



OBSERVACOM

Observatorio Latinoamericano
de Regulación, Medios y Convergencia

TO PROTECT CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS ON THE INTERNET WE NEED TO REGULATE THE BUSINESS MODELS OF TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES

Criticism of social media access bans **cannot be used to prevent or block rules that guarantee rights by limiting the power of large digital platforms.**

Several countries have established or announced rules restricting access to social media apps from the largest technology companies for people under 16 or 15, depending on the case.

Age-based access restrictions **are neither a “magic solution” nor sufficient or appropriate, and they pose risks to everyone’s privacy.** OBSERVACOM recommends that Latin American countries **exercise caution when adopting measures that ban access to social media**, such as those

adopted by Australia and some European countries.

Restricting access does not alter the business model of large technology companies, whose algorithmic designs seek to retain attention in order to extract and monetize personal data.

- OBSERVACOM recommends using the momentum of these debates to **move forward urgently and firmly with rules that guarantee effective protection for children on the Internet** within the framework of democratic, comprehensive regulation based on international human rights standards.

[READ MORE HERE \(IN SPANISH\)](#)
“To ban or not to ban”: that is not the (only) question.

FOUNDATIONS FOR DEMOCRATIC REGULATION TO PROTECT CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

Regulation to guarantee rights in the digital environment **should require digital platform companies** to take appropriate and effective measures in the following areas, among others:

- 1. ADDICTIVE DESIGN** - Removal of addictive mechanisms such as infinite *scroll*, autoplay, random rewards, and constant notifications, among others.
- 2. HARMFUL CONTENT** - Restrictions on access to content and/or services highly harmful to development, such as pornography and online gambling.
- 3. TRANSPARENCY** - Algorithmic transparency on how and why certain content is prioritized in feeds or recommended.
- 4. MODERATION AND CURATION** - Accessible, simple mechanisms to adjust or limit ranking or recommendation criteria according to young people's own preferences, and access to algorithmic ranking options different from those offered by the company.

5. PARENTAL CONTROL - Accessible, simple parental control and adult supervision mechanisms. Linking the accounts of children under 16 to their parents' or legal guardians' accounts or user profiles.

6. REPORTING AND APPEALS - Accessible and effective mechanisms for reporting and filing complaints about rights violations must be available to adults as well as children and adolescents.

7. TARGETED ADVERTISING - No use of advertising targeted at children and adolescents through techniques such as emotion recognition or virtual and augmented reality.

8. MICROTARGETING - Prohibition of advertising, *microtargeting*, and commercial prospecting strategies based on the automated or semi-automated processing of their personal data.

9. PERSONAL DATA - Maximum protection of children's and adolescents' personal data by default (minimal collection, maximum privacy settings, restricted third-party access, and limited retention periods).

10. SYSTEMIC RISKS - Ongoing assessment, prevention, and mitigation of systemic risks posed by companies' services and products to the rights of children and adolescents.

IN ADDITION, REGULATION SHOULD PROVIDE FOR:

- Guarantees of compliance with the obligations imposed on companies through an **appropriate state institutional framework**, with the **technical and budgetary resources and powers necessary** for the supervision and enforcement of its provisions.
- Obligations for the relevant State bodies to **design public digital literacy programs and campaigns** for all citizens.