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Preamble

Objectives

Objective 1: Protection of minors under the age of 14 from harmful content and addictive platform features
Objective 2: Oversight and enforceability of measures for the protection of minors

Content

The proposed legislation primarily comprises the following measures:

Measure 1: Addition to the regulations applicable to VSP [video-sharing platforms] regarding age-verification precautions to protect against features that could be developmentally harmful
Measure 2: Expansion of KommAustria's duties

Significant impacts

The proposed legislation has a material impact in the following impact category(ies):

Financial impact

Financial impacts on the federal budget and other public budgets

Simplified presentation of the financial impact

The proposed regulations will result in an additional staffing requirement at KommAustria of approx. 0.5 FTE (lawyer), amounting to around 60 000 euro. These additional administrative costs may be met from the sum of 234 000 euro (approximately 256 000 euro, index-adjusted for 2027) to be transferred annually from the federal budget to RTR-GmbH to cover KommAustria's expenditure on the regulation of video-sharing platforms, pursuant to Section 35a of the KommAustria Act.

Relationship with European Union legislation

The proposed legislation serves to transpose an EU Directive

Special features of the legislative procedure:

None

Simplified outcome-oriented impact assessment

Amendments to the Audiovisual Media Services Act and to the KommAustria Act

Submitting entity: Federal Ministry for Housing, Arts, Culture, Media and Sport

Title of the project: Federal Act amending the Audiovisual Media Services Act and the KommAustria Act

Project type:	Act:	Entry into force/effective date	2027
Year created:	2026:	Last updated	27 July 2026

Contribution to outcome objective or measure in the federal budget

Contribution to:

- Outcome objective: Strengthening Austria as a business location through initiatives in the telecommunications, postal and media sectors. Ensuring a resilient, nationwide, high-performance fixed and mobile communications infrastructure and provision of postal services, as well as supporting the digital transformation process in the media sector and promoting quality journalism (Subdivision 17 Housing, Media, Telecommunications and Sports - Federal Budget 2026)

Systems analysis

Definition of the problem

According to the European Parliament's report of 4 November 2025 on the protection of minors in the online environment (see https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-10-2025-0213_EN.pdf), the online behaviour of children and adolescents is cause for considerable concern. A large proportion of young people use the internet almost constantly; a significant proportion exhibit problematic or addiction-like patterns of use. Studies indicate that excessive social media use can have a negative impact on mental health (in particular regarding anxiety and depression) as well as on cognitive and neural development. These effects are amplified by algorithm-guided mechanisms of video-sharing platforms (VSP) — such as endless scrolling, automatic playback, and reward systems for continuous use — which are specifically designed to increase time spent on use and user engagement, thereby promoting addictive behaviour.

The existing requirements under EU law (in particular the Audiovisual Media Services Directive [AVMSD] and the Digital Services Act [DSA]) are essentially limited to general obligations for VSP providers to take appropriate measures for the protection of minors.

Against this background, the project pursues the goal of strengthening the protection of children and adolescents in the digital environment. In particular, the plan is to introduce a ban on access for children under the age of 14 to VSPs, which include the most widely used social media platforms, and to require providers to implement effective access restrictions (in particular age verification) for services with features that could potentially have a negative impact on the development of minors. At the same time, the principle of freedom of expression is taken into account by not providing for a general prohibition of use, but by instead limiting the obligation to control access to VSPs with features that could constitute an especial danger to minors.

The present draft requires notification pursuant to Directive (EU) 2015/1535.

Data privacy impact assessment pursuant to Article 35, EU General Data Protection Regulation

The requirements for age verification methods set out in this project are designed to ensure a verification process that ensures data privacy consistently with current technological standards, with particular emphasis on data minimisation. The need for a data privacy impact assessment would have to be assessed by the respective data controller; in this regard, we would like to emphasise here the obligation on providers of age verification methods to document their compliance with data privacy requirements (proposed Section 54e(3a) of the AMD-G).

Interoperability assessment pursuant to Article 3(1) of the Interoperable Europe Act

The need for an Interoperability assessment pursuant to Article 3(1) of the Interoperable Europe Act (IEA) has not been assessed.

Digital Readiness Check

The need for the digital readiness check has not been assessed.

Objectives

Objective 1: Protection of minors under the age of 14 from harmful content and platform features that promote addiction

Description of the objective:

Minors under 14 years of age must be effectively protected against adverse developmental effects of certain VSPs. Here, we take into account the fact that risks arise not only from content, but in particular from the way the platforms operate (e.g. algorithmic recommendation systems or designs that encourage addictive behaviour).

Implemented by:

Measure 1: Addition to the regulations applicable to VSP [video-sharing platforms] regarding age-verification precautions to protect against features that could be developmentally harmful

Measure 2: Expansion of KommAustria's duties

Objective 2: Oversight and enforceability of measures for the protection of minors

Description of the objective:

Effective oversight must ensure that VSP providers implement effective age verification systems and access restrictions for minors under 14 years of age. Furthermore, it must ensure that, as determined specifically on a case-by-case basis by KommAustria, platform providers established in other Member States can also be required – in compliance with the provisions of EU law and procedural safeguards – to take action to ensure the protection of young people.

Implemented by:

Measure 2: Expansion of KommAustria's duties

Measures

Measure 1: Addition to the regulations applicable to VSP [video-sharing platforms] regarding age-verification precautions to protect against features that could be developmentally harmful

Description of the measure:

VSP providers will be required to block access for minors under 14 if their services exhibit certain features that could be harmful to young people's development. The age verification systems in place must be designed in such a way that they cannot be easily circumvented, but at the same time remain proportionate and do not disproportionately impede access for adult users.

Implementation of:

Objective 1: Protection of minors under the age of 14 from harmful content and platform features that promote addiction

Measure 2: Expansion of KommAustria's duties

Description of the measure:

KommAustria has been entrusted with the following new responsibilities:

- Assessment of whether age verification and access restrictions requirements have been met
- Official intervention in the event of serious breaches (e.g. where age verification is not effective) and the initiation of proceedings to verify the adequacy of the measures
- Expansion of options for lodging a complaint
- Imposition of penalties in case of non-compliance with official orders
- The ability to take action, in accordance with the requirements of EU law, against VSP providers established in other EU Member States.

Implementation of:

Objective 1: Protection of minors under the age of 14 from harmful content and platform features that promote addiction

Objective 2: Oversight and enforceability of measures for the protection of minors

Impact assessment

Simplified presentation of the financial impact

The proposed regulations will result in an additional staffing requirement at KommAustria of approx. 0.5 FTE (lawyer), amounting to around 60 000 euro. These additional administrative costs may be met from the sum of 234 000 euro (approximately 256 000 euro, index-adjusted for 2027) to be transferred annually from the federal budget to RTR-GmbH to cover KommAustria's expenditure on the regulation of video-sharing platforms, pursuant to Section 35a of the KommAustria Act.

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