

Germany

EU Kids Online has categorised Germany as a ‘low use, low risk’ country. This finding is consistent with the earlier classification based on earlier empirical evidence (see Hasebrink et al. 2009). Lower use of the internet goes along with a comparatively low level of digital skills. Although, according to these results, on average children in Germany use the internet less and encounter less risk than their peers in other European countries, the patterns of social and individual influences on risk and harm are quite the same as in other countries; this means that many of the general recommendations that have been developed on the basis of the European sample also hold for this country.

With regard to specific observations that have been emphasised during the stakeholder meetings in Germany, one aspect is the fact that as a rule parents in Germany overestimate the risk and harm their children experience on the internet. Combined with the low level of digital skills one can conclude that German parents should be encouraged to realise the positive aspects of the internet and to support their children in discovering the opportunities provided by the internet.

Recently the political discourse on safer internet issues in Germany has got an important new platform. In 2010 the Federal Ministry of Families, Seniors, Women, and Youth has initiated a multi-stakeholder-forum called ‘Dialogue Internet’ (see <http://www.dialog-internet.de/>), which includes expert working groups as well as a broad public discourse using Facebook, StudiVZ, Twitter, and YouTube. The working groups, with representatives of Insafe, internet providers and online companies, organisations for children’s rights, youth protection and media education, as well as researchers, deal with a broad spectrum of topics, which goes beyond safer internet issues: a) media literacy, b) participation, c) youth protection, negative content, d) chats and social media, e) data and consumer protection. The EU Kids Online findings are being used in all these groups as an important empirical basis for the discussions.

The current version of the recommendations that have been developed so far includes the following general principles:

- Attention for age-related differences in online use;
- Transparency and visibility of relevant initiatives including a monitoring of on-going projects, networks and initiatives;
- Sustainability of projects;
- Increased networking and collaboration between the different projects;
- Encouragement of peer-to-peer approaches in the fields of media literacy and youth protection.

With regard to concrete measures the strategy of ‘white lists’ get particular attention in the German debates.