

Slow Italian, Fast Learning

Ep.413: Meet the tech company developing tools for digital detox, as more countries enact underage social media bans

Italian	English
<p>In questo circolo di tennis nel sud della Spagna, molti dei giocatori adolescenti sono sui loro smartphone, intenti a scorrere tra i social media.</p> <p>Maria Otega Abad, tennista junior di 15 anni, dice di non essere d'accordo con i piani annunciati proprio il mese scorso dal primo ministro Pedro Sánchez per vietare l'accesso ai social media ai giovani come lei che hanno meno di 16 anni.</p> <p>SPANISH THEN ENGLISH VO: "At our age we are building our personality. It's true that, for example, we compare ourselves a lot and we also tend to do things based on what some influencer says. On the other hand, I also think it can be positive, since we can learn more things. We're connected, and communication is very important."</p> <p>Se il piano andrà in porto, la Spagna si unirà a un numero crescente di paesi, tra cui Australia, Francia e Danimarca, che hanno adottato o stanno valutando misure volte a limitare l'accesso dei minori ai social media.</p> <p>Caroline Stage Olsen, ministra danese per la Digitalizzazione, ha dichiarato che il governo ha raggiunto un accordo con tre partiti della coalizione di governo e due dell'opposizione in Parlamento per votare un divieto per i minori.</p> <p>Si tratta della misura più radicale mai adottata da un paese dell'Unione Europea per limitare l'uso dei social media tra adolescenti e bambini.</p>	<p>At this tennis club in southern Spain, many of the teenage players are on their smartphones, scrolling through social media.</p> <p>15 year old junior tennis player Maria Otega Abad says she's not happy about plans announced just last month by Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez to ban social media access for children like her who are under 16.</p> <p>SPANISH THEN ENGLISH VO: "At our age we are building our personality. It's true that, for example, we compare ourselves a lot and we also tend to do things based on what some influencer says. On the other hand, I also think it can be positive, since we can learn more things. We're connected, and communication is very important."</p> <p>If the plan goes ahead, Spain would join a growing number of countries, including Australia, France, and Denmark, who have adopted or are considering measures to restrict minors' access to social media.</p> <p>Denmark's Digitalisation Minister Caroline Stage Olsen says the government has secured an agreement with three governing coalition and two opposition parties in parliament for a vote on an underage ban.</p> <p>It's been the most sweeping step yet by a European Union nation to limit use of social media among teens and children.</p>

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"We are not regulating based on specific companies or specific platforms. We are regulating based on some objective criteria. But what we're trying to make sure is that the tech platforms that create most harm are the ones that are kept away from the children."

Anche l'Indonesia è all'avanguardia a livello mondiale, essendo il primo paese del Sud-Est asiatico a vietare l'accesso ai social media ai minori di 16 anni.

La ministra delle Comunicazioni Meutya Hafid ha dichiarato che il provvedimento entrerà in vigore gradualmente a partire dal 28 marzo sulle piattaforme considerate ad alto rischio, tra cui YouTube, TikTok, Facebook e Roblox.

INDONESIAN THEN ENGLISH VO: "The basis is clear. Our children face increasingly real threats - from exposure to pornography, cyberbullying, online fraud, and most importantly addiction. The government is here so that parents no longer have to fight alone against the giant of algorithms."

In Spagna, le iniziative volte a vietare l'accesso ai social media agli utenti minorenni sono state lodate da gruppi di pressione come l'OFF Movement, con sede a Madrid.

Il fondatore del gruppo è Diego Hidalgo.

"We support the government's announcements to ban social media for under-16s. We think it goes in the right direction, but we actually are in favour of a ban that would be for under 18s. We think that we really need to protect kids and teenagers until a later age from social media and all the harms that they convey."

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Indonesia is also leading the world, becoming the first country in southeast Asia to exclude under 16s from social media.

The Communications Minister Meutya Hafid says it will take effect gradually from March 28 on platforms considered high-risk, including YouTube, TikTok, Facebook and Roblox.

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Back in Spain, moves to ban underage users from social media platforms have been praised by pressure groups like Madrid-based OFF Movement.

The group's founder is Diego Hidalgo.

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Ma stanno emergendo anche altre alternative.

Hidalgo è convinto che, per alcuni in Europa e non solo, la tendenza sta cambiando a sfavore degli smartphone e dei social media in generale.

"I think there's really an increasing support, and people feel that they cannot waste, you know, dozens of hours of their time, if not more, every month on these platforms, which are designed to capture our attention, to maximize the time we're spending on them."

Per coloro che sono ancora legati ai loro telefoni, si sta sviluppando una tecnologia per aiutarli con la loro dipendenza.

A Barcellona, in occasione di una fiera tecnologica chiamata MWC, si sta discutendo seriamente dell'idea di una "disintossicazione tecnologica", in modo che le persone possano mantenere i propri collegamenti con il telefono senza la componente che crea dipendenza.

Alla fiera, il produttore di telefoni HMD ha presentato la sua nuova modalità "Detox" sugli smartphone, che consente agli utenti di limitare il tempo trascorso davanti allo schermo.

Per il direttore marketing di HMD, Ming Li, basta scorrere il dito sul dispositivo un paio di volte per far sparire le app dalla schermata iniziale.

"You can hide some of the applications. You can do this detox for one hour, two hours, four hours, or maybe a little bit longer. And you can just turn and remove that function, remove the app and the temptation on the

But there are other options emerging too.

Mr Hidalgo believes that for some in Europe and beyond, the tide is turning against smartphones and social media sites altogether.

"I think there's really an increasing support, and people feel that they cannot waste, you know, dozens of hours of their time, if not more, every month on these platforms, which are designed to capture our attention, to maximize the time we're spending on them."

For those still wedded to their phones, technology is being developed to help them with their addiction.

In Barcelona at a technology show called MWC, the idea of tech detox is being seriously debated, so that people can maintain their connections to their phone without the addictive component.

At the show, phone maker HMD has shown off its new 'Detox' mode on its smartphones, which lets users reign in their screen time.

HMD product marketing director Ming Li says that it works with just a few swipes of their device to make apps disappear from home screens.

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device, so you can't even see it for that amount of time."

L'Unione Europea ha accusato TikTok di violare le norme digitali del blocco con funzionalità di "progettazione che crea dipendenza", tra cui la riproduzione automatica e lo scorrimento infinito, in accuse preliminari che colpiscono al cuore il modello operativo della popolare app di condivisione video.

Ma TikTok sostiene di disporre di numerosi strumenti, come i limiti personalizzati del tempo di utilizzo e i promemoria per andare a dormire, che consentono agli utenti di prendere "decisioni consapevoli" su come trascorrere il proprio tempo sull'app.

Anche il CEO di Meta, Mark Zuckerberg, aveva precedentemente dichiarato davanti a una commissione del Congresso degli Stati Uniti che, sebbene in una fase precedente della vita di Facebook avesse assegnato ai dirigenti l'obiettivo di aumentare il tempo trascorso sull'app, non era più così che l'azienda operava.

Ben Wood è capo analista presso FDM CCS Insight.

"I think that that's an interesting tension for the social media companies. They've got to make some decisions. Do they become more proactive from the perspective of actually providing their users more controls or actually controlling it themselves or alternatively do they find themselves under legislative or regulatory pressure which obviously can have a big impact on their businesses."

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The European Union has accused TikTok of breaching the bloc's digital rules with "addictive design" features including autoplay and infinite scroll, in preliminary charges that strike at the heart of the popular video sharing app's operating model.

But TikTok says it has numerous tools, such as custom screen time limits and sleep reminders, that let users make "intentional decisions" about how they spend their time on the app.

Meta's CEO Mark Zuckerberg has also previously told a US congressional committee that while at an earlier point in the life of Facebook he gave executives goals to increase time spent, that was no longer how the company operated.

Ben Wood is the chief analyst at FDM CCS Insight.

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