

Protecting children's rights in the digital world

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction An estimated one-third of the world's Internet users are children and adolescents. The Internet plays a huge role in their lives, being a source of knowledge, new acquaintances and fun (<https://brpd.gov.pl/2019/09/26/cel-rzecznikow-z-calej-europy-internet-bezpieczny-dla-dzieci/>; accessed 2023.03.30).

The dynamic progress in the field of information and communication technologies greatly affects not only adults, but also minors. The digital world undoubtedly plays an important role in the lives of young people.

Children are the most vulnerable and relatively "vulnerable group in society". For this reason, attention to the proper protection of their rights in the digital world appears to be particularly momentous. All the more so because digital technologies affect children even when they do not use the Internet as direct users.

The aim of research The goal of the research is to determine whether children's rights are sufficiently protected in the digital world.

Objectives Although the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN General Assembly 33 years ago, it can be reasonably doubted whether children's rights are sufficiently protected in today's digital age. One in three children worldwide reports online bullying. In 2020, 33% of girls and 20% of boys in Europe said they encountered disturbing content at least once a month. Recent research shows that between 1 and 20% of children in some parts of Africa and Asia have experienced sexual abuse or inappropriate sexual treatment online at least once between 2020 and 2021. Children are also increasingly vulnerable to hidden technologies, including algorithms as well as systems that locate the user - potentially violating their right to privacy.

From the point of view of legal sources - the UN General Comment No. 25 of 2021 "on the rights of the child in the digital environment" seems particularly important. It indicates the obligations of the state, companies and organizations towards children, concerning the digital world.

Among the most important rules adopted by the UN Convention is the consideration of the principle of "the welfare of the child" in the process of regulating and designing the digital environment. In addition to this, the right of children to life and development is important, which entails ensuring the ability to diagnose and eliminate emerging threats from content, contact and behavior such as violent or extremist information, false narratives, manipulative activities, disinformation, sexual abuse (e.g., pornography), promotion of gambling, encouragement of suicide or other activities that threaten children's health and lives. It is equally important to respect the views of the child and treat the opinions expressed by children towards the digital environment with due seriousness.

The methods of the research: analysis of scientific literature, websites, law regulations.

Social and law backgrounds

The 2019 survey, which included 1,173 students from 55 schools across the country (elementary school, middle school, high school, technical school), showed that:

"Teenagers have been using the web independently since the age of seven. Almost all respondents declared daily use of the net for several hours. This amounts to about 4 hours and 12 minutes (in the previous survey, the average was about 3 hours and 40 minutes). This is mainly influenced by the increasing use of smartphones." (<https://www.comnet.pl/2022/05/31/bezpieczenstwo-dzieci-w-swiecie-internetu/>; accessed 2023.03.30)

Main findings

Regardless of the lofty slogans adopted by the UN convention, looking at the possibilities for children in Poland to set up social media accounts, one may have doubts about the protection of their rights in this regard. After all, it is a common practice for children under the age of 13 to set up social media accounts without hindrance.



Fot. stock.adobe.com/bluebackimage (Skurce: <https://olebank.pl/czeka-nas-bunt-sztucznej-inteligencji/?id=319453&catid=625&cat2id=361&cat3id=25924>)

The AI works 24/7 with no interruptions or interruptions, and there is no down time.

Main results and conclusions

In view of the potential dangers lurking for children in the digital world, the proposal for normalization adopted in France to establish an age of digital maturity should be noted with approval. French legislation provides for the establishment of an age of digital maturity at 15 to use social media freely and independently. However, children between the ages of 13 and 15 can only create social media accounts with parental consent. If this law is not respected, social media platforms can be fined 1% of their total turnover (<https://www.vie-publique.fr/loi/288274-reseaux-sociaux-majorite-numerique-15-ans-proposition-de-loi>; accessed 2023.03.31).