

Hungary

Online risks for children in Hungary has for the last few years been a widely debated topic, often accompanied by moral panic from various stakeholders, including the media.

According to EU Kids Online data, Hungary is considered to be a 'lower use, lower risk' country. The two are not independent from each other, and this implies some clear policy guidelines.

The results reveal that those children who are the most vulnerable on the internet are vulnerable in the offline world as well. This means that the policy focus should move to the training and education of those professionals (teachers, social workers, etc.) dealing with children both in the realm of "traditional" offline and online risks. Differences in parents' readiness, the generally low level of digital literacy, and inadequate knowledge of online risks and threats means that schools are in an influential position. However, in many cases schools and teachers are not prepared to deal with this problem. In this situation the role of civil organizations providing education and training in online safety becomes more important. Fortunately there are some good practices in Hungary, but their activities could be more institutionalized. Teaching of online safety skills should also be part of the regular curriculum.

One in four parents do not use the internet, so a clear skills gap exists between children and parents. Unfortunately, such children lack parental support and are disadvantaged in other dimensions as well (having parents with low level of education, living in rural areas, etc. At the same time, many of those children whose parents are active Internet users also lack a balanced view on the nature of online risks.

From the parents' point of view therefore, it is of crucial importance to strengthen active approaches to mediation. However, a lack of confidence on the part of parents and insufficient knowledge of online risks results in ignoring the problem or overreliance on restrictive mediation. In this respect, joint efforts of government, content and service provider companies and civil organizations should focus on how to communicate effectively in a straightforward manner about the desirable role parents can play in supporting their children's online activities.