# European governments push for social media age limits, challenging parental control



Today's teenagers are often cited as a generation marked by their virtue, displaying a lower tendency towards smoking, drinking, and casual sexual activities compared to earlier cohorts. The most prevalent concern, however, lies in their extensive and often compulsive engagement with social media platforms. Data indicates that nearly all adolescents now log onto these platforms daily, with many reporting nearly constant usage of apps like TikTok and Snapchat. This has sparked a sustained debate regarding the role of parents, educators, and government authorities in regulating young people's access to these digital spaces.

The current discourse is particularly heated in Europe, where various nations are advocating for stricter EU-wide regulations on children's social media use. These proposed regulations signify a departure from traditional parental oversight, with proposals from the EU and individual member states like France suggesting that government entities, rather than parents, should dictate terms for minors' online activities. French President Emmanuel Macron has been a prominent advocate for these changes, coining the term "digital majority" to denote the age at which young individuals might be entrusted with unrestricted access to social media. Macron posits that individuals should reach this milestone by age 15, underscoring the necessity for parental guidance in the digital landscape. Speaking to the press, he remarked, “We must regain control of the lives of our children and teenagers in Europe,” reflecting a sentiment echoed by other European leaders.

Framing these restrictions as protective, many policymakers assert that social media use can contribute to a plethora of mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and cyberbullying. France's recent legislation, which mandates parental consent for social media accounts for those under 15, is a direct response to concerns about children being exposed to harmful content online. Yet, critics argue that the narrative surrounding social media addiction lacks sufficient nuance. Comparing social media use to smoking and drinking fails to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of online engagement and its possible benefits. While there is a correlation between social media use and various mental health challenges, establishing a direct causal link remains contentious. The notion that excessive screen time is a primary culprit for adolescent distress oversimplifies the issue, ignoring other critical factors such as real-world social interactions.

There is also a growing concern that these restrictions undermine parental authority. By transferring control over children’s online activities to regulatory bodies, proponents of these policies inadvertently diminish the role of parents in guiding their children through the complexities of digital life. Critics assert that such measures not only challenge familial responsibilities but also position governments as arbiters of what constitutes appropriate behaviour for minors. This governmental overreach can potentially alienate parents, who might feel disempowered as they navigate their children's lives in an environment where state regulations take precedence.

Moreover, the push for stringent regulations on youth access to social media may reflect a broader agenda related to managing digital narratives and controlling public discourse. As concerns about misinformation and the influence of populist messages on young users mount, the impulse to limit teenagers’ exposure to online platforms may also stem from a desire amongst authorities to safeguard established forms of communication and civic engagement. Given that today's youth are often seen as vulnerable to the seductive sway of alternative ideological narratives circulating on social media, such restrictions could be perceived as preemptive measures against perceived societal threats.

Ultimately, while the debate around social media and its impact on youth is essential, it is crucial to involve parents in the conversation. They are best situated to understand their children's individual needs and circumstances. Encouraging parental engagement and establishing clear guidelines for responsible social media use could create a more balanced and empowered approach to youth digital citizenship—one that respects familial authority while promoting the safe navigation of online spaces. As the EU continues to deliberate on these proposals, the voices of parents, educators, and the youth themselves must hold paramount importance in shaping the future of children's online experiences.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.spiked-online.com/2025/05/28/parents-not-the-eu-should-decide-what-kids-can-do-online/), [[2]](https://www.spiked-online.com/2025/05/28/parents-not-the-eu-should-decide-what-kids-can-do-online/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.spiked-online.com/2025/05/28/parents-not-the-eu-should-decide-what-kids-can-do-online/), [[3]](https://www.euronews.com/next/2024/04/27/macron-in-favour-of-europe-wide-social-media-age-restriction-for-teens-under-15), [[4]](https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/france-tightens-social-media-rules-with-children-under-15-requiring-parental-consent-to-create-accounts/3435446)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.ft.com/content/3978c96a-21b4-469f-bca9-1b1055bb3a6f), [[6]](https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/02/27/emmanuel-macron-the-social-media-king-of-europe)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.spiked-online.com/2025/05/28/parents-not-the-eu-should-decide-what-kids-can-do-online/), [[7]](https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/factpages/better-internet-kids)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.spiked-online.com/2025/05/28/parents-not-the-eu-should-decide-what-kids-can-do-online/), [[3]](https://www.euronews.com/next/2024/04/27/macron-in-favour-of-europe-wide-social-media-age-restriction-for-teens-under-15)

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## Bibliography

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3. <https://www.euronews.com/next/2024/04/27/macron-in-favour-of-europe-wide-social-media-age-restriction-for-teens-under-15> - An article from Euronews reporting on French President Emmanuel Macron's support for a Europe-wide age restriction on social media for teenagers under 15. Macron advocates for a 'digital majority' at age 15, allowing parents to control their children's access to digital spaces.
4. <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/france-tightens-social-media-rules-with-children-under-15-requiring-parental-consent-to-create-accounts/3435446> - An article from Anadolu Agency detailing France's 2023 law requiring parental consent for children under 15 to create social media accounts. The law aims to protect minors from harmful online content and cyberbullying.
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/3978c96a-21b4-469f-bca9-1b1055bb3a6f> - An article from the Financial Times reporting on the European Commission's investigation into Meta (Facebook and Instagram) over concerns that its platforms may be contributing to social media addiction among children. The probe assesses Meta's age-verification tools and compliance with the EU's Digital Services Act.
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