

Vienna, April 1<sup>st</sup> 2026

Dear Colleagues of the Member States,

For many young people in Europe, the day begins and ends with a glance at a screen. Social media has become an important means of communication and information. At the same time, likes, stories and endless feeds shape their everyday lives, their self-image and, not infrequently, their mental well-being. Studies, parents and educators have been pointing this out for some time: social media no longer just accompanies many young people through their lives, but is increasingly making them dependent. Cyberbullying, political radicalisation and disinformation have also become real dangers. In addition, social media increases distraction and concentration problems, while personalised advertising and algorithmic content increase the pressure on young people. It is particularly problematic that platforms do not comply with existing age restrictions and that content remains accessible without control.

This development knows no national borders. And it is increasingly overwhelming children, families, schools – our entire society.

Against this backdrop, more and more European countries are consistently considering measures, including clear restrictions on the use of social media by young people. This is a strong political signal. At the same time, however, it is clear that we are facing a common European challenge that requires a coordinated response.

The European Commission has already recognised the importance of a coordinated European approach to the protection of minors in the digital space and has created the first binding regulations with the Digital Services Act. In addition, in your recent State of the Union address, you announced the introduction of further measures, including an EU-wide age limit for social media platforms.

It now seems crucial to flesh out and implement the announced initiatives in a timely manner. In particular, there is a need for a uniform Europe-wide age limit for social media platforms and a clear and harmonised definition of the platforms covered. A Union-wide approach will ensure effective protection of minors, legal certainty and the integrity of the digital single market in equal measure. This is the only way to prevent individual Member States from pushing for national solutions.

However, in order to enforce these measures for the protection of minors in all Member States, it is also of utmost importance to enable the rapid introduction of a reliable and interoperable age verification system that can be used throughout the EU. A common European approach would not only substantially strengthen the protection of minors, but also prevent the emergence of a multitude of individual national solutions, thereby securing the digital single market.

We welcome the Commission's open-source and white-label solution for age verification and the possibility of national adaptations. However, for rapid EU-wide introduction, the Commission itself should provide a usable app via popular app stores, accessible to all citizens with eIDAS1-notified eID and using a zero-knowledge proof standard. The EU login infrastructure provides a basis for this.

Austria has therefore suggested examining a central European age verification application with eIDAS1-compliant registration. This would reduce the implementation effort and provide platforms with a uniform interface. National flexibility could be maintained through supplementary extensions based on a common European solution.

A basic solution provided by the Commission at EU level – supplemented by optional national variations – would greatly facilitate rapid introduction, broad acceptance and Europe-wide use. At the same time, it would send a clear political signal that Europe is acting in unison to protect minors and is also putting digital sovereignty into practice. Austria therefore requests the Commission to reconsider this approach in light of the current political dynamics.

Against this background, we would like to make the following specific suggestions:

- There needs to be a joint political commitment by all Member States and the European Commission to a coordinated European approach to age verification.
- placing the protection of minors online, and in particular the issue of age verification, high on the agenda of the informal TTE Council on 29 and 30 April and holding a substantive political debate on this issue.

Thank you for your attention and for your continued constructive cooperation on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,



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Digitalisation in the Federal  
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