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TEENAGERS & SOCIAL MEDIA

POSITION PAPER



Hosted at
Demos Center
of the American
College of Greece



The Demos Center
Strengthening democracy
through active citizenship

The use of social networks by minors is a critical public policy issue, as it is linked both to opportunities for access to information and social interaction, as well as to risks for the mental health, safety, and personal data of children. The aim of this document is to propose measures that strengthen protection without unreasonably restricting minors' access to the digital world, through realistic and applicable control mechanisms.

On the occasion of the new regulatory framework for minors' access to social networks proposed by the Greek government, the Democracy & Culture Foundation organized a workshop aimed at hearing the voices of experts from different fields (medical, law enforcement, academic, research and artistic), as well as the teenagers themselves, by organizing a deliberation. The purpose of the deliberation was threefold: recording the lived experiences of teenagers regarding social media use, mapping their main concerns as well as positive perceptions about social networks, and formulating specific, realistic proposals for five groups of stakeholders: schools, parents, the state, social network platforms, and the teenagers themselves.

The Democracy & Culture Foundation recommends the inclusion of teenagers' proposals in the national dialogue on digital policy for children and young people.

In today's reality, we can no longer speak of a 'real' world and a 'digital' world as two separate things. These are essentially one unified world, which manifests in both physical and digital forms. The digital environment cannot be compared to tobacco products or alcohol; it is more like books, where each piece of content is appropriate for specific age groups.

Digital literacy is essential for children, in the same way as physical exercise is important for the body. Children should acquire a 'digital passport' – that is, skills and knowledge for the safe and responsible use of technology. Before generalized bans are adopted, both the benefits and the consequences must be carefully examined, so that young people's capabilities in the digital world are not unreasonably restricted.

Greece needs to adopt an intervention model that combines legislation, pedagogical guidance, technological tools, and the participation of the children themselves. The central message is 'protection without regression': ensuring children's safety and rights without depriving them of the opportunity for development and participation in modern digital reality.

In this context, strong public policy intervention is proposed. Co-regulation – a combination of public rules and self-regulation by companies – appears to be the ideal solution, as a complete ban leads to noncompliance and self-regulation alone does not work.

A complete ban can lead to the use of uncontrolled platforms (the dark web), while realistic restrictions combined with education appear to produce better results. Restrictions should be applied proportionately and accompanied by a broader set of measures, such as public



awareness and education, strengthening independent oversight authorities, and developing effective protection mechanisms.

Over-protection or constant adult intervention makes children less able to make decisions.

Interventions must be proportionate to the perceived risks.

It must be taken into account that banning or restricting access is not a solution for children living in remote areas or those who do not have access to other services.

As children grow up in a digital environment, it is important that the tools and platforms they use are designed based on different developmental stages (childhood, pre-adolescence, adolescence, just before adulthood) and are safe for use by minors, with built-in parental controls and mechanisms to adequately verify the user's age.

Mental Health and Development

Excessive use of digital media is associated with:

- Anxiety, depression and poor academic performance.
- Poor sleep quality due to nighttime use of mobile phones and social networks.
- Addiction to gaming and gambling, as demonstrated in research on Greek teenagers.

Conversely, participation in sports or social activities enhances socialization and reduces mental health difficulties.

The European and International Frameworks

The experience of other countries reveals different approaches:

- **Australia:** Use of social networks is banned for minors under 16 years of age (prohibition of account creation), although we do not yet have data and safe conclusions from the measures taken. There are already indications that several children find ways to circumvent the bans and turn to different social media platforms that 'escape' the institutional framework and are not covered by the law.
- **France:** Proposed ban for minors under 15 years of age.



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- **Denmark:** Proposed ban for minors under 15 with the possibility of use from age 13 with parental consent.
- **Portugal:** Proposed ban for minors under 16.
- **Austria:** Proposed ban for minors under 14.
- **Greece:** A new regulatory framework has been announced for minors under 15, with mandatory user age verification.

Legal and Regulatory Framework – Ethical Issues

The protection of children is linked to:

- **GDPR (Κανονισμός 679/2016): General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation 679/2016):** minimum age of 15 for data processing consent in Greece.
- **Convention on the Rights of the Child:** protection of development and participation.
- **Digital Services Act:** platform obligations for the protection of minors (in effect from October 2025).
- **AI Act:** prohibition of addictive features on digital platforms.

Greece and the European Union have already developed rules aimed at protecting minors, such as the GDPR and the Digital Services Act (DSA), while the Council of Europe has established specific principles for protecting children from online dangers, as has the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Mechanisms for age verification, parental consent, and content access restriction are foreseen, although a complete ban is not considered an effective method.

Greece has a general institutional framework for the protection of minors, established in 2021. It is deemed necessary to update it to include more specialized measures that respond to the new challenges of the digital environment, while taking into account that social media now constitutes a central element of children's and teenagers' social lives.

Platforms are not designed for children, a fact that requires a combination of legislation and education.



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Policy proposals for the proper use of technology and social media by children must combine safety, privacy, and children's participation. Technologically, their implementation is not straightforward:

- **Safety and Privacy**

There is already a strong regulatory framework (e.g., the AI Act, the principle of proportionality), and it is considered that there is no urgent need for new regulation. Despite technological challenges, it is crucial to find solutions that protect children without violating their privacy. For example, age verification must be carried out without excessive data collection, while the use of software within mobile phones or 'client-side scanning' must balance security and personal data protection.

- **Over-Control**

Breaking encryption for control purposes can produce the opposite results, as criminals could exploit the 'gaps'. Laws on bans often contain forms of surveillance, which must be limited and proportionate.

- **Time Restrictions**

The strict enforcement of a digital curfew (digital restriction) – such as limiting usage time (specific hours of use during the day) – is applied in only a few countries, including China, India and Jordan, and requires careful evaluation before being introduced elsewhere.

- **Digital Literacy and News**

Children's education must also be incorporated into the digital content they consume. Proposals for media literacy education can involve children staying informed, critically reading news, and developing skills for safe use.

Enforcement of Penalties

The Greek government needs to take into account the important questions that must be answered before a definitive position against a ban is formed, including how penalties for violations should be imposed. Should these be applied to the platforms, the parents, or the children themselves? Ambiguity does not help in addressing the problem. Furthermore, a complete ban may increase demand and noncompliance. Another point that must be taken into account is that banning minors from creating accounts carries the risk that they will continue to use the platforms by using adult accounts (e.g., their parents' or older siblings'), thereby removing the ability to restrict content and adequately protect underage users from exposure to inappropriate or dangerous content. For this reason, a greater emphasis on real

and substantive controls is proposed – from parents toward children and from the state and the platforms themselves.

Educational and Parental Guidance

The active involvement of parents is crucial in terms of:

- Monitoring content and restricting usage time.
- Encouraging dialogue and involving children in decisions.
- Promoting alternative activities and quality time with the family.

Prevention is the most effective ‘cure’.

Recommendations to the Greek Government

1. Legislative Framework

- Mandatory age verification – where deemed necessary – (‘kids wallet’) must be GDPR-compliant and align with privacy by design specifications, with safeguards regarding the security of users’ personal data.
- Platform compliance with GDPR, DSA, and AI Act, with special filters for minors.

2. Education and Training

- Creation of educational programs for parents and teachers to enhance digital literacy and promote the safe use of social networks.
- Promotion of school programs combining technology, safety, and mental health.

3. Infrastructure and Support Services

- Strengthening SOS lines: helplines, including illegal content reporting lines (safe-line), created by SaferInternet4kids.gr, which has been operating since 2016 at ITE Crete.
- Utilizing school counselors and online child support services.
- Development of reporting mechanisms for misuse or addictive applications, such as the ‘We Are Here for You/Your Safe Place’ platform for reporting or seeking



help through the helpline, where children can talk about their concerns, feeling free and protected.

4. Promotion of Alternative Activities

- Strengthening sports, cultural, and social programs for teenagers, in order to reduce excessive use of social networks.

The protection of children must be **comprehensive**, encompassing a legal framework, education, oversight and infrastructure. The Greek government has the opportunity to set standards for a safe digital environment, while simultaneously protecting the development and well-being of young people.

Policies must balance **safety, privacy, and participation**, providing technical solutions from companies while ensuring **public oversight**, and must incorporate the **voice of children**, without resorting to excessive bans or surveillance.

Mobile phones and social media are now essential tools for young people's socialization. Bans delay addressing the issue; they do not solve the fundamental problem. The deeper issue is that young people should be empowered to face life and develop **resilience**.

Children's Participation

It is essential to hear the voices of children. It is proposed that deliberation processes be designed in public spaces, both digital and physical, so that children can actively participate in shaping the policies that concern them.



March 14 Workshop at Demos Center of the American College of Greece: Program and Participants

Presentation: The European Experience: Measures from E.U. Countries – Legal Framework Under Consideration by Greece

Isavella Monioudis-Pikrou, Deputy Ombudsman on Children’s Rights, European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC)

Brigadier General Vasileios Bertanos, Director, Cyber Crime Division, Hellenic Police

Eugenia Bozou, Head of Government Affairs and Public Policy for Greece, Cyprus and Malta, Google

Mental Health and Development

George P. Chrousos, Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics and Endocrinology, School of Medicine, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Athena Linou, Professor of Epidemiology and Founder, Prolepsis Institute, Marousi

Ioanna Gkika, Psychologist, Smile of the Child and Coordinator, Center for Online Safety

Ethical and Legal Issues Surrounding the Ban

Christos Tsevas, Human rights Officer and Legal Adviser, Greek National Commission for Human Rights

Katerina Charokopou, Legal Officer, Greek National Commission for Human Rights

Theodoros Trokanas, Scientific Officer, National Commission for Bioethics and Technoethics



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Educational and Parental Guidance

George Nakos, Psychologist, Cyber Crime Division, Hellenic Police

Stelios Papathanassopoulos, Professor of Media Organization and Policy, Department of Communication and Media Studies, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Stella Naki, Director, Second Arsakeio Lyceum School, Psychiko

Dimitra Velika, Representative of the Parents and Guardians Association, Second Arsakeio Gymnasium School, Psychiko

Best Practices and Proposals

Paraskevi Fragkopoulou, Coordinator, Greek Safer Internet Center, Institute of Computer Science, Foundation for Research and Technology – Hellas, Crete

Konstantinos Komaitis, Resident Senior Fellow, Global Governance Lead, Democracy & Tech Initiative, Atlantic Council

Calliope Charalambous, Founder and Director, Athens International Children's Film Festival

Moderator: **Elina Makri**, General Manager, Democracy & Culture Foundation



TEENAGERS' DELIBERATION

Teenagers & Social Media
March 14, 2026 | Democracy & Culture Foundation

Description of the Workshop

The deliberation is part of a broader workshop, during which a detailed discussion had previously taken place among adult experts with medical, academic, law enforcement, artistic, and research backgrounds. The teenage deliberation was designed to function as an autonomous, equal consultation process, focusing exclusively on the voices of teenagers.

The purpose of the deliberation was threefold: to record the lived experiences of teenagers regarding the use of social networks; to map their main concerns as well as their positive perceptions of social networks; and to formulate specific, realistic proposals for five key stakeholders, namely schools, parents, the state, social network platforms, and the teenagers themselves. The results are intended for multiple audiences, including institutional bodies, educators, parents, researchers, and the wider public.

The deliberation took place at the Demos Center of the American College of Greece in central Athens and lasted approximately two and a half hours. The session was anonymously recorded by a designated note-taker, with the consent of all participants. Names are not published, and age is mentioned only where deemed useful for context.

Participants

The deliberation involved 11 teenagers aged between 12 and 17. The group showed significant diversity in terms of age, gender and experience with social networks. Among the participants were children with no social media accounts at all (aged 12), children with strict parental time limits, and teenagers with years of extensive use of multiple platforms from a young age. Some participants also had technical knowledge of programming, which enriched the discussion on digital security issues. Participants attend the following schools: General Lyceum of Thrakomakedones, First Model General Lyceum of Athens – Gennadios, 19th General Lyceum of Athens, Leonteios School of Athens, Athens College and Moraitis School. Members of the Youth Advisory Groups of the Children's Ombudsman, a participant from the Teens for Democracy program, and members of the YouSmile team of Smile of the Child were also in attendance.



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CHARACTERISTICS	DATA	NOTES
Number of participants	11 teenagers	6 schools: 4 public, 2 private
Age range	12–17 years	Diversity of participation
Social media experience	From none to several years	TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat mainly mentioned
Screen time (self-reported)	< 2 hours to > 4 hours/day	60%+ report 2–4 hours

The Facilitator

Myrto Xanthopoulou is a consultant for philanthropy and civil society, specializing in citizen, youth, and children’s consultations. She collaborates with ELIAMEP, the Democracy & Culture Foundation, and the European Commission as a facilitator in the European Citizens’ Panels of the European Commission, the European Parliament’s Young Citizens Assembly on Pollinators t, the pan-European Democratic Odyssey, as well as the Teens For Democracy program held during the Athens Democracy Forum. She also has extensive experience in children’s rights, having served as an advocacy consultant at SOS Children’s Villages Greece and as a member of the organizational committee of the nationwide Child Protection Network.



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Methodology

The consultation was designed in accordance with principles of participatory and experiential learning and deliberative democracy, adapted to the young age of the participants. It consisted of five successive stages:

PHASE	DURATION	OBJECTIVES
1 Opening & Creating a Safe Space	10'	Icebreaker Establishing shared rules of engagement
2 World Café – Thematic tables	35'	4 thematic tables · 3 rounds of 8 minutes to enable all children to participate
3 Analysis – Positives, Concerns and Responsibilities	25'	Voting on key points and prioritization
4 Producing Proposals	30'	5 groups per recipient · 1–2 proposals per group
5 Presentation and Voting	20'	Plenary · Prioritization · Reflection Circle

In the second stage, the World Café method was used with four thematic tables:

- Social Media as Power: communication, socialization, expression, entertainment
- Pressure and Image: likes, acceptance, gender differences
- Safety and Boundaries: risks, reporting tools, fake profiles, surveillance
- Time and Dependency: doom scrolling, inability to set limits, algorithms, sleep

Each table had a permanent secretary for detailed recording and coordination. The remaining participants rotated among tables in three rounds, ensuring that each teenager discussed all topics. After the World Café, the data was gathered and grouped into Key Concerns, Recognized Benefits, and Contested Points. A vote followed (2 votes per participant) to identify the top five points and concerns, while for each concern the context of responsibility was discussed, whether individual, family, or systemic.

For the proposals, the group was then divided into five subgroups, with each group taking on the role of one of the five key stakeholders (schools, family, state, technology companies, the teenagers themselves). Each group then presented its proposals to the plenary, where critical commentary and a final vote took place to determine the most urgent and realistic points.



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Key Points of the Deliberation

Benefits of Social Networks – Recognized Values

The deliberation began with teenagers acknowledging the benefits of social networks before mentioning their concerns.

Based on frequency of occurrence across all tables, the most commonly recognized benefit of social media recorded across all age groups lies in the sphere of communication and socialization, as well as the ability to talk with people from other countries. The value of being able to access information quickly was another benefited, highlighted by three out of four tables with the characteristic observation that ‘young people don’t read newspapers’ and social networks have taken on this role. Additionally, three tables highlighted entertainment and relaxation through content platforms such as BookTok, music and sports.

Also noteworthy is the dimension of social cohesion and inclusion. The need to ‘be part of the group’ emerged as a motivation for use from three groups, highlighting the function of social networks as a space for social participation. Finally, two groups mentioned the acquisition of new skills (‘you learn things you didn’t know’) and networking and promoting activities, with emphasis on the ability to ‘spread the word about something you’re organizing’.

A particularly interesting observation that emerged concerns ‘fitting in’, which operates both offline and online. The note-taker commented:

“The way a child deals with... wanting to be liked and accepted, what they did offline, they now do online as well.”

Concerns – Key Findings

Image Pressure, Likes, and Gender Differences

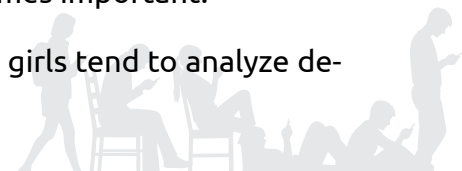
The pressure around managing one’s public image proved complex: participants clearly distinguished between quantity and quality of acceptance:

“I don’t care about likes quantitatively – I care about who has liked me.”

Most participants stated that likes concern them mainly in an interpersonal context (what it means that a specific person didn’t react) and not so much quantitatively.

An exception is the case of event organization, where quantity becomes important.

Regarding gender differences, the majority confirmed a clear trend: girls tend to analyze de-



tails (e.g., who ‘spams’ stories so as not to be seen as having watched them), while boys follow more casually. However, some participants emphasized that this differentiation is not always so pronounced in their own circles.

Particularly revealing was the distinction between stories, which are perceived as ‘proof that you’re alive’ or a kind of live stream of everyday life, while a post is seen as a permanent, ‘aesthetic’ memory.

Online Safety – A Complex Concern

Safety issues were addressed with maturity and realism. Three out of eleven participants reported direct experience of safety concerns, including spam calls, suspicious links and attempted account hacking. The main finding concerns the evolving concept of privacy. While it is understood that data is collected, the issue is not treated as a cause for panic.

“Instagram, TikTok, they all take our data every day. We know this, but we have accepted that risks exist.”

In contrast, concern intensifies when it comes to personalized image theft or surveillance by known individuals. It is worth noting that a 15-year-old with programming knowledge highlighted issues of application vulnerabilities, emphasizing how easily someone can gain access to another’s mobile phone through malicious applications. This revelation triggered a lively discussion in the plenary.

Time, Dependency, and Psychological Impact

This section revealed the most intense and emotionally charged findings, with participants describing complex experiences. They know they spend a lot of time online and they want to change this, but they find it difficult. The experience was characterized as an ‘addictive design trap’:

“You see that you can’t stop it. There is an inability to set boundaries, because the algorithms exactly do this... But partly we ourselves are at fault.”

Particularly significant was the observation regarding the passive state induced by excessive use:

“You enter a state where you don’t think, where you just wait for information to come in. You don’t become a sender, you become only a receiver.”

Self-reported screen time: 4 participants reported under 2 hours, while 7 reported time between 2 and 4+ hours daily.



Other significant findings from this section concerned neglect of responsibilities (mainly studying), reported by all groups; sleep disturbance ('we talk with friends until late'); psychological over-stimulation, including increased stress and reduced ability to deal with failure; the inability to socialize face-to-face – 'we have learned to communicate via messages'; and the mixed messaging from adults: 'they say children shouldn't have social media, but adults at the table were constantly checking their phones'.

Contested Points

Two topics generated productive discussion within the group:

The age limit for the ban: The proposal 'ban under 15' and the counter-proposal 'ban under 13' were debated in a lively discussion. The argument against a complete ban ('it is a source of socialization – you cannot marginalize the child') was contrasted with the argument in favor ('you essentially save their lives – they must grow up in a world that is not only electronic').

Digital literacy as a school subject: The proposal for a permanent school subject in digital literacy was met with enthusiasm by several participants, but also with practical skepticism about the school schedule.

First step: Designating a responsible teacher for cyberbullying in each school.



Teenagers' Proposals

The following proposals were approved by the plenary with a degree of consensus explicitly noted for the themes discussed. Each proposal has a rationale based on the voices of the teenagers themselves.

1. Proposals for Schools

PROPOSAL 1

Digital Literacy as a Core Subject

Proposal: Introduction of digital literacy in primary and secondary schools, covering correct use, risks, privacy, cyberbullying, algorithms, and addiction. The frequency is left to the discretion of school authorities.

Rationale: *"It doesn't need to be once a month or once a week, it just needs to exist. Right now it doesn't exist at all."*

First step: Pilot program in 2–3 secondary school classes.

PROPOSAL 2

Teacher Training

Proposal: Mandatory training of informatics teachers (and more broadly all teachers) regarding the risks, functioning, and correct use of social networks.

Rationale: *"The teacher must first learn it properly themselves, in order to be able to teach it to children."*

First step: Seminar within existing teacher training structures.

PROPOSAL 3

Addressing Cyberbullying

Proposal: Active intervention above and beyond passive information provision for the prevention and management of cyberbullying, including education on where and how to report incidents, and clear definitions of stricter penalties.

Rationale: *"A person who explains how you can deal with this situation – because it may not happen in 7th grade, but it can appear in 9th."*

First step: Appoint a teacher to be responsible for cyber bullying in each school



2. Proposals for the Family

PROPOSAL 1

Information from Experts

Proposal: Parents should attend seminars from experts (psychologists, educators) on the impact of social networks on children and correct use, and then pass this knowledge on to the child.

Rationale: *Rationale: "Children must learn how to manage social network – not by banning them, but with proper guidance."*

First step: Organization of seminars by the Parents' Association of each school.

PROPOSAL 2

Healthy Boundaries with Trust

Proposal: The boundaries set by parents must be reasonable (not punitive), justified, and accompanied by open dialogue, so that the child understands the reason and builds internal critical thinking. The key concept is trust.

Rationale: *Rationale: "What the parent says, they say it because they care – but the parent must also understand why the child wants certain things."*

First step: Regular family routines without screens for the whole family, e.g., mealtimes or specific hours.

PROPOSAL 3

Good Role Model & Alternative Activities

Proposal: Parents must themselves set a healthy model of digital behavior (not be constantly on their phones during family time) and encourage children toward alternative activities (sport, art, hobbies).

Rationale: *"They say children shouldn't have social media while they themselves were constantly checking their phones at the table."*

First step: Parental commitment to less and more controlled phone time.



3. Proposals for the State

PROPOSAL 1

Legislative Age Limit for Network Use

Proposal: Ban on the use of social networks for young people under 15 years of age. (Minority view: under 13 years.) The measure is consistent with existing Greek law, which stipulates the age of digital consent as 15.

Voting result: 5 out of 10 were in favor of some form of access restriction until the end of primary school/beginning of secondary school. One girl was absent from the vote.

Rationale: *"The 12-year-old mind cannot manage the same as a 16-year-old mind – the older teenagers themselves say so."*

First step: Drafting and consultation of relevant legislation with representation from teenagers, psychologists and educators.

PROPOSAL 2

National Digital Awareness Programs

Proposal: The state, through the Ministry of Education, should systematically organize digital awareness programs for both parents and students, through schools.

Rationale: *"Even if just one in a hundred takes it on board and changes, it's worth the effort."*

First step: Design a pilot program for the 2026–27 school year.



4. Proposals to the Platforms

PROPOSAL 1

Algorithm Control for Minors

Proposal: The social platform algorithms for teenage accounts (under 18) must be strictly regulated to ensure no addictive content, no malicious material and no personalized advertising.

Rationale: *"Algorithms grab your attention and keep you busy – it's a design trap."*

First step: Compliance with the law, application of specific strict rules for minors.

PROPOSAL 2

A Meaningful Teens Version

Proposal: Creation of a special version for teenagers (teens version), substantially different from the children's environment (kid mode), with no malicious or addictive content, no personalized advertising, but with age-appropriate content.

Rationale: *"The main problem with YouTube Kids is that it's too childish. Something for teens is needed"*

First step: Pilot teen mode from Meta or TikTok, evaluated by psychologists.



5. Proposals from Teenagers for Teenagers

PROPOSAL 1

Self-Awareness & Screen Time Awareness

Proposal: Each teenager should recognize the extent to which their phone use negatively affects their daily life. The use of screen time indicators (e.g., limit apps) is proposed as a tool for awareness, not punishment.

Rationale: *"If you don't recognize that you have a problem, you can't do anything."*

First step: Activating the Screen Time function by the teenager themselves with a weekly review.

PROPOSAL 2

Prioritizing In-Person Meetings and Alternative Interests

Proposal: Teenagers should consciously engage in face-to-face communication and seek activities away from screens, including sports, art and music. Choosing a circle of friends with similar interests is proposed as a reinforcing factor.

Rationale: *"Social media gives us the ability to be far from each other while still being close."*

First step: Instead of a message, make a phone call or arrange a meeting.



Summary Table of Proposals

The table below summarizes all the proposals approved by the plenary, categorized by recipient.

RECIPIENT	PROPOSAL	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
Schools	Digital Literacy	Digital literacy subject in primary and secondary schools
Schools	Teacher Training	Social media training for teachers
Schools	Cyberbullying	Active intervention + responsible teacher
Family	Information from experts	Seminars on correct use and safety
Family	Healthy boundaries with trust	Reasonable limits + open dialogue + offline time
Family	Good role model	Parents as role models + alternative activities
State	Age limit (15 or 13)	Legislative ban – 5/10 in favor of restriction
State	National digital awareness	Organized programs through IEP/schools
Platforms	Algorithm control	Non-addictive algorithms for minors (DSA)
Platforms	Teens version	Special version for teenagers, without addictive content
Teenagers	Screen time awareness	Self-awareness and usage limit tools
Teenagers	Face-to-face & hobbies	In-person communication + alternative activities



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Observations and Conclusions

This deliberation demonstrated that, when given a structured space for expression, teenagers possess a deep experiential understanding of the issues that concern them, alongside the ability to discuss productively, disagree respectfully, and formulate realistic, principled, and implementable proposals.

We identify four central conclusions:

Experience precedes opinion. Teenagers do not express ideological positions, but lived truths. This gives the findings strong credibility.

Age changes everything. Even within the group, a 16-year-old and a 12-year-old experience completely different realities. Any policy must take this fluidity into account.

A technical solution is not enough. Although part of the group was in favor of banning social networks under 15 years of age, teenagers ask for education, role models, and trust. The balance between protection and autonomy is central.

Responsibility is distributed. Without asking for the impossible, teenagers take a holistic approach, distributing responsibilities across five key stakeholders and groups, in a holistic approach. This multi-level approach is invaluable for policymaking.

This deliberation constitutes a documented voice of teenagers in a discussion that directly concerns them. The Democracy & Culture Foundation recommends the inclusion of the present proposals in the national dialogue on digital policy for children and young people.

