

Bulgaria

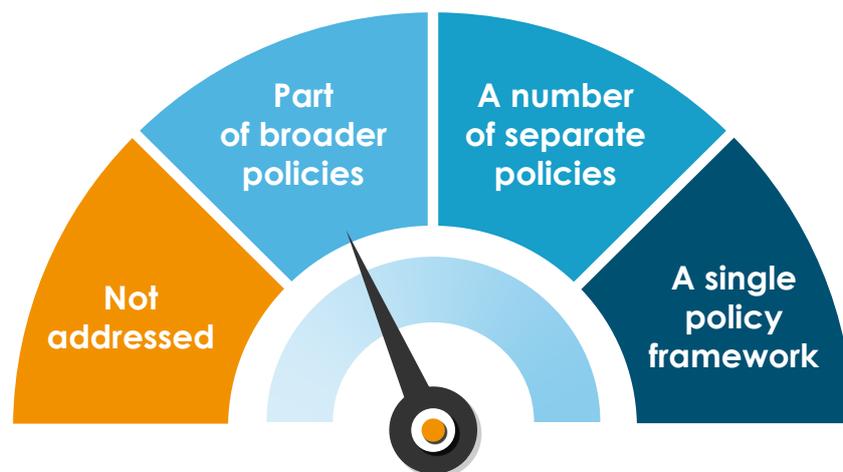
The Better Internet for Kids (BIK) Policy Map is a tool used to compare and exchange knowledge on policy making and implementation in EU Member States on the themes and recommendations of the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children (or BIK Strategy) first set out by the European Commission in May 2012. The third BIK Policy Map report (2020) examines the implementation of the BIK Strategy in 30 European countries, including all EU Member States, Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom.

For each country in the BIK Policy Map study, we outline findings for Policy frameworks, Policy making and Policy implementation, and conclude by providing a selection of good practices.

Download the full [BIK Policy Map report](#) from the Better Internet for Kids website.

1. Policy frameworks

Policy frameworks refer to the organising principles and long-term goals for policies, guidelines, decisions and other statements made at the national level in the course of putting into practice the BIK Strategy.



In Bulgaria, the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children has not specifically featured in national policy debates on the subject of children's use of the internet. This topic is covered as part of broader policies which address the four different pillars of the BIK Strategy. Some examples are given below.

Pillar 1: High-quality content online for children and young people

- There is no existent policy in this area in Bulgaria.

Pillar 2: Stepping up awareness and empowerment

- Education and media literacy form part of broader policies and are part of the digital competences described in education programmes.
- General awareness and empowerment also forms part of broader policies and are mentioned in the [National Programme for Child Protection](#) elaborated by the State Agency for Child Protection, last updated in 2018.

Pillar 3: Creating a safer environment for children online

- There is no specific policy in this area. However, creating a safer environment for children online is mentioned in the [National Programme for Child Protection](#) elaborated by the State Agency for Child Protection, last updated in 2018.

Pillar 4: Legislation and law enforcement against child sexual abuse and exploitation

- Law or regulation are the primary means for implementing Pillar 4. Details are given in the [Penal Code](#).

2. Policy making

Policy making refers to the general process by which policies are developed within each country, including how coordination and oversight is managed, the extent to which the policy agenda is informed by an evidence base, and whether there are arrangements for young people to be involved in the policy process.

2.1 How are policies coordinated?

In Bulgaria, more than one ministry, agency or body is responsible for coordinating policies regarding children's use of the internet and digital technologies with four to six ministries involved in the process. There is no formal co-ordinating body for policies relating to children's use of the internet.

The work of the [Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre](#) is monitored and facilitated by an Advisory Board named the Public Council on Safer Internet Use, which includes representatives from the key national, private and non-governmental institutions and organisations, which are working towards building a safer and more positive Internet environment for children and adolescents. Members of the Advisory Board meet twice a year, adopt the public report of the Safer Internet Centre, debate changes in operational procedures of the hotline and helpline, and discuss the overall situation concerning children's safety online. They are presented the activities and initiatives of the Safer Internet Centre and invited to participate, for example in joint initiatives or events.

2.2 Who is primarily in charge of policy coordination?

Responsibility for coordination of BIK-related policies varies by each respective pillar of the BIK Strategy.

- Regarding Pillars 1 to 3, the [Applied Research and Communications Fund \(ARC Fund\)](#) is the leading organisation. The ARC Fund is a private non-profit organisation established in Sofia in 1991. Today it is one of the leading Bulgarian non-government organisations (NGOs) working to advance the development of a modern knowledge-based society that harnesses the power of information technologies and innovations. ARC Fund is involved in the efforts to shape policies and developments towards the information society and knowledge economy in the national and international contexts. ARC Fund's activities serve a wide community of policy-makers and practitioners in central and local governments, businesses and industry associations, NGOs and civil society actors.
- Under Pillar 4, the [Ministry of the Interior](#) has the primary responsibility for policy coordination.

2.3 Data collection in the last three years

Data collection to support policy making related to the BIK Strategy includes national and regional surveys with quantitative data specifically focused on children's use of the internet, quantitative data on some topics of children's use of the internet collected as part of a broader survey, and qualitative research specifically focused on children's use of the internet. Examples include:

- A national representative study [Online Experiences of Children in Bulgaria](#) was undertaken in 2016 based on the Global Kids Online methodology.
- Separate analytical studies of [Risk and safety](#), [Parental support](#) and [Digital and media literacy](#) are also available from the same study.
- A qualitative study of [Young Children \(0-8\) and Digital Technology](#) was undertaken in 2016 in conjunction with the Applied Research and Communications Fund, the Association of Parents, and the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre.

2.4 Involvement of young people in policy making

The involvement of young people in policy making is described as one whereby young people are systematically and directly consulted and informed (for example, through hearings, consultations and specific surveys). This takes place primarily through the [Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre Youth Panel](#). The youth panel is a voluntary structure which has existed as a successful form of youth participation since 2010. Its members are young people aged 14-18 who meet face-to-face regularly (at least once per month) to develop their digital and media skills. They play an important role in the initiatives and the events organised by the centre and its partners.

3. Policy implementation

Policy implementation refers to the involvement of the relevant stakeholders in the delivery of initiatives and the spread of activities as envisaged under each of the four pillars of the BIK Strategy.

Pillar 1: High-quality content online for children and young people

Activities under Pillar 1 are led by the Safer Internet Centre with NGOs and civil society having a complementary role. Youth panel members are actively involved in the development of quality online content. The Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre is also partnering with the teen online media [TeenStation](#).

Summary of Pillar 1 actions:

	Introduced in the last 12 months	Existent before last year	Not available
Initiatives to stimulate the production and visibility of quality content for children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Initiatives to encourage children's creativity and to promote positive use of the internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Initiatives to implement standards for quality online content for children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other relevant activity (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Pillar 2: Stepping up awareness and empowerment

The Safer Internet Centre takes the lead in implementing actions under Pillar 2 with complementary roles by relevant government ministries. All initiatives, events and resource development activities are either done or initiated by the Safer Internet Centre. Other stakeholders join in activities of their choice.

In relation to teaching online safety in schools, the Ministry of Education took part in a working group with teachers and academics formed by the Safer Internet Centre. A methodology for early development of digital and media literacy in schools was created and piloted in dozens of schools. It was also presented at two national teachers' conferences. The working group also developed a national framework for introducing digital and media literacy from 1st to 12th grade which was partially used by the Ministry in a guidebook disseminated to schools.

In terms of digital and media literacy activities, several projects run by NGOs on the topics of radicalisation and hate online were launched during the period.

Summary of Pillar 2 actions:

	Introduced in the last 12 months	Existent before last year	Not available
“Teaching online safety in schools”			
Strategies to include teaching online safety in schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Activities to reinforce informal education about online safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activities to provide for online safety policies in schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activities to ensure adequate teacher training in online safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activities to support public-private partnerships in online safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
“Digital and media literacy activities”			
Activities to support young people’s technical skills required to use online media content and services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activities to encourage critical thinking around media industries and evaluating content for truthfulness, reliability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activities that encourage interaction, engagement and participation in the economic, social, creative, cultural aspects of society through online media	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activities that promote democratic participation and fundamental rights on the internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activities that challenge radicalisation and hate speech online	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
“Scaling up awareness activities and youth participation”			
National support for public awareness-raising campaigns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Involvement of children when developing national campaigns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Involvement of children when developing legislation with an impact on their online activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Activities or initiatives to match the Commission’s support for the national Youth Panels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Industry funding and technical support for NGOs and education providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Industry dissemination of awareness material either online or at the point of sale	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
“Simple and robust reporting tools for users”			
Mechanisms for reporting content and contacts that may be harmful for children such as cyberbullying or grooming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Initiatives to facilitate cooperation between helplines and law enforcement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Initiatives to monitor the effective functioning of reporting mechanisms at a national level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Pillar 3: Creating a safe environment for children online

The Safer Internet Centre takes the lead in the implementation of Pillar 3 with a complementary role played by relevant government ministries. State institutions, public agencies, industry players and NGOs join in some of the activities and initiatives launched or conducted by the Safer Internet Centre.

The availability of parental control tools such as Family Link, and settings in apps like TikTok, Facebook and Snapchat have been publicised and recommended mainly by the Safer Internet Centre. The only change in the field was the GDPR transposing with a minimum age of 14 years but it was not sufficiently publicised and is largely unknown to the target groups and society at large.

In terms of age rating and content classification, only the Safer Internet Centre has put effort into promoting the greater use of age ratings.

Initiatives in the area of online advertising and overspending are non-existent.

Summary of Pillar 3 actions:

	Introduced in the last 12 months	Existent before last year	Not available
“Age-appropriate privacy settings”			
Activities to ensure the implementation of EU legislation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Self-regulatory measures by industry about age-appropriate privacy settings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Awareness-raising activities regarding age-appropriate privacy settings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

“Wider availability and use of parental controls”			
Activities to promote the availability of parental control tools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tests and certification for parental control tools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Efforts to support industry implementation of parental control tools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
“Wider use of age rating and content classification”			
Activities to promote the adoption of age rating and content classification among relevant stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A complaints process for the effective functioning of such systems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
“Online advertising and overspending”			
Activities at the national level to ensure that legislation regarding online profiling and behavioural advertising is observed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support industry in developing codes of conduct regarding inappropriate advertising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Monitor implementation of codes of conduct at the national level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Pillar 4: Fighting against child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation

Government ministries lead in the implementation of Pillar 4 activities with a complementary role played by the Safer Internet Centre.

The Ministry of Interior, in cooperation with the Safer Internet Centre’s helpline and hotline, are the only active actors. Other stakeholders mostly assist with awareness raising.

Summary of Pillar 4 actions:

	Introduced in the last 12 months	Existent before last year	Not available
Increased resources for law enforcement bodies that fight against child abuse material online	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Effective safeguards in place to ensure democratic accountability in the use of investigative tools to combat child sexual abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Activities to support the functioning and visibility of hotlines at the national level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Activities to support the improvement of cooperation between hotlines and industry for taking down child abuse material	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. Good practices

Following are two selected examples of good practices in supporting children's use of the internet in Bulgaria:

Cyberscout Training Programme

The most successful activity of the Safer Internet Centre in the past five years has been the [Cyberscout Training Programme](#). This uses peer-to-peer training methods for effectively raising awareness of the most dangerous online risks and the ways for combating them among 10- and 11-year-old Bulgarian children. To this end, 5th-graders from across Bulgaria undergo a two-day online safety training conducted by the Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre. The children then later use the acquired skills and knowledge to conduct activities and initiatives with their peers. With the financial support of Telenor Bulgaria and the help of the Ministry of Interior, by the end of 2019, a total of 2,000 children from more than 60 cities and towns had participated in the programme.

Early Development of Digital Media Literacy Training Programme

The Safer Internet Centre and the Faculty of Pre-school and Primary Education of the Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski have developed content for early development of [digital media literacy](#) for a postgraduate qualification course. Under the guidance of the lecturers of the course and experts from the centre, university students develop a methodology for primary school students that uses elements of Montessori pedagogy to develop five core competencies based on the European Digital Competence Framework (DigiComp) and the European Association of Viewers Interests (EAVI) media literacy model. These are:

1. Information literacy.
2. Communication and cooperation.
3. Creating digital content.
4. Safety.
5. Solving problems.