



Twelve Plus Group regional seminar

Human rights in the digital era. AI and social media: Opportunity or threat for youth?

Sejm of Poland, Warsaw, 8–10 June 2026

Report

Parliamentarians from the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) Twelve Plus Group met at the Sejm of Poland for a regional seminar on two of the most pressing questions in digital policy: how to protect children and young people online, and how parliaments can govern artificial intelligence (AI) in defence of human rights.

Convened by the Polish IPU Group with the Twelve Plus Group and the IPU, the seminar paired keynote addresses with extended panel debates, drawing delegations from 16 parliaments. This report outlines the main discussion points, highlights the actions already being taken by parliaments and sets out how the IPU is taking the work forward.

At a glance

Event: Twelve Plus Group regional seminar: *Human rights in the digital era. AI and social media: Opportunity or threat for youth?*

Dates and venue: 8–10 June 2026, Sejm of Poland, Warsaw; two days of debate (8 and 9 June) followed by a one-day cultural programme (10 June)

Convened by: The Twelve Plus Group, the IPU and the Polish IPU Group; chaired by Ms. Gabriela Morawska-Stanecka (Poland, IPU Vice-President) and opened by Mr. Szymon Hołownia (Poland, Deputy Marshal of the Sejm), Mr. Laurent Wehrli (Switzerland, Chair of the Twelve Plus Group) and Ms. Anda Filip (IPU Secretary General-elect)

Participation: Delegations from Albania, Australia, Czechia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Switzerland, Türkiye and Ukraine, plus a representative of the Assembly of Madrid (Spain)

Opening remarks

Opening the seminar, Mr. S. Hołownia stressed the urgent need to address the growing risks faced by young people online, including cyberbullying, harmful content, manipulation and threats to mental health. He emphasized that digital education, greater awareness among parents and teachers, and stronger regulation were essential to protecting children while allowing them to benefit from new technologies. He also called for concrete action, stressing that policymakers must act not only as lawmakers, but also as parents responsible for future generations.

“We are here not only as lawmakers, but also as parents, with a responsibility for the world to come.”

— Mr. S. Hołownia (Poland, Deputy Marshal of the Sejm)

In his opening remarks, delivered remotely from Bern, Mr. L. Wehrli placed the seminar within the broader context of the Twelve Plus Group's long-standing commitment to democracy, the rule of law and human rights. He noted that AI was reshaping societies at an unprecedented pace, giving rise to new challenges ranging from disinformation and deepfakes to autonomous weapons systems. He welcomed the seminar's approach to discussing the protection of children and young people online, noting that they were both early adopters of new technologies and among the first to be affected by regulatory gaps.

Mr. Wehrli stressed that these rapid developments in AI and the digital sphere called for stronger international cooperation and enhanced parliamentary engagement to ensure that innovation remained aligned with democratic values and fundamental rights. He further underlined the importance of

dialogue among legislators to bridge the gap between the speed of technological change and the pace of democratic decision-making.

“We must move beyond viewing AI primarily as a technological issue and instead recognize its fundamentally political, ethical and human dimensions.”

— Mr. L. Wehrli (Switzerland, Chair of the Twelve Plus Group)

Ms. G. Morawska-Stanecka welcomed participants to Warsaw and stressed the importance of addressing the impact of AI and social media on young people. She highlighted both the opportunities offered by digital technologies and the risks they posed to privacy, freedom, mental well-being and human rights. She emphasized the need for appropriate regulation, digital education and international cooperation to ensure that technological progress served people and protected human dignity.

“We must ensure that technological development serves people and strengthens human rights, rather than undermining them.”

— Ms. G. Morawska-Stanecka (Poland, IPU Vice-President)

Ms. A. Filip, IPU Secretary General-elect, argued that the choices being made about AI were inherently political, emphasizing that they involved trade-offs between innovation and safety, between commercial freedom and public protection, and between what platforms will do voluntarily and what societies require of them. In any democracy, those choices must be settled by institutions accountable to the public. Children and young people are at the sharp end of those choices: one in three internet users is a child, yet the tools they use every day are designed to maximize commercial engagement rather than to protect them, with consequences for their privacy and well-being.

“We cannot leave the protection of our citizens to platform self-regulation. It is for parliaments to enforce it.”

— Ms. A. Filip (IPU Secretary General-elect)

Ms. Filip placed this issue within the IPU's mandate, as expressed in the IPU resolution on *The impact of AI on democracy, human rights and the rule of law* (October 2024), in the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on *Parliaments and responsible AI* (November 2025) with its 13 recommendations endorsed by parliaments from 65 countries, and in the *Joint Statement on Artificial Intelligence and the Rights of the Child*, endorsed by the IPU. She pointed members towards two practical steps: adapting committee structures to anticipate the impact of fast-moving technologies – inspired by the “Committees of the Future” model pioneered in countries including Chile and Finland – and taking part in the World e-Parliament Conference, to be convened by the IPU in Brussels, Belgium, in November 2026.

Protecting children and young people online

The first day of the seminar examined how States and parliaments protect children and young people in the digital environment. In a keynote, Mr. Emilio Puccio (Secretary General, Intergroup on Children's Rights, European Parliament) set out the obligation of the State to shield minors from violence and discussed emerging legislative initiatives in the European Parliament around children's digital rights, including the implications of the European Union (EU) Digital Services Act for the protection of children, and the need for additional protections.

Panel I considered the legal foundations for the protection of children, highlighting that fundamental rights and legal guarantees must evolve alongside technological development. The discussions focused on how constitutional standards, international human rights instruments and EU regulations can effectively protect children in an increasingly globalized digital space. Panellists located the duty in national constitutions and in international law – in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Council of Europe instruments – and examined how those standards are given practical effect through the work of parliament. The debate focused on the balance between protecting children without disproportionately restricting freedom of expression and access to information, and on the respective roles of role courts, regulators, schools and platforms.

In a second keynote, Ms. Sharon Claydon (Australia, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives) set out the international trend towards restricting children's access to social media, including the ban on social media use for children under age 16 in her country, as well as the experience of holding technology companies to account.

Panel II focused on the growing problem of cyberviolence and gender-based violence online. The discussion highlighted the complexity of striking a balance between, on the one hand, children's safety

and, on the other, their right to participate in digital life and their rights to freedom of expression and access to information. The important role of parents, teachers and digital platforms in creating a safer and more responsible online environment was also emphasized. Panellists focused on the contested question of age limits, weighing the case for regulating social media against children's rights, and considering platform accountability, age verification and support for victims. Participants noted that harms such as non-consensual intimate imagery and harassment fell hardest on girls and young women.

Across both panels, the discussion showed that parliaments are already acting – and doing so in concrete ways:

- **Translating international standards into enforceable rules:** Parliaments are turning international standards into domestic obligations on platforms, drawing on instruments such as the EU Digital Services Act for transparency, content moderation and complaint mechanisms.
- **Legislating on children's online activity:** A growing number of parliaments are enacting dedicated child online safety laws that strengthen age verification, parental controls and content moderation, as well as limit targeted advertising and restrict the behavioural tracking, profiling and addictive design that recommender systems direct at minors.
- **Criminalizing AI-enabled abuse of children:** Parliaments are extending criminal law to AI-generated child sexual abuse material and non-consensual intimate imagery, in many cases criminalizing not only the distribution of such material but also its creation, and giving victims rapid routes to have content removed.
- **Investing in education and digital literacy:** Members stressed that legal protection only works alongside the digital skills of children, parents and teachers, the responsibility of families to encourage safe use, and the capacity of schools to recognize and respond to online harm.

In her closing reflections, Ms. Morawska-Stanecka underlined that protecting minors online was not only a constitutional and legal obligation, but also a shared responsibility of the State, schools, families, platforms and civil society, and that protection of fundamental rights and legal guarantees must evolve alongside the technology.

Artificial intelligence and human rights

The second day widened the lens from children to protection of fundamental rights in the AI era. Ms. Manuela Tender (Portugal) opened with a keynote on the challenges AI poses to parliaments, from risk systems and manipulation to transparency and political accountability.

Panel III examined AI and human rights, from algorithmic discrimination to surveillance, framing AI as a question of power, rights and accountability rather than of technology. Three rights came under particular focus: privacy, non-discrimination and human dignity. A fourth concern – the right to an effective remedy – was framed as being important across all of them.

Panellists addressed the profound impact of AI on human rights, examining issues associated with algorithmic decision-making, profiling, discrimination, surveillance and data collection. They identified examples of harms that are emerging quickly: opaque use of AI in the public sector; the spread of live facial recognition by police before regulation is in place; and discriminatory risk-scoring in justice systems. In several cases, it had been a parliament or an individual MP whose persistence had brought the problem to light. Interventions drew on the experience of the group, including the use of an "AI minister" in Albania for anti-corruption and public procurement – and the oversight and safeguards such a role requires – and the shared problem of AI-generated disinformation eroding the information environment that democracies depend upon.

The panel underlined that the tools to respond to these issues were directly in parliamentary hands:

- **Require impact assessments:** Parliaments can require human rights or fundamental rights impact assessments before high-risk systems are deployed, and prohibit uses incompatible with international human rights obligations – as the EU AI Act now does and as the Joint Committee on Artificial Intelligence in Ireland has recommended.
- **Mandate testing and transparency:** Parliaments can require the implementation of anti-bias and non-discrimination measures, and establish public registers – such as the one being built in the Netherlands – so that the algorithms governments use are visible.
- **Guarantee human control and redress:** Parliaments can insist on keeping a human in the loop, and on establishing a right to explanation and appeal if a decision is made by an AI system.

- **Equip parliaments to address issues related to AI:** Parliaments can build their own capacity through dedicated AI committees, and by empowering independent technology-assessment or audit bodies.

Ms. Morawska-Stanecka's closing reflections on this session stressed transparency, accountability and a human-centred approach to AI, so that innovation serves people and respects their rights.

Closing address: A common thread and agenda for action

Wrapping up the seminar, Ms. Morawska-Stanecka drew conclusions from across the three panels: technology is neither good nor bad in itself, and its impact depends on the legal frameworks, ethical principles and choices that societies make. Whether the question is a child's safety on a social media platform or a citizen's exposure to an opaque algorithm, the task for parliaments is the same: to legislate clear rules, to scrutinize how power is exercised and to keep human dignity central in the face of technological change. Protecting minors from violence, cruelty and moral corruption on the internet is not merely an obligation arising from constitutions, international law and European standards; it is also a shared responsibility of the State, educational institutions, families, technology platforms and civil society.

“Protecting human rights in the digital era requires constant vigilance, international cooperation and a consistent commitment to placing human dignity at the centre of technological development.”

— Ms. G. Morawska-Stanecka (Poland, IPU Vice-President)

Ms. Morawska-Stanecka stressed that the views expressed at the seminar demonstrated the importance of interdisciplinary dialogue in the face of the dynamic changes shaping the contemporary digital world. Discussions such as these should inspire further research, cooperation and concrete parliamentary action to ensure that digital technologies and AI become tools that empower and protect young people, rather than sources of exclusion, discrimination or harm.

How the IPU is taking this forward

The seminar connected directly to the IPU's programme of work on AI policy and strengthened several of its workstreams:

- It provided **new examples of parliamentary action** for the Organization's knowledge and evidence work, and in particular for its [Parliamentary actions on AI policy](#) tracker and its upcoming issue brief on AI and child rights.
- It brought new MPs and staff from across the Twelve Plus Group into the **peer-exchange networks the programme is building**.
- It provided an opportunity to **engage with, and draw evidence from, more parliaments**, producing insights that the IPU can carry into international AI governance, including by inviting interested Twelve Plus Group members to its events at the three meetings held in Geneva on 6–10 July 2026: the [World Summit on the Information Society Forum](#), the International Telecommunication Union's [AI for Good Summit](#) and the inaugural United Nations [Global Dialogue on AI Governance](#).

Programme

Twelve Plus Group regional seminar

Human rights in the digital era. Artificial intelligence and social media: Opportunity or threat for youth?

Sejm of Poland, Warsaw, 8–10 June 2026

Monday, 8 June 2026

10:00–10:25 **Opening of the seminar**

Welcome addresses:

- Mr. Szymon Hołownia (Poland, Deputy Marshal of the Sejm)
- Ms. Gabriela Morawska-Stanecka (Poland, IPU Vice-President)
- Mr. Laurent Wehrli (Switzerland, Chair of the Twelve Plus Group)

10:25–10:30 **Address by Ms. Anda Filip (IPU Secretary General-elect)**

10:30–10:45 **Keynote 1: The duty of States to protect minors from violence, cruelty and moral corruption**

Mr. Emilio Puccio (Secretary General, Intergroup on Children's Rights, European Parliament)

10:45–12:45 **Panel I: Constitutional and international foundations for protecting children from moral corruption on the internet**

Moderator: Ms. Kinga Gajewska (Poland)

Panellists:

- Mr. Emilio Puccio
- Ms. Lesia Vasylenko (Ukraine)
- Mr. João Pedro Louro (Portugal)
- Ms. Magdalena Kochan (Poland)
- Mr. Adam Bodnar (Poland)

14:45–15:00 **Keynote 2: Global trends in restricting children's access to social media**

Ms. Sharon Claydon (Australia, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives)

15:00–17:00 **Panel II: Combating cyberviolence and online gender-based violence. Social media bans for children – where should the line be drawn?**

Moderator: Ms. Monika Rosa (Poland)

Panellists:

- Ms. Sharon Claydon
- Ms. Elisa Vigil (Assembly of Madrid, Spain)
- Ms. Marta Puciłowska-Schiellmann (Vice-President, Institute of Digital Citizenship)
- Mr. Alexander Kriebitz (AI Policy Consultant, IPU)
- Ms. Cynthia López Castro (Mexico, President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians)
- Ms. Joanna Napierała (President, Polish State Commission for Counteracting Sexual Exploitation of Minors Under 15 Years of Age)

Tuesday, 9 June 2026

10:00–10:15 **Keynote 3: AI and human rights – new challenges for parliaments. Risk systems, manipulation, transparency, political accountability**
Ms. Manuela Tender (Portugal)

10:15–12:45 **Panel III: AI and human rights – from algorithmic discrimination to surveillance**

Moderator: Mr. Grzegorz Napieralski (Poland)

Panellists:

- Ms. Manuela Tender
- Ms. Joanna Kluzik-Rostkowska (Poland)
- Ms. Bora Muzhaqi (Albania)
- Mr. Cosmin-Ioan Corendea (Romania)
- Mr. Alex Read (Project Officer, Parliamentary Action on AI, IPU)

14:30–15:00 **Conference summary and closing**
Summary remarks by Ms. Morawska-Stanecka

Wednesday, 10 June 2026

Cultural visit