Risks and safety for children on the internet: the Cyprus report

Full findings from the *EU Kids Online* survey
of Cypriot 9-16 year olds and their parents

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www.eukidsonline.net

This report presents the Cyprus findings for the *EU Kids Online* project (see www.eukidsonline.net). Specifically, it includes selected findings, calculated and interpreted for Cyprus only, of the survey data and analysis reported in 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.

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Note: This report refers to findings for all 25 countries in the European survey, and incorporates minor corrections in Cyprus data weighting.

Previous reports and publications from *EU Kids Online* include:

- Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2011). R*isks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full Findings*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online.
- O'Neill, B, and McLaughlin, S. (2011). *Recommendations on Safety Initiatives.* LSE, London: EU Kids Online.
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- Mascheroni, G., Murru, M. F., Aristodemou, E. & Laouris, Y. (2013 in press). Parents: Mediation, Self-regulation and co-regulation. In O'Neil, S., Staksrud, E. & McLaughlin, S (eds.) Promoting a Safer Internet for Children. European Policy Debates and Challenges: Nordicom.

- O'Neill, B., Laouris, Y. & Economou, A. (2013 in press). Teaching internet safety, promoting digital literacy: the dual role of education and schools. In O'Neil, S., Staksrud, E. & McLaughlin, S (eds.) Promoting a Safer Internet for Children. European Policy Debates and Challenges: Nordicom.

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1. KEY FINDINGS

1.1 Context

This report presents initial findings from a Cypriot survey of children and their parents designed to provide a unique insight into the balance of opportunities and risks experienced by Cypriot children on the internet. A random stratified sample of 806 9-16 year olds, who use the internet, and one of their parents/carers, was interviewed during May/September 2010.

The Cypriot survey forms part of a larger 25 country survey conducted by *EU Kids Online* and funded by the EC's Safer Internet Programme. The questionnaire was designed by the *EU Kids Online* network, coordinated by the London School of Economics and Political Science. Fieldwork was conducted by Ipsos MORI.

In what follows, the Cypriot findings are compared with those from other countries, as reported in 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. See www.eukidsonline.net.

1.2 Usage

What do 9-16 year old children in Cyprus say about how they access the internet?

- Compared to the European average, slightly less Cypriot children go online at school (58% vs. 63%), at home (79% vs. 87%) and when 'out and about' (7% vs. 9%).

- More than half go online in their bedroom, in another private room (62%) or at a friend's house (62%). As for Europe as a whole, girls and boys have similar levels of access to the internet in their own bedroom.

- More than half Cypriot children go online via a mobile device - 16% report handheld access to the internet (e.g. iPod Touch, iPhone or Blackberry) and an additional 39% access the internet via their mobile phone. Equivalent figures for the 25 countries in the European survey are considerably lower (12% and 22%).

More access results in more use, and the internet is now taken for granted in many children's daily lives.

- 9-16 year old children were on average ten years old when they first used the internet, putting Cypriot children among the oldest in Europe when they first go online.

- 70% go online daily or almost daily, 26% use it once or twice a week, leaving just 4% to go online less often. In terms of frequency of use, higher figures are seen in Sweden, Bulgaria, Estonia, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Finland, the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovenia, and Lithuania.

- The average time spent online by Cypriot 9-16 year olds is just over an hour and a half per day (104 minutes), higher than the European average (88 minutes).

But some children still lack key digital and safety skills, especially younger children.

- Blocking messages (64%), change privacy settings on a social networking profile (58%), bookmarking websites (56%) and finding information on how to use the internet safely (56%) are all skills that Cypriot children claim to have. But only a quarter, claim to be able to change filter preferences.

- Still, among the younger children there are some significant gaps in their safety skills which policy initiatives should address. Four in ten (41%) of 11-12 year olds can neither delete the record of sites they have visited nor change privacy settings on a social networking profile (42%). Boys are less competent of the aforementioned skills than girls.

- Nearly half Cypriot 9-16 year olds (48%) say the statement "I know more about the internet than my parents" is 'very true' of them, almost one third (30%) say it is 'a bit true' and more than one fifth (22% of all children though 42% of 9-10 year olds) say it is 'not true' of them.

Arguably, some children use the internet too much.

- Cypriot children's experiences of excessive use are more common (40%) than the European average (30%): nearly one quarter (23%) have very often caught themselves surfing when they were not really interested and 19% have tried unsuccessfully to

spend less time on the internet. 16% felt very or fairly often bothered when they could not use the internet.

1.3   Activities

What do Cypriot 9-16 year old internet users do online?

- Top activities are using the internet for playing games (91%), watching video clips (86%), using the internet for school work (81%), and social networking (72%).

- Creating content is much less common than receiving it. For example, 86% have watched video clips online but only 55% have posted photos, videos or music to share with others. Fewer have visited a chat room (23%) and even less blogged (12%). Still, Cypriot children participate and create online more than children in many other countries.

Social networking sites (SNS) are very popular.

- 73% of children who use the internet in Cyprus have their own SNS profile, considerably more than the European average of 59%.

- 39% of 9-10 year olds compared to 70% of 11-12 year olds have a profile, suggesting that it is the start of secondary school, rather than the minimum age set by popular providers, that triggers social networking. By the age of 16 (15-16 year olds), 90% of children have their own SNS.

- Cypriot children report substantially less SNS contacts than in most of Europe: 8% of Cypriot SNS users have more than 300 contacts, 13% have between 100 and 300.

Some of children's online communication practices could be considered risky:

- Less than half SNS users have their profile set to private (46%) or partially private (19%) and more than a quarter (27%) in Cyprus (more of boys than girls) have made it public (similar to the 26% across Europe).

- 35% of 11-16 year olds (more boys than girls, more teens than younger children) say they communicate online with people who they met online and who have no connection with their offline social networks.

- More often than once per month, one quarter of 9-16 year old internet users looked for new friends on the internet and 26% added contacts they don't know face-to-face.

- 45% talk about different things online than offline, and nearly a fifth (18%, with more boys than girls) talk about more private things online than when present with other people face to face.

- One reason for such apparently risky communications may be that more than half (54%) of 11-16 year old internet users say they find it easier to be themselves online.

1.4   Subjective harm

Before asking children about specific online risk experiences, we asked them about experiences online that had bothered them in some way, explaining that **by 'bothered' we meant,** *"made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen it."*

- Children are six times more likely to say that the internet bothers other children (63%) than they are to say something has bothered them personally in the past year. Still, 9% say they have been bothered or upset by something online in the past year – this figure is about the same as the European average.

- By implication, more than half of 9-16 year olds do not see the internet as problematic for children of their age. Strikingly, the vast majority have not experienced a problem themselves.

- Parents (though not children) seem a bit less likely to see the internet as problematic for boys than for girls.

- Even though 10% of 11-12 year olds say they've been bothered by something online, their parents are less likely to recognise this: only half of their parents say that something has bothered my child online. Since this is when Cypriot children start secondary school, the problem may be increased internet use then, or a new peer group encouraging risk-taking, or related to the onset of adolescence.

1.5   Specific risks

The *EU Kids Online* survey explored children's experiences of a range of possible risks online. The nature of these experiences, which children are most affected, and how children respond are questions to be pursued in a future report.

Sexual images

- One quarter (24%) of Cypriot 9-16 year olds say that they have seen sexual images in the past 12 months, whether online or offline. This is close to the European average of 23%.

- Seeing sexual images at all is related to age. One fifth of 15-16 year olds (39%) have seen such images compared with just 13% of 9-10 year olds; teenagers also see such images more often.

- However, rather fewer - 12% - of Cypriot children have encountered sexual images online. 8% of Cypriot 9-16 year olds say they have seen online sexual images including nudity, 8% (more teenagers than young children) have seen images of someone having sex, 2% have seen someone's genitals online and 2% say they have seen violent sexual images.

- Among children who have seen online sexual images, 30% of parents say their child has not seen this, while 46% recognise that they have and 24% say they don't know.

- As in other countries, 9-10 year olds are less likely to see sexual images online and being bothered or upset by the experience.

- Overall, most children have not experienced sexual images online and, even of those who have, most say they were not bothered or upset by the experience.

Bullying

- In relation to online bullying, 16% of Cypriot children (and 19% across Europe) say they have been bullied, but just 5% say this occurred on the internet. This is lower than for Europe overall (6%).

- Most common are nasty or hurtful messages sent to the child or other nasty things encountered online (both at 2%) followed equally by messages being posted or passed on, being left out or excluded from a group or an online activity and being threatened online (all at 1%).

- 16% of children say they have bullied others, though only 5% say they have bullied others online in the past 12 months.

Sexual messages

- 12% of 11-16 year old internet users have received sexual messages, although 3% have sent them. In Cyprus, 'sexting' appears a little less common than across Europe (15% receiving and 3% sending).

- 5% of Cypriot 11-16 year olds have been sent a sexual message, and 3% have seen a sexual message posted online. 4% have seen others perform sexual acts in a message and only 1% had been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone online.

Meeting online contacts offline

- 13% of Cypriot children have had contact online with someone they have not met face to face. This percentage is considerably lower than the European average of 30%.

- 6% have gone to an offline meeting with someone first met online, which is less than the European average (9% across all countries).

- Older teenagers (13-16 year olds) are much more likely than younger children to have online contact with someone they have not met face to face. They are also more likely to have gone to meet them in person – though such instances are rare.

Other online risks

- 20% of Cypriot 11-16 year olds have seen one or more type of potentially harmful user-generated content, rising to 31% of 14-16 year old girls. This Cypriot finding is slightly lower than across Europe, where the average is 21%.

- Most common are hate messages (13%), followed by anorexia/bulimia sites (12%). These percentages are slightly over the European average (10% and 12% respectively). Few (4%) have visited a suicide site.

- The main misuse of personal data experienced by Cypriot children is when someone has used their password or pretended to be them (6%). Some have had personal information used in a way they did not like (4%). These percentages are similar to the European average.

1.6   Parental mediation

70% of Cypriot 9-16 year olds go online daily or almost daily, and nearly 40% of their parents.

How do Cypriot parents manage their children's internet use?

- Most notably, the survey shows that parents and children agree to a high degree in their accounts of parental mediation.

- Most Cypriot parents talk to their children about what they do on the internet (74%), making this, as in Europe generally, the most popular way to actively mediate children's internet use.

- Parents actively mediate a little more younger children's use of the internet than older children's– including talking to them, staying nearby, encouraging them or sharing internet use. But one in ten parents (8%), never do any of these things.

- Explaining why websites are good or bad (74%), talking to them about what to do if something bothered them online (67%) and helping when something is difficult to do or find (59%) are all common strategies of parental safety mediation – Cyprus is near the top of ranking of countries in terms of parents actively mediating their children's safety.

- 91% of Cypriot children say that they are either not allowed to do some of a list of online activities (disclose personal information, upload, download,

etc.) or that restrictions apply, and younger children face more restrictions.

- Monitoring strategies are adopted by one third (34%) of Cypriot parents, making this fairly common and yet the least favoured strategy by comparison with positive support, safety guidance or making rules about internet use (as in Europe generally).

- 28% of parents block or filter websites and track the websites visited by the children (22%) according to their children - these findings are lower than in Europe generally, coming nevertheless at the top part of the country ranking for use of filters.

- Both children and parents consider parental mediation helpful to some degree. Over two thirds of children (73%) say it helps a lot or a little.

- 85% of parents are confident that they can help their child if something bothers them online.

- However, 29% of children think that parental mediation limits what they do online, 10% saying it limits their activities a lot.

- Two thirds of Cypriot children (64%) do not simply ignore parental mediation, this being at the European average (64%). However, 29% say they ignore their parents' mediation a little and 7% of children say they ignore their parents' mediation a lot.

- 55% parents think it is likely that their child will experience something that bothers them online in the next six months.

- 27% of children (and 38% of 9-10 year olds) would like their parents to take more of an interest in their internet use and 79% of parents think that they should do more in relation to their child's internet use.

1.7   Other forms of mediation

In addition to parents, other sources, including teachers and friends, may support children's internet use and safety.

- 85% of children say their teachers have been involved in at least one of the forms of active mediation asked about. This is substantially higher than the European average of 73%.

- Only 8% of children who use the internet have received no guidance or advice from their teachers.

- Friends are likely to mediate in a practical way, helping each other to do or find something when there is a difficulty (69%). Fewer say that friends help when they are bothered by something (27%), but this may reflect the fact that few are bothered. When

children are bothered by something online, more turn to a teacher (70%) than to a parent or friends.

- While 50% of children say they have received some guidance on safe internet use from their friends, 54% say that they have also provided such advice to their friends. However, most internet safety advice is received from teachers (70%), and then equally by parents (50%) and peers (50%).

- Other relatives (67%) are also important in providing advice to children on how to use the internet safely.

- Cypriot parents receive internet safety advice first and foremost from traditional media (44%), then internet service providers (37%), friends and family (30%), the child's school (28%), websites (17%) and from their child (12%). In Cyprus, traditional media appear considerably more important than in Europe generally (32%).

- 8% of parents say that they don't want further information on internet safety, especially parents of 11-12 year olds. But the majority would like more.

1.8   Conclusions

It may be hazarded that the very considerable efforts put into raising awareness and improving safety online for Cypriot children in recent years are bearing fruit. Cypriot children experience rather fewer online risks than might be expected given their high degree of access and use. Moreover, their parents are relatively more aware of their experiences and they do considerably more to mediate their children's internet safety than the European average.

Future efforts should focus especially on younger children as they gain internet access, and on the diversification of platforms (access in bedrooms, via mobile phones and handheld devices). The array of possible risks online continues to change, with emerging risks including potentially harmful user-generated content such as anorexia, self-harm or suicide sites (for example, one in five teenage girls has visited a pro-anorexia or bulimia website, yet little is known of such practices or their consequences as yet).

In planning for risk *management*, it must be borne in mind that risk *reduction* is not always an optimal strategy – children encounter a fair number of risks that, at least as they see it, are not problematic, upsetting or harmful. Although addressing levels of risk remains important, it is the case that children learn to cope by encountering some degree of risk and, it seems, many do cope successfully – at least if one takes seriously children's accounts of whether online risk results in being upset or harmed. The European study (of which this Cyprus report is part)

explores how children cope with online risk, revealing that while a minority are upset by online risks, many benefit from the advice and tools available to them to cope with such upsetting circumstances.

Also important, the findings show that risks and opportunity often go hand in hand – more use tends to bring more of both. Thus efforts to reduce harm should take care not overly to restrict opportunities for children since they benefit from the internet. Since one third of Cypriot children say that their parents' efforts at mediation have the effect of restricting their online activities, the trade-off is clear, if difficult for parents to manage.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Overview

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 how to use, and finding a purpose for the internet within their daily lives. Stakeholders – governments, schools, industry, child welfare organisations and families – seek to maximise online opportunities while minimising the risk of harm associated with internet use.

This report presents the initial findings from a Cypriot survey of 9-16 year olds to provide a unique insight into the balance of opportunities and risks experienced by children in Cyprus on the internet. It compares findings by age, gender and socioeconomic status; it compares the accounts of children and their parents; and it compares Cypriot children's experiences in relation to those across Europe.

The Cypriot survey was conducted as part of a larger 25 country survey conducted by the *EU Kids Online* network and funded by the EC's Safer Internet Programme. This 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. Countries included in *EU Kids Online* 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.

For the Cypriot survey, a random stratified sample of 806 9-16 year olds who use the internet, together with one of their parents/carers, was interviewed during May/September 2010. The survey questionnaire was designed by the *EU Kids Online network*, coordinated by the London School of Economics and Political Science. Fieldwork was conducted by Ipsos MORI.

Where the Cypriot findings are compared with those from other countries, these are taken from the pan-European report: Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., and Ólafsson, K. (2011). R*isks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full Findings*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online, available at www.eukidsonline.net.

2.2 Theoretical framework

The research and policy agenda remains contested regarding online opportunities (focused on access to education, communication, information and participation) and risks of harm posed to children by internet use. To clarify our approach, the project's theoretical framework, including a critical analysis of the relation between use, risk and potential harm to children associated with the internet, is presented in the pan-European report.

In brief, this elaborates a hypothesised sequence of factors relating to internet use that may shape children's experiences of harm. The present report follows this sequence, presenting an account of children's internet use (amount, device and location of use), then their online activities (opportunities taken up, skills developed and risky practices engaged in) and, in this wider context, an account of the risks encountered by children.

Possible risks include encountering pornography, bullying/being bullied, sending/receiving sexual messages ('sexting') and going to offline meetings with people first met online. Also included, more briefly, are risks associated with negative user-generated content and personal data misuse. However, it is important to note that we also ask how children respond to and/or cope with these experiences. To the extent that they do not cope, the outcome may be harmful. However, there is no inevitable relation between risk and harm – it is a probabilistic relation and, for many children, the probability that risk encounters will be harmful is shown in the report to be low.

Figure 1: Relating online use, activities and risk factors to harm to children
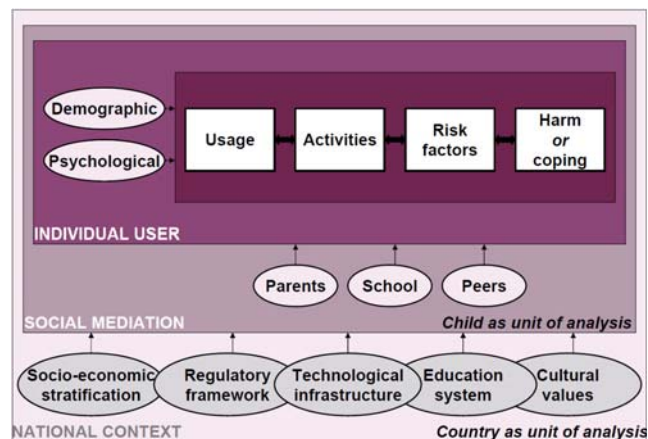
As shown in Figure 1, many external factors may influence children's experiences. In this report, we examine the role of demographic factors such as the child's age, gender, socio-economic status (SES). Socio-economic status was assessed by combining two measures – the level of education and the type of occupation of the main wage earner in the household. Educational systems vary across countries, so national measures were standardised using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED).

In subsequent reports, analysis will encompass the role of (2) psychological factors such as emotional problems, self-efficacy, risk-taking, (3) the social factors that mediate children's online and offline experiences, especially the activities of parents, teachers and friends, and (4) the economic, social and cultural factors that may shape the online experience at the national level.

2.3 Methodology

It is particularly difficult to measure private or upsetting aspects of a child's experience. Our approach to mapping the online risk experiences of European children centres on several key responses to the methodological challenges faced. **The survey was conducted as a face to face interview in the children's own homes. The questionnaire included a self-completion section for sensitive questions to avoid being heard by parents, family members or the interviewer.**

The methodology adopted was approved by the *LSE Research Ethics Committee* and appropriate protocols were put in place to ensure that the rights and wellbeing of children and families were protected during the research process. At the end of the interview, children and families were provided with a leaflet providing tips on internet safety and details of relevant help lines.

Key features of the methodology include:

- Cognitive testing and pilot testing, to check thoroughly children's understandings of and reactions to the questions.

- A detailed survey that questions children themselves, to gain a direct account of their online experiences.

- Equivalent questions asked of each type of risk to compare across risks, and across online and offline risks.

- Matched comparison questions to the parent most involved in the child's internet use.

- 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.

- The inclusion of the experiences of young children aged 9-10, who are often excluded from surveys.

For full details of the project methodology, materials, technical fieldwork report and research ethics, see www.eukidsonline.net. The Cypriot survey was conducted as a face to face interview with children, with a paper-based self-completion question for questions on risk and harm.

Note that findings presented for Cyprus are compared with those obtained in other countries. **The 'Europe' of this report is distinct from, though overlapping with the European Union, being the weighted average of findings from the particular 25 countries included in this project**.

Throughout this report, 'children' refers to 9-16 year olds in Cyprus who use the internet at least rarely.

3 USAGE

What do 9-16 year olds children in Cyprus say about how they use the internet? The face to face interview with children included a range of questions about 'using the internet'. The interviewer reminded children that, 'using the internet' includes any and all devices by which, and any and all places where, the child goes online.

3.1 Where/how children go online

With the spread of mobile and personalised devices, the ways in which children go online are diversifying. In their bedroom, or when 'out and about', children may escape supervision entirely, using the internet privately. Further, while schools are generally highly supervised locations, cybercafés are popular in some countries, allowing children relatively unsupervised use.

Table 1: Where children use the internet

% children who say they use the internet at the following locations	
Living room (or other public room) at home	79
At a friend's home	62
Own bedroom (or other private room) at home	62
At school or college	58
At a relative's home	53
In an internet café	9
When 'out and about'	7
In a public library or other public place	3
Average number of locations	3.3

QC301a-h: Looking at this card, please tell me where you use the internet these days.[1] *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

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[1] For all tables and figures, the exact question number on the questionnaire is reported. Where younger and older children's questionnaires use different numbers, the one for the older children is reported. Full questionnaires may be found at www.eukidsonline.net.

- As shown in Table 1, eight in ten Cypriot children who use the internet go online at home in a public room (79%) and nearly two thirds (62%) at a private room. 62% also use the internet a friend's house and 58% at school.

- Since children on average can access the internet in about three different places, they clearly enjoy considerable flexibility as regards when and how they go online.

- **Compared to the European average, more Cypriot children go online in a public space (79% vs. 62%) or a private room (62% vs. 49%) in the home and at a friend's home (62%% vs. 53%), reflecting widespread adoption of mobile phones and handheld devices. Access at a relative's house is also higher in Cyprus (53% vs. 42%).**

- Cypriot children have about the same amount of access when 'out and about' (7% vs. 9%) as in Europe generally. Fewer Cypriot children however use internet cafés (9% in Cyprus vs.12% in Europe) or a public place such as a library (3% vs. 12%).

Figure 2: Children's use of internet at home
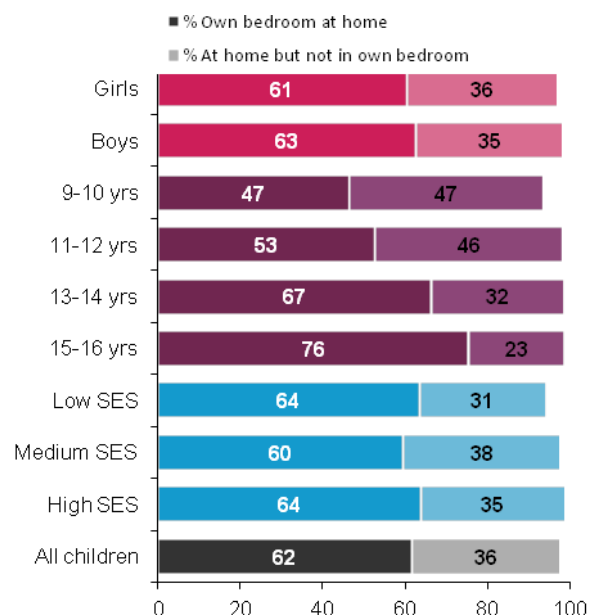
QC301a, b: Looking at this card, please tell me where you use the internet these days.

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Figure 2 shows that, as in Europe generally, private use in the child's bedroom is strongly differentiated by age. For younger children use is generally in a public room, while teenagers often have private access.

- The general tendency in Europe as a whole is for children of higher SES to have more private access. Nevertheless, Cypriot children of lower and medium SES also show the same tendency.

Table 2: Devices by which children go online

% children who use the internet	
Own laptop	54
Mobile phone	52
Television set	48
Shared PC	46
Shared laptop	43
Own PC	39
Games console	38
Other handheld portable device/smartphone	16
Average number of devices of use	3.3

QC300a-h: Which of these devices do you use for the internet these days? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

- As shown in Table 2, use of the internet via private platforms (own laptop, mobile phone) is substantial. Private use is, it may be suggested, catching up with use via shared platforms (shared computer or laptop, television set).

- **Compared with the European average, Cypriot children are more likely to access the internet on all platforms (with the exception of shared PC; 46% in Cyprus vs. 58% in Europe), including their own laptop (54% vs. 24% in Europe), via the television (48% vs. 32%) and via a games console (38% vs. 26%).**

- **Cypriot children are considerably more likely than others in Europe to go online via their mobiles phone (52% vs. 22%) or other handheld device (16% vs. 12%).**

- The average number of devices is slightly higher in Cyprus than Europe (3.3 vs. 2.5).

It seems that Cypriot children use the internet from a wider range of devices than is the average for Europe. These devices are distinctive also in offering private, personalised internet access.

Figure 3: Child accesses the internet using a mobile phone or a handheld device
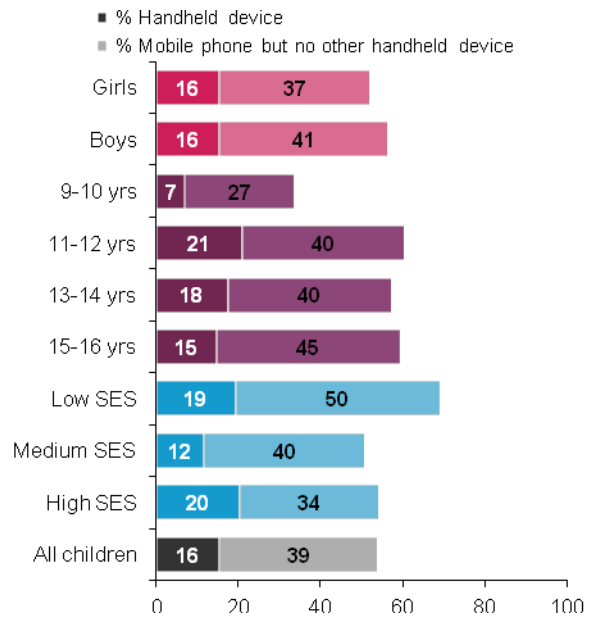
QC300h, e: Which of these devices do you use for the internet these days? [2]

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Figure 3 shows no gender differences in handheld access in Cyprus. The figures are nevertheless comparable as in Europe generally (16% boys and 16% girls in Cyprus, compared with 13% and 11% respectively across Europe).

- The pattern of age differences as regards using handheld devices is the same as in Europe generally: more use the older the child.

- Figure 3 however shows that in Cyprus differences in mobile phone usage exist only for children over 15 years old with equal usage percentages for children between 11-12 years old and 13-14 years old. This could suggest that children utilize a mobile phone device from an earlier age on.

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[2] In Figure 2, the percentage for 'mobile phone' may overlap with handheld device as multiple responses were allowed. In Figure 3, these are recalculated as mutually exclusive.

- Cypriot children also rank second (39%) for internet access using a mobile phone device by country.
- The SES differences in going online via a handheld device are similar in Cyprus as across Europe but interestingly an inverse trend is observed for going online using a mobile phone; with increasing SES, internet access via a mobile phone device decreases.

Beyond matters of access, there are several dimensions of internet usage that are explored below: age of first internet use, frequency of internet use, and time spent online.

- Children across Europe are going online ever younger, with average age of first use among 9-16 years old being nine years old. This varies by age group, with the youngest group saying they were seven, on average, when they first went online while the 15-16 year olds say they were eleven on first use.
- **In Cyprus, children average ten years old when they first use the internet, putting them among the oldest across Europe along Greece, Italy, Turkey, Denmark, Austria and Portugal.**

In terms of frequency of internet use, across Europe the findings suggest a division of children into two groups: those who use the internet daily or almost daily (60%) and those who use it once or twice a week (33%). Combined, this is 93% of all children who go online at all; 5% go online once or twice a month, 2% less often.

By contrast, in Cyprus children who use the internet go online more often than in Europe generally (Figure 4):

- **70% go online daily or almost daily, 26% use it once or twice a week, leaving just 4% who go online less often.**
- Daily use is far more common among teenagers than younger children, and a little more common among girls than boys. SES differences are small though with higher SES there is higher internet usage.

Figure 4: How often children use the internet
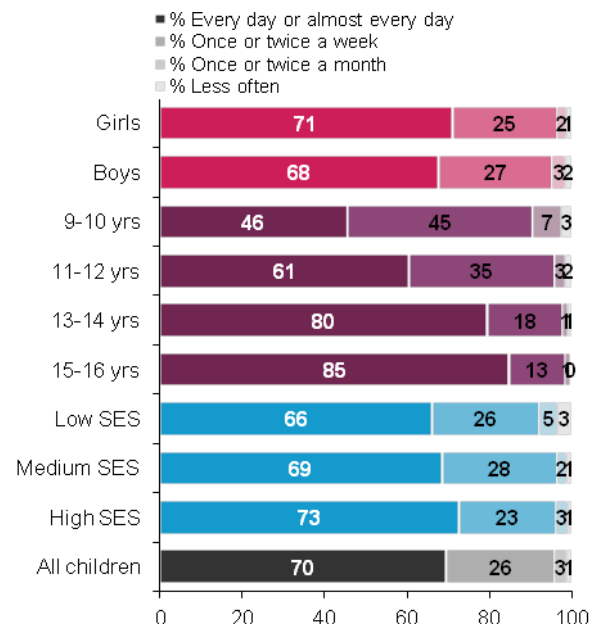
QC303: How often do you use the internet?

Base: All children who use the internet.

How long do Cypriot children spend online each day (Figure 5)? Time spent online was calculated using a method widely used to measure television viewing. It asks children for separate estimates for an average school day and an average non-school day. These are combined to estimate average internet use each day, noting that *time spent online is difficult to measure because children multitask, going online while doing other activities while not turning off the internet.*

Figure 5: How long children use the internet for on an average day (in minutes)
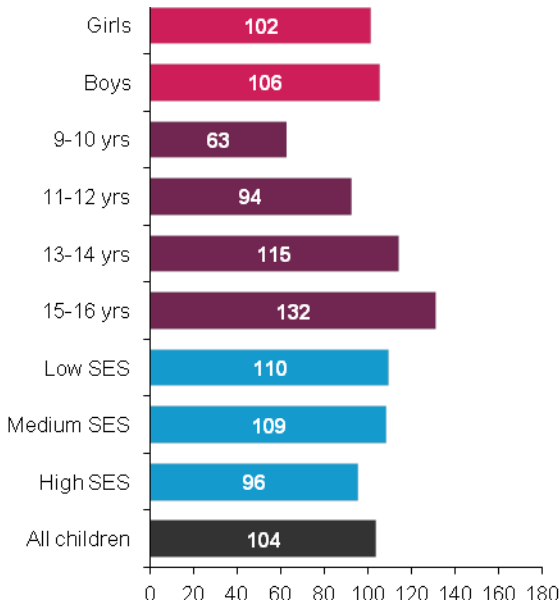
Derived from QC304 and QC305: About how long do you spend using the internet on a normal school day / normal non-school day?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **The average time spent online by Cypriot 9-16 year olds is just below an hour and three quarters per day (104 minutes). This is higher than the European average (88 minutes).**

- Gender differences in time spent online are very small and the same applies to SES.

- The largest difference in time spent online is by age. The 15-16 year olds spend over two hours per day, online on average (132 minutes), 13-14 year olds 115 minutes on average per day and the youngest group (9-10 year olds) 94 minutes on average per day online. The older thus the children are, the longer they spend online.

- It remains therefore to be seen whether children will spend even more time online in the coming years. What is clear is that, for many Cypriot children, internet use is already thoroughly embedded in their daily lives and everyday routines.

3.2 Digital literacy and safety skills

'Digital literacy' (or 'media literacy', 'competence' or 'skills'), plays a vital role in children's use of the internet. It is assumed to result from, and further stimulate, the range and depth of children's online activities. Policy makers anticipate that the more digitally literate or skilled children become, the more they will gain from the internet while also being better prepared to avoid or cope with online risks. While digital literacy is generally defined as including a broad range of skills and competences, digital safety skills represent a specific subset of digital or media literacy.

Table 3 shows the skills which children were asked about in the survey.

- **Blocking messages (64%), bookmarking websites (56%) and finding information on how to use the internet safely (56%) are all skills that Cypriot children claim to have. But only a quarter, claim to be able to change filter preferences.**

- **On average, Cypriot children said they have 3.8 of the eight skills asked about, which is below the European average at 4.2.**

- Internet safety campaigns should thus target Cypriot children's digital literacy to increase their perceptive awareness and enhance their practical skills in regard to online dangers.

As in past research, boys have often claimed to have more digital skills than girls, Cypriot boys also claimed to be slightly more digitally literate compared to girls.

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Table 3: Children's digital literacy and safety skills (age 11+)

% who say they can…	11-12 year old		13-16 year old		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Block messages from someone you don't want to hear from	52	51	71	68	64
Change privacy settings on a social networking profile	37	47	64	66	58
Find information on how to use the internet safely	58	44	57	59	56
Bookmark a website	44	48	66	56	56
Delete the record of which sites you have visited	33	48	64	61	55
Block unwanted adverts or junk mail/spam	27	32	56	49	46
Compare different websites to decide if information is true	31	19	56	51	45
Change filter preferences	16	11	33	27	25
Average number of skills	2.9	2.8	4.4	4.1	3.8

QC320a-d and QC321a-d: Which of these things do you know how to do on the internet? Please say yes or no to each of the following... If you don't know what something is or what it means, don't worry, just say you don't know.

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

Additionally, as a simple, global measure of self-confidence among European youth, the *EU Kids Online* survey also asked the children (now including the 9-10 year olds) to say how true it is for them that "I know more about the internet than my parents" (Figure 6).

Figure 6: "I know more about the internet than my parents"
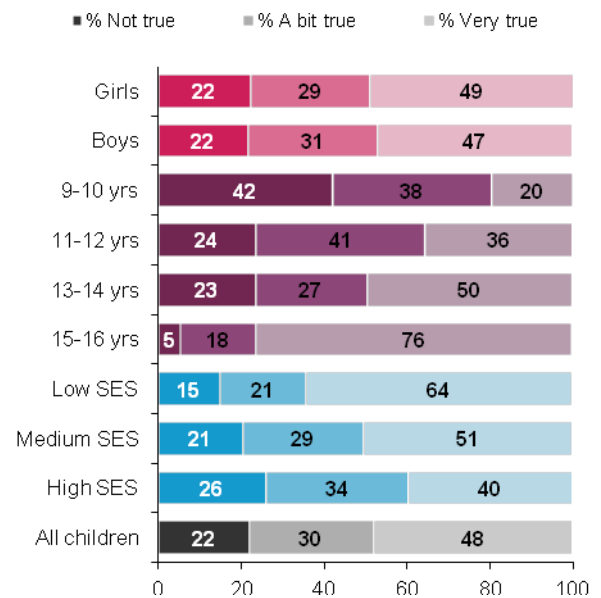
QC319a: How true are these of you? I know more about the internet than my parents. Please answer not true, a bit true or very true.

- **On average, nearly half 9-16 year olds (48%) say that the statement, "I know more about the internet than my parents," is 'very true' of them, nearly one third (30%) say it is 'a bit true' and one fifth (22%) say it is 'not true' of them.**

- There are small gender differences (as for the European average), with about as many boys as girls claiming this is 'very true' (47% vs. 49%).

- Unsurprisingly, the older the children the more confident they are that they know more than their parents – among 15-16 year olds, 76% say they know more than their parents. However, **42% of 9-10 year olds say they do not know more about the internet than their parents, suggesting an opportunity window for parents to guide younger children in using the internet.**

- Children from lower SES homes are more confident that they know more than their parents, this reflecting the same pattern found for European children.

3.3 Excessive use of the internet

The arrival of each new medium has been accompanied by public anxiety over its potential dominance of children's time and attention – past examples include television and the home computer. Concern over 'internet addiction' is growing, with efforts among researchers to measure it and efforts among clinicians to decide whether the internet is addictive in the same sense as alcohol or drugs.

Although the jury is still out on the question of internet 'addiction', consensus is growing that 'excessive' use of the internet is worth investigating. Drawing on prior measurement of computer or games 'addiction', questions about excessive use were asked of the 11-16 year olds. Our focus is not simply on overall amount of use but on the conflict this may introduce with family or schoolwork, together with the experience of not being able to reduce or stop internet use.

Although many children report little experience of these indicators of excessive use, Cyprus children's experiences are higher, compared with the European ranking (see below)Figure 7:

- **Over half (51%) agree they have caught themselves surfing when they were not really interested (considerably higher than the 42% of European average).**

- Nearly half say they have tried unsuccessfully to spend less time on the internet (46% in Cyprus vs. 33% in Europe) and four in ten have felt bothered when they could not go online (38%).

- 30% of Cypriot children spent less time with family and friends than they should because of time they spend on the internet; the only finding lower reported than the corresponding European average (35%).

- As in Europe generally, it is less common for Cypriot children to go without sleeping or eating because of the internet (24%).

Figure 7: Excessive use of the internet among children (age 11+)
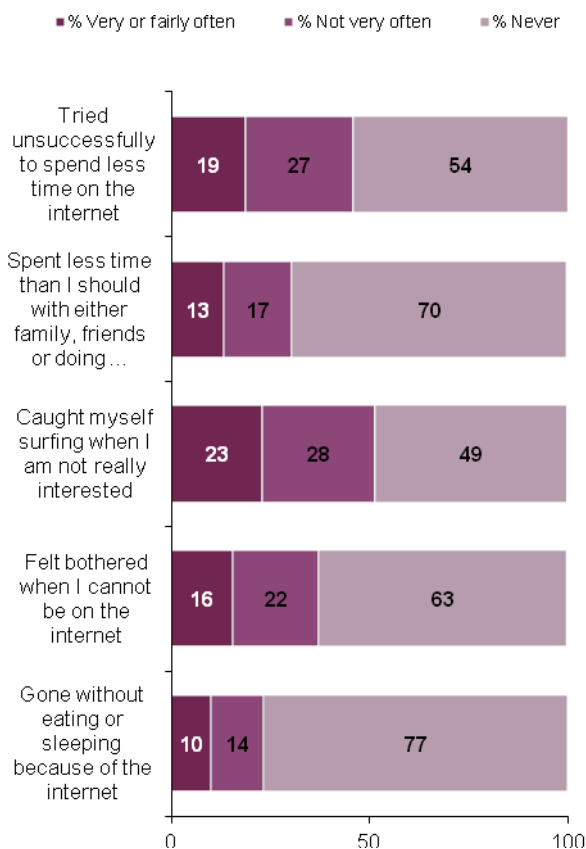
QC144a-e: How often have these things happened to you?

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

We then calculated the percentage of children who answer 'fairly' or 'very often' to one or more of these five experiences. This revealed that Cyprus is very high among European countries in terms of excessive internet use: 40% of Cypriots answer 'fairly' or 'very often' to one or more of these five experiences, ranking 8th among the 25 countries and compared with a European average of 23%.

4 ACTIVITIES

4.1 Range of online activities

What do Cypriot children aged 9-16 say they do when they go online? The *EU Kids Online* survey asked children about which online activities they take up, so as to understand the opportunities they enjoy and to provide a context for the subsequent investigation of online risks.

Table 4 shows what Cypriots do online. Note that to be sure children understood these questions the questionnaires were tried out and then refined, using cognitive testing in each country, to ensure children's comprehension.

▪ **Use of the internet for playing internet games is the top online activity out of the 17 activities asked about - 91% of Cypriot children use the internet for playing internet games on their own or against the computer, more than the European average (83%). This is particularly troubling in regard to children's social development.**

▪ Watching video clips (e.g. YouTube) is the next most popular activity; 10% more Cypriot children (86%) watch video clips online than the European average (76%).

▪ Visiting a social networking profile is considerably more popular in Cypriots as elsewhere (63% in Cyprus vs. 44% in Europe). Other forms of engaging with user-generated content, such as posting photos, videos, or music to share, are also more common in Cyprus than Europe (51% vs. 39%).

▪ **As in Europe communicating is generally popular. More Cypriots use instant messaging, 72%, compared to 62% in Europe, but sending and receiving emails is less common for Cypriot children (55% vs. 61%). Visiting chatrooms is equally common in Cyprus as in Europe at 23%. Interestingly, nearly half Cypriots (45%) have used a webcam, no doubt as part of online communication which is also higher than Europe (31%).**

▪ **Although creating content is generally less common than receiving content, Cypriot children do this more than in many other countries.** More children have created a character, pet of avatar (39% vs. 18% in Europe) and more have spent time in a virtual world (29% vs. 16%). Still, only 21% have used a file sharing site and only 12% have blogged.

Table 4: Children's activities online in the past month

% who have…	9-12 year old		13-16 year old		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Played internet games on your own or against the computer	94	87	95	86	91
Watched video clips	81	81	92	89	86
Used the internet for school work	78	80	77	90	81
Used instant messaging	53	62	82	84	72
Visited a social networking profile	51	53	83	80	69
Played games with other people on the internet	69	56	80	48	63
Downloaded music or films	41	41	81	61	58
Sent/received email	33	40	72	66	55
Put (or posted) photos, videos or music to share with others	32	38	68	60	51
Used a webcam	26	43	58	50	45
Created a character, pet or avatar	45	43	32	36	39
Put (or posted) a message on a website	19	19	55	51	37
Visited a chatroom	12	16	38	32	25
Read/watched the news on the internet	15	10	27	22	19
Spent time in a virtual world	15	25	16	19	19
Used file sharing sites	2	4	24	22	14
Written a blog or online diary	8	9	13	17	12
Average number of activities	6.9	9.6	9.6	8.5	8.1

QC102: How often have you played internet games in the past 12 months? QC306a-d, QC308a-f and QC311a-f: Which of the following things have you done in the past month on the internet? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

Table 4 also reveals some noteworthy age and gender differences.

- **Some activities span the age range (using the internet for watching video clips, playing games against the computer and, at a much lower incidence, spending time in a virtual world). Other activities increase substantially in the teenage years (watching and posting video clips or messages, social networking, email, instant messaging and downloading music or films).**

- Some participatory activities (e.g. writing a blog) and some that may be considered risky (e.g. using file sharing sites, visiting a chatroom) are undertaken by few younger children.

- **Both across Europe and Cyprus, gender differences are generally small (except that boys play games more), this marking a change from earlier research, where many activities were found to differentiate among girls and boys.**

- However, it is the case that, among younger children (9-12 years), girls use email and instant messaging more, and are more likely to use a webcam and spend time in a virtual world than do boys. On the other hand, more boys play games online with others than do girls.

- Among teenagers (13-16 years), gender differences are still marked in relation to games, with boys playing more against the computer and with others online. Girls are somewhat more likely to post photos, videos or music to share with others.

4.2   Quality of online content

Children do not enjoy equivalent opportunities across Europe. In some countries there are more online resources, often as a result of differential investment and/or because national markets vary in size and wealth. Familiarity with the English language in each country, especially among children also matters. **Although an objective assessment of online opportunities is difficult, the *EU Kids Online* survey asked children for their own assessment** (Figure 8).

- Most satisfied, it seems, are children in Lithuania, Greece and Belgium.

- Nonetheless Cyprus ranks eighth, with 52% of children saying it is 'very true' and 39% saying it is 'a bit true' that there are lots of good things for them to do online; only 9% say the statement is 'not true'. **Cypriot children are, therefore, more satisfied than most European children, for whom, on average, 44% (compared with 52% in Cyprus) say**

it is 'very true' that there are lots of good things to do online.

Figure 8: "There are lots of things on the internet that are good for children of my age"
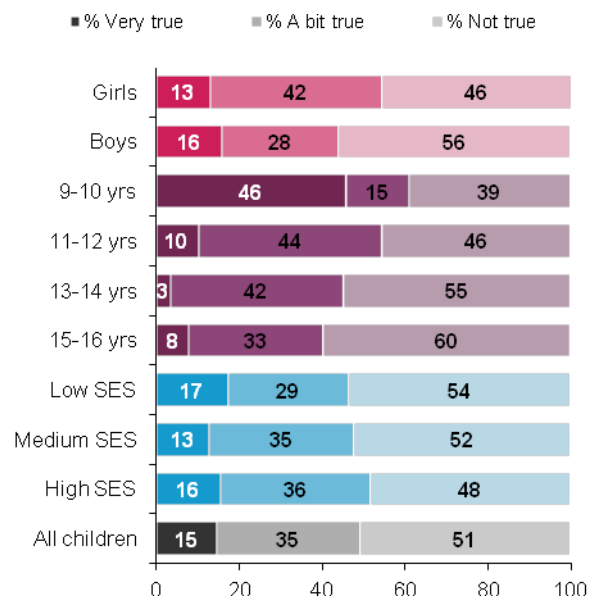
QC319c: There are lots of things on the internet that are good for children of my age. Response options: very true, a bit true, not true.

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Turning to the socio-demographic variables, Cypriot girls are no more enthusiastic than boys about online content (56% vs. 55% answering 'very true'), whereas in the European sample it is boys who are more positive.

- Cypriot children aged 11-12 years are especially positive. In Cyprus as in Europe as a whole there is little SES difference.

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4.3 Children's use of social networking sites (SNS)

Although not quite the most popular activity, social networking is arguably the fastest growing online activity among youth. Certainly, social networking sites (SNS) have attracted widespread attention among children and young people, policy makers and the wider public. By integrating chat, messaging, contacts, photo albums and blogging functions, SNSs integrate online opportunities and risks more seamlessly than previously.

On the one hand, policy makers seek to capitalise on the benefits of social networking by developing educational, participatory, creative and other resources linked to web 2.0 platforms. On the other hand, public policy concerns centre on the uneasy relation between the design of the SNS interface and emerging social conventions of use in terms of notions of 'friendship', the management of privacy and intimacy, awareness of the permanence of what is uploaded, techniques for age verification, and possibilities of 'flaming', hacking, harassment and other problematic communications.

As shown in Figure 9:

- **73% of children who use the internet in Cyprus have their own SNS profile, this being considerably higher than the European average of 59%.**

- **The older the child, the more likely they are to have profiles, applying to most 15-16 year olds (90% have a profile).**

- **Since many social networking sites have a minimum age of 13, the findings for 9-10 year olds (39%) and especially 11-12 year olds (70%) seem high, suggesting that some tell a false age when setting up a profile.**

- The 31% rise at 11-12 years old also suggests, in a Cypriot context, that the start of secondary school brings with it the peer expectation of social networking.

- Slightly more girls than boys have profiles (73% vs. 72%).

- It is puzzling perhaps, that children from the highest SES homes are less likely to have a profile than children from the lowest SES homes, despite nearly three quarters having one (71%). In the European sample children from all SES groups, are less likely to have a profile than Cypriot children.
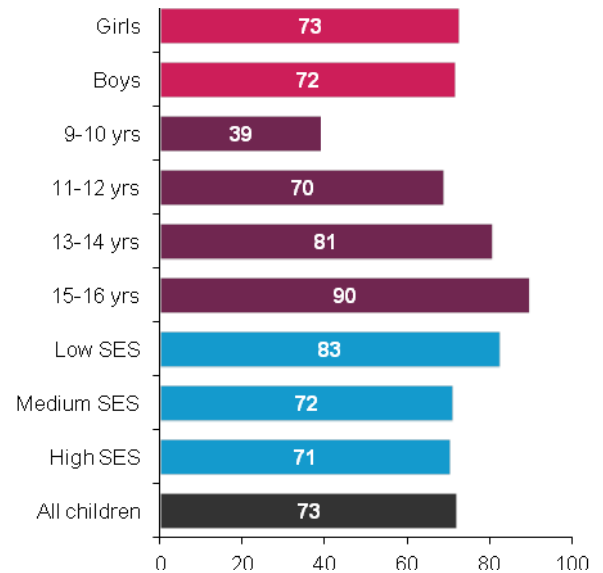
QC313: Do you have your OWN profile on a social networking site that you currently use, or not?

Base: All children who use the internet.

What do we know about how children use social networking, once they have a profile? The survey asked several questions to those with profiles.

- Despite popular media stories of children with hundreds of contacts, few European children report having more than 300 contacts on their social networking profile (9%), though one in five (20%) has between 100 and 300; half have up to 50 contacts and 19% have fewer than 10.

- **Cypriot children report substantially less SNS contacts than in most of Europe, ranking 20th across Europe. Among Cypriot SNS users, 8% report more than 300 contacts, 13% have between 100 and 300, 15% have between 51 and 100 and 20% have 11-50 contacts. 44% have fewer than ten contacts.**

Does this amount of contacts imply that children have no sense of privacy, that they might include anyone in their contact list?

- **In line with many countries across Europe, Figure 10 shows that Cypriot SNS users are as likely to have their profile set to public (rather than private or partially private): 27% in Cyprus compared with 26% across Europe.**

- Cypriot children are less likely to post their address or phone number (6%, compared with 14% in Europe).

- Cypriot children are more likely however to show an incorrect age (23% compared with the Europe average of 16%). This is in line with the high percentages of 9-12 years olds who report having a SNS.

A breakdown of the use of privacy settings by socio-demographic factors is shown in Figure 10:

- **Cypriot boys are more likely to have public settings (33% vs. 22% of girls), a similar pattern to the European sample as a whole.**

- Similar to Europe the younger children in Cyprus are as likely to have public settings 29%, compared to 28% in Europe.

- However more Cypriot children from high SES homes are likely to set their profiles to public (25% vs. 19% in Europe).

Figure 10: Children's use of privacy settings on their social networking profile
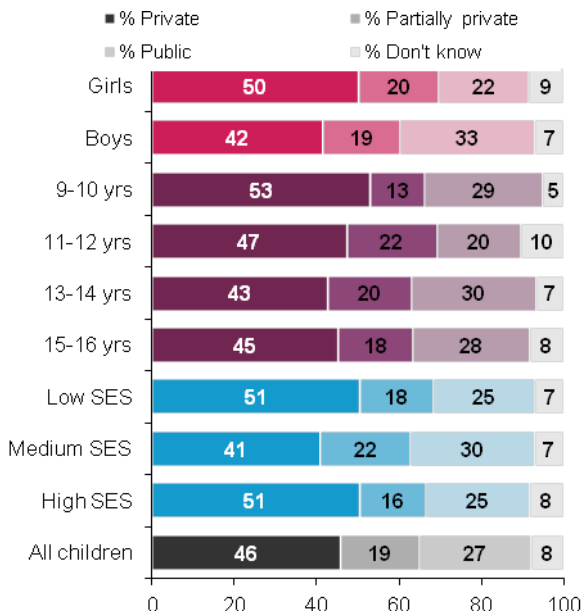
QC317: Is your profile set to …? Public, so that everyone can see; partially private, so that friends of friends or your networks can see; private so that only your friends can see; don't know.

Base: All children who have a profile on a social networking site.

Drawing the line between activities which facilitate beneficial outcomes and those which increase risk of

harm is not straightforward. A particular challenge for policy makers is that children's agency, although generally to be celebrated, may lead them to adopt risky or even deliberately risk-taking behaviours. Focusing on communication online, we explored this by inviting children to compare their approach to communication online and offline (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Online and offline communication compared (% 11+ who say a bit true or very true)
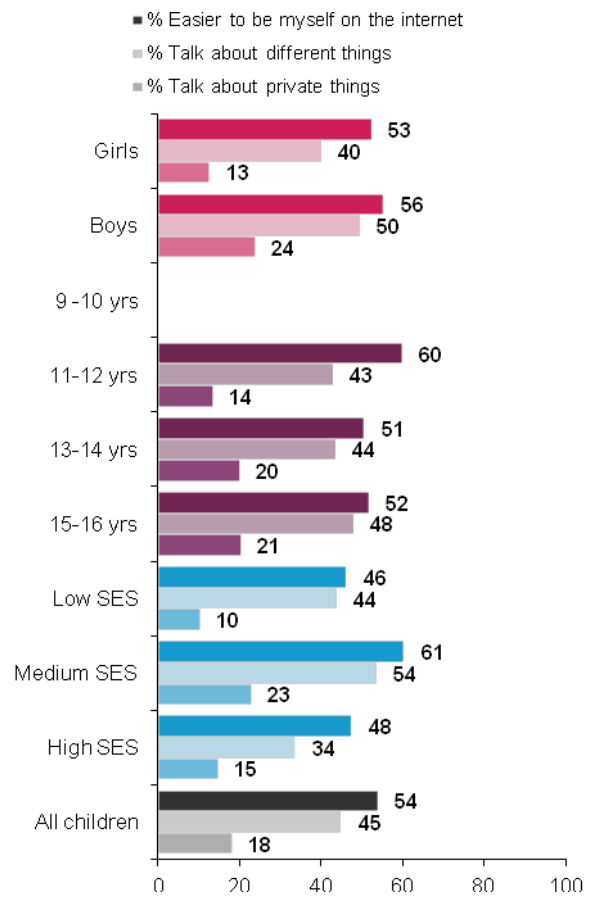
QC103: How true are these of you? Percentage who said 'A bit true' or 'Very true'

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

- More than half (54%) 11-16 year old internet users say they find it easier to be themselves on the internet, and 45% talk about different things, even more private things (18%) than they talk about when with other people face to face.

- Boys appear, a little more likely to find the internet a good place to be themselves.

Insofar as the internet offers some children an opportunity for more personal or intimate communication, this raises the crucial question, with whom are they communicating? For each platform (email, SNS, chatrooms, IM, games, virtual worlds) that the child had used in the past month, he or she was asked about "the types of people you have had contact with" (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Nature of children's online contacts (11+)

■ % Met on the internet, no other connection
■ % Met on the internet, friends/family of people you know
■ % First met in person face-to-face
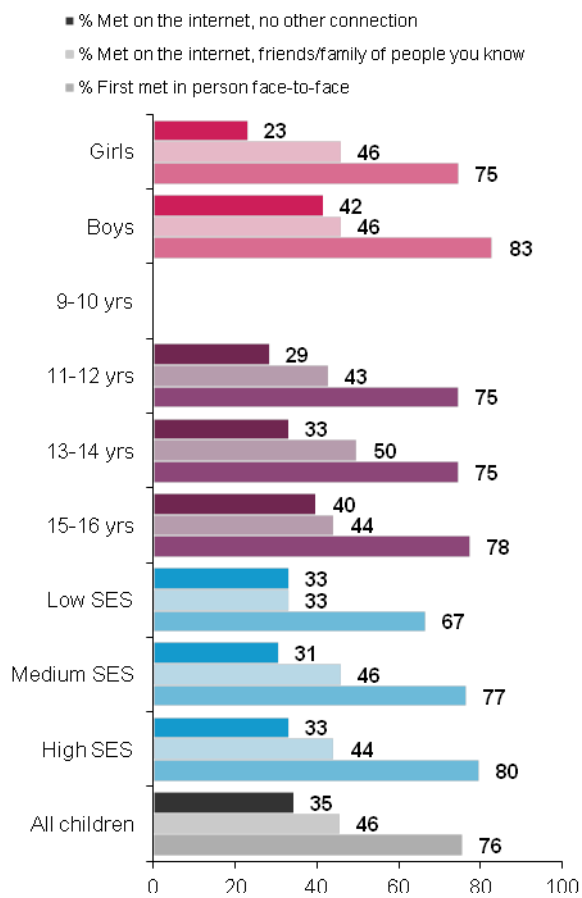
QC310: I'd like you to tell me the types of people you have had contact with when doing each of these things. Response options: people who you first met in person face-to-face; people who you first met on the internet, but who are friends or family of other people you know in person; people who you first met on the internet, but who have no other connection to your life outside of the internet. *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use internet and have given at least one valid response about the nature of their online contacts.

This question pursued the common assumption that it is 'strangers' who threaten children's safety through online contact although, as previous research suggests, people

from within a child's social circle can also pose a threat. Findings showed that:

▪ **As in the rest of Europe, most Cypriot children who communicate online are in touch with people who they already know face-to-face (76%). Thus online communication relies on and complements the communication that occurs in everyday social networks.**

▪ A sizable percentage (46%), again similar to the European average, is in touch with people that they first met on the internet but who have a connection with friends or family offline.

▪ **More than one third 11-16 year olds (35%) say they communicate online with people whom they met online and who have no connection with their offline social networks.** It is these contacts, arguably, that we need to understand better in the context of risk and safety issues. It is concerning that the number who experiences this, is considerably higher than the European average of 25%.

▪ Roughly the same number of boys (42%) as girls (46%) communicates online with people whom they only know online.

▪ Three quarters in each age group communicate online with their existing offline social circle with more 11-12 year old children communicating with people online who are connected to their offline circle but whom, nonetheless, they first met on the internet: 43% of 11-12 year olds, 50% of 13-14 year olds and 44% of 15-16 year olds.

▪ **The age differences in making new contacts online (i.e. with people who have no other connection with the child's life) is more striking than in Europe overall: 29% of 11-12 year olds, 33% of 13-14 year olds and 40% of 15-16 year olds (in Europe, the findings are 19%, 23%, and 33%) with the greatest difference lying in the youngest age group of.**

▪ SES of the household does not differentiate the number of children's online contacts. Nevertheless across all three SESs, more Cypriot children communicate with people they met on the internet and have no other contact than in Europe.

Finally, children were asked about some risky practices related to engaging with online contacts (see Table 5).

▪ **The vast majority of Cypriot children aged 9-16 say that in the past year they have not sent a photo or video of themselves (95%) or personal information (90%) to someone they have never**

met face to face. Nor have they pretended to be a different kind of person on the internet (92%).

▪ All these findings are somewhat higher than the European averages, where such potentially risky activities are more common.

Table 5: Children's actions in relation to online contacts

% who have, in the past 12 months . . .	Never/ not in past year	Less than monthly	More often
Looked for new friends on the internet	53	22	25
Added people to my friends list or address book that I have never met face to face	61	13	26
Sent personal information to someone that I have never met face to face	90	6	5
Sent a photo or video of myself to someone that I have never met face to face	95	3	3
Pretended to be a different kind of person on the internet from what I really am	95	4	4

QC145a-c and QC146a-b: Have you done any of the following things in the PST 12 MONTHS; if yes, how often have you done each of these things?

Base: All children who use the internet.

▪ Six in ten (61%) say that they have not added people to their friends' list or address book that they have never met face to face, nor have most looked for new friends on the internet (53%).

▪ **However, a minority of children say they have done some of these things. Nearly half of those who looked for new friends on the internet did so more often than monthly. One quarter (39%) has added contacts they don't know face to face, two thirds of these more often than monthly.**

▪ Few have sent personal information (11%) or images of themselves (6%) to people they haven't met in person.

Some of these approaches to communication might be judged to involve children in 'risky' practices. But as our overall framework asserts, the key question is whether or

not undertaking these practices results in more risk-related behaviours or, importantly, more harm - a key question for further analysis.

5 RISK AND HARM

5.1 Overall experiences of harm

Before asking children about their specific online experiences associated with risk, we included both closed and open-ended questions in the survey that invited an overall view from the children.

First, we asked children about experiences that had bothered them in some way, explaining that by *'bothered'* we meant, *"made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen it."* The aim was to focus on the child's self-report of concern or distress, avoiding an adult framing (e.g. danger, risk, bad things). After this introduction, children were asked two closed questions:

- *Do you think there are things on the internet that people about your age will be bothered by in any way?*

- *In the past 12 months, have you seen or experienced something on the internet that has bothered you in some way?*

Also, parents were asked: *As far as you are aware, in the past year, has your child seen or experienced something on the internet that has bothered them in some way?*

- Clearly, many children don't see the internet as a completely safe environment. In Figure 13, six in ten Cypriot 9-16 year old children think that the internet bothers people their own age – a considerably higher percentage than the 55% of European children who say the same.

- **Intriguingly, Cypriot children are seven times more likely to say that the internet bothers other children (63%) than they are to say something has bothered them personally in the past year (9%) – this latter finding is almost double for Cyprus than the European average where children are four times more likely to make the aforementioned statement**. Possibly they worry for each other; possibly it is easier to say there are bad things out there than to say 'it's happened to me.'

- **But, more than half of Cypriot 9-16 year olds do not see the internet as problematic for children of their age. Younger children are least likely to be concerned. More strikingly, the majority have not experienced a problem themselves – just 9%**

report they were bothered by something online in the past year.

Figure 13: Online experiences that have bothered children, according to child and parent

- % 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)

	parent	child	age
Girls	5	11	62
Boys	3	8	64
9-10 yrs	4	5	56
11-12 yrs	5	10	63
13-14 yrs	5	7	68
15-16 yrs	3	13	63
Low SES	6	10	67
Medium SES	6	11	61
High SES	1	7	66
All children	4	9	63
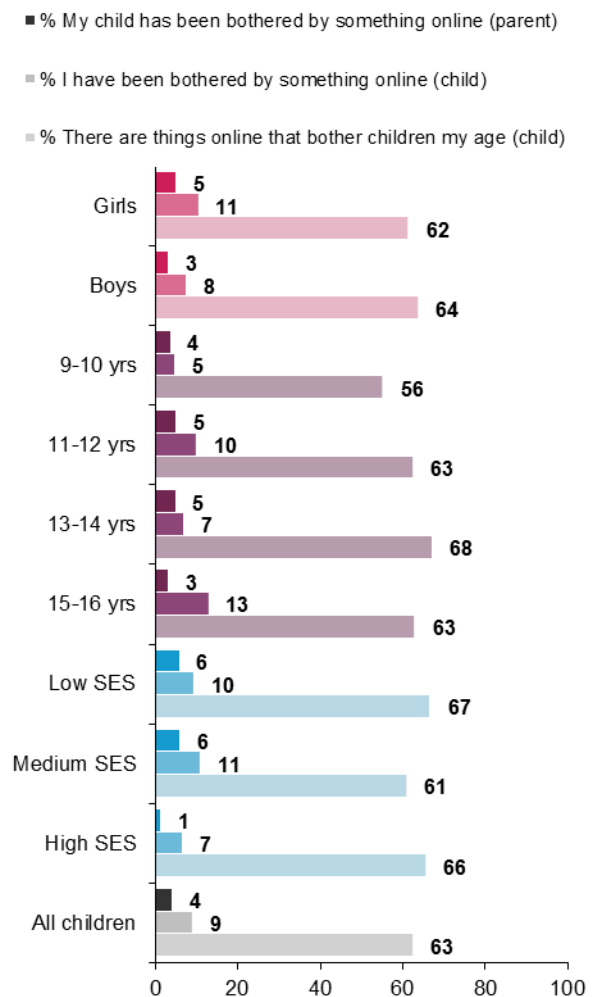
QC110: In the PAST 12 MONTHS, have you seen or experienced something on the internet that has bothered you in some way? For example, made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen it. QP228: As far as you are aware, in the past year, has your child seen or experienced something on the internet that has bothered them in some way? QC322: Do you think there are things on the internet that people about your age will be bothered by in any way?

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

- **Girls (11%) are somewhat more likely than boys (8%) to say that something on the internet has bothered them. Parents mirror this gender difference, seeing the internet as more problematic for their daughters than their sons.**
- **Even though 10% of 9-10 year olds say they have been bothered by something online, their parents are unlikely to recognise this. Only half of their parents say yes, something has bothered my child online.**
- **Similarly whereas 13% of 13-14 year olds report that they have been bothered by something online, only 3% of their parents recognise this.**
- **Reported problems online double from 9-10 year olds to 11-12 year olds, as perceived by both children and parents. Since this is when Cypriot children start secondary school, the problem may be greater internet use at secondary school, or a new peer group encouraging risk-taking, or the onset of adolescence.**

5.2   Sexual images online

Pornography is not easy to define. It covers a wide range of material from the everyday to the illegal. For ethical reasons, pornography cannot be defined very explicitly in a closed-ended survey with children, for to do so might introduce new ideas to children who are hitherto unaware of such phenomena. Consequently, although this section broadly concerns pornography, the term itself was not used in the interview with children.

Questions about pornography were introduced thus:

"In the past year, you will have seen lots of different images – pictures, photos, videos. Sometimes, these might be obviously sexual – for example, showing people naked or people having sex."

To contextualise online pornography in relation to exposure to pornography across any media, children were first asked, "*Have you seen anything of this kind in the past 12 months?*"

Figure 14: Child has seen sexual images online or offline in past 12 months
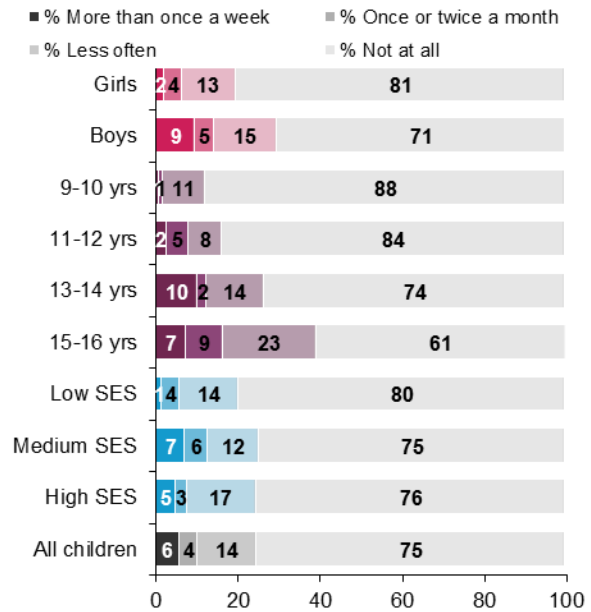
QC128: Have you seen anything of this kind [obviously sexual] in the past 12 month? QC129: How often have you seen [images, photos, videos that are obviously sexual] in the past 12 months.

Base: All children who use the internet.

Figure 14 shows that:

- **One quarter (24%) of Cypriot 9-16 year olds say that they have seen sexual images in the past 12 months, whether online or offline. This is close to the European average of 23%.**
- As in Europe, age matters. More older children have seen sexual images. In Cyprus this levels off earlier - by age 13-14. The range is 13% of 9-10 year olds rising to 39% of 15-16 year olds.
- Gender differences are quite large, with boys being more likely than girls to have seen sexual images somewhere (29% vs. 19%); for Europe as a whole the numbers are slightly lower (25% vs. 21%).
- In contrast to the European average where children from higher SES homes say they see sexual images more frequently, Cypriot children from medium SES homes report seeing sexual images more frequently.

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Table 6: Child has seen sexual images online or offline in past 12 months, by age and gender

%	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
On any websites	3	7	19	10	12
On television, film or video/DVD	3	6	25	9	11
In a magazine or book	2	5	14	3	6
By text (SMS), images (MMS), or otherwise on my mobile phone	1	4	8	4	4
By Bluetooth	1	0	3	1	1
Has seen at all, online or offline	10	19	47	20	24

QC128: Have you seen anything of this kind [obviously sexual] in the past 12 month? QC130a-f: In which, if any, of these places have you seen [images, photos, videos that are obviously sexual] in the past 12 months? QC131: Have you seen [images, photos, videos that are obviously sexual] on any websites in the past 12 months? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

Table 6 examines where children have seen sexual images, to put online sources into context.

- **For Cypriot children internet is a more common source of sexual images than television (12% vs. 11%), as for European children (14% vs. 12%).**
- Cypriot children are a little less likely to have seen sexual images online than the European average (12% vs. 14%) and Cyprus is rather low down the country ranking for exposure to online sexual images – far higher are Norway (34%), Estonia (29%), Finland (29%), the Czech Republic (28%), and Denmark (28%).
- Cypriot children are also slightly less likely than other Europeans to have seen sexual images in magazines (6% vs. 7%).
- Gender differences are striking. Fewer younger boys (9-12 years) have seen sexual images on websites and television than younger girls (6% vs. 13%). By 13-16 however, boys are considerably more likely to say they have seen sexual images on television, film and video/DVD than girls (44% vs. 29%). Boys are in general more likely to say that they have seen sexual

images in magazines, and on mobile phone. Boys are also much more likely than girls to say that they have seen sexual images on websites. This differs from the European picture, where there are few gender differences apart from slightly more boys saying they have seen sexual images on websites.

Table 7 shows the type of sexual images they have seen.

Table 7: What kind of sexual images the child has seen online in past 12 months, by age (age 11+)

%	Age				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
Images or video of someone naked	n.a.	3	7	17	8
Images or video of someone having sex	n.a.	3	9	11	8
'Images or video of someone's 'private parts'	n.a.	0	3	4	2
Images or video or movies that show sex in a violent way	n.a.	0	1	3	2
Something else	n.a.	0	6	1	2
Seen sexual images online	n.a	8	17	20	12

QC131: Have you seen these kinds of things on any websites in the past 12 months? QC133: Which, if any, of these things have you seen on a website in the last 12 months? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children 11-16 who use the internet.

- **8% of Cypriot 11-16 year olds say they have seen online sexual images including nudity, 8% (more teenagers than young children) have seen images of someone having sex, 2% have seen someone's genitals online and 2% say they have seen violent sexual images.**
- The overall pattern is somewhat similar to the European average, with milder images of nudity predominating, except that for images of genitals, the European findings for 15-16 year olds' exposure are higher by 8% (4% for Cypriots vs. 12% for European children).

Previous research raised questions about what parents really know about their children's experiences online, such knowledge surely being a prerequisite for supporting or

guiding their children. Exploiting the unique features of the *EU Kids Online* survey in which answers can be analysed for each child/parent pair, we now ask how far parents are aware of children's experiences online.

Table 8: Children's and parents' accounts of whether child has seen sexual images online

Child has seen sexual images on the internet?	Child's answer	
	Yes	**No**
% Parent answer:		
Yes	46	20
No	30	40
Don't know	24	40
	100	100

QP235: [Has your child] seen images on the internet that are obviously sexual - for example, showing people naked or people having sex. QC131: Have you seen these kinds of things on any websites in the past 12 months?

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

- Across Europe, among just those children who have seen sexual images online, one in three (35%) of their parents agree this has occurred. One in four (26%) of their parents say that they don't know and, significantly, 40% say their child has not seen sexual images on the internet.

- **In Cyprus, parents are slightly more aware of their children's experiences of online sexual images than in Europe generally. Among children who have seen online sexual images, 30% of parents say their child has not seen such images, while 46% recognise that they have and 24% say they don't know** (Table 8).

When does risk translate into harm? As noted at the outset, the notion of risk refers to a probability not a necessity of harm. Unless one makes the strong case that any exposure to sexual images is inevitably harmful in some degree, it must be recognised that some children may, for instance, be exposed to pornographic content with no adverse effects. Others, however, may be harmed – whether upset at the time of the exposure, or worried later, or even influenced in their attitudes or behaviour years subsequently.

So as not to presume that all risks result in harm, we asked further questions to those children who said they had seen sexual images online, prefaced as follows:

Seeing sexual images on the internet may be fine or may not be fine. In the LAST 12 MONTHS have you seen any things like this that have bothered you in any way? For example, made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen them.

- Across Europe, 32% of those who have seen sexual images online were bothered by what they had seen. But this comprises only 4% of all children.

- By comparison, slightly fewer – 26% - of Cypriot children who saw such images say they were bothered by what they saw. This comprises 3% of all 9-16 year olds who use the internet in Cyprus.

- **Cyprus is thus relatively low, compared with many countries, both in terms of overall exposure to online pornography and in terms of the degree to which children are bothered or upset by what they saw when they were exposed to online sexual images.**

Figure 15 shows who has seen sexual images on the internet and been bothered by this.

- Boys are twice more likely to have seen sexual images online (16% vs. 8%), the same pattern as in Europe generally. Interestingly, there were slightly more boys who had been bothered by this experience, which is different from the overall European finding – across all countries, boys had seen more sexual images online but girls were more upset by such experiences.

- Seeing sexual images online is more common among teenagers than younger children, and there are also more teenagers – especially those aged 11-12 years old - who report being bothered by this.

- **As in other countries, 9-10 year olds are less likely to see sexual images online but more likely to be bothered or upset by the experience if they do see them.**

Figure 15: Child has seen sexual images online and was bothered by this
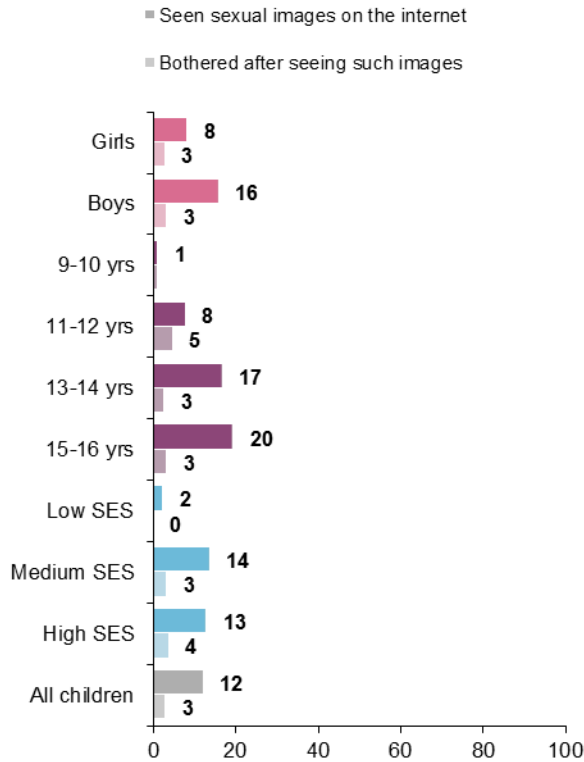
QC131: Have you seen these kinds of things on any websites in the past 12 months? And QC134: In the LAST 12 MONTHS have you seen any things like this that have bothered you in any way? For example, made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have seen them.

Base: All children who use the internet. Only children who have seen sexual images online.

In the full European report, further questions explore how upset children felt, for how long they were upset, who they told and what they did in response to such an experience. However, for a single country report the sample sizes are too small to report in detail how children coped, or not, with upsetting online experiences.

The key point, therefore, is that most children have not experienced seeing sexual images online and, even of those who have, most say they were not bothered or upset by the experience.

5.3   Bullying online

Being bullied is one of several conduct risks that may harm children when they use the internet. In some sense, bullying builds on children's availability through and/or conduct in peer-to-peer exchanges and it may or may not be associated with offline bullying.

Although the term 'bullying' has a distinct and familiar meaning in some countries, this is not universal, making the term difficult to translate. So, as with 'pornography', the term 'bully' was not used in the children's questionnaire. Instead, it was defined thus:

"Sometimes children or teenagers say or do hurtful or nasty things to someone and this can often be quite a few times on different days over a period of time, for example. This can include: teasing someone in a way this person does not like; hitting, kicking or pushing someone around; leaving someone out of things."

Children were then asked whether *someone has acted in this kind of hurtful or nasty way to you in the past 12 months.*

Figure 16: Child has been bullied online or offline in past 12 months
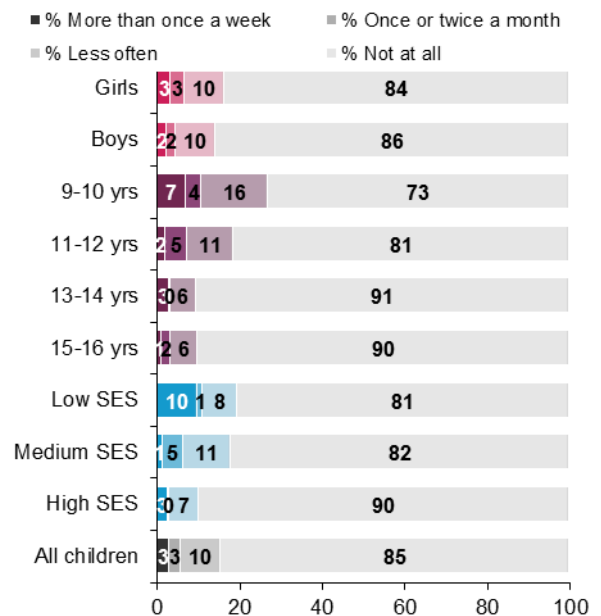
QC112: Has someone acted in this kind of hurtful or nasty way to you in the past 12 months? QC113: How often has someone acted in this kind [hurtful and nasty] way towards you in the past 12 months?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **One in six Cypriot children claims to have been bullied in the past year, according to the definition provided, with 3% bullied weekly** (Figure 16).
- The overall level of bullying in Cyprus is similar to that across Europe (16% vs. 19%), though the European range is from 43% in Estonia for having been bullied overall (online or offline) to just 9% in Portugal.
- **The likelihood of online bullying in Cyprus is slightly less common: 5% (versus 6% in Europe generally) have received nasty or hurtful message online.**
- Slightly less boys than girls claim to have been bullied (14% vs. 16%).
- 15-16 year olds say they have been bullied the least, the most bullied being 9-10 year olds (an opposite pattern than the European average).
- In contrast to the European average children from lower SES homes in Cyprus claim to have been bullied most (19%), with those from high SES homes the least (10%).

The European comparisons suggest that, broadly, bullying online is more common in countries where bullying in general is more common, rather than, for instance, in countries where the internet is more established. This suggests online bullying to be a new form of a long-established problem in childhood rather than, simply, the consequence of a new technology.

Table 9 indicates how children are bullied.

Table 9: Ways in which children have been bullied in past 12 months

%	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**All**
In person face to face	14	10	6	7	9
On the Internet	8	5	2	4	5
By mobile phone calls, texts or image/video texts	1	5	1	4	3
Has been bullied at all, online or offline	22	23	7	12	15

QC114: At any time during the last 12 months, has this happened [that you have been treated in a hurtful or nasty way]? QC115: At any time during the last 12 months has this happened on the internet. *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

- In Cyprus, face to face bullying is more common than online bullying (9% vs. 5%), and 3% have also been bullied by mobile phone.
- Gender differences are small, although slightly more boys have been bullied face to face. Notably, more girls have been bullied via the mobile phone.

Table 10: What happened when child was bullied online in past 12 months (age 11+)

%	Age				All
	9-10	**11-12**	**13-14**	**15-16**	
Other nasty or harmful things on the internet	n.a.	4	1	0	2
Nasty or hurtful messages were sent to me	n.a.	1	1	2	2
I was left out or excluded from a group or activity on the internet	n.a.	1	1	1	1
Nasty or hurtful messages about me were passed around or posted where others could see	n.a.	2	0	1	1
I was threatened on the internet	n.a.	1	0	0	0
Something else	n.a.	1	1	1	1
At all on the internet	6	7	3	3	5

QC115: At any time during the last 12 months has this happened on the internet? QC117: Can I just check, which of these things have happened in the last 12 months? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children 11-16 years old who use the internet.

Table 10 examines how children are bullied online.

- **Most common are messages sent to the child and other nasty things online (both 2%), followed by messages being posted or passed on (1%) and other nasty things online (1%).**
- 11-12 year olds are most likely to encounter the various forms of online bullying (7%) something which is not in harmony with the European findings where 15-16 years olds are most likely to be bullied.

As with exposure to sexual images, the survey findings reveal the degree to which parents are not aware of children's online experience of being bullied (Table 11).

Table 11: Parents' accounts of whether child has been bullied online

Child has been sent nasty or hurtful messages on the internet?	Child's answer:	
	Yes	**No**
% Parent answer:		
Yes	6	6
No	91	83
Don't know	3	10
	100	100

QP235: [Has your child] been treated in a hurtful or nasty way on the internet by another child or teenager? QC115: At any time during the last 12 months [have you been treated in a hurtful or nasty way] on the internet?

Note: sample sizes in this table are small (and confidence intervals high) so these findings to be treated as indicative only.

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

- Among the 6% of children who say they have been bullied online, few (6%) of their parents are aware of this while the majority (91%) say this has not happened and 3% does not know.

- By comparison with parental awareness of children's exposure to online pornography, and by comparison with the European findings, Cypriot parents seem considerably less likely to be aware of when their child has been bullied on the internet, in those cases where it has happened.

Since bullying is an activity that occurs largely among peers, children may not only be bullied but they may also bully others, either on the internet or in other ways. After asking children about their experiences of being bullied, children were asked if they themselves had acted in a hurtful or nasty way to others in the past year.

Figure 17: Child has bullied others online or offline in past 12 months
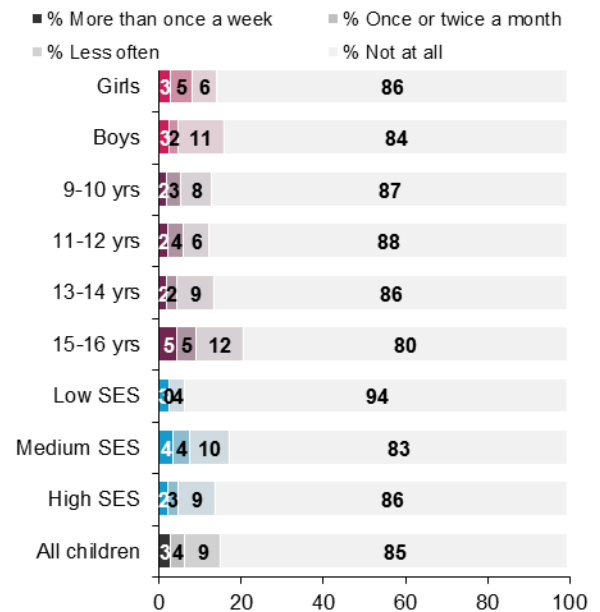
QC125: Have you acted in a way that might have felt hurtful or nasty to someone else in the past 12 months? QC126: How often have you acted in this kind [hurtful and nasty] way in the past 12 months?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Figure 17 shows that, **in Cyprus, 16% of children say they have bullied others – as many as saying they have been bullied (16%).**

- **Bullying others (in general) is most common among the 15-16 year olds (in contrast of being bullied which is most common among 9-10 year olds).**

- Children from medium SES homes are most likely to bully others.

- 3% bully others more than once a week.

- **While 5% said they had been bullied online, only between 2-3% say they have bullied others online in the past 12 months.**

A central question in the *EU Kids Online* project is to explore whether and when certain factors increase the likelihood of harm to the child.

In the full European report, children's experiences of online bullying are followed up to explore how upset children felt, for how long they were upset, who they told

and what they did in response to such an experience. However, for a single country report the sample sizes are too small to report in detail how children coped, or not, with upsetting online experiences.

The key point, therefore, is that **most children have not experienced bullying, online or offline. In Cyprus (as elsewhere) face to face bullying is more common than online bullying and the incidence of online bullying is a little lower in Cyprus than the European average.**

EU Kids Online researchers will next examine what can be said at a country as well as a pan-European level.

5.4 Sending and receiving sexual messages online

There is some evidence, and much speculation, that the internet facilitates the exchange of sexual messages among peers. Originating with the spread of mobile phone messaging more than online communication, and thus popularly labelled 'sexting' (an amalgam of 'sex' and 'texting'), such practices have given rise to popular and policy concern. For reasons of both research ethics and interview length, questions about sending and receiving sexual messages were not asked of 9-10 year olds.

The term 'sexting' was not used in the questionnaire. Children (and parents) were introduced to the questions on sending and receiving sexual messages as follows:

"People do all kinds of things on the internet. Sometimes, they may send sexual messages or images. By this we mean talk about having sex or images of people naked or having sex."

Figure 18: Child has seen or received sexual messages online in past 12 months (age 11+)
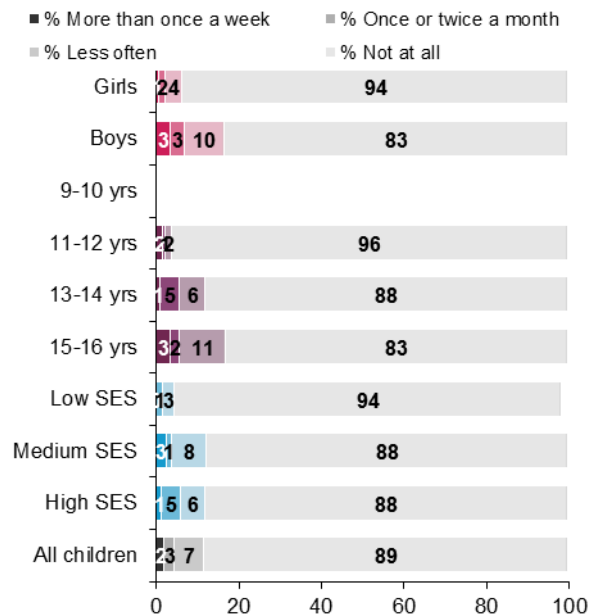
QC167: In the past 12 months have you seen or received sexual messages of any kind on the internet? QC168: How often have you received sexual messages of any kind on the internet in the past 12 months? This could be words, pictures or videos.

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

- **Some one in nine children in Cyprus (11%) have seen or received sexual messages online, 2% receiving them more than once a week** (Figure 18). This compares with 15% receiving them across Europe, 3% more often than weekly.

- Interestingly in Cyprus, boys are more likely to have received them than girls (16% vs. 7%), whereas in the European findings there is no gender difference.

- 11-12 year olds are less likely to receive sexual messages online than the older age groups, while there is little difference by social class.

- Seeing/receiving sexual messages online is more common (though still a minority practice) than is posting/sending such messages. Only a very small proportion of children – 3% of 11-16 year olds – say that they have posted or sent a sexual message online in the past 12 months.

- **Thus in the Cyprus, 'sexting' appears a little less common than across Europe, with several countries having much higher incidence of this practice.**

Table 12 shows the type of sexual messages received by children on the internet.

Table 12: Kinds of sexual messaging child has encountered online in past 12 months (age 11+)

%	Age				
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	All
I have been sent a sexual message on the internet	n.a.	2	4	8	5
I have seen other people perform sexual acts	n.a.	2	5	6	4
I have seen a sexual message posted where other people could see it on the internet	n.a.	1	1	7	3
I have been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone on the internet	n.a.	1	1	1	1
I have been asked on the internet for a photo or video showing my private parts	n.a.	0	0	1	1
Has seen or received at all	n.a.	4	12	16	11

QC169: In the past 12 months, have any of these happened to you on the internet?

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

- **5% of Cypriot 11-16 year olds have been sent a sexual message, and 3% have seen a sexual message posted online. Only 2-4%, have experience each of the following: seen others perform sexual acts in a message, been asked for a photo or video showing their private parts or been asked to talk about sexual acts with someone online.**
- The older the child, the more likely they have been sent a sexual message and to have seen one posted. 11-12 year olds are less likely to have received a message showing other people performing sexual acts. The same patterns apply in the European data generally.

Are parents aware of children's experiences regarding online sexual messages? (Table 13)

Table 13: Parents' accounts of whether child has seen or received sexual messages online (age 11+)

Seen or been sent sexual images on the internet?	Child's answer	
	Yes	No
% Parent answer:		
Yes	27	2
No	53	79
Don't know	20	19
	100	100

QP235: [Has your child] seen or been sent sexual messages on the internet? QC167: In the past 12 months have you seen or received sexual messages of any kind on the internet? This could be words, pictures or videos?

Note: sample sizes in this table are small (and confidence intervals high) so these findings to be treated as indicative only.

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet and one of their parents.

- In Figure 19, among the 11% of children who say they have seen or been sent sexual messages online, a minority of their parents (27%) are aware of this, and more than half (53%) say this has not happened, though one fifth (20%) does not know.
- This level of parental awareness is notably higher in Cyprus than the European average where among the 15% of children who say have they have seen or been sent sexual messages, only 21% of their parents are aware of this.
- One must be nevertheless wary of findings based on such a small subset of the population.

As noted in the discussion of seeing pornography, unless one makes the strong case that any exposure to sexual messages is inevitably harmful in some degree, it must be recognised that some children may receive sexual messages with no negative effects. Others, however, may be upset.

- Across Europe, although 15% of children have seen or received a sexual message online, only 4% of children aged 11-16 have both received and been bothered by this experience. However, looked at differently, one quarter (25%) of the 15% who have received sexual messages were bothered by this.
- In Cyprus by contrast, 11% have seen or received such messages, but slightly less - just 2% - have

been bothered by it. To put it another way, 18% of Cypriot children who have received sexual messages online have been bothered or upset by the experience.

Figure 19: Child has seen or received sexual messages in past 12 months and was bothered (age 11+)
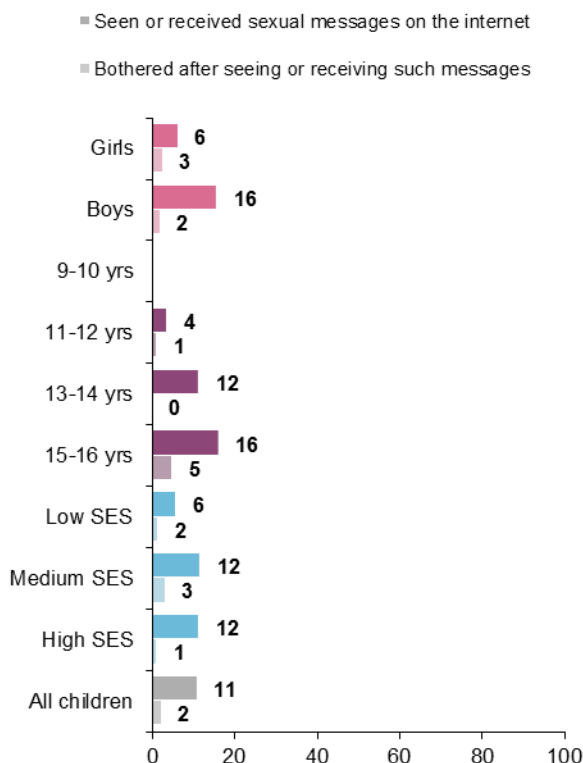
QC167: In the past 12 months have you seen or received sexual messages of any kind on the internet? This could be words, pictures or videos. QC171: In the last 12 months, has any sexual message that you have seen or received bothered you in any way?

Base: All children age 11-16 who use the internet. Children who have seen or received sexual messages online in the past 12 months.

- Figure 19 shows that girls are more likely to have been bothered by receiving sexual messages than boys (3% vs. 2%), in line with the European findings.
- The younger children are more likely to be bothered by these messages (as across Europe generally).

5.5 Meeting online contacts offline

Possibly the greatest public and policy concern for children's safety on the internet has focused on the risk that a child will meet someone new online who then abuses them in a subsequent face to face meeting.

However, previous research suggests that the risk of harm from a face to face meeting with someone whom one first met on the internet is low, not least because children increasingly use the internet to widen their circle of friends, with very few using online communication to meet adults (whether deliberately or inadvertently). Further, although it is possible for contacts with new people online to result in harm, public concern tends to be unclear regarding just what harm might result.

How many Cypriot children make new contacts on the internet? Do these lead to face to face meetings offline? See Figure 20.

- **13% of Cypriot children have had contact online with someone they have not met face to face (a finding which is less than half to the European average of 30%).**
- **6% have gone to an offline meeting with someone first met online. This is two thirds the European average (which is 9% across all countries).** Indeed, as the pan-European report shows, children are most likely to have gone to an offline meeting with a contact first made online in some of the Baltic countries (25% in Estonia and 23% in Lithuania). Such offline meetings are least common in the UK and Portugal (each 5%), Italy and Ireland (each 4%). and then Turkey (3%).
- **Older teenagers (13-16 year olds) are much more likely than younger children to have online contact with someone they have not met face to face. They are also more likely to have gone on to meet them in person – though such instances are rare.**
- Gender differences are minor although boys are a little more likely to have gone on to meet someone than girls (7% vs. 6%). This fits the wider European pattern, as does the above age difference.
- Children from high SES homes in Cyprus are more likely to have made contact and to have met offline people that they first met online (as in Europe generally).

Figure 20: Child has communicated online or gone to an offline meeting with someone not met face to face

- % Ever gone on to meet anyone face to face that you first met on the internet

- % Ever had contact with someone you have not met face to face before
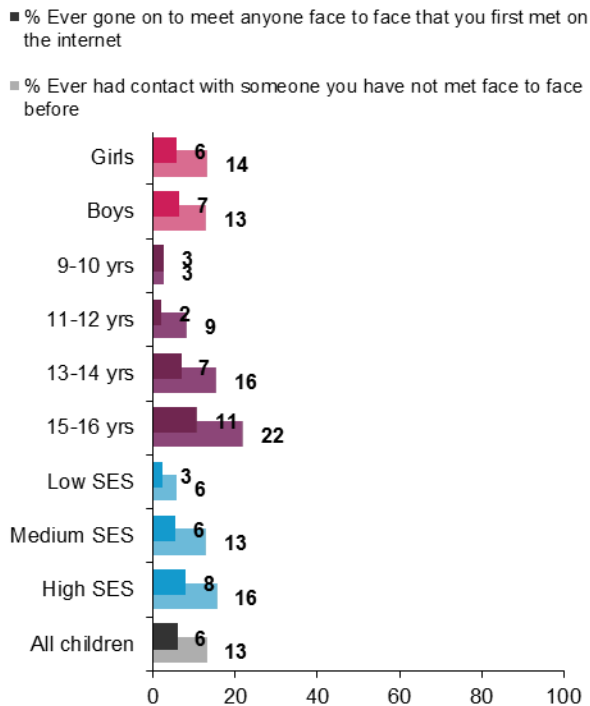
QC147: Can I just check, have you ever had contact on the internet with someone you have not met face to face before?
QC148: Have you ever gone on to meet anyone face to face that you first met on the internet in this way.

Base: All children who use the internet.

Are parents aware of such offline meetings? (Table 14)

Table 14: Parents' accounts of whether child has met online contacts offline

Met someone face to face that first met on the internet?	Child's answer	
	Yes	No
% Parent answer:		
Yes	11	7
No	82	89
Don't know	7	4
	100	100

QP235: [Has your child] gone to a meeting with someone face to face that he/she first met on the internet? QC148: Have you ever gone on to meet anyone face to face that you first met on the internet in this way?

Note: sample sizes in this table are small (and confidence intervals high) so these findings to be treated as indicative only.

Base: All children who use the internet, and one of their parents.

- The small sample sizes for meeting contacts offline mean one must be particularly wary of providing further details. Thus we just note as indicative that in most of the cases where a child has gone to such a meeting, parents seem unaware of this.

Making new contacts online and then arranging to meet these people offline is, perhaps, one of the more contested activities children may engage in. This may be a harmless means of widening a social circle. Or it may be a risky or even dangerous means of contacting an abusive stranger.

As before, we prefaced questions about subjective harm with the following:

Face to face meetings with people that you first met on the internet may be fine or not fine. In the LAST 12 MONTHS have you gone to a meeting with someone you met in this way that bothered you? For example, made you feel uncomfortable, upset, or feel that you shouldn't have been there?

For the overall European sample, some follow up questions on children's responses to such meetings can be reported. But for a single country sample, the number of children involved is too small to report reliable findings.

5.6 Potentially harmful user-generated content

There are online experiences that, although potentially harmful to children, have attracted little research as yet. These include exposure to potentially harmful user-generated content – i.e. not mass-produced commercial content but content generated through peer-to-peer activity.

Given the sensitive nature of the potentially harmful user-generated content shown in Table 15, only 11-16 year olds were asked if they had seen this. The question introduction clarified the potentially harmful nature of the content:

On some websites, people discuss things that may not be good for you. Here are some questions about these kinds of things. In the PAST 12 MONTHS, have you seen websites where people discuss…

Table 15: Child has seen potentially harmful user-generated content in past 12 months (age 11+)

%	Age				All
	11-13 years		14-16 years		
	Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**All**
Hate messages that attack certain groups or individuals	8	4	14	23	13
Ways to be very thin (such as being anorexic or bulimic)	7	10	9	19	12
Talk about or share their experiences of taking drugs	4	7	5	9	6
Talk about or share their experiences of taking drugs	4	7	5	9	6
Has seen such material at all on any websites	10	14	22	31	20

QC142: In the past 12 months, have you seen websites where people discuss...?

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

- **Overall, 20% of Cypriot 11-16 year olds have seen one or more type of potentially harmful user-generated content, rising to 31% of 14-16 year old girls. The overall Cypriot percentage is about the same as the percentage across Europe, where the average is 21%.**
- **Most common are hate messages (13%), closely followed by anorexia/bulimia sites (12%) and sites talking about drug experiences (6%). The first two percentages are slightly below the European average. Few have visited a suicide site (4%).**
- Older girls are far more likely to have visited anorexic/bulimic sites than older boys (19% vs. 7%), and younger girls have visited these slightly more than have younger boys (10% vs. 9%). This reflects the wider European pattern. Younger girls are more likely to have talked about or shared their experiences of taking drugs than younger boys (10% vs. 7%). In general, young children (24%) visited such sites less than older children (52%).

5.7 Misuse of personal data

Also little researched as yet is the misuse of personal data online, although this may enable ill-intentioned others to access children and/or their personal information. Questions on personal data misuse were asked of children aged 11-16:

In the PAST 12 MONTHS, has any of the following happened to you on the internet?

Table 16: Child has experienced misuse of personal data in past 12 months (age 11+)

%	Age				All
	11-13 years		14-16 years		
	Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**All**
Somebody used my password to access my information or to pretend to be me	3	6	4	8	6
Somebody used my personal information in a way I didn't like	3	6	5	3	4
I lost money by being cheated on the internet	1	0	4	0	1
Has experienced personal data misuse of any kind	6	10	7	8	8

QC143: In the past 12 months, has any of the following happened to you on the internet?

Base: All children aged 11-16 who use the internet.

- **The main misuse of personal data experienced by Cypriot children is when someone has used their password or pretended to be them (6%). Some have had personal information used in a way they did not like (4%), similar findings to the European average.**
- Younger girls have had these problems more than boys.

6 MEDIATION

A distinctive feature of the *EU Kids Online* survey is that it asked children about all the types of mediation practised by parents and also by teachers and peers. Drawing on previous research, a series of questions were devised for both children and one of their parents, distinguishing 'active mediation' of internet use in general and active mediation of internet safety in particular. Together these reveal the main sources of support available to children. In terms of policy, this may pinpoint children's need for further support, differentiated by demographic factors and by country.

Both forms of active mediation may also be practised by teachers in school and, further, children may support each other through discussing and sharing internet use; though informal, this constitutes a potentially valuable form of peer mediation.[3] In sum, **this section analyses eight sources of social support and mediation available to children:**

- Active mediation of the child's internet use - the parent is present, staying nearby, encouraging or sharing or discussing the child's online activities.

- Active mediation of the child's internet safety – before, during or after the child's online activities, the parent guides the child in using the internet safely, maybe helping or discussing what to do in case of difficulty.

- Restrictive mediation – the parent sets rules that restrict the child's use (of particular applications, activities, or of giving out personal information).

- Monitoring – the parent checks available records of the child's internet use afterwards.

- Technical mediation of the child's internet use – the parent uses software or parental controls to filter, restrict or monitor the child's use.

- Teachers' mediation – these questions included a mix of active mediation of the child's internet use and internet safety, plus a question on restrictive mediation.

- Peer mediation of the child's internet safety – it was assumed that children talk about their online activities in general, so here the focus was on peer mediation of safety practices in particular. These questions were asked bi-directionally – do the child's friends help them, and also do they help their friends.

- Other sources of safety awareness – both parents and children may benefit from a range of sources of guidance - from the media or from experts in their community. We also asked about the use of such sources.

6.1 Parents

The *EU Kids Online* project interviewed both the child and one of his or her parents. This section compares answers to matched questions asked of both child and the parent most involved in the child's internet use.

- **While 70% of Cypriot 9-16 year olds go online daily or almost daily, the same applies for 40% of their parents.**

Previous research has revealed a considerable generation gap, with parents reporting more mediating activities than are recognised by their children. This gap has been interpreted as a sign of the barriers to parents' taking responsibility for their children's internet safety – whether because parents and teenagers find it difficult to talk to each other, or because parents feel ill-equipped to understand the internet, or because children guard their privacy online and so evade parental oversight.

As will be shown below, this gap appears to have reduced in recent years. So, how do Cypriot parents mediate their children's internet use?

In what follows, *questions about active mediation of use and safety practices are asked of all children, and all parents of these children. Questions regarding parental restriction, monitoring and use of technical tools are asked only for children who use the internet at home.*

Table 17 examines supportive forms of active mediation and co-use by parents, as reported by the child.

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[3] In practical terms, it was not possible also to ask teachers or friends matched questions; nor was it appropriate to ask children about restrictive, monitoring or technical forms of mediation for teachers or friends.

Table 17: Parent's active mediation of the child's internet use, according to child

% who say that their parent does…	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**All**
Talk to you about what you do on the internet	76	81	71	71	74
Stay nearby when you use the internet	78	78	61	63	69
Encourage you to explore and learn things on the internet on your own	57	52	54	50	53
Do shared activities together with you on the internet	60	55	50	48	53
Sit with you while you use the internet	55	46	36	40	44
One or more of these	93	95	89	94	92

QC327: Does your parent / do either of you parents sometimes… *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

▪ **Most Cypriot parents talk to their children about what they do on the internet (74%), making this, as in Europe generally, the most popular way to actively mediate children's internet use.**

▪ Second most popular is staying nearby (69%), and in third place are encouraging the child to explore and learn things on the internet, and doing shared activities on the internet (each at 53%). The remaining strategy is adopted by just under a half of parents.

▪ **Overall, it seems that there is a fair amount of general positive mediation taking place. Each of these findings for Cyprus is a little higher than the European average (overall, 87% of European children report one or more of these activities by their parents vs. 92% in Cyprus).**

▪ Whereas gender differences are often small in the European sample, many are more striking in the Cypriot findings. Parents engage in more active mediation for girls than boys. Teenage boys however

receive more encouragement to learn on the internet and parents share more activities with them.

▪ **For most strategies, as in Europe generally, parents carry out considerably more active mediation of younger children's use of the internet,** with the exception of Cypriot teenage girls receiving slightly more active mediation than younger boys.

▪ **Notably, about one in twelve parents (8%) never engage in any of these forms of mediation, according to their children.**

Previous research suggests that parents claim they mediate their child's internet use more than the child themselves recognises.

Table 18 compares the accounts of parents and children, examining the relation between the child's answers (yes or no) and those of their parent.

Table 18: Parent's active mediation of the child's internet use, according to child and parent

% who say that their parents sometimes…	Child no parent no	Child yes parent no	Child no parent yes	Child yes parent yes
Talk to you about what you do on the internet	9	7	16	68
Stay nearby when you use the internet	19	11	12	58
Encourage you to explore and learn things on the internet on your own	29	11	18	42
Do shared activities together with you on the internet	37	12	10	41
Sit with you while you use the internet	39	12	18	32

QC327 and QP220: Does your parents/do either of your parents sometimes [which of the following things, if any do you (or your partner/other carer) sometimes do with your child]…

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

▪ In 10-18% of cases, parents claim a mediating practice that their child does not acknowledge (see third column). There could be a social desirability

effect on the part of parents who wish to appear 'good parents'. Or, parents may be more aware of practices that their children might not notice or might forget.

- Interestingly, in 7-12% of cases, the child perceives parental mediation that the parent themselves does not report (the second column). This may arise because children may wish to represent their parents as doing more than they really do, or they may notice a practice that, for the parent is so routine as to go unnoticed.

- Adding the percentages in the second and third column suggests that **a quarter of parents and children disagree about whether these different forms of mediation are taking place, depending on the strategy. Therefore, in about three quarters of homes they agree. This ratio is similar to that found in across Europe.**

To show demographic differences, Figure 21 is based on the row, 'One of more of these' responses in Table 17 – i.e. it combines the various forms of active mediation.

Figure 21: Parent's active mediation of the child's *internet use*, according to child and parent
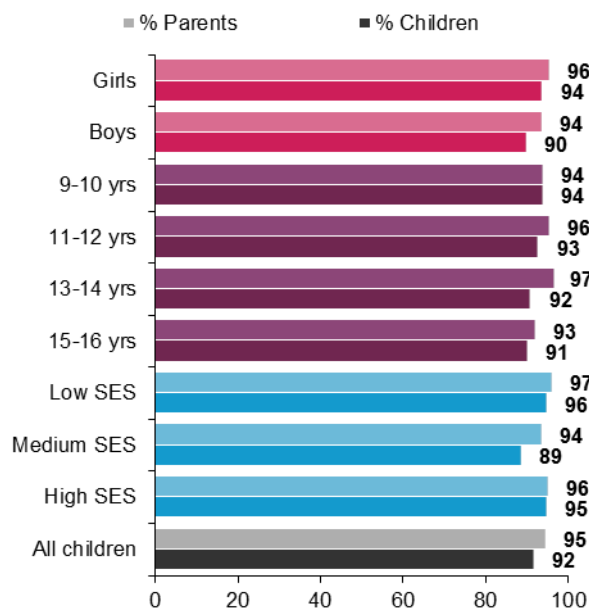
QC327 and QP220: Does your parents/do either of your parents sometimes [which of the following things, if any do you (or your partner/other carer) sometimes do with your child]…

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

- Active mediation by parents is highest for young children and reduces as children grow older: 94% of parents do one of more of the activities shown in Table 17 in relation to their 9-10 year olds, according to the child, dropping slightly to 91% for 15-16 year olds.

- Perhaps most notable is that most parents pursue nearly the same amount of active mediation with the teenagers as with the younger children.

- **There are few differences for sons and daughters, but quite larger differences by SES.** Whereas children from high and low SESs receive about the same amount of active mediation, children from medium SES receive 5-6% less.

How does Cyprus compare to other countries?

- The pan-European report found that overall, levels of active mediation range from 98% of parents in the Netherlands who engage in one or more form of active mediation, down to just 73% in Turkey, according to children. At 92%, active mediation of internet use in Cyprus is at the top of the ranking and similar to other countries.

Turning to active mediation of the child's internet safety in particular, the survey asked a series of questions about the role parents play (Table 19).

Table 19: Parent's active mediation of the child's *internet safety*, according to child

% who say that their parent does…	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**All**
Explained why some websites are good or bad	80	77	71	71	74
Talked to you about what to do if something on the internet bothered you	68	73	61	66	67
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	72	64	67	63	66
Helped you when something is difficult to do or find on the internet	77	64	48	53	59
Suggested ways to use the internet safely	65	53	46	41	50
Helped you in the past when something has bothered you on the internet	24	25	19	24	23
One or more of these	97	89	89	87	90

QC329 Does your parent / do either of your parents sometimes… *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Explaining why websites are good or bad (74%), talking to them about what to do when something bothers them online (67%) and suggesting ways to behave towards others online (66%) are all common strategies of parental safety mediation.**
- **But two in three parents also take such positive steps as helping their child when something problematic happens (59%). Half provided also suggestions on how to use the internet safely.**
- In the case of active mediation of internet safety, as opposed to use, gender differences are present but often small. Younger boys receive more advice about ways to use the internet safely and younger girls receive more advice if something bothers them online.

- Younger children also receive more guidance in critical tasks – evaluating websites and managing internet use effectively.

Children's and parents' answers are compared in Table 20.

Table 20: Parent's active mediation of the child's *internet safety*, according to child and parent

% who say that their parents sometimes…	Child no parent no	Child yes parent no	Child no parent yes	Child yes parent yes
Explained why some websites are good or bad	11	6	14	69
Talked to you about what to do if something on the internet bothered you	18	7	15	61
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	19	8	15	58
Helped you when something is difficult to do or find on the internet	31	11	9	49
Suggested ways to use the internet safely	16	3	34	47
Helped you in the past when something has bothered you on the internet	66	6	11	18

QC329 and QP222: Has your parent/either of your parents [have you] ever done any of these things with you [your child]?

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

- **Parents and children generally agree with each other whether or not safety mediation occurs.**
- Parents and children disagree between about a quarter of the time (23%), depending on the strategy, with parents a little more likely to over-claim compared with their children. The exception is helping when something is difficult to do or find on the internet, when children claim parents do this more than the parents think.

Figure 22 shows the demographic differences in parental mediation of the child's internet safety.

Figure 22: Parent's active mediation of the child's *internet safety*, according to child and parent

QC329 and QP222: Has your parent/either of your parents [have you] ever done any of these things with you [your child]?
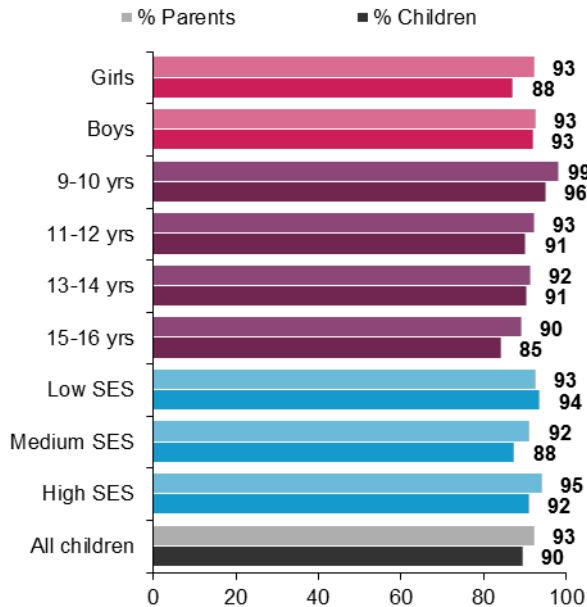
Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

- There are few gender differences in parental safety mediation.
- Parents mediate a little more for 9-10 years old and a bit less for 15-16 years old.
- Parents engage in more of this type of mediation for low SES households and less from medium SES households.

Looking across Europe, although there is a wide range in parental practices, with Norway the highest (97% of parents mediate children's internet safety, according to their children) and Turkey, again and distinctively, the lowest (70%). At 90% Cyprus is near the top of ranking of countries in terms of actively mediating their children's safety.

In addition to active mediation, which enables both opportunities and enhances safety, parents have long been advised to set rules or restrictions in order to manage their child's internet use. These may be simple bans – telling the child they are not permitted to undertake a particular online activity, or the child may be permitted to do that activity only with permission or under supervision. Both these were treated as measures of restrictive mediation, compared with children for whom no restrictions apply (Table 21).

Table 21: Parents' restrictive mediation of the child's internet use, according to child

% who say that rules apply about…	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Give out personal information to others on the internet	95	96	89	91	93
Upload photos, videos or music to share with others	62	62	29	43	47
Have your own social networking profile	49	49	13	22	31
Use instant messaging	41	37	12	16	25
Download music or films on the internet	37	34	15	16	24
Watch video clips on the internet	33	31	12	14	21
One or more of these	96	95	85	88	91

QC328: For each of these things, please tell me if your parents CURRENTLY let you do them whenever you want, or let you do them but only with your parent's permission or supervision, or NEVER let you do them.

Note: The latter two options are combined to calculate the percentage for whom rules or restrictions apply.

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Table 21 shows that **parents impose most rules in relation to the child's disclosure of personal information online: 93% of Cypriot children say that they are either not allowed to do this or that restrictions apply (i.e. they can only do it with specific permission or under supervision from the parent).**
- Next most regulated is uploading material (47%), though possibly this reflects rules in cases where photos or videos are of the children themselves and downloading material (24%) is considerable lower

among Cypriot parents than in Europe generally (57%).

- Roughly three in ten children (31%) are restricted in their use of social networking sites, 25% are restricted in their use of instant messaging and 21% experience rules relating to watching video clips.

- Gender differences vary by type of mediation. They are relatively small for disclosing personal information but girls experience more rules about uploading material and having a SNS profile. Boys face more rules about downloading material.

- **Across all areas of internet use, younger children face more parental restrictions.**

Table 22: Parents' restrictive mediation of the child's internet use, according to child and parent

% who say that rules apply about …	Child no parent no	Child yes parent no	Child no parent yes	Child yes parent yes
Give out personal information to others on the internet	2	4	5	89
Upload photos, videos or music to share with others	39	10	15	35
Have your own social networking profile	59	6	10	25
Use instant messaging	66	5	10	20
Download music or films on the internet	65	7	11	17
Watch video clips on the internet	64	8	14	14

QC328 and QP221: For each of these things, please tell me if your parents CURRENTLY let you [your child is allowed to] do them whenever you want, or let you do them but only with your parent's permission or supervision, or NEVER let you do them.

Note: The latter two options are combined to calculate the percentage for whom rules or restrictions apply.

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

- Compared with the two types of active mediation discussed early, Table 22 shows that there is more agreement between parents and children about whether rules exist - 91% (i.e. 2% + 89%) – regarding

rules related to giving out personal information, dropping to 74% in the case of uploading material.

Figure 23: Parents' restrictive mediation of the child's internet use, according to child and parent
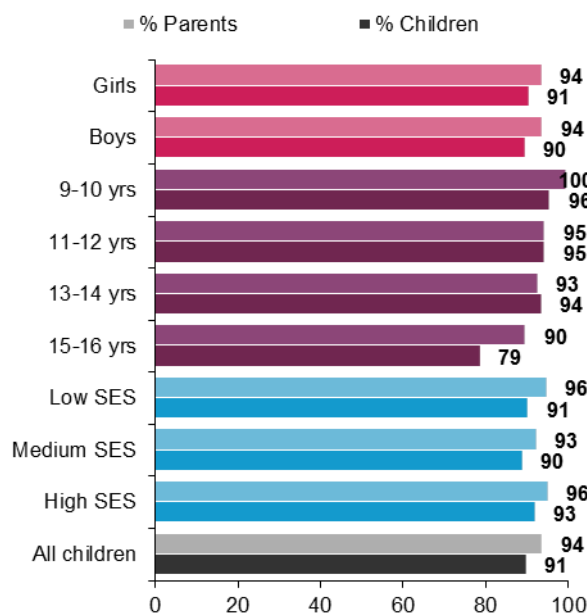
QC328 and QP221: Whether your parents let you [your child is allowed to] do this all of the time, only with permission/supervision or never allowed.

Note: The latter two options are combined to calculate the percentage for whom rules or restrictions apply.

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

- Compared with the various forms of active mediation (shown in Figure 21), **the decline in restrictive mediation with age is about the same, falling from 96% for 9-10 year olds to 94% for 15-16 year olds.**

- Girls are slightly more restricted than boys, but the difference is only 1%. There is also very little difference by SES.

- Looking across European countries, the range of restrictions ranges, according to the child, from 92% in Germany where one or more of the restrictions applies to the child down to only 54% in Lithuania – indicating country differences in restrictive mediation are substantial.

- At 91% Cyprus is considerably high up this list ranking fifth. Compared to the European average of 85% (according to the child, though 90% according to the parent) **Cypriot parents impose more restrictions on their children's internet use.**

The internet is distinctive insofar as it keeps a record of previous activity, making it possible for parents to monitor or check on their children during or, more often, after use of the internet (Table 23). While restrictive mediation can be difficult insofar as it causes arguments at home, monitoring is difficult insofar as it undermines the trust between parent and child.

Table 23: Parent's monitoring of the child's internet use, according to child

% who say parents check...	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**All**
Which websites you visited	42	41	27	28	33
Your profile on a social network or online community	34	35	11	16	20
Which friends or contacts you add to social networking profile	34	33	10	18	20
The messages in your email or instant messaging account	13	33	7	9	12
One or more of these	38	40	29	33	34

QC330: Does your parent/either of your parents sometimes check any of the following things?

Base: All children who use the internet at home.

- **Monitoring strategies are adopted by one third (34%) of Cypriot parents, making this fairly common and yet the least favoured strategy by comparison with positive support, safety guidance or making rules about internet use (as in Europe generally).**
- Checking which websites children visit is the most common form of monitoring (33%), perhaps reflecting the relative ease of doing this.
- Checking social networking profiles (20%) or the friends who are added to those profiles (20%) are a little less common, though still more practised than actually checking the content of children's messages.
- Some gender and age differences are striking. **Girls are monitored more than boys in nearly every way (apart from the websites visited and contacts added where the difference is still minimal; 1% for**

each). Teenage girls are monitored to a greater extent, compared to their male peers.

Table 24: Parent's monitoring of the child's internet use, according to child and parent (M14)

% who say parents check…	Child no parent no	Child yes parent no	Child no parent yes	Child yes parent yes
Which websites you visited	47	6	20	28
Which friends or contacts you add to social networking profile	59	4	21	17
Your profile on a social network or online community	65	4	14	17
The messages in your email or instant messaging account	73	4	14	8

QC330 and QP223: Does your parent/either of your parents sometimes check any of the following things?

Base: All children who use the internet at home and one of their parents.

- From Table 24, it can be seen that **parents and children are mostly in agreement about whether parents monitor what the child does on the internet.** This applies both to things that parents are more likely to do (such as checking on which websites the children visit; 75%) and things that parents are unlikely to do (such as checking the messages in the children's email or instant messaging account; 81%).
- For the 20% of parents who say they monitor websites when their child says they do not, it may be that children simply do not know what monitoring parents undertake.
- As with other mediation activities parents are more likely than their children to claim that they do certain things themselves rather than their children saying that their parents do something that the parents themselves claim that they do not do.

Figure 24: Parent's monitoring of the child's internet use, according to child and parent (M15)

QC330 and QP223: Does your parent/either of your parents sometimes check any of the following things?

Base: All children who use the internet at home and one of their parents.

Table 25: Parents' technical mediation of the child's internet use, according to child

% who say parents check...	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**All**
Software to prevent spam/junk mail or viruses	63	64	47	50	53
Parental controls or other means of blocking or filtering some types of website	35	26	19	18	22
Parental controls or other means of keeping track of the websites you visit	32	24	19	20	22
A service or contract that limits the time you spend on the internet	18	27	14	13	16
One or more of these	67	69	50	55	57

QC331: Does your parent/either of your parents make use of the following?

Base: All children who use the internet at home.

- Figure 24 reveals a small increase in monitoring as children grow older: 36% of the parents of 9-10 year olds use one or more forms of monitoring, escalating to 39% of the parents of 15-16 year olds.

- There is considerably less monitoring of children from lower SES homes (21% of children of low SES vs. 37% of children of high SES).

Country differences, as detailed in the pan-European report, are substantial, ranging from 61% of parents monitoring children's activities in one or more ways in Poland, according to the child, down to only to 26% doing this in Lithuania. At 34% Cyprus lies at the bottom of this list as Cypriot parents monitor their children much less than parents in many other countries, according to their children. Parents report rather more monitoring (57%), but still Cyprus is very low in the European country ranking.

For the internet in particular, 'parental tools' have been developed as technical solutions to the challenge of parental mediation. Thus, last, parents and children were asked if the parents use any technical means to monitor what the child does online (Table 25).

- **The form of technical intervention, occurring in more than half of households (53%) does not relate to safety concerns but rather to security, being used to control spam and viruses** (Table 25). This is the same pattern as in Europe generally.

- Beyond this, use of technical tools is lower, especially by comparison with other parental mediation strategies. Still, **nearly one quarter of parents (22%) block or filter websites and track the websites visited by the children (22%), as reported by children. Both of these percentages are slightly lower than in Europe generally (28% and 24% respectively).**

- Younger children face more technical restrictions, apart from the use of software to prevent spam, junk mail and viruses.

Table 26: Parents' technical mediation of the child's internet use, according to child and parent

| % who say parents check…	Child no parent no	Child yes parent no	Child no parent yes	Child yes parent yes
Software to prevent spam/junk mail or viruses	35	9	11	44
Parental controls or other means of blocking or filtering some types of website	68	5	9	18
Parental controls or other means of keeping track of the websites you visit	69	7	8	16
A service or contract that limits the time you spend on the internet	77	4	6	13

QC330 and QP223: Does your parent/either of your parents sometimes check any of the following things?

Base: All children who use the internet at home and one of their parents.

- **It seems children and parents largely agree over whether parents use technical tools to mediate their children's internet use** (Table 26).

Below we present the demographic findings just for parental use of filtering technology (the second row in the above tables) (see Figure 25).

Figure 25: Parents' use of parental controls or other means of blocking or filtering some types of websites
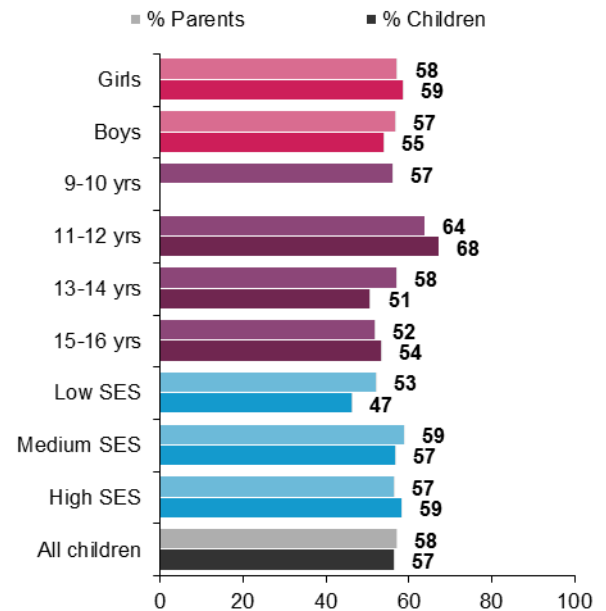
QC331: Does your parent/either of your parents make use of the following? Use of parental controls or other means of blocking or filtering some types of websites.

Base: All children who use the internet at home and one of their parents. Note: this question was not asked of 9-10 year olds.

- **Parents claim to use controls to filter or block sites their child can visit roughly the same as their children (58% vs. 57%).**
- Girls claim to have their internet use blocked or filtered more than boys (59% vs. 55%).
- With the exception of 9-10 year olds, filtering tools are used less the older the child – and they are used by more than half of parents of 15-16 year olds (Figure 25).
- **Looking across the European countries, Cypriot parents lie at the top of the ranking for use of filtering technology just below the European average of 33%.**

6.2   Judging parental mediation

Does parental mediation work? It is possible, though difficult, to determine whether parental mediation works in the sense of reducing children's exposure to online risk or experiences of harm. More straightforwardly, though less objectively, one can also ask parents and children for their judgements.

Within the scope of the *EU Kids Online* survey, children's and parents' reflections on the role played by parents was asked about more directly, hoping to throw some light on what seems to work and, if they the mediations does not, why not. In future analysis, *EU Kids Online* will pursue the statistical relations between parental knowledge of the internet, parental mediation and children's experiences of risk and, especially, of harm.

Thus the survey asked children and parents whether parental mediation activities are generally helpful or not (Table 27).

Table 27: Whether parental mediation is helpful, according to child and parent

% who say that what parents do helps to make the child's internet experience better		Yes		
		A lot	**A little**	**No**
9-12 years	Child says	39	39	23
	Parent says	34	41	26
13-16 years	Child says	30	40	30
	Parent says	25	46	29
All children	Child says	34	39	27
	Parent says	29	43	28

QC332: Do the things that your parent does/parents do relating to how you use the internet help to make your internet experience better, or not really? QP225: Do the things that you (and your partner/other carer) do relating to how your child uses the internet help to make his/her internet experience better, or not really?

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

- **Both children and parents consider parental mediation helpful to some degree. Over two thirds of children (73%) say it helps a lot or a little. This is the same as the European average.**
- 9-12 year olds are more positive, perhaps reflecting their relative lack of skills; for them, parental mediation may indeed be more helpful.

- Parents in general think that their mediation is as helpful as their children think.

Why, overall, might one third of children find parental mediation very helpful (34%), over a third find it a little helpful (39%), and more than one quarter consider it not helpful (27%). The *EU Kids Online* survey pursued several possibilities, including (i) whether children consider that their parents really know enough about the child's internet use, (ii) whether parental mediation is seen as more restrictive of online opportunities than beneficial, or (iii) whether parental mediation is just something that children ignore.

Table 28: How much parents know about their child's internet use, according to child

% who say that their parent(s) know(s)...	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**All**
A lot	35	42	21	22	29
Quite a bit	43	39	37	50	42
Just a little	18	16	30	20	22
Nothing	4	3	12	9	7

QC325: How much do you think your parent(s) knows about what you do on the internet?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Table 28 shows that s**even in ten of children (71%) think their parents know a lot or quite a bit about their children's internet use, a slightly higher percentage than in Europe generally (68%), and only 7% claims that their parent knows nothing.**
- Younger children are more likely to think their parents know more, in line with the finding that parents mediate their experiences more than they do older children.
- Older boys are a as inclined as older girls to think that their parents know a lot.

The balance between well-judged parental intervention in the child's internet use and trusting the child to deal with online experiences by themselves is difficult for any parent.

Not all parents may feel confident that they can help their child deal with anything on the internet that bothers them.

And they may feel that their child is themselves better able to cope with their own online experiences.

Table 29: Parents' ability to help their child and child's ability to cope, according to parent

% of parents…	Extent			
	Not at all	Not very much	A fair amount	A lot
To what extent, if at all, do you feel you are able to help your child to deal with anything on the internet that bothers them?				
Parents of children aged 9 to 12 years	6	4	62	27
Parents of children aged 13 to 16 years	3	15	64	18
Parents of all children	4	10	63	22
To what extent, if at all, do you feel your child is able to deal with anything on the internet that bothers them?				
Parents of children aged 9 to 12 years	10	33	51	7
Parents of children aged 13 to 16 years	4	15	69	13
Parents of all children	7	23	61	10

QP233: To what extent, if at all, do you feel you are able to help your child to deal with anything on the internet that bothers them? QP234: To what extent, if at all, do you think your child is able to deal with things on the internet that bothers them?

Base: Parents whose child uses the internet.

▪
▪ Table 29 shows that **the greatest majority of parents (85%) are confident about their role, feeling that they can help their child a lot or a fair amount if the latter encounter something that bothers them online.**
▪ The parents of younger children are somewhat more inclined to say they can help a lot (89%) compared to parents of older children (82%).
▪ Parents are also confident in their child's ability to cope with things online that may bother them, with nearly three quarters (71%) indicating that they have a lot or a fair amount of confidence in their child – this is more the case for parents of older children.

Another source of doubt regarding the value of parental mediation is the possibility that parental mediation may limit opportunities as well as support online safety. Thus, children and parents were asked whether parental activities limit what the child can do online (Figure 26).

Figure 26: Whether parental mediation limits the child's activities on the internet, according to child
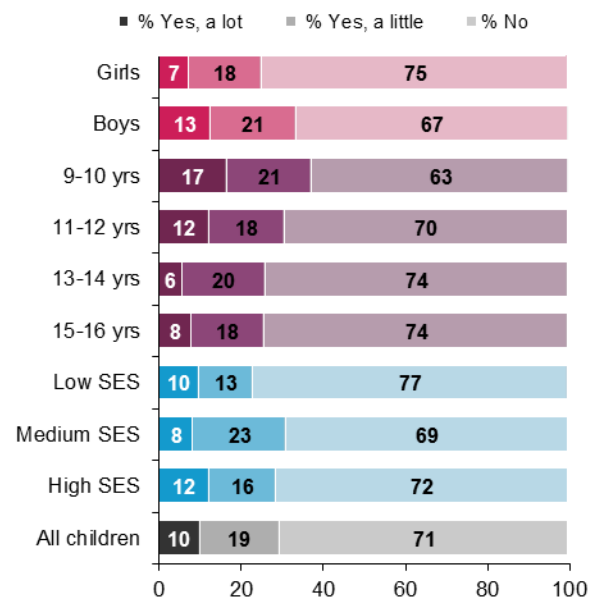
QC333: Do the things that your parent does (parents do) relating to how you use the internet limit what you can do on the internet or not really?
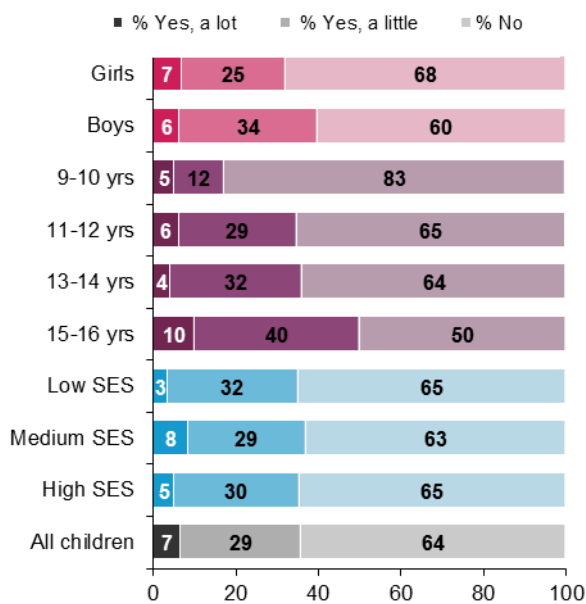
Base: All children who use the internet.

▪ Figure 26 shows that **about three in ten of children (29%) think that parental mediation limits what they do online, 10% saying it limits their activities a lot.**
▪ As might be expected given greater parental mediation, the younger children are more likely to say it limits them, and that it limits them a lot. It is worth noting, however, that the opposite result might have been predicted, namely that teenagers would feel more restricted by parental activities than would younger children.
▪ Boys are more inclined to think that mediation limits them a lot or a little compared to girls (34% vs. 25%).
▪ Children in some countries feel rather more restricted by parental mediation (e.g. in Turkey, Ireland and Bulgaria) than in others (e.g. Hungary, and the Netherlands). Cyprus is towards the end of the countries' scores, with Cypriot children not feeling quite restricted in regard to their online activities by parental mediation.

Examining any association between amount of parental mediation and children's sense of being restricted is a task for a future *EU Kids Online* report.

So, do children say that they simply ignore parental efforts to mediate their internet use, as is popularly supposed?

Figure 27: Whether child ignores what parents say when they use the internet, according to child

QC334: And do you ever ignore what your parent(s) tell you when use the internet, or not really?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Figure 27 shows that **for many children, parental mediation is seen to have some effect. Nearly two thirds of Cypriot children (64%) do not simply ignore it, which is at the European average (64%). However, 29% say they ignore their parents' mediation efforts a little and 7% of children say they ignore their parents' mediation a lot.**

- 15-16 year olds (50%) are most likely to say they ignore what their parents do or say about their internet use, one fifth saying they ignore it a lot.

- Girls are less likely to claim they ignore their parents' mediation (68% of girls vs. 60% of boys), which is similar to the European pattern (67% of girls vs. 61% of boys).

Whether effective or not, there is clearly a considerable amount of parental mediation of different kinds being

practised in Cypriot families. In a cross-sectional survey, it is not possible to determine whether this mediation reduces the risk of harm to children online. Indeed, it is possible that parents' mediating activities are a response to problematic experiences in the past. Or it may be that parents do what they do because they anticipate future problems, and seek to prevent them. The *EU Kids Online* survey asked both children and parents about this possibility.

Figure 28: Whether parents do anything differently because the child has been bothered by something on the internet, according to child and parent
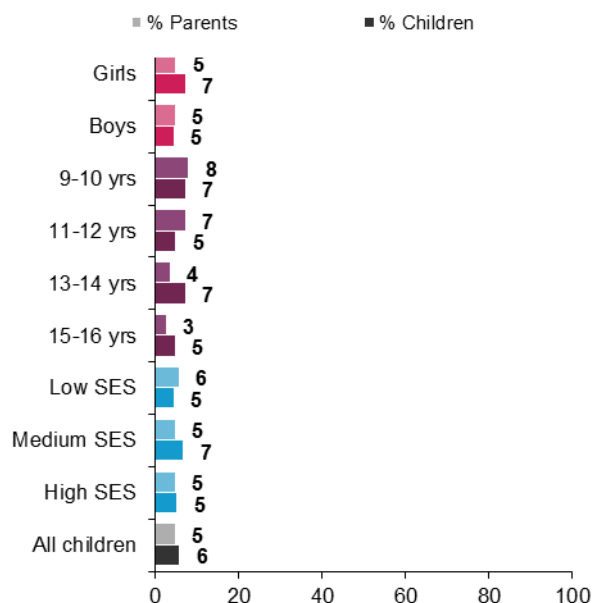
QC335: Does your parent / Do your parents do anything new or different these days because you have been bothered by something on the internet in the past, or not really? QP227: Do you (or your partner/other carer) do anything different these days because your child has been bothered by something on the internet in the past or not really?

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

- Figure 28 shows that **only 5% of Cypriot parents claim that they mediate differently because of something that had bothered the child in the past. Just 6% of children give this as an explanation of their parent's current mediation.**

- 7% of 13-14 year olds claimed that parents mediate differently because of a past event.

- There is little difference by SES from the perspective of the child.

- If we look at Europe variation, 18% of children claim that their parents mediate differently because of something that upset them in Estonia, compared with just 3% in Hungary. Claims by parents reveal even greater national variation, from 29% in Turkey to 5% in Greece. Cyprus lies at the European average of 6% in regard to children's counts, but at the bottom of this range in regard to parents' counts (7% vs. 15%).

It may not be past problems but rather the anticipation of future problems that stimulates parents to mediate their children's internet use. Table 30 shows parental anticipation of future problems that lie ahead for their children.

Table 30: Whether parent thinks child will experience problems on the internet in the next six months

% of parents who say...	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Not at all likely	27	26	20	21	23
Not very likely	23	20	21	24	22
Fairly likely	32	46	42	40	40
Very likely	19	9	17	15	15

QP232: In the next six months, how likely, if at all, do you think it is that your child will experience something on the internet that will bother them?

Base: Parents of children who use the internet.

- Table 30 suggests that **parents are quite confident (45%) that it is not very or at all likely that their child will encounter anything that bothers them in the next six months.**
- **In contrast, 55% think it fairly or very likely that their child will experience something that bothers them online in the next six months.**
- There is an age effect for boys- the proportion of parents who think it is fairly or very likely that boys may experience something that will bother them decreases slightly from 51% for 9-12 year olds to 49% for 13-16 year olds, whereas their concern for girls remains at 55% regardless of age.
- Compared to the European average (28%) considerably more Cypriot parents believe that is fairly or very likely that their children will experience something that bothers them in the next six months (55%).

Last, we explored whether children and parents think the level of parental mediation they receive is about right. We asked children if they would like their parents to take more or less interest in what they do online. And we asked parents if they think they should do more or not.

Table 31: Whether the child would like their parent(s) to take more interest in what they do online

| % who say ...	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
A lot more	9	12	10	10	10
A little more	19	27	11	15	17
Stay the same	65	57	67	68	65
A little less	6	5	9	4	6
A lot less	2	0	4	3	2

QC326: Overall, would you like your parent(s) to take more or less interest in what you do on the internet, or stay the same?

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Table 31 shows that **for two thirds of children (65%), and slightly more for teenagers, parents have got it about right, according to their children - since these children think the level of parental interest in their online activities should stay the same.**
- **27% would like their parents to do a little or a lot more, however. On the other hand, some 8% would like their parents to do rather less.**
- Compared to the European average which is 15%, 12% more Cypriot children (27%) would have liked their parents to be interested a little or a lot more.

Figure 29 examines more closely those children who would like their parents to take a bit or a lot more interest in their internet use. We also compare these with the proportions of parents who say that they should do a bit or a lot more.

- **27% of children would like their parents to take more of an interest in their internet use, while strikingly, 79% of parents think that they should do more in relation to their child's internet use.**
- **9-10 year olds most want their parents to show more interest in their internet use (38%).**
- Gender differences are small. The lower the SES level, the more children think their parents ought to do more. This is in line with the European pattern, where children from lower SES homes wish for more

interest and where there is little difference between parents.

Figure 29: Children who would like their parent(s) to take more interest in what they do online, and parents who think they should do more
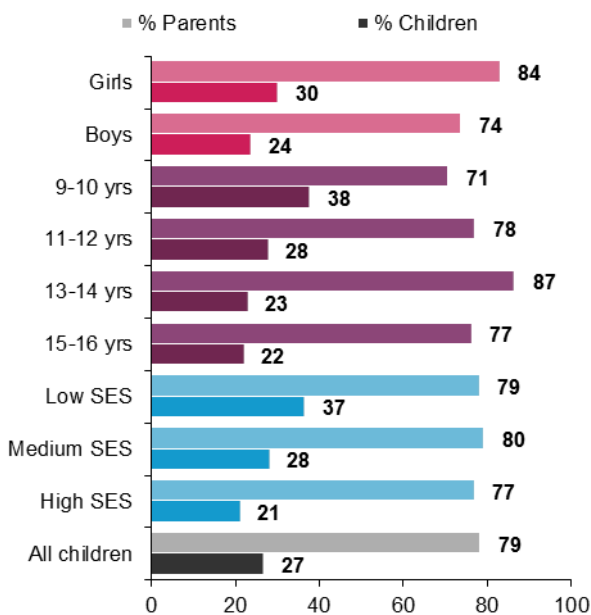
QC326: Overall, would you like your parent(s) to take more or less interest in what you do on the internet, or to stay about the same? And is that a lot/little more/less? QP226: Speaking of things you do in relation to your child's internet use, do you think you should do more, or not really?

Note: graph shows children who say yes, a bit or a lot more, and parents who say yes, a bit or a lot more.

Base: All children who use the internet and one of their parents.

- Country differences in children's desire for more parental input are noteworthy, with children in Eastern and Southern Europe greatly wishing that their parents would show more interest in what they do online – especially Romania, Portugal, Turkey, Spain and Bulgaria and **Cyprus**. By contrast, children in France, Denmark, and the Netherlands wish for little or no further input from their parents.

- Cypriot parents take the same view as their children's wishes. In line with parents in Romania, Bulgaria, Norway, Greece, Estonia and Finland, parents in **Cyprus** think they should do more, while parents in the Netherlands, the UK, Germany and Austria are least likely to think this.

6.3   Teachers

Parents are not the only adults with a responsibility to mediate children's internet use or safety. To aid comparison, children were asked about the kinds of mediating activities undertaken by their teachers.

One question asked about active mediation in general ('have your teachers ever talked to you about what you do on the internet?'). Another asked about restrictive mediation ('have your teachers ever made rules about what you can do on the internet at school?').[4] Then we asked about mediation of internet safety, using items also asked to parents (Table 31).

- **91% of children say their teachers have done at least one of the forms of active mediation asked about. This is substantially higher than the European average of 73% and is at the top part of the European country ranking for reported teacher mediation.**

- More than two thirds of children think that their teachers have engaged with their internet use in terms of suggesting ways to use the internet safely (70%), helping them when something was difficult to find of do (68%) and explaining why some websites are good or bad (68%).

- Six in ten (58%) had talked to children about what to do if something bothered them, and even for the least common form of mediation, a substantial minority (17%) say their teachers have helped when something bothered them on the internet.

- **Older children report more mediation by teachers, indicating some further scope for mediation in schools for younger children. Putting this the other way around, one in ten children who use the internet has received no guidance or advice from their teachers.**

- There are some gender differences, but this depends on age and the particular form of mediation. Older boys are more likely than older girls to say that teachers explain why some websites are good and bad (72% vs. 69%), to suggest ways to use the internet safely (75% vs. 72%) and show how to behave towards others online (61% vs. 58%).

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[4] Note that, to be consistent with the following items on active mediation of internet safety, these two summary questions were asked in the form, *have your teachers ever …* They are, therefore, not exactly equivalent to the earlier questions to parents, which took the form, *do your parents …*

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Table 32: Teachers' mediation of child's internet use, according to child

% who say teachers at their school have ever…	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Suggested ways to use the internet safely	64	67	75	72	70
Explained why some websites are good or bad	69	63	72	69	68
Helped you when something is difficult to do or find on the internet	64	67	70	70	68
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	62	53	61	58	59
Talked to you about what to do if something on the internet bothered you	52	56	59	65	58
Helped you in the past when something has bothered you on the internet	17	21	16	14	17
One or more forms of active mediation	79	83	88	88	85
Made rules about what you can do on the internet at school	68	69	75	75	72
Talked to you about what you do on the internet	63	68	72	68	68
One or more of all of the above	86	91	93	91	91

QC338: Have any teachers at your school ever done any of these things? *(Multiple responses allowed)*
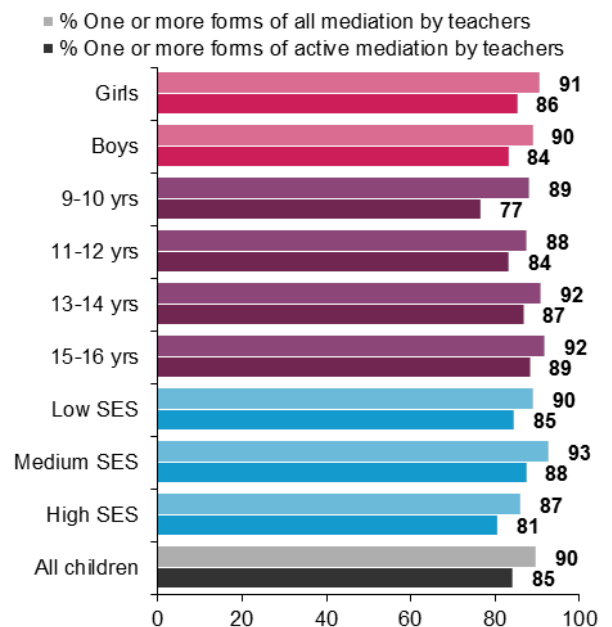
Base: All children who use the internet.

- Turning to the bottom section of Table 32, which focuses on active mediation, seven in ten children (72%) say that teachers have made rules about what they can do on the internet at school, the

percentages being higher for older children. By comparison, only 62% of children across Europe said their teachers made such rules.

- **More than two thirds of children (68%) say that their teachers talk to them about what they do on the internet, more for older than younger boys. Again, this compares favourably with the 53% who say this across Europe.**

- Figure 30 reveals few differences by gender, age or SES in children's experience of mediation of the internet by teachers.

Figure 30: Teachers' mediation of child's internet use, according to child

QC338: Have any teachers at your school ever done any of these things? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

6.4 Peers

Some of the same questions regarding forms of mediation can also be asked of children's friends. Little is known about whether or how children really support each other in terms of internet safety, although previous research has often shown that children would rather turn to their friends than to an adult when something online bothers or worries them.

Five of the questions on active mediation of internet safety were also asked of friends (see Table 33).

Table 33: Peer mediation of child's internet use, according to child

| % who say friends at their school have ever...	9-12 years		13-16 years		
	Boys	**Girls**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**All**
Helped you when something is difficult to do or find on the internet	22	26	28	32	27
Explained why some websites are good or bad	50	54	55	58	54
Suggested ways to use the internet safely	46	55	46	54	50
Suggested ways to behave towards other people online	41	43	39	49	43
Helped you in the past when something has bothered you on the internet	22	26	28	32	27
One or more of all of the above	75	80	80	84	80

QC336: Have your friends ever done any of these things? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Four fifths (80%) of children say their peers have helped or supported their internet use in at least one of the five ways asked about** (Table 33).

- As was found for teachers, this suggests that children do consider other children supportive in general, more so in the case of older children.

- **Friends are much more likely to mediate in a practical way, helping each other to do or find something when there is a difficulty (69%) and explaining why some websites are good or bad (54%). Half say that friends help when they are bothered by something (50%) and when children are bothered by something online, more turn to a teacher (58%) than to a friend (50%); parents are last in the line at 23%**.

- Also compared with help from teachers, it seems that friends are less likely to give safety or ethical advice (68% vs. 54%).

- Older children claim their friends help them more than do younger children.

- **Younger girls report more peer mediation than do younger boys (85% vs. 75%), as do older girls when compared to older boys (84% vs. 80%).**

- Specifically, older girls claim more than older boys that friends help in suggesting ways on how to behave towards others online (49% vs. 39%), and using the internet safely (54% vs. 46%). They are also more inclined than older boys to say that friends helped when something bothered them (32% vs. 28%).

Figure 31: Peer mediation of child's internet use, according to child
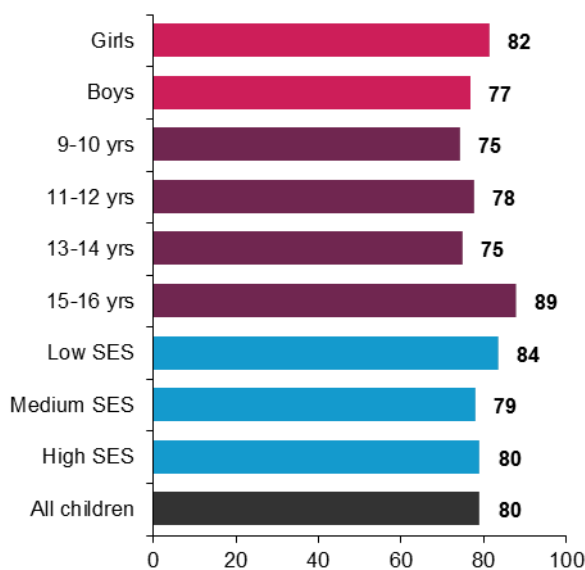
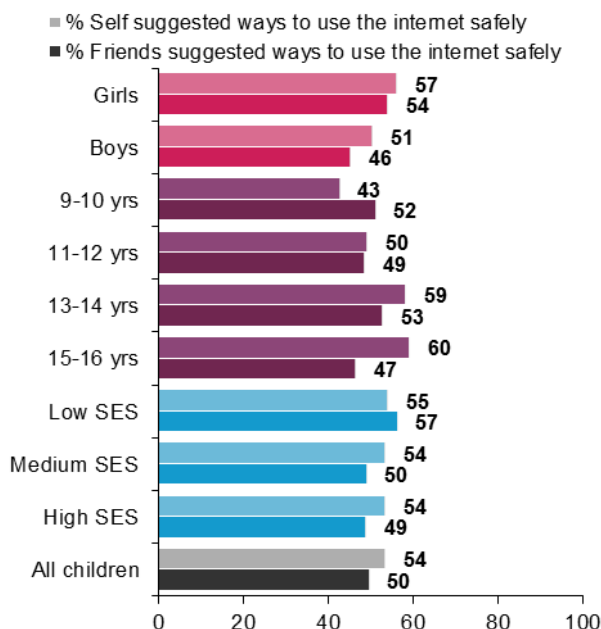QC336: Have your friends ever done any of these things? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

- Figure 31 indicates that looking across age groups and types of mediation, peer support is equivalent for boys and girls.

- It reaffirms the finding that older children think their friends mediate more, the exception being the drop in mediation for 13-14 year olds.

The overall European average is 73% of children saying their friends help in term of one or more of the types of mediation asked about. Interestingly, the Cypriot finding is higher at 80%, and with the percentages in many countries ranging from 86% in Finland and Estonia to 63% in France, Cyprus is at the top of the ranking. **Thus it seems that Cypriot children can rely more on peer support than in many other countries.**

Distinctively, peer mediation can work both ways. Thus children were also asked if they help their friends in similar ways, specifically as regards how to use the internet safely.

Figure 32: Peer mediation of child's safe internet use, according to child

QC337: Have you ever suggested ways to use the internet safely to your friends. QC336c: Have your friends ever done any of these things – suggested ways to use the internet safely.

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **While 50% of children say they have received some guidance on safe internet use from their friends, 54% say that they have also provided such advice to their friends** (Figure 32).
- Both girls and boys report that they are more likely to help friends in this particular respect.
- Older children are more likely to help friends in terms of suggesting how to be safe online whereas receiving help seems to be irrespective of age.

- The lower the SES level of the household, the greater the degree of peer help received about internet safety.

Considerable national differences are evident in the degree of peer support. More than half report guiding their friends in Cyprus, nearly half report guiding their friends in Estonia, Austria and Finland, while less than a third claims this in Belgium and France. **Cyprus is at the top part of the European ranking, ranking forth in terms of children giving safety advice to their friends**.

6.5 Parent, teacher and peer mediation compared

In designing the questionnaire, for reasons of both interview length and question repetition (which is useful for making comparisons but boring for the child respondent), not all questions were asked of all forms of mediation. **One question was repeated across all the contexts discussed above: have your parents/teachers/friends 'suggested ways to use the internet safely?'**

Figure 33 compares children's receipt of internet safety advice from parents, teachers and peers.

- **It seems that internet safety advice is received first from teachers (70%), and equally by parents (50%), and peers (50%), whereas in the European population in general, it is parents followed by teachers followed by peers.**
- For both genders the advice received from teachers comes first. While for boys however, the advice from parents comes second (54%) and from peers third (46%), for girls more advice is received from peers (54%) than parents (46%).
- The difference between teachers and parents increases as children grow older, and the difference is most noticeable for 15-16 year olds. 9-10 year olds (71%) receive more than double parental advice than 15-16 year olds (71%).
- While peers are more influential than parents for children from lower and higher SES homes, they are lower for children from medium SES homes.
- Compared to the European average (58%), Cypriot teachers give considerably more advice (70%), and parents less advice (63% in Europe vs. 50% in Cyprus).

Figure 33: Whether parents, peers or teachers have ever suggested ways to use the internet safely, according to child
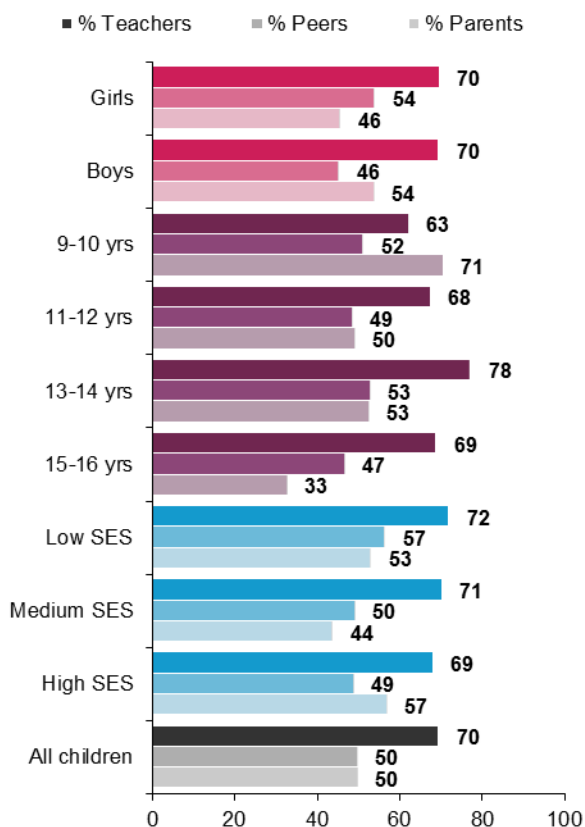
QC329c: Have your parents ever suggested ways to use the internet safely? QC336c: Have your friends ever suggested ways to use the internet safely? QC338d: Have your teachers ever suggested ways to use the internet safely?

Base: All children who use the internet.

6.6 Sources of safety awareness

Parents, teachers and peers are clearly important, but there are also additional sources of information available to children regarding how to use the internet safely. How important are these? Use of other sources is shown in

Table 34.

Note that the response options below do not include parents, teachers or friends, as these are reported above.

Table 34: Children's sources of advice on internet safety (other than parents, teachers or friends)

| % | 9-12 years | | 13-16 years | | |
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	All
Other relative	73	66	58	70	67
Television, radio, newspapers or magazines	18	18	25	31	24
Someone whose job is to give advice over the internet	20	22	23	18	21
Websites	8	7	10	10	9
Internet service provider	2	3	10	10	7
Youth or church or social worker	4	7	10	11	8
Librarian	3	0	3	4	3
I haven't received advice from any of these	10	10	12	8	10

QC339: Have you EVER received advice about how to use the internet safely from any of these people or places? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: All children who use the internet.

- **Other relatives (67%) are also important in providing advice to children on how to use the internet safely.**
- Information received via the traditional media (24%) is less used, though still more than websites (9%).
- 21% Cypriot children receive advice from online advisors, which is considerably higher than the European average (9%).
- Rather fewer get advice from youth workers (or similar), websites, librarians or internet service providers.
- Older children get more advice from traditional media, websites, youth/church/social workers, websites and internet service providers.
- Cypriot girls receive more advice than boys from traditional media, and somewhat more from other relatives, librarians, youth/church/social workers and internet service providers. Older girls receive more than older boys from traditional media and other relatives.
- Most significant in

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- Table 34 is that **younger children, report receiving less advice than do teenagers.**
- These percentages are a lot better than in Europe overall, where 34% of children report receiving no safety guidance from these sources.

Similar questions were also asked of parents, although a somewhat different list of advice sources was provided. Additionally, the *EU Kids Online* survey asked parents where they would like to get information and advice about internet safety from in the future, so as to focus further awareness-raising activities (Table 35 and information **on internet safety.**

).

Table 35: Parents' actual sources of information on internet safety, by age of child

%	Age of child				
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	All
Television, radio, newspapers or magazines	45	38	46	46	44
Internet service providers	41	37	37	35	37
Family and friends	34	27	31	28	30
Your child's school	39	24	29	24	28
Websites with safety information	18	13	20	16	17
From my child	15	7	15	12	12
Government, local authorities	10	7	7	8	8
Manufacturers and retailers selling the products	11	4	7	7	7
Other sources	11	7	5	6	7
Children's welfare organisations/charities	2	2	3	3	2
None, I don't get any information about this	8	9	8	6	8

QP238: In general where do you get information and advice on safety tools and safe use of the internet from? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: Parents whose child uses the internet.

- Table 35 indicates that **Cypriot parents receive internet safety advice first and foremost from traditional media (44%), then internet service providers (37%), family and friends (30%), the child's school (28%), websites (17%) and from their child (12%). In Cyprus, traditional media appear much more important than in Europe generally (32%), as opposed to friends and family which appear to be less important when compared to the European average (48%).**
- Those with younger children (9-12 years) are a little more likely to get advice from friends and family.
- Interestingly, 12% say they have received safety information from their own child.
- About one in ten parents (8%) reports getting no advice from any of these sources.
- When asked where they would like to get more advice from (Table 36) the child's school is the most popular choice for parents at 59%, while internet service providers are at second place at 44%. Traditional media and government and local authorities come third and fourth at 41% and 39% respectively.
- **Only 2% parents say that they don't want further information on internet safety.**

Table 36: Parents' desired sources of information on internet safety, by age of child

%	Age of child				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
Your child's school	65	53	57	61	59
Internet service providers	52	40	45	42	44
Television, radio, newspapers or magazines	46	41	34	44	41
Government, local authorities	31	41	43	37	39
Websites with safety information	34	22	30	25	27
Family and friends	26	12	23	16	19
From my child	20	9	15	16	15
Children's welfare organisations/charities	23	9	16	12	14
Manufacturers and retailers selling the products	11	6	16	12	12
Other sources	3	8	7	8	7
None, I don't want more information about this	3	2	2	2	2

QP239: In general where would you like to get information and advice on safety tools and safe use of the internet from in the future? *(Multiple responses allowed)*

Base: Parents whose child uses the internet.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Ways of going online are diversifying rapidly. For many Cypriot children, internet use is now thoroughly embedded in their daily lives and everyday routines. Compared with other European countries, Cypriot children are slightly more likely to have domestic access, but not more likely to have private access at home. However, across the socioeconomic range, Cypriot children are gaining access to handheld devices for going online faster than across many European countries, especially among teenagers and boys. This poses a new set of challenges for the multiple stakeholders working to make the internet safer for children in Cyprus.

Young users need digital skills. Children are going online at ever younger ages. Since 42% of 9-10 year olds say they do not know more about the internet than their parents, and a substantial number of younger children lack key safety skills, there is plenty of scope for parents, teachers and others to guide younger children in using the internet. Internet safety campaigns and initiatives should now be tailored for younger age groups, especially at primary schools, while also sustaining existing efforts for older children. This has implications for curricula, teacher training, parental guidance and other awareness-raising efforts.

Success for safer internet initiatives? The overall relatively low levels of online risk experienced by Cypriot children, particularly compared with other countries in Europe, suggests that the considerable efforts towards safety practices and the promotion of safety messages have indeed reached their target. For example, Cypriot children especially appear to have learned that it is unwise to post their address or phone number on their SNS profiles, and best to keep their profile private or partially private. Another example is the relatively high awareness among parents, in those cases where children have seen sexual images online – there are still many parents who remain unaware of such incidents, but not so many as in many other European countries.

Other findings suggest that Cypriot children evade safety advice from their parents. For instance, they are distinctive also in being among the most likely of all countries to post an incorrect age on their profile (23%, compared with a European average of 16%). Since it seems unlikely that they would post a younger age, though some do post a 'silly' age (e.g. 99), it may be assumed that most make themselves appear older than they really are. In many cases, it may be further assumed

that this is to evade the age restrictions on popular SNSs. In other words, many may be using social networking sites 'under-age'.

Overall levels of risk found in the Cypriot survey are summarised in Table 37.

Table 37: Summary of online risk factors shaping children's probability of experiencing harm

%	Age				All
	9-10	11-12	13-14	15-16	
Have come across one or more types of potentially harmful user-generated content in past 12 months	n.a.	12	15	30	20
Ever had contact on the internet with someone not met face to face before	3	9	16	23	14
Seen sexual images on websites in past 12 months	1	8	17	20	12
Seen or received sexual messages on the internet in past 12 months	n.a.	4	12	17	11
Have experienced one or more types of misuse of personal data in past 12 months	n.a.	6	9	8	8
Ever gone on to meet anyone face to face that first met on the internet	3	2	7	11	6
Encountered one or more of the above	9	28	38	52	34
Acted in a nasty or hurtful way towards others on the internet in the past 12 months	0	2	3	4	2
Sent or posted a sexual message of any kind on the internet in the past 12 months	n.a.	2	4	3	3
Done either of these	0	4	6	5	4

Note: for the exact questions asked of children, see earlier sections of this report (indicated in the text next to this table).

Base: All children who use the internet.

For the most part, these Cypriot findings are similar to or a little lower than the European average. They may, further, seem lower than reported by some other, perhaps less rigorously conducted surveys. But, when we examine the proportions who have experienced at least one of the types of risk asked about, there is a steady increase from a minority (9%) of 9-10 year olds who use the internet to over a quarter of 11-12 year olds (28%) and rising to over half of the 13-14 year olds (38%) and 15-16 year olds (52%).

Children are not all the same. Throughout this report we have highlighted differences by age, gender and socio-economic status. Some key differences could not be analysed within a single nation study, but it is noteworthy that in the Europe-wide study, those who encounter most risk online (often, teenagers, boys) are not necessarily those most bothered or upset by the experience (often, younger children, girls). In the next steps of our research, we will examine other indicators of vulnerability to see if these explain which children experience risk and, especially, are upset by this.

Risks and opportunities both rise with increased internet use. As noted in previous *EU Kids Online* reports, the findings confirm that opportunities and risks go hand in hand. Figure 34 – a figure taken from the pan-European report - plots countries in terms of the percentage of children who have encountered one or more risks (those shown in Table 37) and, additionally, the average number of online opportunities enjoyed by children in that country as shown in Table 4).

What stands out here is the broad positive association between risks and opportunities, as experienced by children on a country level. The more of one, the more of the other, it appears.

Figure 34: Children who have encountered one or more online risk factors by average number of online activities, by country
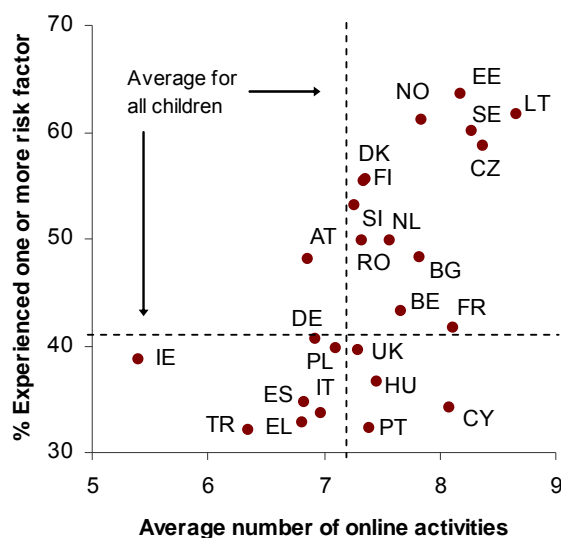
The position of Cyprus on this graph is particularly interesting, since *EU Kids Online*'s review of research conducted during the past decade put Cyprus as a 'higher use, some risk' country.[5] **Now, it seems, Cyprus is a 'higher use' country but, significantly, among the lower risk countries.** In our future research, we will explore country-level factors that may explain some of these cross-national differences. To stay in touch with our future research, join the mailing list at www.eukidsonline.net.

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[5] Hasebrink, U., Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., and Ólafsson, K (2009) *Comparing children's online opportunities and risks across Europe: cross-national comparisons for EU Kids Online* (2nd edition). At http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/24368/

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ANNEX 1: EU KIDS ONLINE

Overview

EU Kids Online II: Enhancing Knowledge Regarding European Children's Use, Risk and Safety Online is funded from 2009-2011 by the EC Safer Internet Programme.

The 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, in order to inform the promotion of a safer online environment for children among national and international stakeholders.

Adopting an approach which is child-centred, comparative, critical and contextual, *EU Kids Online* has conducted a major quantitative survey of children's experiences (and their parents' perceptions) of online risk in 25 European countries. The findings will be disseminated through a series of reports and presentations during 2010-2.

Objectives

- To design a robust survey instrument appropriate for identifying the nature of children's online access, use, risk, coping and safety awareness.
- To design a robust survey instrument appropriate for identifying parental experiences, practices and concerns regarding their child's internet use.
- To administer the survey in a reliable and ethically-sensitive manner to national samples of internet users aged 9-16 and their parents in Europe.
- To analyse the results systematically to identify core findings and more complex patterns among findings on a national and comparative basis.
- To disseminate the findings in a timely manner to a wide range of relevant stakeholders nationally, across Europe, and internationally.
- To identify and disseminate key recommendations relevant to the development of safety awareness initiatives in Europe.
- To identify remaining knowledge gaps and methodological guidance to inform future projects on the safer use of online technologies.

Work packages

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.

International Advisory Panel

- María José Cantarino, Corporate Responsibility Manager, Telefonica, Spain.
- Dieter Carstensen, Save the Children Denmark, European NGO Alliance on Child Safety Online.
- David Finkelhor and Janis Wolak, Crimes against Children Center, University of New Hampshire, USA.
- Will Gardner, CEO of Childnet International, UK.
- Ellen Helsper, Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics, UK.
- Amanda Lenhart, Senior Researchert, Pew Internet & American Life Project, Washington DC USA
- Eileen Munro, Deptartment of Social Policy, London School of Economics, UK.
- Annie Mullins, Global Head of Content Standards, Vodafone, UK.
- Kjartan Ólafsson, University of Akureyri, Iceland.
- Janice Richardson, project manager at European Schoolnet, coordinator of Insafe, Brussels, Belgium.
- Agnieszka Wrzesień, Project Coordinator, Nobody's Children Foundation, Poland.

ANNEX 2: SURVEY DETAILS

Sampling

- For each country, samples were stratified by region and level of urbanisation.
- Sampling points were selected from official and complete registers of geographical/administrative units.
- Addresses were selected randomly by using Random Walk procedures.
- At each address which agreed to interview we randomly selected one child from all eligible children in the household (i.e. all those aged 9-16 who use the internet) on the basis of whichever eligible child had the most recent birthday. If a household contained more than one parent/carer, we selected the one who knew most about the child and their internet use.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork was carried out in Cyprus from May until September 2010. A parent interview was conducted for every child interviewed.

The child interview was conducted face to face, with a paper-based self-completion component for the sensitive questions on online risks as well as the interviewer-administered one.

The questionnaires were developed by *EU Kids Online* with guidance from Ipsos MORI. They were tested and refined by a two-phase process of cognitive interviewing and pilot testing.

- Phase one cognitive testing involved 20 cognitive interviews (14 with children and six with parents) in England using English language questionnaires. Several refinements were then made to the questionnaires.
- The amended master questionnaires were then translated and cognitively tested via four interviews in each of 16 other countries, to ensure testing in all main languages. A small number of parent interviews were also conducted in some cases. Again, amendments to the questionnaires were made for the final versions.
- Before the main fieldwork, a pilot survey was conducted to test all aspects of the survey including sampling, recruitment and the interview process. A total of 102 pilot interviews were carried out across five countries: Germany, Slovenia, Ireland, Portugal and the UK.

Data processing

- The questionnaires, with all response options and full interviewer instructions, are online at www.eukidsonline.net.
- Weighting: three forms of weighting have been applied to the data – (i) design weights which adjust for unequal probabilities of selection; (ii) non-response weights which correct for bias caused by differing levels of response across different groups of the population; (iii) a European level weight which adjusts for country level contribution to the overall results according to population size. As there are no available data on the population of children aged 9-16 who use the internet by country, these percentages were estimated using data from Eurobarometer and Eurostat.
- Socio-economic status (SES): information relating to the head of household's (designated as the chief income earner) level of education and occupation was collected during the screening process. Responses to level of education and employment were then grouped and cross-referenced with each other to calculate one of three levels of SES: low, middle and high.

Research materials

Materials and resources associated with the research process summarised above are available at www.eukidsonline.net.

- Full Technical Report on the fieldwork process
- Original questionnaires (for children, for parents)
- Letters to parents and safety leaflets for children
- Research ethics procedures

These are freely available to interested researchers and research users, provided the following credit is included:

This report 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.

If outputs result from the use of this resource, we request that an email is sent to inform us of this use, to info@cnti.org.cy .

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