Turkey

According to EU Kids Online, Turkey is categorized as a "low use, low risk" country. Moreover, among all European countries, Turkish parents have the lowest levels of internet use and are the least knowledgeable about the Internet. Since many Turkish children are heavily dependent on out-of-home internet access, parents may not be able to regulate their children's online activities. Compared to other European countries, Turkish children are also the least knowledgeable about safer Internet usage skills. Furthermore, 9-12 year olds register themselves on Facebook as older than they really are in violation of Facebook policy and U.S. law governing the age at which individuals can provide private information about themselves without parental consent. Because of their lack of internet skill and understanding of privacy issues, they generally leave their privacy settings on default values.

Turkish children and their families need educational initiatives to improve internet safety skills as well as digital literacy skills. These initiatives should be provided not only by the government but also by NGOs, the media, and all educational institutions, including universities. Easy to use software tools, instructional materials, and online Web portals for safer internet use must be provided by internet service providers and other organizations at no cost to parents. The Ministry of Education must include essential internet-related content into the curriculum.

Unfortunately, today in Turkey, government efforts have been focused on restricting access to achieve the goal of creating a safer internet. These restrictions are applied through broad, though, disproportionate and arbitrary use of existing legal measures, particularly Turkish Law No. 5651, 'Regulation of Publications on the Internet and Suppression of Crimes Committed by Means of Such Publication'. One of the law's most commonly used methods of limiting access has been through 'blocking' of websites deemed inappropriate. At least 14,907 websites have been blocked under the provisions of this law as of August 2011.[1] Such actions definitely are a result of a panic reaction, and the consequences are felt by the entire society. As stated in several EU reports and meetings, government intervention in restricting/censoring the internet is definitely not an appropriate way of providing a safer internet for the citizens. Turkey must develop more democratic solutions to provide a safer online environment for its citizens.

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[1] Gulden Gursoy Ataman (2011) 'How far are freedom of expression and the right to access to information undermined by the restrictions on the Internet in Turkey?' [online]