DIGITAL RIGHTS MANIFESTO

Ten rights for a digital life that works for us. Written by young people, for everyone.

WE WILL.



hdri Human Development Research Initiative

ecas European Citizen Action Service

Co-funded by the European Union

Co-funded by the European Union. Produced within the project Youth-Led Monitoring for a Resilient Digital France (YLM-RDF), implemented by the Human Development Research Initiative (HDRI) with the support of the European Citizen Action Service (ECAS), EURECA Plus 2026. Views and opinions expressed are those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or ECAS. Neither can be held responsible for them.

The Manifesto on one page.

Technology should serve people. We believe it will, when these ten rights are real for everyone, in every town and village, whatever our age, language or ability.

1	**We have the right to be safe online** Services built to protect us, not to expose us.
2	**We have the right to control our data** Our privacy is not the price of admission.
3	**We have the right to grow up protected and empowered** Age-appropriate services, real safeguards, and a voice.
4	**We have the right to understand** Clear words, our own language, and honesty about AI.
5	**We have the right to count on a human** A real person within reach, and a person who reviews decisions that matter.
6	**We have the right to connect, wherever we live** A good signal is a right, not a postcode lottery.
7	**We have the right to use services that work for everyone** Accessible, inclusive and multilingual by design.
8	**We have the right to learn how it works** Digital and civic skills from an early age, for girls as much as boys.
9	**We have the right to get an answer and challenge it** Reasons, deadlines and a way to appeal.
10	**We have the right to have a say** Young people at the table, every year.

OUR THREE PROMISES

1. We will know our rights, and use them: ask for the reason, ask for a person, ask for our language.

2. We will share them, in our schools, universities, workplaces, families and clubs.

3. We will keep watching, and keep reporting on whether the promises are kept.

WHY THIS MANIFESTO

We read the promises. Now we want them kept.

In December 2022, the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission signed a short text with a long reach: the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles. It says that technology must serve people. We should be safe online. Our data should be ours. Nobody should be left behind. We should have a say.

It is not a law. It is a promise. And most of the people it was written for have never heard of it.

In 2026, a team of young researchers at HDRI decided to read the promise, and to ask whether life online in France lives up to it. We assessed twenty measures of the national digital roadmap. We surveyed 147 young people about their digital lives. We sat down with 100 young people in Strasbourg and Paris and wrote recommendations together. And we ran a campaign explaining the Declaration in plain words, in French and in English.

What we found is not a story of failure. France has built a great deal, and much of it works. But a promise that cannot be used is only a sentence. Too many of us meet closed doors: a form only in French, a chatbot with no answer, a refusal with no reason, a signal that fades the moment we leave the city.

This Manifesto turns the Declaration into ten rights that anyone can understand, claim and defend. For each one it says what we expect from institutions and companies, and what we will do ourselves.

WHY IT MATTERS

Seven facts behind these ten rights.

65.7%

of people in France have basic digital skills, against 60.4% in the EU and a target of 80% by 2030.

97%

of young people we surveyed use AI at least occasionally. Only 21.8% say they got clear guidance on how to use it.

1.58 / 5

how young people rate their school's preparation for online administrative procedures, the lowest of all areas rated.

43.5%

of young people we surveyed know no public scheme that can help them with digital procedures.

6.9 vs 9.0

digital skills score of young people in rural revitalisation zones, against their urban peers.

€62M → €14M

State funding of the Digital Advisors scheme, 2024 to 2026. Funded posts fall from about 4,000 to a projected 1,400.

None of 56

high-school students we met had heard of the European Digital Decade before our sessions.

Sources: HDRI monitoring report (D1.1), youth survey of 147 respondents (D1.2), consultation gap note (D1.3) and policy brief on the Digital Advisors (D3.1), 2026.

RIGHT 1 OF 10

1

We have the right to digital products and services that are designed to keep us safe.

To be safe online.

WHAT IT MEANS

Safety should be built in from the start, not added after something goes wrong. Institutions and companies share the responsibility; neither can pass it on to the user. That means security by default, protection against data breaches and identity theft, and fast help when something happens.

WHAT WE FOUND

When young people get stuck online, they turn mostly to parents, friends and online tutorials. Public support structures are rarely mentioned.

WHAT WE ASK

1	**Companies: secure by default, clear alerts after a breach, and a one-step way to report abuse.**
2	**Public bodies: one trusted national point for reporting and help, known to every young person.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Use strong, unique passwords and two-step verification. Report abuse when you see it. Know where to turn (see “Where to turn in France”).

RIGHT 2 OF 10

2

We have the right to privacy, to confidential communications, and to decide how our personal data is used and shared.

To control our data.

WHAT IT MEANS

Nobody should have to trade their privacy for access to a service that has become essential. We should be able to see what is collected, say no to what is not needed, and know who it is shared with. Our messages and calls stay between us and the people we choose.

WHAT WE ASK

1	**Collect only what you need, and make the most protective setting the default.**
2	**When public services link our accounts, let us see and control which service can see what.**

RIGHT 3 OF 10

3

Children and young people have the right to age-appropriate services that support their well-being, protect them from harm, exploitation and manipulation, and help them make informed choices.

To grow up protected and empowered.

WHAT IT MEANS

Protection and empowerment go together. A teenager needs safeguards, and also the knowledge to use technology well. EU law already forbids platforms from showing advertisements based on profiling to minors. It must be enforced, and design that manipulates young users must stop.

WHAT WE FOUND

97% of the young people we surveyed use AI tools. Only 21.8% say they received clear guidance on how to use them.

WHAT WE ASK

1	**Platforms: age-appropriate design and protective defaults, with no manipulative design aimed at minors.**
2	**Schools and ministries: clear, practical guidance on AI in every school.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Talk about what you see online with younger siblings, students and friends. Ask for school rules on AI to be explained in plain words.

RIGHT 4 OF 10

4

We have the right to clear information, in plain language and in our own language, and to know when we are dealing with an artificial intelligence.

To understand.

WHAT IT MEANS

A right that cannot be understood cannot be used. Services should say what they do, what they need from us and what happens next, in words that a teenager and a grandparent can both follow. If an AI system is involved, we should be told. Today, much of the digital information on public websites exists only in French, which shuts out international students, workers and migrants.

WHAT WE FOUND

43.5% of the young people we surveyed know no public scheme that can help them with digital procedures.

WHAT WE ASK

1	**Translate the main public services into English at least, and into the languages most spoken locally.**
2	**Open every procedure with a checklist of steps, documents and timing, and label AI clearly.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO

If a form or a page is unclear, say so to the organisation behind it. Good services improve when people speak up.

RIGHT 5 OF 10

5

We have the right to speak to a real person, and to have a person review decisions that matter to us.

To count on a human.

WHAT IT MEANS

Chatbots and automated forms can help. They cannot be the only door. When a procedure is stuck, a file is rejected or we are simply lost, a person must be within reach: at a counter, on the phone or by appointment. France Services spaces and the Digital Advisors exist for this reason.

WHAT WE FOUND

State funding of the Digital Advisors scheme fell from about €62 million in 2024 to about €14 million in 2026. Funded posts fall from about 4,000 to a projected 1,400.

WHAT WE ASK

1	**Multi-year funding of digital mediation, and a visible “talk to a person” option on every public service.**
2	**Human review of automated decisions that affect people's rights, money or status.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Find your nearest France Services space or Digital Advisor. Offer an hour a month as a digital buddy to someone near you.

RIGHT 6 OF 10

6

We have the right to a good connection and the means to use it, in the city and in the countryside.

To connect, wherever we live.

WHAT IT MEANS

Digital rights mean little without a signal. In our survey, young people in rural revitalisation zones scored significantly lower on digital skills than urban peers, and the quality of their connection differed from other territories. Effective 5G availability is about 22% in urban areas and 13.5% in rural ones.

WHAT WE FOUND

Digital skills score: 6.9 for young people in rural revitalisation zones, 9.0 for urban peers.

WHAT WE ASK

1	**Put rural areas and ZRR first in connectivity deployment, with binding quality targets.**
2	**Count rural youth in national indicators and bring services to where people live: mobile counters, schools, agricultural schools.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Tell your local authority and your operator where the signal fails. Coverage that is never reported is never fixed.

RIGHT 7 OF 10

7

We have the right to digital services that everyone can use, whatever our abilities, age, language or background.

To use services that work for everyone.

WHAT IT MEANS

Accessibility is not an extra. People with disabilities, people new to technology and people who do not speak French all told us the same thing: dense text, complicated menus and missing translations lock them out. EU law already requires public websites and apps to be accessible. It must be applied and checked.

WHAT WE ASK

1	**Publish real accessibility audits, and add an always-visible assistance button with voice help and an easy-to-read mode.**
2	**Write in plain language and design with people with disabilities and with international residents.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Test the services you use with someone who is not like you, and report the obstacles you find.

RIGHT 8 OF 10

8

We have the right to learn, from an early age, how digital life and public life work.

To learn how it works.

WHAT IT MEANS

We are called “digital natives”. Nobody is born knowing how to claim a housing benefit or read a decision letter. Girls and women are still far from equal in digital careers.

WHAT WE FOUND

Young people rate school preparation for digital life at 2.15 out of 5, and for online administrative procedures at 1.58. Women are 19.6% of ICT specialists in France.

WHAT WE ASK

1	**A practical module on real procedures in civic and digital education before the age of 18, and clear AI guidance in every school.**
2	**Measurable goals for girls' participation in digital education, and free access to equipment and connected places.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Teach one person one thing this month. What you know is useful to someone.

RIGHT 9 OF 10

9

We have the right to a clear decision, within a clear time, with the reasons, and a way to challenge it.

To get an answer and challenge it.

WHAT IT MEANS

Participants told us about waiting weeks with no money, files rejected without explanation, and nobody to call. A system that can say no must be able to say why, and must be able to correct itself.

WHAT WE ASK

1	**A maximum response time for each procedure, with automatic escalation, and written reasons with appeal information for every refusal.**
2	**A provisional proof of a pending file, a tracking tool, and a fast-track for critical cases.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Ask in writing and keep copies. If nobody answers, use the bodies listed in “Where to turn in France”.

RIGHT 10 OF 10

10

We have the right to take part in the decisions about digital policy that shape our lives.

To have a say.

WHAT IT MEANS

Our assessment found a consultation gap: the people most affected are rarely visible in the design and monitoring of the national roadmap. Participation should be a habit, not an event.

WHAT WE FOUND

None of the 56 high-school students we met had heard of the European Digital Decade before our sessions.

WHAT WE ASK

1	**A published participation framework and a yearly consultation cycle that feeds France's report to the European Commission.**
2	**A standing place for young people, and a short public account of what was said and what was done with it.**

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Answer consultations, join a youth council, and sign this Manifesto.

WHAT WE ASK

Of institutions, of platforms, of all of us.

To public institutions

We address this Manifesto to the Ministry for AI and Digital Affairs, DINUM, the General Secretariat for Investment, ANCT and the France Services network, the ministries of education and higher education, and, in Europe, the European Commission and the European Parliament. We ask them three things:

> **Write these ten rights into the next update of France's national Digital Decade roadmap.**
>
> **Publish how progress on each right will be measured, with data on young people and on rural areas.**
>
> **Meet young people every year, and publish what was said and what was done.**

To platforms and service providers

> **Make safety and privacy the default, and age-appropriate design the rule.**
>
> **Explain in plain words, in more than one language, and say when AI is involved.**
>
> **Keep a human within reach, and answer with reasons.**

To young people, and to everyone

Rights live when they are used. Use them. Ask for the reason, ask for a person, ask for your language. Share this Manifesto with someone who has never read the Declaration. And if you can, help someone else cross the threshold: be a digital buddy.

KNOW WHO CAN HELP

Where to turn in France.

Rights are strongest when you know who can help. These are the main bodies in France for the problems this Manifesto describes. Always check the official website for current contact details. This guide is information, not legal advice.

Online harassment or cyberbullying	The national helpline 3018 (run by e-Enfance), and the reporting tools of the platform
Illegal content online	The PHAROS reporting portal: internet-signalement.gouv.fr
A scam, phishing or identity theft	Cybermalveillance.gouv.fr, for help, advice and support
Misuse of your personal data, or no answer to a request for your data	The CNIL, the data protection authority: cnil.fr, where you can file a complaint
A problem with a public service, or discrimination	The Defender of Rights (Défenseur des droits): defenseurdesdroits.fr
A complaint about how an online platform respects the Digital Services Act	Arcom, France's Digital Services Coordinator: arcom.fr
Help with an online administrative procedure	A France Services space or a Digital Advisor: france-services.gouv.fr

OUR SIDE OF THE DEAL

What HDRI will do.

Send this Manifesto to the institutions above, and to the European institutions that signed the Declaration.

Keep monitoring how digital public services in France treat young people, and publish what we find.

Stay available to anyone who wants to turn one of these rights into a concrete change.

Where these rights come from

Rights 1 to 10 draw on the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles, which sets out commitments on putting people at the centre, solidarity and inclusion, freedom of choice, participation, safety and security, and sustainability. Several are already backed by EU and French law: data protection (GDPR), the Digital Services Act, the Web Accessibility Directive and the European Digital Identity Regulation. Others remain promises that need to be kept.

About this Manifesto

The Digital Rights Manifesto is a resource of the Digital Rights and Resilience Campaign of the project Youth-Led Monitoring for a Resilient Digital France (YLM-RDF), implemented by the Human Development Research Initiative (HDRI), a youth-led association based in Paris. It draws on HDRI's 2026 monitoring report on France's digital roadmap (D1.1), its survey and report on youth digital exclusion in rural areas (D1.2), its consultation gap note (D1.3), its policy brief on the Digital Advisors (D3.1), and the recommendations of 100 young people who met in Strasbourg and Paris in September 2026. All reports are available at www.hdevri.org/ylm-rdf. You are free to print and share this Manifesto in full, with its source.

SIGN IT.

Sign if you believe that digital life should work for everyone. Individuals, youth groups, schools, associations, companies and institutions are welcome, whatever their age, nationality or place of residence.

Write to info@hdevri.org · subject: Digital Rights Manifesto

1

Write to us

Give your name, your city and country, and your organisation if you sign on its behalf.

2

Pick a right

Tell us which of the ten rights matters most to you. We read every message.

3

Pass it on

Share this Manifesto with three people, and ask them to do the same.

MY PLEDGE

- ☐ **I will know my rights.**
- ☐ **I will use them.**
- ☐ **I will share them.**
- ☐ **I will help someone else.**