# CRC/C/GC/25 Draft General Comment No. 25 (202x) Children’s rights in relation to the digital environment

## SUBMISSION CONTEXT

As we already know, technologies and the internet are a part of our lives, gradually; the line that separates the physical and virtual world disappears. Children start to interact with the network increasingly earlier, being 7 years the age[[1]](#footnote-1) they start, and it is used by 95,1% of children among 10 and 15 years old[[2]](#footnote-2).

At Save the Children, we are aware of the benefits that the internet and social media usually have and even more during this COVID19 crisis. Nonetheless, we are concern about children’s overexposure to the internet that may lead to situations of violence, as well as, the abuse of time they spend in front of the screens. We are also aware that on confinement situations, the use of the internet increases exponentially, it is strengthened as a social interaction means, and in many cases, it is the only way to be in contact with our friends and family.

## I INTRODUCTION

### Paragraph 1

Children see digital technology as a platform to relate to their peers and develop their personality, especially between teenagers. Children between the ages of 0 and 18 do not have the same needs. According to their age, these needs can change and evolve as they grow.

### Paragraph 3

Children’s digital rights are included in the rights of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Virtual life is as real as life in the physical world; it is part of daily experiences, and a more relationship space. Therefore, it is also necessary to protect children on this environment so that they can enjoy all the benefits of the internet in a responsible and secure way.

### Paragraph 4

Children face risks on the digital environment. The violence that children and teenagers suffer on their daily use of the technologies can be as real and harmful as physical violence and usually it does not come alone. In fact, several forms of online violence can be combined and can lead to physical violence. The possibility of reproducing and forwarding digital contents endlessly, makes these forms of violence prolonged over time.

## VI. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

## E. Right to privacy (art. 16).

### Addition of a last new paragraph

Even if the right to be forgotten is not expressly contained in the CRC, it is part of those rights related to the protection of personal data. According to the European Data Protection Regulation, everyone has the right to have his or her searches and personal data shared on social media and other similar services removed from these platforms.

## VII. Violence against children (arts. 19, 24 (3), 28 (2), 34, 37 (a) and 39; OPSC; OPAC)

### Paragraph **82**

In the context of COVID19 and after the isolation situation that we have lived, it is more important than ever to promote good practices on a healthy and responsible use of the internet, without forgetting that online risks do not disappear.

### Paragraph 85

The violence that children and teenagers suffer on their daily use of the technologies can be as real and harmful as physical violence and usually it does not come alone. In fact, several forms of online violence can be combined and can lead to physical violence. The possibility of reproducing and forwarding digital contents endlessly, makes these forms of violence prolonged over time.

All these forms of online violence evolve as fast as technology. In addition to those mentioned by the Committee, from Save the Children Spain we want to remind three other ones equally important.

* Onlineviolence inside the couple or by a former partner is usually marked by gender inequality, this type of violence is made up of behaviors that are repeated during courtship and once this is over, it aims at controlling, undermining or harming the other. Some of the other forms of violence that we have analyzed can feed it.

Instigation to harmful behaviors (platforms that promote self-harming or eating disorders) and involuntary exposure to sexual or violent material (by doing internet researches or downloading files that have inappropriate material), are risks higher during confinement since children and teenagers spend more hours connected.

Sharenting: even if it is not a proper form of violence, sharenting is a risky behavior by relatives and caregivers /mostly parents), who continuously post pictures and videos of their children on their social media profiles. The main risk of sharenting is the lack of control over the content, it may be used with a different purpose and lead to violence against children. Nowadays, due to a greater use of the social media as a way of interacting, we can overexpose our children on the internet, sharing what we usually do as a family during our confinement.

It may seem like a harmless habit, but we must be aware of the consequences that it may have on the lives of our children. The digital footprint is the trace we leave when we use internet and we cannot erase it. For children, this footprint is created increasingly earlier, due to the publication of personal information (pictures, videos, etc.), done by parents. Children and teenagers have the right to their own digital presence[[3]](#footnote-3).

In addition, we can expose our children, without noticing, to cybercriminals who may take the material that has been posted on social media. Related to the protection, more often than not, we cannot control who sees the content, as adults we are assuming a risky behavior that affects children directly, and that can expose them to different forms of violence such as cyberbullying or online grooming.

## XI. Education, leisure and cultural activities

## A. The right to education (arts. 28, 29)

### Paragraph 107

Education should aim for developing the personality, skills and mental and physical capacity of each individual to the fullest of their possibilities. Thus, education must also include the development of technological skills, as well as on the safe and responsible use of the internet.

1. Jiménez, E., Garmendia, M., y Casado, M. A. (2018). Entre selfies y whatsapps. Oportunidades y riesgos para la infancia y la adolescencia conectadas. [*Among selfies and whatsapps. Opportunities and risks for childhood and adolescence connected*]. España: Gedisa. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Save the Children 2019. Viral violence. Violence against childhood and adolescence on the digital context analysis. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For instance, Spanish legislation consent to share minors under 14 years old personal information must be provided by their parents with some limits. Children entitled to honor, to personal and family privacy and self-image, and it can be considered an intrusion to this right the actions undertaken by parents, legal guardians, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)