essential to ensure that **all young people across the EU benefit from a common baseline of safety and protection measures**, regardless of where they live or which digital service or device they use. That is why **ISPA Belgium advocates for a harmonized, EU-led approach to prevent regulatory fragmentation and ensure that national policies align with European standards without resorting to gold plating**. The **Digital Services Act (DSA)** plays a key role in this regard, as it establishes clear and binding responsibilities for platforms and digital services, including specific obligations related to the protection of minors. By providing a common legal framework and enforcement mechanisms across all Member States, the DSA helps ensure a consistent and effective level of protection for children throughout the European Union.

This regulation imposes important obligations on platforms accessible to young people, including “safety-by-design” measures and risk-based age verification. Effective enforcement and transparency are essential in this regard.

The way forward: ISPA Belgium's commitment

As the digital landscape continues to evolve, it is **crucial** for the **internet sector to speak with a unified voice** on minors’ online safety and wellbeing. ISPA Belgium is committed to fostering collaboration between policymakers, educators, parents, young people themselves, online platforms and ISPs, and to promoting evidence-based approaches that empower young people to navigate the internet safely and responsibly.

Recognizing that there is still work to be done, ISPA Belgium aims to act as a constructive partner in contributing to ongoing dialogue and solutions. By taking an active, vocal role, the industry recognizes its shared responsibility to help shape practices that maximize the opportunities of the online world while safeguarding minors. ISPA Belgium stands ready to be a driving force in building that future.

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