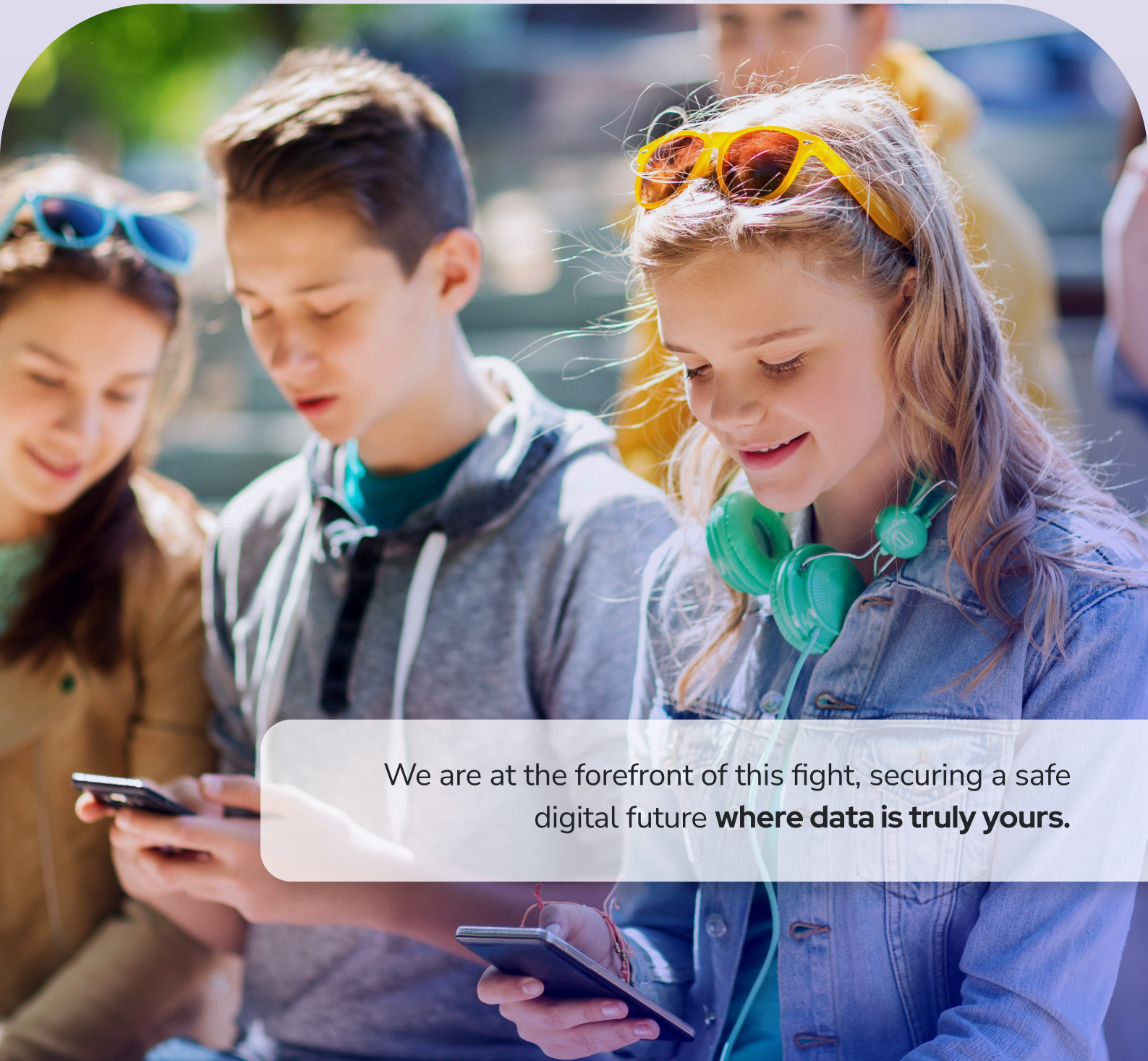


# MINORS ONLINE

POCKET GUIDE FOR PARENTS ON HOW  
TO PROTECT THEIR CHILDREN IN 2026



We are at the forefront of this fight, securing a safe digital future **where data is truly yours.**

# 00.

**Dear parent,**

Growing up in the digital world is exciting, full of opportunities and challenges. And for **our children**, the digital world isn't just a tool. It's their playground, their classroom, and even their town square.

The internet helps young people build digital literacy, **sharpens their ability** to navigate a complex world, and allows children to find communities that share their interests and passions.

However, **we cannot ignore the shadows**. The same platforms that foster connection can also expose young users to harmful content, dark design patterns and exploitation.

This guide is here to **help you safely and consciously navigate your child through this world**, allowing them to explore, learn, and have fun without feeling overwhelmed.



## How An Healthy Digital Environment Looks Like In 2026?

A healthy digital environment isn't a life without screens. It's one where screens are used with intention. According to OECD, the most confident children aren't those with the most restrictions, but those with confidence in their digital abilities. Digital literacy is associated with the capacity to evaluate the accuracy and quality of online.

# 01.

## OUR MANIFESTO

At **SOMI**, we believe that safety isn't a cage but it is a fundamental human right that unlocks true freedom. That's why your goal as a parent isn't to patrol the digital borders, but to guide your child to thrive within them.

This guide moves past fear and toward digital resilience, so you can support your children online with wisdom and understanding.



### KNOWING IS POWER

Understanding the risks is the first step to neutralizing them.



### PRIVACY IS A RIGHT

Every user has a right to have control over their own digital footprint.



### CONNECTION IS KEY

The best firewall is a child who feels safe talking to their parents.

In 2026, personal data is the currency of the web. Teaching your child that their personal data, like their location, their photos, and even their "likes", has worth is an essential first step.

***We aren't just protecting our children from the world. We are preparing them for it. That is the ultimate challenge, and you are more than ready for it.***

# 02.

## MINORS ONLINE: THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE IN NUMBERS

### Universal connection

**97%** of young people (aged 16-29) across Europe use the **internet daily**.

### Safety gap

While **164 countries** have legal measures for Child Online Protection, many still struggle with enforcement (only **94** have effective strategies to implement them). If the law is the shield, **you are the frontline**.

### Hidden risks

Across 25 countries, **80% of the children** report feeling at risk of **exploitation online**. Predators often use **grooming techniques** disguised as friendly interactions in gaming environments or social media platforms, creating communities with shared interest to cultivate relationships with the victim

### The AI shift

Generative AI has evolved into a **companion and educator** for children worldwide. The new digital literacy skill today is therefore the ability to distinguish **"what is real"** from what is synthetically generated.

# 03.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS IN 2026?

**Knowledge is your first line of defense.** By understanding how the digital world can be misused, we can better equip our children to navigate it safely.

### Sexual Exploitation & Abuse

The use of digital tools to facilitate sexual abuse or the exploitation of vulnerable minors.

### Addiction and Manipulative feed

This includes persistent cyberbullying, harassment, and other forms of aggression that follow a child from the playground to their bedroom.

### Harmful content

Exposure to material that promotes violence, self-harm, toxic social standards and age-inappropriate content often follow a child from the playground to their bedroom.

There is a direct correlation between digital safety and physical health, resulting in sleep deprivation, anxiety, and a significant decrease in self-esteem. **Protecting personal data is protecting mental health.**

# 04.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

### **BE THE FIRST MOVER, BE THE ROLE MODEL.**

Your child is observing you, therefore it is important that you set a good example. Avoid using your phone during social moments. Always ask for your child's permission before posting a photo of them. This teaches them the value of digital consent.

### **KEEP YOURSELF UPDATED.**

To help them build their digital skills, you need to first strengthen your own. Get comfortable with privacy settings, safe search options, and parental controls. When you understand how to use these features, you become a trustworthy resource for them.

### **EMPOWER, DON'T JUST RESTRICT.**

Banning devices usually fails and may lead children to conceal their online activities. Instead, focus on empowering them digitally. Discuss the concept of a digital footprint and emphasize that online actions have real-world effects. Teach caution when encountering suspicious links or attachments. Encourage exploration of safer, privacy-respecting alternatives to popular platforms.

### **SPEAK TO YOUR CHILD.**

When something feels off with your child, start the dialogue before a crisis occurs. Ask open-ended questions like: "*Have you ever felt pressured to share a photo or information you didn't want to?*"; or "*What would you do if someone was being mean to you in a game lobby?*"; or "*Should we check our privacy settings together this weekend?*".



# 05.

## SEEK HELP AND SUPPORT.

You are not alone in this fight. If an issue becomes serious, such as grooming or persistent cyberbullying, reach out for professional help. School and authorities, helplines and communities can provide you with the assistance you and your kid(s) need.

## CLR: CALM, LISTEN & REASSURE.

If your child comes to you with a problem, follow this simple 3-step approach.

### CALM

When the truth feels overwhelming, take a deep breath. Reacting with anger or panic will make the door close.

### LISTEN

Listen with an open mind and without judgment. Your goal isn't to fix it immediately, but to deeply understand.

### REASSURE

Ensure your children know you're always there for them. Trust grows when they feel that their safety matters more than any punishment.

### The Parent's Insight.

Safety is built on trust, not surveillance. Respecting your child's privacy while maintaining an "open door" policy, is the best firewall you can have. When you respect their space, they are much more likely to invite you into it when they feel unsafe.

# 06.

## HOTLINES

**If something goes wrong online**, you don't have to handle it alone. The European Union provides specialized services for every type of digital risk.



In the Netherlands



*Centrum Seksueel Geweld*



*Meldknop*



*OffLimits*



*Safer Internet Centre*



In Europe



*BIK (EU)*



*Child Helpline International*



*International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE)*

# 07.

## ABOUT SOMI

The Foundation for Market Information Research (SOMI) is a **non-profit organization** established to identify and influence issues of social importance.

SOMI is a recognized claims foundation in the field of privacy and data autonomy and is committed, among other things, to the **protection of the fundamental rights of consumers and minors who use various online services.**

SOMI investigates abuses, informs the public and helps injured parties. SOMI does this by conducting **collective proceedings and claiming compensation.**

**SOMI is currently investigating alleged GDPR violations by TikTok, Meta (Instagram and Facebook) and X (formerly Twitter).**

With the app that SOMI has developed, we want to restore ownership and control over your (minor's) personal data.

**All your data. all yours.**



# 08.

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