

**Leslie Haddon and [Sonia Livingstone](#)**  
*EU Kids Online: national perspectives*

## Report

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## Summary

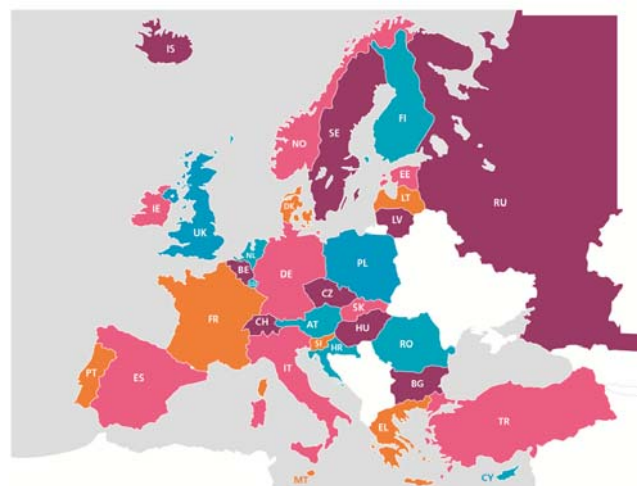
For each country, we present the key statistics and country-specific commentary on children's internet access and use, activities and skills, risks and harm parental mediation and safety, and national policy implications.

- # This report

- How do children use the internet in different countries? What do they do online? Does this lead them into exposure to online risks? Is this harmful and if so for whom?
- What are their parents doing to empower them and ensure their safety? What else can be done to support children's online safety so that they can benefit from online opportunities?

The EU Kids Online network has asked all these questions and more over recent years. In 2011, we published the findings of our pan-European survey of 25,142 children aged 9-16 in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK. Now the network includes 33 countries, adding Croatia, Iceland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, Russia, Slovakia and Switzerland. What is children's internet use and safety like in these?

**Figure 1: The 33 countries in EU Kids Online**



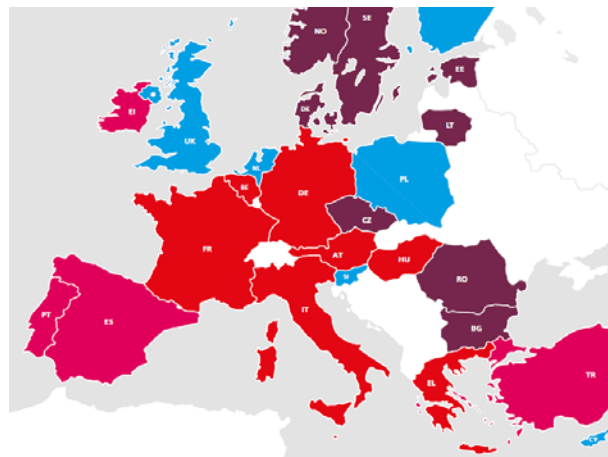
Below we report country findings for all 33 countries. First, we overview the pan-European findings, based on the 25 countries included in our 2010 survey. Then we present findings for each country, relying on EU Kids Online survey findings where available, and referring to recent national studies in other cases. We emphasise what is nationally distinctive in each country. For all countries, we then draw out the national policy implications, addressing these to the stakeholders who, together, can make the internet a better place for children, as specified by EC Vice President Neelie Kroes. See national webpages at [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net) for fuller reports.

## Classifying countries

A crucial finding from our previous research is that increasing internet access brings both increased opportunities but also increased risks. Based on national findings for children's internet usage and the risks they encountered), we classified countries as follows (as referred to in the national reports that follow, and as shown in Figure 2):

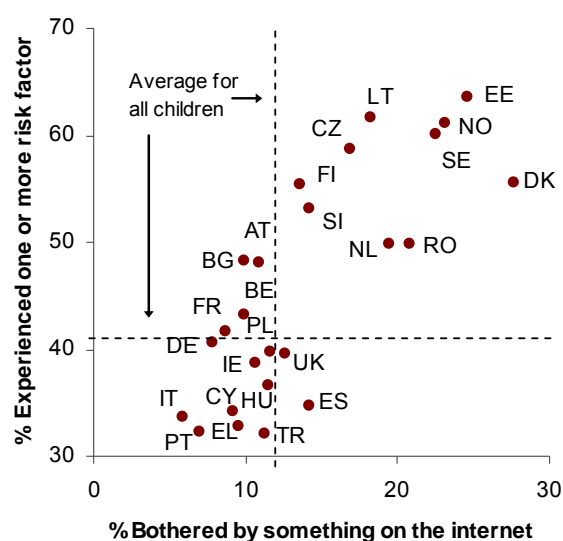
- 'Lower use, lower risk' countries (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Hungary) – here children make the lowest use of the internet, and they are below average on all risks apart from meeting online contacts – online and offline; still, it may be expected that as levels of use rise in these countries, so too will risk.
- 'Lower use, some risk' countries (Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Turkey) have the lowest internet usage, although there is some excessive use of the internet and some problems with user-generated content.
- 'Higher use, some risk' countries (Cyprus, Finland, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, the UK) make high use of the internet but are high only on some risks, possibly because of effective awareness-raising campaigns, regulatory strategies or strategies of parental mediation of children's internet use.
- 'Higher use, higher risk' countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, Norway, Romania, Sweden) include both wealthy Nordic countries and Eastern European countries (better called, 'New use, new risk').

**Figure 2: Country classification based on children's online use and risk**



Equally important was the finding that risk is not inevitably harmful: conceptually too, risk is distinct from harm. The survey findings show that the probability of harm following from online risk is often low, and this too differs by count (Figure 3). Try to explain the difference between risk and harm and so to reduce harm without necessarily reducing risk (which accompanies opportunities and also builds resilience), one must examine the operation of a range of safeguarding and mediating factors (on the part of parents, schools, governments, industry etc).

**Figure 3: Children who have encountered one or more online risk factors by percentage of children who have been bothered by something online**



## 25 European countries

Summarised from Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011) *Risks and safety on the internet: Full findings. The perspective of European children*. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/>

### Access and use

- Use is thoroughly embedded in children's daily lives: 60% of 9-16 year old users go online everyday or almost every day. Children are going online at ever younger ages.
- The most common location of internet use is at home (87%), followed by school (63%). But internet access is diversifying – 49% use it in their bedroom and 33% via a mobile phone or handheld device.

### Activities and skills

- Children do diverse and potentially beneficial things online: 9-16 year olds use the internet for school work (85%), playing games (83%), watching video clips (76%) and instant messaging (62%). Fewer post images (39%) or messages (31%), use a webcam (31%), file-sharing sites (16%) or blog (11%).
- 59% of 9-16 year olds have a social networking profile – 26% aged 9-10, 49% aged 11-12, 73% aged 13-14 and 82% aged 15-16. Among social network users, 26% have public profiles.
- It is likely that more use facilitates digital literacy and safety skills. One third of 9-16 year olds (36%) say that "I know more about the internet than my parents" is 'very true' of them but one third (33%) say it is 'not true' of them.
- Younger children tend to lack skills and confidence. Most 11-16 year olds can block messages from unwelcome contacts (64%) or find safety advice online (64%). Half can change privacy settings (56%) compare websites to judge quality (56%) or block spam (51%).

### Risks and harm

- 12% of European 9-16 year olds say that they have been bothered or upset by something on the internet - including 9% of 9-10 year olds. However, most children do not report being bothered or upset by going online.
- Risks are not necessarily experienced by children as upsetting or harmful. For example, 14% of 9-16 year olds have in the past 12

months seen images online that are "obviously sexual – for example, showing people naked or people having sex." Of those who have seen sexual or pornographic images online, one in three were bothered by the experience and, of those, half (i.e. one sixth of those exposed to sexual images or around 2% of all children) were fairly or very upset by what they saw.

- By contrast, only 6% of 9-16 year olds have been sent nasty or hurtful messages online, and 3% have sent such messages to others. But over half of those who received bullying messages were fairly or very upset. It seems more bullying occurs offline than online: 19% have been bullied either online or offline (compared with 6% online), and 12% bullied someone else online or offline (vs. 3% online),
- 15% of 11-16 year olds have received peer to peer "sexual messages or images ...[meaning] talk about having sex or images of people naked or having sex," and 3% say they have sent or posted such messages.
- Only 1 in 12 children have met an online contact offline, though this is rarely harmful according to children. But 21% of 11-16 year olds have been exposed to one or more types of potentially harmful user-generated content: hate (12%), pro-anorexia (10%), self-harm (7%), drug-taking (7%) or suicide (5%).
- Boys, especially teenagers, are more exposed to sexual images online, while teenage girls are slightly more likely to receive nasty or hurtful messages online. Girls are generally more likely to be upset by the risks they experience.
- Looking across all the risks asked about in the survey, 41% of European 9-16 year olds have encountered one or more of these risks. Risks increase with age: 14% 9-10 year olds have encountered one or more of the risks asked about, rising to 33% 11-12 year olds, 49% 13-14 year olds and 63% 15-16 year olds.

### Parental mediation and safety

- 40% of parents whose child has seen sexual images online do not realise their child has seen them; 56% of parents whose child has received nasty or hurtful messages online say that their child has not; for sexting, the figure is 52% of parents, and for offline meetings with online contacts it is 61% of parents who do not realise their child has gone to these.



- Most parents talk to their children about what they do on the internet (70%) and stay nearby when the child is online (58%). But one in eight parents (13%) do none of the forms of mediation asked about, according to their children. Half of parents take positive steps such as suggesting how to behave towards others online (56%), talking about things that might bother the child (52%), or helping their child when something arose in the past (36%).
- The use of technical safety tools is relatively low: just over a quarter of parents block or filters websites (28%) and/or track the websites visited by their child (24%).
- Both children and parents consider parental mediation helpful, especially 9-12 year olds. Most parents (85%) are confident about their role, feeling they can help their child if the latter encounters something that bothers them online.
- One in two children think their teachers have engaged with their internet use in most of the ways asked about, and 73% of children say their teachers have done at least one of the forms of active mediation asked about. But teachers' engagement with children's internet use is least among 9-10 year olds, and there is much national variation in teachers' role.
- Three quarters (73%) of children say their peers have helped or supported their internet use in at least one of the five ways asked about, and other relatives are also important.
- Only around 9% of parents say that they do not want further information on internet safety. Many parents want far more information on internet safety than they actually get from the child's school, from government or local authorities, from welfare organisations and charities but also, though to a lesser extent, from manufacturers and retailers.
- A new focus is needed on internet safety for younger users, demanding great attention at primary school and even pre-school level.
- Safety provision should apply for new modes of access, with industry protection across all platforms without unduly constraining opportunities.
- Educational support and digital literacy is needed for those who do not progress very far up the 'ladder of opportunities'.
- Schools are vital for developing digital skills and reducing digital exclusion, but teachers need training and resources.
- Positive online content for children should be made a policy priority, particularly for younger children and in small language communities.
- To build resilience online, an agreed framework for digital safety training is needed for educators, awareness-raising and civil society.
- Social networking service providers must address the privacy and safety needs of all users, even those below the 'minimum age'.
- Awareness-raising for children and parents should be up to date, balanced, proportionate, and targeted at those most at risk of harm.
- Responses to young people's exposure to online sexual content should be proportionate and focused on those likely to be harmed by such exposure.
- Sensitive responses to bullying should address online and offline bullying and their interrelation, recognising that bullies may also be victims.
- Parents should know that many children make new contacts online and some meet an online contact offline harmlessly; meeting strangers poses a small but serious risk.
- Policy makers need to be alert to new risks that affect children and young people, especially arising from peer-to-peer contact and user-generated content.
- Awareness-raising should highlight effective coping strategies in safety messages, including talking to parents, friends and teachers.
- Filtering and parental control software should be far easier to use and should promote parental engagement in children's internet use.
- To increase trust, the effectiveness of safety, identity and privacy services used by children should be independently evaluated.

## National policy implications

Summarised from O'Neill, B., Livingstone, S. and McLaughlin, S. (2011) *Final recommendations for policy, methodology and research*. LSE, London: EU Kids Online. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39410/>

- Children have the right to protection and safety online but they must also take responsibility for safety and the rights of others on the internet.
- For children who still lack access, efforts are vital to ensure digital exclusion does not compound social exclusion.

## Austria

Written by Ingrid Paus-Hasebrink, Philip Sinner, Fabian Prochazka and Andrea Dürager.

### Access and use

- As in other countries, nearly all children in Austria who use the internet at all, go online from home (98%). 48% do so in their own room, 50% do so in another room like the living room, which is also used by other family members.
- Compared to the European average (34%) a relatively large number of children in Austria (53%) use the internet via mobile phones or handheld devices such as smartphones.
- The average starting age for using the internet in Austria (ten years) is comparatively high and above the European average, which is nine years. In Sweden and Denmark, the starting age is a low seven years old.
- 51% of Austrian children use the internet daily or almost daily; below the European average of 60%. Another 41% of children in Austria use the internet once or twice a week, 6% once or twice a month and the rest less frequently.
- Occasional signs of excessive Internet use can be found in 24% of Austrian children aged 11 to 16 - this is a lower value than the European average which is 30%. These signs include neglecting family and friends but also work or school due to using the internet.

### Activities and skills

- In Austria, far more children (54%) than the European average (44%) believe that the internet has enough online provision for them. The figure for Germany (45%) is substantially lower than in Austria, despite the fact that they use the same language and so there is a similar level of what is available online. One reason could be that the discourse about the internet in Germany is more risk-oriented than in Austria.
- 62% of Austrian children have a social networking profile. This figure is above the 51% for Germany and the European average of 59%.
- 57% of the Austrian children possessing a profile account have a maximum of 50 friends, 24% have more than 100 friends. This represents the European average more or less.

- 19% of children in Austria, who have a profile, indicate this is publicly accessible. The European average here is 26%. These significant differences between countries can also be an indication that many children do not know the status of their profile.
- Mostly, children appear to have learned that it is unwise to post their address or phone number on their SNS profiles. Overall, 14% have posted such information, although in Lithuania, 35% of children have done this, as have 31% in Hungary. In Austria, 15% have posted their address or phone number, 14% show an incorrect age. The figures for Germany (12% and 9%) are lower than the average and those in Austria.
- Austrian respondents have skills slightly above the European average.

### Risks and harm

- 7% of Austrian parents think that their child has had an online experience that led the child to feel bothered or upset. In contrast, 11% of the children report that they have. These figures are close to the European average. However, 43% of children believe that there are certain things on the internet that may bother children of their age, compared to the European average of 55%. It appears that Austrian children tend to underestimate risks on the internet more than children from other European countries.
- Experiences with sexual images or pornographic content seem to be fairly common among Austrian children, especially in comparison to Germany. 28% have seen such images on some media in the past 12 months (only 10% of children did so in Germany). 17% of children (in comparison to only 4% of German children) state that they had seen them on the internet. However, the Austrian numbers are only slightly above the European average. Austrian parents (6%) rarely think that their child has seen such images. As regards the European average, however, the figures for parents and children are almost on par (12% of parents 14% of children).
- Only 30% of the children that experienced sexual content felt bothered by it – this figure is slightly below the European average (32%).
- 28% of Austrian children report that they have been bullied online or offline, well above the

European average of 19%. 7% of all children have been bullied online - marginally above the European average of 6%. Austrian parents also underestimate the risk of online bullying - 4% say that their child has already been bullied online.

- The risk assessment of children and parents concerning messages with sexual content is clearly different. 17% of the Austrian children report that they have received such messages; this slightly tops the European average of 15%. In contrast, only 5% of the parents (6% is the European average) think that their child has already had such an experience. In Europe generally there seems to be an underestimation of children's experience of these messages, while in Austria the underestimation is slightly higher.
- 16% of those children who received sexual messages felt bothered (this corresponds to 3% of all children who use the internet). This value is well below the European average of 25%.
- 4% of Austrian children have sent or posted sexual messages themselves in the last 12 months. The European average is 3%.
- 45% of all Austrian children have had contact with strangers. 16% of all children had gone to meet someone face to face whom they first met online. This figure is almost twice as high as the European average of 9%. In contrast, only 7% of parents believe that their children have met an online acquaintance offline. This again shows that Austrian parents significantly underestimate actual risks on the internet. The difference in comparison to the European average between children (9%) and parents (4%) is drastically lower.
- 28% of Austrian children have had contact with harmful user-generated content such as suicide or pro-anorexia sites. This figure is above the European average of 21%.
- 9% of Austrian children have experienced online data abuse; this figure corresponds to the European average.
- While the proportion of children in Austria who use the internet daily is relatively low with 51% (Europe: 60%), the proportion of children who have already experienced one or more online risks is quite high, more than 45%. Surprisingly, the children rarely say that they have had

unpleasant feelings about these risk experiences.

## Parental mediation and safety

- In comparison to the rest of Europe, Austrian parents influence their children's internet use rather rarely, but when they intervene, it is more in terms of restrictive measures that set rules about the child's use of the internet.

## National policy implications

- If Austria is compared with the other countries surveyed children's use of the internet is lower, but children are still confronted by many risks. Two other lower-usage and lower-risk countries are France and Germany. But in both countries usage of the internet is a little higher and the risk a little lower than in Austria. This means that the 'risks versus opportunities' relationship is unbalanced in Austria.
- Yet, while in Austria the exposure to online risks is relatively high, Austrian children do feel less bothered by online risks – which seems to be a positive result and underlines other evidence that risks do not necessarily lead to negative experiences.
- One of the most serious issues that needs to be addressed is the fact that Austrian parents tend to underestimate the risks associated with their children's online activities. They should be made aware of this and encouraged to be more active in supporting their children to use the internet safely. Hence the need for targeted actions, for instance through media campaigns, to boost parents' interest in their children's online activities and improve Austrian parents' understanding of the online world.
- The study has further revealed that there is a considerably higher proportion of youngsters in Austria who possess smartphones. On the positive side, this enables them to go online wherever they are and at the same time creates a more intimate environment for using the internet, including popular social networking services. However, parents are often unaware of the actual online functionalities that smartphones offer to their children and simultaneously parents have fewer opportunities to check what their children are doing with these devices. With less opportunity to monitor what children do online, developing children's media literacy becomes even more important.

## Belgium

This summary of national findings is based on: d'Haenens, L. & Vandoninck, S. (2012). Digitale geletterdheid en omgaan met online risico's: positie van Belgische kinderen en jongeren in vergelijking met leeftijdsgenoten in Europa. In L. d'Haenens & S. Vandoninck (Eds.), *Kids Online: kansen en risico's van kinderen en jongeren op het internet* (pp. 7-27). Ghent: Academia Press.

### Access and use

- The living room remains the most popular location for internet use (91%); private access in the bedroom is less common in Belgian families (33%), less than the European average (49%).
- In Belgium, 95% of the 9-16 year olds go online at least once a week, and 66% are online (almost) every day, which is slightly above the European average of 93%.
- The importance of regions is very apparent in Belgium. While 71% of youngsters in Flanders (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) have the opportunity to go online at school, only 27% of the youngsters in the French-speaking part have access to the internet at school - compared to a European average of 63%
- In contrast, French-speaking youth are more used to mobile internet access, with 37% going online using their mobile phone and 15% using other portable devices. In Flanders, only 16% go online using their mobile and 10% use other portable devices. The European averages are fall in between these two figures at 22% and 12% respectively.
- Like the European average, the average age of first internet use in Belgium is nine years old.
- The experience of one of more forms of excessive use (28%) is similar to the European average (30%).

### Activities and Skills

- Belgian children tend to explore educative opportunities of the internet less, with fewer children using the internet for homework and news consumption.
- While on average in Europe the internet is mostly used for homework, in Belgium the entertainment-oriented activity of watching videos turned out to be the most popular online application.

- Creative internet use and online communication are also higher in Belgium compared to the EU average; instant messaging (73%), e-mailing (73%), using a webcam (39%), the use of file sharing sites (28%) and blogs (21%) are all more popular in Belgium.
- Being able to perform on average 4.4 out of 8 digital skills, Belgian children estimate their level of digital skills to be slightly higher than the European average (4.2 out of eight).
- More children in Belgium indicate they are able to block a contact person (73%), to adapt privacy settings (63%), and to block spam (62%). Nevertheless, even in Belgium these digital skills are seriously underdeveloped, especially among the youngest age group of 9-12 year olds.

### Risks and harm

- Belgium belongs to the group of 'medium risk' countries. Nevertheless, when it comes to sexual risks, the percentages encountering these are a little higher in Belgium, with 16% having been exposed to sexual images online and 18% having received sexual messages (compared to 13% and 15% in the overall European context).
- In line with the European average, 30% of Belgian children have had online contact with people they did not know personally. However, Belgian children are somewhat more likely to meet these online contacts in an offline situation (11% in Belgium versus 7% the European average).
- Exposure to negative user-generated content is lower than the European average.. Belgian youngsters are less likely to be exposed to content about self-harm (5%), suicide (2%), pro-anorexia (6%) and hate messages (10%).
- While on average 55% of the children in the Europe think the internet might be risky for children of their age, only 43% of the Belgian children share this opinion.
- Children in Belgium are less shocked and feel less harm compared to their European counterparts when confronted with cyberbullying, sexual images and sexual messages.
- Belgian children seem to be more indifferent, since they tend more often to respond in a passive or fatalistic way: 59% of the children in



Belgium do not do anything at all after being bothered by sexual images, 20% stop using the internet after being bullied online and after receiving unwelcome sexting messages, 29% simply hope the problem goes away by itself.

- Similar to other European countries, Belgian parents also have a tendency to considerably underestimate their children's exposure to online risks, with (depending on the type of risk) 40% to 60% of the parents incorrectly thinking their child has not been exposed to a particular risk online.

## Parental mediation and safety

- Belgian parents mediate their children's internet use a little less intensively compared to the average in Europe.
- Nevertheless, a majority of the parents in Belgium use a combination of communicative and restrictive approaches, with 64% of the parents talking with their children about their internet use, 50% of the parents staying nearby when their child goes online, and 81% of the parents restricting their children's disclosure of personal information.
- Belgian parents have more confidence in the online coping capacities of their children (88% versus 79% in Europe) when coming across something that bothers them.
- Belgian parents are a little more realistic as regards exposure to risk compared to the other European countries, as only 65% believe that their child would not be exposed to online risks in the six months ahead (compared to 72% in Europe). Nevertheless, parents continue to underestimate their children's exposure to sexual messages and their meetings with online contacts.
- A large majority of children in Belgium (75%) agree that their parents are well aware of their offspring's online activities in general, even if less so in the case of sensitive experiences.

## National policy implications

- More initiatives on the use of internet at school would be welcome in Belgium given the relatively low figure on internet use at school, and the lower percentage of children using the internet for schoolwork. In particular, in the French-speaking part of Belgium, school-related internet access should increase.

- More attention to digital literacy is highly recommended, especially in primary education, since "digital literacy" in secondary schools has recently been implemented from a cross-curricular perspective (i.e. not as a separate subject). Initiatives and educational material on digital literacy education are scattered. A central website where all information and material can be found and shared would be very helpful for schools and educators.
- As discrepancies continue to persist between what parents think about what their children face online and their children's actual online experiences, efforts to inform parents about online risks and safety should be encouraged further. Public foundations such as Child Focus and Families' Association (Gezinsbond), already play an active role in parental awareness raising, but their initiatives deserve further support and development.
- In April 2011, a selection of Belgian stakeholders<sup>1</sup> emphasised the importance of:
  - surveying the child's perception of online risks, opportunities and mediation practices by parents, peers and teachers so as to get a better overview of how initiatives on safer internet use have an impact on the child's behaviour and perceptions;
  - taking cultural and political differences into account when developing initiatives on awareness raising, digital literacy and internet safety, given Belgium's two main language communities;
  - equipping important adult stakeholders (other than parents and teachers) working in the area of youth services (social workers, youth movements, etc.) with the necessary skills; too often their ICT skills are insufficient, which explains why they tend to feel insecure about how to guide children in the online world.

<sup>1</sup> OIVO (research and information centre for consumer organisations), CJSM (Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sports and Media), VRT (Flemish Public Television), Gezinsbond (organisation for families with children), ISFE (Interactive Software Federation of Europe).

## Bulgaria

Written by Jivka Marinova.

### Access and use

- According to the EU Kids Online research, Bulgarian children are usually found near the top of many of the cross-country comparative graphs.
- 95% of Bulgarian children who use the internet access it at home (compared to a European average of 87%).
- 61% access the internet in their own room (the European average is 49%).
- Bulgarian children are in third place after Greece and Slovenia as regards accessing the internet via mobile phones
- They are top of the list for average daily usage and 83% go online every day (only in Sweden do 84% of children do this).
- Bulgarian children are among those spending the most time per day on the internet – 120 minutes (compared to the European average of 88 minutes).
- Probably reflecting that pattern of considerable internet activity, Bulgarian children score the highest for excessive use (44%). Only Estonia is greater in this respect with 50% of children scoring for excessive use. Specifically there are three dimensions where Bulgaria stands out. 31% of children feel 'very' or 'fairly often' bothered when they cannot be on the internet, compared to the European average of 11%. 36% had often or sometimes gone with out eating because of the internet (Europe: 17%), 47% had tried unsuccessfully to spend less time on the internet (Europe: 33%)

### Activities and Skills

- In comparison to the European average, Bulgarian children stand out in a few ways as regards activities. In Bulgaria the most important activity is instant messaging (89% vs. for Europe 62%), as opposed to doing school work (76% vs. 85% for Europe). Bulgarian children are also more likely to download music and films: 68% vs. the European average of 44%. However, they are less likely to visit other's SNS profiles (56% vs. 62% for Europe). They are more likely to play games with other people

online (58% vs. 44% for Europe) and post material like photos, videos and music for others to see (50% vs. 39% for Europe)..

- In relation to skills, Bulgarian children are a little above average with 4.7 skills (the European average 4.2).
- However, Bulgarian children are towards the top of the European scores for saying that there is lot on the internet that is good for children of their age (59% versus the European average of 44%).
- 54% have social networking site profile, slightly less than the European overall figure of 59%.
- Yet, Bulgarian children are networking less than other countries in the sense that 52% have fewer than 10 contacts (European average 20%). Only Romanian children have fewer contacts
- 30% have their profiles set to public, just above the European average.

### Risks and harm

- If Bulgarian children are fairly positive about the internet, they are also among those less likely to see it is dangerous: 41% think there are things online that might bother children of their age compared the European average of 55%.
- 33% had seen sexual images on or offline, 20% online (just below the European average). 17% of the latter were bothered (vs. 32% for Europe).
- 21% had been bullied on- or offline, 6% specifically online, the same as for Europe as a whole.
- 14% have seen or received sexual messages, similar to the 15% European average. 18% of the latter were bothered (vs. 25% for Europe).
- 31% had had contact online with someone they had not met face-to face, and 9% had gone on to have a meeting, both figures at or near the European average. 13% of the latter were bothered (vs. 11% for Europe).
- But while Bulgarian children may not be so exceptional as regards the main risk areas studied, 33% had encountered potential harmful user-generated content online, above the European average of 21%, which also puts Bulgaria in the top quarter of countries in this respect.

## Parental mediation and safety

- Bulgarian children can be classified among the “Digital natives” because their parents are very much behind their children in terms of using the internet (only 50% of parents use it regularly).
- According to their children, 91% of Bulgarian parents actively mediate their children’s online experiences, 84% discuss internet safety, 84% restrict their children’s use in some way, 42% electronically monitor their child’s use, and 12% use controls (e.g. filters). Most figures are near the European average apart from monitoring (the European average was higher as 50%) and technical controls (a much higher 28% for Europe)
- Despite the fact that parents interventions are average or less than average for the different forms of mediation, Bulgarian children are somewhat more inclined to feel that parental mediation limits their activities a little or a lot (50%, compared to the European average of 44%).
- Perhaps as a consequence, they are more inclined to ignore what parents say, a lot or a little: 53%, compared to the European average of 36%. Only Czech children score higher in this respect.
- Yet despite some degree of resistance to parental intervention, 19% of Bulgarian children actually feel that their parents should do more (versus the European average of 15%).
- Moreover, Bulgaria is in the top group of countries where parents themselves think that they should do more (72%). This compares to a European average of 53%, and only Cyprus and Romania score higher.
- Bulgarian children are amongst the group that are more likely to say that parents do something different because they had in the past been bothered by something: 15% according to children, versus the European average of 6%. Only Estonian children claim this happens more.
- The awareness of parents of the online activities of their children is something that has to be tackled more seriously – i.e. parents often say that they do not know if their child has had some risky experiences.
- For example, for children who have been bullied online, 28% of parents say they did not know, versus the European average of 15%, and this

was the country with the highest ‘don’t know’ response. The same was true for sexting (54% versus a European average of 27%). The response was amongst the highest and hence above the European average, for seeing sexual images and meeting strangers.

- 66% of Bulgarian teachers mediate the children’s experiences in one way or another, below the European average of 73%.
- In contrast, 82% of peers have done so, above the European average of 73%.

## National policy implications

- The lack of regular research in Bulgaria is a challenge for those professionals dealing with risk assessment and risk prevention when they attempt to formulate policy recommendations.
- Broadband internet is still not widespread in Bulgaria but is gaining ground.
- Bulgaria has been classified in the group of countries with higher use and higher risk as well as in the specific category of Eastern European countries called ‘new use new risk’.
- Although they start to go online at nine years of age in common with most European children, Bulgarian children clearly learn to do everything in a shorter time than in many other countries. This process of rapidly catching-up is alarming given that it is not backed-up by an appropriate educational and regulatory environment.
- At the same time, Bulgarian schools are among the few European schools where computers are not used on a regular basis in classrooms. Hence, the education system from elementary school upwards needs to change dramatically. All professional teachers should have high computer and internet literacy in order to be able to respond to the needs of children. Internet literacy, including internet safety literacy, should be a compulsory specialty in the teachers’ curriculum and in regular re-qualification courses for older teachers.
- Media should be much more engaged in spreading the message about the internet risks and safety of children, specifically targeting parents.
- Elementary schools should be encouraged to raise the awareness of parents on the potential internet activities of their children.

## Croatia

Written by Dunja Potočnik. This summary of national findings is based on: Buljan Flander, G.; Ćosić, I.; Profaca, B. (2009). *Exposure of Children to Sexual Content on the Internet in Croatia. Child abuse & neglect* 33(12), 849-856.

Croatia did not take part in the EU Kids Online survey. The research reported here covered 2700 students of primary and high school age from several Croatian cities (Zagreb, Split, Dubrovnik, Osijek and Opatija). Their age span covers 11 to 18 years, averaging 14 years of age.

### Access and use

- Almost all the children (95%) state that they have a computer (a desk-top or a lap-top) at home, and 85% have internet access at home.
- 49% of these internet users state they use it every day, 34% several times a week, while 17% of them use it several times a month.

### Activities and skills

- Croatian children use the internet for communication with chosen friends (63%), downloading various contents (61%), searching for contents needed for school and learning (47%, which is less than the EU kids Online European average), browsing without a specific aim (42%), using e-mail (20%), using applications for socialising and creating profiles (18%), writing their own blogs (web logs); commenting on other blogs (10%) and participating in discussions via internet chats or forums (9%).
- When asked about using the internet for socialising and communication, 41% of children and youth say they do it every day, while 37% do it several times a week. 43% of children and youth say they spend up to one hour per session communicating with others, while one third spends more than two hours per session.
- The most frequent topics when chatting via the internet are said to be having fun, telling jokes and funny stories (65%), friendship and love (64%), hobbies and specific interests (44%), school and homework (28%), while 20% say they chat about personal problems.

### Risks and harm

- As regards exposure to sexual content on the internet 54% of Croatian children and youth state that they unwittingly came across a web page with naked people's photographs or people having sexual intercourse (more than the European survey average of 14%).
- 24% say that they have received an unrequested e-mail message containing pornographic web page advertisements or links to these pages and 28% of children and youth opened the unwanted message or the link containing pictures of naked people or people involved in sexual activity.
- Boys are statistically significantly more likely to report (unsolicited) exposure to sexual content.
- 18% of children and youth state they had known that the offered page contained pornographic content before they opened it.
- The majority of unwanted exposure took place while the children were using a computer at home (23%), while 3% of them found messages while using a computer at school or at a friend's.
- Similar to the European average, 34% say it did not disturb them and 46% say that they did not notice significant changes in their behaviour.
- Still, some children showed reactions indicating they were disturbed after the exposure – 14% felt uneasiness, 7% shame, 6% feel nervous, while 7% of them say they felt very embarrassed. In terms of behaviour, 4% of them say they were not able to stop thinking about the content they had seen, while 3% say that for some time afterwards they did not use the internet, which indicates a higher degree of stress because of the exposure experienced.
- 22% of the participants say they did not tell anybody about the experience, while 21% of them talked about it with their friends, and 4% told their parents.
- As regards receiving sexual messages during communication via the internet (chat, msn, icq, blog, forum, etc.), 41% say they were asked intimate questions about themselves, their body or questions of sexual nature.
- Girls (43%) were more often asked about intimate details than boys (38%), the difference being statistically significant.
- Older children were more often exposed to intimate questions than younger ones, the



difference being statistically significant. Such questions included: questions related to sex, kissing and personal experiences (67%), questions about private body parts (31%), questions about masturbation experiences (29%), questions about clothes they wear (42%) and invitations to meet or have sex (39%).

- The majority of children did not feel these questions were disturbing – 42% say they did not feel uneasy (the EU Kids Online average was 25%), while 31% of children and youth say they considered the questions they had been asked as funny and a part of the fun. This indicates that children and youth do possess certain knowledge and skills that help them recognise a potential problem, that they know how to protect themselves in such situations and terminate communication that is becoming uncomfortable.
- However, 14% of children and youth felt uneasy; 6% report a feeling of shame; 9% say they felt nervous or irritated and 10% say they felt very embarrassed.
- In addition, when asked whether somebody they had met on the internet requested that they should take self-photos or be video-recorded in a sexualised way, 39% answered 'yes', but they did not do it, while 6% of children and youth say they took their photo and sent it. 31% of children say that the person they met via the Internet sent them a naked photo.
- Regarding abusive behaviour towards others on the internet, 7% say they misused somebody's name and published his/her private affairs on the internet, 5% say they have uploaded another child's photo or video recording with the purpose of ridiculing the person and 7% admit they took someone's identity and say nasty things in the name of that person.
- 14% say they went to meet with an online friend whom they had not known in person before (a little more than the 9% EU Kids Online average). In 14% of cases they were accompanied by their parents, in 49% by their friends, while 37% of them say they were not accompanied by anyone.
- 22% of children and youth think that being disturbed, threatened and receiving sexual messages via the mobile phone and the internet should not be reported, while 78% of them think that such experiences should be reported. 24%

of them do not know whom they should report to, while 9% think they should be reported to the administrator and 37% think they should be reported to the police. 45% of children think that they should talk to their parents about these experiences.

## Parental mediation and safety

- 49% of Croatian children state they are unsupervised when using the internet, while 46% say that parents are sometimes present. Only 3% say that one parent is always present while they are online.
- More than half of the participants (60%) say their parents teach them about the dangers related to the internet and about protection, while one third (36%) think their parents are not interested in what they are doing online.

## National policy implications

- Although countries that have been investigating these issues for years have a relevant legal infrastructure, in Croatia such discussion is only now beginning.
- The very fact that this is the first national research of its kind emphasises the importance of engaging experts on this issue.
- The most alarming data pertain to the percentage of children using the internet without the supervision of a parent or other adult.
- Results from the survey indicate that the experiences of children in Croatia regarding receiving inappropriate and pornographic material via email messages and their emotional reactions, are similar to the research results from other European countries.
- There are some suggestions for promoting internet safety. Young people who stay away from chatrooms and are cautious about communicating with strangers on the internet appear to be solicited at lower rates.
- It may be useful if more prevention efforts for adolescents can come from peers and other sources credible with the group.
- Guidelines for working with children in class were created as part of a larger project to emphasise the benefits for children and their development and possible associated risks in using the internet, as well as to encourage the development of children's self-protection skills in case of exposure to sexual content.

## Cyprus

Written by Elena Aristodemou.

### Access and use

- Most children in Cyprus appear to go online on a computer in their own bedroom rather than in a common area where parents can more easily check what they are doing online.
- 39% of Cypriot children access the internet through the mobile phone but no other handheld device, which is higher than the European average (22%).
- The average age of first access in Cyprus is at 10 years, a number slightly higher than the European average, which is nine years.
- 70% of Cypriot children access the internet every day or almost every day, whereas 26% access it once or twice a week.
- Most 9-16 year olds use the internet for 60 minutes per day on a normal school day, whereas on non-school days most of them use it for more than four hours per day.

### Activities and skills

- Most children from Cyprus use the internet for playing games (86%), watching video clips (84%), school work (79%) and downloading music or films (58%).
- The vast majority of Cypriot children who use the internet (73%) have a social networking profile. Even though EU Kids Online showed that most child keep their profile private (27% of Cypriot children keep a public profile, which is slightly near the European average, 26%), they still accept invitations from strangers while at the same time displaying abundant information about themselves.
- EU Kids Online found that children in Cyprus rank low on digital literacy and safety skills especially as regards changing filter preferences, comparing websites to decide if content is true, blocking unwanted adverts or junk mail/spam and finding information on how to use the internet safely. Digital literacy and safety skills in Cyprus are lower (3.8 out of eight) than the European average (4.2 out of eight skills).
- 18% of 11-16 year olds say they communicate through a social networking website with

people they met online who are not part of their offline social networks. In addition, 33% of Cypriot children had contact with a person they met only on the internet when playing online games.

### Risks and harm

- Cypriot children report that there are things online that bother children of their age even though only a 9% report being bothered themselves by something they experienced online. This percentage is slightly lower than the European average, which is 12%.
- One quarter (24%) of Cypriot 9-16 year olds say that they have seen sexual images in the past 12 months, whether online or offline (similar to the European average of 23%). Only 12% of Cypriot children have encountered sexual images on the internet.
- Among children who have seen online sexual images, most say they were not bothered or upset by the experience. However, 30% of the parents of the children who had seen images say their child has not seen them and 24% say they don't know if they have seen them.
- 15% of children report being bullied online or offline in the past 12 months and 5% say they have been bullied on the internet, which is close to the European average.
- Parental accounts (of children who have been bullied online) showed that 91% of Cypriot parents were not aware their child has been bullied online.
- 11% of 11-16 year old internet users have received sexual messages, although only 3% admit they have sent them. In the Cyprus, 'sexting' appears a little less common than across Europe.
- 53% of parents of Cypriot children who report they have seen or received such messages say that their child has never had such an experience. The percentage is slightly above the European average (52%), which indicates parental awareness in Cyprus is similar to other European countries in terms of seeing, sending or receiving sexual messages.
- A minority of Cypriot children (14%) have had contact with people they did not know face to face before and 6% of those have met in person with people that they met online first.

- Parents seem unaware (82%) that their child has met face to face a person they knew only online. This parental unawareness is far higher than the European average (61%) where parents seem to be more knowledgeable as to what their children do online and offline.

## Parental mediation and safety

- Parents in Cyprus actively mediate their child's internet use and their child's internet safety but they are not so active in monitoring their child's use. Of interest here is the high discrepancy in the responses of parents and children respectively. 34% of Cypriot children report that their parent is monitoring their internet use, while 57% of parents claim to do so. This might be a mere social desirability effect, as parents could have responded as they were expected to answer and not with the truth, while children could have responded with what they would like to be the case and not with the true facts.
- The most popular form of parental mediation according to parents is active safety mediation (95%) through which parents try to explain or help children with their use of the internet such as by explaining why some websites are good or bad, assisting with finding something over the internet, suggesting ways of using the internet safely, suggesting ways on behaving properly on the internet and helping them when something has bothered them on the internet..
- Most parents expressed their wish to be more actively involved in what their children are doing on the internet and likewise children in Cyprus mentioned that they would welcome more parental involvement.
- 50% of Cypriot children seek advice from their peers on how to use the internet safely while 54% also suggest to peers how they can use the internet safely.
- In Cyprus, internet safety is a topic taught to students mainly by their teachers (70%), which is consistent with what more parents would like the school to provide to their children.

## National policy implications

- Online technologies have been on the rise in Cyprus only in the last decade. At the same

time, policy efforts through schools and online safety organisations have attempted to ensure that children are aware of the dangers and can protect themselves when using the Internet.

- The EU Kids Online survey has highlighted the major areas in which policy action is needed in Cyprus. Efforts through schools should be concentrated on increasing the digital literacy and the safety skills of children so that they are able to protect themselves in the cases where they encounter something harmful.
- EU Kids Online has raised the concern that cyberbullying goes largely unrecognised by Cypriot parents and that this can have detrimental effects on children. It is important, then, that parents get more involved in their children's online activities and learn how to identify behaviour that may arise from exposure to cyberbullying, before it is too late to act. Stakeholders and schools with access to parents should take the initiative to educate and alert parents on how to recognise the possible cyberbullying of their children.
- As in some other countries, parents seem unaware of the activities of their children both online and offline. Especially in the cases where children meet online contacts offline, parents should guide their children on how to meet an online contact offline.
- Stakeholders with access to parents should create programmes that educate parents on how to communicate effectively with their children regarding their online activities and their offline impact.
- Future efforts should focus on younger children as they gain internet access. As the age of first use lowers every year, it is important that actions are taken to educate and support children from their first steps in online use.
- More and more Cypriot children access the internet through their mobile phones putting them in the vanguard of new risks associated with personal internet access and, equally, making protective oversight by their parents more difficult.

## Czech Republic

Written by David Šmahel, Anna Sevcikova, Lukáš Blinka, Věra Kontríková, Štěpán Konečný and Hana Macháèková.

### Access and use

- Czech children ranked above the European average in most aspects of internet use.
- Czech children use the internet quite frequently: 75% of children go online every day or almost every day and another 22% go online once or twice a week. They go online most frequently from their own home (99%) or school (76%). 63% of children access the internet from their own bedroom. 39% of children use the internet through mobile phones or other handheld devices. Both of these numbers are above the European average. It seems that Czech children can use the internet more privately, meaning they are under less supervision when doing so.
- Excessive internet use among Czech children aged 11-16 years is slightly above the European average (the Czech mean index is 0.18 and the European index is 0.16).
- 3% of Czech children report that they have gone without eating or sleeping very often or fairly often because of the internet, 12% Czech children say that they have often felt bothered when they could not be on the internet.
- 12% of Czech children state that they often spend less time than they should with either family, friends or doing schoolwork because of the time they spent on the internet.
- 13% of Czech children say that they have tried unsuccessfully to spend less time on the internet (the European average is 12%).

### Activities and skills

- Czech children participate in more different activities online compared to the European average. They are also quite satisfied with internet content in general (56% of Czech children agree strongly with the statement "There are lots of things on the internet that are good for children of my age." and only 5% children say that this statement is not true). These findings are not simply related to digital literacy. The spectrum of the most frequent online activities is the same as in other

European countries: school work, entertainment (playing games, watching videos) and communication (social networking sites, instant messaging, e-mail).

- Czech children can handle four digital skills on average (from a set of eight skills such as "can bookmark a website" or "can change privacy on social networking site"), while The European average is 4.2 skills. Czech children are in the group of the most skilled countries together with Nordic countries and Netherlands.

### Risks and harm

- Generally, Czech children report the second highest prevalence of exposure to sexual material both offline and online in Europe (45%) and the third highest rate of exposure specifically to online sexual material (28%). Czech parents over-estimate their child's experience with sexual material. 58% percent of parents believe that their children have seen sexual material both offline and online and 31% believe that their children have seen sexual material online.
- There are huge differences in age: older children are more likely to encounter sexual material on the internet than their younger peers. Specifically, at age 9-10 11% have seen this kind of material, at age 11-12. This grows to 14 % at age 13-14, and it is 28% and at age 15-16. 55% have encountered sexual material online. The older the children are, the more likely they have seen such material on adult/X-rated websites. By comparison, at age 9-10 only 1% have visited these websites, while at age 15-16 20% claim to have had his experience. A similar trend is apparent when talking about exposure to images that pop up accidentally; at age 9-10 2% have seen them, while at age 15-16 17% report this experience.
- However, only 7% have been bothered by seeing online sexual content, which is slightly higher than the European average.
- 27% of Czech children report that they have been bullied, 7% have had such an experience online. This is slightly higher than the European average (6%). However, among Czech bullying and cyberbullying victims, only 9% were not at all upset by the experience. This is much lower than in Europe generally (19%). Only 5% of Czech parents believe that their child was bullied via the internet. Interestingly, only 1% of



Czech children report that they talked about bullying with parents.

- 44% of all Czech children have had online contact with people they did not know in person. This is a higher value than the European average, which is 33%. Moreover, 13% have met with such online contacts offline, which is again a little higher than in Europe generally (9%). Among Czech children meeting someone offline, 14% were bothered by this experience. Only 1% of Czech parents believe that their child has had such an offline contact with a stranger.

## Parental mediation and safety

- In the Czech Republic, 93% of children and 96% of parents claim that parents are involved in the active mediation of their children's online experiences (e.g. talking about internet use, suggesting ways to use the internet). This places the Czech Republic in the fourth position among European countries. Additionally, Czech parents provide active advice concerning safe use of the internet (93% according to children and 94% according to parents), which is also above European average (also fourth position).
- Czech parents are rather benevolent: they do not use restrictive mediation methods that often. 72% of children report being restricted from some online activities, while 78% of parents report this happens. This gives the Czech Republic one of the lowest positions among the EU countries (with Estonia, Poland and Lithuania).
- Parental monitoring of children's internet use (e.g. visited websites, friends and contacts added to social networking site profiles) is close to the European average in the Czech Republic. 68% of parents report that they monitor their children while only 45% of children report being monitored. A similar discrepancy between the reports of children and parents is common across all European countries.
- 19% of parents say that they used technical mediation (e.g. websites), while 17% of children state that their parents use these kinds of methods. This is rather low compared to the European average, but similar to other post-communist countries and Nordic countries.
- 48% of Czech children think that their parents limit their online activities. This is very close to

the European average. 8% think that their online activities are severely limited by the parents and 40% think that they are only a little limited.

- 54% of Czech children ignore the internet restrictions of their parents, which is the highest number of all European countries. 9% of children ignore parental restrictions a lot, 45% a little, while only 46% admit they adhere to the restrictions. Also, Czech children are among those European children who are the least likely to want their parents to be more interested in what they do on the internet. Only 7% of children wished their parents to be more involved, while the European average is more than double that amount.

## National policy implications

- The Czech Republic is one of the countries with very frequent internet use and – perhaps naturally – with a relatively high incidence of online risks in comparison to other European countries. Similarly to their peers from Sweden and Estonia, Czech children take a relatively liberal and intensive approach to the internet, which potentially puts them in greater risk. Yet, their above-average in internet use allows them to at least partially deal with such risks and also allows them to utilise better the positive aspects of the internet. This represents a challenge for schools, parents and others responsible for children to balance the present wide variety of opportunities against ensuring a safer online environment for children.
- Active parental mediation is relatively strong in the Czech Republic in comparison to other European countries, while restrictive parental mediation is relatively weak. Given Czech children often state that their parents limit their internet use too much and children also ignored parental rules it seems that Czech children demand a good deal of freedom in the online world. Children should be educated more in schools given that they often tend to ignore parental advice
- Lastly, the Czech Republic is a country with relatively high intergenerational differences in the perception of online risks as parents often underestimate the risks of the online activities of their children. Hence parent-child communication about internet use should be improved.

## Denmark

Written by Gitte Stald.

### Access and use

- Danish children have one of the highest national percentages regarding access to the internet at home (98% compared to 87% across Europe) and the greatest access in their own bedroom (74% compared to the European average of 49%). 15-16 year olds almost all have access in their bedroom (95% compared to 67% across Europe).
- 17% of Danish children access the internet from a handheld device, which is a little over the European average of 12%. 22% access it from their mobile phone but no other handheld device, also the average across Europe.
- Denmark has, together with Sweden, the youngest internet users. Danish children are on an average seven years old when they start going online, compared to the European average of nine years.
- 81% of Danish children use the internet every day (60% in Europe), 16% use it once or twice a week, and 2% and 1% use it respectively once or twice a month or less often. They are also online for a longer time, especially boys with an average time online of 124 minutes daily compared to girls who are online 104 minutes (the Europe figures are 91 and 85 minutes).

### Activities and skills

- Young Danes' internet activities match the European average – they know how to do 4.6 activities out of eight (the European average is 4.2). The relatively low number may reflect the fact that many very young children use the internet in Denmark and they do fewer things online. Compared to the European average young Danes read less news online (16% against 48%). Playing computer games and watching video clips are the most common activities in Denmark (90% and 88%), followed by doing homework (83%, compared to 85% in Europe).
- Interestingly, the activities that most Danish children (age 11+) manage are bookmarking a homepage (DK 79%, EU 64%), blocking messages from someone you don't want to hear from (DK 76%, EU 64%) and changing privacy

settings on social network sites (DK 76%, EU 56%).

- Young Danes are among the top countries when it comes to having profiles on one or more social networking sites (75% compared to 59% for Europe), including on those sites that some are actually too young to use (e.g. Facebook). The number of children with a private profile is somewhat larger than across Europe (47% compared to 43%) but relatively more Danes say they do not know if their profile is public or private (12% and 3% for Europe). This tendency is more explicit among the youngest users.
- Fewer Danish children find that it is easier to be oneself on the internet (43% versus 50% for Europe). But, the majority think that the internet is a good space for communication and exchange regarding different topics (76% and 45% in Europe), but not necessarily for talking about personal matters (30% and 32% in Europe).
- More young Danes than Europeans generally meet others online whom they have not met first offline (39% vs. 25% for Europe). This is most typical for boys (55% against 31% for Europe) compared to girls (25% against 20% for Europe). This may be due to boys spending more time playing online computer games where they meet new people. Young Danes primarily meet new people through virtual worlds (DK 60% and Europe 30%), computer games (DK 55% and Europe 28%), and chatrooms (DK 44% and Europe 29%) and less often through social networking sites (DK 12% and Europe 8%).

### Risks and harm

- Danish children's' use of online opportunities are characterised by "more of everything" compared to the European average: early access, high frequency of use, long time spent online and access through many platforms. This picture of extensive use is reflected in the relatively high percentage of Danish children (56%) who encounter one or more of the risks that are defined in the EU Kids Online survey.
- 28% of Danish children who experienced risks feel somewhat or very bothered. This is more than twice the European average of 12%. In part this reflects the fact that more access and use gives rise to more exposure to risk, and hence, also, to harmful experiences.

- Interestingly, however, almost all young Danes (94%) say that they believe that there are things on the internet that may not be good for children their age. The European average is 55%.
- More children have seen sexual images online and offline compared to the European average (42% and 23%). The tendency is the same in the other Nordic countries. Of the 42% of Danish children who have seen sexual images, 28% have seen them on websites.
- A quarter of all Danish children have experienced being bullied recently, that is, 75% reply that they have not been bullied (online and offline) over the past 12 months which is less than across Europe (81%).
- 15-16 year old Danish girls are more likely to be bullied online (20%, vs. 9% in Europe) than boys (9%, vs. 6% in Europe).
- 16% of the young Danes have seen or received sexual messages within the past 12 months, which is close to the 15% European average.
- Young Danes are generally more exposed to potentially harmful content online than the European average (29% vs. 21%). The difference occurs in part because 46% of 14 to 16 year old girls and 31% of 14 to 16 year old boys experienced these types of content. Girls especially encounter hate messages, and find information about self-inflicted harm, and extreme weight loss methods.

## Parental mediation and safety

- Parents' perception of their own engagement in their children's online activities is another area of concern: 47% think that they should take more interest (53% in Europe), but only 6% of the children think so (15% in Europe)
- Only 15% of Danish parents believe that their children have experienced something shocking or worrying, even if the number according to children is almost double.
- The majority of Danish children find parental mediation to be sufficient. They also think that their parents are competent users. 67% of the parents have, according to the children, suggested safe ways to use the internet. Only 5% of the children say that parental mediation limits their activities a lot, and 27% say it limits them somewhat.
- Danish parents seem to feel very confident with their children's coping capabilities and only 14%

used blocking/filtering tools to prevent children's access to certain websites. The European average is 33%.

- 31% of the Danish children do not feel that they know more about the internet than their parents. They also appear to listen to their parents' advice: 2% (7% for Europe) ignored parental advice a lot, 17% ignore it somewhat (29% for Europe) and 81% do not ignore it (64% for Europe).

## National policy implications

- Denmark has a long tradition of promoting institutional and public awareness. The general principle has been to disseminate information and examples of best practice at all levels. In this context the fact that the vast majority answered "yes, there are things on the internet that are not good for children my age" indicates that Danish children have listened to "campaigns" from parents, from schools, read the Media Council's information material, and perhaps also listened to public debates. These efforts must be continued and strengthened through increased dissemination of knowledge, best practice examples and collaboration.
- Another area of concern is that children often engage in online activities that have not been designed for their age group. The youngest children in the survey are most troubled by and find it more difficult to cope with negative online experiences of all kinds. In some areas older children are more exposed to risks but they are also more capable of coping.
- One concern is that we may not have reached the most vulnerable children through this survey, as they may not have participated in it. This is an area where more studies are needed that focus on such groups, followed by initiatives, such as looking into positive online opportunities, directed specifically towards this group.
- The vast majority of young Danes do not remember a "pre-internet" time or a pre-mobile phone time. Getting new devices such as smartphones does not revolutionise their everyday life but adds to the overall opportunities and instant access and connectivity. But, online access through advanced platforms calls for more knowledge about the specific risk and harm factors related to them.

## Estonia

Written by Veronika Kalmus, Kersti Karu, Lennart Komp, Pille Runnel, Pille Pruulmann-Vengerfeldt, Andra Siibak and Kadri Ugur. Translated by Inga Kald, Veronika Kalmus, Kersti Karu, Lennart Komp, Maria Murumaa-Mengel and Kairi Talves.

### Access and use

- 96% of 9-16 year old Estonian children use the internet at home and over half of them use it in their own bedroom or another private room. 38% use a mobile device to access the internet, 31% of them use their mobile phone. These indicators are close to the European average.
- Similarly to Nordic countries, Estonian children start using the internet at an early age, when eight years old. 82% of children use the internet daily, so Estonia is among the countries with the highest internet frequency of internet use.
- Estonian children are at the top when it comes to excessive use of the internet – half of the children admit that because of internet use, other activities have been neglected or they have tried unsuccessfully to spend less time on the internet. The European average is 30%.

### Activities and skills

- 44% of Estonian children agree with the statement that the internet provides a lot of age-appropriate material for them – this figure is the same as the European average and is a good result for a small linguistic community.
- Estonian youth report that they have about five (5.1) digital skills on average, which places them among the most skilful children in Europe.
- 71% of Estonian children have a profile on a social networking site; seventh to eighth place in Europe. The average number of contacts is quite modest, similarly to young Finns. 30% of Estonian young have set their SNS profile to public, 27% have posted their home address or phone number.

### Risks and harm

- Estonian young have a good deal of exposure to sexual images: 29% had seen sexual images online, 37% had seen sexual images on the internet or offline in the past 12 months. These

figures are similar to the Nordic and Eastern European countries

- 49% of Estonian children who have been exposed to sexual online content have been bothered by it. Estonian and Turkish children are at the top of the European ranking.
- In contrast to the other risk areas, Estonian parents have quite a realistic perception of their children's exposure to sexual images. 31% of the parents think their child has seen sexual images online.
- 19% of children have seen or received sexual messages. That number places Estonia on joint fourth position with France and Lithuania. 3% of all 11-16 year olds in Europe say that they have posted or sent a sexual message.
- Parents tend to underestimate their children's contact with sexual messages. Only 9% of Estonian parents think that their children have experienced sexual messaging.
- Those children in Estonia who have received sexual messages appear particularly likely to have been bothered by this experience: 34% admit to this. This number is higher only in Turkey and Romania.
- More than 40% of Romanian and Estonian children have experienced bullying (which is twice as much as the average for all countries); in these two countries every seventh child who uses the internet has experienced online bullying.
- Estonian parents are less informed about their children being bullied than European parents on average: 68% of Estonian parents whose child had been bullied think that the child have not experienced online bullying,
- Estonian children stand out as first in Europe in terms of meeting face to face with someone they had first met online (25%). This was similar to Lithuania (23%). There were equally many (54%) children in Estonia and Sweden who had met online with someone whom they had not met before. Lithuania (52%) was the third country. The average in Europe was 30%.
- The most striking gap between children's and their parents' answers is found in Estonia and Lithuania: only 11% of Estonian and 7% of Lithuanian parents say that their child has met face to face with someone they first met online.



## Parental mediation and safety

- 86% of children and 90% of parents state that parents engage in active mediation of children's internet use (European averages are respectively 90% and 87%). 89% of children have got advice from parents on internet safety, and with this Estonia is in 13th position, slightly exceeding the European averages (87% and 86%, according to children and parents.).
- Estonia has a low level of parental restrictive mediation. 61% of children and 73% of parents say parents limit children's online activities. Only Lithuania displays lower figures (54% and 60%); the European averages are 85% and 90%, respectively. There is also a large gap between Estonian parents' and children's answers (12%), the highest after Poland.
- Monitoring the child's internet use takes place according to 53% of children and 61% of parents, which is quite close to the European averages (50% and 64%).
- 16% of parents say that they use technical mediation, while 12% of children state that their parents do so. This is similar to other Eastern European countries where technical restrictions on internet use are less common. European averages are 33% and 28%, respectively; Estonia is in 20th position.
- Only 5% of children answered that parental mediation restricts their internet use "very much"; 23% say it does so "a little" and 72% replied "not at all", while the European averages were 11%, 33% and 56%, respectively. 44% of Estonian children ignore parental restrictions "very much" or "a little" (the sixth position in Europe); the European average is 37%.
- 18% of both parents and children state that parents have done something differently when the child has been bothered by something on the internet (the highest in Europe). The consensus between Estonian parents and children is remarkable as in Europe 15% of parents and 6% of children think the same way.
- 66% of parents admit that they should pay more attention to their children's internet use whereas only 16% of children think the same (European averages are 53% and 15%).
- Estonian teachers are quite active in mediating children's internet use: 72% of children say that their teachers had used active mediation strategies and 15% report that teachers have

employed some other methods (European averages are 73% and 8%).

- Peers are also important agents for mediating internet use. Estonia and Finland have the highest position in Europe, where 86% of children have received advice about internet use from friends (the European average is 73%),
- Parents, teachers and peers are almost equal in terms of helping children with safer internet use: Estonian children say 57% of parents, 53% of teachers and 39% of peers have given advice on how to use the internet safely.

## National policy implications

- Estonia is classified a "higher use, higher risk" country.
- The percent experiencing harm is always lower than that for experiencing risks, but the two are correlated, especially in the case of Estonia. This country has the highest proportion of children who have experienced one or more online risks, and the second highest for children being bothered by something on the internet.
- Another rule applies: the more children in a country use the internet daily, the more they experience both risks and opportunities. Estonia and Lithuania belong to the countries where the correlation between risks and opportunities manifests itself particularly strongly.
- Given that Estonian children experience high levels of cyberbullying as well as offline bullying, policy should differentiate less between the online and offline world. Counselling and teaching should emphasise transferring online coping strategies to offline situations and vice versa.
- Considering that Estonian children start using the internet at a very early age, the high proportion of children attending kindergartens, and relatively low levels of parental awareness of children's risk experiences, kindergartens can be important for parental awareness raising and should be employed more intensively.
- As creating positive internet content may be a problem for smaller language communities such as Estonia, where the market size sets limits to the diversity and quality of commercial production, public service, NGO and government initiatives are essential for content production and the related fund-raising.

## Finland

Written by Reijo Kupiainen, Annikka Suoninen, Sirkku Kotilainen, Kaarina Nikunen.

### Access and use

- While Finland has long been one of the top countries for internet use, differences between European countries have gradually diminished. 79% of Finnish children use the internet daily whereas the average in Europe is 60%. Compared to the European average many more children go online at school (84% vs. 63%) and at home (97% vs. 87%) – more than half from their bedroom (58%) – but only little more when they are “out and about” (12% vs. 9%).
- 36% use the internet via a mobile phone or handled device, 24% access the internet via mobile phone, near the European figure (22%).
- 9-16 years olds children were eight years old on average when they first used the internet.
- The average time spent online was 95 minutes per day, higher than European average (88 minutes). Among 25 European countries the country ranking of spending time on the internet is twelfth.

### Activities and skills

- Finnish children have a lower number of online activities than children in Europe on average, even though the daily use of the internet is remarkably higher than European average.
- The most popular internet activities among Finnish kids are playing games alone (84%), watching video clips (82%), receiving and sending email (72%), using the internet for schoolwork (72%) and visiting social networking sites (66%).
- Using the internet for schoolwork, on the other hand, is less common than in European countries on average (72% vs. 85%).
- In comparison to other countries Finnish youth stands out in terms of digital skills: they report that they had more digital skills (5.8) than children in any other European country (the average being 4.2), but only about one third (36%) can change filter preferences.
- 67% of children who use the internet in Finland have their own social networking profile, a little more than the European average of 59%. 46%

of 9-12 year olds have a profile, despite the fact that most use Facebook, where the minimum age is 13.

- Finnish children, together with Romanian, Bulgarian and German children, have the lowest number of contacts on social networking sites. Most SNS users in Finland have their profile set to private or partially private but 28% of Finnish children have a public profile, which is about the same as the European average of 26%.

### Risks and harm

- 14% say that they have been bothered or upset by something online in the past year, this figure is about the same as the European average (12%).
- The most common online risk for young people in Finland was seeing sexual images. 23% of children report that they have seen sexual images online in the past 12 months and 37% at all, online or offline (much more than European average of 14% online and 23% at all whether on- or offline). 6% have seen online sexual images including nudity, 9% have seen images of someone having sex, 9% have seen someone's genitals and 9% have seen violent sexual images, that is much more than European average (2%).
- Among children who have seen online sexual images 20% of children say that they were bothered or upset by this experience. Half of their parents say that their child has seen such images, which is more than the European average (35%). 9-10 year olds are less likely to have seen sexual images but more likely to have been bothered or upset by such an experience.
- Bullying online is rare. 5% of children report that they have been bullied online. Bullying seems to be more common offline. 18% say that they have been bullied online or offline in the past 12 months. 11% of the parents report that their children have been bullied online. The gap between parents' and their children's answers is among the largest in Europe.
- 18% of 11-16 year olds have received sexual messages, which is more than European average (15%), and 3% have sent them. 'Sexting' seems to be little more common in Finland than across Europe generally. Once again parents in Finland are quite well aware of

whether their child has seen or received sexual images online, 57% of parents say that they know about this.

- 49% of Finnish children have had contact online with someone they have not met face to face. The percentage is much higher than the European average of 30%. 10% have gone to an offline meeting with “strangers” first met online, but half of them were someone who was a friend or family member of someone else she/he knew in person face to face.
- 23% of Finnish 11-16 year olds (vs. 21% across Europe) have seen one or more types of potentially harmful user-generated content.
- Finland has been classified as a “higher use, some risks” country where children have encountered fewer risks in comparison to those other countries where children use more internet than European average.

## Parental mediation and safety

- Parents report that they are especially interested in the internet use of their children. The parents also assumed that their children had experienced more harm on the internet (i.e. being bothered) than what was reported by the children themselves. Almost in all the other countries the result was the opposite.
- Finnish parents and children disagree on how much parents mediate children’s online life. 98% of parents say that they actively mediate but only 89% of children say that their parents do so. In comparison to other countries only Sweden had a similar difference between children’s and parents’ answers. When asked how much parents monitor their children’s internet use the difference between children’s and parents answers was 30%.
- 94% of parents report that they talk with their 9- to 12-year-old children about what they do online, while 85% have the same discussions with older children. However, this means that 15% of families of 13- to 16-year-olds do not have a discussion culture as regards internet use.
- 27% of parents, but only 15% of children, say that they, the parents, block or filter some types of websites at home, which is lower than European average (parents 33%, children 28%).
- While figures for parents’ role in mediating internet use were the opposite in Finland and

Sweden, peer support was reported to be particularly relevant in these two countries. 86% of children say that their friends have helped them to do or find something on the internet. This is the highest percentage in Europe, where the average was 73%.

- Teachers’ mediation is also at a high level in Finland. 95% of children say that teachers are engaged with the children’s internet use. This is substantially higher than the European average of 73%.

## National policy implications

- Finland is a country where children use the internet a great deal but also encounter fewer risks than in the other Nordic countries where the usage is also high.
- Notably, young people in Finland seem to have more digital skills than children in any other country in the survey. Usually greater usage increases skills and therefore restrictive mediation is not the best way to mediate internet use. In the case of Finland, parents practice above average active mediation of use but below average restrictive mediation. This kind of active mediation is associated with lower risk and lower harm. It appears that in terms of active mediation Finnish parents talk with their child about the internet and share online activities with them.
- Parents also need support in order to strengthen family interaction. Therefore it is important to reinforce parental awareness of internet safety and an understanding of internet environments such as social networking sites that require new kinds of privacy management.
- Schools are also important places to learn about internet safety. Internet safety should be part of regular school subjects and more specifically ICT teaching in schools. The principal recommendation in Finland is that media education and the pedagogical use of ICTs should be also part of Finnish national core curriculum.
- It is important to enhance children’s reasonable, positive and productive use of ICTs and the media and strengthen their digital citizenship and media literacy. 21<sup>st</sup> century citizenship includes safe and creative use of the internet and digital social networks.

## France

Written by Catherine Blaya.

### Access and use

- Children in France spend a longer time online with an average time of about 118 minutes (2 hours) per day while the European average is 88 minutes.
- They access the internet less often with a mobile or handheld device. But the use of webcams is more common than the European average (48% vs. 31%).
- French participants in the survey are less likely to go online in a private room (41% vs. 49%) or in a public library/other public places (7% vs. 12%). From these results we can conclude that fewer children in France use outside public places to go online compared to the other European countries while the use of the internet is much more common in a home shared space.
- Although fewer children state that they had tried unsuccessfully to spend less time on the internet than the European average (35% vs. 42%), more than one child out of two acknowledges that they carried on surfing even when they were not interested. One in three spent less time with their family or friends because they were online.

### Activities and skills

- Children are also more creative than in many other countries. More of them have written blogs (23% vs. 11% for Europe), to use file sharing sites (26% vs. 11%), posted materials online (41% vs. 39%) and created a pet or avatar (26% vs. 18%). They also spend more time in virtual worlds (27% vs. 16%).
- Fewer children report using the internet for schoolwork. The most common activity is reading or watching the news online. Although the question does not in itself show this, news on the internet is more likely to be about pop stars and famous people than world news.
- Slightly fewer children in France have a social networking profile compared to children in Europe overall (54% vs. 59%). Children from the lower SES homes are more likely to have a profile. Children in France report substantially more SNS contacts than in most of Europe, just after Hungary, Belgium, the UK and Poland. In

France, children are also less likely to have a profile set to public access.

- A higher percentage of females than males. 13% of the 9-10 years old and 37% of the 11-12 have such a profile. Although these percentages are lower than in many other European countries, it is a worry as far as risk taking is concerned. Children report more SNS contacts than in most of Europe.
- Children in France have greater digital technical skills than their European counterparts with 75% saying that they know how to block messages from someone they do not want to hear from (64% for Europe). Bookmarking websites (67%), changing privacy settings on a social networking profile (62%), blocking unwanted adverts or junk mail (61%), and deleting the record of which sites you have visited (61%) are skills claimed by most young people.

### Risks and harm

- In terms of risks, fewer French children say they have been bothered or upset by something on the internet (8%), though more parents in France believe they have (10%). Children in France also report the least exposure to harmful user generated content (25th of 25 countries).
- French children are more likely to say they have received sexual messages or seen sexual or pornographic images online than the European average (29% vs. 23%). Nearly one quarter of the 11-16 year olds say they have seen online sexual images including nudity and images of someone having sex (39%).
- They are below the European average for reporting being bothered or upset about such messages or images though (27% vs. 32%).
- As in the other participating countries, risk increases with age.
- The overall level of bullying in France (both online and offline) is higher than the European one (26% vs. 19%) and higher SES children claim higher percentages of bullying, which could be due to a greater awareness of the issue. However percentages for online or mobile phone bullying are very similar to the European ones (5% vs. 6%).
- 17% of the participants in the survey report they have been involved in bullying someone else offline or online - lower than the European average (12%).



- One child out of five (20%) reports they have seen or received sexual messages online, mainly on the Internet (19%). 4% of them received such contents more than once a week. This compares with 15% receiving them across Europe, 3% more often than weekly.
- If the percentages of children who have had online contact with strangers (one third) is similar to the European average, this is not the case for meeting these strangers face to face. Children in France are more likely to report they have met strangers face to face, compared to the European average (12% vs. 9%).

## Parental mediation and safety

- French children are more likely to say that their parents mediate their activities on the internet. Most parents, as in Europe generally, talk with their children about what they do online (73%). French parents are, like German parents, among the most restrictive parents and among the highest in Europe as regards the use of technical safety tools. As it happens, French teenagers are more likely to complain about parental restrictive mediation and think that it limits their activities on the internet. But, they are also above the European average in terms of saying they ignore parental recommendations for safe internet use, especially within the 13-16 age range. They also think that their parents' level of mediation should remain the same.
- Socio demographical factors do influence the results. As a matter of fact, children from higher SES spend less time on the internet, take less risks and parents are more active mediators of their online activities according to both parents and children,
- Teachers' mediation of internet use is low in France compared to other Northern Europe countries, as is peer mediation, either in terms of helping when children have a problem or offering internet safety advice. Teachers are involved in supporting children who are bothered by something online although they are less inclined to provide safety guidance. Both of these areas require further support and are the subject of policy recommendations in the French context. However, when asked, teachers do provide support and help.

## National policy implications

- As in the other European countries future efforts should focus especially on younger children as they gain internet access. Schools have to make much more effort since other research shows that access to the internet in French schools is very strictly controlled (Fluckiger, 2010), which has a negative effect on the children's willingness to use internet within educational settings. This is reflected in our findings, school being the second place where children go online in contrast to the European average.
- Taking into account that low SES children seem to be less informed about the risks they take, their parental supervision is less active and that they spend more time on the internet, more targeted interventions should be aimed at them through schools to ensure a safe and positive use of the internet. Parents should be empowered to be more supportive and to encourage their children to use the Internet safely.
- French stakeholders should carry on their efforts on all national and educational levels to raise awareness on bullying, its consequences and safety issues on the internet since 1 out of 4 child reports bullying and 17% having bullied which is above the European average.
- Given the percentages of young people who meet strangers online and then offline, safety issues should be disseminated more in depth to the young people in order to reduce risk taking and vulnerability to abuse and sexual predators.
- Quite a few children report they have been exposed to blatant sexual contents online. Media providers and families should pay more attention to children's exposure to sexual contents online. Education to promote safer surfing habits should be intensified in that respect.
- When asked who provided help when something bothered them, children report that the ones to provide help are parents (51%), teachers (43%), peers (14%). Other children should be empowered and trained to be able to help their friends in case problems occur since worldwide research indicates that when they are in trouble, children first talk to their friends.

## Germany

Written by Claudia Lampert and Uwe Hasebrink.

### Access and use

- As in other countries, nearly all children who ever go online use the internet at home (99%). 51% access the internet from their own room (near the EU average of 49%), 48% from another room, like the living room, which is also used by other family members.
- Compared to the European average (34%) a relative large proportion of children in Germany (56%) access the internet via mobile phones and smartphones.
- At around ten years old, the average starting age for the internet use in Germany is slightly above the European average. In the Nordic countries, the Netherlands and Great Britain, the starting age is earlier at eight or – as in Sweden – even at seven years old.
- 55% of the German children surveyed use the internet daily or almost daily; this value is below the European average (60%). A further 36% of German children are online at least once or twice a week, 7% once or twice a month and 3% less often.
- 21% of 11-16 year olds occasionally show signs of excessive use of the internet, which is about 9% below the European average. One of these signs is – for instance – the neglect of family and friends or work for school as a result of internet use.

### Activities and skills

- 51% of the German children have set up a profile on a social networking site. This is less than the European average (59%), only in Turkey and Romania is the number even lower than in Germany. This cautious attitude on the part of German children is also reflected in the relatively small number of contacts within the social networks. Only 11% have more than 100 contacts, 17% less than the European average.
- 22% of children who have a profile indicated this is publicly available - slightly less than the European average (26%). The differences between countries could also be an indication that some children do not know to what extent their profile is public.
- 12% reveal personal information such as an address or telephone number to their online

networks. 9% provide a false age, which is about 7% below the European average

- The 11-16 year olds were asked about various digital literacy and safety skills, for example, using bookmarks, filter or privacy settings. In comparison to the other European countries, German respondents have an average skill-level.

### Risks and harm

- Both the children and their parents were asked whether the child has already had some experience on the internet that had bothered the child. 6% of German parents think that their child has had such an experience while 8% of the children affirmed this. In contrast, about half of the children (48%) say that the internet contains certain things that can be very disturbing for children of their age. All these values are below the European average, the perception of risk shown by German children and parents is therefore comparatively low.
- Regarding experiences with pictures of a sexual or pornographic content, German children seem to have rather rarely encountered them: 10% of the 11- 16 year olds have seen such images in any media over the last twelve months; only 4% say that they have seen them on the internet. All other countries have higher scores.
- Comparing these results with the perceptions of parents, it turns out that German parents expect that it is far more likely that their child has already seen such pictures (9%), compared to what is reported by the children (4%). However, the relevant data for parents and children in Europe generally are almost equal.
- While German children's experiences of sexual content are relatively rare, 36% felt very/fairly upset when they did encounter it – a value that is slightly above the European average (34%).
- Similar to the European average of 15%, 16% of German 11-16 year olds report that they have already received messages with a sexual content (Sexting); 2% have even sent those messages.
- In this case, parents underestimate the frequency of this risk. Only 6% of the parents believe that their child has received sexual messages.
- 28% of those children who had received sexual messages feel uncomfortable because of this. This represents 4% of all children who use the internet.

- 16% of German children report that they had been bullied (offline or online), 5% have had such experiences online. Both values correspond to the European average. However, the result that online bullying is less common than other forms of bullying is also confirmed by the German data.
- Parents estimate the frequency of online bullying to be slightly higher than that corresponding to the reports of children: 6% say their child has already been bullied online.
- 38% of all German children have had online contact with people they did not know personally. 11% have also met such online contacts offline. Both values are slightly higher than the European average.
- Only 7% of the parents believe that their child has already met online contacts offline.
- 18% of German children had seen potentially harmful user-generated content, just a little below the European average of 21%.

## Parental mediation and safety

- As in the most countries, German parents and children show a high agreement regarding parental mediation.
- 95% of the German parents say that they promote the child's internet safety by, for example, explaining why some websites are good or bad, suggesting ways to use the internet safely, helping children when something bothered them on the internet or when they have problems finding something on the internet. 90% of the children confirm the answers of the parents.
- Both German parents and children say that there is a high level of restrictive mediation of children's internet use (93% and 92%), which is slightly higher than the European average (90% and 85%).
- Parents and children have a different perception of the parental monitoring activities: 62% of the parents say that they check the websites the child has used, the profile on a social network, the email or instant messages, but only 47% of the children seem to be aware of this. The data correspond to the European average.
- 23% of the German parents use some means of parental control and blocking or filter software (33% on European level).
- 40% of the children say that parental mediation limits their online activities. 27% of the children state that they sometimes ignore it what their

parents say when they use the internet. Only 10% of the German children wish that their parents would show more interest for their online activities.

- Close to the European average, 77% of the children say that their teacher mediate the child's internet use either by helping in difficult situations or with problems, by explaining things or suggesting ways to behave online or use the internet safely, by talking about the online activities or by making roles for the internet use in school.

## National policy implications

- Overall German children use the internet less frequently and even less diversely compared to the European average. This is associated with a lower probability of having unpleasant experiences online. In this respect, Germany is a part of a group of countries with lower internet usage and lower risk, such as France, Italy, Portugal and Spain.
- This finding is consistent with the classification based on earlier empirical evidence (see Hasebrink et al. 2009). Lower use of the internet goes along with a comparatively low level of digital skills. Although on average children in Germany use the internet less and encounter less risk than their peers in other European countries, the patterns of social and individual influences on risk and harm are quite similar to other countries. This means that many of the general recommendations that have been developed on the basis of the European sample also hold true for this country.
- With regard to specific observations that have been emphasised during the stakeholder meetings in Germany, one aspect is the fact that as a rule parents in Germany overestimate the risk and harm their children experience on the internet. Combined with the low level of digital skills one can conclude that German parents should be encouraged to realise the positive aspects of the internet and to support their children in discovering the opportunities provided by the internet.
- With regard to concrete measures the strategy of 'white lists' has received particular attention in the German debates.

## Greece

Written by Liza Tsaliki.

### Access and use

- Children in Greece access the internet via for different devices on average (from a variety including shared PC or laptop, mobile, games console, television and handheld portable devices), whereas their European peers use 2.2 devices on average.
- With 52% of children in Greece using the internet in their own bedroom (above the European average 49%) and 66% of them accessing it on their mobiles (the highest figure in Europe where the average is only 22%), we would be right to think that Greek children's internet usage largely takes place outside the scope of parental – and other adult - control. However, this is not the case, as we shall see below.
- The age of first internet use is ten, compared with the nine years European average, something that shows that children in Greece are not lagging behind in this respect.
- Greeks children spend approximately 90 minutes online per day, which is very close to the average time among the countries participating in the survey, and visit an average of 2.9 locations. 56% of children use the internet on a daily basis and 38% once or twice per week, thus indicating that online use is quickly becoming a staple in children's everyday routine.
- Approximately 85% of those who spend 90 minutes online per day, have personal or mobile access.
- Those who spend 90 minutes online, have been using the internet for approximately 2.5 years.
- 33% of children in Greece report some form of excessive use of the internet, just above the European average of 30%.

### Activities and skills

- 33% of children aged 9-12 years old in Greece use one of the popular social networking platforms (the most popular being Facebook). This number rises to 70% when it comes to teenagers aged 13-16 years old. 93% of all Greek respondents report using Facebook and

only 7% report using another platform. Greeks are among those young Europeans who use Facebook the most. Only Italians and Cypriots rank higher. More specifically, Facebook is used by 31% of 9-12 year olds and by 65% of 13-16 year olds.

- Of those using Facebook 36% of 9-12 year olds have given an incorrect age when they created their profile, while this is true for 14% of those aged 13-16 years old. In terms of privacy settings, 33% of 9-12 and 38% of 13-16 year olds have set their profile to 'public' (37% of users in total). 38% of them all have more than 100 contacts linked to their profile (19% of 9-12 year olds, 45% of the 13-16). Finally, when it comes to personal information provision, 10% of 9-12 year olds and 13% of 13-16 year olds display their address or phone number on their profile, while 13% of children (9-12) and 14% of teens (13-16) mention their school.
- It seems that, to some extent, Greek parents restrict their offspring's use of SNSs. According to parental responses, 42% do not allow their children to use SNSs, 13% allow them to do so only with permission or supervision and 45% allow them to have an SNS profile and use it anytime.
- Young Greeks have fewer digital skills (3.7) than the Europeans in general but are closer to the average in terms of the number of online activities (6.8). Not every activity in the 'ladder of opportunities' is evenly or widely spread across the country as 13% prefer popular activities only, 23% prefer watching video clips, while 10% of them also choose communication and news related activities. Another 37% prefer playing, downloading and sharing and 17% of them prefer advanced and creative activities.

### Risks and harm

- Greece has been classified as a 'lower use, lower risk' country by the EU Kids Online II findings, where lower levels of internet use among children result in lower exposure to online risks.
- In fact, Greece is also among those countries with the lowest risk encountered online (along with Turkey, Portugal and Italy).
- The same as the European average, 14% of young Greeks have seen sexual images on websites (29% of them have seen sexual



content somewhere and not just online), 4% have received nasty or hurtful messages, compared to the European average of 6%. 17% have being bullied in some way online or offline. 11% have received sexual messages – slightly below the European average of 15%. 2% have posted sexual messages. 20% of them have had contact with someone they have never met face-to-face (the European average is higher at 30%) and 6% have met face-to-face someone that they only knew online (less than the European average of 9%).

- As regards harmful effects, 15% of those who have seen sexual images were bothered (Europe: 32%), 19% of those receiving sexual messages were upset (Europe: 25%).
- 19% have come across one or more types of potentially harmful user-generated content (near the European average of 21%) and 7% have experienced one or more types of misuse of personal data (Europe: 9%).

## Parental mediation and safety

- As parental use of filtering and blocking has no (statistically) significant effect on the degree of risks, according to the latest EU Kids Online findings, policy making should concentrate on active mediation (rather than restrictive mediation, which reduces risks but also opportunities). Children need to be taught how to develop resilience and appropriate digital skills (including self-monitoring) and practise caution when online. In fact, active mediation in Greece (84% according to children) is just a little below the European average (90%), while using some form of restrictive mediation (92%) is a little above that average (90%).
- Active mediation of children's internet safety (i.e. helping children find or do something difficult on the internet, explaining to them which sites are best for them, suggesting internet safety use, helping them when bothered online) is exceptionally high, with both parties reporting similarly levels: 83% of parents and 82% of children. This is slightly below the European averages of 87% and 86% respectively.
- Although considerably lower than active mediation and with greater disagreement between children and parents, levels of parental monitoring are still significant (51% of children as opposed to 60% of parents report monitoring). This compares to European

averages of 64% and 50% - showing the different perspectives of parents and children is common.

- Although teacher's mediation of children's internet use (70%) is less than the European average (81%), it still means that a minority of teachers take an active role. Moreover, only 4% of Greek children report that they ignore what their parents say regarding their internet use (compared to 7% in Europe more generally). Thus a considerable amount of parental –and adult - mediation of different kinds is being practised and heeded in Greece.
- According to parents, their use of parental controls of various forms (blocking, filtering) is less than the European average (24% vs. 33%).

## National policy implications

- The 'low use, low risk' feature is reiterated in the case of broadband penetration, which in Greece is low and coupled with low levels of online risk encounters. At the same time, though, 'low risk' can be the result of parental mediation of children's internet use.
- Bearing in mind the substantial debates surrounding the notion of 'excessive internet use' that have recently emerged, we should note that the so-called 'intensified' use is usually the result of how integrated the internet has become in everyday children's practices. What is now sometimes considered to be excessive use is, in fact, the manifestation of the variety of things Greek children do online. The more sophisticated children become online, the more varied and sophisticated their internet use is, and for a multitude of activities (schoolwork, leisure, social communication, information), all of which take time to perform. In this sense, the narrative of 'excessive internet use' may simply be a reflection of the maladjustment of adult and children perceptions to how quickly the internet has become inseparable from Greek children's daily activities and cultural capital in Greece.

## Hungary

Written by Bence Ságvári.

### Access and use

- 66% of Hungarian children go online at school, similar to the European average (63%). Around half go online at home, and four out of ten (38%) access the internet from his/her room. More than half of 15-16 year olds go online in their own bedrooms. These figures are among the lowest in Europe.
- The most widespread way of accessing the internet is the use of a shared desktop computer at home. (60%) Accessing the internet by mobile devices was just a little bit lower than the European average: one quarter (25%) of children go online on their mobiles or handheld devices.
- On average Hungarian children – similar to the European figure - start using the internet at the age of nine. For 9-10 year olds this number is seven years, while for 15-16 year olds it is around ten years, indicating that as time goes by internet use occurs earlier and earlier and it will probably stabilise at the age of around six years.
- The average time spent online by Hungarian 9-16 year olds is 85 minutes per day, which is close to the European average.
- Most Hungarian children never feel that they have spent less time with family and friends than they should because of time they spend on the internet. Only 22% of them had this feeling rarely or often. Only 8% of children had some bad experiences, when they did not eat or sleep because of their excessive internet use.

### Activities and skills

- Top activities are using the internet for watching videos (76%), schoolwork (73%), social networking (72%), instant messaging (61%) and playing online games (60%). Similar to the European trends creating content is much less common than receiving it: only 42% have posted photos, videos or music to share with others, around one third (32%) of them spend some time in virtual worlds, and only a tiny minority blogged (5%).
- Around half of Hungarian children are able to bookmark websites, find information on how to

use the internet safely, block messages from unwanted persons, delete their browsing history and change privacy settings on social networking sites. These figures indicate major gaps in skills, but are close to the European average.

- Two thirds of Hungarian children have profiles on social networking sites, a little more than the European figure. Since the survey in 2010 the SNS market in Hungary has also been “Facebook-ised”. Hungarian children have the most SNS contacts in Europe. 13% of them have more than 300 contacts, while 33% have between 101 and 300. The number of contacts depends on age and gender. More than half (53%) of 13-16 year old girls have more than 100 online friends.
- 55% of SNS users have their profile set to completely public, without any restrictions. Only 20% of children applied strict privacy settings. This could have changed in the last two years since in contrast to Facebook the former most popular SNS site iWiW had no real possibilities for users to set sophisticated privacy settings.

### Risks and harm

- 11% of children say they have been bothered or upset by something online in the past year – this figure is about the European average.
- 16% of Hungarian 9-16 year olds claim that they have seen sexual images or videos online or offline in the past 12 months - slightly lower than the European average (23%). 10% have encountered these materials on the internet. Parents seem to be realistic in this respect since 9% of them claim that their children have seen sexual images online.
- Most children who have seen online sexual content (70%) say they were not bothered or upset by this experiences.
- 20% of children say they have been bullied online, and 6% had this experience on the internet - very similar to the European averages. Hungarian parents in most cases are not aware of their children being bullied online.
- 7% of 11-16 year old Hungarian internet users have received sexual messages. This is more frequent among 15-16 year olds (12%) than among 11-14 year olds (4-5%). Sexting in Hungary seems to be less widespread than in other countries in Europe.

- 24% of Hungarian children have had contact online with someone they have not met face to face, while a third of these children (7% of all children) have gone to an offline meeting with someone first met online – like the European average. This seems to be clearly an age related practice: this is three times more likely among 15-16 year olds than 11-14 year olds.
- 84% of Hungarian (vs. 79% of European) children have not encountered potentially harmful user-generated content online.
- Analysing the complex web of risky online activities among Hungarian children 87% of them have not experienced any of them. 12% have encountered one, and only 0.5% of them had experiences with multiple risks. More risks are clearly connected to age: the older the child the more risks he/she encounters.

## Parental mediation and safety

- 27% of parents do not use the internet, meaning that around one quarter of 9-16 year old children in Hungary are living in families where parents have no real personal experiences online.
- Around one third (31%) of internet user parents claim they are not confident in their user skills.
- Sending instant messages (71%) and watching videos online (66%) are among those online activities where most parents employ no restrictions. 54% of children are able to set up an SNS account without any parental control or restrictions.
- Most Hungarian parents talk to their children about what they do on the internet (75%), while 35% use the internet together with their children. Explaining why websites are good or bad (51%), suggesting how to use the internet safely (51%) and helping when something is difficult to do or find (50%) are all common modes of parental safety mediation.
- In general younger children receive more parental support, and the activities of parents depend largely on the socio-economic status of the household and on the parent's level of education. One in five children receives no support on safer internet use from their non-user parents.
- 70% of Hungarian children say their teachers have been involved in at least one of the forms

of active mediation asked about – slightly lower than the European average of 73%.

- Around two third of children got support from their friends when they had difficulties finding something on the internet, while 37% got advice on the safer use of the internet.
- Similar to the European average, 19% of parents say that they block or filter websites at home or and 24% say they use technical tools to track the websites visited by their children.

## National policy implications

- Over the last few years the online risks faced by children has been a widely debated topic in Hungary, often accompanied by a moral panic expressed by various stakeholders, including the media. Yet according to the EU Kids Online data, Hungary is actually considered to be a 'lower use, lower risk' country.
- In the last few years major ISPs and IT companies introduced initiatives (such as media campaigns, training, special competitions, etc.) to support children's safer use of the internet. However the reach of these programmes is not sufficient to support all children who need help and information. Further efforts should be made in this field, by strengthening cooperation between industry, NGOs and governments.
- The National Media and Infocommunications Authority actively supports NGOs in the field, operates an internet hotline to fight against illegal content and uses empirical evidence. However other stakeholders could also gain from unbiased professional research.
- Parents' generally low level of digital literacy, and inadequate knowledge of online risks and threats means that schools are in a more potentially influential position. However, in many cases schools and teachers are not prepared to deal with this problem. Hence, civil organisations' provision of education and training in online safety becomes more important. Fortunately there are some good practices in Hungary, but their activities should be made more institutionalised and more visible. The teaching of online safety skills should also be part of the regular curriculum, although this also requires well trained professionals to provide courses in this topic.

## Iceland

Written by Kjartan Ólafsson.

- Like the other Nordic countries Iceland has been an early and eager adopter of digital technologies. The Icelandic government issued plans in the mid-nineties on how to build up the necessary infrastructure and this, combined with the general affluence of the population, has created the necessary preconditions for widespread use of digital technologies both amongst adults and children.
- The information reported below is mostly based on two surveys. The first survey was conducted in the period from December 2011 to January 2012 with a representative sample of 2,038 children aged around 15 years old (attending the 9th and 10th grades in school). The second survey, of 1,727 parents of children aged 6-16, was conducted in January and February 2009.

### Access and use

- Almost all children in Iceland have access to the internet at home and the vast majority have access in their own bedroom. A 2012 survey of 15 year olds found that some 70% have access from a computer in their bedroom (most often a private laptop that they can then take to their bedroom). Even allowing for the fact that this survey is two years later than the EU Kids Online one and covers just older children, this private access is probably above the European average. Mobile access is also on the rise with some 35% of the 15 year olds using a mobile device to access the internet on a regular basis.
- The 15 year olds in Iceland started using the internet when they were on average little more than seven years old. This is almost four years younger than for children of similar age in Europe as a whole.
- It is difficult to determine whether Icelandic children are more or less active on the internet than their European counterparts as the data to hand do not allow for such comparisons. 70% of children aged 15 years old say that they use the internet every day or almost every day. The estimated daily time spent on the internet is around two hours and 30 minutes or almost half an hour more than for children of similar age in Europe as a whole.

- The pattern of use is similar to that of the other Nordic countries. For Icelandic children internet use starts early in life, they have access through their own devices (mostly laptop computers and increasingly through mobile devices).

### Activities and skills

- Almost all 15 year old children in Iceland say that they use social networking sites, which might be a little higher than the European figures, even allowing for the data being older. Videos are also watched frequently and by all children. The same applies for using the internet in relation to schoolwork. Most children send and receive e-mails but not frequently and thus only around 10% say that they send e-mails every day compared with 74% who say that they use social networking sites on a daily basis.
- Icelandic teenagers seem to have a reasonable level of skills in using the internet though perhaps not any more than would be expected given their extensive access to and use of the online world. Of the 15 year olds surveyed in 2012 some 57% think that they know lots about using the internet. When asked about whether they know how to do certain things some 83% say that they can compare different websites to decide if the information given there is true. Some 75% say that they know how to block unwanted adverts or junk mail and some 56% say that they know how to change filter preferences. Almost all say that they know how to bookmark a website. These are similar to or higher than the highest figures found for similar items in the EU Kids Online survey of 2010 for children aged 13-16.

### Risks and harm

- The number of children who have seen sexual images online or offline is also high compared with equivalent European figures. Thus some 65% of the Icelandic 15 year olds report that they have seen sexual images on- or offline compared with 36% for 15-16 year olds in Europe as a whole. Also in line with the European data a high number of children have seen sexual images online (some estimate 36%).
- Given the widespread use of the internet by Icelandic children bullying is perhaps not as common as might be expected. Some 14% of



15 year olds say that they have been treated in a nasty or hurtful way on the internet in the past 12 months

- Compared with Europe as a whole, where 46% of children aged 15-16 said in 2010 that they had been in contact with someone on the internet that they had not met face to face before, the Icelandic figure of 65% for a similar question is very high. Out of those some 35% (or 23% of the whole age group) had gone on to meet someone in person that they had previously only met on the internet. Interestingly the ratio between having had contact and going to meet someone in person is exactly the same as in the EU Kids Online survey of 2010.

## Parental mediation and safety

- Virtually all parents in Iceland are themselves internet users, which is much higher proportion than the European average. And this has been the case since the first parent survey was conducted in 2002. At that time 63% of parents were daily users but by 2009 more than 90% of parents were daily internet users.
- Almost 70% of the parents assess themselves as either being very capable or expert users of the internet. Despite this, about 54% of the teenagers studied in 2012 claim that they know more about using the internet than their parents. (By comparison, the 2010 European figure for 15-16 year olds who claim to know more than their parents was 87%)
- When asked about what they worry about the most in relation to their children's internet use a fifth of the Icelandic parents say that they have no or few worries. Those who worry about anything mentioned various things but the most common answers were 'worry that my child might see something inappropriate' (18%) and 'meeting strangers/dangerous people' (11%).
- For children aged 6-16 a majority of parents (64%) claim that they have rules about internet use. This is more common for younger children but still applies to half of parents of the oldest group (15-16 years). The most common rule relates to limiting time spent online.
- Parents in Iceland also use other mediation strategies. A large majority (74%) report that they have at some point checked on their children's bookmarks or the websites visited by their child. 62% say that they sometimes sit

with their child when they are online and even for the oldest group (15-16 years) only 26% say that they never sit with their child when they are on the internet.

- Looking at parental mediation from the side of children the available data are more limited. For children aged 15-16 years and surveyed in 2012 some 30% of children claim that their parents do not know which websites they visit on the internet and a further 50% say that their parents allow them to visit whatever websites they want.

## National policy implications

- The National Parent's Association in Iceland (Heimili og skóli) has for several years operated a safety awareness node in partnership with the Directorate of Health, which is part of the Insafe network of national nodes. Recommendations and information on internet safety in Iceland have drawn heavily on methods and experiences shared within that network.
- When it comes to enhancing children's online safety the main emphasis seems to be on awareness raising and education. All major internet service providers offer filtering at the ISP level to their customers, which seems to be mainly targeted at pornographic material.
- Surveys conducted in 2003, 2007 and 2009 show an increase in parents' awareness of internet safety issues. Indicative of this, for parents of children aged 9-16 the percentage who say that they do not monitor what their children are doing online dropped from 10% in 2003 to 3% in 2009. At the same time more children report that their parents are well aware of what they do online.
- The available data for Iceland puts the country firmly in the same group as the other Nordic countries that are characterised by a high level of use and a high likelihood of encountering risks of any kind.

## Ireland

Written by Brian O'Neill.

### Access and use

- The EU Kids Online findings highlight above average levels for Irish children in some respects: use of the internet at home (IE 87% vs. EU 62%); mobile internet access (IE 46% vs. EU 31%); Going online via gaming consoles (IE 44% vs. EU 26%).
- However, fewer children in Ireland access the internet from their own room compared to their European counterparts (IE 37% vs. EU 49%).
- Daily use of the internet is also lower and time spent online is 50% below that of the UK - 61 minutes compared to 99 minutes per day.

### Activities and skills

- Irish children's online activities are fewer in number and at the lower end of the 'ladder of opportunities': 57% of young people do not go beyond the second step of a 5 stage ladder of online activities.
- The most popular activities are 'watching video clips' and 'playing internet games' (76% each), followed by using the internet for schoolwork and using social networking sites (58% each).
- The average number of activities per child is five. This compares to 7.1 activities on average reported by children across Europe. Even teenagers, who use the internet more, are below their European counterparts: teenage boys across Europe report on average nine activities and girls cited ten, nearly double the findings for girls and boys in Ireland, aged 13-16.
- A cluster analysis shows that 'a low use, low risk' pattern to be the most prominent (39% of the total sample) followed by a "moderate-use, entertainment and communication-oriented" use of the internet (25%).
- Findings for digital competence were close to the European average in EU Kids Online.
- One third of all children say it is very true that they know lots of things about the internet; just over half say it is a bit true and less than a fifth (16.9%) say it is not true.
- One third of 9-16 year olds (34%) also claim they know more about the internet than their

parents: one third (31%) say it is 'a bit true' and one third (36%) say it is 'not true' of them.

- Teenagers (13-16) are somewhat more confident, but less than half say "they know lots of things about the internet". Just over half of teenagers claim to know more about the internet than their parents. Younger children (9-12 years old) were far more likely to say they do not know as much as their parents
- Children (11-16 years old) were asked about eight specific skills, with a focus on digital safety and information skills: On average, children say they can do four of the eight things asked about. This is slightly below the European average of 4.2 but at the lower end of the European spectrum, i.e. 7th lowest of EU25.
- Most 11-16 year olds can bookmark a website (66%), block messages from someone they do not wish to be in contact with (64%) or find safety information online (64%). These findings are very similar to the European average.
- Over half can change privacy settings on a social networking profile (58%), block junk mail and spam (49%). Less than half (43%) can delete their history on an internet browser. Less than a quarter can change filter preferences (21%).

### Risks and harm

- In terms of risk, children in Ireland are more risk averse than most European countries: just 39% of children on average have experienced one of the risk factors asked about, placing Ireland very much on the lower end of the spectrum for experience of risk.
- Having contact online with someone they have not met face to face before is the most common risk (28% of all children; 43% of older teenagers).
- Coming across harmful user generated content is the next most common risk, encountered by a quarter of all children and 42% of older teenagers.
- Personal data misuse is the third most prevalent risk encountered by children and has been experienced by 12% of children overall and by 15% of older teenagers.
- One in five (23%) say that they have seen sexual images in the past 12 months, whether online or offline. This is broadly in line with the European average. Around half have seen this

at least once or twice a month, while half have seen it less often. Nearly half of 15-16 year olds (45%) have seen such images compared with just 8% of 9-10 year olds; teenagers also see such images more often.

- The most common ways for children to see sexual images are on television, films or videos (14%) and on the internet (11%). Most children come across sexual images online accidentally through pop ups, though 13% of older teenagers have seen them on an adult/x-rated website.
- Ireland is relatively low both in terms of overall exposure to online pornography and in terms of the degree to which children are bothered or upset by what they saw when they were exposed to online sexual images. In Ireland, one in three of those that had seen sexual images (4% of all children) were bothered by this experience. Older teenagers are also more likely to have been bothered by what they saw (10% of 15-16 year olds who had seen such images).
- A large proportion (67%) of children aged 9-16 think that there are things on the internet that will bother children of their age. This is slightly more for teenagers than for younger children.
- Yet, just 11% of children say that they have themselves been bothered by something on the internet. Younger children are less likely to have been bothered by something online (9%) compared with older teenagers (16%).

## Parental mediation and safety

- Parents in Ireland take an active interest in their children's internet use. However, they tend to be more restrictive compared to other countries, with a consequent reduction in children's online opportunities. The most common form of mediation in Ireland is restrictive mediation, the highest in Europe at 95%. While this has the effect of reducing risks and potential harm for children, it also restricts opportunities and limits young people's ability to avail of the full range of online opportunities. Most children say that such forms of mediation limits what they do online and 20% say it limits their activities a lot.
- Despite this high level of restrictive mediation most parents believe that the things they do relating to their child's internet use helps to

make their online experience better (38% a lot; 36% a bit better).

- The vast majority of parents/guardians (85%) also feel confident they can help their children deal with anything on the internet that might bother them. Most also feel (79%) that their child will be able to cope with anything they may encounter online.
- At the same time, over half of Irish parents also feel they should do more (27% a lot more; 37% a bit more). Younger children would also like parents to take more interest (22% of 9-12 year old boys; 25% of 9-12 year old girls).

## National policy implications

- Ireland is an outlier compared to other EU Kids Online countries with a low average number of online activities for a country of reasonably high usage and a low exposure to risk (39%). This, combined with the fact that restrictive mediation in Ireland at 91% is actually the highest in Europe, suggests that internet use overall is conservative. As online access becomes more pervasive, young people may be less prepared and inadequately skilled to deal with the range of activities and risks they may encounter.
- EU Kids Online data show that going online among Irish children is high for at home and mobile use. However, Ireland still falls into the group of countries classified as 'lower use, some risk', mainly due to the low number of activities and low levels of risks encountered along with less time spent online.
- One of the policy priorities is to promote digital opportunities for young people and ensure they gain more benefits from the internet.
- Another priority is supporting digital literacy initiatives that target both skills development and also encourage the broadening of online internet activities. Given the importance of the IT sector to Ireland's economy, there is an urgent need to support digital opportunities for all.
- Efforts to support better parental awareness and digital literacy are also important. Public debate is often informed by sensationalist media reporting. The current high levels of restrictive mediation suggest that parents feel ill-equipped to support young people online. Here, the media, including public service broadcasting, can play a positive role supporting content creation.

## Italy

Written by Giovanna Mascheroni.

### Access and use

- The most common location where Italian children use the internet is at home (97%), above the European average (87%). 62% of Italian children access the internet from their bedroom, while 35% do so from a computer in a shared room. Compared to other European countries, Italy is characterised by lower access from mobile phones and other handheld devices (9% as against the 33% of the European average) and by the lowest access rate from schools (36% compared to 63% of European children).
- Use is now thoroughly embedded in Italian children's daily lives: in line with the European average, 60% go online everyday or almost every day.
- Italian children go online later, though the average age of first use is decreasing: While children go online at seven in Denmark and Sweden, the average age of first use in Italy is still ten, though younger children using the internet, now aged nine, went online before they were eight.

### Activities and skills

- Italian children participate in a range of diverse and potentially beneficial activities online: 9-16 year olds use the internet for school work (89%), watching video clips (77%) and instant messaging (64%). Fewer post images (44%) or messages for others to share (22%), use a webcam (25%), visit file-sharing sites (19%) or blog (11%).
- Near the European average, 57% of 9-16 year olds have a social networking profile – including 19% aged 9-10, 47% aged 11-12, 68% aged 13-14 and 80% aged 15-16.
- Among social network site users, 34% have public profiles – and 34% have more than 100 contacts, though many have fewer.
- Among social network users, 36%, near the European average, keep their profile private so that only their friends can see it. A further 28% report that their profile is partially private so that friends of friends and networks can see it.

- It is likely that more use facilitates digital literacy and safety skills. One third of 9-16 year olds (34%) say that the statement, "I know more about the internet than my parents," is 'very true' of them, one third (32%) say it is 'a bit true' and one third (34%) say it is 'not true' of them.
- Younger children tend to lack skills and confidence. Half of 11-16 year olds can block messages from those they do not wish to contact (50%) or find safety advice online (51%). Less than half can change privacy settings on a social networking profile (42%) compare websites to judge their quality (42%) or block spam (40%). On average, Italian children report one skill less than their European peers.

### Risks and harm

- 34% of Italian children have experienced at least one of the seven online risks surveyed, but only 6% of Italian 9-16 year olds say that they have been bothered or upset by something on the internet. Moreover, together with Portugal and Germany, Italy is one of the countries with the lowest incidence of harm.
- Exposure to risks increases with age: the proportion of children who have experienced online risks includes 7% of 9-10 years olds, 23% of 11-12 years olds, 48% of those aged 13-14 and 47% of older teenagers (aged 15-16)
- The most common online risks Italian children are exposed to is potentially harmful user-generated content (18%), personal data misuse (9%), and exposure to sexual images (7%). The incidence of sexting (4%), offline meetings with online contacts (4%) and bullying (2%) is lower.
- Risks are not necessarily experienced by children as upsetting or harmful. For example, seeing sexual images and receiving sexual messages online are generally not experienced as harmful except by one in four children who are exposed to them.
- By contrast, being bullied online by receiving nasty or hurtful messages is relatively uncommon but it is the risk most likely to upset Italian children: 27% report being 'very upset', 47% 'fairly upset' and 12% 'a bit upset' by nasty or harmful messages online.

### Parental mediation and safety

- Among those children who have experienced one of these risks, Italian parents are more



likely to be unaware of this, compared to the European average.

- 54% of parents whose child has seen sexual images online say that their child has not seen this.
- 81% of parents whose child has received nasty or hurtful messages online say that their child has not.
- 48% of parents whose child has received sexual messages say that their child has not.
- Finally, 67% of parents whose child has met offline with an online contact say that their child has not.
- Most Italian parents talk to their children about what they do on the internet (79%, compared to the European average of 70%) and stay nearby when the child is online (56%). But one in eight parents (13%) seem never to practise any of the forms of mediation asked about, according to their children.
- Over half of Italian parents also take positive steps such as suggesting how to behave towards others online (63%) and talking about things that might bother the child (56%), and third have helped their child when something arose in the past (26%).
- Parents also restrict children's disclosure of personal information (87%), uploading (65%) and downloading (55%).
- Only 54% of Italian parents monitor their child's internet use later, making this the least favoured strategy (as in Europe generally) in comparison to positive support, safety guidance or making rules about internet use.
- The use of technical safety tools is relatively low: less than a quarter of parents block or filter websites (21%) and/or tracks the websites visited by their child (15%).
- Most parents (75%) are confident about their role (although less than the European average of 85%), feeling that they can help their child if the latter encounters something that bothers them online. Parents are also confident in their child's ability to cope with things online that may bother them (70%), and 11% claim that they mediate differently because of something that had bothered the child in the past.
- Many parents (82%) are confident that it is not very or at all likely that their child will encounter

anything that bothers them in the next six months.

- Over two-thirds of Italian children (76%) think their parents know a lot or quite a bit about their children's internet use. However, 39% say they ignore their parents a little and 8% of children say they ignore a lot.
- Around half (47%) of children think that parental mediation limits what they do online (the European average is 37%), 8% saying it limits their activities a lot. 10% would like their parents to do a little or a lot more and 16% would like their parents to do rather less.

## National policy implications

- On the one hand, Italy is noteworthy in terms of having a high proportion of children who access the internet from their private bedroom without adults' supervision, and the lowest percentage in Europe with school access. On the other hand, the gap between children's online experiences and parental awareness of what children do online is very high for all the risks investigated in the EU Kids Online survey. This suggests that, while the home represents the primary context for mediating children's internet experiences, schools should be recognised as an appropriate setting for educating and raising awareness among both children and their parents, especially when parents are not themselves internet users.
- Although internet use is increasing, Italy remains largely a 'low risk' country, as reported risks for Italian children are among the lowest in Europe. This is not, however, the product of a planned risk reduction strategy: Italian children are less exposed to online risks, compared to children in most European countries, because they engage in fewer online activities and tend to benefit from a smaller range of opportunities. In terms of digital literacy, Italian children are less equipped and lack basic safety skills. Reducing their exposure to risks may therefore result in persistent digital exclusion. On the contrary, children should be encouraged to look for positive content online, and should be given all the necessary tools to learn how to cope with risks. Again, schools would be the most appropriate context for the delivery of digital literacy skills, and media education needs to be a priority on the national curriculum for primary education.

## Latvia

Written by Līva Brice. The findings outlined below are summarised from:

- Dilevska, L., Roga, B., Plotņikova, I., Gusarova, A. (2012). *Jauniešu aktivitātes internetā: pētnieciskais projekts*, LU SZF Komunikācijas studiju nodaļa
  - Drossinternet.lv., Zelta Zivtina. (2012). *Mobilā telefona un interneta izmantošana bērnu un jauniešu vidū*.  
[http://www.drossinternets.lv/upload/materiali/petijumi/mob-tel\\_interneta\\_izmantosana\\_2012.pdf](http://www.drossinternets.lv/upload/materiali/petijumi/mob-tel_interneta_izmantosana_2012.pdf)
  - Latvijas internet asociācija, Drošāka interneta centrs. (2010). *Moderno tehnoloģiju izmantojums un drošība internetā*.  
[http://www.drossinternets.lv/upload/materiali/petijumi/petijums\\_modernas\\_tehnologijas\\_drosiba\\_interneta\\_2010.pdf](http://www.drossinternets.lv/upload/materiali/petijumi/petijums_modernas_tehnologijas_drosiba_interneta_2010.pdf)
  - Valsts Bērnu tiesību aizsardzības inspekcija. (2010). *Uzticības tālrunis*.  
[http://www.drossinternets.lv/upload/materiali/petijumi/ut\\_aptauja\\_2010.pdf](http://www.drossinternets.lv/upload/materiali/petijumi/ut_aptauja_2010.pdf)
  - Žigajeva, A. (2012). Latvijas drošāka interneta centra mājaslapas [www.drossinternets.lv](http://www.drossinternets.lv) komunikācija ar bērniem un jauniešiem: problēmas un risinājumi: Bakalaura darbs. LU SZF Komunikācijas studiju nodaļa.
- Sometimes the surveys cited below ask slightly different questions from the EU Kids Online ones, and so while they provide some clues, and sometimes additional information, the figures are often not strictly comparable to the European data.

### Access and use

- Internet and computer use is very popular among Latvian young people: 90% in the age group 16 to 34 have used the internet at least once.
- From age 16 to 24, the internet is used regularly by 96%.
- 79% of Latvian children aged up to 13 years and 90% aged 14 to 18 have a computer and internet connection in their households.
- The internet is regularly used by 95% of Latvian students in elementary, secondary schools and universities.
- Latvian students now aged 20, started to use computers and the internet in their late

childhood – when they were 13-14 years old, the first experience for using internet was either at home or at school.

### Activities and skills

- The main activity of Latvian children on the internet is searching for information, using search engines and (as in Europe more generally) for schoolwork - to complete exercises or write essays - but also for entertainment. Most respondents in a survey admit that when they do not know something the first place they look is on the web. The other main reason for using the internet that Latvian children mention is visiting social networking sites.
- Only 27% of Latvian children (compared to EU Kids Online European average of 40%) mention that one of the activities done online is to search for new friends on the internet.

### Risks and harm

- Similar to the overall European pattern in EU Kids Online, it is the older Latvian children aged 15 to 17 who have most often encountered pornographic materials online: pictures that have been accidentally seen online or sometimes video materials.
- The second main risk that was mentioned by Latvian children was the bad influence that the internet can have on the studying process. Often children start a session using the internet with a focus on study material, as required for school purposes, but then they are tempted to surf away to entertainment activities. A related temptation is the social networking sites, which the children visit every time they go online.
- The third risk mentioned was problems of privacy and the confidentiality of their personal data. In fact, children admit that they often do not pay enough attention to their e-mail and social network accounts and are careless with their login information (setting up very simple passwords). They usually put up things before considering whether they are worth publishing online
- A major fear mentioned by Latvian children was that of strangers talking to children online – most of the times such strangers are associated with paedophiles, maniacs or criminals that could kidnap the child, rob the house, sexually

abuse the child, kill or in other ways harm the child.

- Besides harmful content, Latvian respondents also mention other bad influences related to children's internet use:
  - Computer and internet addiction.
  - Health problem caused by the physical use of the internet and computer (e.g. eye strain, back problems).
  - Lowering the quality of life by influencing children's value system.
  - Promoting loneliness that causes bad relationships with friends and family as well as promoting aggression and stress and encouraging suicide.
  - Cost issues, which are important in cases where children use some services or home pages that needs to be paid for, or when ordering thing over the internet without making sure whether the payment system is safe.
  - 23% of Latvian children have the experience that their private e-mail has been hacked.
  - Viruses, spam and sexual characters in pop-up windows are viewed as a threat to children's activities online as children tend to visit web pages where hidden content has been included.
  - Less than the other risks, online games, were also mentioned, specially pointing to those which have violent characteristics in them.
- 26% of Latvian children say they feel safer when communicating online by not revealing their true personality but instead using a nickname or staying anonymous.
- A typical day for Latvian kids (14-15 years) starts with reading news on news portals, then tweeting about mood and plans for the day on their way to school. At school (both between the classes and during the classes) they check their Facebook status and hang out in the national portal draugiem.lv. In the evening they finish with a blog post and skype chat with friends.

## Parental mediation and safety

- Latvian parents are aware that harmful material can be found and unpleasant situations can occur online, but they admit that they are not

well informed about how often children encounter these and what kind of material they find. 20% of parents admit that they do not have a clue whether their children have been in touch with the unpleasant material. This situation can be explained by the fact that only 17% of children inform their parents about unpleasant experiences online.

- 66% of Latvian parents say that their children have not experienced the harmful side of the internet, while 67% of children acknowledge that they have not had any unpleasant experiences or problem on the internet (the EU Kids online European figures was 88%).
- Unfortunately 17% of Latvian parents admit that they have known about unpleasant or harmful situations faced by their children online, but they have not done anything to resolve these.
- The most common parental reactions in Latvia when helping their children to deal with harmful content are: to talk the situation through with their children and find the solution together (43%), contact the administrator of the site or mobile phone operator (7%), call the police (5%), contact a specialist help website (3%), and call a helpline (1%).

## National policy implications

- At the moment the Latvian educational system is facing other issues and safer internet use for children has not been one of the main subjects of discussion.
- Safer internet use for children is being taken care of by NGOs, which are developing games and informative lectures to inform the parents and children about the risks online.
- The family should be first institution where knowledge about the safer internet is developed. Parents need to be educated more about how to act in problematic situations and, first of all, that they should pay attention to their children's activities online.
- Schools need to participate more in the educational process and inform students about internet usage.

## Lithuania

Written by Alfredas Laurinavičius.

### Access and use

- Lithuanian children start to use the internet at an early age. The average age for starting to use the internet in Lithuania is eight years (the youngest age is in Denmark and Sweden - seven years, the oldest age is in Greece - ten years – and the European average is nine years).
- 95% of Lithuanian internet users go online at least once a week, 72% do so every day (above the European average of 60%). Compared to other 24 countries Lithuanian children are in 11th place.
- Lithuanian children's internet use can be characterised as private. 57% of Lithuanian children access the internet at home in their own bedroom (considerably higher than the European average of 49%). Meanwhile 35% use their mobile phones to access the internet (again, higher than the 22% average for Europe as whole) This limits the ability of Lithuanian parents to check their children's internet usage.
- Lithuanian children are very positive towards the internet and its possibilities. 63% of internet using children think that internet activities are very useful for children. Lithuanian children, compared to the other countries, have the most positive attitudes.

### Activities and skills

- The high internet activity of Lithuanian children goes hand in hand with good digital skills. Evaluating a variety of digital skills Lithuanian kids are in ninth place among the European countries in the EU Kids Online survey. The leaders are children from Finland. Lithuanian children report that they can do many different things related to their internet activities: change privacy settings in their social profiles, block unwanted content, etc.
- Lithuanian children communicate very intensively on social networking sites. 76% of Lithuanian children have a social network site profile. These numbers are very high in a European context as the European average number is only 59%. Only the Netherlands (80%) exceeds Lithuania in this respect.

- Lithuanian children use the internet more intensively compared to their parents. This means that ability of some parents to help their children with internet related problems and safety online is quite limited.

### Risks and harm

- According to the EU Kids Online II results Lithuania belongs to 'higher use, higher risk' group of countries. The other "higher use, higher risk" countries are Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Norway, Romania and Sweden).
- High internet use is related to more chance of encountering online risks. 5% of Lithuanian children report being bullied online and 19% being bullied at all - close to the average European numbers. The highest numbers were found in Estonia (14% and 43%) and Romania (13% and 41%), the lowest in Italy (2% and 11%) and Portugal (2% and 9%).
- The survey shows that children's exposure to sexual content online appears to be the highest in the Nordic countries and in some Eastern European countries. Lithuanian children are not protected from pornography online. 25% of the children who participated in the survey have encountered sexual content online. 19% of Lithuania children have seen or received sexual messages.
- It is worth mentioning that very often parents are not aware of their children's level of exposure to sexual images online. Only 27% of parents know that their kids have seen sexual images online.
- 52% of Lithuanian children have communicated online with strangers. Only Estonia has a higher rate (54%). Turkey has the lowest (18%).
- Lithuanian children, along with Estonian, children, are more likely to continue their internet communication with strangers in a face-to-face mode. 23% of children went to face-to-face meetings with persons with whom they became acquainted online. By comparison in Turkey the figure is only 3%. The results also show that parents of Lithuanian children underestimate this type of risk. Only 7% of Lithuanian parents think that their children meet strangers whom they first met online.
- Posting personal information on the internet is one of the risks where Lithuanian children show



a lack of wariness. 35% of Lithuanian children posted their address or phone number on their social networking site profile.

## Parental mediation and safety

- In general, Lithuanian children's use is also uncontrolled. Only 26% of Lithuanian parents (according to the child) monitor their children's internet activities. These are the lowest numbers when looking across European countries, where the average for using some form of monitoring is 50% according to the children. Meanwhile, according to the children, only 54% of Lithuanian parents use restrictions in relation to internet use compared to 92% in Germany and 91% in France. To complete the picture, Lithuanians, according to parents who might have a better idea than children, make less use of parental control (11% as opposed to the far greater European average of 33%)
  - Parents active mediation of children's use (talking to them, etc.) is the same as the European average at 87% but active mediation of internet safety (e.g. talking to them specifically about internet risks or problems) is at 75% near the bottom of the national tables, the European average being 86%,
  - Parents are also not aware of the risks their children encounter online. For example, 23% of Lithuanian children have met face to face people they first met on the internet, but only 7% of Lithuanian parents think that this has happened. Relative to the other countries, this lack of awareness is one of the highest across all risks. The large number of parents' 'Don't know' answers regarding their children's internet use also suggests that Lithuanian children are facing online risks without parental support.
- One of the peculiarities of internet use in Lithuania is a gap between children's and parents' internet activity. Lithuanian children are more familiar with the internet compared to their parents. This creates a difficult situation for parents. Some of them are not capable of helping their children with internet related problems. Moreover, many of them are not trying to engage with the internet use of their children.
  - Raising parents' digital literacy is a very complicated issue. It is hard to believe that it is possible for parents to compete with their children in internet literacy, but some improvement of parents' knowledge of their children online experiences could be beneficial since Lithuanian parents, more so than other Europeans, are not aware of the risks their children encounter online. Some initiatives are being taken in this direction in Lithuania already (for example [www.draugiskasinternetas.lt](http://www.draugiskasinternetas.lt)). More initiatives from governmental and non-governmental institutions would be helpful.
  - On the other hand, raising awareness should be based not only on emphasising threats and risks. Lithuanian children value the internet and benefit very positively from its use. It is very important that the opportunities and benefits of using the internet are emphasised and that children learn to use the internet for educational and self-enhancement purposes. In order to achieve these goals people working in the educational field should develop their own level of digital literacy to a sufficient level and update it regularly.
  - It is more and more evident that the online world is related to offline reality. This means that some considerable steps need to be taken not only in relation to the internet but also in relation to risks more generally, some of which spill over onto the internet. Educational institutions in their curriculum (e.g. during lectures on ethics), media, governmental institutions and NGOs should pay more attention to such risks as bullying, pornography, violent acts, etc., its harm and ways of coping with/avoiding it (both offline and online).

## National policy implications

- As Lithuania was categorised as a 'high use, high risk' country, national policy should be more focused on the range of risks that children experience online.
- Though Lithuanian children feel very comfortable online, it seems that they also lack sufficient knowledge about some online risks. Schools could play the main role in education both for children and parents in such subjects as internet safety and the practicalities of managing online risks. Internet providers and media should take an active role in these

## Luxembourg

Written by Andreia Costa, André Melzer and Georges Steffgen

Luxembourg did not take part in the EU Kids Online survey and so this section is based on other sources including:

- Bredemus, L. (2010). *Cyberbullying in Luxembourg. Bestandsaufnahme in den luxemburgischen Lyzeen*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Luxembourg, Luxembourg.
- Schaan, V., & Melzer, A. (2012). *Media is family business: Parental mediation of children's television and video game use*. Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Steffgen, G., König, A., Pfetsch, J., & Melzer, A. (2011). Are cyberbullies less empathic? Adolescents' cyberbullying behaviour and empathic responsiveness. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 14(11), 643-648.

### Access and use

- Luxembourg has one of the youngest populations in Europe: about 25% of the population is aged 0 to 19 years, while in Europe this age group represents only 20%.
- Luxembourg ranks number two in Europe for internet connections. 92% of 1,500 Luxembourg households (STATEC, 2011) report that they have a computer, and 91% are connected to the internet and 78% of them have broadband internet. 82% claim to access the internet every day and 10% of the households have mobile internet connections (e.g. 3G).
- 40% of children attending primary schools own a mobile phone. Furthermore, younger users in Luxembourg are more likely to access the internet through their mobile phone than older ones. 42% of internet users aged between 16 and 34 years use their mobile phone to go online.
- In a national study conducted in Luxembourg in 2008, 1,663 children (aged 10-16) were questioned about their internet habits (Bredemus, 2010). 85% of primary school children (10-12 year olds) and 94% of secondary school children (12-16 year olds) report using computers at home.
- 43% of children spend at least one hour per day on the internet. A further 36% are online several hours per week and 11% spend several hours

per month. Only 10% report never or almost never being online. Thus, the number of children going online every day appears to be lower than in other European countries. However, the weekly frequency is similar.

### Activities and skills

- 51% of internet users in Luxembourg are members of a social network sites. However, the percentage is greater for younger people: 83% of people younger than 24 years have an account on a social networking site like Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn. Currently, there are about 202,000 Facebook users in Luxembourg (www.socialbakers.com). 15% of them are aged 13 to 17, and 21% are between 18 and 24 years old. Girls are more likely than boys to become members of social network sites. They also tend to spend more time on them (STATEC, 2011).
- A cross-national Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study (HBSC, 2006) shows differences between Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg). For young children, for example, the frequency of daily electronic contacts with friends is highest in Luxembourg.

### Risks and harm

- 42% of the 1,663 children surveyed in the 2008 study (Bredemus, 2010) claim to have experienced bullying through the mobile phone or the internet. 13% report that they have been victims of cyberbullying at least once during the current school year. This number is more than twice the European average (6%). 4% of children in Luxembourg report that they have been victims frequently (from almost daily to about once in a month) during the current school year.
- Most remarkably, a total of 10% of children say they have actively cyberbullied others. 6% claim to do that only 1 to 3 times a year, and 4% say they frequently bully others online. Therefore, the amount of young online perpetrators appears to be three times higher than the European average (3%).
- Instant messaging is the most common medium used for cyberbullying, followed by bullying in chat rooms, email, and finally through images or video-clips.

- Girls are more likely to become victims of cyberbullying than boys, but are not more likely to be perpetrators. In addition to gender differences, personality is likely to play an important role. A recent study at the University of Luxembourg revealed that cyberbullies show a lack of empathy (Steffgen et al., 2011).
- 27% of children do not feel well-protected with regard to cyberbullying. 8% fear being cyberbullied by at least one classmate, and 4% report that they have taken time off school to avoid becoming the victim of cyberbullying.
- As regards what children think could be done to stop cyberbullying, the majority (41%) think that perpetrators should be punished more severely. 22% think that mobile phones and the internet should be monitored more closely. 9% think that nothing can be done.
- 48% believe it is easier to be harassed by mobile phone or the internet than by face-to-face contact. 64% believe that it is difficult to identify the perpetrator when being cyberbullied, and 35% find it easier to defend themselves from cyberbullying than from traditional forms of bullying.

## Parental mediation and safety

- In a study of parental mediation with 158 dyads of 9 to 12 year old children and their parents (Schaan & Melzer, submitted), three mediation styles were found.
- Active-emotional co-use (AEC) mediation: parents inform, explain, discuss, and use media together with their children.
- Patronising mediation: parents keep an eye on children's media use, comment on media content, and join the child's media consumption when the child asks for it.
- Restrictive mediation: after having informed themselves about the content, parents set up media rules and restrictions and stimulate critical thinking by focusing the child's attention on negative aspects of media use.
- Interventions that are part of restrictive mediation practices were found to be associated with a decrease in children's secret use of media. However, as in other European countries, more restrictive mediation is related to children having less media contact.
- Parents who see media as a positive learning opportunity use patronising mediation more

frequently. In contrast, parents with negative expectations about media use prefer the AEC mediation style or restrictive mediation.

- Parental mediation becomes less important as children get older. It seems that parental mediation becomes less important as the parents feel children have more media awareness.
- Family processes also determine media use. A positive family climate is associated with an increased use of AEC mediation. Furthermore, a positive relation between parents and children is associated with a reduced amount of media consumption overall, which implies fewer contacts with potentially harmful contents.

## National policy implications

- Considering that children in Luxembourg report higher levels of cyberbullying, this problem should be addressed more closely through campaigns and interventions.
- Since 2007, the Ministry of Economic and Foreign Trade together with the division Cyber Awareness Security Enhancement Structures (CASES, [www.cases.public.lu](http://www.cases.public.lu)) has paid attention to the dangers of the internet and especially to cyberbullying. A training programme for teachers and students on using the internet safely, as well as on avoiding and dealing with issues of cyberbullying, has been developed and adopted. In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, CASES has also published a textbook for school teachers on safer internet use and cyberbullying.
- Co-funded by the Safer Internet Programme ([www.saferinternet.org](http://www.saferinternet.org)), the Luxembourg Safer Internet Project (LuSI; node of Ins@fe) offers brochures, flyers, and posters, but also workshops and training to educate about internet and mobile phone safety.
- Bee-Secure ([www.bee-secure.lu](http://www.bee-secure.lu)), a joint initiative from the Ministry of the Economic and Foreign Trade, the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, and the Ministry of Family and Integration, develops many awareness-raising activities aimed at the safe and responsible use of the new ICTs.

## Malta

Written by Mary Anne Lauri.

- Malta did not take part in the EU Kids Online survey but in 2010, the Safer Internet Programme conducted a quantitative study with a view to investigating the use of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) by children and the levels of awareness and types of perceptions of both children and their parents or other guardians.
- The study was supported by the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family, the Secretariat for Catholic Education (an office of the Catholic Church) and a number of independent schools. The fieldwork was conducted during May 2010.
- The study was carried out by means of two separate questionnaires. The first questionnaire targeted children aged between 8 and 15 years. The second questionnaire was addressed to the parents or guardians of the children that participated in the first questionnaire.
- For a more detailed report of this study please go to [www.mca.org.mt](http://www.mca.org.mt).

### Access and use

- The results showed that roughly one in three children (32%) access the internet in their bedroom. Use of the internet by children in the bedroom appears to increase marginally with age. Another 22% access it in the study room while 21% access it from the living room. A smaller percentage of children, 10%, access the internet in the kitchen.
- Most children use the internet on a daily basis (54%). The frequency of usage appears to be strongly related to age as the percentage of daily users increases from 33% for primary school children to an average of 64% for the secondary school groups. This frequency is quite comparable to the 60% of European children sampled by EU Kids Online who go online daily.
- Use of the internet (once a week or more) increases considerably from primary (88%) to secondary school levels (98%). Females seem to use the internet more frequently than males, with 57% claiming to use the technology on a

daily basis as opposed to the 51% reported by males.

- Mobile phone ownership also appears to increase with age and approaches full penetration at secondary school. Females appear more likely to own a mobile phone than males across all ages. Internet access by means of a mobile phone still appears to be a novelty amongst children, so much so that only 18% of those surveyed, mostly from secondary school, access the internet through their mobile device.

### Activities and skills

- A total of 77% of children surveyed use the internet for school-related research, 70% use it for games, whilst 66% use it for accessing social networking sites. Results show that internet games are more popular with younger children. Applications such as social networking sites appear to become more popular with age. The results for Maltese children also indicate that at secondary school level females use more social networking sites than males, whilst males play more online games than females.
- Two particular social networking sites dominate, MSN and Facebook. Males prefer Facebook whilst females prefer MSN. The following table indicates the top five social networking sites that the children interviewed subscribed to:

	Total	Primary	Secondary
MSN	82%	63%	77%
Facebook	80%	60%	86%
Skype	22%	19%	22%
Hi5	9%	1%	11%
Twitter	6%	-	8%

- Students were asked how often they play computer games, including online games and game consoles, such as PSP, XBOX etc. The results show that 33% of the sample play computer games daily, 47% play at least once a week whilst 20% of the sample play less than once a week. Internet games are more popular amongst males, particularly at the secondary school level.



## Risks and harm

- 85% of the children surveyed think that they are well aware of the risks posed to minors when using the internet. 62% of the children agree that making friends over the internet was not safe. 66% of children also agree that posting photos to social networking sites might be dangerous. 76% of children are not willing to meet someone they made friends with over the internet.
- An average of 42% of the children surveyed agrees that they should be allowed to use the internet without supervision.

## Parental mediation and safety

- Parents were asked whether they think that the internet is a safe place for their children. 40% of the respondents think that the internet is not safe for their children. Only 19% think that it is safe.
- Parents and guardians take various precautions to protect their children when using the internet. 25% actually stay next to their child when he or she using the internet. Another 34% of the sample restrict the time their child can spend on the internet. Other strategies include using filters, knowing the people with whom they interact online and keeping track of the websites that their children look at. A small percentage of parents, 1%, do not allow their child to use the internet at all.
- Parents and guardians were asked to identify the type of action they would be willing to take if they realised that their child was being bullied over the internet. In most cases, these adults would resort to the police if they suspected their child was being bullied (52%). Another 26% identified Appoġġ, a government organisation in charge of social welfare, whilst 20% state that they would take matters into their own hands.
- Guardians were also asked who they would contact if they believe their child was being harassed over the internet by someone whom they suspected was an adult. The majority of parents and guardians state that they would resort directly to the police (86%).

## National policy implications

- The Maltese Government took a number of policy decisions aimed at bridging the digital divide. These included the liberalisation of the

market, special schemes which reduced the price of computers, software and internet access, courses in local councils' premises and free access to the internet in public places. This has helped to increase the number of children having access to the internet at home (Eurobarometer, 2004) to 97% of the children surveyed by MCA in 2010.

- Today, only 2% of parents and guardians say that they could not afford to have the internet at home for their children. It has therefore become more urgent for policy makers to use mass media programmes and campaigns to disseminate more information about the use, risks and benefits of internet.
- Although 2% is a very small proportion, it means that some children still lack access to the internet. Actions need to be taken to ensure that these children do not suffer from digital exclusion.
- 34% of children access the internet in their school. This highlights the need for more availability of internet access in schools, as well as the introduction of media literacy in the school curricula. Such teaching helps students learn how to manage risks in such a way that they optimise the possibilities offered by the internet while minimising harm.
- Policy makers should take note of two important developments: the increased use of social networking sites and the children's increased access to the internet via mobile devices. Appropriate strategies should be adopted to deal with these developments.
- Policy makers should also be aware of the rapid technological innovations and changes in patterns of use. Rapid developments seem to be making research outdated after a short period of time.
- The training provided for adults should not only consist of digital literacy skills, but also of how to mediate the children's experience on the internet.
- All stakeholders should be consulted and involved in the development and implementation of policies to ensure a holistic and consistent approach in providing a safer internet for children.
- In Malta, policy makers should commission more research about internet use, online safety and risks associated with its use.

## Netherlands

Written by Nathalie Sonck.

### Access and use

- 80% of children in the Netherlands between 9 and 16 years old use the internet (almost) every day. This is the highest percentage of internet use in the European countries studied, where the average is 60%.
- All Dutch 9-16 year-old internet-using children access the internet at home, 56% use the internet in their own bedroom (higher than the European average of 49%).
- More than one third of Dutch youngsters go online either via a mobile phone (20%) or via another handheld device (15%). This is in line with the average European figures.
- The Dutch average age of first internet use is eight years, slightly younger than the European average of nine years.
- Although internet access is very high among Dutch children, the prevalence of excessive internet use is average (29% aged 11-16) compared with other European countries.

### Activities and skills

- Compared to the other European countries, social networking sites are most popular in the Netherlands: 80% of young internet users have their own profile compared to 59% for Europe as a whole. The Dutch figures break down to 62% of those aged 9-10, 77% of those aged 11-12, 86% of those aged 13-14 and 88% of those aged 15-16.
- The diversity of activities that children perform online can give an indication of children's internet skills. Most Dutch youngsters (aged 9-16) use the internet to watch videoclips (89%, the EU average is 76%), play games (84%) or complete school work (78%). In addition, they relatively often use the internet to communicate with others, by sending e-mails (77%, above the European average of 61%) or by visiting a social networking profile (74%, again above the EU average of 62%). The online activities that 9-16 year-olds perform less often are blogging (13%), creating a virtual character (15%) and visiting a chatroom (15%).

- Another indication of children's internet skills can be obtained by asking them to self-assess their ability to perform specific internet tasks. Dutch teenagers (aged 11-16) say, in particular, that they are able to block messages (87%) and bookmark websites (85%). Dutch teenagers least often say that they are able to change filter settings (30%).
- The Netherlands shows an above-average self-reported skill level among 9-16 year-olds (mastering five out of eight surveyed internet skills, compared to the European average of 4.2).

### Risks and harm

- Contrary to what is often assumed, young people are exposed to internet risks to only a limited extent. Fewer than a quarter (22%) of Dutch internet users aged between 9 and 16 years say they have seen pornographic images online (admittedly above the European average of 14%). Meanwhile 15% say they have received sexually explicit messages via the internet (sexting) – this is the same as the European average.
- About a third of Dutch youngsters (32%) engage in online contacts with strangers (similar to the EU figure of 30%) but only 6% of this group actually meet those online contacts in person (EU: 9%).
- Finally 4% of the Dutch youngsters surveyed report that they experience repeated bullying via the internet, near to the European average of 6%.
- Most young people are not upset by these experiences, but a small minority are. Young people most often say they are upset by seeing sexually explicit images on the internet (5% of all 9-16 year-old internet users in the Netherlands compared to 4% for Europe), followed by receiving sexually explicit messages (3%; EU: 4%) and meeting an online contact in person (1%, same as the EU average). Being a victim of any form of bullying, including cyberbullying, is considered to be a negative experience.
- Dutch young people are exposed to or elicit risks on the internet to differing degrees. The extent to which they have negative experiences also varies from one group to another. Boys and older teenagers are particularly exposed to

online risks, but girls and younger teenagers more often report that they find these experiences negative. The group of nine and ten year-old children who report having had at least one negative experience from an internet risk is almost twice as large (40% of those who have been exposed to a risk) as the group of 15 and 16 year-olds who say they have been troubled by such an experience (22%). These negative experiences do not differ for young people from differing socioeconomic backgrounds, although youngsters from higher socioeconomic milieu are more often exposed to risks.

- 26% of Dutch children had encountered potentially harmful user generated content (e.g. hate messages, self-harm sites) compared the European average of 21%

## Parental mediation and safety

- Most Dutch 9-16 year old internet users report that they have been helped by their parents in the past when something was difficult to find (83%). They also received such active mediation from peers (74%) and teachers (68%). Less Dutch children say they have been helped in the past when they were bothered or harmed by something online: 27% received such help from parents, 12% from peers and 9% from teachers.
- In the Netherlands, almost all parents actively mediate their children's internet use in one way or another (about 98%), which is more than in most other European countries.
- Less than half of the 9-16 year olds say their parents monitor their social networking profile, the websites they visit or the contacts they add. These figures are a little higher when the same questions are asked of parents. The Netherlands scores average for monitoring practices compared to other European countries.
- For the majority of Dutch children, rules apply as to whether they can give out personal information to others on the internet (89%). Rules are much less prevalent for uploading content, downloading, social networking, etc.
- Although almost all parents in the Netherlands use software to prevent spam mail and viruses, they use parental controls or other means of blocking or limiting their children's internet use

to a much lesser extent (ranges between 10 and 30%).

## National policy implications

- In addition to parents who should be the main contact when children encounter problems online, youngsters might also seek help through the internet, whether or not anonymously. In the Netherlands, one such initiative is the website Helpwanted, where young people can report online sexual abuse. Additionally, diverse organisations in the Netherlands are working on preventing child pornography, bullying and discrimination. The police have developed an online button for youngsters to report internet problems (meldknop.nl). In this way, young people can not only get help offline, but also online, when they experience harm on the internet.
- The Netherlands already has a high-level ICT infrastructure at schools, but lacks professional teachers specialised in ICTs. Teachers acknowledge that time spent on digital media literacy is at the expense of time spent on teaching their own subject. In the Netherlands, media literacy is not included in the curriculum and the current policy is not to broaden the core learning objectives at school. Nevertheless, the Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development (SLO) has developed a learning programme about media literacy that schools can voluntarily adopt. Currently, they are also working on a policy measure to support schools in implementing this programme
- It is important to develop age labelling for websites aimed at children, similar to television parental guidelines ('Kijkwijzer'-pictogrammes in the Netherlands) or the international Pan European Game Information (PEGI) for interactive games. Ideally, such an initiative should be co-regulated by the Government and media parties in a European or international setting. Recently, the Dutch government commissioned a 3-year pilot, called Mediasmarties, to provide parents with an overview of online content that is suitable for children of different age categories (between 1 and 11 years old). In this way, positive content that is available for children on the internet becomes more visible to parents and educators, but also to child-carers and schools.

## Norway

Written by Elisabeth Staksrud.

### Access and use

- Norwegian children are highly wired and use the internet extensively. 99% of the children in the survey use the internet from home. On average, 66% access it from their own bedroom, increasing to 90% for all 15–16-year-olds.
- While the number of locations (4.4) where they use the internet is below the European average, this is attributed to the high number of privatised means of access such as via their own laptop (62%), mobile phone (37%) games console (32%) and other handheld portable device (31%).
- 31% of Norwegian children use a handheld device to go online — this is the highest in Europe. While only 11% of 9–10 year olds report the use of handheld devices, this increases by age: it is reported by 26% of 11–12 year olds, 35% of 13–14 year olds and 47% of 15–16 year olds.
- Typically, Norwegian children use the internet for 2 hours (114 minutes) on an average day. While there are no gender differences, the age difference is clear: 9–10-year-olds use the internet for an hour (63 minutes) per day, compared to 85 minutes for 11–12 year olds, two hours (121 minutes) for 13–14 year olds and almost three hours (173 minutes) for the 15–16 year olds.
- 41% of Norwegian children report one or more of the experiences associated with excessive internet use “fairly” or “very often”, significantly higher than the European average (30%). Age is a factor: while 18% of the 11–12 year olds report one or more of these experiences, this increases to 62% among the 15–16 year olds.
- The most common experience is that children report that they have very or fairly often “caught myself surfing when I am not really interested” (27%).

### Activities and skills

- Norwegian children engage in a wide range of online activities. On average, children have engaged in eight activities online in the past month.

- The most popular activities include watching video clips (89%), using the internet for school work (75%), visiting a social networking profile (68%) and playing games against themselves or against the computer (70%) or with other people (46%).
- Contrary to popular belief, blogging is not something “everyone” does; on average, only 12% have done this in the past month. There are, however, gender differences: girls blog more than boys, twice as many in the 9–12 years old group (7% boys vs. 14% girls) and over five times as many girls among the 13–16 year olds (22% vs. 4% of the boys).
- When asked about a variety of digital skills, such as the ability to bookmark a website, block messages from someone, change privacy settings and compare different websites to decide if information is true, Norwegian children report an average of 5.0 skills. While this is well above the European average of 4.2 skills, younger children (11–12 year olds) report only 3.6 skills.

### Risks and harm

- Norway is in the EU Kids Online survey classified as a “high risk, high use” country. As most children use the internet regularly, many have also at some point had an online experience that bothered them. Such experiences are reported by 23% of the children, ranging from 17% of the 9–10 year olds, 12% of the 11–12 year olds, 23% of the 13–14 year olds and 38% among the 15–16 year olds.
- 46% of all Norwegian children have seen a sexual image online or offline in the past 12 months, 34% have seen sexual images on websites. Both numbers are the highest in Europe.
- 20% of Norwegian children have seen or received a sexual message online, significantly higher than the European average of 6%.
- 31% of Norwegian children report that they have been bullied — online or offline. This is among the highest in Europe, only Estonia (43%) and Romania (41%) report higher numbers.
- 8% of Norwegian children have been bullied on the internet — again figure this is among the highest in Europe.
- Norwegian children are the second highest in Europe when it comes to experiences with



potentially harmful user-generated content. 42% aged 11+ say that they have seen such material, second only to Czech children (43%), and significantly higher than traditionally comparable countries such as Sweden (36%) and Denmark (29%).

## Parental mediation and safety

- Norwegian children generally communicate very well with their parents and report the highest level of active mediation from both parents and teachers in Europe. They also report the highest level of all forms of mediation of internet use by teachers (97%).
- Moreover, parental knowledge of their children being bothered is fairly high: 20% of parents report that their child has been bothered by something online, compared to the European average of 8%.
- However, in terms of parental awareness of specific risks, of those Norwegian parents with children who have seen sexual images online, 46% say their child has seen such images, 28% say their child has not seen such images and 26% report “do not know”.
- It is a particular worry that while 20% of the children from low SES families report that they have been bothered online, none of the parents in this group acknowledge this.
- Norwegian parents engage in higher active mediation (94% according to children) than the European average (87%). They also top the European list for active mediation of internet safety (97% vs. 86% for Europe) – meaning that they specifically give advice on safety issues. They are slightly above the European average for restrictive mediation (89% vs. 85%) and electronically monitoring their children’s use (54% vs. 50%). They are actually below average for technical mediation (16% vs. 28%).

## National policy implications

- Norway has a well-established network of stakeholders working in the area of safer internet use. While building on existing work, some new areas should be given particular attention in future awareness-raising efforts.
- As revealed in the EU Kids Online survey, Norwegian children belong to a high-risk/high use group, but they also possess more than average coping and practical skills.

- Three results stand out as being of particular significance: the high level of bullying experiences, the high level of children encountering potentially harmful user-generated content, and the user- and risk characteristics of children from low SES families.
- Given the omnipresent and privatised internet access experienced by Norwegian children, attention should be paid to the few that are not online, or have limited access. In order to ensure that the few children that are not afforded online opportunities can do so in the future.
- This also entails a policy emphasis on the opportunities afforded by the internet for children when relating to parents and teachers.
- Given the high level of usage and risk experiences among young Norwegian children, it is important to pay attention to general safe use issues for young children, including pre-school age.
- Given the exceptionally privatised use of the internet among Norwegian children, being online on mobile devices, policy should aim to aid and enhance critical thinking abilities amongst children.
- In addition, there is a need for a more general understanding of children’s own role and responsibilities as digital users and digital citizens, in particular in areas where children themselves contribute to risky and potential harmful behaviour — such as bullying and harassing other users online — where Norwegian children are among the highest in Europe.
- There is an urgent requirement for safety strategies that address Norwegian children’s use of harmful user generated services, the second highest in Europe. Given the nature of such services, e.g. hate sites, self-harm sites, pro-anorexia sites and suicide sites, and the issues associated with this, internet safety initiatives should seek to include and involve health care services.
- Given the high proportion of Norwegian children reporting one or more experiences associated with excessive internet use, this issue should be addressed, especially by creating information for parents and children alike helping them to manage the time children spend online.

## Poland

Written by Lucyna Kirwil.

### Access and use

- Compared to the European average, slightly fewer Polish children go online at school (66% vs. 63%). Usage at home is much more private than in many other countries. Two thirds of Polish children go online at home in their bedroom or another private room (66% vs. 49% on average in Europe) while only one quarter (27% vs. 62%) go online in the living room or another public room at home. Fewer Polish children than in Europe on average (only 5% vs. 12%) use the internet in an internet café and fewer Polish children (4%) than the European average (9%) go online when 'out and about'.
- More children in Poland than in Europe go online via their own personal computer (52% vs. 35%), however less of them do so via their own laptop (13% vs. 24%) or a shared laptop computer (13% vs. 22%). In 2010 far fewer Polish children than on average in Europe had access via their i-phones, i-pod Touch and other handheld and portable device (5% vs. 12%) and games console (11% vs. 26%). However slightly more Polish children (34%) than in Europe (31%) went online via mobile phone.
- 9-16 year old Polish children were nine years old on average when they first used the internet, the same as the European average.
- The average time spent online by Polish 9-16 year olds is 103 minutes per day (higher than the European average of 88 minutes).
- Polish children's experiences of excessive use places them below the European average. Only 23% children (vs. 30% for Europe) experienced one or more forms of excessive internet use fairly or very often. But even if 41% of Polish children aged 11 to 16 report none of the 5 symptoms of excessive use, each 11th child (9%) at this age has experienced all the symptoms.

### Activities and skills

- The three top activities of the Polish children are the same across Europe, however more Polish children (than on average in Europe) use the internet for schoolwork (91% vs. 85%), social networking (73% vs. 62%) and playing games

(51% vs. 48%). Compared to Europe fewer Polish children use the internet for entertainment, for instance fewer watch video clips on internet (72% vs. 76%). But more Polish children use internet to be better informed, i.e. more read or watch news in the internet (60% vs. 41%). Among Polish children creative online activity is less common than on average in Europe. Only 30% of Polish children (vs. 39%) post photos, videos or music to share with others. Only 19% (vs. 31%) use web cameras and only 17% (vs. 31%) post messages on the website. Only 16% (vs. 20%) have created an avatar or pet and only 6% (vs. 11%) blog. Fewer Polish children (9% vs. 16%) have spent time in a virtual world. Polish children are less active in online communication – fewer of them have sent or received e-mail in past month (57% vs. 60%), used files sharing sites (12% vs. 18%), visited chat room (17% vs. 23%). However, more of them have used instant messaging (67% vs. 62%).

- Digital skills are as common as in Europe. But many children do not know how to block unwanted contacts (42%), and especially unwanted messages, junk e-mail and spam (63%). Less than a third can change filter preferences.
- 71% of children who use the internet in Poland (vs. 59% in Europe) have their own social networking profile. Most report using 'Nasza Klasa' (60%). Polish children belong to those who claim to have the highest number of contacts in their SNS profile and greatest number of identifying features they show in their profiles. 37% of Polish children (vs. 26% in Europe) set their SNS profile as public. Very few children (3% vs. 16% in Europe) display an incorrect age, because at the most used SNS in Poland there is no age limit. But the average number of identifying features in their profiles is higher than average for Europe (3.4 vs. 2.8).

### Risks and harm

- Poland is a 'high use, some risk' country - previously it was in the 'high use, high risk' category. With the exception of seeing sexual images online, Polish children are below the European average for encountering online risks.
- 12% of Polish children say they have been bothered or upset by something online in the past year (the same on average in Europe).

- One quarter (24%) of 9-16 year olds say that they have seen sexual images in the past 12 months, whether online or offline (similar to the European average of 23%). 15% of Polish children have encountered sexual images on the internet. Of Polish children who have seen online sexual images, half say they were not bothered by the experience.
- 19% of children say they have been bullied, but just 6% say this occurred on the internet (31% of all bullied children). 66% of children bullied online feel that they were bothered by this experience and 51% report that the negative emotions lasted for several days or longer time.
- One out of four Polish children aged 9-16 (25% vs. 30% in Europe) have had contact online with someone they have not met face to face, while 8% (vs. 9% in Europe) have gone to an offline meeting with someone first met online.
- Almost each fourth child aged 9-16 in Poland (24% vs. 21% across Europe) has seen one or more types of potentially harmful user-generated content.
- Many Polish parents are not aware that their children have experienced online risks. 58% of Polish parents (40% cross Europe) are not aware that their children had seen sexual image on the internet. 52% of parents are not aware that their children have received sexual messages. 54% of Polish parents (vs. 61% w Europe) are not aware that their children met face to face offline contacts they met for the first time on the internet. Polish parents are least aware that their child was bullied online. 63% of Polish parents whose children were bullied online (vs. 56% of parents on average in Europe) say that their child was not bullied online.

## Parental mediation and safety

- Most Polish parents (94%) use active mediation, e.g. talking to their children about what they do on the internet or undertaking shared online activities.
- Only 61% of Polish children are aware that their parents (77%) track their online activity.
- Also fewer children than parents (17% vs. 19%) say that blocks and filters are installed on the computer that is used by a child.
- Polish children have a positive attitude towards parental mediation. 74% of them say they do not neglect their parents' advice and

suggestions related to the internet use. 66% of Polish children are convinced that their parents' mediation does not limit their online activity.

- More parents (44%) than children (18%) are convinced that the parents should be more engaged in their children's online activities.
- More than two thirds of children have got support/help from their parents (68%) and teachers (68%). When Polish children experienced online risk they found parental support helped. Fewer children feel that such support was received from the peers (44%).

## National policy implications

- These findings demand a wide online safety education initiative for Polish parents, who are not only behind their children in internet use but are below the European average for thinking they should do more for children's safety online. Engaging the parents would seem to be a promising approach since Polish children would like more parental interest. Most Polish children take heed of their parents' advice on safe use of the internet. Those who have experienced risks mostly rely on parents' support. And finally, parents' support, not teachers' and peers' support, seems to help Polish children best to cope with negative online experiences.
- Since Polish children are more exposed to sexual content online, they might be better protected if their parents used parental controls blocking inappropriate content. Since Polish parents are very low on technical mediation they should be taught how to use these tools.
- Relatively few Polish children use internet via mobiles, smart phones, iPads or other handheld devices, probably because of their high prices in Poland. To better utilise Polish children's digital skills and address their interests (as suggested by the very high use of the internet for schoolwork and watching news), greater availability of the internet, reduced cost mobile devices for school children should be promoted.
- In Poland, despite wide circulation of the EU Kids Online II reports to teachers and stakeholders, there was very little response and, one suspects, very little interest. Polish stakeholders seem to delegate the responsibility for children's online safety to NGOs. Stakeholders should increase their own interest in children's online safety.

## Portugal

Written by Cristina Ponte and Ana Jorge.

### Access and use

- Portuguese children are European leaders in terms of accessing the internet through laptops, which is a direct consequence of national policies, particularly after 2008: 65% of the respondents have their own laptops, without significant differences between households. The recent and rapid growth and democratisation of internet access is also shown by the fact that the country still presents one of the highest averages in Europe for the age of first internet use: 10 years-old.
- Children's predominantly use laptops in the home and particularly in the bedroom. 93% of Portuguese children access the internet from home, and 67% access it in their bedrooms. Only in Sweden and Denmark do more children access the internet in their bedrooms.
- Besides school, where 72% of children report that they access the internet, public libraries are used as points of access by 25% of children and young people, double the European average (12%). This practice may be a way to compensate for the cost of accessing the internet at home, considering that 53% of the households are low SES.
- Despite having their own laptops, Portuguese children are among those who use the internet less frequently, which can account for the relatively low level of risk reported (7% of children have experienced one or more of the risks asked about). 53% of children say they use the internet daily or almost daily.
- However, older children in Portugal report some of the highest levels of excessive use (49% of young people 11+), which may have more to do with anxieties about parents limiting their internet access than to the amount of time actually spent online itself.
- Mobile phone access is still marginal, as only 7% of boys and 2% of girls, especially those from middle class families, say they use it on the go.

### Activities and skills

- Portuguese children use the internet mostly for schoolwork (89%) and games (83%). Watching videos, instant messaging and e-mail exchanges are also popular (respectively, 70%, 69% and 66%). Only one in three read/watch the news on the internet (32%).
- Productive, participative and creative uses are less prevalent: only 11% had posted a message on a website, 10% had spent time in a virtual world, and 7% had written a blog and used file sharing sites.
- There are gender differences among the 9-12 year-olds: boys have more access in their bedrooms and show a more diversified use of the internet, whereas girls use the internet mostly for schoolwork. For the 13-16 year-olds, contacting others become more prevalent among both boys and girls.
- Portuguese children report an average of 4.9 skills, placing the country in eighth place among the 25 countries. The most mentioned digital skills are bookmarking a website (76%) and changing privacy setting (62%), both above the European average (64% and 56%, respectively). These hide considerable age differences, as 14-16 year-olds show more accumulated experience.
- Generally, comparing websites is one of the least reported competences, and more than half of the younger age group (9-11) state that they do not know how to search for information on online safety.
- Whereas children and young people from higher class families report more competences in terms of creating more opportunities and minimising unwanted contents (bookmarking, blocking unwanted messages and spam, finding information on safety), those from more disadvantaged families claim greater competences as regards safeguarding their personal presentation online (e.g. changing privacy settings and preferences).
- Two out of three children from low SES background consider it is very true that they know more about the internet than their parents.

### Risks and harm

- There is a generally low level of incidence of online risk among Portuguese children and young users of the internet: only 7% say they



have been bothered by one or more of the risks in the survey. Younger children, girls and those from more disadvantaged families seem to be more bothered by the risks they encounter, while they also tend to use the internet less.

- 13% of Portuguese children have seen sexual images online, and 3% of all the children feel bothered by the experience. Although more teenagers and boys report that they have seen these images, girls, 11-12 year-olds and children from lower class families have a greater chance of being upset by them. As for sexual messages, 15% of 11-16 year-olds say they have received them, while 3% admit to having sent them.
- Only 2% of children say they have suffered from online bullying, whereas 9% report they were victims of offline bullying, which follows the European pattern, but with significantly lower percentages. Regarding meeting offline people first contacted online, 16% of children report they have had this experience, most of them only once, and 2% of the total say they were bothered by it.
- The tendency for boys to be more exposed to risk is inverted in the case of seeing potentially harmful user-generated content and experiencing misuse of personal information. Here girls account for more, respectively, of the 15% and 6% of the 11-16 year-olds who say they have been exposed to these two risks.

## Parental mediation and safety

- Portuguese parents are among those in Europe who use the internet less: 78% of children and young people in Portugal used the internet in 2010, whereas only 66% of parents did so. Moreover, only about a third of these parents use the internet frequently, which, connected with the prevailing use in children's bedrooms, helps explain the low proportion, relative to the European average, using the internet together with children (only 43% of parents do so).
- There is still a cultural taboo around sexual risks in Portugal, as parents, especially of girls, resist admitting their children have contact with sexual images or messages.
- Portuguese children as well as parents seem to be eager to receive more information from teachers than they do at the present (28% of parents say they obtain information on online

safety from school nowadays, whereas 65% wish they could).

## National policy implications

- The low incidence of risk among children and young people who use the internet in Portugal may be a sign of the low level of frequent use and the weak uptake of the opportunities available online.
- Despite the low incidence of risk, children from more disadvantaged households seem to be bothered more by risks they may encounter.
- The inclusion of internet safety education in school curricula, from an early age, would benefit children and young people. Although the average starting age is late compared to the rest of Europe Portuguese children are nevertheless starting to use the internet at a younger and younger age.
- Parents also need to develop more ability to help their children, as they are perceived by children as being unable to be a social support when they experience risk, in large part because parents' own use of the internet is less than that of their children, especially among lower class families.
- This finding also suggests a need for greater attention by adults outside the home to support and enrich children's internet use. Since Portuguese children are among those who access the internet more from public spaces such as libraries, library and technical staff and other youth and 'social' workers should be prepared to support children in their use of the internet and also to help them when they experience risks and are upset by them.
- Teachers' readiness to deal with issues of internet safety and support children and their families is an urgent issue. So too is an investment in children's digital skills: although Portuguese children claim to have an average level of skills, they seem less able to use those skills when coping with risks.

## Romania

Written by Monica Barbovschi.

### Access and use

- Romanian children do not use mobile devices to go online very much (mobile phone - 18%, other type of mobile device - 2%), which is a similar level to other South and East European countries (e.g. Turkey and Italy). Moreover, in comparison with other countries (99% in the Netherlands and the Czech Republic), Romanian children have lower levels of internet access from the home (85%).
- One thing worth mentioning is the falling age of first internet use for Romanian children. However, Romanian children still have a relatively high average age for their first internet use, nine years old (Sweden - seven years old, European average - nine years old).
- Romanian children are a little above the European average for excessive internet use, with 33% of children saying that they had experienced often or very often one or more forms of addictive behaviour (e.g. less time spent with friends or family because of the time spent online, less time spent doing homework, neglecting basic needs like sleeping or eating). The European average was 30%.

### Activities and skills

- To some extent it was surprising that the use of social networking sites is very low in Romania in comparison to the rest of the countries, with only 46% of Romanian children having such profiles. However, this is due mostly to the low scores of the younger children - teenagers come close to the European averages (60% of Romanian children of 15-16 years old and 65% of teenagers aged 13-14). In addition, Romanian children say they have the lowest numbers of contacts in their list of friends (63% have less than 10 friends on their list, 24% have between 11 and 50 contacts).
- However, they have one of the highest levels of profiles set to public compared to other European children, with almost half saying that their profile is public (44% of those who have a SNS profile). Romanian children are amongst those who reveal most personal data in their profile (21%), such as home number or address.

- When it comes to the level of digital skills (or online competencies), Romania is still in an inferior position in comparison to other countries (third from last), with 3.4 skills on average (e.g. changing filter settings, blocking/filtering spam messages or blocking an unwanted user), compared to 5.8 competencies in Finland or 5.4 in Slovenia.
- Surprisingly, finding information about how to navigate the internet safely and blocking the messages of an unwanted user rank the highest among the skills reported by Romanian children (more than 50% claiming to know this), while less than half report having the other digital skills, with 'changing filter preferences' registering the smallest percentage, only 28%.

### Risks and harm

- Negative experiences online affect a great many Romanian children. Similar to Denmark, Estonia and Sweden, 21% of Romanian children say that they have been bothered or upset by something on the internet.
- Regarding exposure to sexual images, Romanian children are slightly above the European average, 28% saying that they have been exposed to such images, online or offline (19% on the internet). Among those exposed to sexual images online, 44% were bothered or upset by what they saw (meaning 8% of all Romanian children). This percentage positions the Romanian children amongst those most affected by this type of risk.
- In addition, Romanian children have the highest score for receiving sexual messages ("sexting"), 22% seeing or receiving sexual messages online. Among those exposed, 38% were bothered by this (children aged 11-16).
- Romanian children report one of the highest percentages for being bullied both on the internet and offline (41% say they have been upset by someone in the past 12 months, online or offline, 13% say this happened online).
- 32% of Romanian children say they have communicated online with someone they have not met before, while 13% of children have met such contacts in person. However, a great many of these people are friends or relatives of persons the child already knows face to face.
- 27% of Romanian 11 to 16 year olds have accessed websites with potentially harmful user-

generated content, such as sites that promote hate messages or suicide (European average 21%). 20% of girls age 14-16 have seen web pages that promote anorexia and bulimia.

## Parental mediation and safety

- Romanian parents report lower levels of internet use than their children, as shown by the Figure 3 in the introduction. Alongside Bulgaria, Poland, Lithuania and Turkey, Romania is a country where children's internet use surpasses by far that of their parents'.
- Moreover, Romanian parents underestimate their children's negative experiences on the internet. While 21% of children say that have been bothered by something on the internet, only 7% of their parents are aware of this fact, making the difference between parents' perception and children's reports one of the largest among the European countries.
- Parents underestimate their children's exposure to sexual images: 12% of parents say their children were exposed to these images online (compared to 19% of children saying that). The difference between the actual exposure and parental perception is one of the largest in Europe (alongside Lithuania, Austria, Portugal and Bulgaria). Among the parents of the children who have been exposed to sexual images, almost half do not know this happened (43%).
- As in the case of exposure to sexual images, Romanian parents underestimate their children's exposure to online bullying: only 2% consider that over the past 12 months their child has been bullied online. Once again, this difference between children's reporting and parental perception is one of the largest in Europe. The discrepancy becomes even more visible for the children that say they have been exposed to this type of behaviour online, 77% of their parents were unaware that this happened.
- Among European parents, Romanian parents are the ones that underestimate the most their children's exposure to sexual messages online ("sexting"), only 6% saying that this happened to their child in the past 12 months, when 22% of children report this experience. Taking into consideration only the parents of the children that received such messages, 52% of these have no knowledge that this happened.

- As in the case of other risks, Romanian parents underestimate their children's meetings with new contacts made online, only 6% knowing about these encounters.
- When it comes to mediating their children's online activities, Romanian parents have the lowest level of technical mediation amongst European parents, suggesting the immediate need for educating the parents in issues related to e-safety and digital literacy. Romanian children score the highest among European countries for children saying parents should take more interest in what they do online (30% of children, compared to the 15% European average).

## National policy implications

- As one of the countries profiled as a 'high use-high risk' or 'new use-new risk', Romania requires some specific policy approaches which address both the rapidly growing exposure of children to the online environment and the lack of parental awareness and digital literacy.
- Alongside well-known risks, such as exposure to sexual materials or online grooming, other 'new' risks, such as exposure to self-harm or racist sites need to appear immediately on the online safety agenda for Romania, with measures that target the awareness gap that exists among all stakeholders.
- The high rate of Romanian children's exposure to internet-related risks requires more coherent safety measures, for increasing the digital competencies of children that will enable them to face unpleasant or potentially harmful situations online.
- Parent's lack of awareness of their children's risk experiences means there should be an intensification of parental involvement and awareness, along with increasing the role of teachers' mediation of children's activities outside the internet (especially bullying).
- Last, addressing the lack of digital skills among Romanian parents, which leaves them underprepared for addressing their children's online safety, should be made top priority on the list of policy measures.

## Russia

Written by Galina Soldatova and Ekaterina Zotova.

The Russian survey was conducted strictly following the EU Kids Online methodology, in order to obtain valid and comparable information. Thus, internet-using 9- to 16-year-olds and their parents were interviewed in their homes. The survey covered 11 regions of the Russian Federation located in seven Federal districts. A total of 1025 pairs of parent-child participants were interviewed.

### Access and use

- Russian children tend to go online with no supervision, in their own room, at their friends' home and, more rarely, at school. Seventy to 90% of Russian schoolchildren confirm that they use the internet with no adult supervision. About 30% of Russian kids go online at school, while the European data show twice this number.
- The popularity of the mobile internet has increased in Russia over the past year and a half. The results show that 45% of schoolchildren go online via mobile phones, while the European average is 31%. Russian parents are well aware of their children's uncontrolled internet use but do not consider it a problem of great concern.
- Compared to the European average, children in Russia start using the internet slightly later – the average age is nine years in Europe and ten years in Russia. However, there is a trend whereby the age was reducing, as many children say they have been using the internet since ages five, four and even three. In a couple of years, the average age at which children begin using the internet might have changed significantly.
- Once Russian schoolchildren start using the internet they do it more intensively - 72% go online every day or almost every day, and only 19% once or twice a week. European kids are more moderate in their internet use – in Europe, 60% of children use the internet every day and one-third go online once or twice a week.

### Activities and skills

- Ever-increasing online activities are becoming immediately available to younger generations. Compared to European data, Russian children tend to use social networks more often (77% in Russia vs. 62% in Europe), as well as download music and movies more often (64% in Russia vs. 44% in Europe), whereas in Europe more than 75% of children watch video clips. Apart from this, Russian children like uploading their photos and music, chatting, and creating pets and avatars. A pleasant surprise was that 80% of Russian kids say they use the internet for educational purposes, whereas previous findings were quite different in this respect. Blogging did not differ significantly between Russia and Europe.
- A third of the children in the survey have public profiles on social networking sites. 79% of Russian school kids post their surname, 77% their photo, 59% their exact age and 65% the name of their school. Social networks, on the one hand, expand communication circles; but on the other hand they can devalue the true meaning of friendship. Every fifth child in Russia has more than 100 friends on social networking sites.
- Most of Russian schoolchildren can block the messages (74%), bookmark websites (68%), change privacy settings (66%). As in European countries, in Russia older children have more skills. Fewer Russian children learn to compare websites to judge quality (44% vs. 56% in Europe) and change filter preferences (31% vs 28% for Europe).

### Risks and harm

- 24% of Russian schoolchildren report being bothered by something on the internet – twice as many as their European peers.
- 49% of Russian schoolchildren encounter sexual images online or offline. Every fifth child sees sexual images more than once a week. Regarding sexual content online, 41% of Russian children compared to 14% of European children report having seen such content in the past 12 months.



- Every fifth child in Russia using the internet reports being a victim of online and offline bullying. The data on bullying are almost the same in Russia and Europe. However, Russian children report being bullied online almost as often as being bullied in person (10% and 12% respectively) whereas the European research shows that the incidence of cyberbullying is just over half (6%).
- In Russia, 28% of children admit to having bullied others over the past year. In Europe, half as many children (12%) replied positively to this question.
- 28% of Russian children have received sexual messages, more than the European average. 4% of children in Russia have posted or sent sexual messages.
- As regards internet encounters, according to the European data this problem is not as crucial as it used to be, whereas in Russia it is still quite pressing. Half the children in Russia meet new people online, and every fifth has met online contacts offline. In Europe, less than 10% of children tell of this experience.
- 46% of 11-16 year olds have seen websites with potentially harmful user-generated content. Thus is twice the European average.

## Parental mediation and safety

- Less than half of the parents surveyed in Russia are involved in their children's internet activity. The most popular form of active mediation is talking to a child (58%), in second place is encouraging the child to explore the internet (40%). Other forms of active mediation are less popular among parents in Russia than in Europe.
- Compared to the European findings, in Russia parents control children's activity on the internet less. Under a quarter of parents impose restrictions on the use of instant messaging, downloading music or films, having a social networking profile. The main rule applies to disclosing personal information (39%)
- Russian parents are less likely to monitor child's internet activities than parents in Europe. In Russia, just over a fifth of

parents check which sites the child visited and his/her social networking profile.

- 65% of Russian parents and 57% of children say that parental mediation is helpful. In Europe, in comparison with Russia, both children and parents are a little more confident in the effectiveness of parental mediation.
- In Russia, children say that teachers participate in their online activities much times less than in Europe (49% and 81% respectively). Most often that participation involves making rules about internet use at school (30%). Younger children say their teachers have helped them less often than older ones.
- Peers' mediation in Russia is as common as in Europe: 73% of children say their friends have helped them in some way. The most popular way is helping them to find something. Russian children are less likely, than European peers, to explain why some websites are good or bad and suggest ways to behave online.

## National policy implications

- The internet-isation of Russian educational institutions began in 2006-2007: more than 52,000 Russian schools acquired internet access within the national project "Education". At the beginning of 2009 several leading organisations in the Russian Internet community, being concerned with the increase in the risks surrounding children and teenagers on the Internet, announced that they would combine their efforts and conduct a 'Year of Internet Safety' in Russia. Several projects have already been initiated by the Year of the Safe Internet participants: hotlines to receive information about inappropriate content, as well as the National helpline "Kids online" ([www.detionline.com/helpline](http://www.detionline.com/helpline)). Year of the Safe Internet initiated the growth of number of organisations working on internet safety.
- In the autumn 2012, the federal law "On the protection of children from information that causes harm to their health and development", as well as the federal law on the creation of the registry of prohibited sites took effect in Russia

## Slovakia

Written by Jarmila Tomková.

Slovakia did not take part in EU Kids Online survey so the conclusions are based on the results from research on the topic of the adolescents using the internet, which covers the sample of 13-16 year olds with an average age of 14.25 years. The survey was conducted in 2010, as was the EU Kids Online survey.

### Access and use

- 85% of respondents connect to the internet from home, which is nearly the same as the European average. A large number of teenagers go online from school (75%), from their friends' homes (36%) and from internet cafés (15%). Compared to the near quarter of Europeans 13-16 year olds accessing the internet via their mobile phone, only 15% of these Slovak teenagers do so.
- More than three quarters (81%) of Slovak teenagers connect to the internet once or several times a day (compared to the 60% EU Kids Online average). 96% connect at least several times a week. They spend on average 1-2 hours (32%) or 2-3 hours (25%) per session. There is no difference between girls and boys.

### Activities and skills

- When it comes to "the ladder of opportunities" quite a number of Slovak teenagers reach the level of interactive use for communication. Chatting is the most favourite online activity (77%), 65% of these teenagers use email and spend time on Facebook activities (52%). Online communication with friends and family was the main thing they would miss when asked to imagine a "world without the internet".
- They watch videos from YouTube (66%), download music, movies, and software (64%) and play games online (52%). Surprisingly only 52% of Slovak teenagers say they use the internet for schoolwork (much less than the European average of 85%). As in other countries, a small proportion of Slovak teenagers are involved in such creative activities as blogging (6%) or creating/designing websites (9%).

- Compared with countries in the EU Kids Online survey Slovak teenagers are rather excessive in their usage of SNS. 80% of teenagers (87% of girls and 71% of boys) have created their own profile, or a personal website or blog on the internet, many on SNS (mainly Facebook). 66% of teenagers spend time on SNS activities on a daily basis.
- There are large gender differences in SNS usage. Facebook is not used at all by approximately twice as many boys as girls. Almost three quarters of girls spend 1 hour and more a day on Facebook, whereas only 56% of boys do so.

### Risks and harm

- Slovak teenagers perceive the highest risks on the internet to be that their profiles might be hacked and online identity stolen and their personal information or pictures might be misused. Boys are specifically worried about computer viruses whereas girls are worried about sexual harassment, online perversion, or even abuse or rape.
- Compared to the roughly 20% of European teenagers (13-16) who say they have seen sexual images on any websites in past year, 41% of teenage boys say they watch pornography on the internet at least sometimes. Only 6% of girls say so (which partly reflects having the courage to admit that). 11% of girls and 36% of boys had already used the internet to search for information on sex. In this way natural sexuality development is associated with their online activities.
- 21% of Slovak teenagers accidentally stumbled upon websites with content depicting nudity or sex while surfing the internet, and 15% of teenagers encounter pornography unintentionally. This was reflected in the comments of teenagers who perceived them as bothering and annoying (mostly girls): "...when there are various perverse websites popping out all of a sudden."; "I do not like it if there is pornography and disgusting information there."
- Seeing and receiving sexual messages, sexting, is more common in Eastern European countries (Romania, the Czech Republic, Estonia) as it is among Slovak teenagers. Mostly girls experience this and mention it as one of the disadvantages of the internet. Sexual messages (taunts and comments) were

received by 30% of Slovak teenagers (37% of girls, 22% of boys), which seems to be above the European average of 17%.

- Girls seemed to consider sexting as an ordinary online experience, as a kind of side-effect of their activities on chats and SNS. They usually cope with sexting by ignoring it and worry more about the younger girls, who “are vulnerable whereas they are already immune against it”.
- However, Slovak teenagers do not just take a passive role in sexting - often they are actively involved. Sexual talk and comments were made at least sometimes by 10% of teenage girls and 23% of boys.
- 10% of them admit that they had posted pictures or videos showing them in sexy postures, 5% showing them in underwear or with unveiled parts of body. Such situations are for them a source of entertainment, they play with the risk, they experiment - they test what reactions there will be to their behaviour.
- 6% of Slovak teenagers say they have been cyberbullied. More often they say they encounter negative phenomena such as cursing and deriding (50 %), gossiping, dissemination of false information (43%), receiving sexual taunts and comments (30%), misuse of pictures or videos (16%) and threats (17%).
- Teenagers often refer to their active role in such behaviour and consider it as a “fun”. They are not sensitive enough to distinguish between having fun and bullying online.
- 77% of teenagers have a friend whom they meet only online. 75% chat with online strangers. In the European survey roughly one in ten teenagers that met online made an offline contact, whereas approximately one fifth of Slovak teenagers did so.
- However, transferring an online relationship to the offline one usually takes place upon the recommendations of trusted persons and the online stranger is thus perceived by youngsters as somehow “verified”. Girls expressed fear and concerns about dating with strangers nearly twice as often as boys and pay more attention to verifying a contact before meeting them offline. Despite this concern, they go to such meetings more often than boys. Similar numbers of girls and boys had a good feeling regarding the meeting (68% of girls; 71% of boys). Girls mention more frequently that they

were scared, felt strange and were ashamed or disappointed.

- Slovak teenagers have fairly good awareness of the fact that it is necessary to protect their own personal data and many of them do so. Most negative experience concern the misuse of their pictures and so teenagers are concerned about the privacy of pictures when uploading them. A mere 17% of girls and 28% of boys make their pictures publicly available. 60% of girls and 40% of boys keep them private for their friends and more than quarter have photo albums locked by passwords.
- Teenagers ask for the approval of others when publishing their pictures in 60% of cases. They are also not happy when someone publishes something without their approval in 61% of cases.
- 63% of Slovak teenagers have their email address placed in their Facebook profile and one in ten posts his/her phone number there.

## National policy implications

- Media education has been integrated into education legislation in Slovakia since 2007/2008. There are compulsory sessions on internet safety as part of media education in primary and secondary schools. This takes place, however, very formally and inefficiently because of teachers' lack of knowledge about these issues. In Slovakia very few schools provide media education as a subject on its own because of the absence of qualified teachers. However, according to surveys schools are interested in this issue.
- The government has partnered with corporate entities to support and train teachers in order to enable them to utilise ICT effectively in the classroom and within academic sector.
- Slovakia would be probably considered as East-European country with “high use and high risk” because it is only a newcomer to the internet in terms of the delayed broadband Internet penetration and delayed internet safety awareness campaigns.
- As Slovak children often unintentionally come across the inappropriate online content such as pornography, emphasis on technical tools seems to be reasonable, mainly for young children.

## Slovenia

Written by Bojana Lobe.

### Access and use

- The majority of Slovenian children access the internet from their home (67%). The average age when they go online is approximately eight years. They are amongst the youngest in Europe. The most frequent devices used to access the internet are computers and mobile phones.
- Almost three quarters of Slovenian children use the internet daily, nearly a quarter once or twice a week and 4% twice a month or less frequently. The average usage time is 94 minutes
- Slovenian children are less inclined to use the internet excessively in comparison to the European average.

### Activities and skills

- With regards to opportunities the findings show that Slovenian children have amongst the highest number of digital literacy and safety skills in Europe. They also engage in an above average number of online activities. Looking at the ladder of opportunities, almost two thirds of Slovenian children are on the more advanced steps of the "ladder of opportunities". One third of them are advanced and creative users.
- The majority of Slovenian children have watched videos clips online (86%), played online games (80%), and visited social networking profiles (74%). Fewer children have watched/read the news on the internet (13%), spent time in a virtual world (12%), or have written a blog or online diary. Overall, of the 17 activities surveyed, Slovenian children undertake nearly half of the activities (7.3). As in other countries, the number of activities in which children engage increases with their years of age and years of internet use.
- Almost three quarters of Slovenian children (74%), aged 9-16, have a social networking profile, which is well above the European average of 59%. There are age differences. Amongst the youngest, 34% of children have social networking profile, whilst this percentage goes up significantly to 95% for children aged 15-16. The social networking profile is set to

private by 43% of children, 31% of them set their profile to partially private and almost a quarter of them (23%) have a public social networking profile. There are age and gender differences: girls and older children are more likely to have their profile set to private.

- As in Europe generally, the vast majority of children (89%), communicate online with people who they first met offline.
- In general, Slovenian children are good in five out of eight digital skills (average 5.4), which is above the European average (4.2). Alongside Finnish and Dutch children, Slovenian children report the highest levels of digital literacy and safety skills.
- The majority of Slovenian children can bookmark a webpage (81%, well above the European average of 64%), and many know how to find information on internet safety. 78% of children know how to delete their browsing history and manage the privacy settings in their social network profile (the European averages being 52% and 56% respectively).
- But just under half of Slovenian children (44%) say they know more about internet than their parents, below the European average of 64%.

### Risks and harm

- Slovenian children may score highly within Europe for use of the internet but they are only relatively high for some of the risks.
- Two out of five Slovenian children (40%) say that the internet is not a safe environment for children their age, which is below the European average of 55%.
- Children aged between 15 and 16 have the most negative experiences on internet.
- More than a third of children in Slovenia (36%) have some experience with harmful user generated content (well above the European average of 21%).
- Overall, Slovenian children are above the European average when it comes to experiencing harm online and below average when it comes to coping.
- Every third child in Slovenia say they have seen sexual images online or offline (compared to the European average of 21%), and a quarter of them have seen them online. Of those, less than a half have seen these images less than



once a month. Furthermore, of those who have seen sexual images online, 80% report they have seen someone naked and more than a half reported they had seen images of sexual acts. Only 1% of those who have seen those images have seen them via mobile phones.

- Comparing Slovenian children with the rest of the Europe, we see that relatively more children from Slovenia access pornographic images via web sites (25% in comparison to 14% in Europe). Furthermore, Slovenian children see more pornography on DVSS, TV and videos (23% in comparison to 12% in Europe).
- Seeing/receiving sexual messages is more common amongst Slovenian children (17%) than posting/sending (3%) such messages. The percentage increases with age – amongst the oldest surveyed children, 25% have had such an experience of sexting.
- Amongst Slovenian children, children are bullied three times more often offline (15%) than online (4%). 3% are bullied via the mobile phone. Older children have more frequently experienced bullying than younger children. In comparison to the European average, Slovenian children are actually below average with respect to being bullied online. However, the percentages of Slovenian children who say that they have been a bit, fairly or very upset by this experience are quite high and well above the European average.
- In Slovenia, every third child (34%) has online contacts that they have not met face-to-face but they go to relatively fewer offline meetings (in 13% of cases) compared to some other countries in Europe.

## Parental mediation and safety

- According to EU Kids Online findings, over half of parents practise some form of parental mediation, including talking to their child. However, a parallel Slovenian study showed that a considerably lower percentage of parents mediate their children's media use, including the TV and the internet (only a quarter) and even a lower proportion of parents talk to their children about daily internet practices. Similarly, only a quarter of children in this study state that their parents mediate their internet use. Slovenian parents are also amongst those less confident when using the internet.

- The findings of this parallel study show that Slovenian parents mostly get skills and digital safety information from traditional media and from children's schools. The preferred sources of this information are mostly other parents and family but less so educational institutions such as schools.

## National policy implications

- According to EU Kids Online findings, Slovenia is a 'high use, some risk' country, although previously it was in the 'high use, high risk' category.
- Even though excessive use is below the European average, it still requires some attention, particularly with regard to younger children.
- Risk areas that remain critical are negative user generated content and meeting new people online.
- Slovenian children start to use the internet at around the age of eight which is amongst the youngest in Europe – hence, particular attention needs to be paid to young children
- Given that the majority of children get safety information from their parents it would be wise and reasonable to take the following steps:
  - To initiate a national campaign, focusing on parent to parent and within-family (as opposed to school to parent, and school to children) digital literacy and safety skills education, with the help of the national awareness centre and similar institutions.
  - To encourage parents to talk (as oppose to use blocking and filtering software alone) to their children on a daily bases about their internet use (just as talking about school today, for example).
  - To provide effective and targeted awareness tools to younger children, especially those from six years on who are entering primary school and starting to use the internet. There are none or very few initiatives addressing this age group at the moment. Children in this age group find themselves in a digital skills gap due to lack of parental knowledge as well as lack of digital literacy related topics in school syllabi for younger children.

## Spain

Written by Maialen Garmendia.

### Access and use

- Compared to the European average more Spanish children go online at school (70% vs. 63%), but slightly less at home (84% vs. 87%).
- Most of them (63%) go online in the living room or in some public room at home, whereas 42% do it in their own bedroom.
- More than half (57%) go online at a friend's house and using the internet at some relative's home is fairly common (44%). One out of four children goes online at the library.
- 9-16 year old children were nine years old on average when they first used the internet. But, 9-10 year olds connected first at seven, whereas those aged 15-16 connected first at 11.
- 58% go online daily or almost daily, 34% use it once or twice a week, leaving just 9% who go online less often.
- The average time spent online by Spanish 9-16 year olds is 71 minutes per day, far below the European average (88 minutes).
- Nearly one third of children (31%) agree with the statement "I have caught myself surfing when I am not really interested" saying this happens to them very or fairly often. This suggests surfing the internet is a basic home routine.

### Activities and skills

- Top activities are using the internet for schoolwork (83%), playing games (80%), watching video clips (78%) and using instant messaging (68%).
- Creating content is much less common than receiving it. For example, 78% have watched video clips online but only 44% have posted photos, music or videos to share with others. Fewer have spent time in a virtual world (14%) or blogged (6%).
- 57% of children who use the internet in Spain have their own SNS profile, below the European average (59%). While only 11% of 9-10 year olds have a profile, 42% of 11-12 year olds have one, despite the fact that in Spain the minimum age to have their own profile is 14, as we have the most restrictive regulations in Europe.

Moreover, the percentage with profiles percentage increases steeply to 74% for 13-14 year olds and 89% for 15-16 year olds.

- Spanish children seem to have less SNS contacts than in some other countries as nearly one out of four (24%) has less than 10 contacts.
- Most SNS users have their profile set to private or partially private; but 14% in Spain have made it public (lower than the 26% across Europe). Strikingly, among 9-10 year olds more than one third have set it to public. Most probably this will be related to the lack of digital skills but this fact makes this group especially vulnerable.
- Spain has the highest percentage of children who have posted an incorrect age in their profile (27%).
- 19% of 11-16 year olds (more boys than girls, more teens than younger children) say they communicate online with people who they met online and who have no connection with their offline social networks.
- 13% of 9-16 year old internet users have looked for new friends on the internet and added contacts they do not know face to face, and 4% have pretended to be a different person, below the European averages.
- Bookmarking websites, blocking messages and finding information on how to use the internet safely are the skills that most Spanish children claim to have. Roughly one quarter claim to be able to change filter preferences.
- Among the younger children there are some significant gaps in their safety skills. Less than one third of 11-12 year olds can change their privacy settings and less than half can block messages from people they do not want to hear from.
- 47% of Spanish 9-16 year olds say the statement "I know more about the internet than my parents" is 'very true', 22% say it is 'a bit true' and 31% say it is 'not true'. The percentage of children who claim to know more about the internet than their parents thus is much higher than the European average (36%).

### Risks and harm

- 14% of Spanish 9-16 year olds say they have seen sexual images whether online or offline, far below the European average of 23%. But most Spanish children have seen those images online (11%). This is more common among

boys than girls, more among teens than younger children.

- Among children who have seen online sexual images, 53% of parents say their child has not seen them.
- As in other countries, Spanish 9-10 year olds are less likely to have seen sexual images online but more likely to be bothered or upset by the experience if they do see them.
- Overall, most children have not experienced sexual images online and, even among those who have, most say they were not bothered or upset by the experience.
- 9% of 11-16 year old Spanish internet users have received or seen sexual messages (15% across Europe) and very few (1%) have sent them.
- Among those who received sexual messages roughly one out of four (24%) feel bothered by them.
- In relation to online bullying, 16% of Spanish children (and 19% across Europe) say they have been bullied, but just 5% say this occurred on the internet. This is lower than for Europe overall (6%)
- The most common form of online bullying is nasty or hurtful messages sent to the child (3%).
- 9% of children say they have bullied others (12% across Europe), though only 3% say they have bullied others online in the past 12 months.
- Even though bullying affects a few children - 4% say they have been bullied online- it is always very harmful for them.
- 21% of Spanish children have made contact online with someone they have not met face to face. This percentage is far below the European average (34%).
- 9% have gone to an offline meeting with someone first met online, coinciding with the European average (9%).
- Older teenagers (13-16 year olds) are much more likely than younger children to have online contact with someone they have not met face to face. They are also more likely to have gone on to meet them in person – though such instances are rare.
- 19% of Spanish 11-16 year olds have seen one or more type of potentially harmful user-generated content, rising to 29% of 15-16 year

olds. This finding is lower than across Europe, where the average is 21%.

- The most common types of such content are hate messages (11%), followed by anorexia/bulimia sites (8%) and sites talking about drug experiences (7%). Very few visited a suicide site (2%).
- The main misuse of personal data experienced by Spanish children is when someone has used their password or pretended to be them (8%). Some have had personal information used in a way they did not like (4%). These percentages are quite similar to the European average.

## Parental mediation and safety

- According to their children, 89% of Spanish parents actively mediate their children's online experiences, 89% discuss internet safety, 88% restrict their children's use in some way, 48% electronically monitor their child's use, and 20% use controls (e.g. filters). Most figures are near the European average apart from technical controls (28% for Europe).
- 14% of Spanish child say they often ignore what parent's say, compared to 7% for Europe..

## National policy implications

- Spain has been categorised as a 'medium use, medium risk' country in the EU Kids Online findings.
- The percentage of children who use the internet in their own bedroom is one of the lowest in Europe, but this still remains a challenge for parents' mediation. Such difference between the rest of Europe and Spain underlines the need for promoting communication between parents and their children as a basic requirement for safer use of the internet.
- The incidence of risk is below the European average for all the types of activities considered. Even though this is a positive fact in itself, it is probably be due to children's lower internet use in Spain. Still it is noteworthy that most parents whose children were exposed to some kind of risk did not know this.
- In short, the low risk incidence needs to be contextualised by the lower use in Spain in comparison to other European countries. Nevertheless, a more ambitious policy is still needed in order to raise awareness related to the use of the internet among parents.

## Sweden

Abstract from the report: Cecilia von Feilitzen, Olle Findahl och Elza Dunkels (2011). *Hur farligt är internet? (How dangerous is the internet?) Resultat från den svenska delen av den europeiska undersökningen EU Kids Online*. The International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media. Nordicom, Göteborgs universitet.

### Access and use

- Almost all 9- 16 year olds in Sweden use the internet and almost all of them do so every or almost every day. Their average time spent on the internet is close to 2 hours a day. This means that the frequency and duration of internet use among children in Sweden are high compared to most of the other European countries studied.
- Nearly all of these children in Sweden use the internet at home and two thirds access the internet in their own bedroom, which is also a large proportion cross-culturally. More children in Sweden than on average in Europe also access the internet at friends' homes, relatives' homes, schools, libraries and, not least via mobile phones, when 'out and about'.

### Activities and skills

- Children's activities on the internet are in Sweden generally of the same kinds as the ones of other European children: social interaction (e.g., visiting social network sites, SNS), entertainment (e.g., watching video clips, playing games), and searching for information (not least for school work).
- In Sweden, approximately three quarters of the internet using children say they have visited a social network site during the past month. Two thirds have a profile of their own on a SNS. This is relatively more children than on average in Europe, although the proportion with, for example, a SNS profile of their own is larger in some ten other countries studied than in Sweden.
- Children's internet skills improve with increasing internet use and age. However, children in Sweden do not rank highest in Europe when it comes to digital skills and have more to learn to be able to use the internet in a critical and safe way.

### Risks and harm

- With increased internet use, older age and more diversified internet activities, the probability of voluntarily or involuntarily encountering risks on the internet also increases. Encountering risks on the internet is clearly more common among children in Sweden than among European children on average.
- But meeting with a risk is not the same as experiencing harm (being bothered or upset) by it. Although the majority of children in Sweden have met with one or another risk/s, far fewer children – about one fifth – say that they have been bothered by something on the internet in the past twelve months. Even so, this is a higher rate than in most countries in the study.
- However, when asked about harm caused by certain specified risks, the proportion of children experiencing harm in Sweden is not greater than on average in Europe. For example, in most cases when children in Sweden have met a person face-to-face (offline) whom they first met online, the meeting has been rewarding and without problems. Younger children usually do not go to face-to-face meetings with people they first met online but older children do. 30% of the 15- to 16-year-olds have met people offline whom they first met on the internet. All in all, 1% of all children who use the internet in Sweden have been bothered/upset by such an offline meeting. More precisely, this equates to 8 children of every 1,000 interviewed. In the European countries on average, 1% of all internet using children had also experienced harm by such a face to face meeting.
- Of these 8 children in Sweden – of whom no one met an adult – 3 say they became very upset. 7 children had told someone else about the meeting beforehand. 6 children had been accompanied by someone of the same age and 6 had told someone else afterwards, usually a parent, what happened. Most of these 8 children who perceived harm from face to face meeting erased all messages from this online contact or blocked the person.
- We can do similar comparisons between Sweden and the other countries regarding seeing clearly sexual pictures on the internet and seeing/receiving sexual messages ("sexting") online: Although more children in Sweden than on average in Europe have



encountered these risks, the percentage of all children in Sweden who use the internet and have experienced harm by the risks is on a par with the European average.

- However, somewhat more children in Sweden than on average in the countries studied have been bullied online in the past 12 months. Almost all of these children say they were more or less upset by the bullying (true also for children in the other countries).
- At the same time, bullying offline is more common than bullying online. In Sweden, bullying offline occurs to a similar degree across children in different age groups. But bullying online or via the mobile phone is more common among the older children and less so among the younger ones who are not yet so engaged in social network sites and instant messaging.
- The EU Kids Online project also asked the 11- to 16-year-olds about other risk factors, especially seeing potentially harmful user-generated content (web sites with hate messages; ways to be very thin; ways of physically harming or hurting oneself; experiences of drugs; and ways of committing suicide). Clearly more children in Sweden (that is, slightly more than a third) than on average in the other countries had seen such sites. (There were no questions following up if the child had experienced harm by seeing such content).

## Parental mediation and safety

- In Sweden children's parents use the internet somewhat more often than their children do, a fact probably implying that the parents can be a resource for their children when it comes to opportunities and risks on the internet.
- The absolute majority of the children in Sweden say their parents actively mediate their internet use and internet safety in several ways and also make rules regarding their internet use. There are fewer parents who check the children's internet use afterwards or who use filter or blocking techniques. In several other European countries it is more common to find rules, supervision afterwards and technical blocking/filtering than in Sweden.
- Not all parents in Sweden know that their child has experienced harm on the internet. There are also other aspects the parents are ignorant of or underestimate: that the child has met

someone offline whom s/he first met online; that the child has seen, received or sent sexual messages; and that the child has seen certain web sites with potentially harmful user-generated content (with hate messages; about how to be very thin; about drugs; and about committing suicide).

- Teachers' and peers' mediation of children's internet use seems to be a little more common in Sweden than in the European countries on average. But the teachers' work in this regard is nevertheless more intensive in several other European countries than in Sweden.

## National policy implications

- Sweden lacks national directives concerning young people's online safety, making it hard to coordinate research, policy development and the allocation of resources.
- The EU Kids Online findings in Sweden show that media are one of the parents' primary sources of information about the internet. This constitutes a problem because young people's internet use is often portrayed in a sensationalist manner. There is therefore a risk that parents worry more than is called for.
- Both children and parents in Sweden want more information about internet safety from school. School is a main arena in which information can reach all children, and via the children it can also reach their parents. A national directive could therefore give schools and teacher education institutions the responsibility to educate children in internet security issues.
- Research from EU Kids Online, as well as on actual cases of internet risks/harm and on children's own views, should be the basis for new guidelines for children, so-called Safe Use Guides, and for adults, such as tips on monitoring and restricting children's use. Current guidelines available in Sweden are largely obsolete and are in many cases built on assumptions rather than scientific knowledge.
- It is important that education on internet safety focuses on a critical approach in general rather than on specific media. This would increase the chances for children and adults being prepared for a continuously changing media landscape, offline as well as online.

## Switzerland

Written by Martin Hermida.

During spring/summer 2012 1,000 Swiss children were interviewed using the EU Kids Online questionnaire. Hence the data were collected two years after the other countries.

### Access and use

- Compared to the European average, about the same proportion of Swiss children go online at school (65% vs. 63%) and more go online at home (97% vs. 87%). Also many more children go online when 'out and about' (29% vs. 9%) – which in part might reflect the spread of smartphones in the two year period since the main EU Kids Online survey. More than half (57%) go online in their bedroom or other private room and at a friend's house (59%). While 12% of European children go online in an internet café, only 2% of Swiss children do so.
- Comparatively, far more Swiss children go online via a mobile device (49% vs. 12% in EU), ranking them indeed highest among all countries. Also the use of a mobile phone to access the internet is higher than in any other country but Greece (43% vs. 66% in Greece).
- Children in Switzerland are nine years old on average when the first use the internet, the same as the European average.
- The average time spent online by Swiss 9-16 year olds is 64 minutes per day (much lower than the European average of 88 minutes).
- Swiss children's experiences of excessive use are less common than the European average: Only 9% of 11-16 year olds have ever gone without eating or sleeping because of the internet (EU: 17%). Only 20% ever felt bothered when they could not be online (EU: 33%), 30% spent less time than they should with family, friends or schoolwork because of the internet (EU: 35%). And 25% ever tried unsuccessfully to spend less time on the internet (EU: 33%). When it comes to surfing without really being interested, Swiss children match the European average with 41% (EU: 42%).

### Activities and skills

- Top activities are using the internet for watching videos (85%), for schoolwork (78%), playing

games (75%), sending and receiving emails (65%) and reading/watching the news (61%). Instant messaging is only used by 31% of Swiss children, compared to the 62% European average. Playing online games is much less popular (25% vs. 44%), watching/reading the news is much more popular (48%).

- 49% of Swiss children have their own social network profile, which is less than the European average (59%). This difference is caused by 9-12 year olds who far less often have a profile than their European counterparts. Only 4% have their profile set to public, which is the lowest percentage among all countries, while the European average is at 26%.
- On one hand, more than half of Swiss children know how to bookmark a website (65%) and delete the record of which sites they have visited (60%), ranking them slightly above the European average. On the other hand, knowledge on how to change filter preferences (22%), find information on how to use the internet safely (57%) and block unwanted adverts or spam (46%) is less common than on average across Europe. While skills increase with age, younger children especially lack important skills. 73% of 11-12 year olds cannot block unwanted adverts or spam mails, 67% cannot change privacy settings on their social network and 63% cannot block messages from people they do not want to hear from.
- 19% of 11-16 year olds communicate online with people they only met online and who are not part of their offline social networks (EU: 25%).

### Risks and harm

- 12% of Swiss children have been bothered or upset by something online, which corresponds to the European average.
- One third (35%) of Swiss children say that they have seen sexual images online or offline in the past 12 months – much more than across Europe (23%). 20% have encountered sexual images on the internet, again clearly more than the European average (14%). Among 11-16 years old, 19% have seen online sexual images including nudity, 9% have seen images of someone having sex, 9% have seen images of someone's genitals and 1% have seen images of violent sex.

- Most children (67%) who have seen online sexual images say they were not bothered or upset by these images. Still, 27% (or 5% of all 9-16 years old) were upset by the experience. 21% of parents say their child has seen sexual images online.
- 21% of Swiss children say they have been bullied (EU: 19%) and 5% have been bullied on the internet (EU: 6%).
- 18% of Swiss 11-16 years old have seen or received sexual messages. Figures across Europe vary between 4% and 22% with the average at 15%.
- 24% of Swiss children have had contact online with someone they have not met face to face – a little less than the European average (30%). 8% have gone to an offline meeting with someone they first met online.
- 20% of Swiss 11-16 year olds (vs. 21% across Europe) have seen one or more type of potentially harmful user-generated content. Hate messages that attack certain groups or individuals are the most common type, followed by content discussing ways of being very thin.

## Parental mediation and safety

- 32% of parents think it likely that their child will experience something that bothers them online in the next six months (EU: 28%). And 38% think they should do more in relation to their child's internet use.
- Similar to the European average, 71% of Swiss children say their parents talk to them about what they do on the internet. As in Europe generally, this is the most popular way to actively mediate children's internet use. Sharing internet use by sitting with the child is the least common mediation – only 35% of children say their parents do so (EU: 44%). 7% of parents engage in no active mediation at all (according to children).
- When it comes to parental safety mediation, explaining why websites are good or bad (89%), helping when something is difficult to do or find (85%) and suggesting how to behave toward others on the internet (76%) are the most common strategies Swiss parents adopt.
- 85% of Swiss parents have software installed to prevent spam/junk mail or viruses. 38% have software installed to block or filter some types of

websites. And a quarter of parents (24%) keep track of the websites their child visits.

- Three quarters of children (74%) say it helps a lot or a little that their parents are taking action regarding their internet use (EU: 70%). Only 7% of Swiss children would like their parents to take more interest in their internet use, compared to 15% across Europe.
- 79% of Swiss children say their teachers have been involved in at least one of the forms of active mediation asked about - higher than the European average of 73%. Yet 13% of children have received no guidance or advice from their teachers on using the internet at all, while figures across Europe vary from 3% to 35%.
- Friends are very likely to mediate by helping each other to find or do something when there is a difficulty (64%) which corresponds to the European average. About a third of children (32%) have received some guidance on why some websites are good or bad (EU: 41%). 72% of children say their peers have actively helped or supported their internet safety, about the same amount as across Europe (73%).

## National policy implications

- Due to the federal system in Switzerland and the four different national languages, cooperation and coordination between stakeholders is not always easy. In 2011 the Swiss Government started a five year national programme to protect minors from harmful media effects and to promote media literacy. The Government is collecting information about the media literacy materials offered by different actors - including internet safety – in an online database. Identifying high-risk groups and monitoring developments concerning (self) regulation are part of the programme. This study will also serve as an evidence base for future initiatives. The Swiss Agency for Crime Prevention is already distributing information about internet safety on a national level and in three national languages.
- EU Kids Online shows Switzerland needs to have profound debate about internet risks and safety, as much as any other country in Europe. Still Switzerland is just beginning to investigate this matter. There are no plans yet to establish an evidence base or a dedicated governmental institution to monitor future developments.

## Turkey

Written by Kürşat Çağıltay.

### Access and use

- Children mostly use the computer or a notebook shared with other family members to access the internet.
- 15% of the children say that they were ten years old when they first used the internet.
- 36% of the children spend around one hour daily on online activities.
- 52% of children in Turkey access the internet at home, whereas in other European countries 94% of children have a home connection. About half of children in Turkey go to internet cafés, much higher than the average of 12% for other European countries.
- In Turkey, 25% of children express statements that are perceived as constituting internet addiction ("excessive use"), whereas this percentage is 32% for Europe.

### Activities and skills

- Children state that they use the internet mostly for school work (93%).
- 4% of children in Turkey use the internet for communication (instant messaging, sending or receiving e-mail, visiting social network sites) whereas the figure is 60% for Europe on average.
- 85% of children who use social networking sites have an account on Facebook. Although, more than half of their parents restrict children's disclosure of their personal information, 42% of children state that their profile is "public", which means anyone can see it, while one third of children share this information only with friends. 19% of children share their address and 18% their phone number on the social networking site profiles. Only half of the children in Turkey can change privacy settings in Facebook while in Europe 77% can do it.
- 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 skills and understanding of privacy issues, they

generally leave their privacy settings on default values. Social networking sites have lengthy, confusing privacy guidelines displayed in small, crowded fonts. Simpler new methods should be developed to enable users to change privacy settings.

- In Turkey, children have the fewest internet skills within Europe: children in Turkey have on average 2.6 out of eight - the average is 4.2 across other European countries. Turkish children are also the least knowledgeable about safer internet usage skills.

### Risks and harm

- According to the EU Kids Online study results, Turkey is categorised as a "low use, some risk" country.
- The proportion of children who encountered something that bothered them on the internet is less in Turkey compared to Europe generally (10% vs. 12%). There is a considerable difference between Turkish and other European children in terms of perceived risks of the internet. 38% of children in Turkey believe that there are issues that are bothering for children on the internet while this rate is 55% on average for other European children.
- 13% of children in Turkey have seen sexual images online, less than the 26% European average. However, the percentage of children who are bothered by such images in Turkey is double the European average.
- In terms of receiving or seeing sexual messages, the rates are similar in Turkey (14%) and Europe (15%). Similarly, about 2% of children in both Turkey and Europe have sent an online sexual message.
- Only 3% of Turkish children report that they have been bullied. In other European countries more children have been cyber bullied (6%).
- In terms of meeting strangers, online and offline meetings are less common in Turkey. Only 18% of children have met a stranger online and 3% of them have gone on to meet offline with strangers. The average for Europe is 30% for online meetings and 9% for offline meetings.
- About 15% of children in Turkey have visited at least one harmful web site (web sites related committing suicide, being anorexic, or hate groups, etc.) while the figure is 18% in Europe.



## Parental mediation and safety

- Among all European countries, Turkish parents have the lowest levels of internet use and are least knowledgeable about the internet.
- There is also a significant gap between the parents in that 49% of fathers and only 24% of mothers use the internet. This noteworthy contrast does not exist in other European countries; on average, 87% of fathers and 82% of mothers use the internet in Europe.
- Since many Turkish children are heavily dependent on out-of-home internet access, parents may find it difficult to regulate their children's internet use.
- Parents claim that they mediate activities to ensure internet safety, but they underestimate their children's experiences of risks.
- Most Turkish parents (60%) say that they guide their children's experience of using the internet. 34% of parents say that they use software to prevent spam/junk mail or viruses, and others (less than one third) check or keep track of the websites visited by their children. Interestingly, in Europe, less parents (25%) report that they do these things. When the internet use of parents is compared between Turkey and Europe, it is clearer parents in Turkey do not provide sufficient parental mediation.
- In Turkey, 78% of children state that they have received help from their teachers for at least one of the internet issues, while 71% of them have asked for help from their friends. These rates are a little less than Europe average. In Europe, 83% of children got help from their teachers when they have difficulty in using the internet while 75% of them asked for help from their friends.

## National policy implications

- Nowadays with the F@tih project, there are plans to distribute many tablet computers with internet connection to elementary and secondary school students in Turkey. The Ministry of Education should include essential internet-related content in the whole of the school curriculum.
- In the Turkish elementary curriculum, media literacy and computer courses should be re-designed to address contemporary internet use skills. Such skills have to be integrated into all courses. So, instead of teaching context free

ICT skills, kids have to learn the subject matter and safety issues together.

- Parental use of the internet should be encouraged and increased. Internet literacy courses should be provided, especially for mothers. These courses should be given in a face to face manner to teach them in a more efficient and effective way.
- Although there are some websites aimed at raising awareness of the internet safety, they are not widely known. Therefore, the Turkish media should be urged to prepare programmes to tell people why we need a safer internet. As announced in EC digital agenda, the Turkish ICT industry should also develop easy to use tools to access the internet safely.
- Unfortunately, today in Turkey, government efforts have been focused on higher levels of access restrictions in order to achieve the goal of creating a safer internet. These restrictions are applied through broad, though, disproportionate and arbitrary use of existing legal measures. At least 14,907 websites have been blocked under the provisions of the law as of August 2011<sup>2</sup>. Such actions are definitely a result of panic reactions and 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 internet for its citizens.
- Turkey is not a member of InSafe. Being a member of InSafe and opening awareness centres run by NGOs is necessary. These awareness centres might organise seminars and create web pages for children, parents and teachers.
- Turkey is one of the members of InHope, but it only provides a hotline to notify about harmful websites. A hotline should be established to support children and families to cope with other internet risks as well.
- Lastly, Turkish Justice Units should develop rules and regulations to safeguard personal privacy and penalise bullying behaviour via the internet.

<sup>2</sup> 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]

## United Kingdom

Written by Sonia Livingstone.

### Access and use

- Compared to the European average, more UK children go online at school (91% vs. 63%), at home (95% vs. 87%) and when 'out and about' (21% vs. 9%). Half (52%) go online in their bedroom or other private room and more than half (57%) at a friend's house.
- Half of UK children go online via a mobile device: 26% have handheld access to the internet and an additional 33% have access via their mobile phone, more than across Europe.
- 9-16 year olds children were eight years old on average when they first used the internet, putting UK children among the youngest in Europe when they first go online.
- The average time spent online by UK 9-16 year olds is 102 minutes per day (higher than the European average (88 minutes)).
- UK children's experiences of excessive use are more common than the European average: 51% have spent less time with family and friends than they should because of time they spend on the internet and 39% have tried unsuccessfully to spend less time on the internet.

### Activities and skills

- Top activities are using the internet for schoolwork (92%), playing games (83%), watching video clips (75%) and social networking (71%). Creating content is much less common than receiving it - 71% have watched video clips online but only 45% have posted photos, videos or music to share with others. Fewer have spent time in a virtual world (19%) or blogged (12%). Still, UK children participate and create material online more than children in many other countries.
- Bookmarking websites, finding information on how to use the internet safely and blocking messages are all skills that most UK children claim to have. But only a third can change filter preferences, and there are some significant gaps in skills among younger children. Around one third of 11-12 year olds cannot bookmark a site, and even more cannot block messages from people they do not want to hear from.

- 67% of children who use the internet in the UK have their own social networking profile, a little more than the European average of 59%. However, 28% of 9-10 year olds and 59% of 11-12 year olds have a profile, despite most SNSs, like Facebook, having a minimum age of 13 years. UK children report substantially more SNS contacts. However, most SNS users have their profile set to private or partially private; only 11% in the UK, compared with 26% across Europe, have a public profile.
- 19% of 11-16 year olds say they communicate online with people they met online who are not part of their offline social networks. This may be because 55% of 11-16 year old internet users say they find it easier to be themselves online.

### Risks and harm

- 13% say they have been bothered or upset by something online in the past year – this figure is about the same as the European average.
- One quarter (24%) of UK 9-16 year olds say that they have seen sexual images in the past 12 months, whether online or offline (similar to the European average of 23%). Only 11% of UK children have encountered sexual images on the internet - 8% have seen online sexual images including nudity, 6% (more so teenagers) have seen images of someone having sex, 6% have seen someone's genitals and 2% have seen violent sexual images.
- Among children who have seen online sexual images, most say they were not bothered or upset by the experience; however, 41% of parents say their child has not seen this and 29% say they don't know. As in other countries, 9-10 year olds are less likely to see sexual images online but more likely to be bothered or upset by the experience if they do see them.
- In relation to online bullying, 21% of UK children (and 19% across Europe) say they have been bullied, but just 8% say this occurred on the internet. Still, this is more than for Europe overall (6%). 11% of children say they have bullied others, though only 2-3% say they have bullied others online in the past 12 months.
- 12% of 11-16 year old internet users have received sexual messages, although 4% have sent them. In the UK, 'sexting' appears a little less common than across Europe.

- 29% of UK children have had contact online with someone they have not met face to face - similar to the European average. 4% have gone to an offline meeting with someone first met online - slightly less than half the European average (9%). Older teenagers (13-16 year olds) are much more likely than younger children have this online contact with someone they have not met face to face and meet them in person – though such instances are rare.
- 19% of UK 11-16 year olds (vs. 21% across Europe) has seen one or more type of potentially harmful user-generated content.

## Parental mediation and safety

- The survey shows that parents and children agree to a high degree in their accounts of parental mediation. 23% of parents think it likely that their child will experience something that bothers them online in the next six months.
- Most UK parents talk to their children about what they do on the internet (74%), making this, as in Europe generally, the most popular way to actively mediate children's internet use. Parents do considerably more active mediation of younger children's use of the internet – including talking to them, staying nearby, encouraging them or sharing internet use. But one in ten parents (11%) does none of these.
- Explaining why websites are good or bad (73%), suggesting how to use the internet safely (71%) and helping when something is difficult to do or find (73%) are all common strategies of parental safety mediation. The UK is near the top of ranking of countries in terms of parents actively mediating their children's safety.
- 54% of parents say that they block or filter websites at home or and 46% track the websites visited by their children. These findings are far higher than in Europe generally, with the UK topping the country ranking for use of filters.
- Both children and parents consider parental mediation helpful to some degree. Over two thirds of children (74%) say it helps a lot or a little, and 14% would like their parents to take more interest in their internet use.
- 93% of children say their teachers have been involved in at least one of the forms of active mediation asked about - substantially higher than the European average of 73%. But, one in

ten children who use the internet has received no guidance or advice from their teachers.

- Friends are likely to mediate by helping each other to find something when there is a difficulty (60%). Also, 33% of children have received some guidance on safe internet use from their friends and 33% have also provided such advice to their friends. Other relatives (42%) are also important in providing advice to children on how to use the internet safely.

## National policy implications

- The UK has seen a considerable amount of multi-stakeholder policy development in recent decades, with landmarks including the Home Secretary's Taskforce for Child Protection on the Internet, *The Byron Review: Children and New Technology* (2008) and the establishment of the UK Council for Child Internet Safety in 2008. With multiple workstrands, an annual summit for stakeholders, a strong strategy statement and an active Evidence Group, the UK has seen concerted progress.
- EU Kids Online has categorised the UK as a 'high use, some risk' country, an improvement on previous findings of 'high use, high risk' - it seems that the above efforts are bearing fruit. This should not be grounds for complacency, however, for it shows the level of effort required to reduce risk exposure among children.
- Future efforts should focus on younger children as they gain internet access. The array of possible risks online continues to change - for example, one in five teenage girls has visited a pro-anorexia/bulimia website, yet little is known of such practices and little help is available.
- The UK is noteworthy in the very high proportion of children who access the internet at school, making the school a particularly appropriate setting for the delivery of digital literacy skills.
- UK children are more likely to go online via a mobile or handheld device, putting them in the vanguard of new risks associated with personal internet access and, equally, making protective oversight by their parents more difficult.
- Social networking use in the UK is distinctive insofar as the UK has many 9-12 year olds who put a false age on their profile; policy makers should also note that UK children have more online contacts than most, including some that are not known to them face to face.

## Details of main fieldwork, by country

Country	Children in population 9-16 years	Estimated children online	Number of interviews	Interview methodology	Method of address selection	Fieldwork dates 2010
Austria (AT)	739,722	86%	1,000	PAPI	Random Walk	24 April-25 July
Belgium (BE)	974,461	78%	1,006	PAPI	Random Walk	6 May-14 July
Bulgaria (BG)	554,032	91%	1,088	PAPI	Random Walk	6 May-24 June
Cyprus (CY)	82,059	68%	806	PAPI	Random Walk	17 May-20 Sept
Czech Republic (CZ)	809,443	90%	1,009	PAPI	Pre-selected households - telephone recruitment	21 May-2 July
Denmark (DE)	558,236	97%	1,001	CAPI	Pre-selected households - telephone recruitment	30 April-14 June
Estonia (EE)	105,460	96%	1,005	CAPI	Random Walk	10 May-14 July
Finland (FI)	501,387	98%	1,017	CAPI	Random Walk	28 April-2 July
France (FR)	6,005,850	87%	1,000	PAPI	Random Walk	6 May-3 July
Germany (DE)	6,419,300	86%	1,023	CAPI	Random Walk	20 May-7 July
Greece (EL)	862,481	59%	1,000	PAPI	Random Walk	10 May-2 July
Hungary (HU)	854,406	93%	1,000	PAPI	Pre-selected households with children aged 9-16	10 May-15 June
Italy (IT)	4,516,646	55%	1,021	CAPI	Random Walk	28 April-3 July
Ireland (IE)	458,260	93%	990	CAPI	Random Walk	5 May-24 July
Lithuania (LT)	320,821	96%	1,004	PAPI	Random Walk	23 April-6 July
Netherlands (NL)	1,582,903	96%	1,004	PAPI	Pre-selected households - telephone recruitment	3 May-5 August
Norway (NO)	503,160	98%	1,019	CAPI	Pre-selected households - telephone recruitment	21 May-19 Oct
Poland (PL)	3,490,271	97%	1,034	PAPI	Pre-selected households	6 May-26 July
Portugal (PT)	871,444	78%	1,000	PAPI	Random Walk	29 April-30 July
Romania (RO)	1,821,471	78%	1,041	PAPI	Random Walk	16 May-25 June
Slovenia (SI)	154,063	95%	1,000	CAPI	Random Walk and pre-selected households with	3 May-27 August
Spain (ES)	3,401,338	80%	1,024	CAPI	Random Walk	10 May-15 July
Sweden (SE)	861,183	98%	1,000	CAPI	Pre-selected households with children 9-16 -	27 May-20 Sept
Turkey (TR)	10,297,791	65%	1,018	CAPI	Random Walk	3 May-17 June
United Kingdom (UK)	5,861,598	98%	1,032	PAPI	Random Walk	1 May-21 June

*Note: Population figures from Eurostat. Internet penetration is estimated by combining data from Eurobarometer (% of children using the internet in 2008) and Eurostat (change in internet penetration among 16-24 year olds in 2008-09). See <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/>*



## Methodology

25,142 children who use the internet were interviewed, as was one of each of their parents, during Spring/Summer 2010, across 25 European countries.

Throughout this report, 'children' refers to internet-using children aged 9-16 across Europe. 'Using the internet' includes any devices by which children go online and any places in which they go online.

It is acknowledged that it is particularly difficult to measure private or upsetting aspects of a child's experience. The survey was conducted in children's homes as a face-to-face interview. A self-completion section for sensitive questions allowed privacy from parents, family members and the interviewer.

### Key features of the project's design include:

- Two rounds of cognitive testing, in addition to piloting, to check thoroughly children's understandings of and reactions to the questions.
- Random stratified survey sampling of some 1000 children (9-16 years old) per country who use the internet.
- Survey administration at home, face-to-face, with a self-completion section for sensitive questions.
- A detailed survey that questions children themselves, to gain a direct account of their online experiences.
- Equivalent questions asked of each type of risk to compare across risks.
- Matched questions to compare online with offline risks, to put online risks in proportion.
- Matched comparison questions to the parent most involved in the child's internet use.
- Measures of mediating factors – psychological vulnerability, social support and safety practices.
- Follow up questions to pursue how children respond to or cope with online risk.
- The inclusion of the experiences of young children aged 9-10, who are often excluded from surveys.

**For full details and availability of the project methodology, materials, technical fieldwork report and research ethics, see**

<http://lse.ac.uk/EUKidsOnlineDataMethods>

## Further reports available at [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)

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The *EU Kids Online* network has been funded by the EC Safer Internet Programme in three successive phases of work from 2006-14 to enhance knowledge of children's and parents' experiences and practices regarding risky and safer use of the internet and new online technologies.

As a major part of its activities, *EU Kids Online* conducted a face-to-face, in home survey during 2010 of 25,000 9-16 year old internet users and their parents in 25 countries, using a stratified random sample and self-completion methods for sensitive questions.

Now including researchers and stakeholders from 33 countries in Europe and beyond, the network continues to analyse and update the evidence base to inform policy.

For all reports, findings and technical survey information, as well as full details of national partners, please visit [www.eukidsonline.net](http://www.eukidsonline.net)