

Press release 10.07.2012  
From EU Kids Online III

**Unique European survey on how to protect children from online risk:**

## **Children rarely get help from online services**

**Existing reporting tools do not work – only one in ten (13%) of children who were upset on the Internet reported this through an online reporting mechanism, highlighting the fact that the industry needs to do much better. This is one of the strong conclusions of a new report from the EU Kids Online project,**

Tomorrow, on July 11<sup>th</sup> the Internet industry will present their efforts to keep children safe online in a meeting hosted by the European Commission. In a new report looking at industry strategies compared to what children actually do online, researchers around Europe recommend that industry *focus more on child-friendly communication and accessible tools*.

The report also reveals that one in five children have seen potentially dangerous internet content such as websites which promote anorexia and suicide techniques.

### **Parents more worried about online risk than alcohol, sex and drugs**

When asked about what worried them a lot about their children, parents' top five concerns school achievement, road accidents, bullying (on or offline) and crime. **Online risks – being contacted by strangers or seeing inappropriate content – come fourth and fifth in the list of nine worries: one in three parents say they worry about these risks a lot.** Fewer worry about alcohol, drugs, getting into trouble with the police and sexual activities.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, children reporting problems resulting from contacts met online were generally dissatisfied with the help received from online services. Only two thirds of children who reported content or conduct risks found the response helpful, though one third did not. Those reporting sexual images were a little more positive about the help received than those reporting conduct risks (sexting, cyber-bullying).

Those less experienced in internet use should be specifically encouraged and enabled to use online tools, and these tools should be *designed for ease of use by inexperienced internet users*.

Commenting on the results Sonia Livingstone said:

'Given the relatively low take-up of online reporting mechanisms, there is considerable scope for further promoting their availability, age-appropriateness and use.'

### **Parental mediation also important**

Parental active mediation of use – for example, doing shared activities online together or encouraging a child to learn things on their own while remaining available if needed - reduces the probability of children's exposure to online risks at all ages, and it is also linked to decreased experiences of harm among 9 to 12 year olds without reducing their exposure to the positives of online activity.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that 33% of European 15 year olds, 11% of 13 year olds surveyed in 2005/6 said they had been really drunk twice or more in their life, and 18% of 15 year olds had tried cannabis. World Health Organization (2008), *Inequalities in young people's health*.

## Other findings

- 14% of 9-16 year olds have seen sexual images on websites. This included 8% of 11-16 year olds who saw images of people having sex and/or genitals, and 2% who saw violent sexual images. 32% of all 9-16 year olds who had seen sexual images said they were upset by them.
- Among 11-16 year olds upset by seeing online sexual images, 26% hoped the problem would just go away, 22% tried to fix it, 19% deleted unwelcome messages and 15% blocked the sender. Only 13% reported the problem online, though most of those found the result helpful.
- 21% of 11-16 year olds have seen potentially harmful user-generated content such as hate sites (12%), pro-anorexia sites (10%, rising to 19% of 14-16 year old girls) and self-harm sites (7%).
- Those with more digital skills are more likely to encounter these content-related risks.

## For more information:

The report *“Towards a better internet for children”* surveys the strategies used by industry to protect young users from online risk and examines whether there is evidence that these strategies work and reduce the online risks and harm experienced by children based on interviews with 25,000 children and parents across 25 European countries.

For the full report, *Towards a better internet for children?* by Sonia Livingstone, Kjartan Ólafsson, Brian O'Neill and Verónica Donoso, see the EU Kids Online project.

<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EU%20Kids%20III/Reports/EUKidsOnlineReportfortheCEOCoalition.pdf>

For more information please see [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)

## Information about the project and survey:

- **The EU Kids Online** project aims to enhance knowledge of European children's and parents' experiences and practices regarding risky and safer use of the internet and new online technologies, and thereby to inform the promotion of a safer online environment for children. The project is funded by the EC Safer Internet Programme (SI-2010-TN-4201001).
- **EU Kids Online conducted a face-to-face, in home survey** of 25,000 9-16 year old internet users and their parents in 25 countries, using a stratified random sample and self-completion methods for sensitive questions.
- **Countries included** in the survey are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK. In addition the project includes research teams from Croatia, Iceland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Russia, Slovakia and Switzerland.
- **For more findings**, see Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online. Other reports and technical survey details are at [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)
- **The Coalition to make the Internet a better place for kids** is a cooperative voluntary intervention launched December 2011, supported by the European Commission. Read more about the coalition here: [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/activities/sip/self\\_reg/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/sip/self_reg/index_en.htm)