

Greece

Greece has been classified as a 'lower use, lower risk' country by the EU Kids Online II findings, where lower levels of internet use among children result in lower exposure to online risks. In this respect, the fact that, overall, few children in Greece report excessive use of the internet (i.e. 5% of them reported having gone without eating or sleeping because of the internet; 12% felt bothered when not being able to get online; 20% caught themselves surfing while not really interested; 8% spent less time than appropriate with either family, friends or doing schoolwork because of the time spent online; and 15% tried unsuccessfully to spend less time online) is no cause for alarm.

Greece is also among those countries with the lowest risk encountered online (along with Turkey, Portugal and Italy), whether that refers to seeing online sexual images (14%), having been sent nasty online messages (4%), seeing or sexting (11%), having contact online with someone not met face-to-face before (20%), gone to meet someone face-to-face that was first met online (6%), encountering potentially harmful user-generated content (19%), or having experienced any kind of misuse of personal data (7%). Following that, the percentage of Greek children that reported feeling at least a bit upset as a result of the above risks is rather small, indicating that for the large majority of them, such online activities are harmless - something to be taken into consideration when planning risk management. Having said that, as often argued by the EU Kids Online network, and following a developmental path, rising levels of internet use are expected to be accompanied by rising levels of opportunities as well as risk, hence children in Greece need to be advised of how best to balance their newfound digital skills without compromising the rest of their activities and life practices. Policy recommendations should, then, be proactive and non-alarmist, in an attempt to ease the hype created by the media and a pervasive fear-ridden public agenda.

The 'low use, low risk' feature is reinforced in the case of broadband penetration, which in Greece is low and coupled with low levels of online risk encounters. At the same time, though, 'low risk' can be the result of parental mediation of children's internet use, which in Greece is highly effective according to both parents and children. As parental use of filtering and blocking has no (statistically) significant effect on the degree of risks, according to the latest EU Kids Online findings, policy making should therefore concentrate on active, rather than restrictive, mediation. Children need to be taught how to develop resilience and appropriate digital skills (including self-monitoring) and practice caution when online.

Even considerably lower than parental mediation, and with greater disagreement between children and parents, levels of parental monitoring are still significant (51% of children as opposed to 60% of parents report monitoring rules), which may also explain the occurrence of less online risk. Add to this the rather high percentage of teacher's mediation of children's internet use (70%), and the fact that only 4% of Greek children report ignoring what their parents say regarding their internet use, and it transpires that a considerable amount of parental –and adult- mediation of different kinds is being effectively practiced in Greece.

With 52% of children in Greece using the internet in their own bedroom and 66% of them accessing it on their mobiles, we would be right to think that Greek children's internet usage and access is largely done outside the scope of parental –and other adult control. However, this is not the case, as previously discussed. As a result, policy management of risk in the country should concentrate more a) on parents and educators in order to help them become more effective in teaching children digital literacy and self-protection skills, and b) on promoting self-regulatory and co-

regulatory management of online practices for children. In fact, as the level of digital skills of children in Greece (a mixture of critical and safety skills) is among the lowest in Europe, policy makers need to prioritize the development of such skills as a matter of urgency.