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Final recommendations for policy

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www.eukidsonline.net

Previous reports and publications from *EU Kids Online* include:

Paus-Hasebrink, I., Sinner, P. and Prochazka, F. (2014). *Children's online experiences in socially disadvantaged families: European evidence and policy recommendations.* http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/57878

Vandoninck, S., d'Haenens, L. and Smahel, D (2014). Pre*ventive measures: how youngsters avoid online risks.* http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/55797

Holloway, D., Green, L. and Livingstone, S. (2013). *Zero to eight. Young children and their internet use.* http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/52630

Helsper, E.J., Kalmus, V., Hasebrink, U., Sagvari, B. and de Haan, J. (2013). *Country classification: Opportunities, risks, harm and parental mediation.* http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/52023

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d'Haenens, L., Vandonink, S. and Donoso, V. (2013). *How to cope and build resilience.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/48115

Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K., O'Neill, B. and Donoso, V. (2012). *Towards a better internet for children: Findings and recommendations from EU Kids Online to inform the CEO coalition.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/44213

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Hasebrink, U., Görzig, A., Haddon, L., Kalmus, V. and Livingstone, S. (2011). *Patterns of risk and safety online.* http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39356

Görzig, A. (2011). *Who bullies and who is bullied online? A study of 9-16 year old internet users in 25 European countries.* http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39601

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

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EU Kids Online is the primary source of high quality, independent and comprehensive evidence regarding children's use of the internet in Europe. This report provides research based recommendations to make the internet a better and safer place for children. Our recommendations include the following guidance:

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE are encouraged to:
- **Maximise the benefits** that the internet affords through diverse activities that expand their digital skills to more participative and creative uses;
- **Share responsibility** for online safety and welfare of others, particularly in contexts of online bullying and harassment where as bystanders or participants, they can have decisive impact;
- **Respect age limits** for online services and seek advice from parents and teachers about the suitability of services and content they would like to access.
- **Develop proactive coping strategies** such as deleting messages, blocking unwanted contacts and using reporting tools;
- **Seek help from a parent**, trusted adult or friend if they have been bullied or encounter something problematic online;
- **Review online privacy settings** on a regular basis; share personal information only with friends; and never post other's personal information, including pictures, without consent.

PARENTS should:
- **Support children's exploration** of the internet from an early age and inform themselves about the benefits and the risks that the internet offers;
- **Focus on enhancing children's opportunities**, coping skills and resilience to potential harm;
- **Think less about risk** and focus instead on engaging, fun activities and positive content;
- **Communicate regularly with children** about what they may find problematic online;
- **Be clear** about expectations and rules relating to online behaviour;
- Treat media coverage concerning online risks critically.

EDUCATORS should:
- **Promote positive, safe, and effective use** of technology by children in all educational contexts including homework, using public libraries, computer clubhouses, ICT workshops etc.;
- **Integrate online safety awareness** and digital skills across the curriculum;
- **Ensure the benefits** of digital technologies reach all children.
- **Ensure provision of ICT and digital skills** development for teachers, supported by awareness raising about risks and safety for young people online;
- **Develop whole school policies** regarding positive uses of technology as well as protocols to deal with instances of online bullying and harassment;
- **Form partnerships** with trusted providers and sources of expertise in the delivery of internet safety education.

GOVERNMENTS should:
- **Coordinate multi-stakeholder efforts** to bring about greater levels of internet safety and ensure there is meaningful youth participation in all relevant multi-stakeholder groupings;
- **Review adequate legislative provision** for dealing with online harassment and abuse;
- **Ensure provision for youth protection** in traditional media can also support online safety provision;
- **Continue efforts to support digital inclusion** of all citizens while providing support for socially disadvantaged parents and households;
- **Promote positive online content**, encouraging broadcasters, content developers and entrepreneurs to develop content tailored to the needs of different age groups

AWARENESS RAISERS AND THE MEDIA should:
- **Increase parental understanding** about the risks young people face online without being alarmist or sensationalist;
- **Focus first on the many opportunities** and benefits that the internet affords and only secondly the risks to be managed and harm to be avoided;
- **Represent and present young people's perspectives** about online experiences in ways that respect their rights and their privacy.
- Ensure reporting and awareness raising is based on reliable evidence and robust research.

INDUSTRY PROVIDERS should:
- **Ensure 'safety by default'** and enable customisable, easy-to-use safety features, accessible to those with only basic digital literacy;
- **Promote greater standardization** in classification and advisory labels to guide parents;
- **Ensure age limits are real** and effective using appropriate methods of age verification where possible and accompanied by sufficient safety information;
- **Implement tools** so that under-18s can remove content that may be damaging to their reputation and/or personal integrity.
- **Ensure commercial content is clearly distinguishable**, is age-appropriate, ethical and sensitive to local cultural values, gender and race.
- **Support independent evaluation** and testing of all specified safety tools and features.
- **Develop a shared resource** of standardized industry data regarding the reporting of risks.

1. INTRODUCTION

EU Kids Online is a thematic research network funded under the European Commission's (EC) Safer Internet Programme. Beginning in 2006, the network has in three successive phases of work sought to enhance knowledge of children's experiences and practices regarding risks and safety on the internet. It is the primary source in Europe of high quality, independent and comprehensive evidence underpinning a better and safer internet for children in Europe. Now comprising over 150 researchers and representing 33 different countries, the network integrates research expertise across multiple disciplines and methods to map children's and parents' changing experience of the internet, and the consequences and opportunities resulting from this.

EU Kids Online has consistently emphasized an evidence-based approach to policymaking, and in this report we present recommendations underpinned by analysis and evidence from relevant EU Kids Online studies. The purpose of the report is to draw out the principal policy recommendations in a format that is accessible to a diverse range of policy actors and stakeholders. The report is organized by stakeholder group and contains recommendations related to risks and harm, safeguards and areas of responsibility on the part of different actors.

A resource for policymakers

The EU Kids Online project offers a unique resource for policymakers. Since 2006, the project has monitored the availability of research evidence in Europe on children's use of internet technologies, making it available through a searchable online database on the project's website.[1] In 2011, the project delivered the first fully robust and comparable pan-European survey of children's use of the internet. Subsequently, this comprehensive evidence base has been rigorously mined for further analysis resulting in numerous studies of diverse aspects of young people's online experiences. New qualitative research as part of EU Kids Online III (2011–14) has added a

substantial new dimension, yielding valuable insights to complement the quantitative data.

An overriding objective of the EU Kids Online project has been to inform an evidence-based, proportionate policy framework in relation to children and the internet. The network has contributed to a variety of policy platforms comprising national and European policy stakeholders and including governments, media, industry, policymakers, educators and practitioners at national, European and international levels. Its findings and reports are widely referred to in policy statements. The network has played an extremely active role on the European level, contributing to the policy debates and initiatives such as the CEO Coalition, the ICT Coalition, the annual Safer Internet Forum and related policymaking events. The network also contributes to research and policy debate at the international level, and is a regular participant in events including the Internet Governance Forum and the annual meetings of FOSI (Family Online Safety Institute) in Washington, DC. Members of the network are also active in various national-level initiatives, including multi-stakeholder groupings, task forces and consultative groups as well as active partners with industry and civil society.

Introduction to the report

This report updates policy advice and recommendations of the EU Kids Online network. It builds on previous policy reports,[2] and adds to recommendations on policy implementation, further research and methodological lessons learned contained in the output from the network.

In this phase of its work (2011–14), the project has widened its scope by including all member states, by undertaking international comparisons with selected

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[1] The European Evidence Database. Available at: www.eukidsonline.net

[2] O'Neill, B. and McLaughlin, S. (2010). *Recommendations on safety initiatives.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/42875/

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

findings from countries outside the EC, and extending its engagement – both proactively and responsively – with policy stakeholders and internet safety initiatives.

It has also deepened its work through new and targeted hypothesis testing of the pan-European dataset to strengthen insights into the risk environment and strategies of safety mediation; by testing new and innovative research methodologies for the nature, meaning and consequences of children's online risk experiences; and conducting longitudinal comparisons of findings where available over time.

The European Evidence Database, maintained by the network, is a unique resource containing timely updates on the latest knowledge about new and emerging issues – for example, social networking, mobile platforms, privacy, personal data protection, safety and awareness-raising practices in schools, digital literacy and citizenship, geo-location services, and so forth.

The policy agenda

This report, *Final recommendations for policy*, comes at a time of significant change, both in terms of children's internet use and in the policy environment. As evidenced by EU Kids Online survey findings,[3] new qualitative research in nine European countries[4] and new findings in seven countries from the *Net Children Go Mobile* project,[5] children's use of the internet continues to evolve:

- There is now a marked shift towards a post-desktop mobile internet experience.
- Children are more likely to go online using a variety of mobile-connected devices rather than a shared PC, which was previously the most common way of going online.

- As well as ever-popular social networking services, children use a host of mobile apps and content-sharing platforms as part of their entertainment and communication activities.
- With greater levels of access and use, there has been an upward trend in risks. Notably, seeing hate messages, pro-anorexia sites and, to a lesser degree, porn, cyberbullying and meeting online contacts offline, have all increased.
- Overall levels of children reporting harm have increased somewhat, especially among girls and older teens.
- Children's digital safety skills have increased somewhat although substantial minorities still lack basic skills in keeping safe online.

The policy environment for internet safety has also changed in important ways, including, but not limited to:

- The Strategy for a Better Internet for Kids, launched by the EC in 2012, has added new emphasis to creating a safer online environment through more positive content, better digital literacy and more effective industry safeguards.
- The Safer Internet Programme ends in 2014 to be replaced under the new EC mandate, with a likely emphasis on youth, inclusion and skills.
- The network of Safer Internet Centres (SICs) in each European member state will continue to function under the Connecting Europe Facility, but with less certainty about its future funding and sustainability.
- Studies to date show that the levels of investment and commitment by individual member states in safer internet policy implementation vary considerably, as does the role and involvement of civil society.[6]
- Industry self-regulation, with oversight by governmental bodies and the EC, remains the primary means of achieving public policy goals of enhancing online safety, yet its effectiveness remains subject to question.
- Public concern about risks and harm online, about threats to privacy and about the over-commercialization and sexualization of childhood continue to impact negatively on user trust and confidence.

[3] Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings*. London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

[4] Smahel, D. and Wright, M.F. (2014). *The meaning of online problematic situations for children. Results of qualitative cross-cultural investigation in nine European countries*. London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/56972/

[5] Mascheroni, G. and Ólafsson, K. (2014). *Net Children Go Mobile: Risks and opportunities, 2nd edition*. Milano: Educatt. www.netchildrengomobile.eu/

[6] O'Neill, B. (2014). *Policy influences and country clusters. A comparative analysis of internet safety implementation* (No. D6.3). London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/57247/

Changing patterns of use, the rapid pace of technological evolution and new developments in the policy environment therefore point to a marked transformation in the European landscape regarding child online safety. The coming years represent for European countries, long regarded for their leadership in promoting internet safety,[7] a critical turning point and a crucial test of the multi-stakeholder model of cooperation favoured to date.

These challenges, and how the policy principles of the EU create new dilemmas and paradoxes for the different stakeholders involved, are addressed in more detail in our comprehensive policy book, *Towards a better internet for children? Policy pillars, players and paradoxes* (O'Neill, B., Staksrud, E. and McLaughlin, S., 2013).

In this report, we offer specific, research-based recommendations addressed to individual sectors and stakeholders that we trust will be of practical use.

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[7] See O'Neill, B., Staksrud, E. and McLaughlin, S. (2013). *Towards a better internet for children? Policy pillars, players and paradoxes.* Goteborg: Nordicom/UNESCO Clearinghouse for Children and Media.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

It is a mark of how the policy field has evolved in the past 15 years that we begin this report with recommendations for children and youth. EU Kids Online has, through its research, been committed to representing the voices of children and youth in providing evidence of risk and safety online. All of our policy recommendations have young people's actual use and experiences of using internet technologies as a starting point. It is on the basis of insights derived from this research that recommendations are framed and addressed to children and youth directly.

A review of the available European evidence base undertaken by EU Kids Online has provided a profile of the availability of research related to children's internet use.[8] Of the 1,200 studies identified by EU Kids Online, most (85%) take into account evidence from children and young people about their internet use; about one fifth include parents with a smaller number (13%), also incorporating teachers' perspectives. The majority of studies focus on teenagers' use, 70% of which include teenagers aged 15–17. Younger ages feature much less frequently, and just 12% of the studies contained in the database include children under the age of seven.

Most studies in the European evidence database are quantitative or survey-based (62%); one fifth are qualitative; a smaller number (16%) combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The geographical spread is also uneven. The majority of studies are from larger countries such as the UK and Germany, with the majority also published only in English. Clearly, therefore, further efforts need to be made to ensure children's voices from across Europe are heard, and that all ages, genders and culturally diverse groupings are represented.

The final report for EU Kids Online II included policy recommendations for children, advocating wider recognition for children's experiences, further training and support for digital literacy and digital citizenship, as well as support for alternative forms of leisure and recreation.[9]

Building on these statements, in the following we outline recommendations under the headings of:

- Participation and digital opportunities
- Positive, safe and responsible use
- Coping and resilience
- Privacy and respecting the rights of others

Participation and digital opportunities

Internet use has become an integral part of most European children's everyday lives. The internet has become a primary platform for children and young people to exercise their most basic participatory rights: the right to freedom of expression and information, freedom of organization and participation as well as the right to privacy.[10]

In 2011, EU Kids Online noted: *Children can be creative, experimental and imaginative online in ways that adults (parents, teachers, others) insufficiently value – wider recognition for children's experiences would support more sophistication in use and build self-efficacy more generally.*[11]

EU Kids Online research highlights that relatively few children attain the full potential of digital opportunities. Across 25 countries, only a quarter of children reach the most advanced, creative step in a 'ladder of opportunities' that the internet affords. Less than one fifth of 9- to 12-year-olds and only a third of 15- to 16-year-olds take on the most immersive and the more technically sophisticated aspects of online activity such as blogging, spending time in a virtual world, visiting chatrooms and file-sharing. Most children approach online opportunities in a more passive way, for information, playing games and for entertainment purposes. Using the internet for communication and social interaction accounts for a large proportion of young people's use (80% of 13- to 16-year-

[8] Ólafsson, K., Livingstone, S. and Haddon, L. (2013). *Children's use of online technologies in Europe: A review of the European evidence base* (Monograph). London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/50228/

[9] Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Gorzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *EU Kids Online. Final report.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39351/

[10] Staksrud, E. (2013). *Children and the internet : Risks, regulation, rights.* Farnham: Ashgate, pp. 146–7.

[11] *EU Kids Online. Final report*, p. 44. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39351/

olds visit social networking sites, SNSs),[12] yet truly creative and participative activities remain very much a minority activity.

In order to maximize such opportunities, it is vital, therefore, that young people, according to their needs and skills, seek out and engage in new and more creative opportunities on the internet in ways that fulfil its truly participative and interactive character.

At the same time, young people sometimes express concerns about the potential harm that might arise from overuse of internet technologies and activities. About one third of 11- to 16-year-olds say they have spent less time than they should with friends, family or doing schoolwork because of the time they spend online (35%). A similar proportion has tried unsuccessfully to spend less time on the internet (33%) and/or they feel bothered when they cannot be online (33%).[13] It is clear from our qualitative findings that young people are increasingly concerned about physical and psychological problems that may arise from overuse.[14] Many now self-monitor and limit their use to avoid problems or go online only after homework, during weekends or for delineated periods. The question of whether the internet is addictive in the same way as alcohol or drugs is contested,[15] and one should approach exaggerated claims to that effect with caution. **However, young people should also be aware of the impact of spending too much time online on other activities such as schoolwork, socializing with friends and spending time with their family. Accordingly, they should to balance the amount time spent using online technologies with other activities.**

Positive, safe and responsible use

Research from EU Kids Online documents a range of risks that young people encounter in the course of their use of the internet. Such risks may relate to online *content* that could be unsuitable or potentially harmful; risks arising from *contact* with others online; and *conduct* risks in which young people themselves may be active participants or perpetrators of harmful online behaviour. Recognising that responsibility for internet safety is a shared one and that parents, teachers, industry, governments and specialist organizations all play a role in keeping young people safe online, young people themselves also have a responsibility to ensure positive, safe and responsible use, to ensure their own welfare as well as other internet users.

Findings from EU Kids Online show that 4 in 10 children encountered one or more forms of risk in the previous year:

- 14% of 9- to 16-year-olds had seen sexual messages;
- 6% had been sent hurtful or nasty messages;
- 30% had contact online with someone they had not met face to face;
- 21% of 11- to 16-year-olds had come across potentially harmful user-generated content.[16]

It is important to note, however, that risk does inevitably lead to harm. Meeting new people offline, for instance, is now such a common occurrence that it may be fine in many circumstances. Similarly, exposure to sexual content is not necessarily harmful, and needs to be contextualized before assuming it is wrong or harmful. However, conduct risks such as receiving hurtful or nasty messages and being bullied online have, according to young people, a much more serious impact: one third of young people (31%) who had experienced bullying felt very upset by what had happened and a further quarter were fairly upset.[17] **Conduct-related risks, especially online bullying and receiving hurtful and nasty messages, are the risks felt by young people to be the most serious. These are risky experiences in which young people themselves may be perpetrators and**

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[12] Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 34. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

[13] Ibid, p. 30.

[14] Smahel, D. and Wright, M.F. (2014). *The meaning of online problematic situations for children. Results of qualitative cross-cultural investigation in nine European countries.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 94. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/56972/

[15] Kardefelt-Winther, D. (2014). A conceptual and methodological critique of internet addiction research: towards a model of compensatory internet use. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *31*, 351–354.

[16] Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Gorzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *EU Kids Online. Final report.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39351/

[17] Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 69. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

accordingly young people themselves need to play an active role in creating a safer environment online.

Young people may also encounter risks when using services not intended for their age. Younger children (e.g. aged 9-10) tend to have fewer skills and are likely to feel more bothered by online risky experiences.[18] With the rise in popularity of social networking, many young people under the age of 13 have created profiles on SNSs such as Facebook despite age restrictions. Overall, some 38% of 9- to 12-year-olds have their own social networking profile. In some countries (e.g. Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Greece, Finland, Italy, Norway) the proportion of under-age users with profiles on Facebook exceeds 50%.[19] Some of the risks that arise in this context relate to the fact that younger children are more likely to lack essential digital safety skills and may be less able to manage privacy settings.

Use of online services by under-age users can lead to more risks and potential harm. It is important that young people respect age limits for services. Where possible, young people should seek advice from parents and teachers about the appropriateness of services and content they would like to access.

Coping and resilience

An important objective of online safety awareness-raising and education is to empower young people to become better able to manage their own safety and to be able to respond effectively to risky or upsetting experiences they encounter online. Resilience is the ability to deal with negative experiences online or offline. As young people learn to cope with difficult situations, they develop resilience and are better able to manage risky situations and seek positive solutions.

EU Kids Online has gathered much data about how young people respond to risks and what they find most helpful. Three broad coping strategies were identified:

- fatalistic or passive strategies, such as hoping the problem would go away by itself;

- communicative coping, such as talking to someone about the problem; and

- proactive coping or problem-solving.[20]

For all risks, talking to somebody was the most popular coping strategy employed. Proactive approaches, such as deleting unwanted messages and blocking, were used in relation to conduct risks such as online bullying. Sometimes young people stop using the internet for a while, such as when having seen upsetting content. Overall, such strategies, or a combination of them, depending on the risk involved, were deemed by young people to be helpful. For instance, in response to being bullied online, more young people tried to fix the problem (36%) rather than remaining passive and hoping it would go away by itself (24%). Most children (77%) who had been bullied online also talked to someone about it, either to a friend (52%), a parent (42%), a sibling (13%), another trusted adult (8%) or a teacher (7%).[21]

Accordingly, young people are encouraged to speak to someone, either at home or at school, about any difficult or problematic situations they experience. Talking to someone can bring emotional relief and is a vital first step in finding solutions to situations that young people find upsetting.

Young people should also learn proactive coping strategies such as deleting messages, blocking unwanted contacts and using reporting tools as useful ways in which they can help fix problems as they arise.

Peers can be a valuable source of support in raising awareness about positive, safe and responsible use of internet technologies. Young people are encouraged to promote a positive attitude towards online safety and proactive coping strategies.

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[18] d'Haenens, L., Vandoninck, S. and Donoso, V. (2013). *How to cope and build online resilience?* (Monograph). London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/48115/

[19] Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K. and Staksrud, E. (2011). *Social networking, age and privacy*. London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/35849/

[20] d'Haenens, L., Vandoninck, S. and Donoso, V. (2013). *How to cope and build online resilience?* (Monograph). London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/48115/

[21] Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings*. London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 71. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

Privacy and respecting the rights of others

Privacy and respecting the rights of others are key factors in creating a safer online environment. Our research has found that young people are generally aware of the importance of privacy issues and keeping personal information secure online.[22] However, young people interpret 'personal information' in different ways and privacy practices on social media platforms such as Facebook have been found to be uneven.

Over a quarter of 9- to 16-year-old users of social networking, and 29% of younger users aged 9–12, have their profile set to 'public' so that anyone can see personal information. Around half of the children who use SNS say that they have included information such as the name of their school, their address or their phone number on their profile. In most of the countries surveyed (15 out of 25), younger children were found to be *more likely* than older children to have their profiles public.[23] Just over half of the 11- to 12-year-olds, rising to over three quarters of the 15- to 16-year-olds, said they know how to change privacy settings on their profile. Almost half of the younger Facebook users, and a quarter of the older Facebook users, say they are not able to change their privacy settings.

Young people have also experienced problems relating to misuse of their personal data or violations of their privacy by others gaining access to their account. The most common misuse reported by young people was someone using their password or pretending to be them (7%), followed by someone misusing their personal information (4%).[24]

Young people should take steps to ensure their personal information is safe and secure. They should regularly review their online privacy settings and – ideally – should only share information with friends known to them. They should examine the privacy features and privacy statements of services they use, and report or complain where they feel their privacy may be at risk.

In qualitative research, young people found photo sharing and photo tagging as potentially problematic. They expressed concern about revealing too much information about themselves, including their location, by sharing photos online. Young people found the re-use, editing and collection of photos shared online by peers and others to be very much of concern and something that caused them anxiety.[25] Overall, it would appear that young people do have a good awareness of the importance of online privacy and are concerned about the importance of respecting other users' rights. However, either through lack of skills or knowledge to ensure their privacy online (especially among younger users), or through inadequate online privacy provision or settings, risks to privacy are perceived to be an ongoing area of risk.

Young people should at all times respect the privacy, integrity and feelings of others. They should never post personal information, including pictures, about others without consent. They should not forward online content to others where it might be upsetting, hurtful or embarrassing. They should be kind to others online and take down/remove information about others if asked.

Young people need to recognize how they can have a bystander role when watching other people communicate. They should respect other people's privacy, but acknowledge that they might have a role in escalating conflicts when 'liking' or cheering people, taking sides. As an active observer they are part of the conflict. Therefore, bystanders should also take action and be responsible in order to prevent online harassment, abuse and bullying of others.

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[22] Smahel, D. and Wright, M.F. (2014). *The meaning of online problematic situations for children. Results of qualitative cross-cultural investigation in nine European countries.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 53. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

[23] Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K. and Staksrud, E. (2011). *Social networking, age and privacy.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/35849/

[24] Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 99. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

[25] Smahel, D. and Wright, M.F. (2014). *The meaning of online problematic situations for children. Results of qualitative cross-cultural investigation in nine European countries.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 53. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARENTS

Much of the responsibility for keeping children safe online is devolved to parents. Children from a young age are socialized into internet use within a domestic context. Despite the proliferation of portable connected devices, most young people still access the internet from home. Internet safety advice is also often directed at parents who, it is assumed, take the lead in making decisions regarding their children's online access.

The majority of European parents (85%) are confident about their role, feeling they can help their child a lot or a fair amount if their child encounters something that bothers them online.[26] However, as EU Kids Online has shown, many parents lack awareness about the nature and extent of online risks their child may face. As our research has shown, 40% of parents were unaware of their child's exposure to sexual images online; 56% did not know that their child had been bullied; 52% were unaware that their child had received sexual messages; and 61% had no knowledge of offline meetings their child had with online contacts.[27]

Taking into account evidence of the online risks young people face and how they build resilience, recommendations for parents are organized around the following themes:

- Understanding and responding to risks
- Responding to children's needs

Understanding and responding to risks

Alerting parents to the nature of risks that children encounter online remains an important priority. However, sensationalist or alarmist coverage of risks is counter-productive and serves only to raise fears and restrictive mediation. As argued in our 2011 report on policy recommendations,[28] encouraging better understanding between parents and children is a priority as is promoting shared activity and co-use especially with younger users. Parental mediation, in this sense, is as much concerned with supporting online opportunities as it is with safe and responsible digital use. In this regard, socially disadvantaged parents, very few of whom view media education as an important topic within their children's education, may need additional support.[29]

Qualitative research, complementing the evidence base of the EU Kids Online survey, has confirmed that parental perceptions and the reality of the risks that children experience online may often be at odds. Children's accounts attest to a range of situations, involving violent, vulgar and sexual content, found to be both commonplace and upsetting.[30]

It is vital, therefore, to consider children's perspectives in relation to online risks. Online bullying, for example, rather than a singular phenomenon, involves a whole range of aggressive communication behaviours identified by children as including 'swear words', 'bad language', 'calling names', and 'cursing'.[31] Similarly, problematic online sexual content as experienced by children may include unwanted sexual images, videos and advertisements that pop up on different websites and in games. Younger children may find such content shocking or upsetting while for teenagers it may simply be annoying.

In order to better understand and respond to risks in the online world, parents should:

[26] Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 115. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

[27] Ibid., p. 145.

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

[29] Paus-Hasebrink, I., Sinner, P. and Prochazka, F. (2014). *Children's online experiences in socially disadvantaged families: European evidence and policy recommendations.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 12. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/57878/

[30] Smahel, D. and Wright, M.F. (2014). *The meaning of online problematic situations for children. Results of qualitative cross-cultural investigation in nine European countries.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

[31] Ibid., p. 22.

- **Maintain open communication and dialogue with children about the situations that they find problematic online and seek to understand the child's perspective when they find something upsetting.**
- **Support children from an early age when they go online and be available to children whenever they encounter problems.**
- **Treat media coverage concerning risks on the internet critically, and ensure that children aren't confused by media panics or exaggerated risks about the internet.**
- **Foster open discussion with their children about the benefits and the risks that the internet offers.**
- **Inform themselves about online risks and seek trusted sources of information (e.g. Awareness Centres, government agencies, reputable children's welfare groups) in gaining advice about how to support their children's internet use.**
- **In mediating their children's internet use, parents should think less about risk and instead focus more on positive activities and positive content.**
- **Where children break rules, or through curiosity come across content that may be confusing or upsetting, it is vital that parents, rather than seek to punish the child, use the situation as a learning opportunity.**
- **Understand that their children might through their behaviour cause risk to others and be clear about expectations and rules relating to online behaviour in order to combat online harassment, bullying, 'sexting' and other peer-to-peer risks.**
- **Socially disadvantaged parents need to be made aware of the importance of media education issues as a first step. Parents who experience social disadvantage may need special support by governments and civil society.**

Responding to children's needs

Most parents engage in some form of mediation in relation to their children's internet safety. Four fifths of parents are confident that they can help their children, especially younger children, with problems they may encounter online. Most are satisfied also that their children are able to cope with things on the internet that may bother them.

Yet, in many instances parents resort to forms of restrictive mediation to reduce risk rather than focus on building young people's resilience or ability to cope. According to EU Kids Online data, risk is a prevalent feature of young people's internet use, particularly among teens. Forty-six per cent of 9- to 16-year-old internet users in Europe have experienced at least one risk online, rising from 17% of 9- to 10-year-olds to 69% of 15- to 16-year-olds.[32] Restrictive mediation, such as setting rules about what is 'off-limits', reduces children's exposure to risk and the chances of their having upsetting experiences. However, it is also associated with fewer online activities and skills, thereby restricting opportunities to benefit and learn from the online world.

Active mediation, on the other hand, such as parents talking to their child about the internet, staying nearby or sitting with them while they go online, encouraging them to explore the internet, and sharing online activities with them, can reduce online risks, notably without reducing their opportunities.[33] While parents often respond after the fact to upsetting episodes that children may experience by placing restrictions or additional safety strategies, this is to the disadvantage of their capacity to learn resilience and coping skills. The downsides of resorting to 'temporary restrictions' as a form of punishment when children violate agreements with parents should also be considered in this light. Given that the overall probability of harm is low, increased exposure to risk may result in increased coping and resilience and as a consequence the ability to prevent harm in the future.

Again, qualitative research conducted by the EU Kids Online project illustrates the benefits of self-reliance by young people. Effective strategies as reported by young people included self-monitoring activities, avoiding known risky situations and learning preventive strategies from peers.

Parental efforts to empower children online should therefore focus on enhancing their opportunities, coping skills and capacity to deal with potential harm through resilience rather than risk reduction.

Research findings confirm that young people in general find that parents' mediation activities are helpful. Over two thirds of children, aged 9–16, say that what their parents do helps a lot (27%) or a little (43%). Younger children (9–

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[32] Duerager, A. and Livingstone, S. (2012). *How can parents support children's internet safety?* London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/42872/

[33] Ibid., p.3.

12) are more likely to say that what their parents do helps a lot (35%). A larger number of teens (13–16) say that their parents' mediation activities are not helpful (38%).

Overall, most children report that the level of parental involvement is about right. A minority (15%) would like their parents to do more. Evidence from qualitative research illustrates that younger children are in general positive about parental intervention. Older teenagers were somewhat more ambivalent about it, preferring to talk to peers about problems that they had encountered. They considered steps taken to regulate their internet use, especially the use of monitoring, as an invasion of their privacy.

Research also points to the benefits of other family members taking a role in mediation of online safety. Siblings and cousins were found to provide a source of valuable support, especially for children who found it awkward to turn to their parents. However, respecting children's privacy remains paramount, and other family members acting in *loco parentis* or actively spying on children on behalf of parents was seen as intrusive and a source of conflict.[34]

Parental involvement in mediation is welcome and generally helpful and most likely to succeed when adapted to the age and needs of the child, taking into account their level of experience, maturity and needs for autonomy and privacy.

Co-setting or making rules together with children. for instance about when and where (not) to use mobile devices (e.g. not at the dinner table, not in bed), are likely to be more effective than imposed strategies.

Parental controls have long been advocated by some stakeholders as a tool that can assist parents and guardians manage their children's access to content that may be unsuitable or inappropriate for their age. In contrast to the traditional media environment where access to potentially harmful content is regulated, responsibility for regulating access to internet content is devolved to parents themselves. In this context, software filters provide the only *technical* means available to parents if they wish to block access to unmoderated content.

Parental controls encompass a wide range of settings and filters, ranging from pin-code access on connected TVs,

safe search modes on internet browsers to full-featured software applications that may be customized according to users' preferences.

Our previous advice recommended that parents *be encouraged to make more use of the array of parental controls, though this will require greater availability of easy-to-use, carefully tailored, affordable tools.*[35] Given that the internet environment has become more complex with multiples of connected devices in the typical household, as well as a proliferation of services that parents may prefer their children, especially younger children, don't access, parental control features remain a mainstay of internet safety provision.

Benchmarking of parental controls' functionality and effectiveness, undertaken on behalf of the EC, continues to show recurrent problems of under-blocking, particularly with regard to social media and Web 2.0 content.[36] The availability of tools in European languages other than English also remains limited.

Parental controls have also been widely deployed in the mobile environment with companies and connectivity providers advocating their use as a means of protecting children when not directly under the supervision of their parents. However, filter solutions for mobile devices tend to have limited functionality compared to desktop or PC-based tools.[37] In addition, as our qualitative research shows, attempts at monitoring or 'spying' on children, for example, via GPS tracking services and mobile applications, are likely to be counter-productive and only serve to create conflict and lack of trust between parents and children.[38] Active mediation, based on dialogue and

[34] Smahel, D. and Wright, M.F. (2014). *The meaning of online problematic situations for children. Results of qualitative cross-cultural investigation in nine European countries*, London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 145. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

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

[36] SIP Bench III (2014). *Benchmarking of parental control tools for the online protection of children. 2nd testing cycle report*. European Commission. http://sipbench.eu/transfer/EXECUTIVE_SUMMARY_2nd_cycle.pdf

[37] O'Neill, B. (2014). *First report of the implementation of the ICT principles*. Brussels: The ICT Coalition for the Safer Use of Connected Devices and Online Services by Children and Young People in the EU. http://www.ictcoalition.eu

[38] Smahel, D. and Wright, M.F. (2014). *The meaning of online problematic situations for children. Results of qualitative cross-cultural investigation in nine European countries*. London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 158. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

negotiation with children, is likely to be more effective in building trust and supporting children's ability to take responsibility for their own safety.

A balanced approach towards awareness-raising about parental controls is therefore needed which emphasizes the potential usefulness of filters as safety features while recognizing that these do not constitute a complete solution.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATORS

In the interface between government, industry and end users, the educational system is key for creating conditions for safer internet use. Schools are uniquely positioned to reach all children and to deliver essential education and skills in safer internet use. However, if schools are to raise awareness of internet safety and provide training in safe and responsible internet use, they must be adequately resourced to do so. The EC has asked member states to step up their support for delivery of internet safety and to ensure it is part of the national curriculum.[39] While development of ICT skills play an important role within most education systems, schools may find themselves challenged in assuming the additional responsibility for children's e-safety awareness as well as ensuring a safe digital environment among school peers.

Our recommendations for ministries of education, schools systems and educators are organized as follows:

- Supporting access
- Promoting stakeholder partnerships
- Supporting curriculum development
- Combating harmful peer-to-peer behaviour

Supporting access

Schools play a crucial role in support for and delivery of digital skills as well as internet safety. European Schoolnet, a network of 31 European ministries of education, enables education stakeholders to share experience and problems and to learn from each other in relation to the deployment of ICTs in education.[40] A focus of ICT education strategy has been to enhance learning opportunities for children through investment in technology and high-speed connectivity. In providing quality resources and technology, schools help to counteract digital exclusion, develop digital literacy and skills and support safe and positive technology use.

According to European Schoolnet, students and teachers have unprecedented access to educational technology with about 50% of students in grade 11, or the final stage of secondary level education, in highly equipped schools with fast broadband connections.[41] However, obstacles have also been identified, including wide variation in availability of ICT equipment, lack of teacher training and the absence of policies integrating ICTs, teaching and learning, and social and personal development of students. In particular, while teachers often reported using ICT in preparation of class materials, use of the internet in actual classroom settings was infrequent.[42]

Insafe, the European network of national awareness centres, is coordinated by European Schoolnet, and provides education ministries with a direct connection to a crucial European resource that aims to empower children and young people to use the internet, as well as other online and mobile technologies, positively, safely and effectively.[43]

SICs, combining hotlines, helplines and awareness nodes, are the focal point for internet safety across 31 countries (27 of the EU member states, as well as Iceland, Norway, Russia and Serbia).[44] SICs develop materials, organize campaigns and provide helpline supports to children and young people, parents, teachers and child welfare groups to enable children and young people make positive use of online technologies and develop their own strategies for staying safe online. SICs

[39] European Commission (2012). *Communication on the European Strategy for a better internet for children,* COM(2012) 196. Brussels: European Commission. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0196:FIN:EN:PDF

[40] See www.eun.org

[41] European Schoolnet (2013). *Survey of schools: ICT in education.* Brussels: European Commission. https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/pillar-6-enhancing-digital-literacy-skills-and-inclusion

[42] Net Children Go Mobile has made a similar finding, reporting that just 8% of 9- to 10-year-olds, rising to a quarter of 13- to 14-year-olds, use the internet on a daily basis in school. See Mascheroni, G. and Ólafsson, K. (2014). *Net Children Go Mobile: Risks and opportunities, 2nd edition.* Milano: Educatt. www.netchildrengomobile.eu/

[43] See www.saferinternet.org

[44] Insafe/INHOPE (2013). *Annual report 2013: Working together for a better internet for children and young people.* www.saferinternet.org/about

also include Youth Panels to advise on youth experiences of online risks and safety. The annual Safer Internet Day, organized and coordinated by Insafe, is a focal point for a host of local and national initiatives involving partnerships between stakeholder groups including government, education, industry and child welfare groups.

In order to maximize benefits to students and to improve the quality of access, education ministries and school systems should:

- **Ensure that the focus on ICT development in education is backed up by equivalent support for teaching and learning strategies incorporating the use of internet technologies.**

- **Teacher training colleges should include provision of ICT and digital skills development, supported by awareness-raising regarding risks and safety for young people online.**

- **Schools should be encouraged to develop whole-school policies regarding positive uses of technology across the spectrum of teaching and learning activities.**

- **To ensure that students gain the maximum benefit from school-based access, educators should encourage greater use of and integration of learning-based activity in other informal and out of school settings, e.g. homework, use of public library resources, computer clubhouses, ICT workshops etc.**

- **Research shows that many socially disadvantaged parents prefer that schools and kindergartens assume responsibility for e-safety education. As schools uniquely can reach all children in a country, this important responsibility should be strengthened and adequately resourced.**

Promoting stakeholder partnerships

In many countries, education is an integral part of the consortium making up the national awareness centre, either through the involvement of the education ministry or other national educational agency.[45] In such instances, schools are ideally positioned to offer in partnership with the SIC targeted awareness-raising and education-based

programmes. In other countries, SICs have developed partnerships with individual schools and education systems to deliver awareness campaigns.

Partnerships with industry also feature prominently in many online safety campaigns. Industry corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes invest heavily in the development of educational resources, especially related to the safe use of technologies and devices. Materials aimed at parents, teachers and at young people provide valuable additional resources for schools, while taking into account their need to ensure balanced, unbiased advice and guidance. In addition, industry has actively engaged in the delivery of awareness-raising and educational programmes, supplying expertise to schools, in-school talks and workshops as well as free software and resources.

Children's groups have likewise supported delivery of programmes in partnership with schools. In particular, where schools' capacity may be limited or where they may find it difficult to discuss sensitive topics, e.g. cyberbullying, sexuality education, online abuse online, external partnerships have been a useful way of supplementing educational provision.

- **SICs should take the lead in establishing relationships with schools across the education sector in order to provide informed advice, guidance and technical support in the delivery of education programmes.**

- **Schools should be encouraged to form partnerships with trusted providers and sources of expertise in the delivery of internet safety education.**

- **Industry support for education and awareness-raising in schools is a valuable addition to educational delivery, but should be done out of CSR motives rather than for commercial motives.**

Supporting curriculum development

The European Council of Ministers has supported EC calls 'to step up awareness and empowerment of children and young people' through the implementation of

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[45] In Cyprus, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Portugal, Serbia and Slovakia, education ministries form part of the consortia making up the national SIC.

strategies to include the teaching of online safety and digital competences in schools.[46]

This important endorsement requires adequate support and resourcing if it is to be successful. As evidenced by European Schoolnet's survey of ICT in education,[47] insufficient attention has been given to integrating technologies with good pedagogy, thus losing out on valuable opportunities to implement digital literacy education in practice. Encouraging children to undertake a wider diversity of online activities while teaching critical literacy and safety skills enhances online benefits, digital citizenship and resilience to harm, and so should be encouraged.

The Paris Declaration on Media and Information Literacy in the Digital Age,[48] a combined effort of UNESCO, the ANR Translit[49] and Emedus projects,[50] provides an opportunity to promote a curriculum framework for media and information literacy skills underpinned by safe use of internet technologies. The Declaration advances a vision of media and information literacy (MIL) that has the capacity to 'address issues of access, privacy, safety and security and the ethical use of information, media and technology in the context of an all-encompassing concept that touches on every aspect of contemporary life.'

Likewise, *Erasmus for All,* the EU's programme for education, training, youth and sport, envisages support for media and digital literacy initiatives and offers an EU-wide framework in which to incorporate internet safety training as a core component of a wider digital literacy initiative.[51]

In order to advance curriculum development for media and information literacy, and to underpin efforts to step up internet safety and digital skills training in schools, education ministries should:

- **Draw on international best practice and relevant policy guidelines as developed by UNESCO,[52] the Council of Europe[53] and OECD.[54]**

- **Coordinate national efforts to ensure that online safety awareness and digital skills are part of curriculum policy, ideally to be integrated with subject teaching across the curriculum.**

- **Develop curricula and guidelines for teachers, trainers and other professionals involved in delivery of programmes.**

- **Provide adequate support and relevant research for online safety awareness in teacher training institutions.**

- **Ensure that curriculum developments are effectively and independently evaluated and subject to a rolling programme of review**.

According to EU Kids Online, the age at which children first go online continues to lower. On average, children aged 9–16 were nine when they first went online. Those aged 15–16 say they were 11 at first use, while the youngest group say they were 7, on average. With rapid adoption of portable devices and use of the mobile internet, this is a trend that is likely to continue. Portable connected devices such as tablets and games consoles are now aimed at younger children with consequent new opportunities as well as challenges for educators and parents alike.

EU Kids Online has accumulated a substantial evidence base for children in the age range 9–16. It has also highlighted the critical need for more research and information about children aged 0–8 in relation to their use of internet technologies.[55] Activities undertaken by

[46] Council of the European Union.(2012). *Council conclusions on the European strategy for a better internet for Children.* Brussels. www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/133824.pdf

[47] European Schoolnet. (2013). *Survey of Schools: ICT in Education.* Brussels: European Commission. Retrieved from https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/pillar-6-enhancing-digital-literacy-skills-and-inclusion

[48] www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/news/paris_mil_declaration.pdf

[49] www.translit.fr – contains reports on the state of media education from all 28 EU member states (2014).

[50] http://eumedus.com

[51] European Commission (2012). *Communication on rethinking education.* http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/communication-rethinking-education

[52] UNESCO (2013). *Media and information literacy policy and strategy guidelines.* Paris: UNESCO.

[53] Council of Europe (2009). *Protecting children from harmful content.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

[54] OECD (2011). *The protection of children online: Risks faced by children online and policies to protect them.* http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5kgcjf71pl28-en

[55] Holloway, D., Green, L. and Livingstone, S. (2013). *Zero to eight: Young children and their internet use* (Monograph). London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/52630/

children under the age of nine such as watching videos, playing games, searching for information, and socialising within virtual worlds, remain under-researched and in need of urgent policy attention.

In 2011, EU Kids Online recommended that initiatives developed at secondary school level should also be extended to primary and even nursery schools. This remains an important priority, both to enhance understanding of the benefits for learning and child development that technology can afford, as well as to support children's developing skills in online safety.

Younger children's use of technologies remains controversial. Guidelines from health professionals typically advise strict time limits on very young children's exposure to screen media. The American Academy of Paediatrics recommends no screen time at all for children under the age of two, and that children over this age should be limited to no more than two hours a day.[56] On the other hand, a number of education-based researchers have highlighted the advantages of new technologies, and emphasize that when used appropriately, digital technologies can lead to an enrichment of the learning and development process.[57]

As the digital landscape of children continues to evolve, it is important that parents, educators and policymakers prepare children for a technology-rich future. Educators should examine how internet technologies may enhance traditional learning and play activities. Promoting positive, safer, and more effective use of technology by children, particularly in an educational context, is therefore a key priority, mindful always that education has a special role to play in ensuring the benefits of digital technologies reach all children.

Combating harmful peer-to-peer behaviour

Children are not only potential victims of online risk, but also potential facilitators, creating risks to others. Many of the risks that have the highest likelihood of leading to harm for children are risks that arise in a peer-to-peer

context. Very often these are also school-related, as children know each other from a school setting, even if the particular incidents might occur after school hours.[58] This includes, but is not limited to, digital bullying and harassment, privacy (and copyright) violations such as taking and publishing unwanted pictures of other children online, sexual harassment, distribution and forwarding of unwanted content, such as pornographic images, to other children, and providing harmful advice, encouragement and peer pressure in relation to pro-anorexia sites and other harmful user-generated content.

The school is a unique environment in which to promote general expectations and rules regarding online behaviour and to foster responsible digital citizenship. Educating children (and their parents) about children's roles – both as victims and perpetrators – is vital not only to protect young people from the consequences of exposure to online risk; it is also an essential part of limiting the degree of exposure and the number of negative incidents and experiences. Research has also shown how a supportive educational environment positively influences individual responsibility and behaviour. Additionally, peer mediation from older children has been found to be effective when communicating expectations and digital responsible behaviour.

▪ **All educators, but in particular those with special responsibility for children and young people's social and personal development and welfare, should facilitate general and specific expectations regarding online behaviour, focusing on minimising peer-to-peer related risks. Schools should work closely with parents, as well as other local stakeholders to foster a general environment of common behavioural expectations towards children and youth.**

▪ **Schools should develop as part of their general policies protocols to deal with instances of digital bullying and harassment that empower educators and students alike to prevent, discuss, disclose and deal with bullying behaviour.**

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[56] American Academy of Pediatrics (2013). Children, adolescents, and the media. *Pediatrics*, *132*(5), 958–961.

[57] Neumann, M.M. and Neumann, D.L. (2014). Touch screen tablets and emergent literacy. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *42*(4), 231–239.b

[58] Staksrud, E. (2013) *Digital mobbing [Digital bullying]*. Oslo: Kommuneforlaget.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

Despite perceptions that the internet is a largely unregulated space free of state involvement, governments play a crucial role in creating the conditions and setting the broad public policy goals in which the internet operates.[59] Government departments through the involvement of regulatory agencies and the application of various legislative measures maintain a 'moral watchdog' role over the media and communications landscape. The role of government in internet safety is also crucial. In addition to resourcing key national initiatives, governments act as an 'honest broker' in fostering cooperation between stakeholders in implementing safer internet policies.

Building on policy recommendations made as part of EU Kids Online II, the following are the main areas of governmental responsibility in which recommendations are made:

- Law enforcement
- Regulation
- Supporting multi-stakeholder participation
- Digital opportunities and digital inclusion
- Human rights

Law enforcement

A central function of government is to oversee the implementation of laws, enacted by parliamentary bodies, through respective law enforcement agencies. Law enforcement in the context of internet safety has primarily been concerned with illegal content, especially the production and distribution of child abuse material online, an area in which international treaties as well as national legislation applies. Maintaining a robust infrastructure to tackle online child abuse content has been a cornerstone of European policymaking since the inception of the Safer Internet Programme. This is an aspect of internet safety that for ethical reasons EU Kids Online has not investigated, and consequently is an area in which the network has not made any recommendations.

More recently, debate has focused on whether other forms of online abuse or harm should be subject to civil and/or criminal legislative codes, based on the principle that what is illegal in the offline world should also be explicitly confirmed as illegal in the online world. In this context, a number of countries have explored whether further legislation is needed to deal with the use of technology to cause harm or threats to personal safety, privacy and reputation, such as digital bullying and harassment.

Internationally, countries such as New Zealand and Australia have taken steps to introduce new criminal offences to deal with the most harmful forms of digital communications as well as new civil enforcement regimes to provide easier access to remedies.[60]

In a European context, most countries have relied on existing laws to address harms caused by use of internet technologies. In the UK, the House of Lords Select Committee on Communications reviewed how the law deals with social media abuses such as cyber-bullying, revenge pornography and trolling, and concluded that relevant legislation such as the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and the Malicious Communications Act 1998 are adequate to deal with such phenomena.[61] In Ireland, the Internet Content Governance Advisory Group (ICGAG) drew a similar conclusion while advising that legislation dealing with harassment be updated to include 'internet' within the meaning of 'communications'.[62]

Abuse of communications technology, EU Kids Online has found, remains a source of potential harm for children and young people. Aggressive communication and bullying by peers or by strangers are among the harms that impact most severely on young people, and in the most serious

[59] Hundt, R. (2012). How the government saved the internet. *TechCrunch*. 19 August. http://techcrunch.com/2012/08/19/why-the-government-saved-the-internet

[60] New Zealand Parliament (2013). Harmful Digital Communications Bill 2013. www.parliament.nz/en-nz/pb/legislation/bills/digests/50PLLaw21041/harmful-digital-communications-bill-2013-bills-digest

[61] House of Lords Select Committee on Communications (2014). *Social media and criminal offences*. London: House of Lords. www.parliament.uk/hlcomms

[62] ICGAG (2014). *Report of the Internet Content Governance Advisory Group*. Dublin: Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. www.dcenr.gov.ie/Broadcasting/ICG

of cases, legal safeguards or remedies may be necessary to protect young people.

Governments should review on an ongoing basis the scope of legislation dealing with online harassment and abuse to ensure that it provides adequate safeguards for victims whilst balancing the need for freedom of expression.

Regulation

Media regulators occupy an important role as governmental agencies with overall responsibility for protecting young people within the media communications environment. While relatively few (the Norwegian Media Authority and the Danish Media Council being among the exceptions) assume responsibility for online safety, protection of minors is a central policy objective of European audio-visual policy, and as such falls within the remit of national media regulatory authorities. The EC's Green Paper, *Preparing for a fully converged audio-visual world* (2013) envisages a review of audio-visual policies and regulatory arrangements regarding youth protection in the online world.

Governments should ensure that expertise in youth protection applied to the traditional media is made available to support online safety provision at the national level.

Without straying beyond their remit, regulatory agencies should review how, for example, film classification bodies could provide resources for online classification schemes; advisory bodies related to the commercial codes of communication could address online advertising; data protection authorities could support awareness-raising related to online privacy issues; and regulators with responsibility for on-demand services could deal with risks related to online content hosting.

Supporting multi-stakeholder participation

Governments offer crucial support in ensuring effective participation by all groups in the development, oversight and implementation of internet safety activities. Ensuring children's safety online is acknowledged to be a shared responsibility[63] and a shift towards multi-stakeholder governance has been identified as best suited to addressing the challenges of a complex and rapidly evolving internet environment.[64]

A benchmarking exercise, undertaken on behalf of the EC, of internet safety policies across member states,[65] has revealed a diversity of frameworks when it comes to implementing the European Better Internet Strategy for Kids.[66] Some governments have created designated agencies as part of an overall government strategy to oversee the implementation of internet safety initiatives.[67] The UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) provides the main example of such an agency.[68] In other cases, responsibility for internet safety is spread across a number of ministries or agencies, sometimes leaving substantial gaps in coordination of strategy.

To ensure that participation in multi-stakeholder governance is meaningful, governments need to formally recognize and support with appropriate structures and frameworks the participation of all stakeholder groups. In particular, it is important that youth participation as well as those civil society/user groups who may have less influence receive adequate support and resources to enable their voices to be heard.

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[63] Lievens, E., Dumortier, J. and Ryan, P.S. (2006). The co-protection of minors in new media: a European approach to co-regulation. *UC Davis Journal of Juvenile Law & Policy*, *10*, 97–151.

[64] Marsden, C. (2008). Beyond Europe: the internet, regulation, and multistakeholder governance – representing the consumer interest? *Journal of Consumer Policy*, *31*, 115–132.

[65] Idate & Technopolis (forthcoming). *Benchmarking of safer internet policies in member states and policy indicators*.

[66] http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/creating-better-internet-kids

[67] See O'Neill, B. (2014). *Policy influences and country clusters. A comparative analysis of internet safety implementation* (No. D6.3). London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/57247/

[68] www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-council-for-child-internet-safety-ukccis

Digital opportunities and digital inclusion

An important policy objective for many governments is to tackle the digital divide, and to ensure that all citizens benefit from use of the internet. The Digital Agenda for Europe includes support for digital literacy, skills and inclusion among its priorities, and identifies targets for member states to implement digital literacy policies, provisions on disability and mainstreaming of eLearning initiatives.[69]

In 2011, EU Kids Online recommended that *for children who lack convenient broadband access, governments should ensure that digital exclusion does not compound social exclusio*n. Policies to promote digital inclusion continue to be a high priority and a focus for governments and the EC. Progress in achieving better standards in connectivity is evident: basic broadband is available to 97% of homes in the EU with 'Next Generation Access' technologies (delivering at 30Mbps download speeds) available to 62% of households, up from 54% in 2013.[70]

However, as argued by Helsper (2012), debates on digital inclusion have shifted from questions of universal access to gradations of digital inclusion, taking into account digital literacy and awareness of the benefits of ICTs in everyday life.[71] Therefore, digital inclusion policies need to be defined in the context of increased social inclusion and measured against tangible outcomes in terms of social inclusion and equality.[72]

Governments should continue efforts to ensure that all citizens have access to, and the skills to use, internet technologies in order to gain the benefits of a rapidly expanding environment for digital content and services.

It is important in this context to consider the role played by parents in mediating and supporting their children's use of the internet. Active mediation of children's internet safety, as recommended by EU Kids Online, is strongly related to socio-economic status (SES).[73] **This suggests that households suffering economic disadvantage may need additional support in promoting digital literacy and safety.[74] Socially disadvantaged parents are often too overburdened with everyday problems to provide support for their children´s media use. Additional efforts may be needed therefore for this reason to realize their children's digital inclusion.[75]**

Relatedly, governments play an important role in facilitating young people's access to wider online opportunities in the course of their use of the internet. A key finding of the EU Kids Online survey was the varied and uneven manner in which young people across Europe availed of digital opportunities in their daily online activities. Whilst most European children use the internet for playing games, schoolwork and watching video clips online, and many engage in online communication activities (social networking, instant messaging, email), further progression along the 'ladder of opportunities' is more unevenly distributed.[76] Just over half of 9- to 16-year-olds in Europe engage in more interactive activities (playing with others online, downloading films and music and sharing content peer-to-peer e.g. via webcam or message boards), and only a quarter advance to more sophisticated and creative uses of the internet.[77]

For this reason, EU Kids Online has recommended that *especially in countries where children do not 'progress' far up the ladder of opportunities, initiatives to support effective access, broad-ranging use and digital literacy are vital.*

[69] http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/our-goals/pillar-vi-enhancing-digital-literacy-skills-and-inclusion

[70] Scoreboard 2014 – Trends in European broadband markets (2014). http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/scoreboard-2014-trends-european-broadband-markets-2014

[71] Helsper, E.J. (2012). A corresponding fields model for the links between social and digital exclusion. *Communication Theory, 22*(4), 403–426.

[72] See Helsper, E.J. (2013). *Digital inclusion in Europe: Evaluating policy and practice*. Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion Programme. ÖSB Consulting. http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=11614&langId=en

[73] Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings*. London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 105. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

[74] Ibid., p. 107.

[75] Paus-Hasebrink, I., Sinner, P. and Prochazka, F. (2014). *Children's online experiences in socially disadvantaged families: European evidence and policy recommendations*. London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 12. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/57878/

[76] Livingstone, S. and Helsper, E. (2007). Gradations in digital inclusion: children, young people and the digital divide. *New Media Society, 9*, 671–696. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/2768/

[77] Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Gorzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *EU Kids Online. Final report*. London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39351/

Findings from Net Children Go Mobile (2014) show some advances: entertainment-oriented activities (watching video e.g. YouTube), social networking and use of media-sharing platforms (publishing content online) have all increased.[78] However, other activities such as using computers for schoolwork and playing computer games showed a decrease. In addition, EU Kids Online findings show how reading and watching the news on the internet is a common activity among children (48% of 9- to 16-year-olds in 2010).[79] At the same time realistic, news-related content such as racism, war, famine, cruelty towards animals and other children, is often cited as especially problematic by the children themselves.[80]

Policymakers continue to emphasize the importance of better provision of positive online content for children.[81] EU Kids Online found that just a third of younger children, aged 9–10 were satisfied that there were lots of good things for them to do online.[82] Fewer than half of 9- to 16-year-olds in several large language communities (e.g. France, Spain, the Netherlands) were satisfied about the availability of positive online content. It is vital, therefore, that this important aspect of public policy is fully supported.

While young people continue to be enthusiastic adopters of online services, more sustained attention to digital literacy education is essential to ensure that they gain the most from the opportunities that the online world affords.

Policies to promote positive online content should be further supported and developed by governments. Major providers of online content, including broadcasters and internet service providers, should be encouraged to develop content tailored to the

needs of different age groups. This includes access to age-appropriate news content online.

Human rights

In the context of the 25th anniversary of the signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), this vital area of public policy should be underpinned by respect for children's rights, including rights of participation, and the right of young people to have their voices heard in matters affecting youth. Similarly, the EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child aims to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in all relevant EU policies and actions.[83] More attention to rights in a digital context is needed. Governments can, through policy initiatives, help to further awareness of the implications of the internet for the exercise of rights of freedom of expression, protection and safety in a digital context. Support for international efforts to secure better realization of children's digital rights, for example, in the Internet Governance Forum and in the work of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child,[84] should be facilitated through inter-governmental cooperation. It is also important in this context to ensure effective and meaningful representation of young people's perspectives in debates on emerging models of internet governance.[85]

Children's participation in the online world requires human and financial investment. Promoting more creative and skilled applications is essential to ensure all children avail of online opportunities.

In debates over internet governance, the interests of children figure unevenly, and evidence shows that only very partial progress has been made in supporting children's rights online globally. The establishment of a trusted, efficient global governance body charged with responsibility for the delivery of children's rights may be required to secure recognition of their interests online.

[78] Mascheroni, G. and Ólafsson, K. (2014). *Net Children Go Mobile: Risks and opportunities, 2nd edition*. Milano: Educatt.

[79] Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings*. London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 34. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

[80] Livingstone, S., Kirwil, L., Ponte, C. and Staksrud, E. (2014). In their own words: what bothers children online? *European Journal of Communication, 29*(3), 271–288.

[81] www.positivecontent.eu

[82] Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings*. London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 35. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

[83] http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamental-rights/rights-child/eu-agenda/index_en.htm

[84] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2014). *Digital media and children's rights*. www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/Discussion2014.aspx

[85] See Livingstone, S. and O'Neill, B. (2014). Children's rights online: challenges, dilemmas and emerging directions. In S. van der Hof, B. van den Berg and B. Schermer (eds), *Minding minors wandering the web: Regulating online child safety* (Vol. 24, pp. 20–38). The Hague: T.M.C. Asser Press.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AWARENESS-RAISING AND THE MEDIA

Raising awareness of internet safety is an activity shared by all stakeholders – governments, industry, civil society and educators alike. Whether conducted formally in the context of information campaigns, training programmes or as part of outreach activities, promoting greater public and user awareness about how to stay safe online has been a cornerstone of international safety efforts for nearly two decades.

Awareness-raising is a core activity of the Insafe network of SICs. Each country in the network has a national Awareness Centre, responsible for implementing campaigns, coordinating actions, developing synergy at the national level and working in close cooperation with all relevant actors at European, regional and local level. According to Insafe, in 2013 Awareness Centres in Europe organized over 8,000 events, comprising school visits, training activities and other events. Awareness activities included websites, online tools and apps, video games, video spots and other audio-visual as well as print resources and promotional materials.[86]

Government agencies and civil society organizations, including those that are primarily internet-focused as well as children's charities and child welfare groups, are also central to awareness-raising efforts.

In addition, traditional media – print, radio and television – are also a key source of information about the internet and a means of promoting awareness about internet safety.

Recommendations for awareness-raising are presented under the following headings:

- Listening to the voices of young people
- Guidance for parents
- Media reporting guidelines
- Importance of evidence-based policy

Listening to the voices of young people

It is vital, as EU Kids Online has previously recommended, to keep listening to children to recognize the changing array of risks they face, to address children's own worries and to support their ability to cope, whether this involves avoiding, resolving or reporting problems.

EU Kids Online uniquely has developed a comprehensive and robust research evidence base, derived from interviews with children in their own homes, in order to map children's and parents' changing experience of the internet. In addition to data about their varied and changing experiences of risk and safety, children were also able to tell us in their own words about what bothered them most, about the impact of upsetting content or experiences and how they coped or responded to upsetting experiences.

The classification of risks developed by EU Kids Online, thematically organized under distinct categories of content, contact and conduct risks,[87] has been augmented by new qualitative findings that call attention to what children perceive as risky.[88] Such findings reveal, for instance, the following as some of the situations which children find problematic:

- vulgar content and messages shared with peers
- commercials with sexual content
- pop-ups or web pages asking for personal data
- parent–child conflict because of the internet
- over-use, emotional stress and problems associated with excessive internet use
- racist content and messages.

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[86] www.saferinternet.org/countries

[87] Livingstone, S. and Haddon, L. (2009). *EU Kids Online: Final report. EC Safer Internet Plus Programme Deliverable D6.5.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

[88] Smahel, D. and Wright, M.F. (2014). *The meaning of online problematic situations for children. Results of qualitative cross-cultural investigation in nine European countries.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

Listening to young people is an essential part of children's rights. Article 12 of the UN CRC stipulates the right of children to be consulted in all matters affecting them. It is vital, therefore, to consult children on matters of education, research and ICT governance. **It is also vital that forms of youth representation are included in all stakeholder structures and policymaking groups to ensure that young people's voices are heard.**

Youth Panels as part of national Awareness Centres have been a valuable means of ensuring young people's views about internet risks and safety are taken into account. They have helped to reinforce awareness-raising campaigns, inform policymakers on new and emerging risks and have lent authenticity to safety messaging.

It is also crucial to reflect the diversity of children and young people's experiences and to target messages appropriately. Messages should be matched to different groups – teens may worry about pro-anorexia content, young children can be upset by pornography, those who bully may also be bullied. Reaching the 'hard to reach', while difficult, is a priority given that vulnerable children are particularly susceptible to online harm.

Guidance for parents

Most parents do get involved in some way in their children's internet use. Yet restrictive mediation – setting rules about what children can and cannot do online – stands out as the most widely practised form of mediation. Whilst this has the effect of reducing risk, it also decreases children's opportunities and capacity to learn new online skills. Nine out of 10 parents impose rules about what their child can do online. However, around one in ten does few or none of the forms of mediation asked about in the EU Kids Online survey.[89]

The EU Kids Online survey revealed low levels of awareness of online risks among parents. Seventy-one per cent of parents, for instance, were unaware that their children had been bullied online; 40% were unaware that their children had seen sexual images online; and over half did not know that their child had been sent a sexual message.[90]

However, in raising awareness about risks, it is important not to exaggerate their occurrence or to overstate the likelihood of harm arising from children's exposure. It is also the case that the risks that parents fear most, for example, predatory grooming or 'stranger danger', are much less likely to be risks for young people. Pornography, violent content, aggressive communication and unwanted contacts are, according to young people, more likely to cause upset.[91]

In order to enhance parental awareness of risks and safety online, awareness should focus on trying to create better understanding of internet technologies, children's and young people's activities and, without being alarmist or sensationalist, alert parents to the nature of the risks young people face online. Increasing parental understanding of risks is particularly important in those countries where awareness of children's risks is lowest.

Media reporting guidelines

For media, as for awareness-raising, reporting about online safety must be balanced and proportionate. Given that most young people's experiences with online technologies are positive and beneficial, it is vital to avoid negative or overly sensationalist reporting or messaging. Efforts to raise parental awareness of good practices in online safety have been hindered by reporting that sensationalizes children's exposure to risk.[92] Media sources were also found to shape children's perceptions of what is problematic on the internet, usually based on exaggerated representation about harmful consequences of online risks such as suicides associated with online bullying, or offline meetings with online predators.[93]

Against this, EU Kids Online has consistently drawn the distinction between risk and harm. While exposure to risk

[89] Duerager, A. and Livingstone, S. (2012). *How can parents support children's internet safety?* London: EU Kids Online, LSE.

[90] Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

[91] Livingstone, S., Kirwil, L., Ponte, C. and Staksrud, E. (2013). *In their own words: What bothers children online?* London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/48357

[92] Haddon, L. and Livingstone, S. (2012). *EU Kids Online: National perspectives* (Monograph). London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/46878/

[93] Smahel, D. and Wright, M.F. (2014). *The meaning of online problematic situations for children. Results of qualitative cross-cultural investigation in nine European countries.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 44. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

is often a feature of internet use, it does not necessarily result in harm. Children experience a range of risks as part of their online use: 40% of 9- to 16-year-olds have experienced one or more forms of risk online.[94] Yet just 12% say they have been bothered or upset by something online. Children who are older, higher in self-efficacy and sensation-seeking experience more risks of all kinds online. But it is children who are younger and lower in self-efficacy and sensation-seeking who are more likely to find risks upsetting and harmful.

UNICEF has issued a comprehensive set of guidelines to help media to cover children in an age-appropriate and sensitive manner.[95] These principles include consideration of the rights of the child whilst reporting issues that affect children and that avoids stereotypes, exploiting children's vulnerability, causing harm and is respectful of young people's privacy.

For awareness-raising, there is little warrant for exaggerated or panicky fears about children's safety online – what is important is to empower all children while addressing the needs of the minority at significant risk of harm.

From a media perspective, many of the risks that receive overly sensationalist media coverage are also among the rarest. In this sense, it is vital to portray in the first instance the many opportunities and benefits that the internet affords, and only second, the risks to be managed and the harm to be avoided.

In media reportage of issues related to children online, journalists should seek to represent young people and their online experiences in ways that respect their rights and their privacy.

Importance of evidence-based policy

Just as it is important to listen to the voices of children and youth in raising awareness, so, too, it is vital to ensure that messages are appropriately evidence-based and informed by reliable research findings.

The reporting of research findings through the media is a valuable and important communications function.

However, all too often media coverage gives insufficient information regarding the sources of research, its representativeness or reliability. Hyping, intentionally or otherwise, research for maximum impact whilst distorting the subject of the study creates confusion for readers and tends to raise unwarranted fears or concerns that have little basis in reality.

Researchers should be aware of good practice in communicating research, and must understand the requirements of media outlets in formulating press releases and other materials for media distribution.

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[94] Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Gorzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *EU Kids Online. Final report.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39351/

[95] www.unicef.org/media/media_tools_guidelines.html

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDUSTRY

Under the system of self-regulation (and co-regulation), widely supported within European policymaking, industry takes a leading role in promoting solutions to identified challenges to internet safety. Industry, it is claimed, is best placed to keep track of emerging technologies and to respond with appropriate solutions that meet the needs of users and policymakers.[96]

At the request of the EC, the CEO Coalition to Make the Internet a Better Place for Kids was formed in December 2011 to respond to key challenges facing internet users.[97] As part of this initiative, participating companies agreed to cooperate on industry-wide solutions to bring about:

1. Simple and robust reporting tools for users

2. Age-appropriate privacy settings

3. Wider use of content classification

4. Wider availability and use of parental controls

5. Effective takedown of child sexual abuse material

The ICT Coalition, an industry alliance of internet companies, has developed a similar code of practice committing industry adherence to principles governing children's safe use of connected devices and online services. The first evaluation of its implementation marked important areas of progress in access controls, provision of reporting tools and user education.[98]

EU Kids Online has contributed to each of the above initiatives and continues to make research findings available to support evidence-based and targeted solutions to identified online safety risks.[99]

Our recommendations for industry in 2011[100] advocated a much greater focus on ensuring that safety tools were user-friendly, both for children and adults, and accessible across all devices. With a marked shift towards mobile internet access by children and young people, the need for effective, easy-to-use tools and features across all connected devices is as relevant as ever although safe internet use is made all the more challenging by the diversity of ways of going online.

Accordingly, our recommendations for industry are organized under the following general headings:

- Safety by default
- Accessibility
- Age-appropriateness of services
- Privacy
- Commercial risks
- Transparency

Safety by default

The environment in which children now use the internet is becoming ever more complex. With increasing use of mobile apps services and devices by children, safety can no longer be confined to the desktop environment. Children now also go online at a younger age, with a substantial increase in the numbers of children using the Internet under the age of nine.[101]

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[96] Price, M.E. and Verhulst, S.G. (2004). *Self regulation and the internet.* The Hague and Frederick, MD: Kluwer Law International.

[97] http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/self-regulation-better-internet-kids

[98] O'Neill, B. (2014). *First report of the implementation of the ICT principles.* Brussels: The ICT Coalition for the Safer Use of Connected Devices and Online Services by Children and Young People in the EU. www.ictcoalition.eu

[99] Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K., O'Neill, B. and Donoso, V. (2012). *Towards a better internet for children.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/44213/

[100] O'Neill, B. and McLaughlin, S. (2010). *Recommendations on safety initiatives.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE.

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

[101] Holloway, D., Green, L. and Livingstone, S. (2013). *Zero to eight: Young children and their internet use* (Monograph). London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/52630/

The high priority accorded by industry to online safety provision therefore needs to be continued and maintained across the full value chain of device manufacturers, content developers and providers through to the diverse range of apps and services used by young people in their online communication.

Members of the ICT Coalition as well the CEO Coalition have undertaken to improve the accessibility and user-friendliness of safety tools and features. Initiatives such as sharing best practices in deploying reporting tools, devising a database for age-appropriate privacy settings and making parental controls more widely available through better promotion and visibility have all been marks of progress towards greater accessibility.[102] The review of the ICT Coalition principles also confirmed progress made by industry in deploying safety features across their services.[103]

Despite improvements in availability, research highlights two areas of ongoing concern. First, when children encounter problems such as online bullying, less than half are availing of the technical supports (46% blocked the person; just 9% reported the problem using a 'report abuse' button), preferring to seek social support instead.[104] While social supports are vital to building children's resilience, the lack of take-up of industry-provided safeguards points towards a continuing gap between what children need and what is provided.

Second, EU Kids Online has found that 33% of parents overall use filters as a means of keeping children safe online, despite the high priority given to parental controls in raising awareness about internet safety. There are quite wide regional variations in use of parental controls, and for those who do use them, just a third found them useful.[105]

In both instances, usability research with end users – children and parents – can help to ensure that tools are better suited to user needs.

Industry initiatives such as the ICT Coalition, the CEO Coalition, as well as the self-regulatory codes of practice governing such areas as safer social networking, and tackling child abuse, should emphasize a position of 'safety by default' in the design and development of products and services used by young people.

Usability research with end users, including children of various ages and linguistic background, should be prioritized. Safety by default initiatives should be designed so that they do not compromise the integrity, privacy and rights of the end user.

Accessibility

Previously, EU Kids Online has recommended that *to reduce user confusion and impractical skill burdens, privacy settings, parental controls, safety tools and reporting mechanisms should be age-appropriate if for children and far more usable (whether for children or parents) than at present and/or enabled by default.*[106]

Safety tools and features should also be tailored according to the age of the end user. EU Kids Online identified significant gaps in digital literacy and safety skills among children in Europe. Younger children in particular and those from less well-off homes lack key safety skills such as knowing how to block messages from someone they didn't want to hear from, to change filter preferences or to change privacy settings.[107]

With large numbers of under-age users on SNSs, a matter of concern is that just over half of 11- to 12-year-olds know how to change the privacy settings on their profile. Children's ability to manage privacy settings vary somewhat by SNS, suggesting differences in design,

[102] See CEO Coalition (2014). *Action summary reports.* http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/news/better-internet-kids-ceo-coalition-1-year

[103] O'Neill, B. (2014). *First report of the implementation of the ICT principles. Brussels: The ICT Coalition for the Safer Use of Connected Devices and Online Services by Children and Young People in the EU.* www.ictcoalition.eu

[104] Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risks and safety on the internet: The perspective of European children. Full findings.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 71. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

[105] Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K., O'Neill, B. and Donoso, V. (2012). *Towards a better internet for children.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE.   http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/44213/

[106] Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Gorzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *EU Kids Online. Final report.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39351/

[107] Sonck, N., Livingstone, S., Kuiper, E. and de Haan, J. (2011). *Digital literacy and safety skills.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33733/

although none stands out as particularly successful in providing settings which children can manage.[108]

It is important that users are able to customize such tools – filters, parental controls, privacy settings, help resources – according to their needs, taking into account different family/cultural settings. EU Kids Online has found wide regional and national variation, both in risk exposure and in experiences of mediation. A country classification based on clusters of opportunities, risks, harm and parental mediation reveals four main groups highlighting substantial differences between countries in the extent to which children are exposed to risk and the kinds of supports available to them.[109] It is unlikely that a single solution will be effective in all situations and as such should be capable of adaptation to user requirements in quite different contexts.

Parental controls are a particular case in point where cultural differences are a factor in contrasting attitudes towards content that may be seen as problematic, inappropriate or offensive.

Safety features should be easy-to-use and accessible to those with only basic digital literacy.

For safety features to be effective they should be capable of customization according to the age of the child, parental preferences and the devices being used.

Greater standardization in the use of classification labels can also provide parents with added guidance when dealing with different types of services and devices.

Age-appropriateness of services

The lowering of the age at which children go online, brought about in part by wider use of portable connected devices including smartphones, tablets and games consoles, means that children can now more easily access content and services that may not be appropriate for their age.

Concerns about content continue to feature among the experiences that upset and bother young people online. Children listed pornography (22% of children who told us of risks) and violent content (18%) among the top online concerns.[110] More specifically, children told us they were worried by stories they had seen on the news, such as gory war footage and cruelty to animals, as well as by pornography and violence they had seen on video-sharing websites such as YouTube.[111]

EU Kids Online found that substantial numbers of children under the age of 13 used social networking, despite age restrictions. Over a quarter of all SNS users and 38% of Facebook users registered a false age to gain access to the service.[112] Net Children Go Mobile has since reported a decline in underage use in the UK, Italy and Ireland, but an increasing trend in other countries (Romania and Denmark).

For parents, the issue of age restrictions has become more confusing due to the proliferation of media-sharing platforms used by children, often in the context of smartphone use.[113]

EU Kids Online has long advocated that industry ensure that services are age-appropriate for likely end users, and that where there are age limits, these should be made real and effective through appropriate age-verification methods.

The large numbers of children accessing content and services not designed for their age group arises in part due to the insufficient amount of positive content available for young people. This is especially the case in smaller countries and in minority language communities. EC initiatives have identified the market opportunities in content development for young age groups.[114]

[108] Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K. and Staksrud, E. (2011). *Social networking, age and privacy*. London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/35849/

[109] Helsper, E.J., Kalmus, V., Hasebrink, U., Sagvari, B. and de Haan, J.D. (2013). *Country classification: Opportunities, risks, harm and parental mediation*. London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/52023/

[110] Livingstone, S., Kirwil, L., Ponte, C. and Staksrud, E. (2013). *In their own words: What bothers children online?* London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/48357

[111] Ibid.

[112] Livingstone, S., Ólafsson, K. and Staksrud, E. (2011). *Social networking, age and privacy*. London: EU Kids Online, LSE. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/35849/

[113] Mascheroni, G. and Ólafsson, K. (2014). *Net Children Go Mobile: Risks and opportunities, 2nd edition*. Milano: Educatt. www.netchildrengomobile.eu/

[114] See www.positivecontent.eu/european-award

Development of more age-appropriate services for under-13s could act as a positive step towards regularising younger children's access and use of certain services. Research confirms that services such YouTube are widely popular among children (close to 40% of boys aged 9–12 regularly watch video on video-sharing platforms; nearly a third – 29% – of 11- to 12-year-olds has a profile on a media-sharing platform such as YouTube, Instagram or Flickr). At the same time, young people are exposed to and frequently upset by seeing unsuitable, sometimes frightening and potentially harmful, content.

How such services are implemented will be important. Strict controls on parental consent are needed in order to be COPPA-compliant (Children's Online Privacy Protection Act). Privacy concerns and safeguards on unnecessary collection of data also need to be addressed. However, providing parents with greater capacity to engage more actively with how children use and navigate the web can offer a safer and better experience.

Where there are age limits on services, these have to be made real and effective using appropriate methods of age verification where necessary.

When age verification cannot be secured, service age recommendations should be accompanied by sufficient safety information and tools tailored to the needs and cognitive level of the most vulnerable and youngest users.

Industry providers can play a major role by developing new products and services dedicated to the needs and interests of younger users.

Privacy

Social networking services and sharing of content online are among the top four most popular online activities undertaken by children on a daily basis, and the most important activity for 13- to 16-year-olds.[115] While nearly half of 9- to 16-year-old users of SNSs keep their profile private, a substantial minority has a public profile, with identifying information such as their phone number or address. There is some evidence that awareness-raising efforts have borne fruit in people's behaviour regarding

privacy (especially in the UK and Ireland).[116] However, children are more likely to have a public profile if they cannot manage the privacy settings. Again, uneven digital safety skills are a cause for concern, with one third of all SNS users struggling to manage their privacy online.

Enhancing users' privacy has assumed added importance in the context of increasing trends towards use of mobile devices, apps and services, with increased public concerns over the security of personal data.[117] The need to support the availability of age-appropriate privacy settings is now widely accepted. To this end, industry has compiled a comprehensive database of current practices, detailing the features and default settings of different branches of the industry.[118] Companies have undertaken to offer a range of privacy setting options that encourage parents, children and young people to make informed decisions about their use of services, particularly in relation to sharing information and content with others online. Industry has also committed to raising awareness about management of personal information and data collection practices.

Greater use of mobile devices and services has added new complexities to the management of personal data and privacy. The review of the ICT Coalition principles has recommended companies pay further attention to how users can be empowered to manage their privacy in the mobile environment. Implementation of the GSMA Mobile Privacy Principles provides a valuable template for all member companies, and emphasizes a 'privacy-by-design' approach.[119]

In order to support users to make informed decisions about management of their personal information, industry should step up efforts to educate and raise awareness about privacy in the digital age. This should include adoption of privacy-by-design principles and tools to enable users under the age of 18 to remove, where necessary, content that may be

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[115] In 2011, 81% of all 13- to 16-year-olds reported visiting a SNS. In 2013, according to Net Children Go Mobile, this had fallen somewhat, but was still the most popular activity.

[116] Grehan, S., McLaughlin, S. and O'Neill, B. (2012). 'Think B4 U Click': an educational online safety resource for the Irish CSPE curriculum. *Media Education Journal*, (51).

[117] 'Concerns over data privacy hit record high'. *Exchange Wire 28/01/14.* www.exchangewire.com/blog/2014/01/28/concerns-over-data-privacy-hit-record-high

[118] See http://enacso.eu/publicationsview/109-database-for-age-appropriate-privacysettings

[119] www.gsma.com/publicpolicy/mobile-and-privacy/mobile-privacy-principles

damaging to their reputation and/or personal integrity.

Commercial risks

Commercial risks have received much less attention than many other features of children's online safety. In some countries, there has been a tendency in public debates to emphasize risks of harmful and sexualized online content over commercial risks that children experience in their use of the internet.[120] In the classification of risks developed by EU Kids Online, children encounter a wide range of content that is commercial in nature – advertising, spam, commercial persuasion, sponsored materials etc. – but that may be difficult for young people to distinguish.[121] Similarly, children and young people may be unaware of the extent to which their actions online may be tracked, or how their personal information is used as part of commercial online profiling.

Young people report feeling annoyed and bothered by the frequency with which commercial content and pop-ups appear in the course of their internet use.[122] Younger children reported difficulty in avoiding unwanted commercial content, were also upset by its frequently sexual nature, and in general regarded such content as a hindrance to their online activity. Children also expressed fears that commercial content could be exploitative or potentially fraudulent and expose their personal data to hacking.

Greater efforts need to be made to ensure that online commercial communications, including advertising, sponsorship, direct marketing etc., follows best international business practice and complies with applicable legislative and regulatory requirements.

For children and young people, it is especially important that commercial content is clearly distinguishable, should not be unethical and should be sensitive to local cultural values, gender and race.

Industry providers should ensure that commercial communications are age-appropriate, and that reasonable steps are taken to ensure that young people are not exposed to commercial messages intended for an over-18 audience.

Transparency

Evaluations of industry safety provision attest to the availability of diverse safety tools and mechanisms. However, less is known about their effectiveness. For instance, in relation to reporting tools, little is known about the extent to which they are taken up by users, the nature of problems reported and the degree to which industry solutions actually solve the problems concerned. The development of the Insafe-INHOPE Assessment Platform, offering a standardized reporting framework across the network of European helplines and hotlines, has greatly assisted in identification of trends in the reporting of online risks.[123] A similar framework by industry would likewise assist in identifying trends and new risks.

A limitation on existing benchmarking of safety features and evaluation studies is that they are often English language-based and may neglect services or features available in other countries and languages.[124]

Industry should continue to support independent evaluation and testing of all specified safety tools and features.

Further efforts need to be made to standardize reporting of risks as captured by industry. Sharing of data on a pan-industry basis would greatly assist identification of trends and new risks.

To increase user awareness across Europe, consumer information should be made available in all languages in the countries of adaption. Benchmarking guides should be made available at least in the main European languages, and preferably in all.

[120] Mascheroni, G., Ponte, C., Garmendia, M., Garitaonandia, C. and Murru, M.F. (2010). Comparing media coverage of online risks for children in southern European countries: Italy, Portugal and Spain. *International Journal of Media & Cultural Politics*, *6*(1), 25–43.

[121] Hasebrink, U., Livingstone, S. and Haddon, L. (2008). *Comparing children's online opportunities and risks across Europe: Cross-national comparisons for EU Kids Online* (Monograph). London: EU Kids Online, LSE.

[122] Smahel, D. and Wright, M.F. (2014). *The meaning of online problematic situations for children. Results of qualitative cross-cultural investigation in nine European countries.* London: EU Kids Online, LSE, p. 35. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/

[123] www.saferinternet.org/countries

[124] The SIP Benchmark studies available in five European languages provide an example of good practice. See http://sipbench.eu

8. CONCLUSION

We conclude this report with a summary of recommendations made, organised by stakeholder group and in the order presented over the course of the report. The purpose of this section and of the report as a whole is to act as a resource for individuals, policy makers and organisations with responsibility for children and young people's internet safety. Policy guidance should be supported by relevant data and research as referenced throughout the report and where available supplemented by relevant national findings and data analysis. References to research and further analysis of EU Kids Online findings at the national level are available on country pages of each participating national team on the EU Kids Online website (www.eukidonline.net).

Children and youth

Participation and digital opportunities

- Internet use offers children and young people valuable opportunities for learning, communication, social interaction and entertainment. In order to maximize the benefits that the internet affords, young people are encouraged to engage in a wide range of activities online and to expand their digital use beyond passive applications to more participative and creative uses.

- While young people should also be aware of the risks arising from overuse of internet technologies, they should seek to balance the amount of time they spend online with other activities, including play, social interaction and schoolwork.

Positive, safe and responsible use of internet technologies

- Young people need to be aware that they – with parents, teachers and others – share responsibility for their safety online.

- Young people encounter a variety of risks in the course of their internet use. Not all risks necessarily result in harm however and developing coping skills to manage personal online safety is important for all internet users.

- Conduct-related risks, especially online bullying and receiving hurtful and nasty messages, are the risks felt by young people to be the most serious. These

are risky experiences in which young people themselves may be perpetrators, and accordingly young people themselves need to play an active role in creating a safer environment online.

- Use of online services by under-age users can lead to more risks and potential harm. It is important that young people respect age limits for services. Where possible, young people should seek advice from parents and teachers about the appropriateness of services and content they would like to access.

Coping and resilience

Building young people's resilience and capacity to deal with online problematic situations is a core objective of online safety awareness raising and education.

- Young people are encouraged to speak to someone, either at home or at school, about any difficult or problematic situations they experience. Talking to someone can bring emotional relief and is a vital first step in finding solutions to situations that young people find upsetting.

- Young people should learn proactive coping strategies such as deleting messages, blocking unwanted contacts and using reporting tools as useful ways in which they can help fix problems as they arise.

- Peers can be a valuable source of support in raising awareness about positive, safe and responsible use of internet technologies. Young people are encouraged to promote a positive attitude towards online safety and proactive coping strategies.

- Young people should assume collective responsibility for their peers and those they interact with online. Online harassment or bullying should never be tolerated. Young people should seek help if they themselves are bullied.

Privacy and respecting the rights of others

Maintaining the security and privacy of one's personal data as well as respecting the rights to privacy of others is a vital part of safe online use.

- Young people should take steps to ensure their personal information is safe and secure. They should

regularly review their online privacy settings and – ideally – should only share information with friends known to them. They should examine the privacy features and privacy statements of services they use, and report or complain where they feel their privacy may be at risk.

- Young people should at all times respect the privacy, integrity and feelings of others. They should never post personal information, including pictures, about others without consent. They should not forward online content to others where it might be upsetting, hurtful or embarrassing. They should be kind to others online and take down/remove information about others if asked.

- Young people need to recognize how they can have a bystander role when watching other people communicate. They should respect other people's privacy, but acknowledge that they might have a role in escalating conflicts when 'liking' or cheering people, taking sides. As an active observer they are part of the conflict. Therefore, bystanders should also take action and be responsible in order to prevent online harassment, abuse and bullying of others.

Parents

In order to better understand and respond to risks in the online world, parents should:

- foster open discussion with their children about the benefits and the risks that the internet offers;

- maintain an ongoing dialogue with children about the situations that they find problematic online and seek to understand the child's perspective when they find something upsetting;

- support children from an early age when they go online and be available to children whenever they encounter problems;

- treat media coverage concerning risks on the internet critically, and ensure that children aren't confused by media panics or exaggerated risks about the internet;

- inform themselves about online risks and seek out trusted sources of information (e.g. Awareness Centres, government agencies, reputable children's welfare groups) to get advice about how to support their children's internet use;

- in mediating their children's internet use, parents should think less about risk and focus instead on engaging, fun activities and positive content;

- where children break rules, or through curiosity come across content that may be confusing or upsetting, it is vital that parents, rather than seek to punish the child, use the situation as a learning opportunity;

- understand that their children might, through their behaviour, cause risk to others. Parents need to be clear about expectations and rules relating to online behaviour in order to combat online harassment, bullying, 'sexting' and other peer-to-peer risks.

Responding to children's needs

- Parental involvement in mediation is welcome and generally helpful and most likely to succeed when adapted to the age and needs of the child, taking into account their level of experience, maturity and needs for autonomy and privacy.

- Parental efforts to empower children online should focus on enhancing their opportunities, coping skills and capacity to deal with potential harm through resilience rather than risk reduction.

- Co-setting or making rules together with children, for instance, about when and where (not) to use mobile devices (e.g. not at the dinner table, not in bed), are likely to be more effective than imposed strategies.

- A balanced approach towards awareness-raising about parental controls is needed which emphasizes the potential usefulness of filters as safety features while recognizing that these do not constitute a complete solution.

Educators

As the digital landscape of children continues to evolve, it is important that parents, educators and policymakers prepare children for a technology-rich future. Educators should examine how internet technologies may enhance traditional learning and play activities. Promoting positive, safer, and more effective use of technology by children, particularly in an educational context, is therefore a key priority, mindful always that education has a special role to play in ensuring the benefits of digital technologies reach all children*.*

Supporting access

In order to maximize benefits to students and to improve the quality of access, education ministries and school systems should:

- ensure that the focus on ICT development in education is backed up by equivalent support for teaching and learning strategies incorporating the use of internet technologies;

- teacher training colleges should include provision of ICT and digital skills development, supported by awareness-raising about risks and safety for young people online;

- schools should be encouraged to develop whole-school policies regarding positive uses of technology across the full range of teaching and learning activities;

- ensure that students gain the maximum benefit from school-based access, encourage greater use of and integration of learning-based activity in informal and out-of-school settings, including when doing homework, using public library facilities, computer clubhouses, ICT workshops etc.;

- take on responsibility for internet safety education for parents and households suffering social disadvantage. As schools uniquely can reach all children in a country, this important responsibility should be strengthened and adequately resourced.

Promoting stakeholder partnerships

- Safer Internet Centres (SICs) should take the lead in establishing relationships with schools across the education sector in order to provide informed advice, guidance and technical support in the delivery of education programmes.

- Schools should be encouraged to form partnerships with trusted providers and sources of expertise in the delivery of internet safety education.

- Industry support for education and awareness-raising in schools is a valuable addition to educational delivery but should be done on the basis of corporate social responsibility rather than for commercial motives.

Supporting curriculum development

In order to advance curriculum development for media and information literacy, and to underpin efforts to step up internet safety and digital skills training in schools, education ministries should:

- draw on international best practice and relevant policy guidelines as developed by UNESCO, Council of Europe and OECD;

- coordinate national efforts to ensure that online safety awareness and digital skills are part of curriculum policy, ideally to be integrated within subject teaching across the curriculum;

- develop curricula and guidelines for teachers, trainers and other professionals involved in delivery of programmes;

- provide adequate support and relevant research for online safety awareness in teacher training institutions;

- ensure that curriculum developments are effectively and independently evaluated and subject to a rolling programme of review.

Combatting harmful peer-to-peer behaviour

- All educators, but in particular those with special responsibility for children and young people's social and personal development and welfare, should facilitate norms and expectations regarding online behaviour that focus on minimising peer-to-peer related risks. Schools should work closely with parents, as well as other local stakeholders to foster a general environment based on positive, safe and responsible online behaviour.

- Schools should develop as part of their general policies protocols to deal with instances of digital bullying and harassment that empower educators and students alike to prevent, discuss, disclose and deal with bullying behaviour.

Government

Law enforcement

- Governments should review on an ongoing basis the scope of legislation dealing with online harassment and abuse to ensure that it provides adequate safeguards for victims whilst balancing the need for freedom of expression on the internet.

Regulation

- Governments should ensure that expertise in youth protection applied to the traditional media is made available to support online safety provision at the national level.

- Without straying beyond their remit, regulatory agencies should review how, for example, film classification bodies could provide resources for online classification schemes; advisory bodies related to commercial codes of communication could address online advertising; data protection authorities could support awareness-raising related to online privacy issues; and regulators with responsibility for on-demand services could deal with risks related to online content hosting.

Supporting multi-stakeholder participation

- To ensure that participation in multi-stakeholder governance is meaningful, governments need to formally recognize and support with appropriate structures and frameworks the participation of all stakeholder groups. In particular, it is important that youth participation as well as those civil society/user groups that may have less influence receive adequate support and resources to enable their voices to be heard.

Digital inclusion

- Governments should continue efforts to ensure that all citizens have access to, and the skills to use, internet technologies in order to gain the benefits of a rapidly expanding environment for digital content and services.

- Additional provision may be needed for parents and households that experience social disadvantage to support digital inclusion and to gain access to resources for internet safety.

Digital opportunities

- While young people continue to be enthusiastic adopters of online services, more sustained attention to digital literacy education is essential to ensure that they gain the most from the opportunities that the online world affords.

- Policies to promote positive online content should be further supported and developed by governments. Major providers of online content, including broadcasters and internet service providers, should be encouraged to develop content tailored to the needs of different age groups. This includes access to age-appropriate news content online.

Human rights

- Children's participation in the online world requires human and financial investment. Promoting more creative and skilled applications is essential to ensure all children avail of online opportunities.

- In debates on internet governance, the interests of children figure unevenly, and evidence shows that only very partial progress has been made in supporting children's rights online globally. The establishment of a trusted, efficient global governance body charged with responsibility for the delivery of children's rights may be required to secure recognition of their interests online

Awareness-raising and the media

Listening to the voices of young people

- It is important that youth representation is an integral element of all stakeholder structures and policymaking groups to ensure that young people's voices are heard.

Guidance for parents

- In order to enhance parental awareness of risks and safety online, awareness-raising should focus on trying to create better understanding of internet technologies, children's and young people's activities and, without being alarmist or sensationalist, alert parents to the nature of the risks young people face online. Increasing parental understanding of risks is particularly important in those countries where awareness of children's risks is lowest.

Media reporting guidelines

- For awareness raising, there is little warrant for exaggerated or panicky fears about children's safety online – what is important is to empower all children while addressing the needs of the minority at significant risk of harm.

- From a media perspective, many of the risks that receive overly sensationalist media coverage are also among the rarest. In this sense, it is vital to portray in the first instance the many opportunities and benefits that the internet affords and only secondly the risks to be managed and harm to be avoided.

- In media reportage of issues related to children online, journalists should seek to represent young people and their online experiences in ways that respect their rights and privacy.

Evidence-based policy

- Researchers should be aware of good practice in communicating research and must understand the requirements of media outlets in formulating press releases and other materials for media distribution.

Industry

Safety by default

- Industry initiatives such as the ICT Coalition, the CEO Coalition, as well as self-regulatory codes of practice governing such areas as safer social networking, and tackling child abuse, should emphasize a position of 'safety by default' in the design and development of products and services used by young people.

- Usability research with end users, including children of various ages and linguistic background, should be prioritized. Safety by default initiatives should be designed so that they do not compromise the integrity, privacy and rights of the end user.

Accessibility

- Safety features should be easy-to-use and accessible to those with only basic digital literacy.

- For safety features to be effective they should be capable of customization according to the age of the

child, parental preferences and the devices being used.

- Greater standardization in the use of classification labels can also provide parents with added guidance when dealing with different types of services and devices.

Age-appropriateness of services

- Where there are age limits on services, these have to be made real and effective using appropriate methods of age verification where possible.

- When age verification cannot be secured, age recommendations for content and services should be accompanied by sufficient safety information and tools tailored to the needs and cognitive level of the most vulnerable and youngest users.

- Industry providers can play a major role by developing new products and services dedicated to the needs and interests of younger users.

Privacy

- In order to support users to make informed decisions about management of their personal information, industry should step up efforts to educate and raise awareness about privacy in the digital age. This should include adoption of privacy-by-design principles and tools to enable users under the age of 18 to remove where necessary content that may be damaging to their reputation and/or personal integrity.

Commercial risks

- Greater efforts need to be made to ensure that online commercial communication, including advertising, sponsorship, direct marketing etc., follows best international business practice and complies with applicable legislative and regulatory requirements.

- For children and young people, it is especially important that commercial content is clearly distinguishable, should not be unethical and should be sensitive to local cultural values, gender and race.

- Industry providers should ensure that commercial communications are age-appropriate and that reasonable steps are taken to ensure that young

people are not exposed to commercial messages intended for an over-18 audience.

Transparency

- Industry should continue to support independent evaluation and testing of all specified safety tools and features.

- Further efforts need to be made to standardize data regarding the reporting of risks. Sharing of data on an industry-wide basis would greatly assist identification of trends and new risks.

- To increase user awareness across Europe, consumer information should be made available in all major European languages. Benchmarking guides should be made available at least in the main European languages, but preferably all.

ANNEX 1: EU KIDS ONLINE

Overview

In its first phase (2006–09), as a thematic network of 21 countries, EU Kids Online identified and critically evaluated the findings of nearly 400 research studies, drawing substantive, methodological and policy-relevant conclusions. In its second phase (2009–11), as a knowledge enhancement project across 25 countries, the network surveyed children and parents to produce original, rigorous data on their internet use, risk experiences and safety mediation.

In its third phase (2011–14), the EU Kids Online network will provide a focal point for timely findings and critical analyses of new media uses and associated risks among children across Europe, drawing on these to sustain an active dialogue with stakeholders about priority areas of concern for child online safety.

Specifically, the network will widen its work by including all member states, by undertaking international comparisons with selected findings from countries outside the EC, and extending its engagement – both proactively and responsively – with policy stakeholders and internet safety initiatives.

It will deepen its work through new and targeted hypothesis testing of the pan-European dataset, focused on strengthening insights into both the risk environment and strategies of safety mediation, by pilot testing new and innovative research methodologies for the nature, meaning and consequences of children's online risk experiences, and conducting longitudinal comparisons of findings where available over time.

Last, it will update its work through a rolling programme to maintain the online database of available findings, and by producing timely updates on the latest knowledge about new and emerging issues (e.g. social networking, mobile platforms, privacy, personal data protection, safety and awareness-raising practices in schools, digital literacy and citizenship, geo-location services, etc.).

Work packages

WP1: Project management and evaluation

WP2: European evidence base

WP3: Hypotheses and comparisons

WP4: Exploring children's understanding of risk

WP5: Dissemination of project results

WP6: Policy recommendations

WP6 objectives

- To monitor emerging issues and debates in internet safety policymaking at both the national and international level
- To highlight areas of interest arising from EU Kids Online research for the safety awareness policy community (with WP5)
- To formulate policy recommendations in conjunction with outcomes of work packages WP3 and WP4

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- Amanda Lenhart, senior research specialist at the Pew Internet & American Life Project, USA
- Janice Richardson, Project Manager at European Schoolnet, Coordinator of Insafe, Brussels, Belgium
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