

Launching the IGF 2023 Youth Track
EuroDIG, Tampere, Finland | 19 June 2023 at 11:30 UTC

Summary of Workshop I

Nurturing Digital Well-being
Addressing the Impact of the Digital Environment on Youth Mental Health

The [IGF 2023 youth track](#)¹ was officially launched at the 2023 annual meeting of the European Dialogues on Internet Governance (EuroDIG). The co-organizers² structured the first workshop to introduce the track, announce the next activities, explore the demand from youth and unpack cybersecurity and trust-related challenges and opportunities as the overarching theme of the track. Specifically, the workshop focused on the ways digital technologies impact mental health of young people.

The workshop featured several expert speakers, ensuring the representation of both youth and senior backgrounds:

- Jutta Croll - Child safety expert, Chair of the IGF Dynamic Coalition on child online safety
- Emilia Zalewska-Czajczyńska - Polish Youth IGF and NASK
- Selma Kaymakci - YOUthDIG
- Valeriia Dubytska - Ukraine Youth IGF
- Natalie Tercova - YOUthDIG

Rapporteurs:

- Nicolas Fiumarelli, Youth IGF Uruguay
- Phyto Thiri Lwin, Youth IGF Myanmar
- Umut Pajaro Velasquez, YouthLACIGF and Youth IGF Colombia,
- Veronica Piccolo, ISOC Youth Standing Group and Youth IGF Italy.

Moderator: Ms. Anja Gengo, IGF Secretariat

A vibrant interactive discussion engaged many young and senior stakeholders who exchanged views on the format of the track as well as on the policy aspects youth could discuss within the youth track in preparations for the final global youth summit at the 18th IGF in Kyoto, Japan.

The meaningful and vibrant exchanges of over 100 participants onsite and online underlined the need for creating synergies between youth and senior stakeholders throughout the track and at

¹ <https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/igf-youth-track>

² Youth IGF coordinators, youth-focused international initiatives and IGF Secretariat as listed on the IGF website <https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/igf-youth-track>

the 18th IGF. Many recognized the need for digital capacity building for youth but also for all stakeholders in the youth's environment, such as school staff, social workers and parents.

Below is the overall summary of the exchanges.

Participants underlined the importance of the youth support systems and the need for digital literacy of all involved actors – parents, social workers, and teachers. Underlined was also the regulation and enforcement of age verification mechanisms, collaboration for children's online safety, considerations for platform design, the importance of ethics and cyberbullying education, exploration of alternative technologies, child participation in policymaking, and addressing systemic challenges in less common languages.

- The impact of online activities on mental health was discussed, considering factors such as content, contacts, and time spent online. This further relates to the importance of considering children's evolving mental development and the role of state parties.
- The positive and negative effects of social media on mental health were acknowledged, including concerns about personalized advertising and the misuse of sensitive data. Upcoming changes to European legislation to enhance internet safety for young people were mentioned as a possible example of good practice.
- The significant impact of the Internet on young people's mental health was highlighted in the context of the need for preventive education to address cyber threats. Insights from a study conducted in Ukraine were shared, and suggestions on promoting mental health and addressing cyber threats were sought.
- The varying impact of harmful online content on children was discussed, emphasizing the importance of teaching them digital skills and empowering them to navigate digital threats.
- The need to empower and educate children was recognized, with a focus on the Governments incorporating digital education into national curriculums. The issue of underreporting hateful speech online and the role of tech companies in mitigating hate speech were brought up.
- Shared responsibilities in ensuring children's online safety were addressed, including the mention of a model developed by a relevant organization and the limitations of parental control tools. The importance of trust between young people and adults and the avoidance of restrictive solutions were emphasized.
- The roles of parents, businesses, and the challenges of balancing internet safety with freedom of expression were discussed. The importance of education, peer support, and

identifying vulnerable groups for appropriate assistance were highlighted.

- The difficulty of age verification and the European Commission's initiative on age-appropriate design were mentioned. The significance of understanding user age for the well-being of young people and all internet users was emphasized.
- The complexity of protecting children online and the potential impact of relevant legislation were acknowledged. The importance of sharing good practices, promoting digital literacy among parents, teachers, and children, and considering the impact of online behavior on mental well-being were emphasized.