

National report for the Czech Republic

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1. The Internet

1.1 Findings on children's access to the Internet and online technologies

In the Czech Republic, parent responses showed that 44% of children up to age 17 use the Internet at school, and 35% of children in the same age range use Internet at home (Eurobarometer 2006).

On the other hand, almost 100% of public schools in the Czech Republic have Internet access (E-Communications Households Survey 2006), which indicates that, despite what parents think, most children probably do come in contact with the Internet at school.

Of children ages 12 to 17 who claim to use the Internet, 96% do so at home, 62% do so at school, and 18% do so at the homes of friends or family (Gemius 2006).

1.2 Findings on children's use of the Internet and online technologies

Data based on parents' responses suggests that 57% of children up to the age of 17 use the Internet (Eurobarometer 2006); however, another study shows that 96% of parents who have children aged 12 to 17 claim their child uses Internet (Gemius 2006). Further, 88.3% of children between 12 and 18 claim to use Internet (World Internet Project 2006). On average, teenagers in this age range have been using Internet for 3 years (WIP 2006), and 85% of 12 to 17 year olds who use Internet do so every day (Gemius 2006). Teenagers spend roughly 8 hours at home per week on the Internet, 2 hours at school, and 1 hour elsewhere (WIP 2006).

There is a statistically significant difference in the amount of Internet use at schools between 'elementary school pupils', aged 12 to 14, and 'high school students', aged 15 to 18. While the first group uses the Internet at school on average 1,5 hours a week, the latter uses it there for 2,3 hours a week ($t = -1,991$, sig. 0.048). These groups also differ in the average amount of time spent searching for personal information on the Internet, where pupils spent about 0.7 hours a week, high school students spent around 1,7 hours ($t = -2,09$, sig. 0.04) (WIP 2006). However, no age difference was found in the use of other applications (email, chats, discussion forums), nor in the amount of Internet use at home (WIP 2006).

Overall usage of the Internet by boys and girls is roughly the same, and, on average, 91% of boys and 86% of girls use the Internet. While boys use the Internet for 9 hours a week at home and about 2 hours at school, girls use it for 7,5 hours at home and about 1,5 hours at school; however, the mean differences are not statistically significant (t-test sig. 0.2 and 0.17 respectively). A significant difference was found in the intensity of use of online discussion forums, with boys spending 1,47 hours a week and girls spending 0,57 hours ($t = 2.08$, sig. 0.04). Nevertheless, all the other online activities (email, chats, game play, etc.) showed no statistical difference (WIP 2006).

1.3 Opportunities experienced by children online

38.6% of teenagers, aged 12 to 18, are part of some kind of online social group (chats, discussion forums, etc.) (WIP 2006); 93% of 12 to 17 year olds surf the Internet; 88% use email; 57% use instant messaging; 57% play Internet games; and, 51% engage in chatting (Gemius 2006).

Once again, there was no statistically significant difference found between teenage girls and boys claiming they have close online friends (chi-square 0.067, sig. 0.471) (WIP 2006).

1.4 Risks experienced by children online

Evidence suggests that 24% of parents think that children experience risks online, while 20% of children agree. This correlation, however, is highly suspicious and it could be attributed to the fact that the parents might have understood the question in the way that their children have the same online and offline friends, while the children might have referred to meetings with complete strangers. Moreover, 64% of parents who believe their children meet people offline also believe their children inform them about these meetings, while just 29% of children admitting to these meetings informed their parents the last time it happened, and only 22% of them inform their parents usually (Gemius 2006).

In an online study of 1.545 children, 49% claimed to meet people on the Internet. Of those children meeting people online, 62% (or 30% of all children in the study) have been asked to meet offline, and for 66% of these children, the meeting took effect. Hence, 20% of children in the study (307 in total) have had an offline meeting with a person they met online (Gemius 2006).

Nevertheless, 21% of parents (or guardians) believe that their child has encountered harmful or illegal content on the Internet (Eurobarometer 2005/6).

1.5 Parental mediation

While 82% of parents claim to have regularly told their children about the safe usage of the Internet, only 39% of children claim to have heard about the dangers of Internet usage from their parents (Gemius 2006).

In Czech households where the child uses the Internet, 41% of parents claim to have set rules for internet usage in the home, 59% have no such rules. To put this into a wider perspective, in 31% of these homes where the child uses the Internet, parents claim there are in fact no rules about using a whole range of ICTs (i.e. TV, Internet, mobile phone and electronic Games consoles) (Eurobarometer 2004).

1.6 Media literacy

In regards to media literacy, we turn again to the issue of risk, but this time focusing on Czech children's ability to negotiate this risk online. 62% of parents think that their child knows what to do if the Internet makes him or her feel uncomfortable. Only 29% of parents feel they need additional information on how to protect their children from online risks, while 59% said they do not need more information. 43% of parents claim to know where to report harmful content, and 27% have no information on this subject (Eurobarometer 2004).

Only 49% of children, aged 12 to 17, who use the Internet consider meeting a person on the Internet definitely dangerous or rather dangerous, and 74% who use the Internet think that sending personal information like an address or phone number to strangers over the Internet can be dangerous (Gemius 2006). 63% of the children are fully aware of the danger of making new contacts or friends on the Internet, but 25% of them do not recognize this danger (Gemius 2006).

A number of sources are responsible for generating awareness about such dangers. According to children, the top 3 are the Internet (68%), television (54%) and the press (52%). Schools and parents also play an important role in teaching children about online risks, accounting for 45% and 39%, respectively (Gemius 2006).

