



EDS WG HE&R

## “Promote education for youth on personal data protection”

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Digitization has improved our lives by creating easier and faster networking, but it has also caused various drawbacks such as the unknowing disclosure of personal data that creates difficulties — not always immediately evident to companies and individuals. In particular, young people are believed to be more exposed to social media and online activities<sup>1</sup>, containing invisible threats<sup>2</sup>.

Digitization has enabled people and companies to save a great amount of time. Thanks to technology we have the ability to simplify, speed up and make work processes more precise. Internet has reduced the localisation constraints, allowing us to be anywhere and at any time thanks to, among others, social media and it has enabled us to see news and communicate in the real time.

As indicated above, despite the benefits, digitization has also created a problem in relation to the collection and disclosure of personal data. The risks are numerous and include, among others: identity theft, risk of fraud, financial losses or reputational damage, and may also have a significant social and economic impact depending on the scale of the problem<sup>3</sup>.

One of the most widespread problems is “phishing”, which consists of various techniques aimed at retrieving financial and personal credentials of users. It is usually an imitation of an e-mail sent by banks or credit institutions. In the message, users are invited to provide service access data or other personal information. Additionally, within these emails, users are often encouraged and tricked into submitting their data to websites visually emulating those of well-known businesses and services.

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<sup>1</sup> Microsoft Digital Civility Index Study

<sup>2</sup> Threats that can create psychological and moral damage, which are not material

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cybersecurity360.it/legal/privacy-dati-personali/i-rischi-dei-social-network-dal-phishing-al-cyberbullismo-i-consigli-per-difendersi/>

These phishing operations have naturally led to an increase in cases of cyberbullying, revenge porn, stalking and identity theft.

Although the European Union has acted by enacting the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation, or “**GDPR**”), many people, especially the youth, do not know how to handle their personal data online.

According to Doxa Kids' 2021 research, 68 percent of children and young people aged between 12 to 18 provide personal data online<sup>4</sup>. According to the Italian Privacy Authority (*l’Autorità Garante per la Protezione dei Dati Personali*), two thirds of young people under the age of 24 access digital platforms without even reading general terms and conditions and privacy notices<sup>5</sup>. Parents should play an important role on data security. They should control which platform their children surf on, what data they provide and think about what others<sup>6</sup> can do with personal information.

Never before has been more important to promote courses to educate our youth to understand the positive and negative side of digitization, while being able to take advantage of the opportunities but, at the same time, being aware of the dangers.

Through education, European youth would be able to be handle their data more efficiently , have greater knowledge on how to behave online and understand how to deal with any risks. After the presentation by the European Commission of the new Industrial Plan, digital skills are at the heart of future education policies, so that digitalization reaches everyone. This year 2023 is the European Year of Skills, and, thus, we believe that digital skills are more than needed for future generations.

**We, European Democrat Students (EDS), the official student’s organisation of European People’s Party (EPP):**

- Recognize the importance of protecting personal data.
- Recognize the threats posed by cybercrimes, especially for younger people;

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.quotidianosanita.it/allegati/allegato294902.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.garanteprivacy.it/home/docweb/-/docweb-display/docweb/9740562>

<sup>6</sup> With "others" we mean anyone who collects data such as website owners and data thieves

- Believe that the European Union should promote initiatives to educate young people on the conscious and moderate use of internet, social media and other electronic means to which they may potentially provide any personal data.

**Call on the European Commission and Member State to::**

- Invest in awareness campaigns —addressed to all citizens— to promote the importance of privacy;
- Propose courses, funded by social media companies, on digitally-awareness from middle schools, high schools, vocational schools and universities, teaching young people how to manage their data online while making awareness of its risks and the possibility of being targeted by cybercriminals (e.g. through phishing);
- Promote courses to all young people and their parents with training on protecting and preserving personal data during the 28<sup>th</sup> January – Data Protection Day;
- Promote master's degrees in digitization at an advanced level for IT and cybersecurity, with a special focus on the fact that women are underrepresented in vocational training and higher education in subfields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) that are highly relevant to digitization.