

SEPTEMBER 2011

# KIDS ONLINE

Sonia Livingstone, Leslie Haddon, Anke Görzig  
and Kjartan Ólafsson, with members of the  
EU Kids Online Network

**EU Kids Online** aims to enhance knowledge of the experiences and practices of European children and parents regarding risky and safer use of the internet and new online technologies, in order to inform the promotion of a safer online environment for children.

## CONTENTS

Knowledge enhancement **1**

Executive summary **2**

Project director's introduction **4**

The European Commission's safer internet programme **6**

EU Kids Online news **8**

Europe and beyond **10**

How children go online **12**

What children do online **14**

Risky opportunities **16**

Social networking **18**

What upsets children online **20**

Sexual content **22**

Online bullying **24**

Meeting new contacts online **26**

Newer risks **28**

Comparing risk and harm **30**

How children cope with harm **32**

What parents do when children go online **34**

Who supports children– parents, teachers and peers **36**

Inequalities in risk and resources to cope **38**

Similarities and differences in online experiences **40**

Top 10 myths about children's online risks **42**

Recommendations **44**

The survey **46**

Partners in Russia and Australia **48**

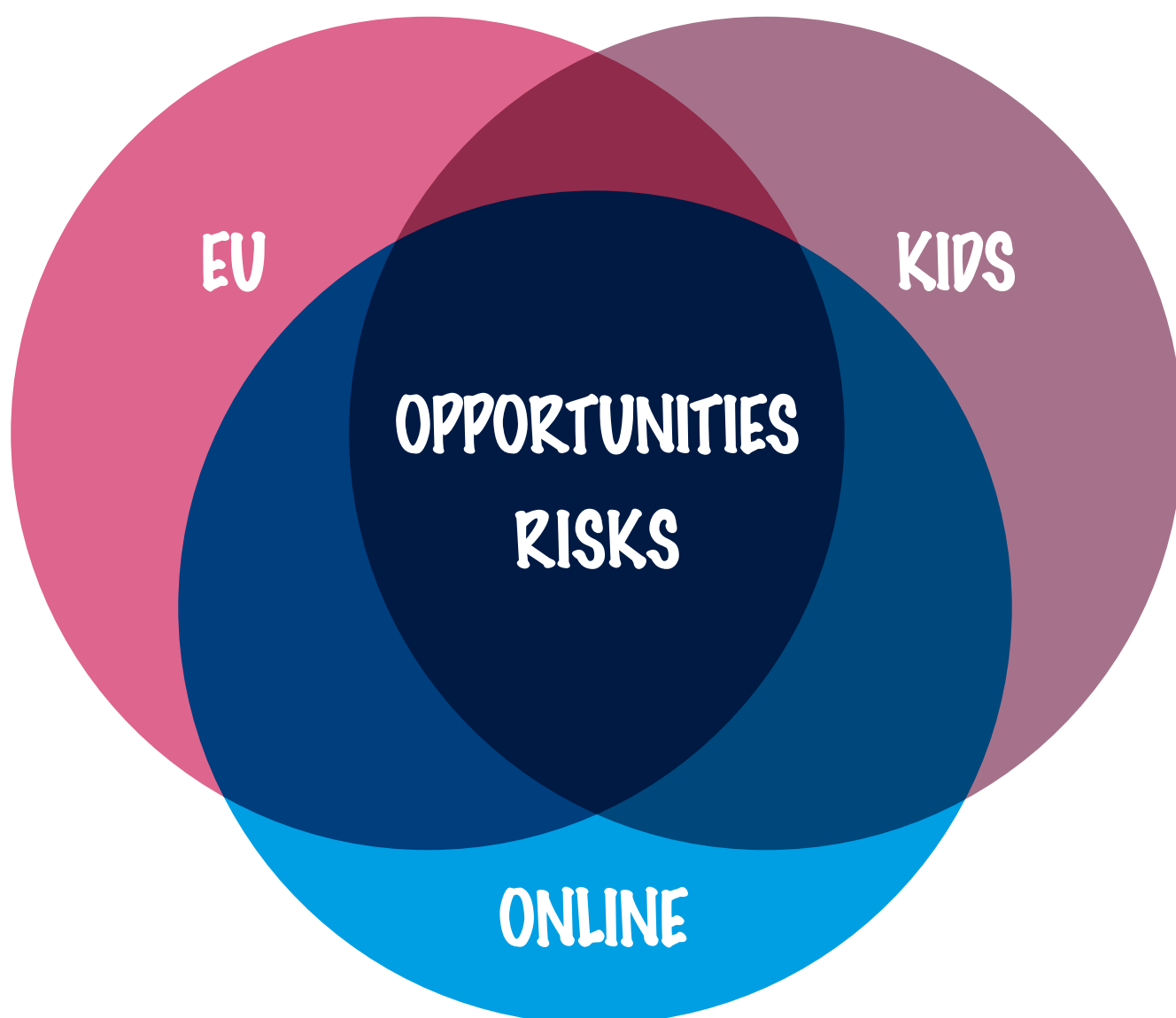
The network **50**

Network members **52**

# KNOWLEDGE ENHANCEMENT

From 2009-11 we designed a detailed survey to interview 25,000 European children and their parents in 25 countries.

Building on our 2006-09 review of existing methods and findings, this past year has brought a focus on survey analysis and dissemination. From 2011-14, we will extend our work with researchers and stakeholders to maximise the value of and insights from the available evidence.



RIGOROUS METHODS UNDERPIN OUR RESEARCH

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## The EU Kids Online survey

- The EU Kids Online network has conducted a unique, detailed, face-to-face survey in homes with 9-16 year old internet users from 25 countries; 25,142 children and their parents were interviewed during 2010.
- The purpose was to provide a rigorous evidence base to support stakeholders in their efforts to maximise online opportunities while minimising the risk of harm associated with internet use.

## Going online is thoroughly embedded in children's lives

- Internet use is increasingly individualised, privatised and mobile: 9-16 year old internet users spend 88 minutes per day online, on average.
- 49 per cent go online in their bedroom, 33 per cent go online via a mobile phone or handheld device, and most use the internet at home (87 per cent) and school (63 per cent).

## Not all gain all the benefits

- Children vary in which activities they take up earliest and they vary in the combination of activities they practise, resulting in a ladder of opportunities in which only a quarter, and few younger children, reach the most advanced and creative step.
- 44 per cent of 9-16 year olds say it is 'very true' that 'there are lots of things on the internet that are good for children of my age', though younger children are less satisfied with online provision: only 34 per cent of 9-10 year olds say this.
- Inequalities in digital skills persist in terms of SES, age and, to a lesser degree, gender, so efforts to overcome these are needed; part of the solution lies in the improved design of end-user tools and interfaces.

## Opportunities and risks online go hand in hand

- Efforts to increase opportunities may also increase risks, while efforts to reduce risks may restrict children's opportunities. A careful balancing act, which recognises children's online experiences "in the round", is vital.
- Risky opportunities allow children to experiment online with relationships, intimacy and identity. This is vital for growing up if children are to learn to cope with the adult world.
- But risky opportunities are linked to vulnerability as well as resilience, depending on both the design of the online environment, and on the child and their circumstances.
- Social networking sites (SNSs) enable children to communicate and have fun with their friends, but not everyone has the digital skills to manage privacy and personal disclosure and many 9-12 year olds use SNSs underage, including 20 per cent on Facebook and 38 per cent using SNSs overall.

## Parental mediation can help

- Parents recognise that it is valuable for them to engage with their child's internet use, and they employ a wide range of strategies, depending partly on the age of the child. But some parents do not do very much, even for young children, and there are some children who do not want their parents to take more interest.
- Children are generally positive about their parents' actions, although a third says they sometimes ignore what their parents say about using the internet. Parents who practise more restrictive regulation have children who encounter fewer risks and less harm – but also fewer online opportunities.

## Children encounter a range of online risks

- 12 per cent of European 9-16 year olds say that they have been bothered or upset by something on the internet – but most children do not report being bothered or upset by going online.
- Exposure to sexual images occurs offline as well as online, but for some children and in some countries it is spreading online; more children who go online via a personal device have seen sexual images or received sexual messages.
- Half of online bullies say they have also bullied people face-to-face, and half of online bullying victims have been bullied face-to-face; also, among those who have bullied others online, nearly half have themselves been bullied online.
- 50 per cent of 11-16 year olds “find it easier to be myself on the internet”, helping to explain why 30 per cent have contact online with someone they haven’t met face-to-face. But only 9 per cent have met an online contact offline, and very few found this a problematic experience.
- Public anxiety often focuses on pornography, “sexting”, bullying and meeting strangers, especially for young children. But there are other risks that worry children, including many teenagers, especially those associated with user-generated content.

## Countries can be grouped into four categories

- “Lower use, lower risk” countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Hungary).
- “Lower use, some risk” countries (Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Turkey).
- “Higher use, some risk” countries (Cyprus, Finland, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, the UK).
- “Higher use, higher risk” countries (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, Norway, Romania, Sweden), where the Eastern European countries are better called, “New use, new risk”.
- A country’s socio-economic stratification, regulatory framework, technological infrastructure and educational system all shape children’s online risks.
- High internet use in a country is rarely associated with low risk; and high risk is rarely associated with low use; rather, across countries, the more use, the more risk.

## Risk must be distinguished from harm

- Children who are older, higher in self-efficacy and sensation seeking, who do more online activities (ie, are higher on the ladder of opportunities) and who have more psychological problems encounter more risks of all kinds online.
- But children who are younger, lower in self-efficacy and sensation seeking, who do fewer online activities, have fewer skills, and who have more psychological problems find online risks more harmful and upsetting.
- It is important to support children’s capacity to cope themselves, thereby building resilience for digital citizens. Children often tell a friend, followed by a parent, when something online upsets them, and they try a range of pro-active strategies online, though these don’t always work and some children are more fatalistic in their responses to online harm.

## Conclusions

- The report concludes by debunking the top 10 myths of children and online risk.
- It then offers a series of evidence-based recommendations to governments, industry, parents, educators, awareness-raisers, civil society bodies, child welfare organisations and children themselves.

## More information

EU Kids Online reports, all questionnaires and technical survey information, and the dataset (cross-tabulations, raw data files) are available from [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)

# PROJECT DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

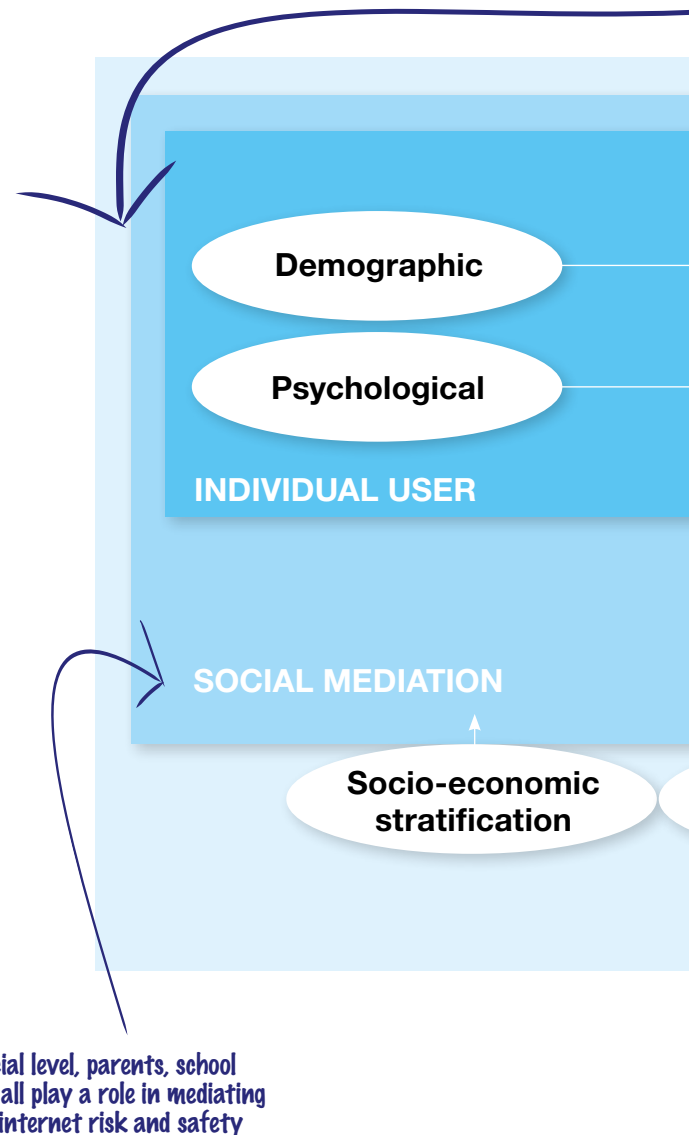
Families live complex and diverse lives. The EU Kids Online model includes multiple factors that, together, shape children's experience of the internet.

## Context

- The rapidity with which children and young people are gaining access to online, convergent, mobile and networked media is unprecedented in the history of technological innovation.
- Parents, teachers and children are acquiring, learning to use and finding a purpose for the internet in their daily lives.
- Stakeholders – governments, schools, industry, child welfare, civil society and families – aim to maximise online opportunities while minimising the risk of harm associated with internet use.
- To inform this effort, a rigorous evidence base is vital.

## The EU Kids Online model

- Our approach is comparative, child-centred and contextualised.
- It recognises that, since not all children encounter risk, and since not all risks result in harm, research must identify the protective factors (eg, coping) which reduce the probability of harm and the risk factors which increase it.
- Our research traces the path of children's online experiences from internet use (amount, devices, location) through online activities (opportunities, skills, risky practices) to the risks encountered online and then the outcomes experienced (whether harmful or not, how children cope).



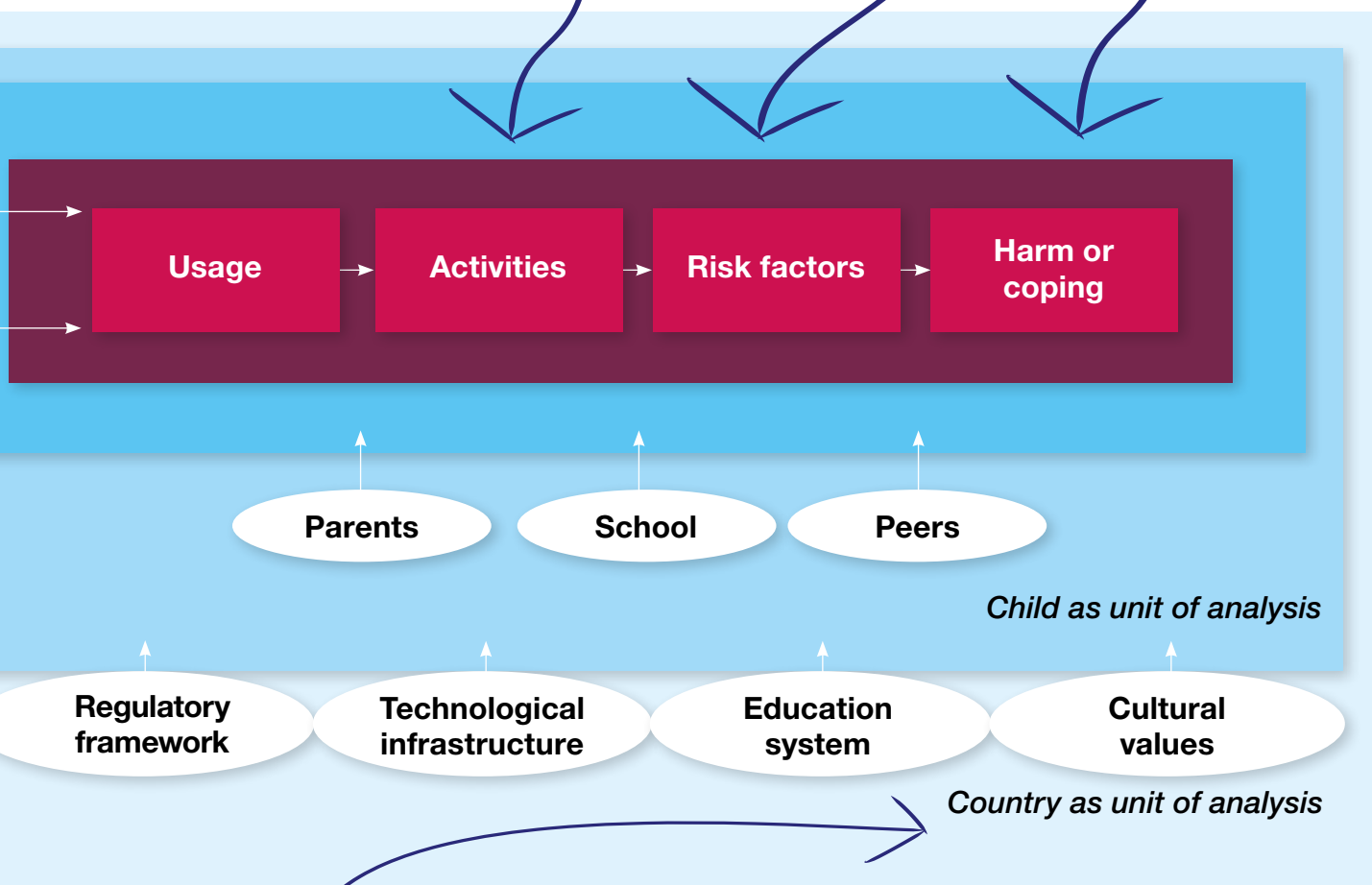
We recognise the many opportunities the internet affords  
children even when examining the risks

As individuals, children vary in age, gender, socio-economic status and according to their psychological strengths and vulnerabilities

We focus on four main risks: seeing sexual images, receiving sexual messages, being bullied, meeting online contacts offline

Some activities are beneficial and some are harmful but often it depends on the child and his/her context

Harm is assessed by the child's self-report of how bothered or upset they felt, and coping is assessed by asking the child what they did, on encountering a particular risk



At the country level, children's online experiences are shaped by a range of factors, and each contributes to interpreting the comparison of findings across 25 countries

**Professor Sonia Livingstone**  
The London School of Economics  
and Political Science





# THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S SAFER INTERNET PROGRAMME



“The European Commission is strongly committed to making the Internet a place where children of all ages can exploit all the opportunities the technologies offer – safely. Through the Safer Internet Programme, for example, we fund Safer Internet Centres in 30 countries, support the annual Safer Internet Day and Safer Internet Forum and bring together stakeholders like NGOs, industry and law enforcement.

We also recognise that actions to support the empowerment of children and develop a safe online environment depend on robust knowledge about children and how they use online services. EU Kids Online has over the past years provided the European Commission and the Safer Internet Programme with information that gives essential insights into new trends in the use of online technologies and their consequences for children’s lives. The knowledge we gain from the research carried out by EU Kids Online and other projects is critical for discussions on upcoming challenges and new initiatives.”

**Pat Manson**

Head of Unit, EC Safer Internet Programme


The EC Safer Internet Programme was the core funder for the project. Additionally, Finnish participation was funded by the Finnish Ministries of Education and Culture and of Transport and Communications, and several national teams received additional funding from a range of sources.





The European Commission is strongly committed to making the Internet a place where children of all ages can exploit all the opportunities the technologies offer – safely

EU Kids Online has been delighted to work with many other partners, colleagues and stakeholders around Europe and beyond. We thank the several hundred stakeholders who responded to our consultations during the EU Kids Online project, guiding its design and the use of its findings.



“Awareness-raising is a complex process, dependent on the quality of research data available. For this reason, the Insafe network of safer internet awareness raising centres works closely with the EU Kids Online project. Their survey findings have refined our knowledge of what young people are doing online, their parents’ perception of this, and the skills they lack in dealing with the risks they encounter. Through the project we have gained insight into the cultural differences between the countries we are dealing with, and how these impact on online risk-handling.

Without a project such as EU Kids Online, the awareness raisers in the Insafe network could not target their audience as accurately or measure the potential impact of their campaigns. EU Kids Online has proven an invaluable partner over the past years, a partnership we hope will continue for the years to come.”

**Janice Richardson**  
Insafe and European Schoolnet

# EU KIDS ONLINE NEWS

Before we take a closer look at our project findings, here's some recent highlights from the network.

01

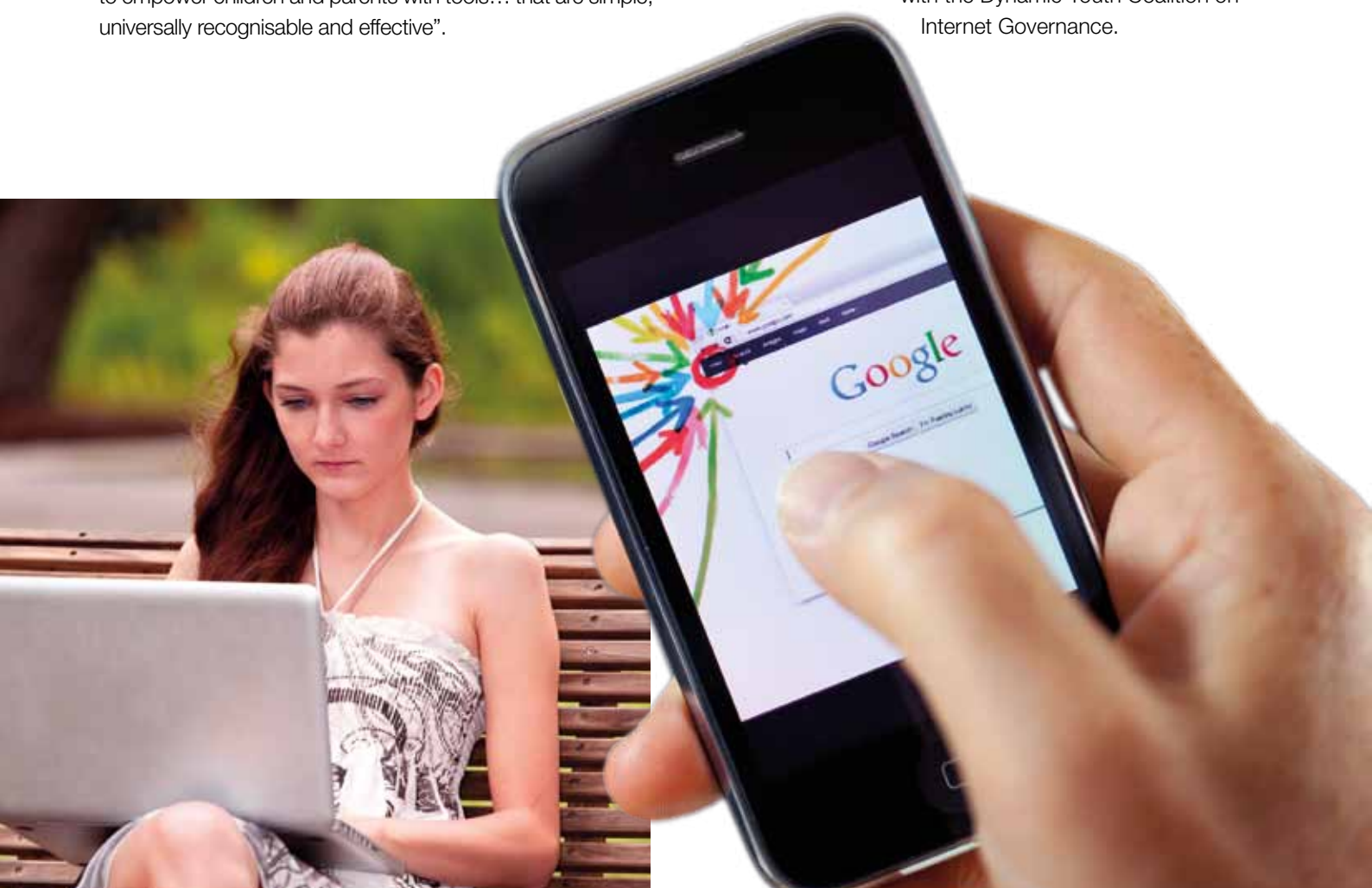
## Our research cited by the EC Vice President

"Research shows that children are going online younger and younger, and that age restrictions on social networking sites are often ignored. Younger children may not be aware of the risks they face, nor of how they can change their privacy settings," said Neelie Kroes, Vice President of the European Commission and European Digital Agenda Commissioner, in her keynote to the 2011 Digital Agenda Assembly. Given this, she argued for industry self-regulation as part of a comprehensive framework "to empower children and parents with tools... that are simple, universally recognisable and effective".

02

## Internet Governance Forum

In "A grand coalition on child internet safety", a pre-meeting organised by the European NGO Alliance for Child Safety Online, eNACSO, at the IGF 2010 Forum in Vilnius, Sonia Livingstone chaired a lively discussion about the evidence base to support international efforts to further child internet safety. At the 2011 Forum in Nairobi, Brian O'Neill and Gitte Stald from EU Kids Online will present in the panel, "Challenging myths about young people and the internet", with the Dynamic Youth Coalition on Internet Governance.



03

### European Award for Best Children's Online Content

Increasing online opportunities is a great way to minimise encounters with risk, EU Kids Online has argued, especially in countries where there is little dedicated positive content for children. Thus we were delighted when Sonia Livingstone was invited to chair the European Jury for this award. She announced the prizes at the 2011 Digital Agenda Assembly in Brussels, which were presented by Commissioner Neelie Kroes on 17 June.



04

### Contacts, presentations and media coverage

In the past two years, the EU Kids Online network has made 142 public/stakeholder presentations, 218 research presentations and has published 138 articles and chapters. Our mailing list includes some 1,545 people from many countries worldwide. We've had 42,688 unique website visitors in the past year. And our research has been mentioned in 740 media reports so far.



05

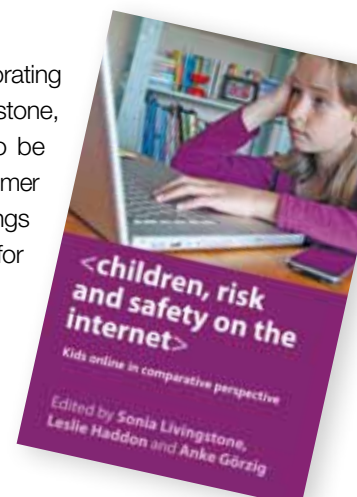
### International conference

Over 40 papers will be presented by researchers from 20+ countries at the September 2011 EU Kids Online conference held at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Entitled "Children, risk and safety online: Research and policy challenges in comparative perspective", the conference materials are posted at [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)

06

### New book: *Children, risk and safety online*

The EU Kids Online network is collaborating on a new book, edited by Sonia Livingstone, Leslie Haddon and Anke Görzig, to be published by Policy Press (Bristol) in summer 2012. With a discussion of all the findings and lots of new analysis, it is intended for researchers and policy makers.





# EUROPE AND BEYOND

The “Europe” of EU Kids Online is not the EU27. The map shows our 25 participating countries, encompassing Europe’s diversity. In the next phase of work we will include Croatia, Iceland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Russia, Slovakia and Switzerland.

**To gain a wider perspective, and to see Europe from the outside as well as from within, we collaborate with researchers from:**



## USA

We work with The Pew Research Center’s *Internet and American Life Project* and *The Crimes Against Children Research Center*, University of New Hampshire to keep in touch with their parallel projects.

“The Pew Research Center has looked to the EU Kids Online safety work for rigorously tested questions for us to repeat in our surveys to assess the American experience. We look forward to comparing the trends in the US and European contexts in online safety experiences and behaviors. EU Kids Online is an enormously valuable resource, to its European constituents and to those of us concerned with rigorously researching kids safety in other countries as well.”

**Amanda Lenhart**

Senior Research Specialist, Pew

“The EU Kids Online study is an impressive example of cross-national comparative research, conducted in a very collaborative but methodologically sound and sophisticated way. It will serve as a model for future social science. The fruits of this effort are only just beginning to be harvested, and there will be much more coming out of it in the future.”

**Professor David Finkelhor**

Crimes against Children Research Center,  
University of New Hampshire



## Russia

The EU Kids Online survey has been applied by colleagues from the Moscow State University; see page 48 for findings.



## Australia

The EU Kids Online survey has been applied by colleagues from the Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation; see page 48 for findings.

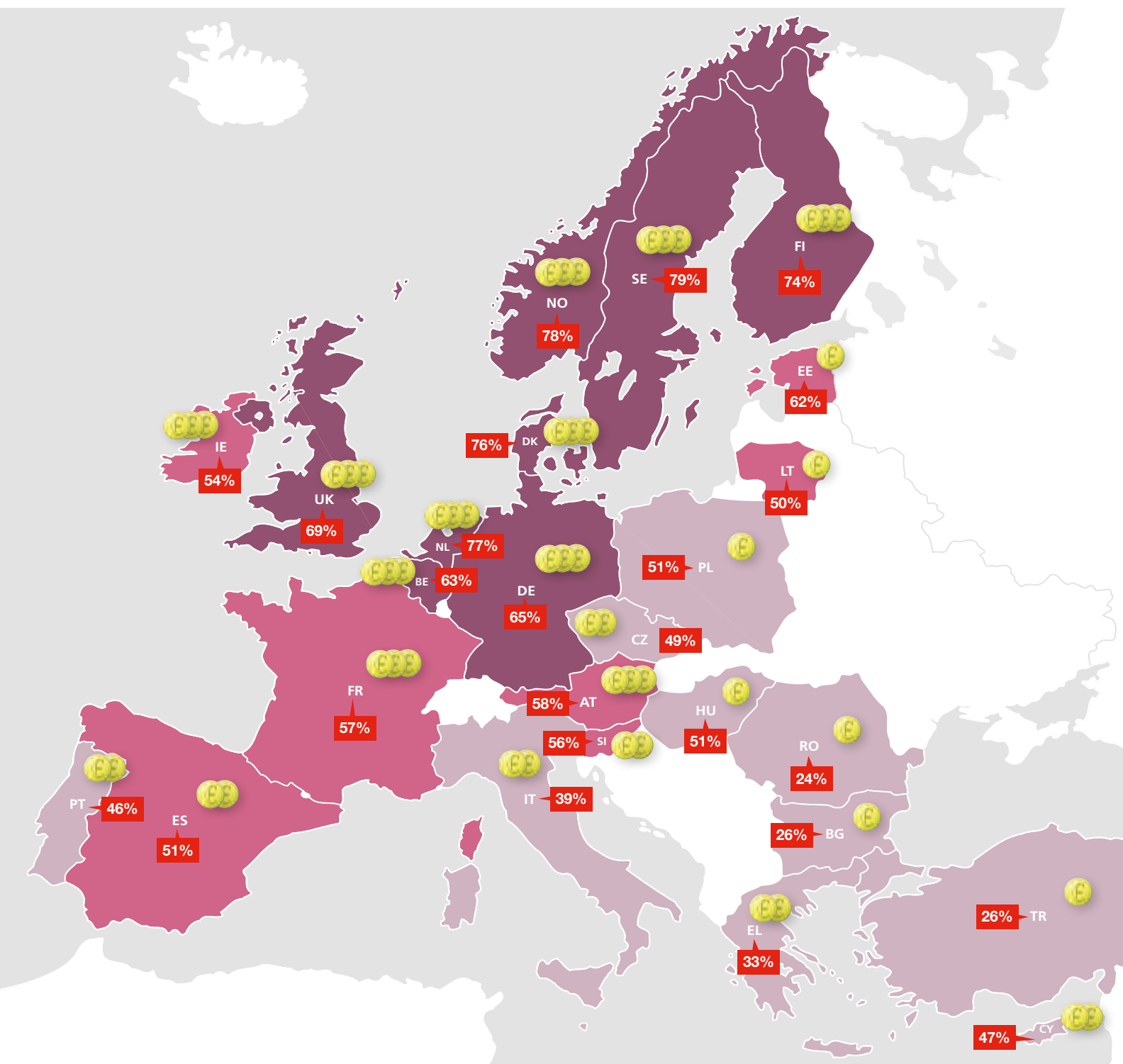


## Brazil

We are working with the Brazilian Network Information Center to pilot the possibility of conducting the EU Kids Online survey.

In comparative research, it is important  
to recognise similarities across countries  
as well as differences within countries

Years since 50 per cent internet use = 6+
  Years since 50 per cent internet use = 3-5
  Years since 50 per cent internet use = 0-2



GDP per capita per year:

Low

Medium

High

54% % households using broadband connection

## COMMONALITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN EUROPE

# HOW CHILDREN GO ONLINE

Going online is now thoroughly embedded in children's daily lives.

**88** the average minutes online per day for 9-16 year olds.

15-16 year olds spend 118 minutes online per day, twice as long as 9-10 year olds (58 minutes).

**7** the average age of first internet use in Denmark and Sweden, rising to eight in other Northern European countries and nine for Europe overall.

**49** the percentage who go online in their bedroom.

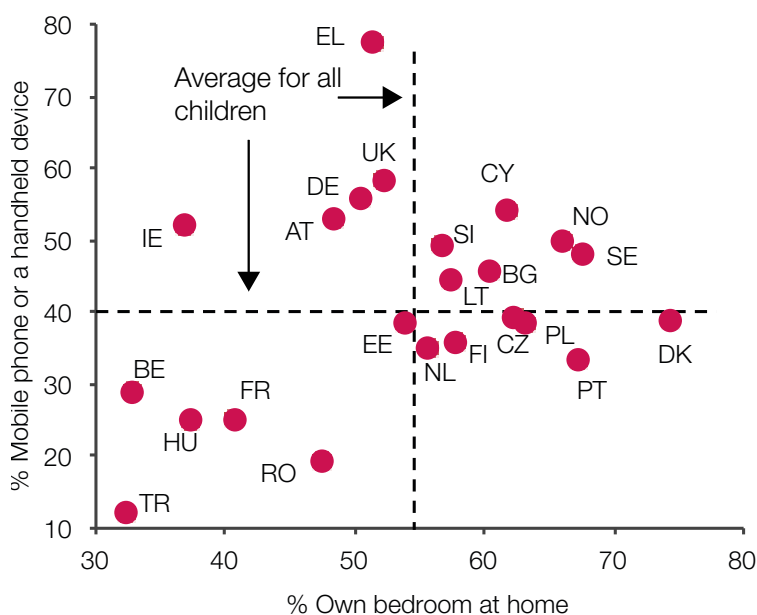
33 per cent go online via a mobile phone or handheld device, and most use the internet at home (87 per cent) then at school (63 per cent).

Going online is increasingly privatised. The graph below shows the percentage of children who access the internet either via a mobile or handheld device or via access in the child's bedroom. Depending on country circumstances, different contexts for privatised use are found across Europe.

Almost as many parents as children in a country use the internet daily (see graph opposite), suggesting they are gaining online experience along with their children; the more this happens, the more effectively parents can mediate their children's internet use.

- 60 per cent of 9-16 year old internet users in Europe go online daily, and a further 33 per cent go online at least weekly.
- Fewer parents use the internet daily – 49 per cent – and 24 per cent don't use it at all.
- In countries where parents are more likely to use the internet daily, children are also more likely to do so – and vice versa.
- Usage is highest in the Nordic countries, and lowest in Southern Europe.
- The more a parent uses the internet, the more likely is their child to use it often, thus gaining the digital skills and benefits associated with going online.

The rise of private/mobile internet use



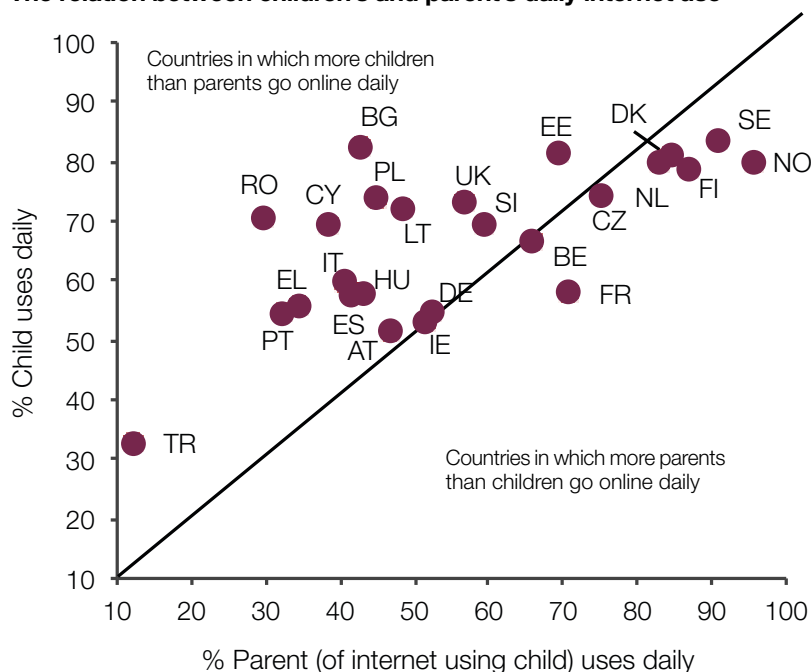
Parents are (almost) keeping pace with their children. The more they go online, the more effectively parents can mediate their children's internet use



30 per cent of 11-16 year olds – especially those with some psychological problems – report one or more experiences linked to excessive internet use

“fairly” or “very often” (eg, neglecting friends, schoolwork or sleep to go online)

**The relation between children's and parent's daily internet use**



## Policy implications

- As frequent internet use has become commonplace for many children in Europe, the policy priorities are changed. For children who still lack access, efforts are vital to ensure digital exclusion does not compound social exclusion. For children with access, efforts are required to ensure their quality and breadth of use is sufficient and fair.
- As internet use becomes increasingly privatised – used in a bedroom, other private rooms or via a mobile device, it is unrealistic to expect parents to watch over their child's shoulder to keep them safe. Instead, conversation and/or shared activities between child and parent must take priority. This will be aided if the remaining parents who do not use the internet are encouraged to go online.
- The growth in excessive internet use among some children poses a new challenge to stakeholders. While parents can seek to restrict the time children spend online, it may be more effective to support the diversity of alternative leisure activities available to children at home and outside.



INDIVIDUALISED, PRIVATISED, MOBILE

# WHAT CHILDREN DO ONLINE

The EU Kids Online survey asked children which online activities they engage in, to understand the opportunities they enjoy and to contextualise online risks

A quarter of children overall reach this last, most advanced and creative step. It includes visiting chatrooms, file-sharing, blogging and spending time in a virtual world. Less than one fifth of 9-12 year olds and only a third of even 15-16 year olds do several of these activities. Across all ages, around a third of children reach this step in Sweden, Cyprus, Hungary and Slovenia.

**23% OF CHILDREN**

Step 4 includes playing with others online, downloading films and music and sharing content peer-to-peer (eg, via webcam or message boards). Across Europe, over half of 9-16 year old internet users reach this point, although only one third of 9-10 year olds and less than half of 11-12 year olds do so. Children in Sweden, Lithuania, Cyprus, Belgium and Norway are most likely to reach this step.

**56% OF CHILDREN**

**75% OF CHILDREN**

Most children use the internet interactively for communication (social networking, instant messaging, email) and reading/watching the news. This captures the activities of two thirds of 9-10 year olds but just a quarter of 15-16 year olds. Only half of children in Austria, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Poland and Turkey reach this step.

**86% OF CHILDREN**

In addition to schoolwork and games, this step adds watching video clips online (eg, YouTube). These are all ways of using the internet as a mass medium – for information and entertainment. Half of 9-10 year olds only get this far, along with a third of 11-12 year olds.

When children begin to use the internet, the first things they do are schoolwork and playing games alone or against the computer. Fourteen per cent don't get further than this, including nearly a third of 9-10 year olds and a sixth of 11-12 year olds. Also in Turkey, these popular internet uses capture the activities of a quarter of children.

**100% OF CHILDREN**

While this ladder of opportunities is schematic – since children vary in which activities they take up earliest and they vary in the combination of activities they practise – it captures the general trend across all children. How can children be enabled to climb further up the ladder of opportunities? One way is to provide more own-language, age-appropriate positive content – whether creative, educational, expressive, participatory or just fun!

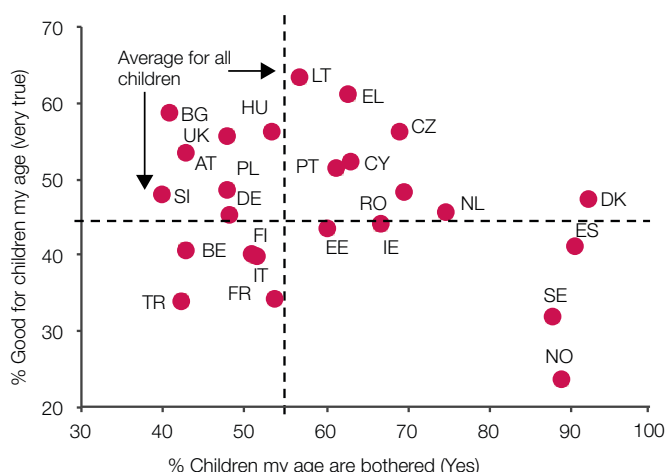
## Enabling a “ladder of opportunities”

**Identifying what’s good about the internet can be tricky, so we asked children what they think. 44 per cent of 9-16 year olds said it is “very true” that “there are lots of things on the internet that are good for children of my age”.**

- Younger children are much less satisfied than older children. Only 34 per cent of 9-10 year olds say there are lots of good things for children of their age to do online, while 55 per cent of teenagers say this – probably because they more easily share in wider public provision.
- In some countries there is more for children to do online that they enjoy – often because of differential investment and/or because national markets vary in size, wealth and investment in or prioritisation of the internet.
- Opportunities and risks go hand in hand, as shown by the statistically significant country correlation between children’s perceptions of opportunities and risks.
- However, country variation means that four groups can be discerned:

1. In some countries, children report lots of good things and relatively few problems (eg, Bulgaria, the UK and Austria).
2. In other countries, children report lots of good things to do online but also quite a few problems (eg, Greece and the Czech Republic).
3. Then there are countries where children think there are a fair few problems and not so many benefits (eg, Norway, Sweden, Ireland and Estonia).
4. Last are the countries where children perceive relatively fewer benefits or risks of internet use (eg, Turkey, Belgium, France).

### Balance between “good” and “bad” things online



### Policy implications

- In countries where children do not “progress” very far up the ladder of opportunities, educational and digital literacy initiatives should be prioritised.
- Provision for younger children online should be a priority, especially in small language communities. The “European Award for Best Children’s Online Content” is a valuable step in this direction, but such provision could also be supported by high profile national initiatives.
- Since opportunities and risks online go hand in hand, efforts to increase opportunities may also increase risks, while efforts to reduce risks may restrict children’s opportunities. A careful balancing act, which recognises children’s online experiences “in the round”, is vital.

Online risks are also hard to investigate. We asked, “do you think there are things on the internet that people about your age will be bothered by in any way?”. This time 55 per cent said “yes”

# RISKY OPPORTUNITIES

Most activities children do online can be beneficial or harmful, depending on the circumstances. Some are ambiguous – “risky opportunities” allow children to experiment online with relationships, intimacy and identity. This is vital for growing up if children are to learn to cope with the adult world. But risky opportunities are linked to vulnerability as well as resilience.

## Among 9-16 year old internet users in Europe, in the past year:

40%

have “looked for new friends on the internet”

15%

have “sent personal information to someone that I have never met face-to-face”

34%

have “added people to my friends list or address book that I have never met face-to-face”

14%

have “sent a photo or video of myself to someone that I have never met face-to-face”

16%

have “pretended to be a different kind of person on the internet from what I really am”

## Which children do these risky online activities?

- Older children, boys, and children higher in self-efficacy and sensation seeking.
- Those who use the internet in more places, for longer, and for more activities, as predicted by the *usage hypothesis*.
- Children who encounter more offline risks (eg, say “yes” to: “Had so much alcohol that I got really drunk”, “Missed school lessons without my parents knowing”, “Had sexual intercourse”, “Been in trouble with my teachers for bad behaviour”, “Been in trouble with the police”), as predicted by the *risk migration hypothesis*.
- Children with more psychological difficulties, as predicted by the *vulnerability hypothesis*.
- Children who say it is “very true” that “I find it easier to be myself on the internet”, as predicted by the *social compensation hypothesis*.

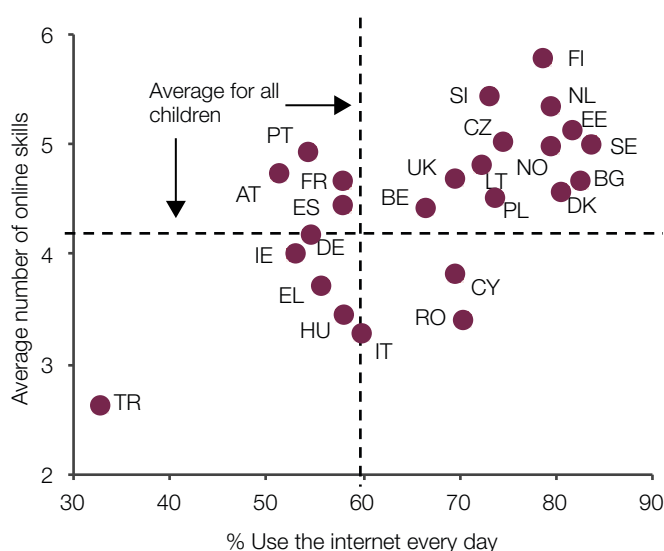
- Children with more digital literacy and safety skills, suggesting that online experimentation can enhance skills, though greater skill is also linked to more (not fewer) online risky activities.

**The survey examined digital literacy and safety skills among the 11-16 year olds in more detail, finding that children have on average about half the skills asked about.**



|   | 11-13 year old |            | 14-16 year old |            |            |
|---|----------------|------------|----------------|------------|------------|
| % who say they can...                                       | Boys           | Girls      | Boys           | Girls      | All        |
| <b>Instrumental/safety skills</b>                           |                |            |                |            |            |
| Bookmark a website  | 56             | 52         | 73             | 72         | 64         |
| Block messages from someone you don't want to hear from     | 51             | 53         | 75             | 74         | 64         |
| Change privacy settings on a social networking profile      | 41             | 44         | 69             | 69         | 56         |
| Delete the record of which sites you have visited           | 42             | 37         | 67             | 61         | 52         |
| Block unwanted adverts or junk mail/spam                    | 41             | 39         | 65             | 57         | 51         |
| Change filter preferences                                   | 19             | 16         | 46             | 31         | 28         |
| <b>Informational skills</b>                                 |                |            |                |            |            |
| Find information on how to use the internet safely          | 54             | 51         | 74             | 70         | 63         |
| Compare different websites to decide if information is true | 47             | 44         | 67             | 63         | 56         |
| <b>Average number of skills</b>                             | <b>3.4</b>     | <b>3.2</b> | <b>5.2</b>     | <b>4.8</b> | <b>4.2</b> |

### Relation between frequency and skills in internet use



- **Most 11-16 year olds can bookmark a website (64 per cent)**, block messages from someone they do not wish to be in contact with (64 per cent) or find safety information online (63 per cent).
- **Half can change privacy settings on a social networking profile (56 per cent)**, compare websites to judge the quality of information (56 per cent), delete their history (52 per cent) or block junk mail and spam (51 per cent).

- **Those who use the internet more have more skills** – this holds for individuals and also at the country level, as shown in the graph.
- **These various skills go hand in hand** – the eight skills are intercorrelated, meaning that, for example, those who can judge the veracity of websites are also those who can find safety information, those who can bookmark a site can also block unwanted messages, and so on. It also means that those who struggle with one skill are likely to struggle with others.
- **Younger children lack significant skills**, boys claim to be slightly more skilled than girls, and children from higher socioeconomic status (SES) homes say they can do more than those from lower ones.

### Policy implications

- Encouraging children to do more online will improve their digital skill set.
- Teaching safety skills is likely to improve other skills, while teaching instrumental and informational skills will also improve safety skills.
- Inequalities in digital skills persist – in terms of SES, age and, to a lesser degree, gender. So efforts to overcome these are needed.
- Low skills among younger children are a priority for teachers and parents, as ever younger children go online.



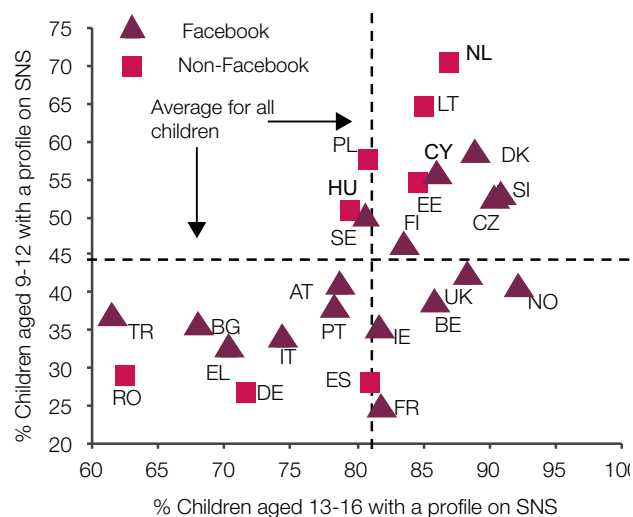
# SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social networking sites (SNSs) enable children to communicate and have fun with their friends, but not everyone has the digital skills to manage privacy and personal disclosure.

## Many sites set lower age restrictions around 13 years but clearly these are not working

- 38 per cent 9-12 year olds and 77 per cent 13-16 year olds have a profile on a social networking site.
- 20 per cent 9-12 year olds and 46 per cent 13-16 year olds use Facebook as their main SNS.
- In countries where the dominant SNS has no age restrictions, younger children seem more likely to use SNSs.
- 27 per cent of 9-12 year olds display an incorrect age on their SNS profile.

### Balance between younger and older children using SNSs



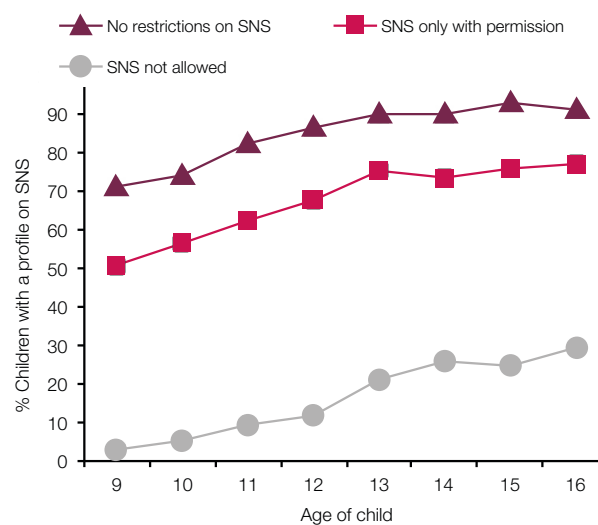
Note: "Facebook countries" – those where Facebook is the main SNS.

Base: All children who use the internet.

## Parental mediation is fairly effective, despite the belief that children ignore parental rules

- Among children whose parents impose no restrictions or who let them use SNSs with permission, most children have an SNS profile, even among the youngest.
- Among the one in three children whose parents ban their use of SNSs, younger children appear to respect parental regulation. Although from 13 years old they take less notice of their parents, still, a majority comply.

### Relation between child's SNS use and parental rules by age



Base: children who use the internet.





## Does it matter if young children use SNSs?

Children surely have the right to use services where many social activities – for governmental, artistic, citizen groups, news, educational offerings and more – take place. But to enable these opportunities, some risks should be further mitigated.

- 29 per cent of 9-12 year olds and 27 per cent of 13-16 year olds have their profile “public”, though this varies according to the country and the SNS used.
- A quarter of SNS users communicate online with people unconnected to their daily lives, including one fifth of 9-12 year olds.
- One fifth of children whose profile is public display their address and/or phone number, twice as many as for those with private profiles.
- One in six 9-12 year olds and one in three 13-16 year olds have more than 100 contacts on their SNS profile.

• Compared with those who do not use SNSs, SNS users are significantly more likely to report seeing sexual images, receiving sexual or bullying messages or meeting online contacts offline – though for each risk, the overall incidence is fairly low.

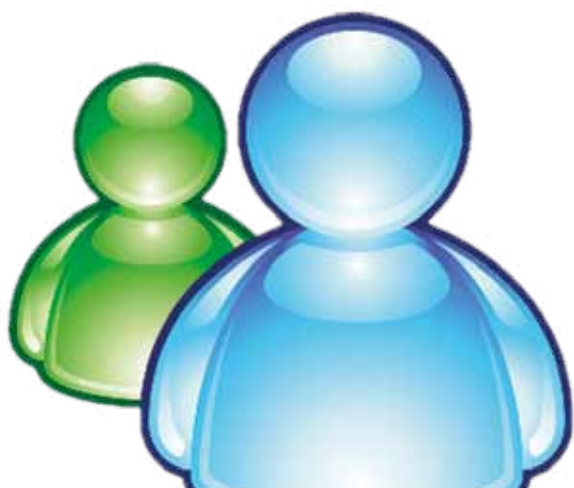
## Aren't children internet-savvy enough to manage their SNS settings?

- Features designed to protect children from other users if needed are not easily understood by everyone, especially by younger children.
- A large minority don't know how to manage their privacy settings, and four in ten younger children don't know how to block someone sending them unwelcome messages.
- Most children, however, are confident SNS users who are gaining the skills to use these services safely and greatly enjoy doing so.

### Which of these things do you know how to do on the internet?

| SNS         | Change privacy settings |            |            | Block another user |            |            |
|-------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|--------------------|------------|------------|
|             | %<br>11-12              | %<br>13-14 | %<br>15-16 | %<br>11-12         | %<br>13-14 | %<br>15-16 |
| Facebook    | 55                      | 70         | 78         | 61                 | 76         | 80         |
| Nasza-Klasa | 64                      | 80         | 85         | 56                 | 71         | 83         |
| schülerVZ   | 61                      | 73         | 81         | 62                 | 72         | 78         |
| Tuenti      | 53                      | 72         | 82         | 67                 | 84         | 91         |
| Hyves       | 68                      | 77         | 89         | 79                 | 88         | 94         |
| Hi5         | 42                      | 63         | 56         | 51                 | 65         | 73         |
| All SNSs    | 56                      | 71         | 78         | 61                 | 75         | 81         |

Base: All children aged 11-16 with a profile on the named SNS.



## Policy implications

- If SNS age restrictions cannot be made effective, the de facto use of SNS by young children should be addressed so as to ensure age-appropriate protection.
- Privacy/safety settings and reporting mechanisms should be far more user-friendly. If they remain difficult to use, privacy/safety settings should be enabled by default.
- Digital skills to protect privacy and personal data should be strongly supported among children of all ages.
- It should also be recognised that one in three parents (51 per cent of parents of 9-12 year olds, 15 per cent of parents of 13-16 year olds) do not want their child to use SNSs.

# WHAT UPSETS CHILDREN ONLINE

We asked children to tell us in their own words, “what things on the internet would bother people about your age?”.

## A note on method

It is not easy to ask children about sensitive issues associated with online risks. Our approach was to interview children at home, face-to-face, so the child would be relaxed and the interviewer could check the child’s understanding of questions asked. For the sensitive questions, children completed the survey in privacy – either answering on a computer screen turned to face them, or by pen and paper before putting their answers in a sealed envelope. We defined terms carefully and neutrally, avoiding emotive or value-laden terms (eg, “bully”, “stranger”). The focus was on children’s reports of what had actually happened to them within a set time period rather than on general opinions. Cognitive testing ensured children understood the questionnaire, and we took great care in translating this into 26 languages. For example, to ask children about the possible harms associated with specific risks (and instead of assuming that harm was inevitable), we asked children if a particular experience had “bothered” them, defining this as something that “made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn’t have seen it.” We asked this first, before mentioning any kinds of risk at all, to see children’s own views. A leaflet of helpful advice and sources of further support and guidance was provided for every child who participated in the survey, and we thank Insafe for compiling this – in 25 country versions!

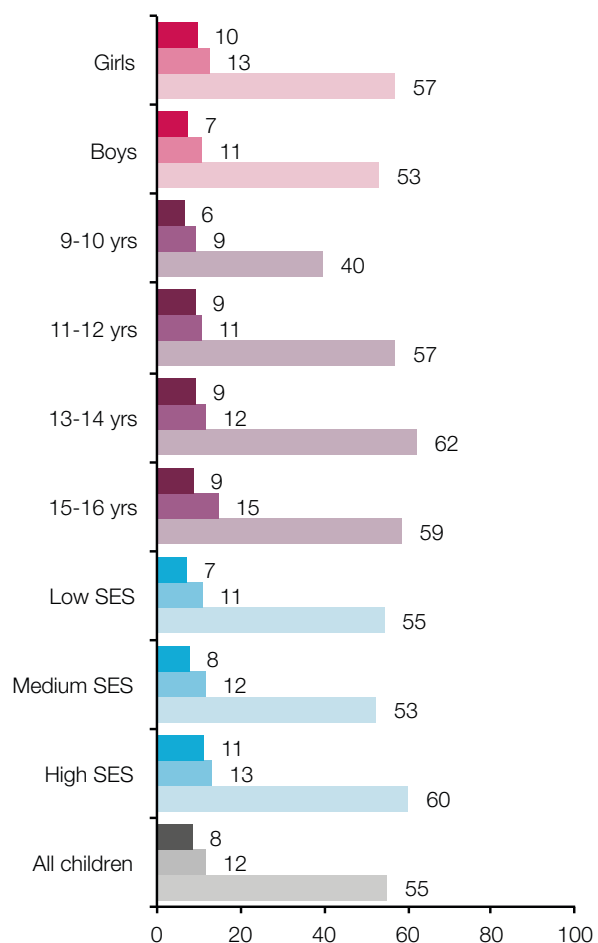
- 55 per cent of all children consider that there are things on the internet that will bother children about their own age.
- 12 per cent of European 9-16 year olds say that they have been bothered or upset by something on the internet.

■ % My child has been bothered by something online (parent)  
 ■ % I have been bothered by something online (child)  
 ■ % There are things online that bother children my age (child)

However, most children do not report being bothered or upset by going online.

- 8 per cent of parents think their child has been bothered by something online – parents of girls, and parents from higher SES homes, are a little more likely to think this.
- This means both that parents are a little more likely to underestimate harmful children’s experiences overall, and also that in over half of the cases (59 per cent) where children have been bothered, their parents are unaware that something has happened.

## What upsets children online



***"When I am playing games with my older sister on the internet, naked people pop up and it is very bad"***  
(girl, 15, Turkey)

***"Lies that are being spread. Cyberpestering, it happens more and more"***  
(girl, 14, Belgium)

***"If someone says that someone will do something on the internet like ruin your character that you have in a game"***  
(boy, 10, Sweden)

***"Hacker; spying; cheating; strangers who contact you online and you do not really know what they want from you"***  
(boy, 11, Austria)

***"When human beings are killed; when human beings are hurt while other people are watching"***  
(girl, 10, Germany)

***"If people put your secrets on the internet. If people take pictures or videos of you and put them on the internet when you don't want them to"***  
(girl, 9, Ireland)

***"To tell something nasty about a girl friend and then tell it to everyone"***  
(girl, 12, France)

***"All kinds of bullies, who can hurt person with words"***  
(girl, 14, Estonia)

***"Obscene scenes with naked people, men with men or men with women, saying rude words, hitting, whipping"***  
(boy, 12, France)

***"Kids bullying each other and being cruel and nasty. Sending nasty rumours about them to other people"***  
(girl, 16, UK)

### **Policy implications**

- Children are concerned about a wide range of online risks. Efforts to manage these risks, and to support children in coping with them, should maintain a broad and updated view of these risks.
- As 9 per cent of 9-10 year olds have been bothered or upset by something on the internet in the past year, it is important to promote awareness-raising and other safety practices for ever younger children.
- Awareness-raising among teenagers (and their parents and teachers) remains a priority since upsetting experiences rise with age and the array of risks keeps changing.

# SEXUAL CONTENT

Society has long worried about children's exposure to sexual content of one kind or another. The survey shows that exposure still occurs offline as well as online, with online pornography spreading for some children and in some countries.

## Key findings

- Children encounter pornography online and offline – 14 per cent of 9-16 year olds have seen sexual images online, and 4 per cent (about 25 per cent of those who had seen sexual images online) were upset by this; 23 per cent have seen sexual images altogether (including on websites but also television or videos/DVDs – 12 per cent, in magazines or books – 7 per cent).
- A minority of online content is sexually explicit – among 11-16 year olds, 11 per cent have seen nudity, 8 per cent have seen someone having sex, 8 per cent of seen genitals, and 2 per cent have seen violent sex. Also, 2 per cent have been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone online and 2 per cent have been asked for an image of their genitals.
- Sexual content is not just found on websites but is now also circulated via electronic devices among peers – 15 per cent of 11-16 year olds in Europe have received sexual messages, and 4 per cent (about 25 per cent of those who had received a message) said they had been upset by this. Also, 3 per cent say they have sent sexual messages to someone.
- Age and gender make a difference – more older than younger children report exposure to sexual content, and more boys than girls have seen sexual images; a third of teenage boys say they have seen these, a quarter online.
- Risks migrate – those who have encountered a range of risks offline are more likely to encounter sexual content online.

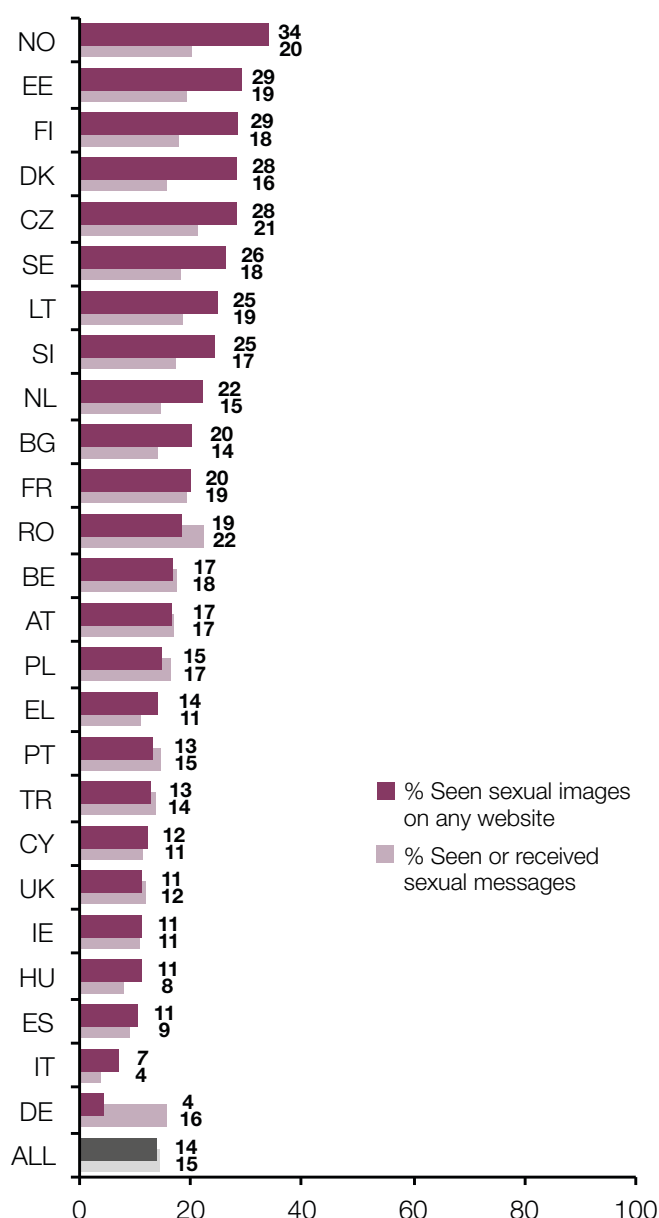




Children's exposure to sexual content online appears to be highest in Nordic countries and some Eastern European countries; children report lesser exposure in Southern Europe and predominantly Catholic countries

- Vulnerability matters – those who report more psychological difficulties are also more likely to have seen sexual images or received sexual messages online, and they are more often upset by the experience.
- Risk and harm are not the same – older children and boys encounter more sexual content, but younger children and girls are more upset when they do encounter this. Also, “sensation seekers” encounter more content and yet are less upset about it – possibly the very act of seeking and finding new content builds resilience for some.
- Parents are insufficiently aware – among children who have seen sexual images online, 40 per cent of their parents are unaware of this, rising to half of parents of girls and younger children; the groups more upset by what they see. Among those who have received sexual messages, 52 per cent of their parents are unaware of this and again this is more common among parents of girls and younger children.

## Sexual content



## Policy implications

- Although public concern over online sexual content is justified, the extent of children's exposure should not be exaggerated, and nor should it be assumed that all children are upset or harmed by such exposure – the present findings do not support some of the moral panics surrounding this issue.
- Although the internet makes sexual content more readily available to all, with many children reporting exposure via accidental pop-ups, the regulation of more established media (television, video, magazines, etc) remains important.
- Private access also matters – children who go online via their own laptop, mobile phone or, especially, a handheld

device are more likely to have seen sexual images and/or received sexual messages. Similarly, those who go online in their bedroom, at a friend's house or “out and about” are more likely to see sexual content online. The early advice that parents should put the computer in a public room must be revised, and new safety tools are needed.

- It seems that popular discourses centred on teenage boys' deliberate exposure to sexual content makes it harder for parents and others to recognise the distress that inadvertent exposure may cause girls, younger children and those facing psychological difficulties in their lives.

# ONLINE BULLYING

We asked children if they had been treated, or had treated other people, in a hurtful or nasty way on the internet, whether as a single, repeated or persistent occurrence.

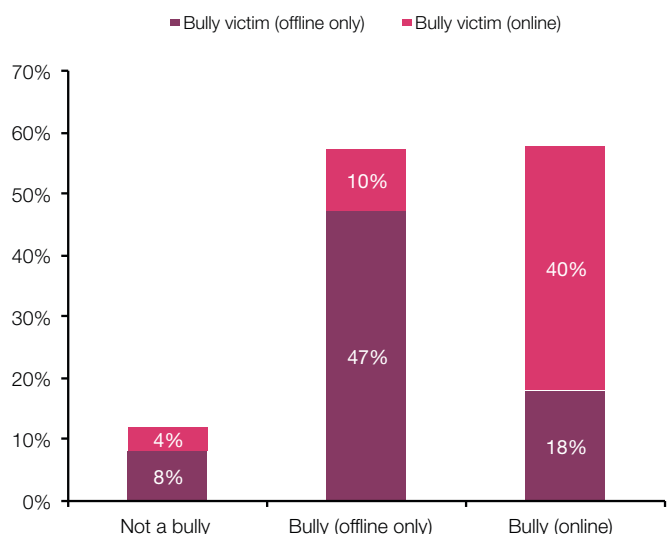
- Across Europe, 6 per cent of 9 to 16-year-old internet users report having been bullied online, and 3 per cent confess to having bullied others.
- Far more have been bullied offline, however, with 19 per cent saying they have been bullied at all – and 12 per cent have bullied someone else. In some countries, bullying is much more common than in others.



**Online bullying has rightly attracted a lot of policy attention. But it is not a wholly new problem. And nor are the children who do it simply “bad”. What does the EU Kids Online survey tell us?**

- How does online bullying relate to offline bullying? Half (56 per cent) of online bullies said they had also bullied people face-to-face, and half (55 per cent) of online victims said they have also been bullied face-to-face. So it is not that bullying takes place either online or offline but that instead bullying migrates from one to the other, making it hard for the victim to escape.
- What is the link between children who bully and children who are bullied? It seems that bullying and being bullied tend to go together. Among those who do not bully others, being bullied is relatively rare – 8 per cent offline only, and 4 per cent online. But, among those who have bullied others offline, nearly half (47 per cent) have also been bullied offline (and fewer online). On the other hand, among those who have bullied others online, nearly half (40 per cent) have been bullied online (and fewer offline).

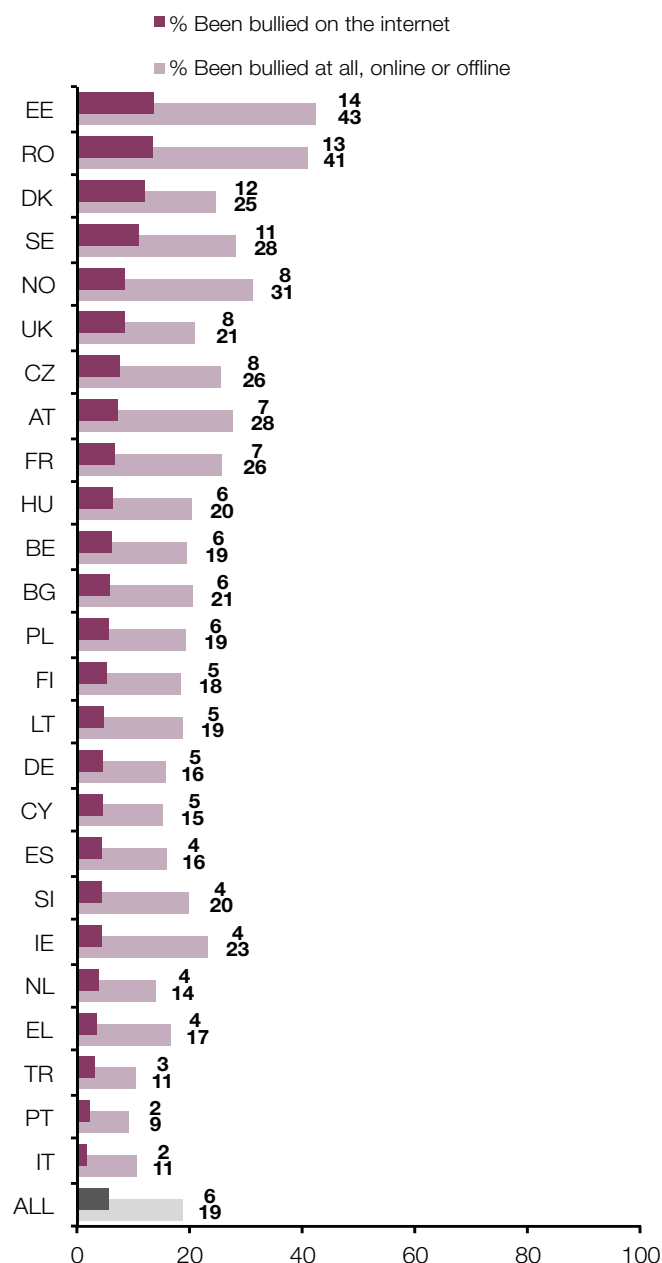
**Whether a child is victim of bullying , by whether the child bullies others**





Although relatively few children report being bullied, this is the risk that upsets them most, more than sexual images, sexual messages, or meeting online contacts offline

#### Whether child has been bullied online or at all



- Which children bully or are bullied? Children who bully and who are bullied online report rather more psychological difficulties than children with no experience of bullying online. Also, those who bully tend to be higher in sensation seeking, while those who are bullied are more often ostracised by their peers.

- Are children who are bullied harmed by this? The 6 per cent of children who have been bullied online divide fairly evenly into those who were very upset (31 per cent), fairly upset (24 per cent), a bit upset (30 per cent) and, the smallest category, not at all upset (15 per cent). Girls are more upset than boys (37 per cent vs. 23 per cent “very upset”).

- How do children who are bullied online cope with this? Children cope fairly well with being bullied online – a third (36 per cent) try to fix the problem, most tell someone (77 per cent, usually a friend but often a parent), and nearly half (46 per cent) block the person sending the hurtful messages.

#### Policy implications

- In countries where there is more bullying, there tends to be more bullying online. This suggests that as internet use increases, so will bullying online. Thus anti-bullying initiatives should accompany efforts to promote internet use.
- Online and offline bullying should be seen as connected, part of a vicious cycle in which perpetrators reach their victims through diverse means and victims find it hard to escape.
- Yet, those who bully may also be vulnerable, and they are often victims themselves, so sensitive treatment is required.
- Although children have a range of coping responses, this risk does upset them, and more support is needed – fewer than half tell a parent or other adult, and fewer than half know how to block the person or delete their messages, so further awareness-raising is vital.

# MEETING NEW CONTACTS ONLINE

50 per cent of children 11-16 say “I find it easier to be myself on the internet than when I am with people face-to-face”.

Communicating, making new friends, developing intimacy – all this is fraught with difficulties and embarrassment for young people. The internet, it seems, offers a space for privacy, control over communication and experimentation. It also lets children easily get to know many new people, whether they are like them or quite different.

Traditionally, it has been clear who children are in touch with because, first, the child can see who they are talking to, also the parent can oversee who the child is talking to and, last, because the child's own identity is not in doubt. But on the internet, none of this can be assumed. Online, no-one knows, famously, if you yourself are a dog – or a child. It is not clear if you are talking to a child or an adult, including an adult pretending to be a child. Nor can parents oversee their children's friends – they are no longer present in the house or street, only on the computer, often inaccessible even to curious or concerned parents.

Nowhere has the public anxiety been greater than over the tension between “meeting strangers” (as many adults see it) and “making new friends” (as children may see it). Meeting strangers is a risk. Making new friends is an opportunity. Distinguishing between the two may depend on the child and the circumstances. Avoiding the emotive terms “stranger” and “friend”, we asked children in the survey about the people they are in touch with online and whether they also know them offline.

- 87 per cent of 11-16 year olds say that online they are in touch with people they first met face-to-face. But 39 per cent are in touch with people they met on the internet who are friends or family of people they know. And 25 per cent are in touch with people they met online who have no connection with their existing social circle.

- 30 per cent of European 9-16 year olds have had contact online with someone they haven't met face to face, but only 9 per cent have gone to an offline meeting with such a person. On a country level, there is no obvious relation between making contacts online and meeting them offline.

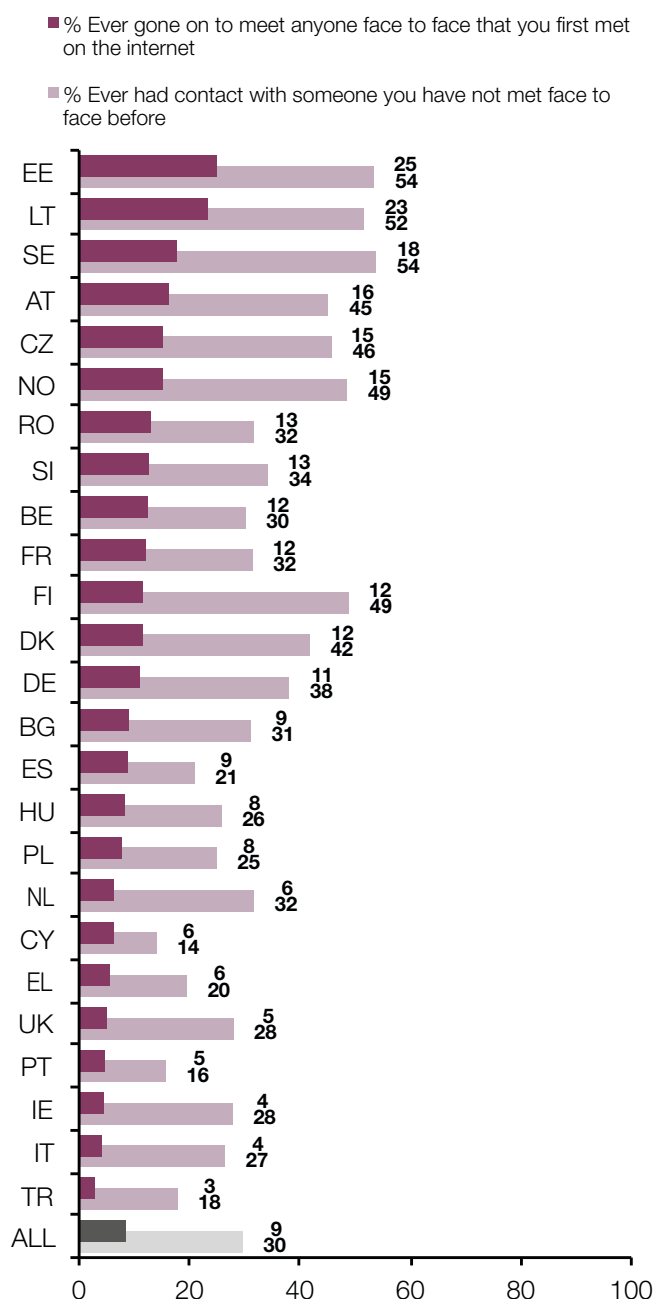
- Among those who have met online contacts offline, half have met one or two people in the past year, half have met more. Also, 57 per cent met a friend of a friend (someone in their social circle) while 48 per cent met someone unconnected with their life before meeting them online.

- Among those children who did meet an online contact offline, 61 per cent of their parents were not aware of this, rising to 68 per cent among the younger children. Parents were least aware of such meetings in Ireland, the UK, Cyprus and Portugal.



## Meeting new people online is commonplace for European children. Only in a small minority of cases is there cause for serious concern

### Whether child has met new people online and then met them offline



### What else do we know about who makes new contacts online?

- Those who make contacts online tend to be higher in self-efficacy and/or sensation seekers who use the internet more, who engage in risky online and offline activities and whose parents place fewer restrictions on their internet use.
- Interestingly, those who go to meet new contacts offline show a similar pattern except they are also more likely to have psychological difficulties; so children's vulnerability is part of what makes some go to face-to-face meetings with 'new friends'.
- 11 per cent of those who went to such meetings (ie, 1 per cent of all children surveyed) were bothered or upset by what happened. Since the vast majority were not upset by such meetings, what makes the difference? We didn't ask much about what happened, though we know that two thirds of those upset met someone about their own age, and that a fifth said something hurtful was said and a few said something sexual happened.
- But we do know that those who were upset were more likely to be younger, low in self-efficacy and higher in psychological difficulties – in short, they tend to be the more vulnerable children.

### Policy implications

- It is important to distinguish making new contacts online – a common occurrence – from going to meet new online contacts offline. It is equally important to recognise that for the most part, meeting online contacts offline is harmless, probably even fun.
- But for a minority of children, meeting online contacts offline are harmful, and these children tend already to be the more vulnerable.
- Since their parents are often unaware of what has happened, awareness raising efforts should be increased so that parents of younger and/or more vulnerable children recognise the risk, but without this undermining the chance for most children to have fun making new friends.

# NEWER RISKS

Public anxiety often focuses on pornography, “sexting”, bullying and meeting strangers, especially for young children. But there are other risks that worry children, including many teenagers.

## Survey findings showed that negative user-generated content is not uncommon:

- **Hate sites** – 12 per cent of European 11-16 year olds have seen these in the past year, rising to one in five 15-16 year olds.
- **Pro-anorexic sites** – 10 per cent have seen these, rising to one in five teenage girls (14-16 years old).
- **Self-harm sites** – 7 per cent have seen these, again more older than younger children.
- **Drug forums** – 7 per cent have seen these too, rising to 12 per cent of 15-16 year olds.
- **Suicide sites** – 5 per cent have seen these.
- **Overall** – 21 per cent of 11-16 year olds have seen at least one of these types of user-generated content; this varies by country, as shown in the graph.

## Varieties of personal data misuse also occur:

- **Identity theft** – 7 per cent of 11-16 year olds say that in the past year somebody used their password to access their information or pretend to be them.
- **Personal information abuse** – 4 per cent say that somebody used their personal information in a way they didn't like.
- **Financial cheating** – just 1 per cent say that they lost money by being cheated on the internet.
- **Overall** – 9 per cent say that they have experienced at least one of these three forms of personal data misuse, and this too varies by country.

*“Be made a ridicule by having personal stuff written about you and then made public” (boy, 11, Greece)*

*“Somebody that would ‘crack’ my password, I mean to access my account, to impersonate me and to make people in my contact list believe that I’m lying to them etc” (girl, 12, Romania)*

*“Pictures of naked people and of people who want to lose weight very quickly” (girl, 10, Portugal)*

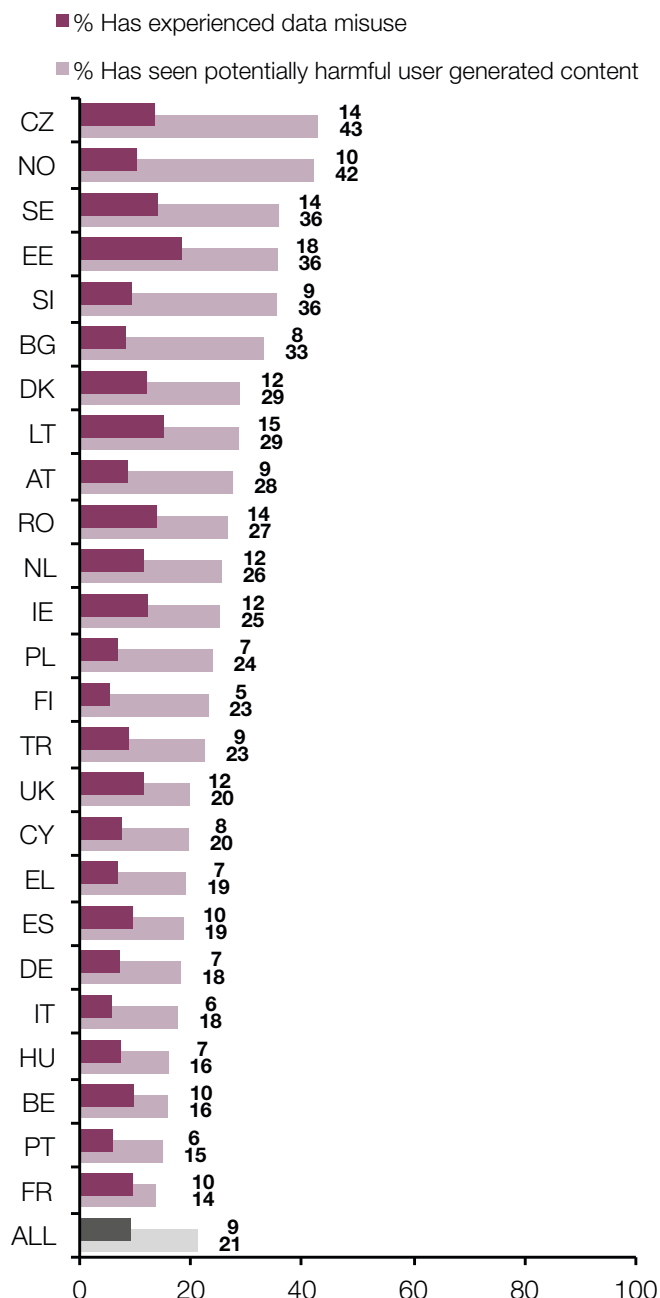
*“Violence (scenes), shocking news” (girl, 14, Slovenia)*

*“Bloodthirsty websites that show how someone is beating himself bloody or how someone is scratching himself” (girl, 15, Austria)*

*“Being hacked by other children online (like: they find out what for instance your password is on an online community)” (girl, 9, Norway)*

*“Lack of sleep, you don’t do your homework if you are too much on the computer and can’t concentrate on study” (boy, 14, Finland)*

## Child (11-16) has encountered negative user-generated content or data misuse



## Policy implications

- As well as conducting surveys, qualitative work based on listening to children is vital to learn what new risks they are experiencing.
- Addressing risks associated with peer-to-peer conduct (user-generated content and personal data misuse) poses a critical challenge to policy makers.
- While younger children have fewer resources to cope with online risk, they are also more willing to turn to parents for help; meanwhile, teenagers face particular risks that worry them and that they may struggle with alone, so they need particular coping strategies and support.

*"Torturing ourselves, attempts to suicide, using drugs" (boy, 15, Hungary)*

*"Violent video filmed at school or when somebody is harmed" (girl, 10, Lithuania)*

*"Showing sexual practices, offering drugs and weapons, religious groups" (boy, 15, Czech Republic)*

*"When somebody says that he/she is going to commit suicide" (boy, 15, Germany)*

*"To do with being skinny, talking about weight loss and what you can do to lose weight" (girl, 15, UK)*

*"Girlfriends who I thought my friends have been awful. They took my identity to have my boyfriend" (girl, 15, France)*

*"The influence of bad websites such as things like diet to lose weight so you could be known as the pretty one. Like vomiting things" (girl, 15, Ireland)*

*"The internet hackers are bothering, also the abusive use of personal accounts or the untrue information tht somebody is spreading for someone else" (boy, 12, Bulgaria)*

# THE RISKS THAT CONCERN CHILDREN KEEP CHANGING

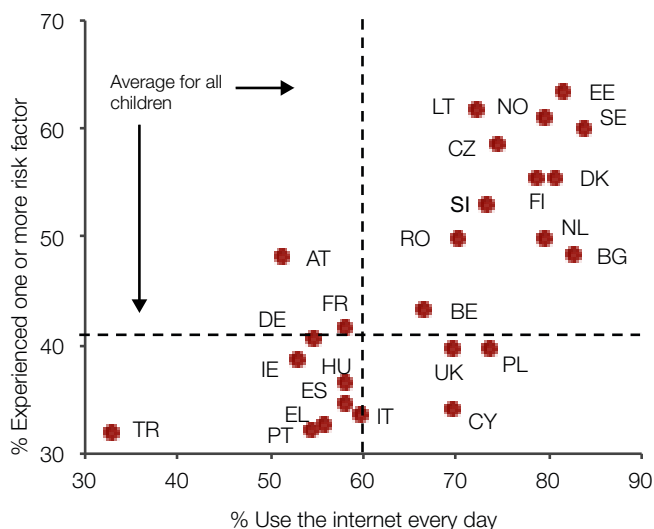
# COMPARING RISK AND HARM

## 4 in 10 children encountered one or more forms of online risk in the past year

- 14 per cent of European 9-16 year olds have seen sexual images online.
- 6 per cent of 9-16 year olds have been sent nasty or hurtful messages/been bullied online.
- 30 per cent of 9-16 year olds have had contact online with someone they have not met face to face.
- 9 per cent of 9-16 year olds have been to an offline meeting with a contact first met online.
- 15 per cent of 11-16 year olds have seen or received sexual messages online.
- 21 per cent of 11-16 year olds have come across one or more types of potentially harmful user-generated content.
- 9 per cent have experienced one or more types of personal data misuse.
- As use of the internet increases – at the level of individuals and countries – so too does risk.

Based on a simple comparison of % children use who the internet daily in a country by % children who have encountered one or more risks online, some striking differences across countries become apparent. More research is needed to understand the reasons that underpin such differences.

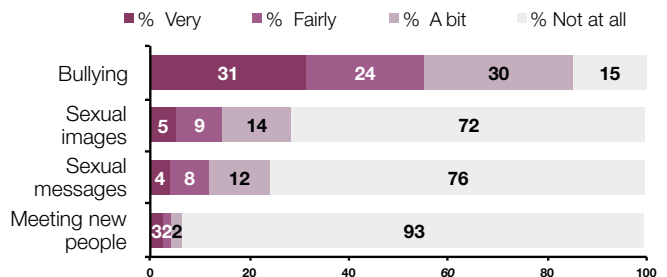
### Encountering online risks by frequency of internet use



## Fewer children report being harmed by online risks

- Being bullied online is the risk that upsets children the most, even though it is among the least common.
- Meeting new people offline – the risk that the public worries about the most – very rarely upsets children, although when it does upset them the consequences can be very serious.
- While society may judge, on moral grounds, that children should not be exposed to sexual content, children are only upset by such exposure in a few circumstances, while in others such exposure may be pleasurable.
- Among the minority upset by sexual content, children are most upset by being asked to talk about sexual acts with someone or being asked for an image of their genitals (by comparison, for example, with sexual messages or images of intercourse).

### How upset the child felt after encountering the risk online



### Risk refers to the probability not the inevitability of harm

Generally, children who are older, higher in self-efficacy and sensation seeking, who do more online activities (ie, are higher on the ladder of opportunities) and who have more psychological problems encounter more risks of all kinds online.

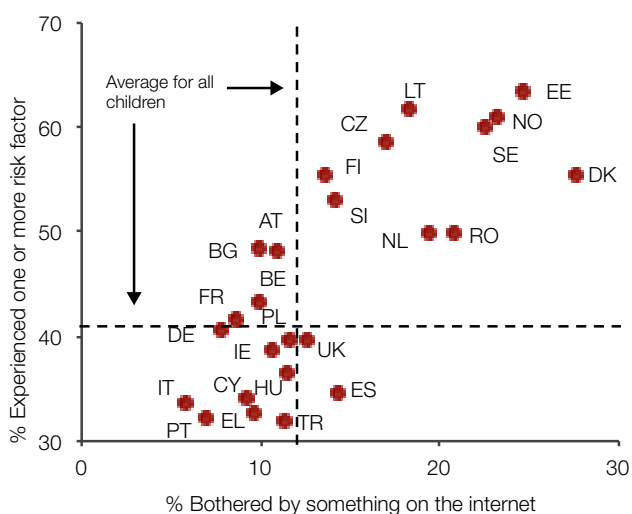
In contrast, children who are younger, lower in self-efficacy and sensation seeking, who do fewer online activities, have fewer skills, and who have more psychological problems find online risks more harmful and upsetting.



## In some countries, a similar level of risk is less upsetting than in others

- Broadly, in countries where more children encounter online risk, children also report more bothering or upsetting experiences – and vice versa.
- But some country comparisons are thought-provoking. For example, children in Finland and Denmark report similar levels of risk, but Danish children are more often upset. At a lower level of risk, the same holds for Spanish and Italian children.

### Encountering online risks by whether bothered or upset by internet use



## Policy implications

- Since risk increases as use increases, it might seem simple to call for restrictions on children's use of the internet. But online opportunities and digital literacy also increase with use, so there is no simple solution. Rather, ways must be found to manage risk without unduly restricting opportunities.
- As with riding a bike or crossing the road, everyday activities online carry a risk of harm, but this harm is far from inevitable – indeed, it is fairly rare. The EU Kids Online survey provides clear empirical support for policy efforts both to manage children's encounters online so as to reduce harm (though not necessarily to reduce risk). This should be achieved both by designing the online environment to build in safety considerations and to increase children's digital skills, coping and resilience.
- In some countries, the need for such efforts is already pressing. In others, it may be anticipated that as use rises, so to will the need for greater policy efforts regarding children's safety, empowerment and well-being.

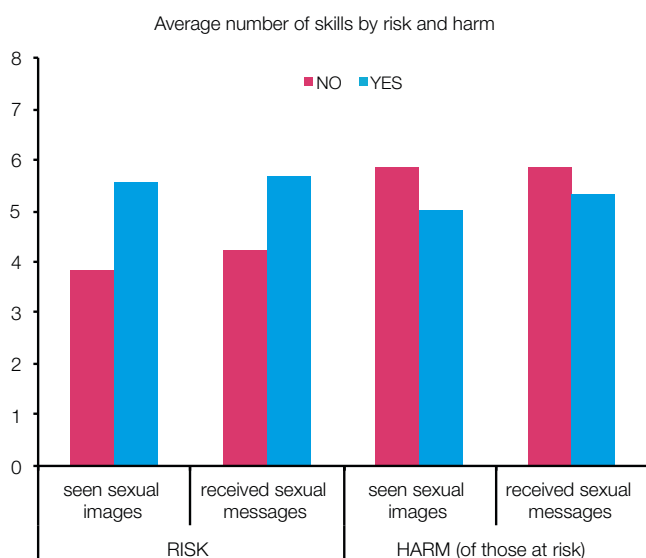
# HOW CHILDREN COPE WITH HARM

Society has a responsibility to provide guidance and support for children facing online risks. But it is also important to support children's capacity to cope themselves, thereby building resilience for digital citizens.

- It might be thought that increasing children's digital skills would reduce their encounters with online risk. But as EU Kids Online findings show, increased skills are associated with a wider and deeper use of the internet, bringing both more opportunities and more risks.
- This may not be problematic: developmental psychologists argue that children must encounter some degree of risk – though not risk which exceeds their capacity to cope – for them to become resilient. The kind of risk that a child can cope with varies with individual circumstances – some children experience risks as harmful while others do not.

- Some online experiences are so extreme or upsetting that children should not be exposed to them in the first place – for these, self- or state-regulation of the online environment is required. But for many everyday encounters, 'end-user' solutions are preferable. These may be provided by parents, teachers or even peers – see the next section. However, children themselves are part of the solution, and empowering them to cope with harm is vital.
- As the graph shows, children with more skills are more likely to have seen sexual images or received sexual messages. But those who are upset (ie, self-reported harm) have fewer skills than those not harmed.

## More skilled children encounter more risk but experience less harm



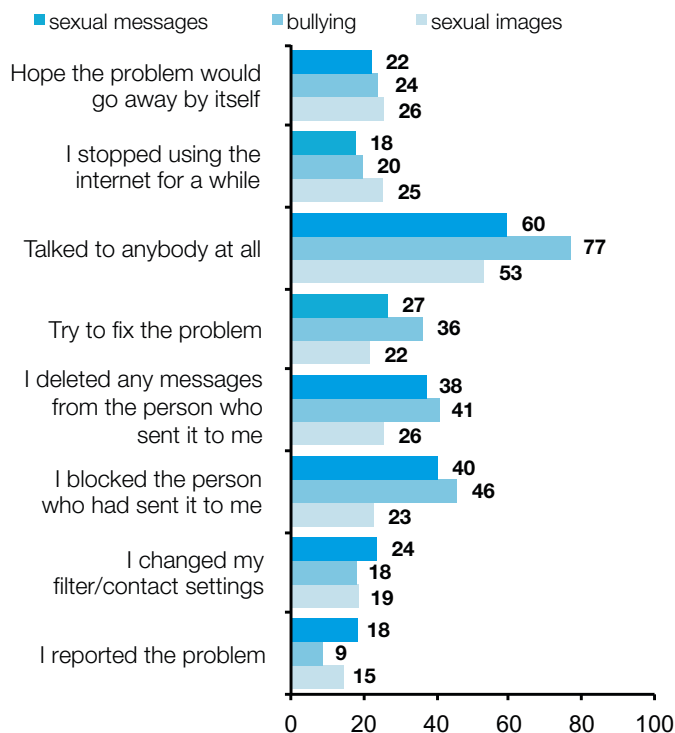
### What can children do, when faced with an online risk that upsets them?

In the EU Kids Online survey, we asked children if they did any of the following:

- Fatalistic responses – hope the problem will go away, stop using the internet for a while.
- Communicative responses – talk to someone about what happened.
- Pro-active strategies – try to fix the problem, delete a problematic message, block an unwelcome person.

Communicative coping relies on having people around you that you trust, while pro-active strategies require available, user-friendly technical tools and the digital skills to employ them and a fatalistic response suggests the approach of someone lacking social, technical or skilful forms of support.

## What children do when upset by online risks



## We found that, among those upset by a particular risk, 11-16 year olds cope in different ways: (see graph)

- Younger children are more likely to make fatalistic responses, and they are also less likely than older children to tell someone if they are upset by sexual images. Older teens are more likely to block unwelcome people.
- Boys, compared with girls, are more likely to hope upsetting sexual messages will go away. Girls are more likely to talk to somebody about online harms. Interestingly, girls are also more likely to adopt proactive strategies to online harm.
- Children lower in self-efficacy favour fatalistic responses, while children higher in self-efficacy try to fix the problem. Self-efficacy makes no difference to either communicative or technical responses, however.
- Children lower on the ladder of opportunities (who do fewer online activities) adopt more fatalistic responses while those higher on the ladder are more proactive.
- Children with more psychological difficulties tend to adopt fatalistic responses, especially stopping using the internet, and they are less likely to talk to someone if they are upset when bullied though some do block the bully.

Efforts to promote children's digital

citizenship – in terms of online safety

and good practice – are bearing some

fruit, and should be extended

## Policy implications

- Policy makers have long advised children to tell someone if they've been upset online, and it seems such messages have been heard.
- Children try some proactive strategies more than others and few are fatalistic: this suggests a desire to cope as best they can and a readiness to adopt new technical tools if these are accessible.
- When asked which strategies really helped the problem, children told us that reporting the problem to an ISP was effective with sexual images but less so for sexual or bullying messages: this suggests that better solutions are needed for peer-to-peer risks.
- Mostly, children said the approach they chose helped in up to two thirds of cases, but this leaves room for provision of better support and/or tools.
- There may be many reasons why the solutions children try, when upset, do not help the situation, but one possibility is that the technical tools are flawed or difficult to use, and another is that adults – professional or personal – are unprepared or unable to help children.
- The “knowledge gap” phenomenon – in which the information-rich learn from available advice and guidance more rapidly than the information-poor – means that efforts to promote digital citizenship will disproportionately benefit the already-advantaged. Targeting less privileged or more vulnerable children is a priority.
- Overwhelmingly, children tell a friend, followed by a parent, when something online upsets them. Rarely do they tell a teacher or any other adult in a position of responsibility. Their apparent lack of trust in those who may have more expert solutions is a concern.

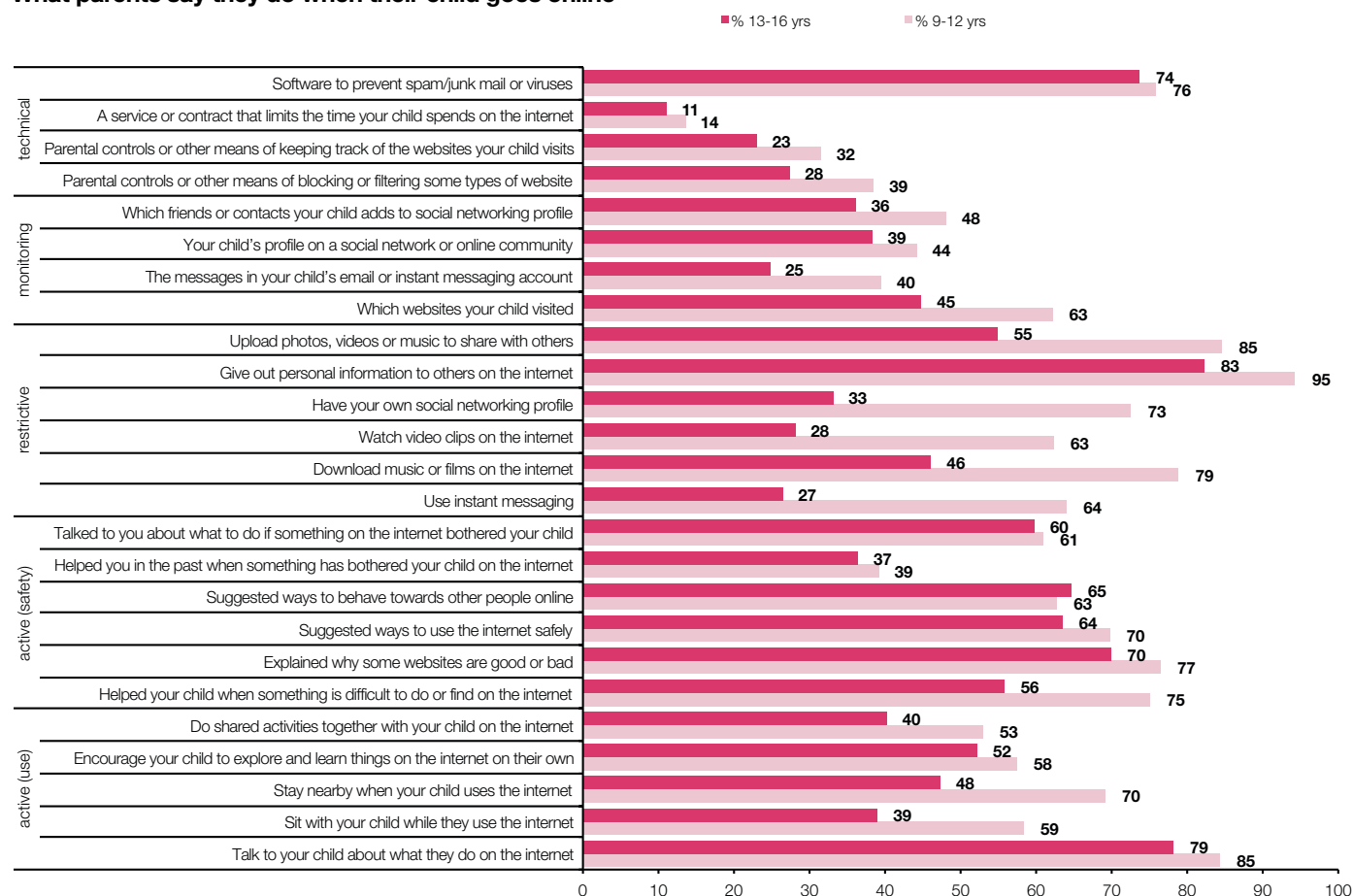
# WHAT PARENTS DO WHEN CHILDREN GO ONLINE

Parents play a vital role in keeping children safe on the internet and they can also empower their child to gain digital skills.

Yet parents face some dilemmas. Should they be more restrictive or more enabling? Do they understand the internet well enough to guide their child? Should they treat the internet like television or other media, or is it different? What are the

technical options available to them? The EU Kids Online survey asked about five parental strategies – and we asked both parents and children what really happened at home.

## What parents say they do when their child goes online



- 88 per cent parents impose rules about whether their child can give out personal information online
- 81 per cent talk to their children – especially their daughters – about what they do on the internet
- 58 per cent stay nearby when their child is online

- Monitoring what the child does online later is less popular, since it may imply less trust
- While three quarters use software to prevent spam/viruses, less than a third uses a filter for safety reasons

Most parents have got the message  
that it is worthwhile engaging with  
their child's internet use – but a few  
could do more

- Around one in ten parents does few or none of the forms of mediation we asked about.
- Parents reduce their amount of mediation – especially restrictions – as children get older, though interestingly they are equally likely to advise on safety whatever the child's age.
- Parents from higher vs. lower SES homes do more active/safety mediation though no more restrictive or technical mediation.
- Parents who are internet users do more of all forms of mediation than parents who are not.
- Interestingly, only 15 per cent of parents say they have changed their approach to internet safety because of something that upset their child online, although one in five parents say this in Estonia, Bulgaria and Romania where, possibly, they are undergoing a process of rapid adjustment to widespread internet access.
- Overall, four fifths of parents (especially those with younger children) are confident that they can help their child deal with anything online that bothers them, and they are also fairly confident in their child's ability to cope.
- Still, one quarter of parents think it is "fairly" (23 per cent) or "very" (5 per cent) likely that their child will experience problems online in the next six months, and half think they should take more interest in their child's online activities.

- Parents who practise more restrictive regulation have children who encounter fewer risks and also less harm – but also fewer online opportunities (these children do fewer online activities, and have fewer digital skills).
- Parents who practise more active safety mediation or monitoring have children who encounter more risks (especially younger children) and more harm (especially teenagers) – probably, parental mediation is a response to, rather than a condition for, problematic online experiences (and these children do more online activities and have more skills).

## What do children say about this?

- Children report similar levels of parental activity to parents, though they underestimate parental levels of monitoring and filtering.
- They are generally positive about their parents' actions – over two thirds say it is helpful (27 per cent "very", 43 per cent "a bit") – teens largely agree with younger children about this.
- Contrary to the view that parents know little of what their children do online, two thirds of children say their parents know a lot (32 per cent) or quite a lot (36 per cent) about what they do.
- However, nearly half think what their parents do limits their online activities (11 per cent "a lot", 33 per cent "a little"), and 9-10 year olds feel the most restricted.
- And, as often suspected, a third of children say they sometimes ignore what their parents say about using the internet (7 per cent "a lot", 29 per cent "a little").
- Some would like their parents to take "a lot" (5 per cent) or "a little" (10 per cent) more interest in what they do online, especially among the 9-12 year olds; most would not, though.

## Policy implications

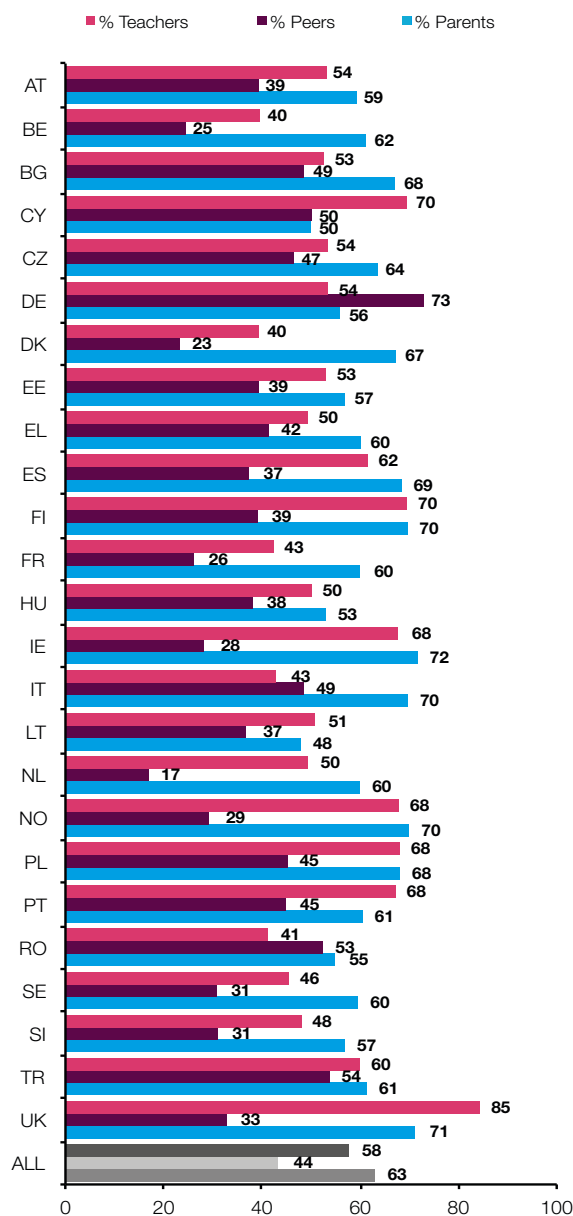
- Parents employ a wide range of strategies, depending partly on the age of the child. But there are some parents who do not do very much, even for young children, and there are some children would like their parents to take more interest. Targeting these parents with awareness raising messages and resources is thus a priority.
- Cynicism that what parents do is not valued, or that children will evade parental guidance, is ungrounded: the evidence reveals a more positive picture in which children welcome parental interest and mediating activities while parents express confidence in their children's abilities. It is important to maintain this situation as the internet becomes more complex and more embedded in everyday life.
- Parental restrictions carry a significant cost in terms of children's online opportunities and skills, but they may be appropriate if children are vulnerable to harm. Parental efforts to empower children online seem to enhance their opportunities and skills, though there is little evidence that they reduce risk or harm. There are no easy answers, therefore, so parents should be supported in judging what best suits their child.



# WHO SUPPORTS CHILDREN – PARENTS, TEACHERS AND PEERS

Parents are not the only people responsible for children. Teachers also have a vital role to play, and for many children, their peers too are a valuable resource: 63 per cent of European 9-16 year olds have received internet safety advice from parents, 58 per cent from teachers and 44 per cent from peers.

## Whether parents, peers or teachers have ever suggested ways to use the internet safely



Beyond advising on using the internet safely, teachers and peers help children with tricky online activities and judgements:

- 58 per cent of 9-16 year olds say their teachers have helped them when something is difficult to do or find on the internet, and the same percentage have explained why some websites are good or bad. Half have talked to them generally about what they do online or have suggested ways to behave towards other people only and 40 per cent have talked to them about what to do if something bothers them online. More, however, have made rules about what children can and can't do on the internet at school (62 per cent).
- 64 per cent of 9-16 year olds say their friends have helped them when something is difficult to do or find on the internet, and over a third have explained why some website are good or bad and have suggested ways to behave towards others online.



When something bothered them online, 36 per cent said a parent helped them, 28 per cent a friend and 24 per cent a teacher. Ideally, every child would have at least one person to turn to

- Three quarters of 15-16 year olds have received safety advice from friends, compared with two thirds of 9-10 year olds. It is also more common among children from lower SES homes.
- Fewer children – especially among the 9-10 year olds – say they have suggested to their friends how to use the internet safely, but still over one third say they have done this.
- The more teachers and friends mediate children's internet use, the greater the children's digital literacy and safety skills – this association is stronger the younger the child. Or, since we cannot determine the direction of causality, it may be that more skilled children are able more effectively to gain the help of teachers and peers (supporting the knowledge gap hypothesis).



### Policy implications

- Levels of teacher mediation are high but could be higher, as a large minority of children are not reached by teacher guidance. Since schools have the resources to reach all children, they should take the biggest share of the task of reaching the “hard to reach”.
- The youngest children (9-10 years) report the least mediation from teachers: as this age group now uses the internet widely, primary schools should increase critical and safety guidance for pupils.
- The benefits of supporting peer mediation are easily neglected but could be constructively harnessed, especially as children are most likely to tell a friend if something bothers them online. Peer mentioning schemes have a valuable role to play.
- When something has bothered them on the internet, 36 per cent of children said a parent helped them, 28 per cent a friend and 24 per cent a teacher. Ideally, every child would have at least one person to turn to, but, as noted already in relation to coping, a minority of children has no-one to tell when something upsets them.

# INEQUALITIES IN RISK AND RESOURCES TO COPE

Some minority groupings, among all internet-using children in Europe, face particular challenges online. Children may be disadvantaged by lack of economic or cultural capital or they may be disadvantaged through social or psychological vulnerability. We used several proxy measures to identify these groups. The differences below are generally small yet indicative.

## Economic or cultural capital

### 27 per cent of children have parents with lower secondary education or less

These children report fewer online risks than the European average, but are more upset when they encounter risk. They also claim fewer digital literacy and safety skills than the average. This relatively inexperienced group in terms of internet risks has parents who feel less confident in supporting their children online, who receive less safety information from a range of sources, and who are less likely to wish for more such information than the average.

### 25 per cent of children have parents who do not use the internet

These children also report fewer online risks than the European average and they are also more upset when they encounter risk. Their digital skills are even lower than the above group, probably because fewer have the internet at home. Their parents are less confident also that they can support their child online, though they think they should do more. These parents are less likely than most to get safety information from their friends or family, and they especially wish their child's school would provide more such information.

### 7 per cent of children use the internet less than once per week

These children also report fewer online risks than the European average and they are also more upset when they encounter risk. Their digital skills are very low – they have only two of the eight skills we asked about. Although their parents do not consider their children well prepared to cope with the

internet, they do not plan to do more themselves than the average parent, nor do they desire more safety information than others.

## Social or psychological vulnerability

### 41 per cent of children have parents who say they are very worried about their safety online

Interestingly, these children are no more likely than average to have encountered online risks, nor are they more upset by them and their digital skills are average. However, their parents are a little less confident that their child can cope with online risks, and they think they should do more to support their child online.



They are also in receipt of slightly more safety information than the average, and they wish to receive more still, from most sources.

### **34 per cent of children reported more psychological difficulties than most**

These children report more online risks than the average, and they are more upset when they occur. Their digital skills are just below average and their parents lack confidence in their ability to help their child online, though they are more likely to have adjusted their approach after something upset their child online. These parents neither receive nor wish for more safety information than the average parent.

### **12 per cent of children have experienced something upsetting on the internet**

These children report many more risk and harm experiences than the average, as often recognised also by their parents. Their digital skills are above average, suggesting a readiness to learn to manage the internet better after an upsetting experience. Their parents, too, have changed their approach after their child was upset online, and they are fairly confident in both their and their child's ability to cope in future, compared with the average. Among those parents aware of their child's experience, there is a desire for more safety information from all sources.

### **6 per cent of children have a mental, physical or other disability**

These children report raised risk levels, especially in relation to contact risks. They find these more upsetting in relation to meeting new online contacts offline, though not otherwise. Their digital skills are also a little higher than average, though their parents are less confident that their child can cope with what they find online. These parents receive slightly more safety information and, particularly, would like to receive more from ISPs and websites than would most.

### **4 per cent of children belong to a discriminated-against group**

These children report more online risk, though only slightly more harm from these risks. Their digital skills are above average, though their parents tend to lack confidence in their ability to support and their children's ability in terms of coping with online problems, and they are more likely to have adjusted their approach in response to such problems. They are more likely to be aware of safety information from the government, and would like yet more, but get less support from their friends and family.

### **4 per cent of children speak a minority language at home**

Risks encountered by these children are about average though they report being more upset from bullying and 'sexting'. Their digital skills are average, but their parents lack confidence in their children's ability to cope, and they think they should do more to support their child online. They receive less safety information from all sources than the average. Though they mostly prefer to receive such information from the child's school, from TV or friends and family, they wish for less not more than does the average parent.

## **Policy implications**

- For children whose parents lack economic or cultural/educational resources, the challenge is to build digital skills and resilience given a relative lack of experience of the internet at home. It is important to increase the confidence of these parents, and to raise awareness that more safety knowledge would be beneficial. The child's school has a key role here as a trusted source.
- For children with social, familial or psychological vulnerabilities, the challenge is rather different. These children may already be experiencing more risk of harm from internet use, though parental worries are a poor indicator of such experiences. Some vulnerable children have increased digital skills already, so the policy priority is less to raise their skills further than to consider other ways of reducing harm. This could include helping those parents who think they should do more to support their child, providing "just in time" guidance for those coping with an upsetting experience, and ensuring a wider range of sources of safety information (eg, online sources for parents of disabled children, government sources for parents of discriminated-against children).



# SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN ONLINE EXPERIENCES

Comparing children's experiences in 25 countries is like comparing apples and oranges – there are many variables to consider, most of them difficult to measure.

Differences are easily overstated, so our first task was to note how European children's experiences of the internet are similar wherever they live. Our second task was to recognise differences among children depending on their country and, if possible, to explain these differences.

In general, the more children do one kind of activity online, the more they do of another – this applies for opportunities and risks. So we grouped the children in the survey according to how they use the internet, and found six “user types”, with different relations to online risk.

## Children are not all the same

### Low risk novices

This group includes many younger children, and averages 11.1 years old. They use the internet rather little, focusing mainly on schoolwork, watching video clips and reading/watching the news. Few have an SNS profile and they do few risky online activities. Although they encounter few online risks, when they do, they tend to be upset.

### Young networkers

These children are about one and a half years older than the first group (average 12.7 years) and more often girls than boys. They are less likely to use the internet for schoolwork or news and more likely to use SNSs. They also encounter online risks though they tend not to find these upsetting.

### Risky explorers

Averaging 13.5 years old, these children spend almost two hours a day online and do the widest range of activities, including some more advanced and creative activities on the ladder of opportunities. They also do more risky online activities. Although not the oldest group, they encounter the most risk online but are the least likely to be upset.

### Moderate users

Being of similar age as the second group (13.1 years on average), these children spend about the same time online, but have a much wider range of activities. They are less likely to encounter online risks linked to online communication, although their level of risk is similar to that of the ‘young networkers’.

### Intensive gamers

These children are on average 13.6 years and more often boys than girls. They are online for the longest of all (around 3 hours per day) and have a fairly wide range of activities. They like playing games against the computer and watching video clips, and they do relatively little schoolwork, news or creative activities. Their exposure to risk is quite high but lower than that of the ‘risky explorers’; some use the internet excessively.

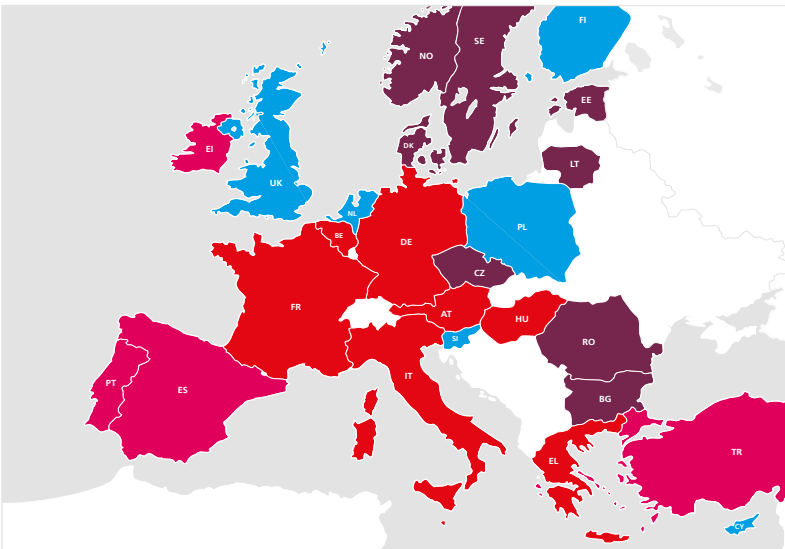
### Experienced networkers

This is the oldest group (average 14.1 years), with more girls than boys. They use the internet for less than two hours but do more activities (especially social networking, though less gaming) than the average. They also read/watch news, use instant messaging, post photos or music and write blogs. They encounter a similar level of risk to the ‘intensive gamers’ but relatively low harm (though they seem particularly sensitive to bullying).



Countries can be characterised as  
 “lower use, lower risk”, “lower use,  
 some risk”, “higher use, some risk”  
 and “higher use, higher risk”

**Country classification based on children’s online use and risk (from EU Kids Online survey)**



Although in reality countries are subtly graded in terms of amounts and types of use and risk, here we cluster the countries into four categories according to the level of children’s usage and the level of each risk encountered online. Overall, it is striking that high internet use is rarely associated with low risk; and high risk is rarely associated with low use. Rather, the more use, the more risk though high use is not necessarily associated with high risk.

**“Lower use, lower risk” countries** – here children make the lowest use of the internet, and they are below average on all risks apart from meeting online contacts – online and offline; still, it may be expected that as levels of use rise in these countries, so too will risk.

**“Lower use, some risk” countries** have the lowest internet usage, although there is some excessive use of the internet and some problems with user-generated content.

**“Higher use, some risk” countries** make high use of the internet but are high only on some risks, possibly because of effective awareness-raising campaigns, regulatory strategies or strategies of parental mediation of children’s internet use.

**“Higher use, higher risk” countries** include both wealthy Nordic countries and Eastern European countries (better called, “New use, new risk”).

**A country’s socio-economic stratification, regulatory framework, technological infrastructure and educational system all shape children’s online risks.**

## Policy implications

- Children in wealthier countries (measured by GDP) encounter more online risk but, arguably, these countries are also well placed to provide more accessible and user-friendly safety resources for children and parents. Also, countries with more press freedom, such as Nordic and Baltic countries, are more likely to have children who encounter online risk – this may be because of lower internet regulation and strategies that ensure safety without introducing censorship are thus needed.
- At the country level, there is no systematic relation between level of parental filtering in a country and children’s risk experiences, although there is a small relationship at the individual level – children whose parents use a filter are less likely to have encountered sexual content, suggesting filters can play a useful role.
- Degree of broadband penetration, and length of time in which most people have had internet access, are associated with greater online risks, but not greater online activities among children – this suggests that, while children are motivated to use the internet everywhere in Europe, higher quality access is bringing more risks than are adequately dealt with by policymakers (whether industry, state or education).
- In countries with 15+ years of schooling on average, children are more likely to have better digital skills, as are children from countries where more schools use computers in the classroom. Education clearly has a positive role to play in supporting digital skills, literacies and citizenship, and should be supported across all countries.

# TOP 10 MYTHS ABOUT CHILDREN'S ONLINE RISKS

## 1 Digital natives know it all

Children knowing more than their parents has been exaggerated – only 36 per cent of 9-16-year olds say it is very true that “I know more about the internet than my parents” – 31 per cent say “a bit true”, and two in three 9-10 year olds say “not true”. Talk of digital natives obscures children's need for support in developing digital skills.

## 2 Everyone is creating their own content now

In the past month, only one in five used a file-sharing site or created a pet/avatar and half that number wrote a blog. Creative activities are rarest among younger children. While social networking makes it easier to upload content, most children use the internet for ready-made, mass produced content.

## 3 Under 13s can't use social networking sites so no worries

With 38 per cent 9-12 year olds having an SNS profile, it is clear that age limits don't work. Since many “under-age” users registered with a false age, even if the provider did tailor privacy and safety settings to suit young children, they couldn't identify them. Some young social networkers have public profiles which display personal information, and some contact people they haven't met. Should providers strengthen their protections? Or get rid of age limits altogether?

## 4 Everyone is watching porn online

Estimates for exposure to pornography online are lower than many anticipated – a quarter saw sexual images in the past year online or offline, and one in seven saw them online, rising to a quarter of older teens. Even assuming some under-reporting, it seems that media hype over pornography is based on unrepresentative samples or just supposition.

## 5 Bullies are baddies

Most (60 per cent) of those who bully – online or offline – have themselves been bullied by others, and 40 per cent of those who bully online have been bullied online. Both those who bully and who are bullied online tend to be more psychologically vulnerable, suggesting a vicious cycle of behaviour that damages both victim and perpetrator.

## 6 People you meet on the internet are strangers

Most (87 per cent) 11-16 year olds are in touch online with people they know face-to-face. Four in ten have online contacts that they met online but who are connected with their friends or family. A quarter are in touch with people unconnected with their social circle, and 9 per cent met offline someone they first met online. Few went unaccompanied or met someone older and only 1 per cent had a negative experience. The challenge is to protect children from rare but harmful occurrences without limiting the opportunities of the majority.

## 7 Offline risks migrate online

Well, in part, the evidence supports this and it is important – children who report more offline risks of various kinds are more likely to report more risk encounters online and, significantly, more likely to report harm from online experiences. But, offline risk does not predict all online risk encounters, so it should not be assumed that children not already identified as at risk offline are not at risk online. We still don't know all the factors that account for online harm, and it is important to see both online and offline risks in context.

Myths about internet safety tend to exaggerate or over simplify, and they are often out of date

8

### Putting the PC in the living room will help

53 per cent go online at a friends' house, 49 per cent go online in their bedroom and 33 per cent go online via a mobile phone or handheld device. So this advice is out of date. It would be better to advise parents to talk to their child about the internet or share an online activity with them.

9

### Teaching digital skills will reduce online risk

More skills are associated with more, not less, risk – because more use leads to more skills, more skills lead to more opportunities, and opportunities are linked to risk. One reason that opportunities and risks are linked is because children must explore and encounter some risk to learn and

gain resilience. Another is that exploring for information or fun leads to unexpected risks because the online environment is not designed with children's interests in mind (too many pop-ups, for instance). But more skills could reduce the harm that some children experience from online risk.

10

### Children can get around safety software

In fact, only 28 per cent of 11-16 year olds say they can change filter preferences. And most say what their parents do in relation to their internet use is helpful (27 per cent a lot, 43 per cent a little). However, it is true that nearly half think their parents' actions limit their online activities while a third say they ignore their parents (7 per cent a lot, 29 per cent a little).



CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS WISER POLICY MAKING



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Government

- For children who lack convenient broadband access, governments should ensure that digital exclusion does not compound social exclusion.
- It is important that while all should benefit from public information resources, special efforts are made to ensure these reach the disadvantaged or information-poor.
- Especially in countries where children do not 'progress' far up the ladder of opportunities, initiatives to support effective access, broad-ranging use and digital literacy are vital.
- If industry self-regulation is to meet the needs of children and families, it requires a firm steer from government to ensure that it is inclusive, effective and accountable.
- If schools, youth and child welfare services are to raise awareness, provide information and guidance and effectively support children and parents, they require strong encouragement, resources and recognition, especially in some countries.
- In many countries, there is already evidence that stakeholder efforts are bearing fruit; the imperative now is to maintain and extend such efforts to address future challenges.

## Awareness-raising

- It is vital to keep listening to children to recognise the changing array of risks they face, to address children's own worries and to support children's ability to cope, whether this involves avoiding, resolving or reporting problems.
- Messages should be matched to different groups – teens may worry about pro-anorexia content, young children can be upset by pornography, those who bully may also be bullied. Reaching the 'hard to reach', while difficult, is a priority given that vulnerable children are particularly susceptible to online harm.
- There is little warrant for exaggerated or panicky fears about children's safety online – what's important is to empower all children while addressing the needs of the minority at significant risk of harm.

## Industry

- To reduce user confusion and impractical skill burdens, privacy settings, parental controls, safety tools and reporting mechanisms should be age-appropriate if for children and far more usable (whether for children or parents) than at present and/or enabled by default.
- To increase user trust, the management of safety, identity and privacy underpinning services used by children should be transparent, accountable and independently evaluated; while 'safety (or privacy) by design' may obviate the need for user-friendly tools, it makes the need for transparency and redress even more pressing.
- As children gain internet access (and, it seems, increased access to sexual/inappropriate content) via more diverse and personal platforms, ensuring consistent and easy-to-use safety mechanisms on all devices is vital.
- Especially in "new use, new risk" countries, children are exposed to pornography or other inappropriate content and contact by accident (eg, popups, inadequate online search processes or weak safety measures) – protection for children needs strengthening.

## Children

- Children generally grasp the ethical codes of courtesy, consideration and care that guide social interaction offline, but they have more to learn – or to be taught – about the importance of such codes online; becoming empowered and responsible digital citizens will be increasingly important as the internet becomes ever more embedded into daily life.
- Children can be creative, experimental and imaginative online in ways that adults (parents, teachers, others) insufficiently value – wider recognition for children's experiences would support more sophistication in use and build self-efficacy more generally.
- Contrary to popular belief, children do not wish to be always online, but often lack sufficient alternative options – for play, travel, interaction or exploration – in their leisure hours; these too, should be enabled and resourced.

## Parents

- As internet use is increasingly private and/or mobile, putting the computer in a public room is no longer inappropriate; rather, parents should get online themselves, talk to their child about the internet and even share an online activity with them.
- Those who encounter risk are not necessarily those who experience more harm, so parents should be encouraged to worry less about the former than the latter, where possible guiding their children so that harms are avoided or managed.
- Without undermining parents' trust in their children, parents should be more aware of and more empowered to respond constructively to children's (including teens') rare but sometimes upsetting experiences of harm.
- Parents should be encouraged to make more use of the array of parental controls, though this will require greater availability of easy-to-use, carefully tailored, affordable tools.

## Child welfare

- Now that the internet has entered into the array of long-established sources of risk in childhood (including other media, risks in the home or community), online risk should be included in risk assessment processes, recognising that increasingly online and offline are intertwined in a potentially vicious circle.
- Children who are vulnerable offline are especially vulnerable online, as EU Kids Online evidence shows; for some children, psychological difficulties or social problems may result in the migration of risk from offline to online settings; this should be recognised by child welfare professionals, youth workers, law enforcement, clinicians etc, and these may require specialist training.
- However, offline vulnerabilities do not fully explain online experiences of harm, and thus child welfare professions should be alert to new risks of harm online that cannot be predicted from what is already known of particular children offline.

## Educators

- Since schools are uniquely positioned to reach all children, in a calm learning environment, with up to date technology and resources, they should take a major responsibility for supporting children and their parents in gaining digital literacy and safety skills.
- Such efforts should become established as a core dimension of the curriculum, and initiatives developed at secondary school level should now be extended to primary and even nursery schools.
- Encouraging children to a wider diversity of online activities while teaching critical literacy and safety skills enhances online benefits, digital citizenship and resilience to harm, and so should be encouraged; particular efforts are needed for less privileged and younger children.
- Since children tell a friend followed by a parent but rarely a teacher or other responsible adult when something online upsets them, teachers' relations with children should enable more trust, and they could also harness the potential of peer mentoring.

## Civil society

- Much more great (diverse, stimulating, high quality) online content of all kinds is needed, especially for young children and in small language communities; while children's books, films and television programmes are publicly celebrated and supported, far less attention is given to online provision for children who are, too often, left to find content for themselves.
- Promoting children's online opportunities, including their right to communicate and their need to take some risks is important to counter simplistic calls for restricting children's internet use. The ambition must be, instead, to maximise benefits (as defined by children as well as adults) while reducing harm (which is not necessarily the same as reducing risk).
- A critical lens should be sustained when examining public anxieties, media reporting, industry accountability or new technological developments to ensure that these do not undermine children's interests. Further, critical analysis of regulatory and technological developments should not assume that all users are adults, that parents can and will always meet the 'special needs' of children, or that children's interests are somehow antithetical to the public interest.



# THE SURVEY

EU Kids Online findings are based on unique and detailed survey conducted in home, face to face, with 9-16 year olds children from 25 countries.

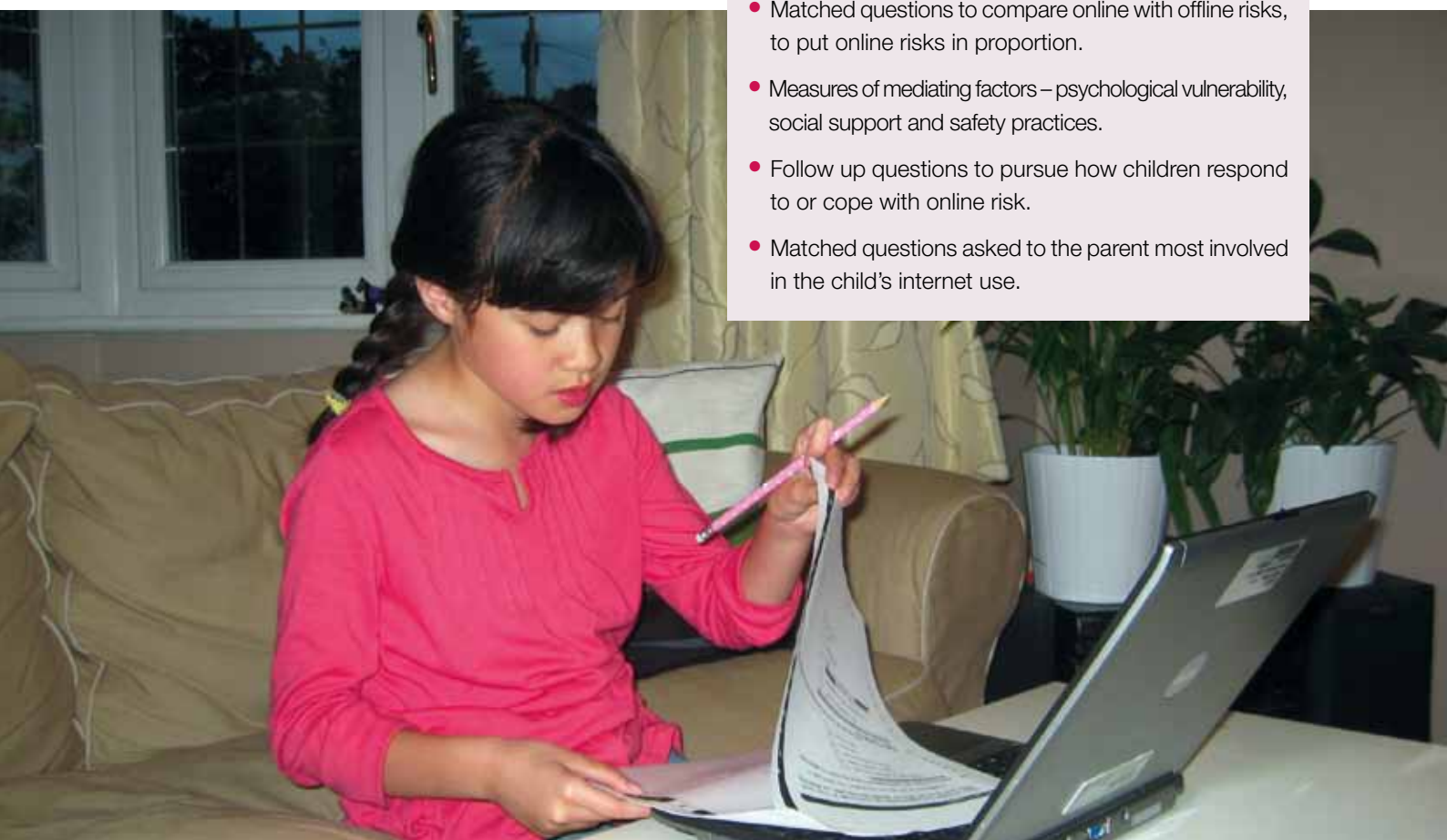
## Ipsos MORI

“Ipsos MORI was delighted to work alongside the LSE on this ground-breaking pan-European study. Conducting 25,000 in-home interviews with parents and children on sensitive topics is a methodological challenge and the outcome is very rewarding with a rich and robust evidence base for Europe’s policy-makers.”

**Andrew Johnson, Director**, Ipsos Europe

### Design features

- High standards applied throughout the design, conduct and analysis of the research process and findings.
- Random stratified survey sampling of 1000 children (9-16 years old) per country who use the internet.
- Survey administration to children at home, face to face, with a self-completion section for sensitive questions.
- Careful consideration given to the ethical issues involved in the research process.
- Equivalent questions asked of each type of risk to compare across risks.
- Matched questions to compare online with offline risks, to put online risks in proportion.
- Measures of mediating factors – psychological vulnerability, social support and safety practices.
- Follow up questions to pursue how children respond to or cope with online risk.
- Matched questions asked to the parent most involved in the child’s internet use.



## Survey administration

The survey was commissioned through a public tender process. It was conducted by Ipsos MORI, working with national agencies in each country. The EU Kids Online team designed the sample and questionnaire, and worked closely with Ipsos MORI throughout pre-testing (cognitive testing, piloting), translation, interviewer briefings, and the fieldwork process.

## Technical report and questionnaires

These can be freely downloaded from the project website. Researchers may use the questionnaires, provided they inform the Coordinator (LSE), and acknowledge the project as follows: "This [article/chapter/report/presentation/project] draws on the work of the 'EU Kids Online' network funded by the EC (DG Information Society) Safer Internet Programme (project code SIP-KEP-321803); see [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)"

## The dataset

All coding and analysis of the dataset has been conducted by the EU Kids Online network. Crosstabulations of key findings are available at [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net). The full dataset (SPSS raw file, with data dictionary and all technical materials) is being deposited in the UK Data Archive for public use. [www.data-archive.ac.uk/](http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/)

## The design allows comparisons of children's online experiences...

- Across locations and devices.
- By child's age, gender and SES.
- Of pornography, bullying, sexual messaging, meeting strangers.
- In terms of children's roles as 'victim' and 'perpetrator'.
- Of encounters with risk versus perceptions of harm.
- Of online and offline risks.
- Of risk and safety as reported by children and by their parents.
- Across 25 countries.



# PARTNERS IN RUSSIA AND AUSTRALIA

Our partner projects followed our methodology, enabling direct comparisons with the 25 country averages for EU Kids Online.



## RUSSIA

**1025 children aged 9-16, and a parent for each, were surveyed in home interviews across seven federal districts of the Russian Federation.**

### Going online

- Over four fifths use the internet in private (in their bedroom and/or via a mobile phone). However, one third go online at school, half the European number. Parental use of the internet varies hugely by region (from one fifth to over four fifths).
- Four in five use the internet for education and social networking sites (SNSs), and two thirds for downloading music and films. On SNSs, one third have their profile public and most provide personal information online.

### Risk and harm

- Russian children report being bullied (online and offline) at a similar rate to other Europeans – around one in five. But they report being bullied online more often than in Europe – indeed, they receive nasty or hurtful messages as often online as offline. Distinctively too, these messages are especially received on SNSs. Twice as many Russian (one quarter) as European children report bullying others, online or offline.

- Seeing sexual images online is also more common in Russia – a bit more common via television/film/DVD and over twice as common on the internet. Most of this exposure is via accidental pop-ups.
- Meeting online contacts offline is also more common in Russia – around one in five children, compared with half that number in Europe.
- Parents tend to be aware of their child's exposure to sexual images, since they are also affected by pop-ups, but they underestimate both bullying and meetings.

As rather few parents use filtering software, check sites visited or discuss internet use with their children, there is much work to be done to promote awareness-raising and other forms of protection and empowerment for Russian children and parents.

### Russian School Children: Challenges and Risks of Online Socialisation

Galina Soldatova, PhD, Professor

Moscow State University

Foundation for Internet Development



## AUSTRALIA

**400 children aged 9-16, and a parent for each, were surveyed in home interviews across Australia.**

- Three quarters go online daily.
- Twice as many as in Europe (one in three) say they have been bothered by something online.
- More than four in ten have seen sexual images, online or offline, and twice as many as in Europe have seen these online (nearly a quarter).

- In relation to online bullying, 29 per cent of AU children (19 per cent across Europe) say they have been bullied, and 13 per cent say this occurred on the internet. This is more than the average for the 25 other nations (6 per cent).

It would seem that in spite of considerable efforts put into raising awareness and improving safety online for Australian children in recent years, a comparatively high proportion are bothered by some things they experience online, predominantly related to online bullying and seeing sexual images. Australian children experience a high degree of access and use, but also a high degree of risk. AU parents are very active in pursuing positive mediation strategies, however, as are Australian teachers.

### Australian Kids Online

Lelia Green, Catharine Lumby, John Hartley,  
Danielle Brady

Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries  
and Innovation (CCI)

## EXTENDING TO OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD

# THE NETWORK

## The coordinating team

At the Department of Media and Communications, the London School of Economics and Political Science, **Professor Sonia Livingstone** directs the network, together with **Dr Leslie Haddon**, senior research fellow, and **Dr Anke Görzig**, survey research officer. Daniel Kardefelt-Winther is our research assistant, and **Kjartan Ólafsson** from our International Advisory Panel has visited on several occasions to lend his valuable expertise in survey management.

The coordinating team led on the first four work packages, working with the management group, international advisory panel, and the wider EU Kids Online network – comprising research teams, in contact with national stakeholders, in each of the 25 countries.

## The management group

This includes the coordinating team, and **Professor Dr Uwe Hasebrink**, Hans Bredow Institute for Media Research in Hamburg, **Dr Bojana Lobe**, University of Ljubljana, **Dr Brian O'Neill**, Dublin Institute of Technology, and **Professor Cristina Ponte**, New University of Lisbon – who are responsible for work packages 5–8 respectively.

## Project management

WP1: Project management and evaluation: ensure effective conduct and evaluation of work packages.

WP2: Project design: design a robust survey instrument and sampling frame for children and parents.

WP3: Data collection: tender, select and work with the subcontractor appointed to conduct the fieldwork.

WP4: Data reporting: cross-tabulation, presentation and report of core findings.

WP5: Statistical analysis of hypotheses: analysis and hypothesis testing of relations among variables.

WP6: Cross-national comparisons: interpretation of similarities and differences across countries.

WP7: Recommendations: guide awareness and safety initiatives and future projects in this field.

WP8: Dissemination of project results: dissemination to diverse stakeholders and the wider public.

## The international advisory panel

We have benefited considerably from the generous guidance received from:

- María José Cantarino, Corporate Responsibility Manager, Telefónica
- David Finkelhor and Janis Wolak, Crimes against Children Research Center, University of New Hampshire, USA
- Will Gardner, Chief Executive Officer of Childnet International
- Ellen Helsper, Department of Media and Communications, LSE
- Amanda Lenhart, Pew Internet and American Life Project
- Eileen Munro, Department of Social Policy, LSE
- Annie Mullins, Global Head of Content Standards, Vodafone
- Kjartan Ólafsson, University of Akureyri, Iceland
- Janice Richardson, European Schoolnet and Insafe
- Kuno Sørensen, Save the Children Denmark, European NGO Alliance on Child Safety Online
- Agnieszka Wrzesień, Project Coordinator, Polish Safer Internet Node, Nobody's Children Foundation





# Network members

## **Austria**

Ingrid Paus-Hasebrink; Andrea Dürager, University of Salzburg

## **Belgium**

Leen d'Haenens; Verónica Donoso; Sofie Vandoninck;  
Katholieke Universiteit Leuven; Joke Bauwens; Katia Segers,  
Vrije Universiteit Brussel

## **Bulgaria**

Jivka Marinova; Diana Boteva, GERT

## **Cyprus**

Yiannis Laouris; Tatjana Taraszow; Elena Aristodemou  
Melis Eroglu; Georgina Siitta-Achilleos  
Cyprus Neuroscience and Technology Inst.

## **Czech Republic**

David Smahel; Štěpán Konečný; Václav Štětka; Lukáš  
Blinka; Anna Ševčíková; Petra Vondráčková; Hana  
Macháčková; Alena Černá, Masaryk University

## **Denmark**

Gitte Stald, IT University of Copenhagen

## **Estonia**

Veronika Kalmus; Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt; Pille Runnel  
Andra Siibak; Kadri Ugur; Lennart Komp; Kersti Karu,  
University of Tartu

## **Finland**

Reijo Kupiainen; Aalto University; Kaarina Nikunen;  
Annikka Suoninen; Riitta Kauppinen, University of Tampere  
Mari Laiho, Save the Children Finland  
Annikka Suoninen, University of Jyväskylä

## **France**

Dominique Pasquier; Sylvie Octobre; Elodie Kredens;  
Pauline Rebou, ENST

## **Germany**

Uwe Hasebrink; Claudia Lampert, The Hans Bredow Institute

## **Greece**

Liza Tsaliki; Despina Chronaki; Eleni-Revekka Staiou; Kalpaki  
Kornilia; Konstantina Michalopoulou' University of Athens

## **Hungary**

Anna Galácz; Bence Ságvári, ITHAKA

## **Ireland**

Brian O'Neill; Nóirín Hayes; Sharon McLaughlin; Simon  
Grehan, Dublin Institute of Technology, Nat. Centre for  
Technology in Education

## **Italy**

Fausto Colombo; Piermarco Aroldi; Barbara Scifo;  
Giovanna Mascheroni; Maria Francesca Murru, Università  
Cattolica del S. Cuore

## **Lithuania**

Alfredas Laurinavicius; Laura Ustinaviciute; Rita  
Zukauskienė, Mykolas Romeris University

## **Netherlands**

Jos de Haan; Patti M. Valkenburg; Marion Duimel; Linda  
Adrichem; Jochen Peter; Maria Koutamanis; Nathalie Sonck;  
Els Kuiper, Netherlands Institute for Social Research, U.  
Amsterdam, Erasmus U. Rotterdam

## **Norway**

Elisabeth Staksrud; Ingunn Hagen; Jørgen Kirksæther,  
University of Oslo, NTNU

## **Poland**

Lucyna Kirwil; Aldona Zdrowska, Warsaw School of  
Social Psychology

## **Portugal**

Cristina Ponte; José Alberto Simões; Daniel Cardoso;  
Ana Jorge, New University of Lisbon

## **Romania**

Monica Barbovschi; Delia Cristina Balaban; Maria  
Diaconescu; Eva Laszlo; George Roman; Valentina  
Marinescu; Anca Velicu, Babes-Bolyai University

## **Slovenia**

Bojana Lobe; Sandra Muha; Hana Vodeb, University  
of Ljubljana

## **Spain**

Carmelo Garitaonandia; Maialen Garmendia; Gemma  
Martínez Fernández; Miguel Angel Casado, Universidad  
del País Vasco

## **Sweden**

Cecilia von Feilitzen; Elza Dunkels ; University of  
Gothenburg; Olle Findahl, World Internet Institute

## **Turkey**

Kursat Cagiltay; Engin Kursun; Turkan Karakus; Duygu  
Nazire Kasikci; Middle East Technical University; Christine  
Ogan, City University of Hong Kong

## **United Kingdom**

Sonia Livingstone; Leslie Haddon; Anke Görzig; Daniel  
Kardefelt-Winther, the London School of Economics and  
Political Science

## For a closer look at our recent findings and reports, see:

- O'Neill, B, Livingstone, S and McLaughlin, S (2011). Final Recommendations. Policy Implications, Methodological Lessons and Further Research Recommendations.
- Livingstone, S, Haddon, L, Görzig, A and Ólafsson, K (2011) Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings.
- Hasebrink, U, Görzig, A, Haddon, L, Kalmus, V and Livingstone, S (2011) Patterns of risk and safety online. In-depth analyses from the EU Kids Online survey of 9-16 year olds and their parents in 25 countries.
- Lobe, B, Livingstone, S, Ólafsson, K and Vodeb, H (2011) Cross-national comparison of risks and safety on the internet: Initial analysis from the EU Kids Online survey of European children.
- Görzig, A (2011) Who bullies and who is bullied online? A study of 9-16 year old internet users in 25 European countries.
- Garmendia, M, Garitaonandia, C, Martínez, G and Casado, M A (2011) Riesgos y seguridad en internet. The Spanish report.
- Livingstone, S, Ólafsson, K and Staksrud, E (2011) Social networking, age and privacy.
- Sonck, N, Livingstone, S, Kuiper, E and de Haan, J (2011) Digital literacy and safety skills.
- Livingstone, S and Ólafsson, K (2011) Risky communication online.
- O'Neill, B, Grehan, S and Ólafsson, K (2011) Risks and safety on the internet: The Ireland report.
- Livingstone, S, Haddon, L, Görzig, A and Ólafsson, K (2011) Risks and safety on the internet: The UK report.
- O'Neill, B and McLaughlin, S (2010). Recommendations on safety initiatives.
- de Haan, J and Livingstone, S (2009) Policy and research recommendations.
- Hasebrink, U, Livingstone, S, Haddon, L and Ólafsson, K (eds) (2009) Comparing children's online opportunities and risks across Europe: Cross-national comparisons for EU Kids Online (2nd edn).
- Lobe, B, Livingstone, S and Haddon, L with others (2007) Researching children's experiences online across countries: Issues and problems in methodology.
- Lobe, B, Livingstone, S, Ólafsson, K and Simões, J A (eds) (2008) Best practice research guide: How to research children and online technologies in comparative perspective.
- Staksrud, E, Livingstone, S, Haddon, L and Ólafsson, K (2009) What do we know about children's use of online technologies? A report on data availability and research gaps in Europe (2nd edn).
- Stald, G and Haddon, L (eds) (2008) Cross-cultural contexts of research: Factors influencing the study of children and the internet in Europe (national reports also available at [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)).



All can be freely downloaded from **[www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)**

See also our recent book: Livingstone, S and Haddon, L (eds) (2009) Kids online: Opportunities and risks for children, Bristol: The Policy Press. This will be followed by our forthcoming book: Livingstone, S, Haddon, L, and Görzig, A (in press), Children, risk and safety online, Bristol: The Policy Press.



THE LONDON SCHOOL  
OF ECONOMICS AND  
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

## Contact details

Professor Sonia Livingstone and Dr Leslie Haddon  
Department of Media and Communications  
The London School of Economics and Political Science  
Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE, UK  
t +44 (0) 20 7955 7248  
s.livingstone@lse.ac.uk/leshaddon@aol.com

Final Report, EU Kids Online II  
Deliverable 8.3 for the EC Safer Internet Programme

ISSN 2045-256X  
Reprinted with minor corrections, February 2012

The EU Kids Online network has received funding from the European Community's Safer Internet Programme. The authors are solely responsible for the contents of this report. It does not represent the opinion of the Community and nor is the Community responsible for any use that might be made of information contained in it.



Co-funded by the European Union



[www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)