



Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Minister for Social Affairs and

Public Health

Jakob Forssmed

Dear Commissioner Breton, Dear Commissioner Kyriakides,

As Minister for Social Affairs and Public Health, I would like to underline the important work of the Commission in developing the legal framework that protects and promotes the health and safety of children and youth online, including through the Digital Services Act (DSA).

The daily lives of children and young people increasingly take place in digital environments. It is of utmost importance that their rights are safeguarded there, just as in the physical world. The extensive use of digital media where harmful and inappropriate content is accessible to children and youth is a serious concern. In a recently published thorough investigation conducted by one of Sweden's major newspapers, children and youth themselves testify how they are subjected to content such as deadly violence, abuse, death, self-harm, and suicide. Content they have not chosen to take part of that still emerge on their screens due to algorithms in full control of their scroll. The images and pictures children and youth are involuntary exposed to stay with them and are seriously affecting their well-being and mental health. The deep concern that these testimonies provoke cannot be underestimated.

Another serious concern is the constantly increasing time children and youth spend on screens and digital media, that displace important protective factors for health, such as sleep and physical activity. According to a newly published research compilation from the Swedish Public Health Agency, ordered by the Government, the increased use can partly be explained by the technical and commercial design of digital media, a design that stimulates continuous use and that does not consider the negative effects on children's and young people's health. Thus, we must acknowledge that social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube and Instagram can cause harm to children and youth in multiple ways, and we need to ensure that the rigorous

regulations adopted by the co-legislators are effectively implemented with due regard to these serious concerns.

While the expectations on the introduction of regulations such as the DSA are high, we understand and respect the complexity of this regulation. However, investigations such as the one recently published in Sweden demonstrates the need to act urgently. I encourage the Commission to continue its efforts and swiftly take decisive action to ensure that social media companies are held responsible and take actions for the impact that their products have on the health and safety of our children and youth, in line with the recently adopted legal framework.

I remain at your disposal and look forward to continued cooperation to protect and promote the health and safety of children and youth online.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'J. V. D.', is positioned below the closing text.