

Portugal

Portuguese children are the leaders of internet access with laptops, which is a direct consequence of national policies providing laptop access for all children. However, they are among those who use internet less frequently and in narrower ways, which can account for the relatively low level of risk reported. In spite of these results, older children in Portugal report excessive use, which may have more to do with anxieties related to the limitation of the internet access than to amount of time itself. These limitations can also explain their use of the internet in public spaces like libraries, twice the European average.

At the level of mediation, children as well as parents seem to be eager to receive more information from teachers they do at the present. This is particularly important given that in Portugal only about a third of the parents use the internet frequently, restrictive mediation is the most practiced by parents, and that many children use the internet in their bedroom. Teachers' readiness to deal with issues on internet safety and support children and their families is an urgent issue, as well as an investment on children's digital skills: although Portuguese children declare an average level of skills, they show less capacity to use those skills in coping with risks.

This scenario poses challenges for the future, as children will access the internet at younger ages in mostly a mobile way. Besides teachers, other support workers in public access points should be prepared to provide support and promote a more participatory use of the internet, rather than just providing access. Despite the low incidence of risk, children from more disadvantaged households seem to be bothered more by risks they may encounter. This also requires greater attention by adults outside the home to support and enrich their internet use.