



# Are young Europeans tired of the digital world?

European View  
1–9

© The Author(s) 2025

DOI: 10.1177/17816858251388812  
journals.sagepub.com/home/euv**Francesco Sismondini**

European Democrat Students, Belgium

## Abstract

Digital burnout has become an increasingly urgent issue affecting young people's mental health across Europe. This article examines the rise of youth digital fatigue, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, which saw screen time surge and reported well-being decline. Drawing on empirical data from the World Health Organization, Eurofound and recent surveys, it explores how excessive online engagement correlates with deteriorating mental health outcomes among European youth. It also investigates the growing digital detox movements spanning Europe, as well as those in the US and Asia (including China's *tang ping* phenomenon), as a cultural backlash against always-online lifestyles. Policy responses are considered, focusing on the present and the future of the 'right to disconnect' in labour law and new EU regulations such as the Digital Services Act, particularly its online age-verification measures and their limitations. The article is framed through a Christian Democratic lens which emphasises that technology needs to align with human dignity and the common good. The conclusion offers a reflection that, much like the way the post-war social market economy balanced liberalism with social justice, our digital future must balance technological innovation with mental well-being and human-centric values.

## Keywords

Digital burnout, Youth mental health, Screen time, Digital detox, Right to disconnect, Digital Services Act, Christian Democracy, Technology and human dignity, Social media fatigue, EU policy

## Corresponding author:

Francesco Sismondini, European Democrat Students, Rue du Commerce 20, 1000 Brussels, Belgium.

Email: [chairman@edsnet.eu](mailto:chairman@edsnet.eu)

Creative Commons CC BY: This article is distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>) which permits any use, reproduction and distribution of the work without further permission provided the original work is attributed as specified on the SAGE and Open Access pages (<https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/open-access-at-sage>).

## Introduction

‘Digital burnout’ refers to the state of mental and physical exhaustion stemming from excessive use of digital devices and constant connectivity. Among Europe’s youth this phenomenon has become increasingly visible as smartphones, social media and remote learning blur the boundaries between leisure, education and rest. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, health experts had noted worrying trends in adolescent mental well-being. For instance, in the late 2010s the World Health Organization’s surveys had observed a decline in self-reported life satisfaction and mental health among European adolescents (Inchley et al. 2020). Many young people reported feeling ‘always on’ and overwhelmed by the incessant flow of online interactions and information. The pandemic, however, dramatically amplified these issues, making digital burnout a widespread concern in the context of youth public health. Education and work shifted online during lockdowns, and social life followed suit, often leaving young people with little escape from screens in daily life. Psychologists describe digital burnout as akin to classic burnout syndrome—featuring fatigue, anxiety and detachment—but triggered by overuse of technology (Kovacs et al. 2020). Anecdotal reports from students and young professionals in Europe increasingly speak of ‘Zoom fatigue’ and the pressure to remain reachable on messaging apps at all hours. This form of digital fatigue is often reflected in the reluctance to even answer phone calls. A survey conducted by Uswitch in 2024 highlights a concerning trend: nearly one in four young adults aged 18–34 reported that they avoid answering incoming calls. Furthermore, approximately 70% of respondents admit to disliking phone conversations, which they perceive as ‘stressful’ and frequently associated with ‘bad news’ (Uswitch 2024). The real-time nature of phone interactions appears to be a significant source of anxiety, with many young people showing a clear preference for asynchronous communication methods, such as text messages and voice notes. The European Parliament itself has acknowledged the problem, debating resolutions on digital well-being. European youth organisations and mental health charities have also raised the alarm about the toll of 24/7 connectivity on young people’s concentration, sleep and emotional resilience (OECD 2023). This introduction has outlined the concept of digital burnout and its emergence as a critical issue; the next section will quantify these trends with empirical data on screen time and mental health outcomes.

## Empirical data on youth digital fatigue

Surveys indicate that pandemic restrictions led to a sharp increase in recreational screen hours for children and adolescents (Nagata et al. 2022). Empirical evidence strongly links the pandemic era to a spike in youth screen time and a concomitant decline in mental health indicators. A systematic review of studies across several countries found that average daily screen time for children and adolescents rose from about 2.7 hours pre-pandemic to 4.4 hours during Covid-19 lockdowns, roughly a 60% increase (Stiglic and Viner 2020). In some cohorts the rise was even more dramatic—one longitudinal study in the US reported that 12- to 13-year-olds doubled their non-school screen use from 3.8 hours to 7.7 hours per day during the spring 2020 lockdown (Nagata et al. 2022). European data mirror this trend: home confinement and the shift to online learning led

many youths to turn to streaming media, social networks and gaming to cope with isolation (OECD 2023). While digital tools provided important social connections during quarantine, excessive use has been associated with negative outcomes. Surveys by the British Standards Institution (BSI) in 2025 found that 68% of UK youth felt worse about themselves after spending time on social media (BSI 2025). Such findings underscore the concept of digital fatigue: young people are not just spending more time online but are reporting diminishing returns and increased emotional exhaustion from that time.

Mental health metrics among Europe's youth have deteriorated in parallel with these digital behaviour shifts. Even before 2020, the mental well-being of young Europeans was trending downwards—the World Health Organization's study *Health Behaviour in School-Aged Children* noted a decline in adolescents' life satisfaction and a rise in psychosomatic complaints (see Inchley et al. 2020). The Covid-19 crisis then exacerbated matters. Eurofound's large-scale *Living, Working and Covid-19* e-survey recorded a precipitous rise in the share of young people at risk of depression. In 2016 about 22% of Europeans aged 18–29 were at risk of clinical depression; by spring 2021, after a year of on-and-off lockdowns, that figure had nearly tripled to over 65% of young adults reporting depressive symptoms (Ahrendt et al. 2022). This made youth the most vulnerable age group in terms of mental health impact, reversing the typical pre-pandemic pattern in which older adults had worse mental health outcomes. Notably, self-reported loneliness, anxiety and stress surged among teenagers and people in their twenties during periods of strict lockdown (Sándor et al. 2021). While these indicators improved somewhat once lockdowns eased, youth mental health has not returned to pre-pandemic baseline levels.

In spring 2020, around half of young adults were at risk; by spring 2021 nearly two-thirds of 18–29-year-olds were at risk of depression, a significantly higher rate than in older groups (Ahrendt et al. 2022). By spring 2022 the youth risk rate had fallen but it still remained above pre-pandemic levels. In addition to these broad trends, specific surveys illustrate young people's growing ambivalence towards digital life. The 2025 BSI study of 16–21-year-olds in Britain revealed striking figures: 47% said they would prefer to grow up in a world without the Internet, and 50% supported the idea of a nightly social media curfew to improve well-being (BSI 2025). These responses suggest that many youths themselves perceive an imbalance and crave more offline time. Similarly, a Harris Poll in late 2024 found a majority of American Gen Z respondents wished that popular apps such as TikTok or Instagram had never been created, blaming them for added stress (Harris Poll 2024). Such data offer quantitative backing to the notion of youth digital fatigue: after a decade of ever-increasing connectivity, today's young generation is increasingly aware of the downsides of constant digital immersion and is open to steps that restore a healthier balance.

## **The rise of digital detox movements**

Nearly half of young people would prefer life without the Internet, and a majority report negative feelings after heavy social media use (BSI 2025). This sentiment is fuelling the popularity of 'digital detox' trends among youth. Around the world, a cultural

counter-movement has emerged in response to digital burnout: the rise of digital detox initiatives and a renewed valorisation of offline life. In Europe especially, young adults have begun forming communities and holding events that encourage people to unplug. For example, The Offline Club, founded by three Dutch entrepreneurs in 2022, organises phone-free gatherings and retreats across cities including Amsterdam, London, Paris, Milan and Copenhagen (Höppner 2025). At these events, participants surrender their smartphones at the door and spend hours or days engaging in face-to-face activities—playing board games, making art, meditating or simply conversing without digital distractions. The motto of The Offline Club, ‘swap screen time for real time’, encapsulates a growing desire among youth to reclaim control over their time and attention. What started as niche meet-ups have quickly gained popularity; the concept spread Europe-wide within a year, indicating that it struck a nerve. Many young Europeans, despite being avid users of technology, are consciously seeking breaks from it—a trend confirmed by surveys such as a Deloitte study in Germany, where 84% of 18–24-year-olds reported feeling that they used their phones ‘too much’ and had taken steps to curb usage (Deloitte 2024). The digital detox trend suggests that younger generations are self-organising to find balance, even as society at large struggles to set norms for healthy technology use. In the US, similar movements have taken hold. Tech executives in Silicon Valley have famously embraced ‘digital minimalism’ for their own families (limiting screen exposure for their children), and on the consumer side an increasing number of young Americans are buying ‘dumbphones’ (basic mobile phones without the Internet) to escape the risk of becoming addicted to apps (*Guardian* 2024). National campaigns such as the National Day of Unplugging have also encouraged people of all ages to voluntarily abstain from screens for 24 hours. A Harris Poll found that 81% of US Gen Z respondents believe regular digital detoxes are important and wish it were easier to disconnect (Quad 2025).

In Asia, too, youth have fostered their own forms of push-back against hyper-competitive, tech-driven lifestyles. In China this has crystallised in the form of the *tang ping* movement (躺平, meaning ‘lying flat’), which emerged around 2021 as young Chinese openly rejected the pressures of long work hours and constant productivity. *Tang ping* is a philosophy of opting out: individuals choose minimalism and rest over the high-tech rat race. While not exclusively about Internet use, *tang ping* resonates as a reaction to burnout in all forms—digital included—and has been described as capturing ‘the pervasive mood of alienation and burnout among Chinese youth’ (Day 2021). Online forums in China dedicated to ‘anti-technology dependency’ likewise have tens of thousands of members exchanging tips on reducing smartphone use and reviving offline skills (Wutao and Davey 2024). Across cultures, these movements share a common message: in the face of digital overload, young people are seeking greater equilibrium by consciously disconnecting and re-engaging with the non-digital world. It is worth noting that these trends often flourish at the grass-roots level, independent of top-down guidance. The popularity of meditation apps, mindfulness practices and ‘phone-free’ spaces speaks to a hunger for respite. Restaurants and clubs in cities from Berlin to New York have started asking patrons to put away their phones to encourage real socialising. Even schools and universities have begun implementing device-free zones on campus to help students

focus and socialise in person. In sum, the rise of digital detox movements represents a cultural balancing act led by the youth themselves. While few advocate abandoning technology entirely, the growing consensus among young people is that intentional breaks and boundaries are necessary to safeguard mental health in an age of ubiquitous screens.

## **Legal instruments: the right to disconnect and the Digital Services Act**

Policymakers in Europe have started to respond to digital burnout and over-connectivity through legislation, with a focus on protecting workers and young users. One prominent policy idea is the ‘right to disconnect’, which has gained traction in several EU member states. The right to disconnect refers to an employee’s legal right to disengage from work communications outside official working hours without fear of reprisal. France was a pioneer, enacting a law in 2017 requiring larger companies to negotiate disconnection policies with employees (France 2016). Since then, other countries have followed: Belgium’s government, for example, passed a law in 2022 granting its 65,000 civil servants the right to ignore work emails and calls after hours (Wood and Shine 2023). Spain, Italy and Ireland have also implemented variants of the right to disconnect in labour codes or collective agreements. The purpose of these laws is explicitly to combat the ‘always on’ culture that can lead to stress and burnout. Legislators note that with remote working on the rise, the line between work and personal life has blurred, sometimes to the detriment of employee well-being (European Parliament 2021). By establishing a right to disconnect, governments seek to restore that boundary. Early evidence suggests such measures can indeed reduce burnout: companies that adopt disconnect policies report improved employee morale and work–life balance (Weber and Adăscăli 2023). However, enforcement remains an issue—many fear that a ‘right’ on paper may not change workplace expectations unless accompanied by a broader shift in culture. To strengthen this policy, in January 2021 the European Parliament passed a resolution calling for an EU-wide directive on the right to disconnect, aiming to harmonise protections across member states (European Parliament 2021). No such directive has yet been issued, but pressure is mounting for EU-level action. The growing legal recognition of disconnection shows that society—not just individuals—is rethinking the virtue of constant connectivity.

Another regulatory front impacting youth digital life is the EU’s Digital Services Act (DSA), a sweeping piece of legislation that came into force in 2023 to govern online platforms (European Parliament and Council 2022). The DSA contains specific provisions aimed at protecting minors online, including measures relating to age verification and content moderation. For instance, very large online platforms (such as major social media networks) are required to assess and mitigate systemic risks to minors using their services (European Commission 2025). In practice, this has led to debates on how platforms should verify users’ ages to enforce age-appropriate experiences (e.g. restricting adult content or the use of targeted ads for users under 18). The DSA encourages platforms to implement ‘appropriate and proportionate measures’ (European Parliament and

Council 2022, art. 28(1))—but this has proven challenging, both technically and ethically. On the one hand, robust age verification (for example, uploading government ID) can improve child safety by keeping under-age users out of harmful services. On the other hand, such methods raise serious privacy concerns, potentially forcing all users to divulge personal data or biometrics. Digital rights advocates warn that invasive age checks could erode privacy and exclude those without ID, while automated age estimation (such as facial analysis by artificial intelligence) is often inaccurate and biased (York 2025). In May 2025 the Commission issued draft guidelines on the protection of minors under the DSA (European Commission 2025; Cooper and Somaini 2025). The guidelines acknowledge these pitfalls, noting that self-declaration of age is unreliable but that more reliable methods must be proportionate and privacy-preserving (Cooper and Somaini 2025). The DSA stops short of mandating any single solution, instead pushing platforms to innovate safer designs (such as high-privacy default settings for minors, easy parental controls and restrictions on addictive features aimed at children). While the DSA represents a landmark attempt to create a safer digital ecosystem for young people, its effectiveness will depend on implementation details. Early enforcement has seen the European Commission open investigations into major platforms' handling of minors—including whether they adequately prevent under-age access to adult content sites and remove harmful material (European Commission 2025). Some member states, too, are taking their own steps: for example, age-verification laws for pornography websites have been discussed or enacted in countries such as France and Germany, albeit with mixed results and legal challenges. The 'age verification and its limits' question thus remains unresolved: how to balance a child's right to online safety with everyone's right to privacy and free expression. It echoes the broader theme of balance in the digital age—a theme that resonates strongly with certain political philosophies, including the Christian Democratic tradition discussed in the next section.

## **A Christian Democratic perspective on technology and human dignity**

Christian Democrats often emphasise a 'human-centric' approach to innovation, insisting that the measure of any economic or technological development is its impact on human flourishing. In the context of digital burnout, this perspective urges caution against treating people as mere users or data points in tech companies' algorithms. As Kadioglu Kumtepe and Riley (2024, 156) write, 'technology should be "humanised", which we can take to mean . . . not subsuming human interests into social efficiency and not unduly negating human autonomy'. In other words, any digital transformation should be continually evaluated against the criterion of human dignity. Does a given app or platform respect users' autonomy, privacy and mental well-being? Does it enhance their capacity to live a good life, or does it exploit their psychological vulnerabilities for profit? From a policy standpoint, contemporary Christian Democrats might advocate for stronger safeguards and social frameworks to protect individuals from the excesses of the digital market. This can mean support for regulations such as that which ensures the right to disconnect (to protect family life and health), data privacy laws grounded in the



idea of ‘informational self-determination’ (a concept born in Germany that ties privacy to human dignity), and laws which ensure oversight of artificial intelligence and algorithms to prevent dehumanisation. We see such support reflected in initiatives such as the EU’s ethics guidelines for artificial intelligence, which stress human agency and oversight—a vision very much in line with Christian Democratic concerns about keeping technology at the service of humankind. Pope Francis, speaking to these issues, cautioned that the digital revolution must not come at the expense of human personhood and community; in 2019 he warned policymakers not to let technology override ethics and human rights (Francis 2019).

## **Conclusion: towards balance in our digital future**

In the face of unprecedented technological change, the experiences of Europe’s youth with digital burnout offer a cautionary tale and a call to action. The Covid-19 pandemic dramatically underscored how vital yet how taxing our digital lives have become. On the one hand, connectivity kept education, work and social contact alive during lockdowns; on the other, overuse of digital media contributed to record levels of youth anxiety, depression and fatigue. Finding the equilibrium between these two realities is now an urgent societal task. The trends and responses surveyed in this article—from the grass-roots digital detox movements to legislative proposals such as those that seek to establish the right to disconnect and new regulations under the DSA—all point towards an emerging consensus: our digital future must be more deliberately balanced to safeguard mental health and human dignity.

This echoes a lesson from history. After the Second World War, European nations adopted the social market economy model, pursuing a middle path that balanced economic liberalism with social welfare and justice. That model, championed by Christian Democrats among others, understood that unfettered markets needed humane constraints to produce broad prosperity and uphold human dignity. Today, we face a similar balancing act in the digital realm. Unrestrained technological innovation and commercialisation, while driving growth and convenience, have also generated externalities such as burnout, privacy erosion and social fragmentation. As a society, we must temper digital liberalism with digital well-being measures. This means implementing policies that ensure tech companies design products responsibly (prioritising safety features for youth, for example) and empower users to set healthy boundaries. It also means investing in education that fosters digital literacy and resilience, so that young people develop the skills needed to navigate online life critically and mindfully. The encouraging news is that young people themselves are leading the way in demanding this balance—their voices call for a future where innovation and mental well-being co-exist in synergy. In conclusion, if we heed these lessons, we can aspire to a digital society that is dynamic and inventive, yet also healthy, humane and in harmony with our fundamental need for balance. Just as the social market economy once reconciled economic growth with social justice, our task now is to reconcile the digital revolution with the timeless requirements of human mental health and dignity—a call for balance in the fullest sense.

## References

- Ahrendt, D., Consolini, M., Mascherini, M., & Sándor, E. (2022). *Fifth round of the living, working and COVID-19 e-survey: Living in a new era of uncertainty*. Luxembourg. doi:10.2806/190361.
- BSI. (2025). Half of young people want to grow up in a world without Internet. 20 May. <https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/insights-and-media/media-centre/press-releases/2025/may/half-of-young-people-want-to-grow-up-in-a-world-without-internet/>. Accessed 30 June 2025.
- Cooper, D., & Somaini, L. (2025). European Commission publishes draft Guidelines on the Protection of Minors under the DSA. *Inside Privacy*, 22 May. <https://www.insideprivacy.com/digital-services-act/european-commission-publishes-draft-guidelines-on-the-protection-of-minors-under-the-dsa/>. Accessed 30 June 2025.
- Day, M. (2021). China's downwardly mobile millennials are throwing in the towel. *Jacobin*, 25 June. <https://jacobin.com/2021/06/chinese-students-white-collar-workers-millennials-lying-flat-tang-ping>. Accessed 30 June 2025.
- Deloitte. (2024). Smartphone users admit overuse and are working to curb it. *Deloitte Insights*, 6 September. <https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/technology-management/survey-users-admit-to-smartphone-overuse-implement-digital-detox.html>. Accessed 9 September 2025.
- Digitale, E. (2022). Age that kids acquire mobile phones not linked to well-being, says Stanford Medicine study. *Stanford Medicine News Center*, 21 November. <https://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2022/11/children-mobile-phone-age.html>. Accessed 9 September 2025.
- European Commission. (2023). Commission opens investigations to safeguard minors from pornographic content under the DSA. Press release, 27 May. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/news/commission-opens-investigations-safeguard-minors-pornographic-content-under-digital-services-act>. Accessed 30 June 2025.
- European Commission. (2025). *Annex to the Communication to the Commission. Approval of the content on a draft Communication from the Commission – Guidelines on measures to ensure a high level of privacy, safety and security for minors online, pursuant to Article 28(4) of Regulation (EU) 2022/2065*. Annex, C(2025) 4764 final, 14 July.
- European Parliament. (2021). Resolution with recommendations to the Commission on the right to disconnect (2019/2181(INL)). OJ C456 (21 January), 161.
- European Parliament and Council. (2022). Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 on a single market for digital services and amending Directive 2000/31/EC (Digital Services Act). OJ L277 (19 October), 1.
- France. (2016). *Loi n°2016-1088 du 8 août 2016 relative au travail, à la modernisation du dialogue social et à la sécurisation des parcours professionnels*. Official Journal of the French Republic, 9 August. <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000032983213>. Accessed 10 September 2025.
- Francis, Pope. (2019). Address to participants in the seminar 'The common good in the digital age'. *The Holy See*, 27 September. [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/september/documents/papa-francesco\\_20190927\\_eradigitale.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/september/documents/papa-francesco_20190927_eradigitale.html). Accessed 10 September 2025.
- Guardian. (2024). The 'boring phone': Stressed-out Gen Z ditch smartphones for dumbphones. 27 April. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/apr/27/the-boring-phone-stressed-out-gen-z-ditch-smartphones-for-dumbphones>. Accessed 9 September 2025.
- Harris Poll. (2024). What Gen Z thinks about its social media and smartphone usage. 10 September. <https://theharrispoll.com/briefs/gen-z-social-media-smart-phones/>. Accessed 20 September 2025.
- Höppner, S. (2025). Young Europeans are growing tired of smartphones. *Deutsche Welle*, 25 May. <https://www.dw.com/en/young-people-wary-of-internet-want-social-media-restrictions/a-72623121>. Accessed 30 June 2025.



- Inchley, J., Currie, D., Budisavljevic, S., Torsheim, T., Jåstad, A., Cosma, A., Kelly, C., & Arnarsson, A. M., eds. (2020). *Spotlight on adolescent health and well-being. Findings from the 2017/2018 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) survey in Europe and Canada. International report, vol. 1: Key findings*. Copenhagen. <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/332091/9789289055000-eng.pdf>. Accessed 30 June 2025.
- Kadioglu Kumtepe, C. C., & Riley, S. (2024). Digital dignity: The shibboleth of digitalization in Europe? *Law, Technology and Humans*, 6(3), 156–73.
- Kovacs, B., Caplan, N., Grob, S., & King, M. (2020). Social networks and loneliness during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*. doi:10.1177/2378023120985254.
- Nagata, J. M., Cortez, C. A., Cattle, C. J., Kanson, K. T., Iyer, P., Bibbins-Domingo, K., & Baker, F. C. (2022). Screen time use among US adolescents during the pandemic: Findings from the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) study. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 176(1), 94–6. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2785686>. Accessed 14 July 2025.
- OECD. (2023). *Mental health and digital technologies: Bridging the knowledge gaps*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Quad. (2025). 81% of Gen Z report wishing it was easier to disconnect from digital devices. 13 May. <https://www.quad.com/newsroom/81-percent-of-gen-z-report-wishing-it-was-easier-to-disconnect-from-digital-devices>. Accessed 30 June 2025.
- Sándor, E., Patrini, V., Mascherini, M., Aassve, A., Mencarini, L., Agosti, F., & Maksimovic, T. (2021). *Impact of COVID-19 on young people in the EU*. Luxembourg. doi:10.2806/361465.
- Stiglic, N., & Viner, R. M. (2020). Effects of screentime on the health and well-being of children and adolescents: A systematic review of reviews. *BMJ Open*. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2018-023191.
- Uswitch. (2024). *Call me maybe (not): A quarter of young people never answer the phone*. 30 April. <https://www.uswitch.com/media-centre/2024/04/Call-me-maybe-quarter-young-people-never-answer-phone/>. Accessed 30 June 2025.
- Weber, T., & Adăscăliței, D. (2023). *Right to disconnect: Implementation and impact at company level*. Luxembourg, 30 November. doi:10.2806/430915.
- Wood, J., & Shine, I. (2023). Right to disconnect: The countries passing laws to stop employees working out of hours. *World Economic Forum*, 3 February. <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/02/belgium-right-to-disconnect-from-work/>. Accessed 30 June 2025.
- Wutao, W., & Davey, A. (2024). Reconnecting in a digital world: How Chinese youth navigate the decline of local communities. *Merics*, 30 August. <https://merics.org/en/comment/reconnecting-digital-world-how-chinese-youth-navigate-decline-local-communities>. Accessed 30 June 2025.
- York, J. C. (2025). Protecting minors online must not come at the cost of privacy and free expression. *Electronic Frontier Foundation*, 16 June. <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2025/06/protecting-minors-online-must-not-come-cost-privacy-and-free-expression>. Accessed 30 June 2025.

## Author biography



**Francesco Sismondini, MA**, is the President of European Democrat Students, the student organisation of the European People's Party. He serves as liaison officer at the Research Office of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Brussels. He holds a Bachelor's degree in International Relations from the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore and a Master's degree in International Relations from the University of Milan, where he wrote his thesis on human rights in China. He is also a journalist and political analyst, having collaborated with several media outlets, including Euronews.