

# Protecting children against online violence – Reflections from the EU Kids Online and the Net Children Go Mobile projects

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# Main questions of my presentation

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- With which types of online risks and violence are children confronted with nowadays?
  - To what extent are children harmed by these risks?
- Which initiatives, policies and practices can be effective in maximizing the benefits and minimizing the harm for children in relation to ICT use?



# Online opportunities and risks

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- New technologies, and particularly social media, offer a myriad of **opportunities**:
  - greater access to education
  - participation,
  - information or socialization
- However, they also create new opportunities for **new forms of risks** and sometimes also **harm**



# Online Risks

- Evidence is growing that the **internet is becoming part of the offline risks and negative experiences that may harm children:**
  - Contact or conduct risks:grooming, sexting or Cyberbullying
  - exposure to pornography
  - violent UGC
  - sexual exploitation, child abuse images or child pornography
  - other potentially harmful experiences

# Classifying online Risks

	<b>Content</b> Child as receiver (of mass productions)	<b>Contact</b> Child as participant (adult-initiated activity)	<b>Conduct</b> Child as actor (perpetrator / victim)
Aggressive	Violent / gory content	Harassment, stalking	Bullying, hostile peer activity
Sexual	Pornographic content	'Grooming', sexual abuse or exploitation	Sexually harassment, 'sexting'
Values	Racist / hateful content	Ideological persuasion	Potentially harmful user-generated content
Commercial	Embedded marketing	Personal data misuse	Gambling, copyright infringement

# Experiences of risk and harm

## EU Kids online survey 2010

	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
(Fairly) upset (% of those who felt bothered)	44	55	45	50

EU Kids online (survey 2010), Base: All children,  
n=25.142

# Lots of concerns, many relate to violence

## What bothers kids your age?



Fighting. People being cruel to animals and hitting them. (Girl, 11)

Horrid games. Killing each other. Batting games. Zombie. (Boy, 10)

Dead bodies, blood, sexual images/videos. Dying people. (Girl, 13)

Porn. Websites showing people doing suicide. (Boy, 12)

Porn websites. Information on how to be anorexic, kill yourself, get drugs. (Girl, 15)

Hate groups on Facebook being created about them. (Boy, 12)

Death by beating. Inappropriate images, sexual images. (Girl, 15)

Graphic images like gore or pornography. (Boy, 14)

Winding people up. Cyber bullying. Threatening. (Boy, 13)

Bullying, racism, fighting, weird voice clips, too many webcam requests!! (Girl, 14)

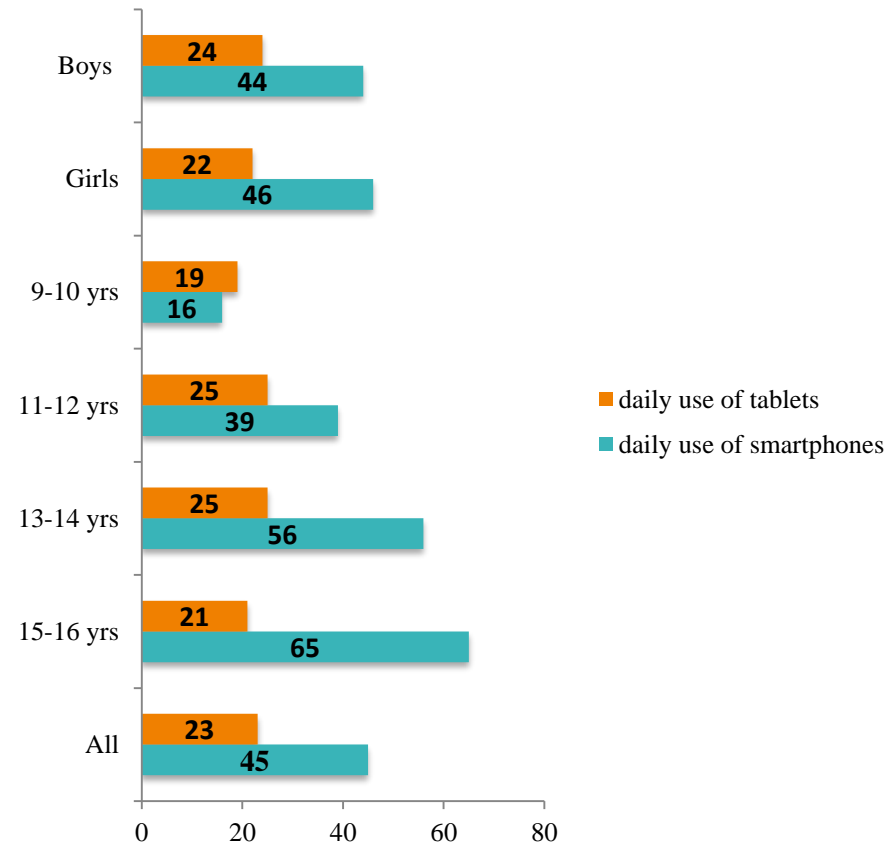
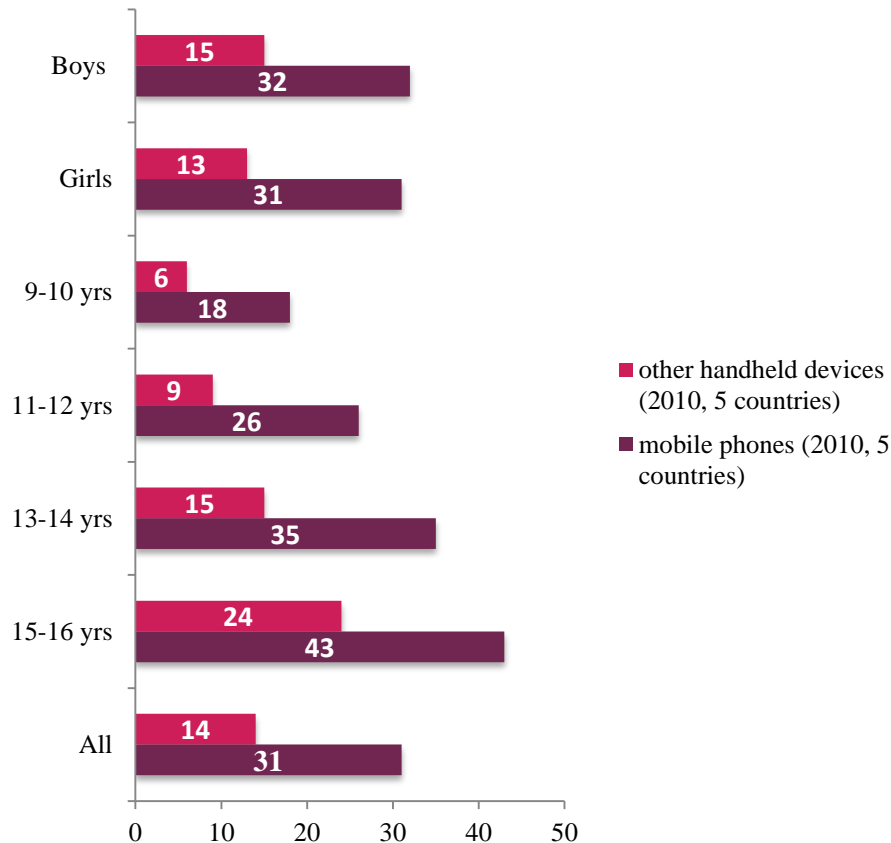
Freddie Kruger. Scary films. Facebook. YouTube. (Girl, 9)

YouTube. Terrible videos. Terrible images. (Boy, 13)



# What has changed since 2010 (1)?

## More mobile devices to go online



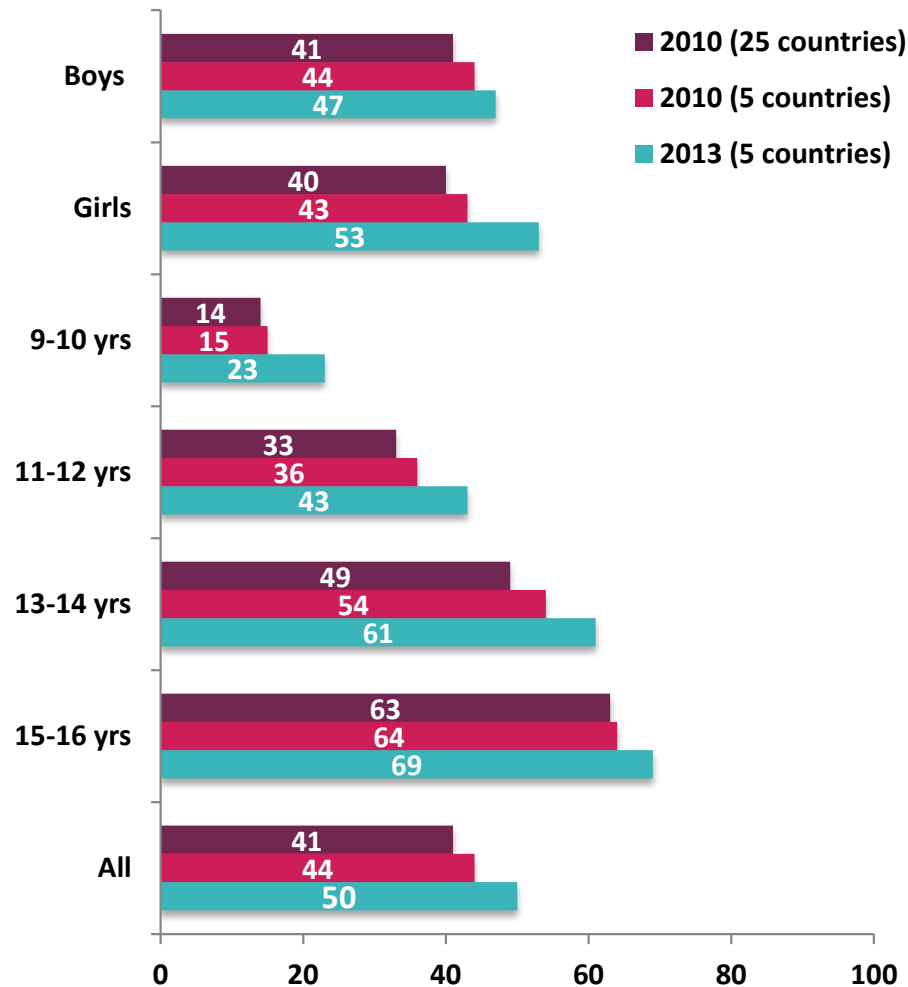


# What has changed since 2010 (2)?

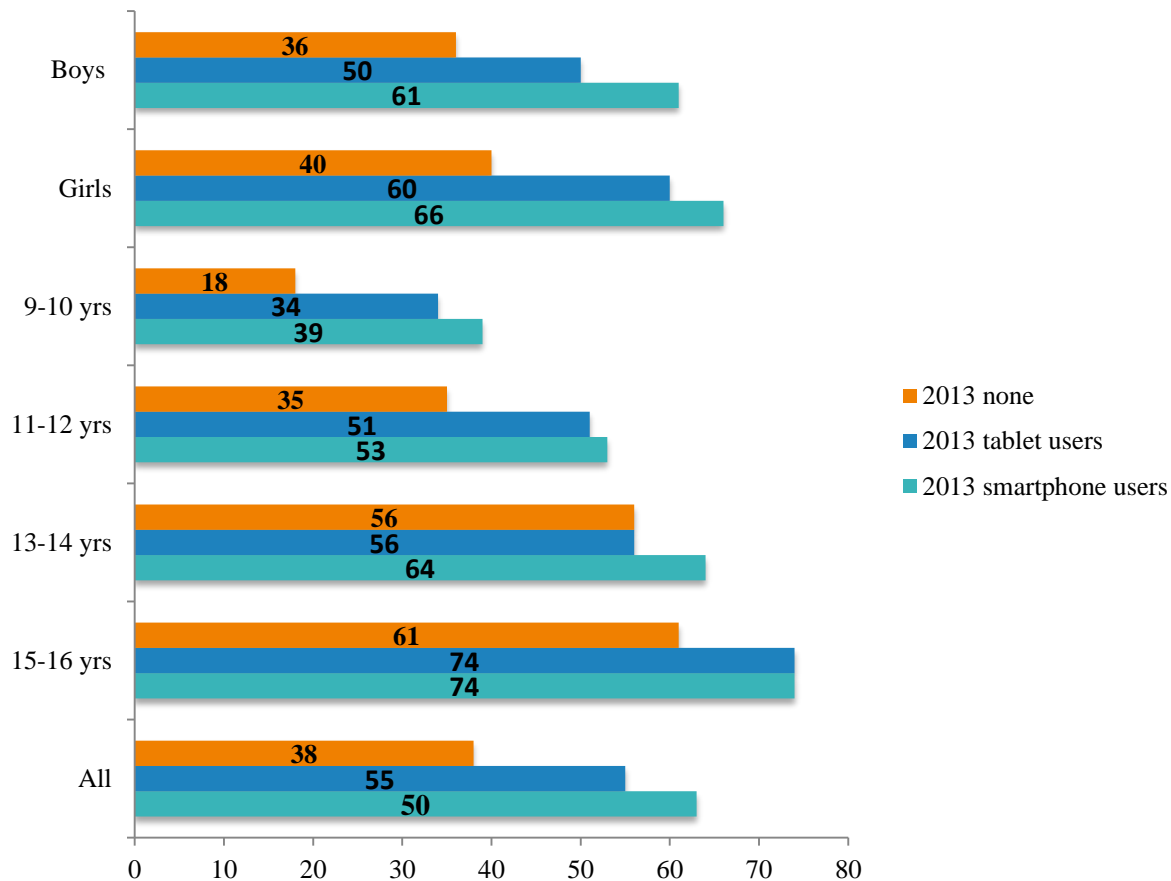
- **Rise in cyberbullying**, esp. for girls, but offline bullying is still greater
- Rise in meeting strangers (offline)
- **Rise in negative UGC**, but not in data misuse
- Slight rise in porn
- Sexting remains the same
- **Rise in % who self-report harmful experiences**, especially girls & teens



# Slight increase in % who encountered one or more online risks



# Tablet and smart phone users more likely to encounter one or more risks



# What about violent online content?



# Sexual risks

- **Sexual risks** – that is seeing sexual images or receiving sexual messages online – are commonly encountered, but are **experienced as harmful by few of the children**

*“It happened on my computer - though they all have to access it with their own password, so they are not allowed on certain websites unless I leave it on – and it happened, I found them in the bathroom watching pornographic websites, on my laptop computer”*

(Mother of a 13-year old boy)




# Violent material

- **Violent material receives less public attention than sexual material, but many children are particularly concerned about violent, aggressive or gory online content**
  - images and descriptions associated with war and other atrocities
  - domestic abuse and violence
  - cruelty to animals
  - material that promotes racial and religious hatred, homophobia or misogyny



# User Generated Content (UGC)

- a large amount of easily accessible **material, usually user generated content (UGC)** that addresses and, tacitly or explicitly, encourages harmful behaviour among children and adolescents:
  - websites and blogs that discuss suicide (including the efficacy of different methods of suicide)
  - eating disorders (“pro-ana” and “pro-mia” sites)
  - self-harm (especially “cutting”) and drug use

Sponsored 

[See all](#)

## Afvallen (SCHOKKEND)



Vergeet de sportschool, lees dit artikel en je streefgewicht is dichterbij dan je denkt!

# How do children cope with online risks?

- Online coping are ‘internet-specific problem solving strategies children adopt after a negative experience online’
- Learning how to cope with negative experiences => building **resilience**
- The EU Kids Online survey identified three main coping strategies:
  - **passive responses** (e.g. fatalistic (stop using the internet for while) and self-accusatory responses (feeling guilty about what happened))
  - **proactive responses** (e.g. reporting inappropriate content and contact, blocking the unwanted contact, etc.)
  - **communicative responses** (talking with parents, peers, teachers or other trusted people about what happened)





# Smartphone users have more safety skills but, overall, skills have declined

% who say they can...	9-12 years		13-16 years		All* (users and non-users)	EU Kids Online 2010
	Non user	S-ph user	Non user	S-ph user		
Block unwanted adverts or junk mail spam	21	34	49	70	43	51
Delete the record of which sites they have visited	26	46	58	77	51	52
Change privacy settings on a social networking profile	22	49	64	89	55	56
Block messages from someone they don't want to hear from	27	54	69	88	59	64
Block pop-ups	20	40	55	66	44	
Find information on how to use the internet safely	31	47	59	77	53	63

# The older the safer

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- As regards safety skills we observe consistent variations by **age** and partly by **gender**:
  - Boys generally claim more safety skills than girls
  - Teenagers claim more than double the skills reported by younger children
  - Younger children who are tablet users claim considerably more safety skills related to SNS

# REFLECTIONS

Online violence: Old wine in new bottle?



# UK Metro`s headline (27-05-14)



# Good or bad content?

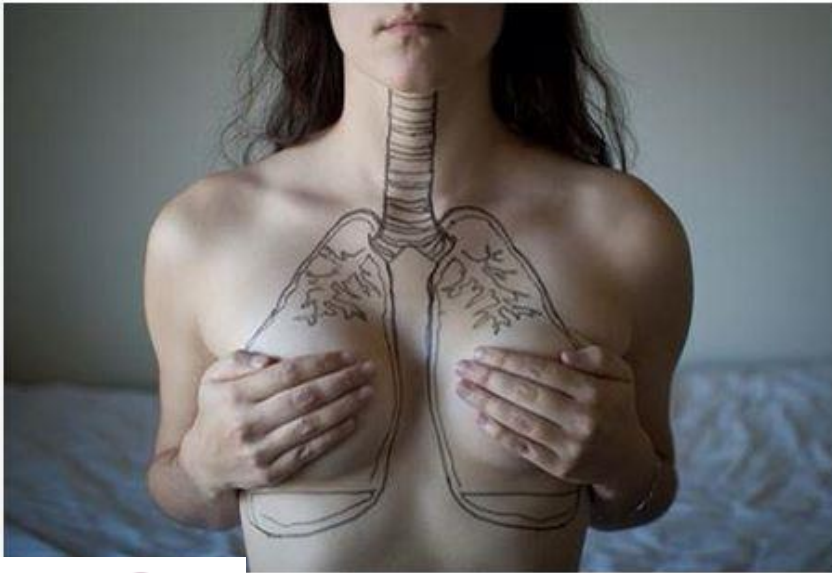
## It all depends on the context

“to learn about the respiratory system..This pic is beautiful!”



Valentina  
25 October 2011

para aprender el sistema respiratorio jsnsksnsksnsksn  
es linda la fotooo<3\_♥



4 1



www.eukidsonline.net

So this is  
porn...I  
guess???



# Risks $\neq$ Harm (1)

- **Not all risks result in harm** and not all children are affected by risks in the same way
- **opportunities and risks go hand in hand:**
  - The more online activities children engage in, the more children are skilled and self-confident (also to deal with online risks) and vice versa.



# (Online) opportunities and risks go hand in hand 😊



# Do we want to “protect” our children like this?





# Or like this?



# Final Recommendations

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- **Media literacy’ and ‘media education’** are essential to mitigate online risks, but also to fully take advantage of the opportunities new ICT offer
- **Special attention for vulnerable groups is needed**
  - children from certain minority groups, and children with disabilities, may be more likely to be bullied, harassed or exploited online
  - EU Kids online concluded that online and offline vulnerability are interrelated
    - Double jeopardy effect: children with more psychological problems suffer more from online as well as offline risks



# Final Recommendations (2)

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- Policy makers can contribute to children's online safety by:
  - introducing appropriate legislation & ensuring their effective implementation
  - developing effective policy responses
  - training law enforcement officials, teachers and other professionals working with children
  - raising awareness of online risks among children and their parents and caregivers
  - supporting recovery for children who have been exposed to abuse and exploitation
  - collecting & updating data
  - incentivizing the private sector to introduce measures to enhance children's online safety



# Final Recommendations (3)

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- **Evaluate the potential positive impact of the use of online technologies to support helplines and other social or counseling services.** Few studies have referred to this, but they do show some encouraging results:

*“Some children prefer to discuss their problems using chat because this enables them, among others, to discuss sensitive issues silently with somebody in private; it provides them with more time to think about what they want to say and to understand what the other person has said. Chatting also allows the volunteer who is helping them to remain at distance.” (Fukkink & Hermanns, 2009, p. 946)*

Fukkink, R. & Hermanns, J. (2009). Counseling children at a helpline: Chatting or calling?



# Final Recommendations (4)

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- *«I am happy that I can finally talk to someone. I don't dare to talk about it with anyone else because I feel so ashamed»*  
(Extract from chat conversation with a 13-year old boy victim of sexual abuse)
- *“I want him to stop doing this, but I don't really know how to deal with it”*  
(Extract from chat conversation with a 15-year old girl victim of sexual abuse)

Ch@dvice project (2012), Daphne programme, EC

## Challenges

- Situations where the abuse is still ongoing
- Ethical issues: Professional secrecy vs. anonymity, etc.





# Big Challenge ahead

How to protect & empower very young users in a post-desktop culture?



# Thanks!



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