

Italy

Italy presents some distinctive features in terms of access and use that pose particular challenges to policy initiatives aimed at promoting safer internet uses.

On the one hand, Italy is noteworthy in the high proportion of children who access the Internet from their private bedroom without adults' supervision, and the lowest proportion in Europe of school access. On the other side, however, the gap between children's online experiences and parental awareness of what children do online is very high for all the risks investigated in the EU Kids Online. This suggests that, while the home represents the natural context of mediation, schools can be recognized as an appropriate setting for education and awareness of both children and their parents, especially when parents are not themselves internet users. Parents should be encouraged in their active mediation of children's internet use, insofar as children indicate in peers and parents their most important sources of safety information.

Though internet use is increasing, Italy remains largely a 'low risk' country, as risks estimates for Italian children are among the lowest in Europe. This is not, however, the product of a planned risk reduction strategy: Italian children are less exposed to online risks, compared to children in most European countries, because they engage in fewer online activities and tend to benefit from a smaller range of opportunities. In terms of digital literacy, Italian children are less equipped and lack basic safety skills. Reducing their exposure to risks may therefore result in a persistent digital exclusion. On the other hand, children should be encouraged to look for positive content online, and should be given all the necessary tools to learn how to cope with risks. Again, schools would be the most appropriate context for the delivery of digital literacy skills, and media education need to be a priority of national curricula since primary education.