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*On 7 June 2021, the CPME adopted the 'CPME Feedback on the Commission's Roadmap on a Declaration of Digital Principles (CPME 2021/056 FINAL).*

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## CPME Feedback on the Commission's Roadmap on a Declaration of Digital Principles

*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.*

CPME welcomes the development of a set of digital principles shaping Europe's digital society in the European way in a political declaration of the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council.

CPME highlights the following points:

1. The concept of 'healthy living' refers to the practice of health enhancing behaviours. It implies the physical, mental, spiritual, and economic capacity to make healthy choices. It focuses on healthy eating, physical activity but also goes beyond to avoid addictive behaviours and being able to cope with life's stresses and other mental health issues.<sup>1</sup>
2. European Doctors advise caution on the intensive use of digital technologies in children and young people. Sufficient links have been found between internet use and mental wellbeing, and concerns have been voiced that digital technologies and social media are exacerbating feelings of anxiety and depression, disturbing sleep patterns, leading to cyber-bullying, body image troubles and disordered eating.<sup>2</sup> Screen time and online gaming are also a source of concern,<sup>3</sup> as well as self-

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<sup>1</sup> [CPME Policy on Healthy Living](#), 6 April 2019.

<sup>2</sup> OECD, [Children & Young People's Mental Health in the Digital Age – Shaping the Future](#) (2018); OECD, Recommendation of the Council on Children in the Digital Environment, OECD/LEGAL/0389 (2021).

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization, Guidelines on physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep for children under 5 years of age, (2019), <<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/311664>>, last accessed 31 May 2021; Armitage, Richard, [Gambling among adolescents: an emerging public health problem](#), The Lancet Public Health 6, no. 3 (2021): e143.; Emond A, Griffiths M, [Gambling in children and adolescents](#), British Medical Bulletin, Vol. 136, Issue 1 (December 2020), p 21–29; Stavropoulos V, Vassallo J, Burleigh T, Gomez R and Carras M, The role of internet gaming in the association between anxiety and depression: A preliminary cross-sectional study, Asia-Pacific Psychiatry (2021): e12474.

harm and suicidal ideation,<sup>4</sup> child abuse and exploitation.<sup>5</sup>

3. To become effective, the principle of “Protecting and empowering children and young people in the online space”, the long-term impact on children and young people’s health, both physical and mental must be considered. The principle as it stands is very narrow, too reactive, and not sufficiently proactive.
4. European Doctors call for a broader and proactive principle that encompasses ‘prevention’ against the negative effects of the online space, reading as “Protecting and empowering children and young people in the online space and preventing the negative effects thereof”. This will ensure that children and young people are able to live healthy lives, which will in turn reduce the incidence of non-communicable diseases.
5. European Doctors also call for the establishment of a right for a “clean data slate” at the age of 18. When children are old enough to understand the consequences of data collection, they should be granted the right to demand companies to delete any personal information collected about them, as data subjects, prior to their legal emancipation, safeguarding patient data as determined by the data subject him/herself.<sup>6</sup>
6. Moreover, CPME strongly recommends that IT professionals abide to ethically-based codes of conduct and be subject to regulatory oversight and sanctions.<sup>7</sup> As the European Commission is targeting to have by 2030 at least 20 million employed ICT specialists,<sup>8</sup> there needs to be sufficient assurances that this new generation of professionals meets high ethical standards and complies with professional obligations (e.g. confidentiality, protection of personal data, privacy, maintain the integrity and security of IT systems).
7. Finally, European Doctors advise caution on lack of alternatives other than digital. The digitalisation should not be imposed as the only available mean, procedure, or tool. Other forms should continue to subsist.

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<sup>4</sup> McTernan N, Ryan F, The Harmful impact of suicide and self-harm content online: A review of the literature (2020), National Suicide Research Foundation, Ireland, <<https://www.nsrif.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Harmful-impact-of-suicide-and-self-harm-content-online-Review-of-the-literature-Final.pdf>>, last accessed 7 June 2021.

<sup>5</sup> UNODC, Study on the Effects of New Information Technologies on the Abuse and Exploitation of Children (2015), New York, <[https://www.unodc.org/documents/Cybercrime/Study\\_on\\_the\\_Effects.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/Cybercrime/Study_on_the_Effects.pdf)>, last accessed 7 June 2021.

<sup>6</sup> [CPME Policy on the European Health Data Space - Focus on Health Research and Policy Making](#), 20 March 2021.

<sup>7</sup> [CPME response to Public Consultation on European Data Strategy](#), 7 May 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Annex to the Commission Communication on ‘2030 Digital Compass: the European way for the Digital Decade’, COM(2021)118 Final, 9 March 2021.