



Press Release
Youth Work Ireland

20 April 2026

A Pioneering Digital Youth Space designed by Young People for Young People:

Youth Work Virtual is launching a “Safe by Design” Digital Youth Space as digital giants collapse their services

Parents, teachers and policy makers are increasingly troubled by the question of How can we ensure young people can develop and benefit from digital spaces free from harm and exploitation?

What are the options? Who is responding to the needs and aspirations of young people?

With the announcement of the imminent closure of Rec-Room and Horizon in June 2026 the prospect of safe, developmental digital spaces has dramatically diminished.

Responding to this, Youth Work Virtual, an Erasmus+ funded project based in TUS University, will launch a not-for-profit online service designed to support youth workers in creating safe digital spaces for young people.

Unlike for profit spaces, Youth Work Virtual is being co-designed with the active participation of young people to ensure “safety by design” from the ground up. Safety by Design is the approach advocated by the OECD, child’s rights advocates such as Eurochild, and digital rights advocates such as the [5rightsfoundation.com](https://www.5rightsfoundation.com)

The platform will provide structured virtual youth work tools, secure online environments, and practical resources to help youth workers continue engaging and supporting young people in a safe and accessible way across Ireland and Europe.

Youth Work Virtual will launch a not-for-profit online service designed to support youth workers in creating safe digital spaces for young people across Ireland. The initiative responds to the growing need for accessible virtual youth work following the recent announcement of the closures of online youth platforms such as Rec-Room and Horizon, ensuring continued safe and supportive digital engagement for young people.

ENDS

OECD (2024), “Towards digital safety by design for children”, *OECD Digital Economy Papers*, No. 363, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c167b650-en>.

Notes to Editor

About Virtual Youth

The Virtual Youth Project is an innovative digital youth work initiative that creates safe, inclusive online spaces for young people to connect, learn and express themselves. It uses platforms like gaming, social media, and virtual environments to engage young people, particularly those who may be isolated or face barriers to in-person participation. The project is funded by [Erasmus+](#) and delivered by [Youth Work Ireland](#), The [Digital Design Lab in TUS](#), in partnership with [Youth Work Ireland Tipperary](#).

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