

# Analysis of EU Media on the Protection of Minors Online

Reitis-Münstermann, T., Damjanovski, A., Caielli, A., Vanigioli, D.

2026



This is a joint publication of the Joint Research Centre (JRC), the European Commission's science and knowledge service, and the European Science-Media Hub, in the Scientific Foresight Unit at the European Parliamentary Research Services (EPRS) of the European Parliament. This report aims to provide evidence-based scientific support to the European policymaking process. It is prepared for, and addressed to, the Members and staff of the European Parliament as background material to assist them in their parliamentary work. The scientific output expressed does not imply a policy position of the European Commission nor the European Parliament. Neither the European Commission nor the European Parliament nor any person acting on behalf of these are responsible for the use that might be made of this publication. For information on the methodology and quality underlying the data used in this publication for which the source is neither Eurostat nor other Commission/Parliament services, users should contact the referenced source. The designations employed and the presentation of material on the maps do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the European Union concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of a commercial entity or product in this report does not imply endorsement by the European Commission or the EPRS.

#### Contact information:

European Commission  
Joint Research Centre  
Directorate Digital Transformation, AI and Data  
Unit Data Intelligence for Policy  
Text Mining for Policy Support  
Email: [JRC-POLINT@ec.europa.eu](mailto:JRC-POLINT@ec.europa.eu)

European Parliament  
European Parliamentary Research Services  
Directorate for Impact Assessment and Foresight  
Panel for the Future of Science and Technology  
European Science-Media Hub  
Email: [ESMH@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:ESMH@europarl.europa.eu)

#### Joint Research Centre

<https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu>

JRC146817

Ispra: European Commission, 2026  
Brussels: European Parliament, 2026

© European Union, 2026



The reuse policy of the European Commission documents is implemented by the Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39). Unless otherwise noted, the reuse of this document is authorised under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). This means that reuse is allowed provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated.

Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorised, provided the source is acknowledged and the European Parliament is given prior notice and sent a copy.

For any use or reproduction of photos or other material that is not owned by the European Union permission must be sought directly from the copyright holders. The European Union does not own the copyright in relation to the following elements:

- Cover/back page illustration, © Studio Romantic, Stock.Adobe.com.

How to cite this report: Reitis-Münstermann, T., Damjanovski, A., Caielli, A., Vanigioli, D., *Analysis of EU Media on the Protection of Minors Online*, European Commission/European Parliament, Ispra/Brussels, 2026, JRC146817

**Contents**

Abstract ..... 2

1. Introduction ..... 3

2. Reporting trends and peaks ..... 4

3. Media narratives and main clusters on online protection of minors ..... 8

4. Sentiment analysis on online protection of minors ..... 10

5. Framing dimensions, values, entities and country comparison ..... 12

Conclusions ..... 15

List of figures ..... 16

List of Tables ..... 17

Annexes ..... 18

    Annex I - Methodology ..... 18

    Data selection ..... 18

    Annex II - About the authors ..... 21

## Abstract

This report analyses **how EU online media cover the issue of protection of minors online**. It provides an overview of the most important news and reporting trends related to this topic. The sources of the analysis include a selection of the most important online media outlets in the 27 EU Member States. This report summarises the findings of the analysis on data collected from **1 January 2024 until 15 April 2026**.

Through text-mining techniques, this report identifies reporting trends, thematic clusters, framings, and sentiment dynamics. It aims to provide insights on the media narratives shaping public discourse around safeguarding children online.

### Key findings:

- **Media coverage** of protection of minors in digital spaces: **2,498 articles** in EU media from 1 January 2024 to 15 April 2026.
- The EU Members States where media reported the most on protection of minors online were **Malta, Greece, Luxembourg and Ireland**.
- The study highlights an increasing media focus on safeguarding minors online, with the ratio in **media coverage increasing threefold from 2024 to 2026**.
- The main reporting peaks occurred in February 2026, when the German political group CDU supported a legal age limit of 14 years for accessing social media platforms, and in March 2026, when Meta was fined for inadequate child protection in the US. A significant peak also occurred in July 2025, when the European Commission presented new guidelines to protect minors online.
- The report identifies four major themes in reporting: **calls for legislative proposals to ban social media use for children, legislative and policy initiatives aimed at online child safety, investigations and fines for tech companies over failing minors' protection, and a broader digital-safety agenda**. These clusters represent a global movement towards stronger regulatory measures to safeguard children online.
- **Media sentiment:** The overall sentiment of the coverage is mostly neutral; followed by negatively connoted articles which mainly underscore the risks and harms that render protection of minors necessary, while positive pieces concentrate on policy initiatives and technological solutions.
- The media framing emphasises policy prescription and evaluation; health and safety; crime and punishment; political, security and defence narratives. Prominent figures such as Commissioner Henna Virkunnen, French President Emmanuel Macron, and Meta's Mark Zuckerberg are frequently mentioned.

Overall, the European media narratives surrounding online protection of minors highlight the importance of continued regulatory and technological advancements in this area.

## 1. Introduction

This Science Media Intelligence Report is part of the joint publication series of the European Science-Media Hub (ESMH) and the JRC Data Intelligence for Policy Unit, which covers a wide range of scientific topics relevant to the activities of the European Parliament's Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA). This report analyses the European media coverage of **protection of minors in digital spaces**.

In today's digital era, protecting children online has become a crucial issue for policymakers, educators, parents, and society at large. As children and adolescents increasingly engage with digital platforms for education, entertainment, and social interaction, ensuring their safety in online environments has become a priority across the European Union. Recent legislative advancements, such as the EU Digital Service Act, reflect a concerted effort to address the risks minors face online. The 2025 guidelines<sup>1</sup> issued by the European Commission establish an enforcement and compliance benchmark to ensure companies' responsibility to act. They aim to ensure that children enjoy a high level of privacy, safety and security online by enhancing safety measures to counteract threats such as cyberbullying, exposure to harmful content and data-privacy violations.

Member States play a key role in enhancing digital safety by adapting EU-wide initiatives to their local realities. They develop tailored national strategies to protect minors online, drawing on guidance from international organisations such as the OECD. This type of collaboration is crucial to tackle online risks and ensure that young people can use digital tools safely and responsibly.

This report examines how EU online media is currently covering online protection of minors, highlighting key initiatives, regulatory frameworks, and societal efforts aimed at safeguarding young Europeans in digital spaces. The analysis was conducted on the data gathered by the Europe Media Monitor (EMM) from a selection of the most popular online media sources in the 27 EU Member States<sup>2</sup> between **1 January 2024 and 15 April 2026**. A topic-clustering algorithm was employed to identify the main events, topics and narratives presented in the media.

For a comprehensive description of the methodology and technology used, please refer to the Annexes.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/commission-publishes-guidelines-protection-minors>

<sup>2</sup> The number of sources was weighted based on the countries' population.

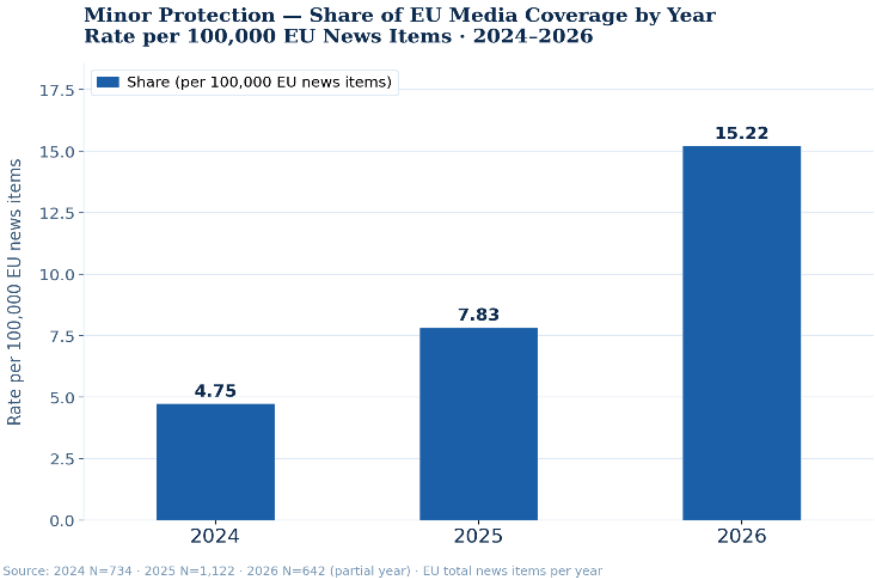
## 2. Reporting trends and peaks

In total, **2,498 articles discussing online protection of minors** were published online from January 2024 until mid-April 2026 in EU online media. This selection includes articles which contain keywords related to the topic (see **Data selection** of the Appendix).

### Reporting trends in EU online media

**Figure 1** displays the annual share of articles on the protection of minors online as a proportion of the total news volume for that year. The topic of online child protection has increasingly gained media attention in recent years. In 2024, articles about the safety of minors online accounted for fewer than 5 out of every 100,000 published pieces. This figure rose to approximately 8 out of 100,000 news items in 2025 and further increased to 15 articles in 2026.

**Figure 1.** Annual share of news on the protection of minors online, compared to the total online news volume



Source: EMM-Pollnt. Period: 01-01-2024 to 15-04-2026.

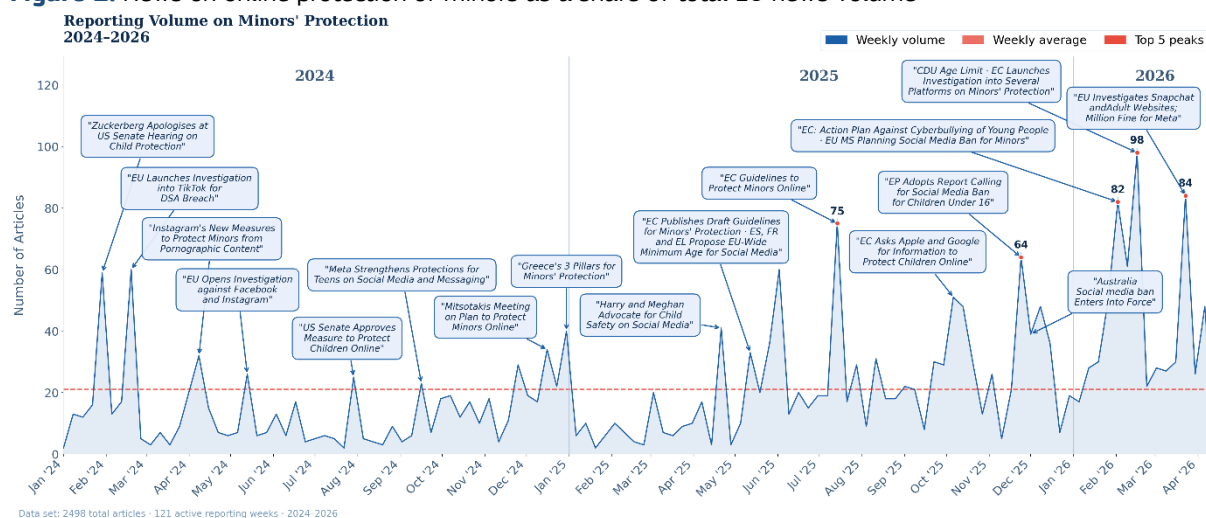
In 2025, the topic received particular attention the week of 13 July (75 articles). That week, the Commission presented new guidelines<sup>3</sup> to protect minors online, including a prototype for an online age verification application, showcasing technological advancements aimed at improving online safety of minors. [[stiripesurse.ro](https://stiripesurse.ro), [gp.se](https://gp.se), [novilist.hr](https://novilist.hr)].

The issue of online minor protection received more attention in 2026. The period from 15 to 21 February (94 articles) represents the highest weekly news volume across the observed timeframe. At their party congress, the German CDU proposed a social media age limit of 14 years, indicating strong political support for stricter regulations on the activities of minors online [[tagesspiegel.de](https://tagesspiegel.de)]. The second highest news volume was reached the week of 22 March 2026 (79 articles), when Meta was fined more than USD 375 million in the US for inadequate child protection measures, highlighting the

<sup>3</sup> <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/commission-publishes-guidelines-protection-minors>

significant regulatory sanctions against major social media platforms that fail to comply with the Digital Service Act and applicable child-safety regulations [trend.at].

**Figure 2.** News on online protection of minors as a share of total EU news volume



Source: EMM-PolInt.Period: 01-01-2024 to 15-04-2026.

Note: Annotated timeline with weekly shares of news about online protection of minors in the overall EU online news volume. The timeline annotations provide an overview of the key topics contributing to the peaks, but they do not exhaustively represent the full range of topics.

### Reporting peaks in EU online media

The media coverage of online protection of minors tends to be predominantly event-driven, rather than a regular topic. During 2024 and early 2025, this topic gained visibility mainly in response to specific incidents or developments. This pattern suggests that ongoing discussions about the safety of minors online often rely on headline-making events to generate significant attention.

For example, Mark Zuckerberg's apology in January 2024 drew significant attention and scrutiny towards Facebook's practices regarding minors' protection. Similarly, the EU's investigation into TikTok for potential law breaches in February 2024 underscored regulatory vigilance and sparked discussions about the adequacy of existing protections for minors online, leading to a more general discussion.

The overview here below includes the most significant weekly peaks and news stories, supported by a link to an original article<sup>4</sup>:

- **28 January 2024** (55 articles): Mark Zuckerberg apologised during a US Senate hearing, addressing Facebook's shortcomings in child protection potentially leading to abuse, depression, and even suicide among children and teenagers [nouvelobs, lasexta]
- **18 February 2024** (61 articles): The EU launched an investigation into TikTok for potentially breaching new laws concerning the protection of minors, illustrating regulatory vigilance [bt.dk, milanofinanza.it, sapo.pt]

<sup>4</sup> Each date listed represents the first day of the week during which these headlines were covered.

- **7 April 2024** (32 articles): Instagram introduced new measures to protect minors from pornographic content and blackmail, demonstrating efforts to enhance user safety. [[francetvinfo.fr](#)]
- **12 May 2024** (26 articles): The EU opened an investigation against Facebook and Instagram regarding child protection, signifying persistent concerns over the effectiveness of these platforms' safeguards. [[lefigaro.fr](#), [gp.se](#)]
- **28 July 2024** (21 articles): The US Senate approved measures to protect children online, requiring platforms to enact provisions to protect minors from problematic and dangerous content, notably sexual exploitation, online harassment, and the promotion of suicide and eating disorders. [[iefimerida.gr](#)]
- **15 September 2024** (23 articles): Meta strengthened protections for teens on social media, showcasing its responsiveness to public pressure and regulatory demands. [[rtl.be](#)]
- **15 December 2024** (31 articles): The Greek government held an extraordinary meeting to develop a plan to protect minors from the dangers of social media. [[parapolitika.gr](#)]
- **29 December 2024** (51 articles): Greece unveiled a three-pillar plan to safeguard minors on social media, marking a significant policy development. [[news247.gr](#)]
- **20 April 2025** (39 articles): Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, called for protecting children from social media dangers, bringing attention to the issue via public advocacy. [[bfmtv.com](#)]
- **11 May 2025** (32 articles): The European Commission published draft guidelines for online child protection, indicating a regulatory push for standardised measures across the EU. [[europske.noviny.sk](#), [lne.es](#)]
- **25 May 2025** (37 articles): The European Commission investigated porn sites for child safety, underscoring efforts to extend protective measures beyond mainstream social media platforms. [[24chasa.bg](#), [eleconomist.es](#), [tvnet.lv](#), [tgcom24.mediaset.it](#)]
- **1 June 2025** (53 articles): The EU launched an app to prevent minors from accessing adult websites, demonstrating technological innovation in child protection strategies. [[ksml.fi](#)]
- **10 August 2025** (32 articles): Scientists recommended against social media use for children under 13, adding to the growing calls for age restrictions. [[welt.de](#)]
- **5 October 2025** (48 articles): The European Commission requested information about the age verification measures of Apple and Google. [[ceskenoviny.cz](#), [sapo.pt](#)]
- **12 October 2025** (51 articles): The European Parliament's Committee for Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) called for a ban on social media for young people under 16, and access with parental control for 13-16 years old, illustrating a push towards stringent age regulations. [[glas-slavonije.hr](#)]
- **23 November 2025** (64 articles): The European Parliament adopted IMCO's own-initiative report on the online protection of minors<sup>5</sup>. [[nra.lv](#), [aktuality.sk](#)]

---

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2025/779205/EPRS\\_ATA\(2025\)779205\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2025/779205/EPRS_ATA(2025)779205_EN.pdf)

- **7 December 2025** (49 articles): Australia's unique social media ban for minors (children under 16) came into force, reflecting a bold national approach to regulating online activity. [[svt.se](#), [tanea.gr](#), [rfi.fr](#)]
- **1 February 2026** (72 articles): The Czech Republic, Spain, Slovenia and Finland were considering legislative proposals to restrict social media for under-15s and under-16s respectively. [[nn.de](#), [euractiv.es](#), [elperiodico.com](#)]
- **8 February 2026** (71 articles): The European Commission announced an action plan against cyberbullying. [[lifo.gr](#), [sita.sk](#)]
- **15 February 2026** (94 articles): The CDU proposed a social media age limit from age 14, suggesting significant political advocacy for legislative reform. [[tagesspiegel.de](#)]
- **22 March 2026** (79 articles): Meta faced a substantial fine for insufficient child protection measures in the US [[trend.at](#)], while the EU opens an investigation into Snapchat and Pornhub and other adult platforms on compliance with child protection rules. [[agerpres.ro](#), [skai.gr](#)]
- **5 April 2026** (50 articles): Dimitris Papastergiou, Greece's Minister of Digital Governance, announced high fines for platforms failing to comply with legislation that bans minors access and implementing age-verification measures. [[protothema.gr](#)] Media picked up the *POLITICO European Pulse* survey which revealed that Europeans support banning social media for minors. [[politico.eu](#), [in.gr](#)] The Slovak government, led by Interior Minister Matúš Šutaj Eštok and Education Minister Tomáš Drucker, was drafting a legislative proposal to prevent online radicalisation of young people. [[teraz.sk](#)]

Key topics were identified by analysing the main clusters of articles based on their titles' semantic similarity. For more details about the clustering algorithm and a comprehensive description of the methodology, please refer to the Annexes.

### 3. Media narratives and main clusters on online protection of minors

The reported peaks mentioned in the previous section showcase the underlying evolving media narratives around safeguarding minors online. They highlight the global movement towards stronger regulatory measures and initiatives to protect children in the digital age.

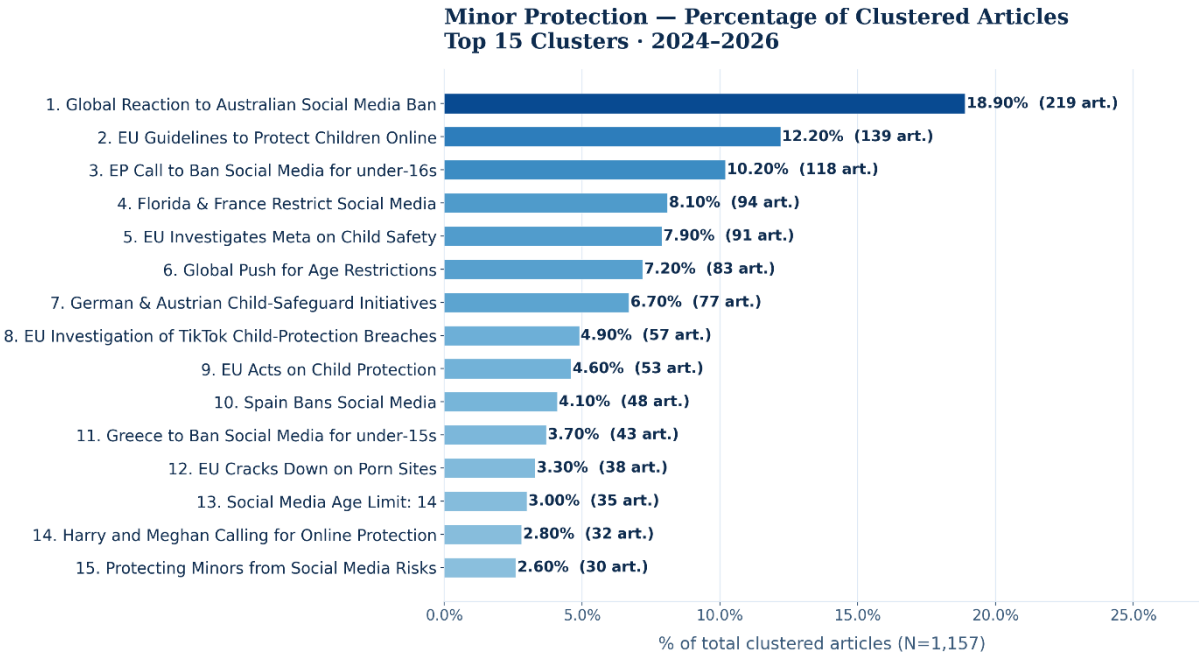
**Figure 3** displays the main topic clusters related to online protection of minors covered by EU online media, from the largest to the smallest volume. The topic clusters have been identified by grouping the articles based on their title and lead lines’ semantic similarity.

#### Top 15 clusters in EU online media on safeguarding minors online

The top 15 clusters account for 1,157 articles out of the total dataset of 2,498, representing approximately 46.32% of all media coverage of online child protection. The clusters reveal a strong focus in reporting around **four recurring themes**:

- **Calls for legislative proposals to ban social media for minors:** articles reporting on calls to restrict or ban the use of social-media platforms by minors
- **Legislative and policy initiatives aimed at online child safety:** media coverage of legislative proposals, adopted legislation, guidelines and programmes designed to enhance the digital safety of minors
- **Investigations and fines for tech companies over failing minors’ protection:** reports on EU investigations and fines imposed on platforms for alleged shortcomings in protecting minors
- **Broader digital-safety agenda** (beyond social media ban): articles addressing wider issues such as online addiction, cyberbullying, inappropriate content, advertising transparency and the use of AI-based tools for age verification

**Figure 3.** Top 15 topics reported on online protection of minors.



Source: EMM-Pollnt. Period: 01-01-2024 to 15-04-2026.  
 Note: Clustering was performed on headlines. Headlines that are not similar to any of the groups are not considered in the distribution across topics (Clustered: 1,157, Total: 2,498).

## **Calls for legislative proposals to ban social media for minors**

Media reported on how proposals on banning social media for children is gaining traction in various regions (see clusters 1, 4, 6, 10, and 11). Australia has implemented a ban for children under 16, and similar legislative proposals are being considered or enacted in countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, the UK, the US, France, Spain, and Greece. The reported motivation focuses on protecting minors from cyberbullying, unsuitable content, and mental health risks. Experts, including psychologists and child protection advocates, see these bans as necessary to protect young users. Public opinion in some regions supports the idea of banning social media for children, driven by increasing awareness of its potential harms. Simultaneously, online articles covered potential critics and caution against the potential overreach of governmental control and the risk of isolating children from digital socialisation, which is increasingly a part of modern life.

## **Legislative and policy initiatives aimed at online child safety**

Media coverage reported on a variety of legislative and policy actions that seek to improve online safety for children, (see clusters 2, 7, and 9).

Australia has enacted a ban for social media for children under 16. Australia's approach includes stringent age verification and collaboration with tech companies, positioning the country as a model for digital child protection.

Within the EU, media coverage mentions the development of guidelines, age-verification applications and national programmes that complement EU directives. Member-state examples include Germany's focus on age verification and school-level solutions, Austria's collaborations with child-rights organisations, and France and Spain's discussions of social-media access restrictions. France and Spain are advancing social media bans for minors, reflecting varied approaches within the EU.

Countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the UK, and the United States are exploring measures similar to Australia's, driven by concerns over cyberbullying and addiction. These efforts contribute to a global discourse on digital child protection, highlighting the global importance of safeguarding minors online.

## **Investigations and fines for tech companies over failing minors' protection**

Media reported on EU-led investigations and financial penalties on tech companies like Meta and TikTok for alleged failures to protect minors from harmful content and addictive design features (see clusters 5, 8, and 12). Meta has faced significant scrutiny over its platforms' impact on children, resulting in billions of dollars in fines. Similarly, TikTok is under investigation to ensure compliance with the Digital Services Act, reflecting a broader concern about the role, responsibility and accountability of tech companies in protecting minors online.

## **Broader digital safety agenda**

Beyond age restrictions for social media, media reports discuss a broader digital safety agenda to protect children from various online threats (see clusters 3, 9, and 15). Media reported initiatives includes tackling issues such as addiction, cyberbullying [[dnevnik.hr](http://dnevnik.hr)], exposure to inappropriate content, and ensuring transparent advertising. Initiatives involve conducting public consultations [[maltadaily.mt](http://maltadaily.mt)], using technologies such as artificial intelligence, to enforce restrictions and educate

parents about risks such as cybergrooming. Greece has implemented a digital platform called “Kids Wallet” that provides automatic age verification capabilities. [[protothema.gr](#)] Efforts also focus on creating safer online environments and advocating for comprehensive protection measures.

The emerging pattern reflects an international push for stronger rules and initiatives that safeguard young users online

#### 4. Sentiment analysis on online protection of minors

An algorithm was used to classify the sentiment of news articles, positive, neutral, or negative, based on a machine-learning model. More details are available in the Methodology section of the Annex.

The overall tone of online media coverage related to the online protection of minors is mostly neutral, with 50.2% of articles falling into this category. However, the interpretation of positive and negative sentiment requires a further clarification.

Negative sentiment associated with articles (35.9%, 898 articles) does not refer to the objective of protecting minors online itself. Rather, it reflects media concern about the problems that make such protection necessary: the risks, harms and threats minors face online. These include exposure to harmful content, the impact of social media on young people’s mental health and the failure of certain pornographic platforms to prevent under-age access.

Positive sentiment (13.9%, 347 articles), by contrast, tends to refer to media articles reporting on the responses to these problems, such as new policy initiatives, regulatory measures and technological tools designed to strengthen the online protection of minors like age verification pilots, and EU-level recommendations to safeguard children

The weekly time series chart (**Figure 4**) shows an increasingly engaged media landscape concerning the online protection of minors throughout the observation period, with coverage intensifying from late 2024 onwards.

- **Late 2024 – early 2025:** a gradual rise in negative articles as high-profile incidents involving minors are reported.
- **Autumn 2025:** following the European Parliament’s debate, a second wave of negatively toned media coverage reported on the mental-health impact of social media on youth [[caleaeuropeana.ro](#)].
- **Early 2026:** the most pronounced escalation occurs. In the week of 2 February 2026, 48 articles appear, reflecting the Commission’s formal accusation against four major pornographic sites for failing to protect minors; the negatively tune sentiment reflected the inability of such platforms to properly protect minors [[eleconomista.es](#)]. A comparable peak is observed in the week of 23 March 2026 (41 negative articles) [[adevarul.ro](#)].

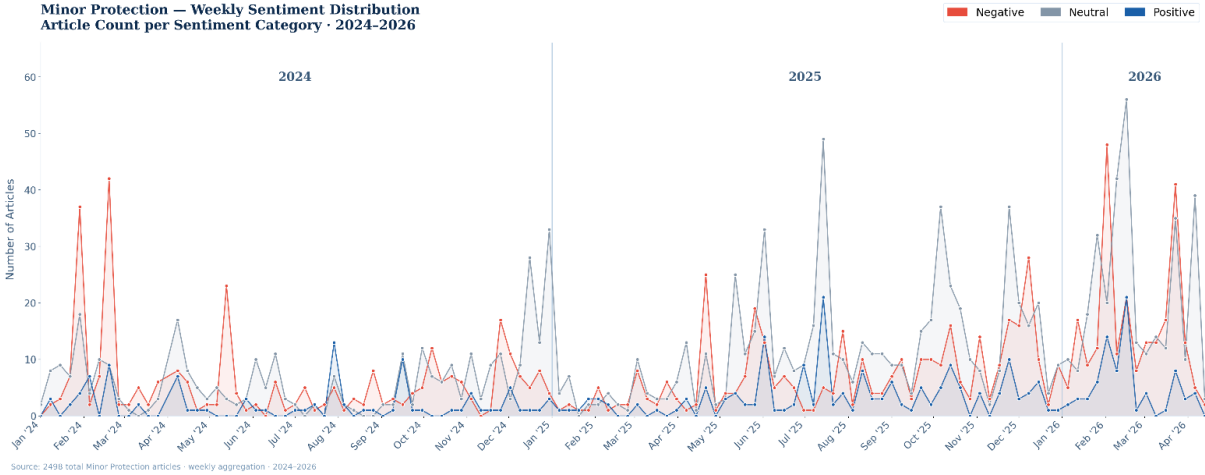
Positive sentiment peaks only around specific policy-related milestones:

- **Late July 2025:** a cluster of positive articles follows the US Senate’s approval of a package of measures to protect children online [[naftemporiki.gr](#)].
- **Mid-July 2025:** 21 positive items (12 on 14 July) report the European Commission’s proposal of an age-verification prototype to limit harmful content exposure [[nyheder.tv2.dk](#)].
- **February 2026:** the weeks of 2 February and 16 February show simultaneous rises in positive and negative sentiment, because articles combine criticism of the negative impact of social media on youth with coverage of new EU policy initiatives addressing those harms.

The relevance of the EU-level policy initiatives on protecting minors in the broader public discourse is also underlined by the recent Euro-barometer poll, which finds that 92 % of Europeans now regard protecting children online as a top priority.<sup>6</sup>

These patterns illustrate the dual nature of the debate: media discourse alternates between highlighting the **threats** faced by minors while navigating online and accessing website that lack to properly protect them (negative sentiment) [[handelsblatt.com](https://www.handelsblatt.com)], and emphasising **protective measures** (positive sentiment) [[tagesspiegel.de](https://www.tagesspiegel.de)]. The coexistence of both sentiment streams during the same weeks signals that the public debate on the online protection of minors has shifted from descriptive reporting to a more stance-driven discussion. It shows how online protection of minors has become a relevant public debate, with media no more simply describing events related to it but clearly taking a stance.

**Figure 4.** Weekly Sentiment Distribution on Minor Protection Articles



Source: EMM-Pollnt. Period: 01-01-2024 to 15-04-2026. Weekly Article Count by Sentiment Distribution

<sup>6</sup> Source: Eurobarometer, May 2026

## 5. Framing dimensions, values, entities and country comparison

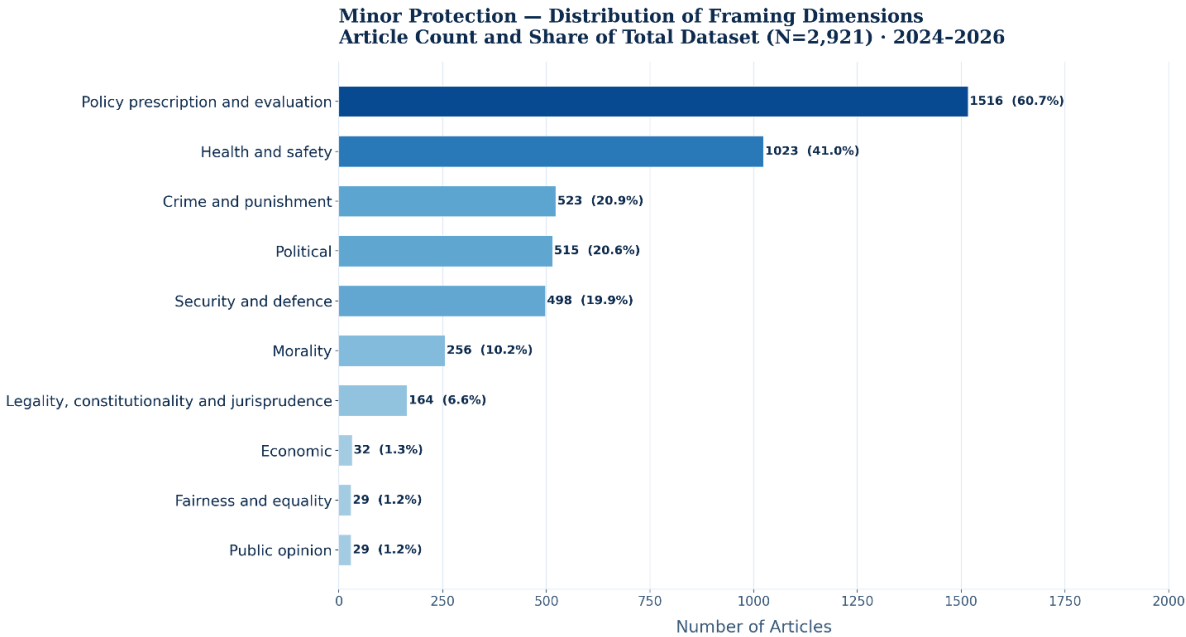
We performed further analyses, employing machine-learning algorithms developed by the JRC, to reveal the framings, and detect the most mentioned entities detected within the media reporting (for details see the Methodology in the Annex).

### Dominant framing dimensions

Framings refer to the angle used to present news. For this analysis, 14 framings are considered: *Economic, Capacity and resources, Morality, Fairness and equality, Legality, Constitutionality and jurisprudence, Policy prescription and evaluation, Crime and punishment, Security and defence, Health and safety, Quality of life, Cultural identity, Public opinion, Political, and External regulation and reputation.*

As illustrated in **Figure 5**, the media covered the issue of ‘online child protection’ from a limited number of angles, focusing on **Policy prescription and evaluation** and **Health and safety**. Among the top 5 framings, also *Crime and punishment, Political, and Security and defence.*

**Figure 5.** Framing dimensions related to Online Protection of Minors



Source: 2,498 total Minor Protection articles · 14 framing dimensions · 2024-2026  
 Source: EMM-PollInt. Period: 01-01-2024 to 15-04-2026.

**POLICY PRESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION (60.69%):** This dominant framing dimension highlights the critical role of policy-making and institutional frameworks in addressing the protection of minors online. Media coverage frequently presents the issue in terms of legislative measures, evaluations of existing policies, and proposals for new initiatives. This framing underscores the reliance on structured governmental action and regulatory oversight to ensure effective child protection in digital environments.

**HEALTH AND SAFETY (40.95%):** Ranking second, this framing dimension reflects the media's focus on the direct impact of online threats on children's health and safety. Coverage often includes discussions about the mental health implications of cyberbullying, addiction, and exposure to harmful

content. This framing captures the urgency of safeguarding children’s well-being and the need for preventative and responsive measures to address these challenges.

**CRIME AND PUNISHMENT (20.94%):** Media outlets frequently frame the issue of child online protection in terms of accountability and enforcement, particularly related to tech companies’ responsibilities. Investigations and fines imposed by regulatory bodies, such as the EU, are highlighted to illustrate consequences for failing to protect minors online. This dimension captures the legal and punitive aspects essential to ensuring compliance and deterring negligence.

**POLITICAL (20.62%):** The political framing dimension reflects the call of governments and international organisations to develop and implement strategies for digital safety. Media reports often discuss legislative initiatives, public advocacy, and the involvement of influential figures in promoting child protection online. This dimension highlights the intersection of policy-making and political will in driving change and garnering public support for protective measures.

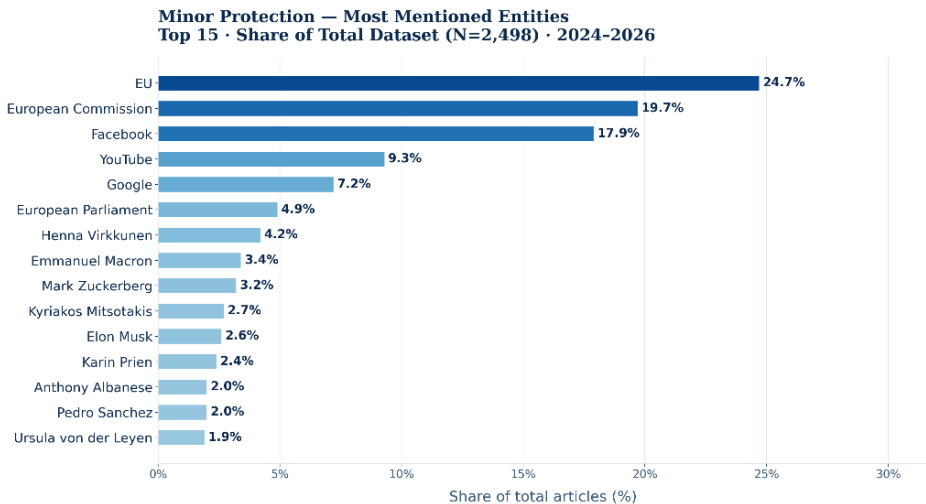
**SECURITY AND DEFENCE (19.94%):** This framing dimension focuses on the defensive strategies required to safeguard minors from online threats. Media coverage frequently discusses technological solutions, such as age verification applications and AI-driven systems, aimed at enhancing digital security. This framing captures the debate around technology safety and the broader public concern about the effectiveness of measures protecting minors.

**Most reported entities**

There is a pre-eminence of European institutions and major technology platforms in the current media narrative, with a modest but discernible presence of high-profile political actors.

The **most mentioned entities (Figure 6)** include the European Union (24.7% articles) and its institutions (**European Commission** (19.7% articles)).<sup>7</sup> Platforms such as **Facebook** (17.9%), YouTube (9.3%) and Google (7.2%) also appearing among the most mentioned.

**Figure 6** Most mentioned entities in autonomous vehicles articles



Source: 2,498 total Minor Protection articles - 2024-2026

Source: EMM-Pollnt. Period: 01-01-2024 to 15-04-2026.

<sup>7</sup> Also, EU regulation such as the **Digital Service Act (DSA)** are mentioned in 6.2% of articles, with the media highlighting how EU law mandates stringent protection for minors online.

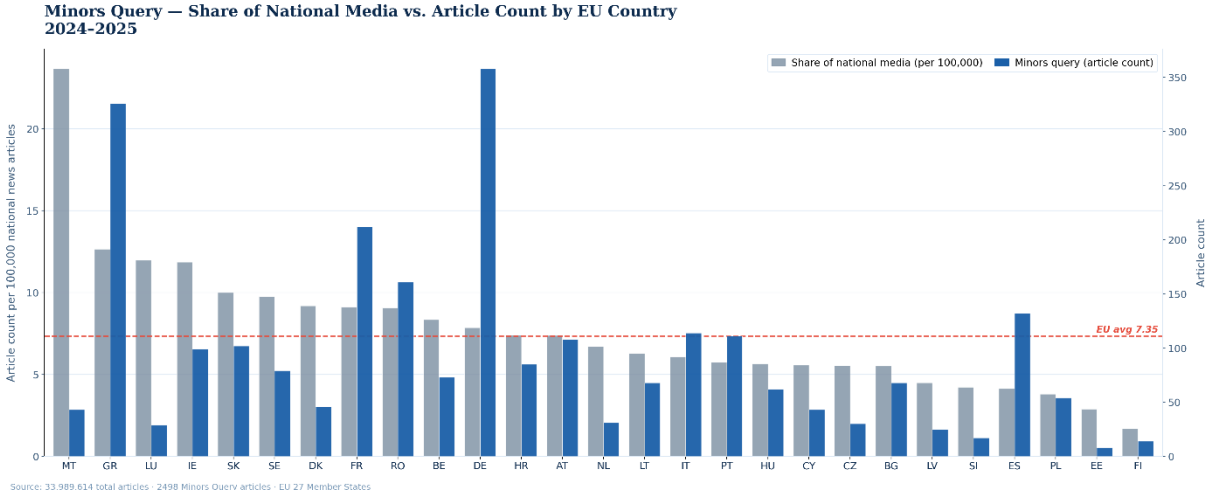
As for the **most mentioned figures**, Commissioner **Henna Virkkunen** (4.2% articles) ranks first as the European Commission’s Executive Vice-President for tech sovereignty, security and democracy. She is followed by French President **Emmanuel Macron** (3.4% articles), Meta’s Mark Zuckerberg (3.2%), and Elon Musk (2.6%) who clashed with Spanish authorities over a policy proposal to ban social platform for minors. Other notable figures include Kyriakos Mitsotakis (2.7 %), Prime Minister of Greece, Karin Prien (2.4 %), German Minister of Education and Youth and leading figure in the CDU’s digital agenda, and the Prime Minister of Australia, Anthony Albanese (2.0 %).

### Country comparison

**Figure 7** compares national media coverage of online protection of minors with the overall news volume across the EU and its 27 Member States. The topic was mentioned in **7.35 out of every 100,000 articles in the EU online media**, with the largest proportion of media coverage identified in **Malta** which has a ratio of **23.6 per 100,000 articles**. The Maltese media has extensively reported on its government’s public consultation on social media reforms to enhance the protection of children and vulnerable individuals from online harm, highlighting Malta’s proactive stance in the EU’s efforts to safeguard minors online [[maltadaily.mt](http://maltadaily.mt)].

**Greece (12.6)** and **Luxembourg (11.9)** have respectively the second and third highest share of national media coverage on the topic. France and Romania occupy a middle position in the ranking. Germany, by contrast, appears distinct when looking at absolute numbers: it contributed the largest total of articles in the dataset (about 350), but its normalised share, topic related articles per 100 000 articles, remains roughly at the EU average. National media coverage of online child protection was below the EU average in **Poland (3.7)**, **Estonia (2.8)** and **Finland (1.6)**, who reported the least on the topic.

**Figure 7.** Share of news on Online Protection of Minors articles per 100,000 online news by Member State



Source: EMM-PollInt. Period: 01-01-2024 to 15-04-2026.  
 Note: Distribution of news by EU Member State, with each country’s share of total coverage.

## Conclusions

This report analysed the **media coverage of online protection of minors** in EU online media through text-mining techniques, from 1 January 2024 to 15 April 2026:

- **Media coverage and trends:** There has been a significant increase in media attention to protection of minors in digital spaces, with a threefold increase from 2024 to 2026. Rather than being a sustained discussion, media coverage is largely event-driven with notable peaks corresponding to specific incidents, such as legislative proposals, fines for tech companies, and new EU guidelines.
- **Geographical focus:** Malta, Greece, Luxembourg, and Ireland reported the most on the topic, while Poland, Estonia, and Finland reported the least on it. This could indicate different levels of concern and engagement across EU Member States.
- **Thematic focus:** Four major thematic clusters have been identified: calls for social media bans for children; legislative proposals and policy initiatives for online safety; investigations and fines for tech companies; and a broader digital safety agenda. These clusters reflect a global movement towards stronger regulatory measures for the protection of minors online.
- **Sentiment dynamics:** The sentiment remains predominantly neutral (50.2 %). The negative sentiment (35.9 %) does reflect criticism of the aim of protecting children but rather highlights the risks and harms that make such protection necessary, whereas the positive sentiment (13.9 %) focuses on policy and technological responses.
- **Framing:** Media narratives on online child protection often focus on policy prescription and evaluation, health and safety, crime and punishment, and security and defence.
- **Prominent figures and entities:** The European Union and major platforms like Facebook and Google are frequently mentioned. Key figures include EU Commissioner Henna Virkkunen, French President Emmanuel Macron, and Meta's Mark Zuckerberg – which highlights the involvement of political actors and tech leaders in the public discourse.

Overall, the report highlights that the European media coverage of online child protection calls for stronger regulatory, technological, and societal safeguards across the EU.

**List of figures**

**Figure 1.** Annual share of news on the protection of minors online, compared to the total online news volume..... 4

**Figure 2.** News on online protection of minors as a share of total EU news volume ..... 5

**Figure 3.** Top 15 topics reported on online protection of minors..... 8

**Figure 4.** Weekly Sentiment Distribution on Minor Protection articles ..... 11

**Figure 5.** Framing dimensions related to Online Protection of Minors..... 12

**Figure 6.** Most mentioned entities in autonomous vehicles articles ..... 13

**Figure 7.** Share of news on Online Protection of Minors articles per 100,000 online news by Member State ..... 14

**List of Tables**

**Table 1.** Overview of the framing dimensions' meaning..... 20

## Annexes

### Annex I - Methodology

This science media intelligence briefing is part of the series of joint publications of the European Science-Media Hub (ESMH) and the JRC Text and Data Mining Unit, covering topics relevant for specific policy domains, ranging from water scarcity, genetically modified organisms, and new-genomic techniques to artificial intelligence in science communication as well as in healthcare. For further information please consults <https://sciencemediahub.eu/science-media-intelligence-reports/>.

#### Data selection

Articles relevant for the analysis are selected by searching for a set of relevant keywords or keyword combinations that appear in the title or lead line of the article. Lead line refers to approximately the first 300 characters of the article, following the title. These keywords are translated into all EU24 languages. The keyword combinations have been selected carefully to include all important articles but to avoid irrelevant 'noise' in the news collection. The articles need to contain at least one keyword from the [Query – protection of minors](#) and at least one keyword from [Query – online](#) in the title or lead line or in their English equivalent.

##### English keywords for “protection of minors” query

“Safe Environments for Children”, “Safe Environments for teenagers”, “Safe Environments for minors”, “Safe Environments for young people”, “Safe Environments for underage”, “Safety Measures for minors”, “Safety Measures for Children”, “Safety Measures for teenagers”, “Safety Measures for young people”, “Safety Measures for underage”, “keeping minors safe”, “keeping children safe”, “keeping underage safe”, “keeping teenagers safe”, “keeping young people safe”, “Protection for Minors”, “Protection for children”, “Protection for teenagers”, “protection for underage”, “protection for young people”, “Safeguarding Young People”, “Safeguarding children”, “safeguarding minors”, “safeguarding teenagers”, “safeguarding underage”, “Protecting Minors”, “Protecting children”, “protecting teenagers”, “protecting underage”, “protecting young people”, “Protect Minors”, “Protect children”, “protect teenagers”, “protect underage”, “protect young people”

##### Query – online

“online spaces”, “Online-Räume”, “online use”, “Online-Nutzung”, “digital spaces”, “Digitale Räume”, “social media”, “Soziale Medien”, “online media”, “Online-Medien”, “online”, “онлайн пространства”, “онлайн употреба”, “дигитални пространства”, “социални медии”, “онлайн медии”, “онлайн”, “online prostori”, “online korištenje”, “digitalni prostori”, “društveni mediji”, “online mediji”, “online prostory”, “používání online”, “digitální prostory”, “sociální média”, “online média”, “online-rum”, “online-brug”, “digitale rum”, “sociale medier”, “online-medier”, “on-line”, “online ruumid”, “online kasutamine”, “digitaalsed ruumid”, “sotsiaalmeedia”, “online meedia”, “verkko-tilat”, “verkon käyttö”, “digitaaliset tilat”, “sosiaalinen media”, “verkkomedia”, “verkossa”

## **Source selection**

The manually curated list of **online media** outlets used for this report is composed of 581 EU27 online media sources monitored as index [pi\_ee24campaign] by Europe Media Monitor (EMM). This sample of sources represents the most popular open news websites in each EU country in terms of visitors. The number of outlets per country was weighted based on the Member States' population.

## **Automated multilingual clustering**

Clusters are computed by a community-based algorithm working with titles and description of the articles in original language. As a metric to compare content of the articles the semantic similarity was used. Text embeddings together with multilingual clustering of embedded texts were used to group articles of similar content into clusters.

The minimum cluster size is set to 5 articles. The maximum cluster size is not fixed. The resulting clusters correspond to the main topics present in the dataset.

## **Automated titles and summaries**

To generate automated summaries for each cluster, we use Large Language Models (LLM). For this use case, the model – an instantiated GPT-4o – is treated like a news digest AI which is capable of analysing a list of news articles and generating a high-level summary with a significant title. For each cluster, the translated headlines of the articles are provided as input, and a title and a summary are generated. If the cluster's size is bigger than 500 articles, 500 titles are chosen randomly. The GPT model allows to receive good quality output in combination with a very fast response time. A carefully crafted prompt is used so that the model is not too generic but instead always focused on the listed facts.

## **Sentiment classifier**

In our sentiment analysis, we utilise a state-of-the-art sentiment model, namely the XLM-RLnews-5 model, which is specifically designed for document-level sentiment analysis across multiple languages. Based on XLM-RoBERTa-Large, this model has been fine-tuned for sentiment analysis using the Unified Multilingual Sentiment Analysis Benchmark (UMSAB) dataset. The sentiment classes are computed on the English translation of the headlines.

More details on the model development are available in:

Di Nuovo, E., Cartier, E., Bertrand De Longueville, 'Meet XLM-RLnews-8: Not Just Another Sentiment Analysis Model'. In *Natural Language Processing and Information Systems, 28th International Conference on Applications of Natural Language to Information Systems, NLDB 2024, Turin, Italy, June 25–27, 2024, Proceedings* (pp. 1). Springer Science and Business Media Deutschland GmbH, 2024.

## Automated framing detection

Automated detection of framing dimensions constituted an extension of our analysis conducted in this report. This work was based on in-house machine learning classifiers that detect framing dimensions in the articles. The machine-learning algorithm trained on a multilingual corpus.

Framing refers to the perspective under which an issue or a piece of news is presented. We consider the following 14 framing dimensions:

**Table 1.** Overview of the framing dimensions' meaning

<b>Framing dimension</b>	<b>Reference of</b>
Economic	costs, benefits or other financial implications.
Capacity and Resources	availability of physical, human or financial resources, and capacity of current systems.
Morality	religious or ethical implications
Fairness and Equality	balance or distribution of rights, responsibilities and resources
Legality, Constitutionally and Jurisprudence	rights, freedoms, and authority of individuals, corporations and government.
Policy Prescription and Evaluation	discussion of specific policies aimed at addressing problems.
Crime and Punishment	effectiveness and implications of laws and their enforcement
Security and Defence	threats to welfare of the individual, community or nation.
Health and Safety	health care, sanitation, public safety
Quality of Life	threats and opportunities for the individual's wealth, happiness, and well-being.
Cultural Identity	traditions, customs , or values of a social group in relation to a policy issue.
Public Opinion	attitudes and opinions of the general public, including polling and demographics.
Political	considerations related to politics and politicians, including lobbying, elections, and attempts to sway voters.
External Regulation and Reputation	international reputation or foreign policy

Source: Own creation based on Piskorski et al.

For more information see the JRC Technical Report:

Piskorski, J., Stefanovitch, N., Bausier, V. A., Faggiani, N., Linge, J., Kharazi, S., Nakov, P. (2023). *News categorization, framing and persuasion techniques: Annotation guidelines*. European Commission, Ispra, JRC132862. [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/text-mining/news-categorization-framing-persuasion-techniques-annotation-guidelines\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/text-mining/news-categorization-framing-persuasion-techniques-annotation-guidelines_en)

## Annex II - About the authors

### Data Intelligence for Policy

The JRC.T.5 Data Intelligence for Policy Unit of the European Commission specialises in Data Science for Policy, leveraging vast amounts of data and text to provide actionable insights. The unit delivers data, methods, services, and analysis to scientists and policymakers throughout the JRC and EU institutions.

As part of the Unit's activities, the "Political Intelligence" team aims to inform and enhance policymaking by providing a comprehensive view of the main topics and entities dominating the media landscape relevant to specific policy domains and assessing the associated tonality. To achieve this, the team aggregates and analyses various data sources, including news media, political speeches, public opinion, and existing and upcoming legislation. By applying cutting-edge text mining techniques, the team extracts valuable knowledge on key topics, sentiment, framing, and other aspects relevant to informing policymakers.

Please check [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/text-mining/topic/political-intelligence\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/text-mining/topic/political-intelligence_en) for more information on Political Intelligence.

### European Science-Media Hub

The European Science-Media Hub (ESMH), operating under the political responsibility of the European Parliament Panel for the Future of Science and Technology (STOA), is a platform to promote networking, training, and knowledge sharing between the European Parliament, the scientific community, and the media.

The ESMH creates a network among policy-makers, scientists, and media involving science, academia, educational and research entities, and professional associations of journalists and scientists. For journalists and media representatives, the ESMH organises training sessions and workshops on current technological developments, both as subjects of their reporting and as means of facilitating their work. Via media monitoring and media intelligence tools, the ESMH follows the most popular topics in the field of science and technology on different platforms including journals, newspapers, and social media.

The ESMH makes information available to journalists, other media, and citizens about new scientific developments, as well as about scientific topics that attract media attention, and promotes information based on evidence.

Check <https://sciencemediahub.eu/> for more information, methodology and technology.

### Europe Media Monitor

Europe Media Monitor (EMM) is a tool developed and maintained by the Text and Data Mining Unit of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission. The main purpose of EMM is to provide monitoring of a large set of online media, reducing the information flow to manageable proportions by clustering related news, categorising articles and applying Language Technology tools to derive further metadata, such as recognising and disambiguating entities in the text, extracting quotes by and about people, applying sentiment/tonality analysis, and more.

A lot of EMM's functionalities are freely available. To **access the tool** that best fits your need, please **check** [https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/text-mining/topic/europe-media-monitor-emm\\_en](https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/text-mining/topic/europe-media-monitor-emm_en).

## Getting in touch with the EU

### In person

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you online ([european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us_en)).

### On the phone or in writing

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union. You can contact this service:

- by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
- at the following standard number: +32 22999696,
- via the following form: [european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/write-us\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/write-us_en).

## Finding information about the EU

### Online

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website ([european-union.europa.eu](https://european-union.europa.eu)).

### EU publications

You can view or order EU publications at [op.europa.eu/en/publications](https://op.europa.eu/en/publications). Multiple copies of free publications can be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local documentation centre ([european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us_en)).

### EU law and related documents

For access to legal information from the EU, including all EU law since 1951 in all the official language versions, go to EUR-Lex ([eur-lex.europa.eu](https://eur-lex.europa.eu)).

### EU open data

The portal [data.europa.eu](https://data.europa.eu) provides access to open datasets from the EU institutions, bodies and agencies. These can be downloaded and reused for free, for both commercial and non-commercial purposes. The portal also provides access to a wealth of datasets from European countries.

