



By: TA | AP Brief

Spain plans to ban social media for under-16s



Spain plans to ban social media access for children under 16, Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said Tuesday, in a move designed to shield young people from the harms of online content.

Sánchez chided the world's biggest tech companies in a speech at a Dubai summit, saying they allow illegal content such as child sex abuse and nonconsensual sexualized deepfake images to proliferate on their platforms.

He said that governments also needed to “stop turning a blind eye.”

“Today, our children are exposed to a space they were never meant to navigate alone,” Sánchez said. “We will no longer accept that.”

Spain joins a growing number of countries, including **Australia** and **France**, which have taken or are considering measures to restrict minors' access to social media.

In January, France approved a bill banning social media for children under 15, paving the way for the measure to take effect at the start of the next school year in September.

The bill would also ban the use of mobile phones in high schools.

Australia has started implementing the world's first social media ban for under-16s, after its government passed a measure that holds platforms including TikTok, Twitch, Facebook, Snapchat, Reddit, X and Instagram liable for failing to prevent children from having accounts.

Denmark has introduced **similar legislation** to ban access to social media for users under 15, while the **U.K. said** last month it would consider banning young teenagers from social media, as it tightens laws designed to protect children from harmful content and excessive screen time.

Sánchez said that Spain would require social media companies to enforce the ban with age verification systems, “not just check boxes, but

real barriers that work.”

A coalition of the digitally willing

Many social media apps require users to be at least 13, though enforcement varies. Users are often asked to declare their own age.

Spain's ban will be added to an already existing measure centered on digital protections for minors that is being debated by parliament, a government spokesperson said. Sánchez said that could happen as early as next week.

It's unclear if Sánchez's left-wing coalition will get the approval needed in Parliament, where his government lacks a majority.

A spokesperson for the far-right Vox party said the Sánchez government's measure was aimed at “making sure that no one criticizes them,” while the main opposition party — the center-right Popular Party — said it had proposed similar restrictions last year, seemingly offering its support.

Social media companies Meta — which owns Facebook and Instagram — and X did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Sánchez is the true fascist totalitarian - Elon Musk

But Elon Musk, X's billionaire owner and the world's richest man, wrote that “Sánchez is the true fascist totalitarian,” in a post referencing the Spanish leader's speech at the World Governments Summit in the United Arab Emirates.

In his address, Sánchez also said that Spain had joined five other European countries in what the Spanish leader dubbed a “coalition of the digitally willing” to coordinate the regulation of social media platforms at a multinational level.

Additionally, Spain would make it a criminal offense to manipulate algorithms to amplify illegal content and would hold tech executives liable for failing to take down criminal content from their platforms, he said.

"No more pretending that technology is neutral," Sánchez said.

Both measures would require parliamentary approval to change Spanish law, a government spokesperson said.