
PERSPECTIVE

Social Media Age Gating in the EU

Perspectives on Member States laws restricting minors' access to social media platforms

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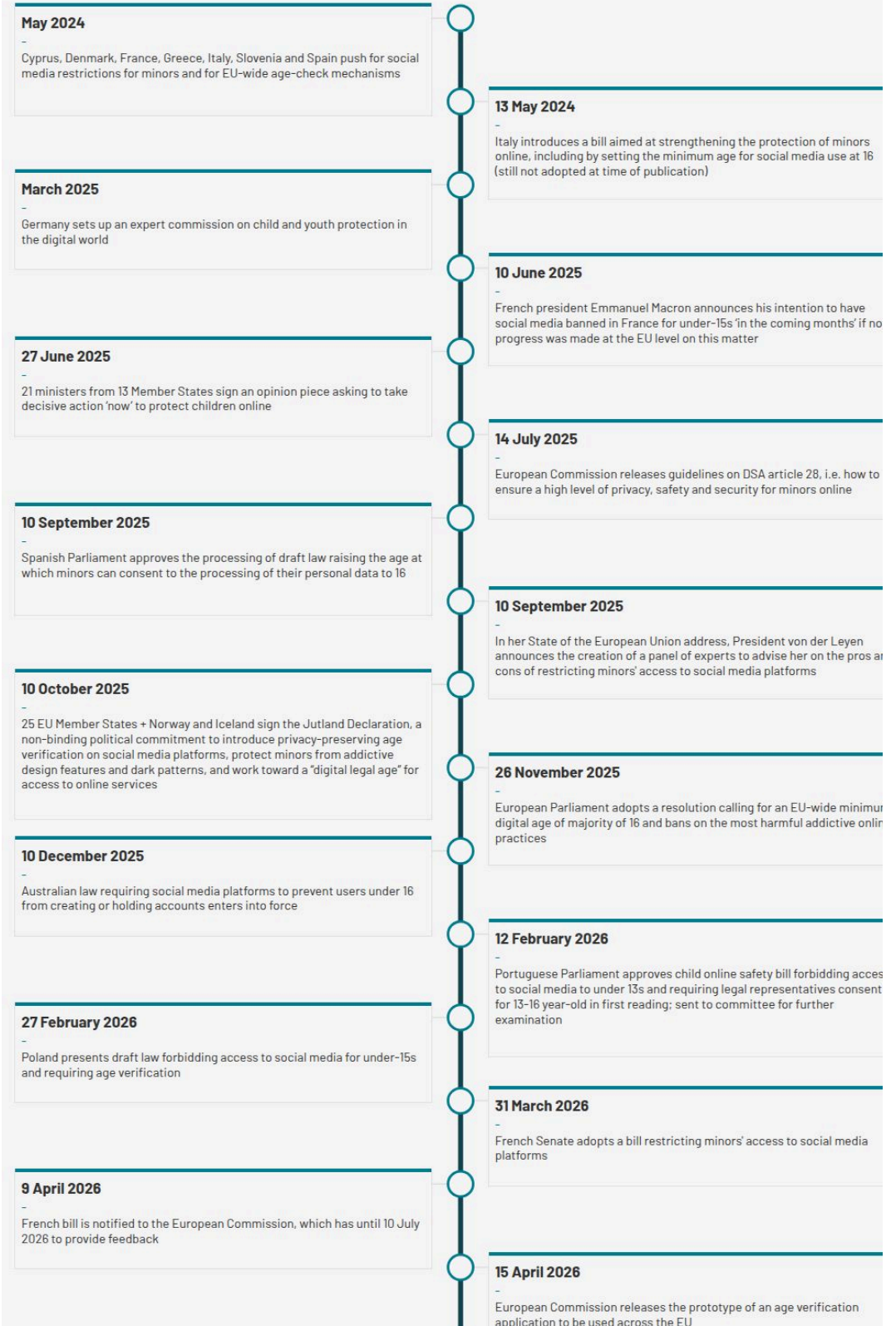
This brief offers perspectives on European Union (EU) Member States laws restricting minors' access to social media platforms. It includes insights on country-specific developments (e.g. France, Germany), a timeline of online child protection policy initiatives in the EU since 2024 and an interactive map of the EU offering a quick glance at national-level initiatives, their advancement status and other key variables.

For a more detailed, monthly updated table-format database covering all EU countries and (soon) the rest of the world, see our [AgeGate Tracker](#).

Introduction

On 10 December 2025, Australia became the first country in the world to require [blacklisted social media services](#) to prevent under-16s from having an account. In the European Union (EU), 2025 has marked a turning point as well, with an increasing number of countries contemplating such steps and putting pressure on EU institutions to take the matter into their own hands.

Timeline of online child protection initiatives in the EU (2024-now)



For a complete presentation of this graph, please see the online version of this publication.

<https://www.interface-eu.org/publications/social-media-age-gating-eu>

Source: Interface

In response to this mounting political pressure, Ursula von der Leyen has set up a [special panel of experts on online child safety](#), tasked, inter alia, with advising her and her team on the pros and cons of banning minors from social media services. This panel is expected to deliver recommendations by the summer. In her [keynote address](#) at the European Summit on Artificial Intelligence and Children on 12 May, 2026, the European Commission's President seemed to anticipate on these conclusions though, observing: '[w]ithout pre-empting the panel's findings, I believe we must consider a social media delay'. 'Depending on the results, we could come with a legal proposal this summer', she added.

In the meantime, Member States are going ahead and introducing national-level legislation.

Overview of national-level age-gating initiatives in the EU

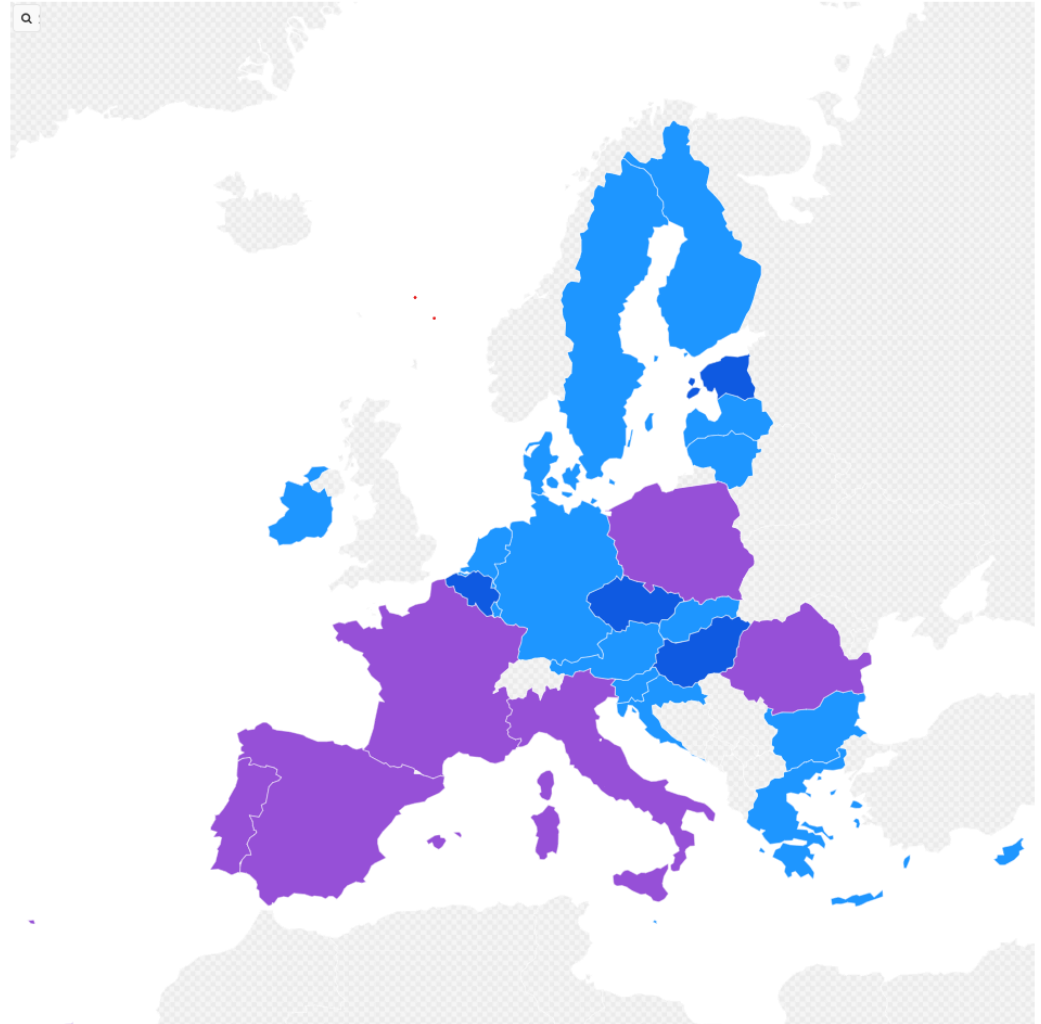
As of 11 May, 2026, 23 out of the 27 EU Member States were at least contemplating national legislation to restrict or forbid access to social media services under a certain age (see details in the map below¹). In most of those countries, initiatives are still at the discussion phase, be it in the public debate or within legislative bodies. In [Italy](#), [Poland](#), [Portugal](#) and [Spain](#), a draft law has been introduced. In Romania, one has been [adopted](#) by the Senate and is pending adoption in the *Camera Deputaților* at the time of writing. France is where the legislative process is most advanced: a different version of the same bill has been adopted by each chamber, and the Senate's version was [notified](#) to the European Commission. The [Czech Republic](#) and [Estonia](#) stand out as having publicly opposed so-called (or wrongly called) 'social media bans'. Estonia and Belgium are the only EU Member States that are not signatories of the [Jutland Declaration](#) of 10 October, 2025, a 'non-binding political commitment to introduce privacy-preserving age verification on social media platforms, protect minors from addictive design features and dark patterns, and work toward [...] a "digital legal age" for access to online services'².

¹ For a more detailed, table-format database, see our [AgeGate Tracker](#).

² '[Estonia is the rare EU country opposing bans on children's social media use](#)', *The Next Web*, 11 April 2026.

National laws restricting minors' access to social media in the EU

■ Under discussion ■ No national initiative ■ Proposed



For a complete presentation of this graph, please see the online version of this publication.

<https://www.interface-eu.org/publications/social-media-age-gating-eu>

Source: Interface

Although these national initiatives share the same main objective – restricting or forbidding minors’ access to (some) social media services – they differ from one country to another.

Complete bans, restrictions, parental consent: a patchwork of approaches

As shown in our [AgeGate Tracker](#), in Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Poland, Slovenia and Spain, the approach that seems to be favoured is that of a **complete ban**, i.e. children under a certain age are forbidden to have a social media account, without possibility to

waive this interdiction through parental consent.

Other EU Member States are instead betting on a **‘tiered approach’**, meaning that there might be a complete ban for minors under a certain age (e.g. 13), but which could be waived for a specific age range above of that threshold (e.g. 13-15). For instance, Denmark proposes to have a strict ban for minors under 13 and to require parental approval for minors between 13 and 15. Italy, Portugal and Luxemburg have chosen that same approach, with different age ranges. In Germany, the current proposal put forward in public statements by CDU and SPD representatives suggests a strict ban for under 14s, and ‘restricted access’ to a specific youth version for teens who are 14 to 16 years old. Greece seems to be going in that same direction, with different age thresholds. France has chosen yet a different approach, mixing a strict ban (under 15, for blacklisted services) with parental consent and restrictions (under 15, for non-blacklisted services).

Age verification, anyone?

Another aspect that differs from one country to another is whether the legal proposals introduce or infer an obligation to verify the age of social media users and how (through a national app or identity wallet, through third party providers, etc.). By 31 December, 2026, according to the European Commission’s [recommendations](#) for EU-wide age-verification technologies, Member States are encouraged to make robust age verification solutions available across the EU. In fact, most Member States’ initiatives, whether they have just been presented in an official press release or are already included in a draft law, do mention age verification solutions to enforce the access bans or restrictions.

However, **it is unclear where compliance and enforcement would sit in this regard**. In principle, Member States cannot introduce rules that conflict with EU law, in particular the Digital Services Act (DSA), which already covers online child safety on social media platforms. The central question here is: **Can Member States pass legislation putting an obligation on social media services to verify the age of their users, even when the DSA does not explicitly require it – and would that be in line with the EU’s ‘country of origin’ principle?** Although that question remains unresolved at the time of writing, it is likely to be answered in the coming weeks.

Indeed, to avoid potential objections from the European Commission, French lawmakers have crafted their bill carefully. The [initial version](#) went: ‘[o]nline social media service providers operating in **France** do not allow minors under the age of fifteen to register for their services’. This put a direct responsibility on social media services providers, and risked clashing with the DSA. French lawmakers thus reformulated this provision so that the prohibition is now formally addressed to minors, while still implying the need for age verification mechanisms in practice. The version of the bill that was notified to the

Commission now [says](#) that ‘[a] minor under the age of fifteen shall be prohibited from accessing a service provided by an online platform incorporating the functionalities of an online social networking service [...]’. Whether this change in wording will be enough for the European Commission not to issue comments or a detailed opinion, and for the bill to be formally passed as is³, remains uncertain. The Commission has until 10 July, 2026 to react. If the bill goes through and is formally adopted as is, France will be the first country in the EU to have put in place a legislation to restrict the access of underage users to social media services. Based on the Commission’s answer – or lack thereof –, the signal will be quite clear for other Member States that may or may not go ahead with their own initiatives.

This, however, doesn’t solve the compliance and enforcement issue around age assurance. The French bill does not set out explicit sanctions for platforms; it relies on existing EU and national enforcement mechanisms, leaving the consequences of non-compliance somewhat unclear. To remain in conformity with the DSA’s country of origin principle, the bill states that Arcom, the French authority in charge of enforcing the law, ‘shall report any suspicion of a breach of the prohibition [...] by online platforms providing an online social networking service established in other Member States of the European Union’ to the authorities competent to enforce the DSA. Given that most services targeted by the bill are not established in France, Arcom would have limited direct oversight powers, and effective enforcement against the main platforms would largely depend on the European Commission – and to a lesser extent on authorities in other Member States, where some of the platforms are established (e.g. Ireland). This also raises questions as to whether such a mechanism is workable in practice, as it could place the European Commission in the position of indirectly overseeing the enforcement of multiple, potentially divergent national frameworks.

In **Germany**, no bill has been proposed, yet a [legal assessment commissioned by the CDU/CSU](#) parliamentary group considers national age limits and other access restrictions on social media to be feasible and in line with the DSA’s country of origin principle. In the authors’ view, existing EU law does not entirely preclude national regulations. The legal assessment outlines three ways in which this could be achieved: a) stricter rules for video-sharing platforms such as TikTok, Instagram or YouTube under the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), b) Germany could determine which features are deemed inappropriate for minors, such as endless scrolling or live streams, or c) social media could be treated as a space posing particular risks to minors.

The first option is unlikely. Even if the AVMSD already provides a European legal

3 In reality, things are a bit more complex, and there are great chances that the version of the bill that has been notified to the European Commission will not be the one that is adopted in the end. The Senate and National Assembly have indeed each adopted a different version of the bill, and still have to find a compromise through a *commission mixte paritaire* once they hear back from the Commission. The very final text may thus differ from the one that was notified in April.

framework upon which national regulations could be based – it is up to the individual countries to devise their own laws on how to reach the goals the directive sets out. Limiting the scope to video-sharing platforms only, with a focus on content impeding children's development, would miss the point of a ban encompassing ‘social media platforms’. The third option, on the other hand, requires a lot of evidence to prove that social media services pose a particular risk to minors, in comparison to other intermediary services. What seems to be most reasonable is the second option. What constitutes as illegal is not explicitly codified in the DSA. It ultimately depends on what is illegal under Union or Member State law. If Germany was to define endless scrolling or live streams as inappropriate features for children under Member State law (*Jugendmedienschutzstaatsvertrag*, JMStV), platforms would be required to implement these provisions. At the same time, a [preliminary assessment](#) by the German expert committee on online child safety has concluded that a social media ban or age verification alone will not address online child protection risks. They instead emphasise a coordinated approach involving parents and schools and do stress that the provisions at EU level set out in Article 28(1) of the DSA and the guidelines, as well as the AVMSD, where applicable, provide the basis for a nuanced approach to the implementation of protective measures by service providers and their enforcement by regulatory authorities.

No homogeneity in the services covered across countries

Although we often hear about ‘**social media bans**’, it is worth noting that these terms are misleading for several reasons. First, they convey the false idea that it is the online services themselves that are being banned, when in fact it’s their underage users. Second, it leads to considering these national initiatives as a homogenous category targeting ‘social media’ services. However, there is no EU-wide legally binding definition of a ‘social media’ service. The definition that comes the closest is that of an ‘online social networking service’ set forth in [article 2\(7\) of the EU Digital Markets Act](#) (DMA): ‘a platform that enables end users to connect and communicate with each other, share content and discover other users and content across multiple devices and, in particular, via chats, posts, videos and recommendations’. Some countries, like France, have derived a national-level definition of social media services from the DMA. Others, like Portugal, have suggested their own. Many others have not defined their scope further.

The services covered by the national legislations listed in our [AgeGate Tracker](#) may thus vary from country to country. One aspect all definitions tend to have in common, though – including the one in the DMA –, is a **focus on features: user profiles, content sharing, algorithmic feeds, the possibility of interacting with unknown users, discoverability, etc.**

Still, some EU Member States may choose to target a restricted or, on the contrary, an extended array of online services. In **Portugal**, the proposed [draft law](#) would apply to ‘[s]ocial media platforms, online betting and gaming sites, photo and video sharing services, content hosting services, and communication apps’ (article 2(1)(a)), but also to ‘[s]ervice providers and content with age restrictions, including violent, addictive, or sexual content, as well as any other content that could harm children’s physical or mental development’ (article 2(1)(b)) and to ‘[p]roviders of app store services and any online intermediary services whose nature, characteristics, or content could be harmful to the physical or mental development of children’ (article 2(1)(c)). Instant messaging services, such as Messenger or WhatsApp for instance, would however not be covered (article 2(3)(a)).

In **France**, the Senate’s version of the bill – i.e. the one that has been [notified](#) to the European Commission – incorporates an Australia-style blacklist approach. Minors under 15 would be strictly forbidden to access the social media services included on a list established by order of the Minister responsible for digital matters, adopted after consulting Arcom. This list is expected to cover the services that, due to ‘the content disseminated or the recommendation systems used’ are ‘likely to be harmful’ to the ‘physical, mental or moral development’ of minors under 15. As for services that are not on the list and do not raise such risks, minors under 15 could access them, but only with parental consent.

On an interesting note, **Slovakia** is the only country to include artificial intelligence services in its initiative, which also covers loot boxes in video games.

Competing national approaches to age gating within Member States

Our research reveals that in some EU Member States, there is no national consensus, but rather a set of partly conflicting measures or approaches. In **Italy** for instance, multiple competing proposals stemming from different parties coexist (four at the time of writing). While some suggest 14 as an age threshold, others like M5S suggest raising it to 16. *Disposizioni per la tutela dei minori nell'ambiente digitale* ([DDL 1136](#)), the most advanced proposal, which stems from a cross-party initiative in the Senate, suggests a strict ban under 15, and access with parental consent between 15 and 16. Likewise in **France**, while the [National Assembly’s version](#) of the draft law imposes a hard ban under 15, the [Senate’s version](#) introduces the possibility to waive it with parental consent for the services that are not blacklisted by the Government. **Belgium** is another interesting case, where different regions seem to disagree on the way forward. The reason behind the country’s refusal to sign onto the Jutland Declaration was indeed a veto by Flemish Media Minister Cielste Van Achter, who judged the age verification requirements

mentioned in the text ‘disproportionate’.

One DSA, 27 approaches

This evolving landscape paints a highly fragmented picture across the EU. Member States are not converging on a single model: some favour strict bans, others tiered approaches, with some extending the scope beyond social media to messaging, gaming, app stores or even AI services. This makes the debate less about a ‘ban’ than about competing regulatory approaches and how to reconcile them and harmonise efforts at EU level.

The European Commission’s response to notified national measures – starting with France – and the forthcoming recommendations of the expert panel on online child safety advising the European Commission’s President will be key in determining whether this patchwork persists or gives way to greater coordination at EU level. As the French and German cases show, what Member States are doing is adopting their own national frameworks while trying to stay within the limits of the DSA and the country-of-origin principle. As mentioned above, the DSA doesn’t codify what constitutes illegal content. It depends on what is illegal under Union or Member State law. To avoid regulatory fragmentation, embrace the harmonising efforts of the DSA and aim for actual platform accountability and effective enforcement, the best option may be for the European Commission to clarify (e.g. through guidelines, or through the Digital Fairness Act) what kind of content or design features are deemed inappropriate for minors – so that Member States don’t have to.

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