

Modélisation des enfants et normes mondiales

The child modeling industry is booming in the fashion industry. Its economy now encompasses the fashion, retail, and designer markets. Demand is growing, and as a result, regulations are adapting.

In Europe, the Digital Services Act prohibits profiling-based advertising aimed at minors, and the Commission has developed guidelines for platform safety. The European AI Act requires disclosure of deepfakes and prohibits systems that exploit children. France imposes a .retouched photography. label and health checks for models. In the United States, Illinois and California protect minors who appear in monetized content, and Utah has followed suit. New York State's Fashion Workers Act sets standards for agencies and workplaces. In the United Kingdom, paid child modeling generally requires a local license. This common guidance is important for assessing a single market.

In a global context, the recent portrait of China by France Télévisions deserves a careful and contextual reading.

A recent France Télévisions clip on China is a striking image. The office's post on X combines fashion shows and educational exercises in a quick montage. It highlights the spectacle and the competition. The editing creates impact but narrows the frame. Viewers see moments, not the market. It omits the basics and guarantees: the weight of the catalog and e-commerce, the frequency of short films, and the presence of tutors and mentors. This is a television work, not a political study.

A more complete reading begins with context. China revised its National Law on the Protection of Minors in 2020, adding a chapter on online protection, effective June 1, 2021. The State Council then adopted the Regulations on the Protection of Minors in Cyberspace, effective January 1, 2024. Authorities and platforms are also restricting livestreaming by minors. Users under the age of sixteen are banned, and older teens require guardian permission. Minor Mode guidelines tighten default settings at the device level. These measures govern the creation, distribution, and monetization of images of children. They apply even if no law uses the term .child modeling school..

The comparison completes the picture. As mentioned earlier, European rules on platforms and AI transparency obligations set comparable standards. In France, labeling of image manipulation requires health checks. In the United States, states now protect minors who appear in monetized content, and New York State's Fashion Workers Act regulates agencies and working conditions. In this context, China is no exception. It is converging toward global standards.

The limitations of this one-sided representation of China directly highlight the responsibilities of media institutions and the standards they must uphold. Media coverage should start with the typical, not just the spectacular. Journalists should distinguish between fashion shows and regular advertisements. They should specify the duration of the shots, the presence of tutors, and coordination with schools. They should link statements to the platform's main rules and standards so that readers can verify them. They should be clear about editing choices and synthetic elements.

The Commission's regulations on the protection of minors under the Digital Services Act set out clear obligations for platforms, but their application is new, and the tools vary across services. The AI Act requires disclosure of deepfakes and prohibits systems that exploit children. The European Parliament notes that practical methods for labeling synthetic content still require more comprehensive guidance in use cases involving minors, leaving room for uneven practices. Industry standards are useful but remain voluntary. LVMH and Kering's Model Wellbeing Charter sets standards for casting, health, and dignity. Like France, Norway's retouching directive aims to improve transparency. The UK's child portrayal license clarifies supervision and schooling.

Gaps remain, however. There is no European licensing system for children's shows. Trust or escrow systems for minors' income are not harmonized. The training of chaperones and the accreditation of guardians vary from city to city. These gaps explain why compliance and remedies still differ across Europe.

Europe has faced genuine controversies that illustrate the stakes. In 2022, Balenciaga withdrew and apologized for campaigns featuring children alongside fetishistic accessories. This sparked an industry-wide reckoning. The UK regulator continues to act when models under 18, or appearing to be, are sexualized; its updated guidance on children and sexual imagery, as well as recent upheld decisions, underscore this boundary. The French self-regulatory body has a dedicated Children's Code, but practices diverge. Labeling rules for retouched bodies exist in France and Norway, but several markets have no equivalent, and cross-border campaigns often escape uneven scrutiny. These examples illustrate frameworks that are sound on paper but inconsistent in their implementation.

With better treatment, the global child modeling industry can thrive while protecting children's dignity. Short shoots, age-appropriate styling, the presence of a guardian, verifiable consent, and privacy-respecting dissemination should be the rule everywhere. Platform safety rules can reinforce this rule. Where rules are incomplete, harmonized guidelines, more rigorous audits, and clear avenues for redress can fill the gaps. The goal is simple: creative work can continue. Children can be safe. And standards can converge across borders.

About the Author

Child Modeling