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THE LONDON SCHOOL  
OF ECONOMICS AND  
POLITICAL SCIENCE



UNIVERSITY OF  
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# Cross-national perspective on risks facing children online

Findings from *EU Kids Online* at  
“Protecting our Children in the Modern World”  
*Northamptonshire Police and Crime Commission*

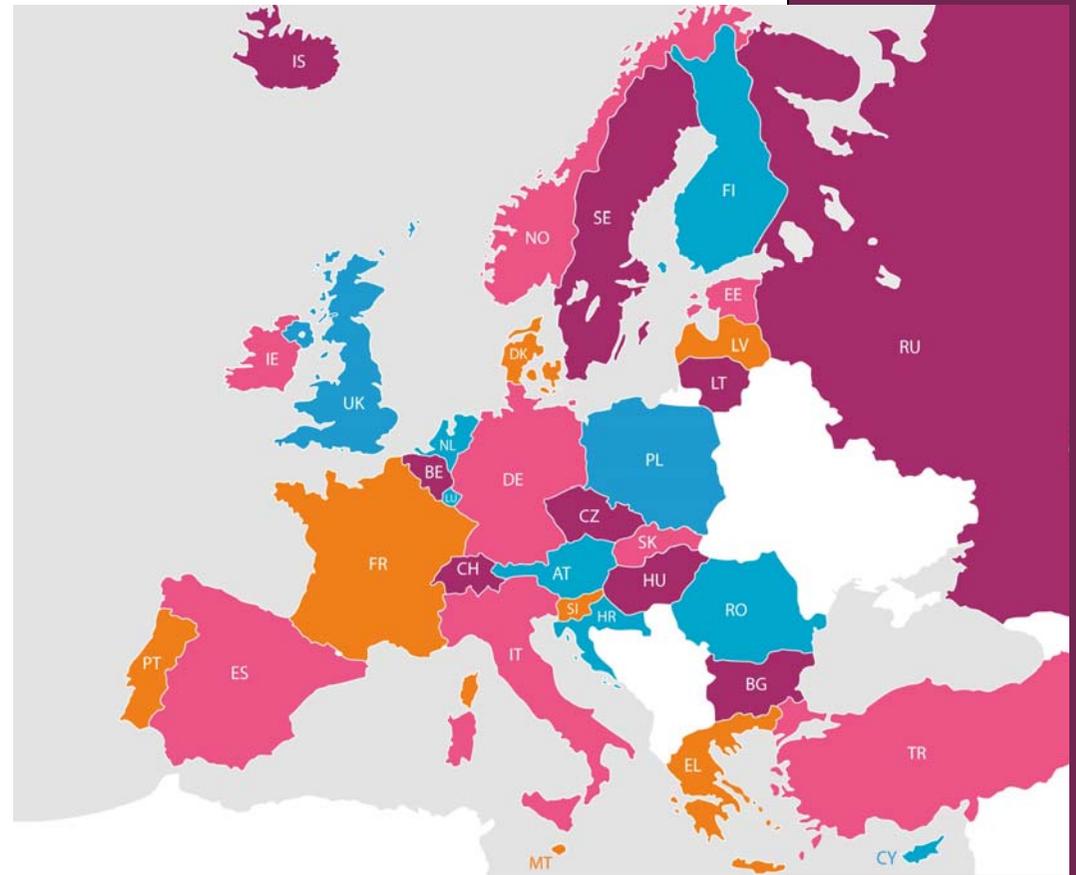
Dr Anke Görzig

# The EU Kids Online network has been funded by the EC Better Internet for Kids programme\*

From [2006-09](#), as a thematic network of **21 countries**, EU Kids Online identified and **evaluated** the findings of nearly **400 research studies** to draw out substantive, methodological and policy implications.

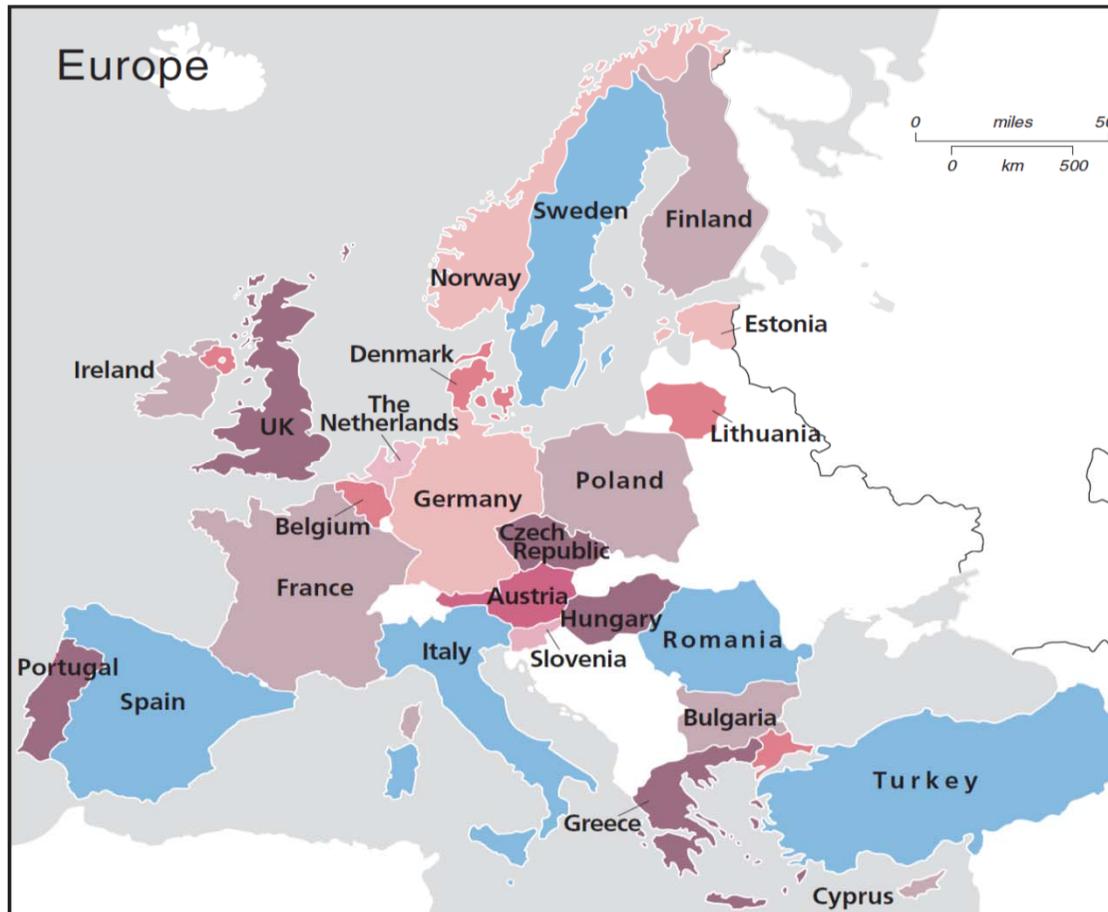
From [2009-11](#), as a knowledge enhancement project across **25 countries**, the network **surveyed 25,000 children and parents** to produce original, rigorous data on online opportunities and risk of harm.

From [2011-14](#), the network expanded to **33 countries** to conduct targeted **analyses of the quantitative survey** and **new qualitative interviews** with children.



\*Originally, Safer Internet Programme

# Surveying 'Europe'



- **Random stratified sample: ~ 1000 9-16 year old internet users per country; total of 25142 internet-users, 25 countries**
- **Fieldwork in spring/summer 2010; child + parent interviews at home, face to face**
- **Questions validated by cognitive/pilot testing; self-completion for sensitive questions; care with research ethics**
- **Informed by national stakeholders and an international advisory panel**
- **Survey covered access, use, activities, risks (sexual images, sexual messages, bullying, meeting strangers), parental mediation, coping, vulnerability**

# Risks and opportunities go hand-in-hand



Figure 105: Children who have encountered one or more online risk factors by children's average number of online activities, by country

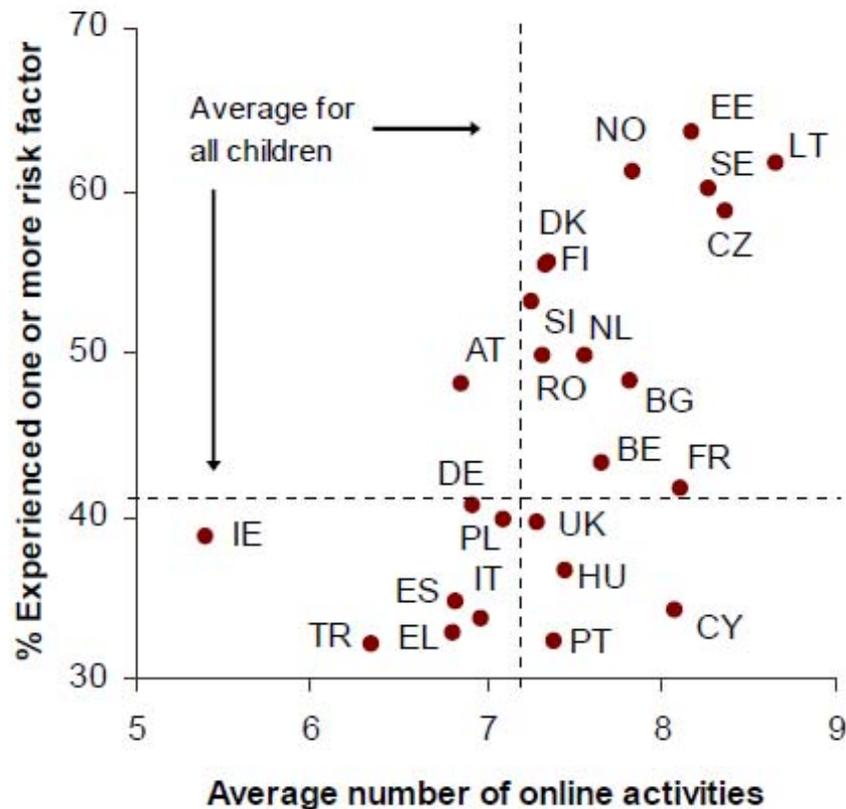
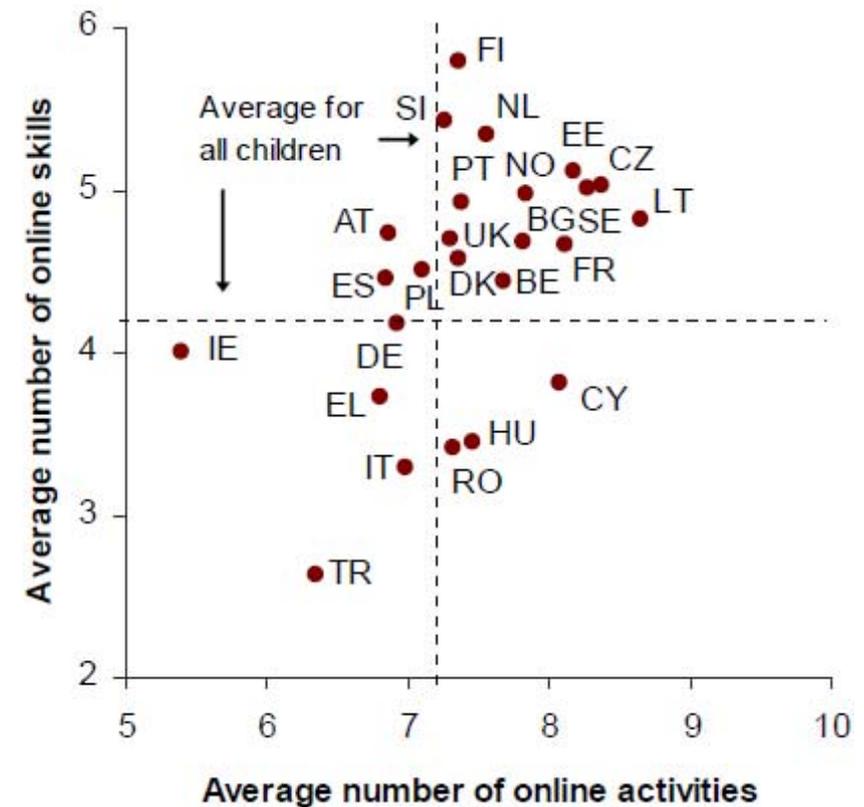


Figure 106: Children's average number of online skills by children's average number of online activities, by country



## Experiences of risk and harm

	Sexual images	Bullying	Sexual messages*	Meeting new people
Experienced the risk at all	23	19	---	---
Experienced the risk online	14	6	15	9
Online perpetrators	---	3	3	---
Felt bothered	4	---	4	1
Felt bothered (% of those who experienced the risk)	32	---	25	11
<b>(Fairly) upset</b> (% of those who felt bothered)	44	55	45	50

Base: All children, n=25.142  
 \*) only 11-16 years

# Explaining experiences of risk and harm



Livingstone, S. & Görzig, A. (2014). "When adolescents receive sexual messages on the internet: Explaining experiences of risk and harm". *Computers in Human Behavior*, 33: 8–15.

# Sexting: Risk and Harm



## Risk

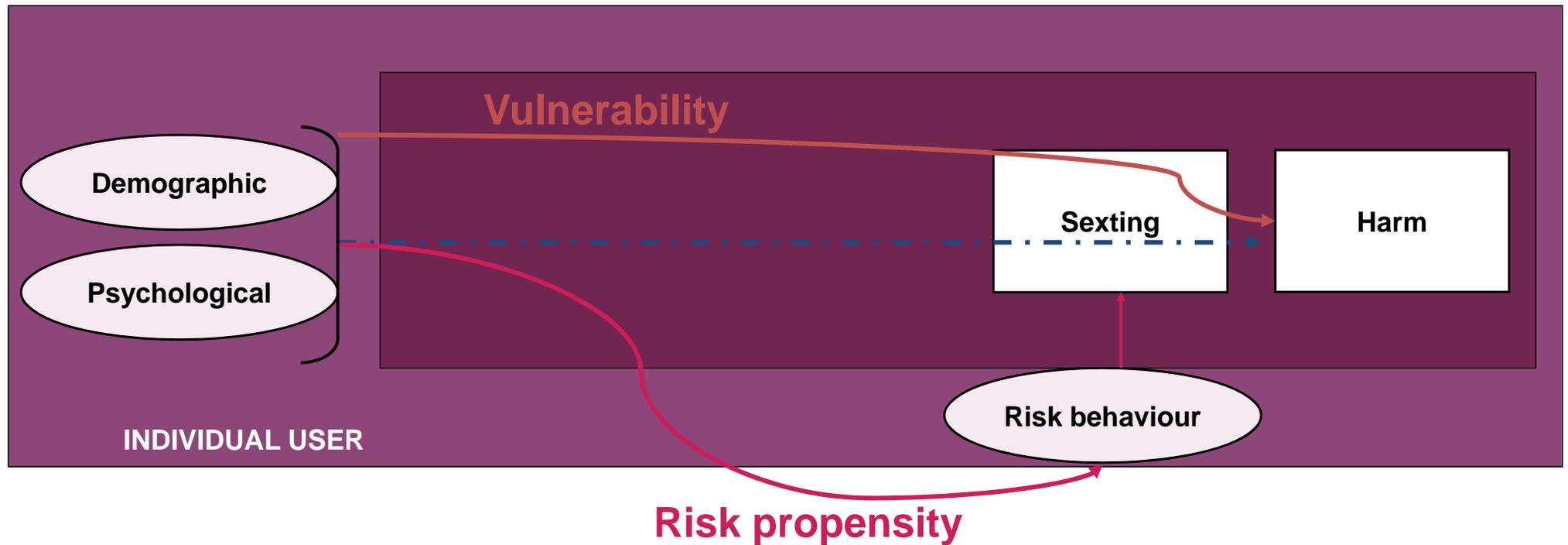
**The occurrence of an event which is associated with a probability of harm.**

## Harm

**Actual physical or mental damage as reported by the person concerned.**

- In relation to sexting, what can known offline factors that influence adolescents' well-being tell us about the likelihood
  - A.** of encountering risk (15%)
  - B.** that the risk is experienced as harmful (4% - 1/4 of those at risk)

# Hypotheses



## ■ Demographic factors:

- Age
- Gender

## ■ Psychological factors:

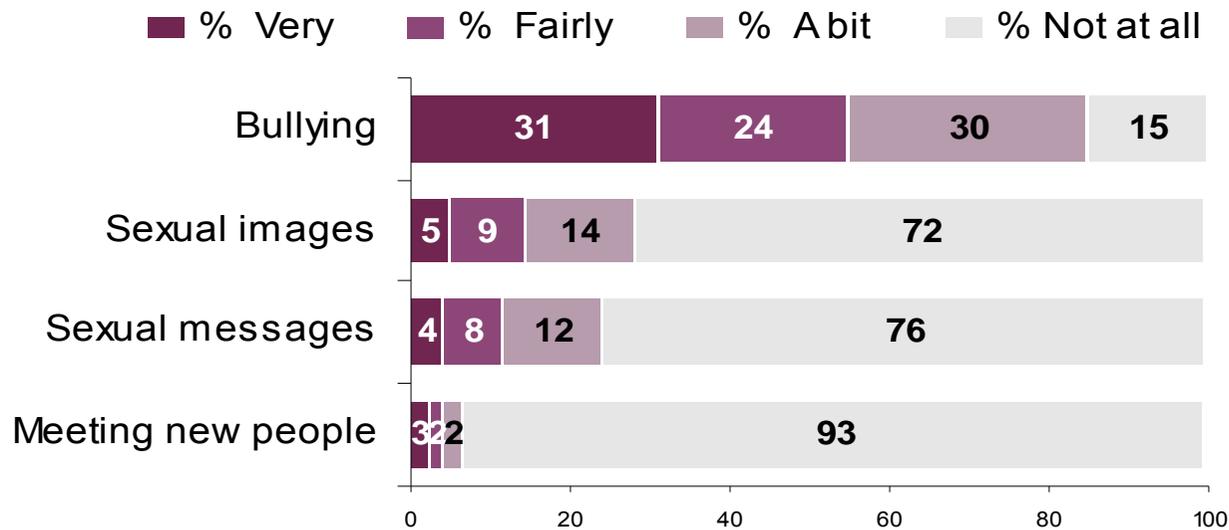
- Sensation seeking
- Psychological difficulties

# Key Findings



	<b>Risk</b> of seeing or receiving sexual messages online	<b>Harm</b> resulting from seeing or receiving such messages
Age	older	younger
Gender	boys	girls
Psychological difficulties	higher	higher
Sensation seeking	higher	lower
Risky online and offline behaviour	higher	no effect

# Harm across risks



More **online risks** are experienced by children who are:

- older, higher in self-efficacy and sensation seeking
- do more online activities
- have more psychological problems

Online risks are found more **harmful and upsetting** by children who are:

- younger, lower in self-efficacy, and sensation seeking
- do fewer online activities, have fewer skills
- have more psychological problems

# Inequalities in risk and resources to cope



## Educational/economic disadvantage

- 27% have parents with lower secondary education or less
- 25% have parents who do not use the internet
- 7% of children use the internet less than once per week
- Experience fewer risks but more harm – less resilient
- Build digital skills and resilience given a relative lack of experience of the internet at home

## Psychological and social disadvantage

- 34% have more psychological difficulties than most
- 6% of children have a mental, physical or other disability
- 4% of children belong to a discriminated-against group
- Experience more risks and more harm.
- Providing targeted guidance for coping and ensuring a wider range of sources of safety information (eg, online sources for parents of disabled children, government sources for parents of discriminated-against children)



# What bothers children online?

**EU Kids Online**

ISSN 2045-256X

**In their own words: What bothers children online?**  
Sonia Livingstone, Lucyna Kirwil, Cristina Ponte and Elisabeth Staksrud, with the EU Kids Online network

**Summary**  
Nearly 10,000 children told us about what upsets them and their friends online. Their responses were diverse, revealing a long list of concerns.

Pornography (named by 22% of children who told us of risks) and violent content (18%) top children's online concerns. Overall, boys appear more bothered by violence than girls, while girls are more concerned with contact-related risks.

Violence receives less public attention than sexual material, but many children are concerned about violent, aggressive or gory online content. They reveal shock and disgust on seeing cruelty, killings, abuse of animals and even the news – since much is real rather than fictional violence, this adds to the depth of children's reactions.

As children told us, video-sharing websites are often associated with violent and pornographic content, along with a range of other content-related risks. Among the children who linked risks to specific internet platforms, 32% mentioned video-sharing sites such as YouTube, followed by websites (20%), social networking sites (13%) and games (10%).

Children's mentions of risks rises markedly from nine to 12 years old. Younger children are more concerned about content and other risks. As they get older they become more concerned about conduct and contact risks. These are linked in many children's minds to the use of social networking sites such as Facebook.

Concern about risks is higher among children from 'high use, high risk' countries. Policy implications are identified and discussed.

**In their own words**  
What worries me is how correct information is on a website. You can also end up on a site where you don't wanna be. (Girl, 16, Belgium)

Violence, child pornography pictures, religious sects, self-harm or suicide sites. (Boy, 15, Greece)

To take a photo of me without my knowledge and upload it to an inappropriate website. (Girl, 10, Bulgaria)

When strangers message me on the internet, sex sites that open without me clicking on them. (Boy, 10, Austria)

Videos where older teenagers mistreat disabled children and upload the video on YouTube. (Girl, 9, Italy)

Some types of pornography, websites containing pictures/film of dead people or animals. Entertainment sites that are racist and other things that are ethically wrong. (Boy, 11, Norway)

YouTube. The things that come up straight away as soon as you search for the website. Facebook shows scary things when you click on something that does not look or sound scary. (Girl, 9, UK)

Kids can be distressed when something they have read on the internet and believed to be true turns out to be fake. (Girl, 11, Estonia)

Propositions to meet from people whom I do not know, photos of naked people, bullying somebody or scenes showing homicide. (Boy, 12, Poland)

Racist messages, sexual messages, some sending horror movies such as Russian Morgue. (Girl, 11, Romania)

I don't like it when people speak nasty to you. (Boy, 10, Slovenia)

February 2013 1

[www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)



## Here's what the children told us bothers them online

When strangers message me on the internet, sex sites that open without me clicking on them. (boy, 10, Austria)

Violence against women and children and perverted humiliations and cruelty. (girl, 14, Germany)

To take a photo of me without my knowledge and upload it to an inappropriate website. (girl, 10, Bulgaria)

See people having sex or naked people. (boy, 10, Portugal)

Showing images of physical violence, torture and suicide images. (girl, 12, Slovenia)

Facebook shows scary things even if you click on something that does not look or sound scary. (girl, 9, UK)

Propositions to meet from people whom I do not know. (boy, 12, Poland)

Animal cruelty, adults hitting kids. (girl, 9, Denmark)

Scary things - I saw something at my friend's house and I can't get it out of my head. (boy, 11, Ireland)

A mate showed me once a video about an execution. It was not fun, but insane. I get scared. (boy, 15, Sweden)

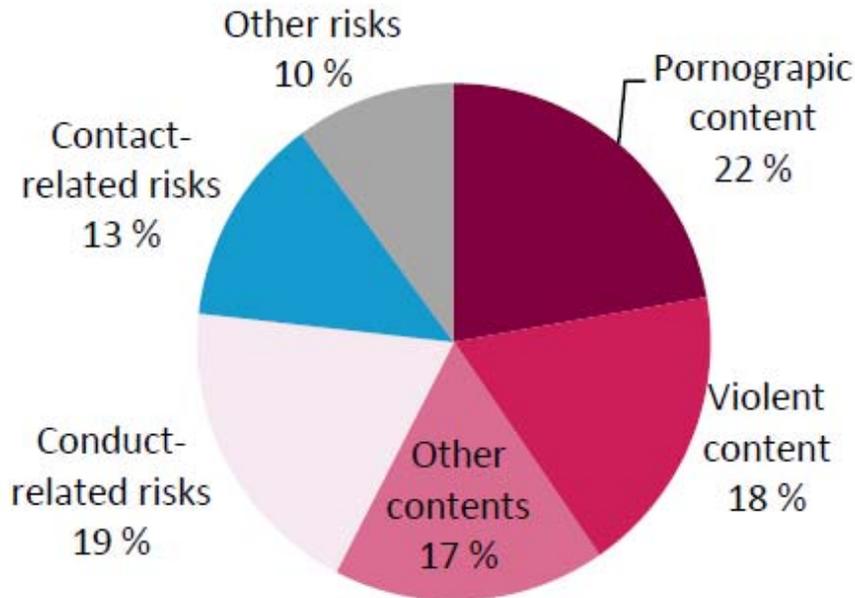
I was shocked seeing a starving African child who was going to die and a condor waiting to eat him. (girl, 13, Turkey)

Those things that show other people's suffering or torment as a funny thing. (boy, 14, Hungary)

# What bothers children online?

We asked the children to tell us in their own words what bothers or upsets people their age on the internet, if anything. Nearly 10,000 children told us of their concerns and their responses were very diverse.

Figure 1: What risks did children tell us about?



Base: N=9,636 children who identified one or more risks online.

## 5 key findings

1. **Pornography** tops children's online concerns.
2. **Violent, aggressive, cruel or gory content** came a close second – although violence receives less public attention than sexual material. What particularly upsets them is real (or realistic) rather than fictional violence, and violence against the vulnerable such as children or animals.
3. Children see **video-sharing websites** as most linked with violent, pornographic and other content risks.
4. **Boys** express more concern about violence than **girls**, while girls are more concerned about contact risks.
5. Children's concern about online risks **rises** markedly **from 9 to 12** years old. Younger children are more concerned about content risks, and as they get older they become more concerned about conduct and contact risks.

# Implications



- **Predictors of risks are also predictors of opportunities (e.g., use and digital literacy)**
- **Predictors of risk are not predictors of harm**
- **Some children are more vulnerable – across risks, offline and online**
- **Policy initiatives should focus on those likely to experience harm:**
  - girls, younger children
  - psychological and social disadvantaged
- **Design the online environment to build in safety considerations**
- **Increase children’s digital skills, coping and resilience**
  - address socio-demographic groups differentially

# Towards evidence-based policy

It's important that policy developments are firmly grounded in evidence. It's also important that policy makers and practitioners should seek to maximise children's opportunities to benefit from the internet as well as trying to minimise harm.

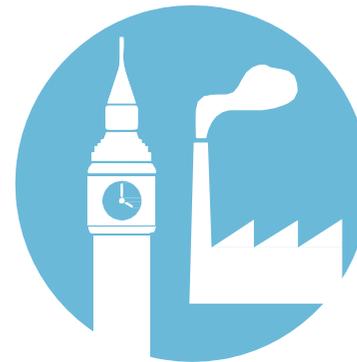
**Based on our research findings, we offer evidence-based recommendations for each of the following groups:**



**Families – for children and for parents**



**Educators, awareness raisers and media**

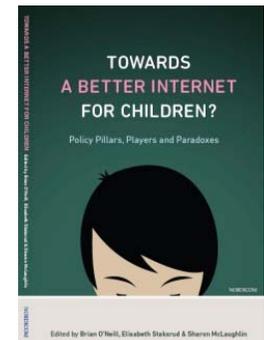


**Government and industry**



[See our full policy report](#) for how these recommendations are evidence-based. See [Video](#).

[See also our report on policy influences and country clusters](#) for the different policy contexts across Europe.



[The book can be obtained here](#)

[All the chapters are summarised here](#)

Compared with 2010,  
European 11- to 16-year-  
olds are now:

**more likely** to  
be exposed to hate  
messages **13%** to  
**20%**

**more likely** to  
be exposed to  
pro-anorexia sites **9%** to  
**13%**

**more likely** to be  
exposed to self-harm  
sites **7%** to  
**11%**

**more likely** to  
be exposed to  
cyberbullying **7%** to  
**12%**

**13%** to  
**17%** European 9- to  
16-year- olds say  
they are now:  
more likely to say  
they were  
**upset**  
by something  
seen online in  
2014



## EU Kids Online recent research findings, methods and recommendations

- Updating and analysis of our 25-country, pan-European survey.
- In-depth interviews with 9- to 16-year-olds in nine countries.
- Expansion of the open access, searchable European evidence database.
- Research toolkit of our methods to guide researchers and research users.
- Active dialogue with stakeholders to ensure policy has a robust evidence base.



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# THANK YOU!

Dr Anke Görzig



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