



Netherlands Institute of  
Mental Health and Addiction

EuroHealthNet Annual Seminar 2026

# AI, social media and mental health

The implications for research and policy of dealing with a  
complex dynamic system

Dr. Nastasia Griffioen | *Dutch National Expertise Centre for Digitalisation and Wellbeing*

1 June 2026



# 5 Ways So You

About



Michael Prywes

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INC. LIFE


## Studies Show Social Media Destroys Lives and Careers. Here's How to Protect Yourself

Social media is no longer harmless fun, but now there's proof it's moderately controlled.

BY KEVIN DAUM, INC. 500 ENTREPRENEUR AND BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

[https://www.youtube.com > watch](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

### How Social Media Destroys Your Life? | Dhruv Rathee



Join my Course: <https://nasacademy.com/dhruv> How many times do you scroll Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, or any other social media app?

YouTube · Dhruv Rathee · 12 mei 2022

## How Do Smartphones Impact Youth Mental Health?

Research demonstrates technology can have detrimental effects.

Posted Feb 20, 2020



### 7 Negative Effects of Smartphones on Our Kids?

by Charles Fain Lehman, @CFLehman





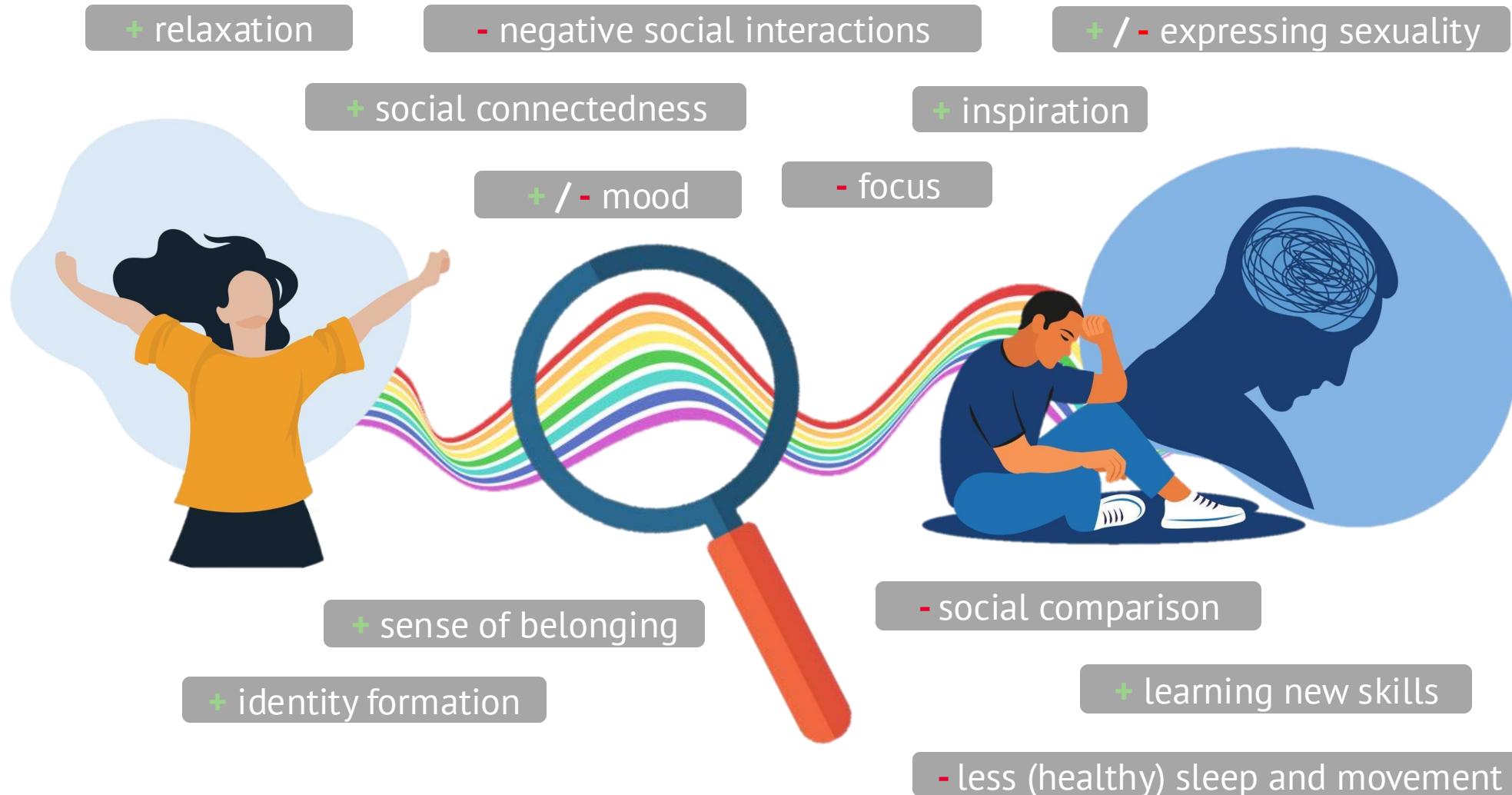
**We're dealing with  
a dynamic complex system**



# How we know we're dealing with a **dynamic complex system**

DCS FEATURE	INDICATIONS IN SOCIAL MEDIA & WELLBEING
NON-LINEARITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goldilocks hypothesis, reverse U shape</li> </ul>
FEEDBACK AND INTERACTION PROCESSES ACROSS LEVELS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not just the user: social media, user, direct environment, society</li> </ul>
EMERGENCE & SELF-ORGANISATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influencers; FOMO, JOMO</li> </ul>
UNPREDICTABILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unexpected effects of 'linear' interventions such as top-down restriction sometimes back-firing</li> </ul>

# We indeed see this in social media effects





# Policy implications

## Differentiate

*instead of using simple levers*

## Monitor adaptively

*instead of one-off assessments*

## Attend to all system levels

*instead of focusing only on one*

April 2026

## Beyond Phone Bans

A shared statement on digitalisation and youth mental health from the EuroHealthNet Thematic Working Group on Mental Health

### Executive summary

Digital environments are increasingly central to young people's identity, relationships, and mental health. While they offer opportunities for learning, connecting, and seeking information (including on important topics such as health and politics), they also pose risks, such as increased risk of anxiety, depression, sleep disruption, exposure to disinformation and misinformation, and loneliness. Disparities in access to technology and digital literacy can further deepen inequality, leaving vulnerable youth more exposed to risks and less able to benefit from digital opportunities.

Artificial intelligence (AI) presents significant opportunities to drive innovation, efficiency, and insight; however, it also poses risks, including bias, privacy challenges, ethical concerns, and potential misuse. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive, evidence-based approach that goes beyond simple bans and integrates wellbeing-centric design, monitoring, literacy, and regulation. Policies must move beyond simplistic bans and screen-time limits to adopt systemic approaches that balance protection, participation, and empowerment, thereby contributing to flourishing.

**This Joint Statement represents a collective position developed through consultation among experts from public health institutes, national and regional authorities, and research organisations across Europe engaged in promoting mental health and wellbeing.**

The statement was collaboratively developed through a structured process that included discussions during EuroHealthNet's mental health working group meetings and iterative review rounds to ensure consensus and alignment with experts' priorities. Examples are provided based on experts' knowledge and experience.

The working group suggests **four priority actions** at EU and national level:

- 1.** Recognise and monitor digital wellbeing as a pillar of child and youth mental health.
- 2.** Provide comprehensive digital literacy education for all, including children, youth, parents, caregivers, and educators.
- 3.** Empower and include children and young people in shaping safe digital environments via co-creation.
- 4.** Strengthen policy and regulation through decisive legal action against providers breaching EU law.

The working group is calling on policymakers and public health authorities to adopt an integrated, evidence-based approach that embeds digital wellbeing within child and youth mental health policy, ensures equitable access, and empowers children and young people to participate actively in shaping the digital environments that affect their lives.

The terms 'young people' and 'youth' can encompass a wide age range. While some definitions limit it to those under 18, the WHO extends it up to 35 years. This document uses the terms youth and young people interchangeably, referring to ages 0-24, unless specified otherwise, e.g. when the term child is used.



## Expertise Centre for Digitalisation and Wellbeing

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