

17 June 2026, 14:00 - 15:30 (CEST)

Online

Research Partnership Platform Webinar: Children's protection online - What role for consumer protection authorities?

The Research Partnership Platform (RPP), created in 2010, provides an informal forum that brings together scholars and enforcers to support dialogue and cooperation in competition and consumer protection policies. The United Nations Conference on Competition and Consumer Protection, in its 9th session held in 2025, recognized the role of the platform in strengthening UNCTAD's research and policy analysis capacities and linking research findings to its technical cooperation pillar.

In our digitalized world, children are increasingly connected and exposed to business practices that they and other vulnerable consumers often cannot detect or fully understand. Children use online gaming platforms, engage in exchanges on social networks, and follow video and music streaming platforms and apps. These platforms and apps have recently come into the spotlight for deliberately embedding design features aimed at maximizing youth engagement to drive advertising revenue into their products.¹ This potentially puts the mental health of vulnerable consumers, especially children, in danger.

[United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection](#) provides for the protection of vulnerable and disadvantaged consumers, in its paragraph 5(b); as well as the protection of consumers from hazards to their health and safety in paragraph 5(c). Children are vulnerable in their use of digital platforms and social networks as they are not aware of the consequences of their actions on these platforms since their brains are still developing and they cannot necessarily distinguish between good or unfair practices and neither control themselves to use them moderately. These platforms are believed to be designed to be addictive. In a digital environment where adults may easily demonstrate addiction to some of these platforms/apps, children cannot be expected to take informed decisions in how they use and manage this space.

This RPP webinar aims to discuss the relevance of the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection and the newly adopted [United Nations Principles for Consumer Product Safety](#) to the protection of vulnerable consumers including children in national consumer protection legislation. It brings scholars to reflect on the role of consumer protection authorities in shielding children from adverse mental health effects stemming from the addictive use of platforms and social networks.

Register [here](#).

¹ [Landmark trial accusing social media companies of addicting children to their platforms begins](#)





Programme

14:00 - 14:05 Opening remarks: **Mr. Rémi Lang**, Officer in Charge, Competition and Consumer Policies Branch, UNCTAD

14:05 - 15:00 Panel discussion: **Children's online protection: What role for consumer protection authorities and policy makers?**

Moderator: Ms. Ebru Gökçe Dessemond, Economic Affairs Officer, UNCTAD

Speakers:

- **Prof. Claudia Lima Marques**, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Brazil
- **Dr. Willard Mwemba**, Chief Executive Officer, COMESA Competition and Consumer Commission
- **Dr. Vellah Kedogo Kigwiru**, Doctoral Research Fellow, Technical University of Munich School of Governance
- **Dr. Laura Best**, Policy Specialist, South Africa

Discussant:

- **Prof. Christine Riefa**, School of Law, University of Reading, United Kingdom

15:00 - 15:30 Interactive debate

Contact

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