

Comment on the General Comment on children´s rights in relation to the digital environment

This comment is the result of a series of discussions in a committee of experts in various fields working for the Deutsche Kinderschutzbund Bundesverband e.V., Germany´s oldest and biggest independent organisation on child protection. The committee thoroughly went through the draft of the General Comment and agreed especially on these comments:

We highly appreciate the work of the UN Committee and everyone else involved in this process, especially the young. The draft highlights the important aspects of children´s life in a digital environment and provides a lot of valuable contributions on how the Convention on the Rights of the Child is to be implemented in the action of governments, parliaments courts and governmental institutions in relation to the digital environment. We welcome the fact that not only the states are obliged, but that the providers and media companies also have to assume their responsibility.

We further welcome the comment's recognition that the digital world for children means access to the adult world, which brings with it opportunities and risks. Fortunately, the comment states that children and young people should be accompanied, protected, trained, encouraged and also as a rule be heard and involved in this process.

In addition we would like to suggest including important parts of the comment in an update of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child for example as a cross-sectional task to make it more known as binding law. This would increase the competence and security of state parties to move to regulate the digital environment which is becoming a part of everyday life for children and young people and is constantly expanding to include objects and environments that are not connected today.

The Deutsche Kinderschutzbund Bundesverband e.V. has been part of a network of 28 associations and organisations in a consultation process organised by the German Children´s Fund, working on a cooperative comment on the General Comment. This present work is intended to further underline the view of the Kinderschutzbund on the draft in some aspects.



Referring to the numbers of the Comment in detail:

No. 13-14, 36-39

We recommend that the age limits should be enforced, monitored and sanctioned strongly in case of non-compliance. The past shows: a voluntary self-regulation does not to work here.

No. 16

The Committee may consider to include interaction risks: *These include content, contact, conduct and interaction risks, and …*

No. 31

The Committee may consider to enclose the processing and interpretation of data: *States should ensure the production of robust, comprehensive data that is adequately resourced, processed and interpreted.*

No. 34

We welcome that the Committee has highlighted the necessity of trainings relating to the digital environment and its impact on children´s rights. We strongly recommend to add, that such training should be a mandatory part of studies and education of professionals working for and with children.

No. 48

The Committee may consider to include specialised courses during studies and education of law enforcement officials etc.

No. 54

In addition to prioritising paid content, automated search and recommendation systems tend to produce content of a kind which is favoured by the recipient – and thereby building content-bubbles. The committee should consider to recommend a ban on such systems to ensure diverse content.

No. 61, 63, 67

The committee should consider that automated systems are not only used to impact or influence children but are also used for social tracking and ranking based on behavioural targeting that may have consequences for the life of a child – like the access to benefits. States should do without such tracking and guarantee freedom of thought, religion and beliefs in the digital environment.



No. 73

We strongly support the right to access the stored data, rectify and even delete it, and to withdraw consent to data processing. We recommend to add a right to get transparent information on data stored, combined, processed and interpreted.

No. 87

The Committee should consider to recommend structural tasks to ensure and monitor the mentioned *approaches to encourage and enforce the ways businesses meet these responsibilities … to combat criminal and harmful behaviour directed at children in relation to the digital environment.*

No. 93, 106

The Committee should consider to mention the necessity of interactions with the non-digital environment (nature): (93) It should also explain that use of digital technologies cannot replace direct, responsive interactions amongst children themselves or between children and parents or caregivers *and experience in non-digital environment and exploring nature.* (106) Digital technologies offer multiple …, when balanced with their need for rest, exercise and direct interaction with their peers, families, communities *and nature*.

No. 114

We recommend not to categorise digital literacy as an independent part of education but as knowledge that is closely linked to all subjects taught in school. Therefore, all teachers should be trained appropriately.