

Forum : Forum citoyen sur la liberté d'expression (bil)

**Thématique : Comment garantir un accès à l'information fiable à la génération Z tout en la protégeant contre les dangers des médias ?**

Nom du/de la Citoyen.ne Sabrina Liborio

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| Situation familiale <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Marié/en couple</li><li>○ Célibataire</li><li>• Avec enfants, si oui combien __1__</li></ul> | Niveau d'étude <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Primaire</li><li>○ Secondaire</li><li>• Universitaire</li></ul> |
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1. De quelle manière êtes-vous concerné.e par le sujet ?

I am Sabrina Liborio, a 51 year old Australian woman and a member of the association 'Let them be kids' I am a mother of a child which committed suicide on account of cyberbullying through social media platforms. Therefore, I believe strongly that by using my voice to spread my son's story, I have power to make change.

With our campaign in Australia, 'Let them be kids' we pushed for a social media ban nationally for all under-16s to protect our children from the media giants that are exposing graphic and inappropriate content, allowing social interaction with strangers and have no safeguarding mechanisms set in place.

It is crucial to discuss the topic of online safety for our children and come to agreements internationally about how we can provide access to information and a voice to our future generation in safe spaces.

In Australia, eating disorders are up 200 percent since 2014. Furthermore, the leading cause of death in Australian young people is suicide. The statistics that correlate to social media use are shocking: 71% of children had encountered content associated with harm, 52% were cyberbullied, 24% were sexually harassed online. We, as the responsible adults of our generation, have the responsibility not to accelerate the growth of our children and not to allow them to be on harmful websites.

Before December 10, an estimate of around 2 million young people between the ages of 8 and 15 were on at least one social media platform. Now, Meta has blocked 550,000 accounts in the first days of the ban with more progress to come. However, I do see that there are multiple problems to fix within this new established law as teenagers are finding ways to circumvent this ban.

Overall, considering the incredibly high number of children being affected by the dangers of social media, it is a sign that we must take action now. In Australia as an example, the implementation of a social media ban is making headway by allowing our children to have a screen-free childhood without the stress of their problems following them into their rooms. Speaking from personal experience as I've suffered from the loss of a child to the dangers of social media, I specially think that this topic is increasingly important to discuss.

2. Que proposez-vous à votre échelle ?

My main point is that access to receiving and spreading information as well as speaking freely is not limited to social media platforms. Therefore by limiting the access to the harmful content and unregulated interactions on social media platforms, we are not limiting our young people to speak their mind and express their opinions and thoughts but providing safe environments for them to do so.

Solutions, that we as an organisation can encourage in Australia include:

Integrating a mandatory subject in school curriculums (that teachers are trained to be objective but informed on how to deal with disagreements between children) which encourages debate on several topics that are of relevance (global politics, etc) to the children, creating safe dialogue with peers and the capacity to ask questions to teachers.

Incorporate education on how children can be critical thinkers when looking for reliable sources online so to avoid the spread of misinformation.

Make access to information (such as sex education, relationships, drug education, religious education) mandatory through school classes so that no matter their family background, each child receives the information necessary to understand their bodies, be aware of peer pressure and dangerous substances and respect others no matter their ethnicity, religion, sexuality.

Create safe spaces for young people to convene and discuss matters that are important to them freely and without judgement, for example youth clubs in community centres. Push for the government to fund these clubs to give young people an alternative to scrolling on their screens and/or gaming and provide an opportunity to interact with different people who perhaps think differently.

Organise events to allow the future generation to have involvement in decision making that affects them, at their local councils, and speak to the representatives of their communities to vouch for their desired changes to be made.

Push for browsers (such as Google) to implement filters for its searches to protect Generation Z from looking up inappropriate material and exposing themselves to dangerous images or websites.

Advocate for all countries to reach an agreement and establish a worldwide ban so that children cannot escape laws through VPNs

Conscientize parents on the dangers of social media platforms so to help in safeguarding their children and understanding the reasoning behind the social media ban.

To conclude, these solutions strive to find manners to encourage young people to have a say in decisions that affect them, receive and have the ability to critically think about what and what is not reliable information, as well as express their thoughts and opinions with peers and people of all ages in safe spaces. Internationally, if we share our experiences and perspectives and collaborate we can look towards a brighter and safer future where our young people have freedom of speech without the dangers that the Internet and social media bring. We need to let them be kids.

## **Sources:**

[Digital use and risk: Online platform engagement among children aged 10 to 15 | eSafety Commissioner](#)

[Let Them Be Kids: How Australia's social media ban started | The Chronicle](#)

[Online safety | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

[Consent and Respectful Relationships Education \(CRRE\) - Department of Education, Australian Government](#)

[How does Australia's under-16 social media ban work? - BBC News](#)