

20 March 2026, Dublin (Ireland)

European doctors discuss Irish and EU action on digital health harms

The leaders of national medical associations from across Europe have gathered in Dublin for the General Assembly of the Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME). A core topic of the event, hosted by the Irish Medical Organisation (IMO), is the digital determinants of poor health, such as social media, AI, pornography and gambling.

The IMO is advocating for greater action to protect children from on-line harm. Professor Matthew Sadlier said “A ban on social media for under-16s is imperative given the overwhelming negative impact social media is having on our children’s health, including features such as infinite scroll, recommender algorithms, and exposure to predatory behaviour. In the face of overwhelming evidence we cannot abdicate our responsibilities for our children’s health to social media companies and we must legislate.

“In addition, the scale and pace of change in pornographic material compared to just a few short years ago has been overwhelming and disturbing. Now, pornography increasingly features extreme acts including gender-based violence and is widely accessible. Appropriate age verification systems must be put in place.”

CPME President Dr Ole Johan Bakke added “CPME is grateful to learn from the national debate on digital health in Ireland, and the leading advocacy of the IMO. The media environment is changing due to the growing importance of digital technology, online platforms, and the rising importance of new media players, such as influencers. We must protect citizens, particularly minors, from harmful media content and digital tools, as well as addictive designs, in the evolving digital landscape.

“For example, we urge the EU to take action to minimise the exposure of children to the marketing of unhealthy foods and drinks in the expected revision of its Audiovisual Media Services Directive. Action on the commercial determinants of health, including the aggressive marketing of tobacco, alcohol, ultra-processed foods and sugary drinks, must remain in the EU’s new cardiovascular health plan.

“European doctors call on the incoming Irish Presidency of the Council of the EU to take account of the digital determinants of poor health in its programme from July to December 2026.”

The meeting will include an in-depth policy discussion on the health effects of gambling and the EU's Digital Omnibus Package, which will amend rules on artificial intelligence. Beyond digital health, the agenda also includes debates on the health workforce, and rules affecting medical devices and innovation in the biotechnology sector.

Notes to editors

The role of the Irish Medical Organisation ([IMO](#)) is to represent doctors in Ireland and to provide them with all relevant services. It is committed to the development of a caring, efficient and effective Health Service.

The Standing Committee of European Doctors ([CPME](#)) represents national medical associations across Europe. We are committed to contributing the medical profession's point of view to EU and European policy-making through pro-active cooperation on a wide range of health and healthcare related issues.