Denmark

Danish children's' uses of online opportunities are characterized by "more of everything" compared to the European average: early access, high frequency of use, long time spent online, access through many platforms. This picture of extensive use is followed by a relatively high percentage of children who encounter one or more of the risks that are defined in the EU Kids survey. This is the typical pattern: more use results in more exposure to potential risk. Only some of the children who meet risks feel somewhat or very bothered and the figures at the national level are so small that it is difficult to say anything when we divide the findings by e.g. age and gender and according to various risk areas, experiences of harm and coping strategies. So, the actual extent of experienced harm at various levels and the coping strategies need to be investigated in more detail.

The extensive online access of young Danes' is mirroring the level of integration of digital media and online activities in the Danish society – at the level of institutions, groups and of the individual person. Denmark has a long tradition of digital communication and hence the vast majority of young Danes do not remember a "pre-internet" time or a time when they had to rely on the stationary phone or even on only accessing the internet outside their homes. In consequence, getting new devices such as smart phones do not revolutionize their everyday life with media but adds to the overall picture of multiple access opportunities and of on-going and instant access and connectivity. In Denmark we also have a long tradition for institutional, public awareness. Compared to some other countries this awareness has not to a very large degree been driven by digital media panic or concerns about the risk and harm aspects of children's online activities even if concerns of course has been raised in specific contexts and by those organisations that specifically deal with children's welfare. A main driving principle has been information and dissemination of best practice experiences at all levels. In this context it is interesting that Denmark is the top country in terms of how many children find that there are things on the internet that are not good for children their age. The vast majority answered yes to this indicating that they have indeed listened to "campaigns" from parents, schools, the Media Council information material, and perhaps also public debate.

The EU Kids Online data point towards a number of areas of specific interest in a Danish context in terms of specific concerns and of positive indicators of awareness and good practices.

Among the areas of specific concern is the fact that despite the extent of young Danes' online activities and the level of integration in the Danish society, young Danes according to the EU Kids Online data are "only" placed in the middle area of countries regarding the number of different activities they engage in and, perhaps more notably, the extent of digital literacy skills. Even if we consider that not all skills are practically measurable it is an area that should be investigated further with the goal of improving the average number of skills.

Parents' perception of their own engagement in their children's online activities is another area of concern even if it is of course also positive that parents are aware of their own limitations. The majority of Danish children find that it is ok that their parents inform, mediate and advise and do also feel that their parents are competent users. So, parents cannot use the excuse of belonging to the digital immigrant generation for not engaging more in this part of their children's lives and upbringing. The parental concern of too little investment of time in their children's online activities probably mirrors the offline situation plus the fact that Danish parents feel very confident with their children's coping capabilities.

Young Danes are among the top countries when it comes to having profiles on one or more social networking sites, also on those they are actually too young to use (e.g. Facebook). That means many young children have profiles with the consent of their parents. As such this is not a problem but crossed with the fact that Danish children do not seem to worry much about privacy and selectivity regarding social networking activities, it is an area of concern that there may be an open access for negative content and communication, not least for the youngest children.

Another area of concern in common with other countries is the fact that children often engage in online activities that have not been designed for their age group. The youngest children in the survey are most troubled by and find it more difficult to cope with negative online experiences of all kinds. In some areas older children are more exposed to risks but they are also more capable of "shaking them off". We need to know more about the specific connections between encountering the various risks, experiencing harm and capability of coping for the younger children and think of specific ways of preventing negative experiences and of giving the young children tools to deal with them when it happens.

A concern in a Danish context – which is probably also shared across Europe – is that we do not reach the most vulnerable children with this survey, as they are not likely to have participated. This also an area where more detailed studies are needed followed by initiatives directed specifically to this group, also with the intention of looking into positive online opportunities especially for this group.

A last example of specific concern is the adaption of new platforms for online activity. The ease with which new platforms and new opportunities are adopted into young Danes' everyday lives challenges the ways in which online opportunities are experienced and perceived. The data indicate that adding the smart phone to the number of online access technologies means increased exposure to risks in terms of how many and how often risks are encountered. But, we do not know enough about the experience of well-known risks and harms on mobile platforms. We need more research about the adoption of new technologies in terms of opportunities, exposure to risks, experience of harm and for coping strategies.

To sum up, it is obvious that policy initiatives in Denmark must focus on the specific areas of concerns but not least build on and continue the positive notions of awareness, and on the fact that children trust their parents – and teachers – to be experienced and "fair" in terms of advice and mediation.