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EU Forces Meta's Hand as Brussels Launches Age Verification App

The European Commission has declared Instagram and Facebook in breach of DSA after finding that children under 13 can bypass age restrictions simply by entering a false date of birth.

Henna Virkkunen, the Commission's executive vice-president for tech sovereignty, announced that preliminary findings show Meta has done "very little" to prevent underage children from accessing its platforms, despite its own terms of service prohibiting use by those under 13. Roughly 12 per cent of children in that age group across the EU are estimated to use one or both services.

The findings were accompanied by the launch of a European age verification app, which Brussels declared technically ready for member states to adopt. "After finalising the technical work on the European Age Verification Solution, it is now ready for Member States to customise and roll out," the Commission's executive vice-president [said in a press conference](#). "Today we have adopted a recommendation that sets out clear expectations for member states," she added.

Developed using zero-knowledge proof technology, the tool allows platforms to confirm a user's age via passport or identity document without retaining or sharing personal data. It is open-source, compatible with national digital identity wallets, and is already being piloted in seven countries: France, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Spain, Cyprus and Ireland.

Virkkunen said the app addressed a fundamental tension in child safety policy — the need to protect minors from harmful content without eroding the privacy of adult users. "It will allow everyone to keep browsing the internet in full privacy, while ensuring that children do not have access to content that is not meant for them," she said.

Earlier allegations that [hackers had broken into the application](#) were addressed by the vice president, who said that lists of

providers that meet "high privacy and security standards" will be published shortly.

The Commission issued a formal recommendation urging member states to accelerate adoption of age verification tools and announced the creation of an age verification scheme, which will assess and publish lists of approved providers meeting EU privacy and security standards.

On Meta specifically, the preliminary findings paint a troubling picture. Investigators found that the reporting tool for flagging underage users is difficult to navigate and frequently goes unactioned — meaning a reported child can simply carry on using the service. The Commission said Meta had failed to identify, assess or mitigate risks to minors, exposing them to cyberbullying, grooming and age-inappropriate content.

Meta faces substantial fines under the Digital Services Act if the preliminary findings are upheld. The company has the right to respond before any final determination is made.

Virkkunen was due to travel to Cyprus for an informal meeting of telecom ministers, where she planned to discuss the Commission's recommendations with member states. There is currently no EU-wide minimum age for social media use, though several countries have moved independently — Greece, for instance, bars children under 15 from certain platforms.

The age verification initiative builds on a series of child safety measures Brussels has pursued in recent years, including the Digital Services Act itself, an action plan against cyberbullying and the Better Internet for Kids strategy. The Commission said it regarded the new app as a critical next step, noting that one in six children in Europe is affected by online bullying.