To Mrs Ursula Von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200, 1049 Brussels

14 September 2026

Subject: Appeal from European youth organisations not to make banning social media the Union's response to protecting minors online

Madam President,

A few days before your State of the Union address, in which you are expected to unveil the Commission's orientations on regulating minors' access to digital platforms, we, organisations representing European youth, wish once again to ask you to take our voice into account.

On 14 August 2026, the French Constitutional Council struck down the French bill that would have banned all social media for under-15s, ruling that it constituted a disproportionate infringement on minors' freedom of expression and communication and failed to guarantee their right to privacy. A text ruled unconstitutional in one Member State should not be presented as a model to be transposed across the entire Union.

It is precisely this logic that we wish to warn you about, before you set the Commission's course.

Recent court rulings in the United States, which found that Google and Meta deliberately designed addictive platforms, should be your guiding light. They confirm that the harm suffered by young people online is not accidental, but inherent to the design and business models of these networks. This judicial path vindicates the approach initiated by the European Union, which has built a robust regulatory arsenal (if enforced) in recent years: the Digital Services Act (DSA), the Digital Markets Act (DMA), the GDPR, and soon the Digital Fairness Act (DFA). This judicial path confirms that the European Union has committed to the right course and must not deviate from it: one that tackles the root causes of the harm suffered by European citizens, minors and adults alike—one that protects. Prioritising access restrictions under the pretext of protecting us would be an admission of weakness, a political and moral abandonment of Europeans in favour of preserving the business model of non-EU companies. Nothing justifies our exclusion, even a temporary one.

Despite their flaws, digital spaces offer unique opportunities: essential access to information, social connection, and civic participation. It is on these platforms that we learn, create, mobilise, and take part in public debate. Social media is far more than mere entertainment, particularly for marginalised young people—including LGBTQIA+ individuals, people with

disabilities, and those from immigrant backgrounds—for whom these spaces are sometimes a genuine lifeline. The standardised approaches being pushed across Europe, such as blanket access restrictions or outright bans, ignore these realities. Far from protecting users, such measures risk isolating those who depend most on these spaces. A genuine principle of digital equity requires public policies that take these differences into account rather than obscuring them—a principle that the French Constitutional Council's own decision recognised when it ruled that an undifferentiated ban, applied without distinction to all minors and all platforms, was disproportionate.

Every day, platforms exploit our attention, share our personal data with thousands of companies, and promote features designed to create dependency: infinite scroll, autoplay video, recommended news feeds, intrusive notifications, likes, or Snapchat's "streaks." Social media platforms already have an obligation to protect minors within the European Union under the Digital Services Act (DSA) and the GDPR. But these obligations only mean something if they are rigorously enforced. When European institutions are slow to sanction, when the transposition of European regulations into national law is watered down, or when national regulators struggle to enforce them for lack of resources, it is young people who pay the price. This path leads nowhere.

Digital giants spend more than €113 million a year lobbying European institutions to demand deregulation. We urge you, Madam President, to make no concessions and to drive systemic, universal change: strict enforcement of the Digital Services Act, and the forthcoming adoption of an ambitious Digital Fairness Act protecting all citizens—regardless of age—against interfaces designed to be manipulative. Social media platforms must be forced to change their interfaces and their design. It is this path—regulating the harmful mechanisms rather than excluding their first victims—that we ask you to favour in your speech on 16 September, rather than pursuing a single legal age threshold.

When we understand the rationale behind the safety measures being discussed in public debate, and when we are offered genuine choices in how we use these platforms, we are far less inclined to reject or circumvent them. In any case, we refuse a future in which our fundamental rights and freedoms would be trampled "for our own good," or in which participation in online life would be conditional on providing identity documents or submitting biometric data. True safety must be a vector of empowerment, and cannot rest solely on an ever-expanding body of legislation, nor on the mere multiplication of awareness campaigns. We ask that regulators, the education system first and foremost, helplines, and associations be given resources commensurate with the challenges at hand. Digital spaces must be designed and regulated in ways that reflect the lived experience of marginalised populations, particularly those exposed to systemic violence.

Madam President, the success of child protection policies should never be measured by the number of young people excluded from the web, but by the proportion of those who have access to online spaces that are safe and suited to their reality. We ask you to resist the companies that thrive on our suffering, because you—and you alone—hold the power today to reverse this balance of power.

We are asking for public policies that address the root causes of these harms, ensuring that the adults we will become do not inherit the same exploitative systems. Banning access and imposing intrusive age verification solve none of the underlying problems: they merely postpone them. To build a safer digital environment, it is essential to confront the mechanisms that generate these risks, rather than banning their first victims.

At a time when your Commission is preparing to settle national debates, we ask you not to build a digital world for us, but to build it with us. We ask to be involved, as representatives of European youth, in the drafting of any future legislation that directly concerns us, so that it becomes a space in which we, in turn, will be comfortable welcoming future generations.

Please accept, Madam President, the assurance of our highest consideration.

Signatory organisations:

- **AEGEE (European Students' Forum)**
- **Amnesty International Digital Rights Champions**
- **Austrian Youth Council (BJV)**
- **Spanish Youth Council (CJE)**
- **Youth Council of the French Community of Belgium (FJ)**
- **Youth Council of the German-speaking Community of Belgium (RdJ)**
- **Latvian Youth Council (LJP)**
- **Norwegian Children and Youth Council (LNU)**
- **Slovenian Youth Council (MSS)**
- **ctrl+alt+reclaim France**
- **EDRi (European Digital Rights)**
- **EDYN (European Democracy Youth Network)**
- **Gabriele Battimelli, BIK+ Youth Ambassador**
- **Youth Committee of the European Disability Forum (EDF)**
- **Youth European Nationalities**