



Coimisiún
na Meán



An Coimisiún um
Chosaint Sonraí
Data Protection
Commission

Advancing the safety of children and the protection of their personal data online

Joint statement by Coimisiún na Meán and the Data Protection
Commission

1. Introduction

The online environment can provide children with valuable opportunities to enjoy their rights, including their rights to be heard, to freedom of expression and association, to access information from a variety of sources to education, and to play and leisure. This environment also presents serious risks to children's enjoyment of their rights, including their rights to the protection of their personal data and to protection from all forms of harm, abuse, violence and exploitation.

Coimisiún na Meán ("An Coimisiún") and the Data Protection Commission ("DPC") have signed a Cooperation Agreement to enable both regulators to work closely together, including for the purposes of cooperating on matters of common interest, having due regard to each regulator's statutory independence and functions.

One such area of common interest is the need to ensure that the rights and best interests of children are respected and upheld by the online services that An Coimisiún and the DPC regulate. We are committed to mobilising our respective regulatory roles in relation to online safety and data protection to advance the implementation of children's rights online in a manner that upholds human rights.

The purpose of this statement is to highlight An Coimisiún and the DPC's shared ambition for, and regulatory approach to, advancing the safety of children and the protection of their personal data online.

2. About An Coimisiún and the DPC

Coimisiún na Meán

Coimisiún na Meán was established in 2023 under the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022 ("OSMR Act"), which amended the Broadcasting Act 2009. In addition to undertaking the functions of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland as the regulator for broadcasting in Ireland, An Coimisiún is responsible for a range of additional functions, including Ireland's regulatory framework for online safety. This framework is currently made up of the Digital Services Act ("DSA"), the OSMR Act (pursuant to which the Online Safety Code was adopted), and the EU Terrorist Content Online Regulation ("TCOR").



Coimisiún
na Meán



An Coimisiún um
Chosaint Sonraí
Data Protection
Commission

An Coimisiún's vision is for a thriving, diverse, creative, safe and trusted media landscape. In striving to realise this vision, An Coimisiún is pursuing six strategic outcomes during the period 2025 to 2027. One of these outcomes is a media landscape that upholds the rights, wellbeing and development of children and their safe engagement with content.

In line with this strategic outcome and its online safety role, An Coimisiún is progressing an ambitious work programme relating to children. This work programme includes:

- putting in place, supervising and enforcing Ireland's Online Safety Code and related statutory guidance
- cooperating and coordinating with the European Commission and other national Digital Services Coordinators to regulate online services' compliance with DSA obligations relevant to the protection of children, including cooperating on the development and implementation of guidelines to assist online platforms accessible to children with fulfilling their obligation to take appropriate and proportionate measures to ensure a high level of privacy, safety and security of children on their service (Article 28, DSA)
- undertaking and supporting information and media literacy initiatives that raise awareness and understanding of children's rights online and of actions, which children and their parents/guardians can take to pursue these rights.

Data Protection Commission

The DPC was established in 2018 under the Data Protection Act 2018 and is the national independent authority in Ireland responsible for upholding the fundamental right of individuals in the European Union ("EU") to have their personal data protected. The DPC is the Irish supervisory authority responsible for monitoring the application of and enforcing applicable data protection law, including the GDPR, on its territory and across the EU/EEA where it acts as Lead Supervisory Authority under the GDPR.

The DPC is committed to being an independent, internationally influential and publicly dependable regulator of EU data protection law; regulating with clear purpose, trusted by the public, respected by its peers and effective in its regulation. One of the five key pillars of the DPC's 2022-2027 Regulatory Strategy is prioritising the protection of children and other vulnerable groups. This pillar has driven significant regulatory action by the DPC over the last number of years, including being one of the first EU data protection authorities to produce detailed, dedicated guidance on the protection of children's personal data under the GDPR¹ and launching two large-scale inquiries into social media platforms' use of children's personal data, which included the first EU-wide decision on children's data protection rights.

¹ Data Protection Commission, [Fundamentals for a Child-Oriented Approach to Data Processing](#) (2021).



The protection of children's personal data and their rights under the GDPR has been a key priority for the DPC since 2018 and remains an area in which the DPC will continue working to substantially raise standards of protection.

3. A shared ambition

An Coimisiún and the DPC have a shared ambition in relation to children's safety and data protection online:

- We want children to enjoy online experiences, which are age-appropriate, which are aligned with their evolving capacities, and which uphold their rights and best interests, including their rights to the protection of their personal data and to protection from harm.
- We want children and their parents/guardians to be empowered through information and education to make choices that are supportive of children's safety and data protection online. We also want children and their parents/guardians to have confidence that we will fulfil our roles as independent regulators for online safety and data protection.
- We want to support the online services we regulate to comply with their obligations, including by providing clarity on areas of intersection between data protection and online safety. We expect online services to comply with the law, and we will take appropriate action to assess whether these online services are complying with their obligations. Where it is established that these online services are not meeting their obligations, we will take effective action in accordance with our statutory powers.

4. A shared perspective

An Coimisiún and the DPC share a rights-based perspective on the protection of children's safety and personal data online. We recognise that:

- Children are holders of rights and have rights in relation to the online environment. These rights are enshrined in, *inter alia*, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Children² and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.³
- Actions taken by An Coimisiún and the DPC as independent regulators and actions taken by the online services we regulate must respect children's rights, including:
 - children's right to non-discrimination
 - children's right to have their best interests treated as a primary consideration in all actions relating to them
 - children's right to express their views freely and to have their views taken into consideration in matters affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity.

² United Nations, [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) (1989).

³ European Union, [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#) (2012).



- The online environment offers opportunities for children to enjoy their rights while also presenting serious risks to the enjoyment of those rights. These risks include content risks, conduct risks, contact risks, consumer risks as well as cross-cutting risks, which include privacy risks.⁴ Taking this holistic view of the positive and negative effects that the online environment can have on children's rights:
 - respects the indivisibility and interdependence of children's rights, as an integral part of human rights
 - facilitates proportionate, balanced consideration of matters relating to children's online safety and data protection
 - is supportive of children's access to positive, high-quality, age-appropriate experiences online, which are aligned with their evolving capacities.
- Parents/guardians can play a vital role in supporting children to exercise their rights, including online, in accordance with their evolving capacities. However, there is an obligation on online services to provide children with age-appropriate experiences, which uphold their rights and best interests, including their rights to the protection of their personal data and protection from harm.
- Age assurance, recommender systems, parental controls and default settings are examples of measures that need to be designed and operated by online services in an appropriate manner, which balances children's rights to the protection of their personal data and protection from harm and which also considers other children's rights and human rights. When designing, developing and operating these and other measures, online services need to comply with online safety and data protection rules. While balancing online safety and data protection appropriately and proportionately may present challenges, online services should not hold up online safety requirements as a barrier to complying with data protection requirements, or the other way around. Safety-by-design and data protection-by-design are compatible. Equally, our respective roles to regulate online services' use of measures such as age assurance from the perspectives of online safety and data protection are complementary.

Examples of measures with online safety and data protection considerations

Age assurance	Age assurance is an umbrella term for methods that can be used to determine the age or age range of an individual to varying levels of accuracy and certainty. Common age assurance methods used by online services fall into three broad categories: self-declaration, age estimation, and age verification.
Recommender systems	Recommender systems determine the manner in which information is prioritised, optimised and displayed to users. For example, they predict the type of content, products and advertisements that might appeal to a user by looking at patterns of previous behaviour or preferences online.
Parental controls	Parental controls are software, features, functionalities or applications designed to help parents accompany their child's online

⁴ OECD, [Children in the Digital Environment: Revised Typology of Risks](#) (2021).



	activity, privacy, safety and well-being, while respecting children's agency and privacy.
Default settings	Default settings are tools that can help online services to mitigate risks to children's personal data and safety. This can include automatically setting accounts to private for child users and turning off geolocation by default.

5. A shared approach

An Coimisiún and the DPC recognise the importance of pursuing an approach to regulation that is both rights-based and risk-based.

In the context of implementing our roles and functions as regulators, taking a rights-based and risk-based approach enables us to prioritise areas of greatest risk and highest impact, while ensuring that we uphold and balance human rights, including children's rights.

An Coimisiún and the DPC welcome the European Commission's guidelines on measures to ensure a high level of privacy, safety and security for minors online, which have been prepared further to Article 28(4) of the Digital Services Act. Among other things, we welcome that these guidelines:

- highlight that upholding the principle of proportionality and appropriateness entails online platforms accessible to children reviewing risks to children's privacy, safety and security stemming from their platforms and reviewing the impact of measures on children's rights and other rights and freedoms
- note that review of risks by online platforms accessible to children can be supported by child rights impact assessment.⁵

We also welcome the European Data Protection Board's Statement on Age Assurance, which aims to ensure a consistent European approach to age assurance, one which protects children's wellbeing and safety, while also complying with data protection principles.⁶

6. Looking ahead

Further to An Coimisiún and the DPC's Cooperation Agreement and our mutual commitment to upholding the rights of children, this joint statement outlines our shared ambition and approach to advancing children's safety and protecting their personal data online. Together, we affirm our shared commitment to driving higher standards of protection for children online and we look forward to continued cooperation in relation to this important area. In this regard, we will have regular structured engagement in the context of the Cooperation Agreement and future cooperation may include sharing insights on emerging risks to the

⁵ European 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](#) (2025), para. 17(a) and para. 22.

⁶ European Data Protection Board, [Statement on Age Assurance](#) (2025).



Coimisiún
na Meán



An Coimisiún um
Chosaint Sonraí
Data Protection
Commission

safety and protection of children's personal data online, joint work on educational resources relating to the protection of children online, and other areas of mutual interest.