Findings of the EU Kids Online Project

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EU Kids Online

www.eukidsonline.net
Findings of the EU Kids Online project

Brian O’Neill

Member of Management Group, EU Kids Online

Child Safety on the Internet: Modern Approach in Russia and Europe”,
Moscow, 2nd February, 2010
EU Kids Online

- A thematic network examining European research on cultural, contextual and risk issues in children's safe use of the internet

- Funded by the EC Safer Internet plus Programme (2006-9) and (2009-2011)

- Network of 21 research teams: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom
Aims of the project in general

– To identify and evaluate available data on children’s use of online technologies
– To compare findings across Europe
– To identify reasons for different patterns of national research
– To produce a best practice guide for methodological issues and challenges
– To develop policy recommendations for awareness-raising and media literacy
N = 400+ single country studies
(600+ multi-country)
See online database at www.eukidsonline.net
Overview of presentation

- General trends: children, parents and the internet
- Data on risks
- Parental mediation
- EU kids Online II
Structure of the research field

Online activities of children

- Access
- Risks and opportunities
- Usage
- Attitudes and skills

Mediation by parents, teachers and peers

Individual level of analysis

- Media environment
- ICT regulation
- Public discourse
- Attitudes and values
- Educational System

Country level of analysis

- Age
- Gender
- SES/inequality

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Co-funded by the European Union
General findings about children and the internet

- Although the focus of the presentation is on risks it is worth making some general points about the patterns of children’s internet use.

- This is relevant because the more children use the internet the more they encounter both risks and opportunities.
Children online 6-17 years
Eurobarometer surveys, 2005/2008

[Bar chart showing the percentage of children online in different countries for the years 2005 and 2008.]
Parents and the age of children

- Assumption: children are the ‘digital natives’, parents are ‘digital immigrants’

- Result: It depends on age

- For younger children (up to 11 years old), their parents are the greater users

- Teenagers are more likely (87% of 12-17 year olds) to use the internet than are the parents of teenagers (65%). So the label ‘digital natives’ applies best to them.
Gender differences

- As regards gender, on balance, if we go beyond some variation in specific country results, boys use the Internet for more time and in more places, than do girls.

- There are indications that these inequalities are becoming less as younger children go online.

- And in a few countries (Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal and the UK), the Eurobarometer survey finds internet use to be greater among girls than boys.
Socioeconomic status

- In almost all countries, higher SES households are more likely to provide their children with access to the internet, this resulting in greater or more frequent use among more advantaged children.
## Varieties of online risk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Commercial</th>
<th>Aggressive</th>
<th>Sexual</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Adverts, spam, sponsorship, personal info</td>
<td>Violent/hateful content</td>
<td>Pornographic or unwelcome sexual content</td>
<td>Bias, racist, misleading info/ ‘advice’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child as recipient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contact</strong></td>
<td>Tracking/harvesting personal info</td>
<td>Being bullied, harassed or stalked</td>
<td>Meeting strangers, being groomed</td>
<td>Self-harm, unwelcome persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child as participant</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conduct</strong></td>
<td>Illegal downloading, hacking</td>
<td>Bullying or harassing another</td>
<td>Creating and uploading porn material</td>
<td>Providing misleading info/advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child as actor</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Prevalence of risks

- Giving out personal information (1st) – around half of online teenagers, with considerable cross-national variation (13% to 91%)
- Seeing pornography (2nd) - around 4 in 10 online teens across Europe, but again considerable cross-national variation (25% - 71%)
- Seeing violent or hateful content (3rd) - approximately one third of teens and, apart of a figure of 90% among social networking teens in Ireland, a fair degree of consistency across countries
- Being bullied/harassed/stalked online (4th) : generally around 1 in 5 or 6 teens online.
Prevalence of risks

- Receiving unwanted sexual comments (5th) - only around 1 in 10 teens in Germany, Ireland and Portugal; but closer to 1 in 4 teens in Iceland and Norway (and 1 in 6 in Sweden), rising to 1 in 3 in the UK and 1 in 2 in Poland.

- Meeting an online contact offline (6th) – the least common but arguably most dangerous risk; there is considerable consistency in the figures across Europe at around 8% (1 in 12) online teens going to such meetings; the exceptions are Poland (23%) and, especially, the Czech Republic (65%).
Age

- Generally, older teenagers encounter more online risks than younger children – largely related to the fact that they use it more.

- The question of how younger children cope with online risk remains little researched.
Gender

- Boys appear more likely to:
  - seek out offensive or violent content,
  - access pornographic content or be sent links to pornographic websites,
  - meet somebody offline that they have met online and to give out personal information.

- Girls appear more likely to
  - be upset by offensive, violent and pornographic material,
  - chat online with strangers,
  - receive unwanted sexual comments
  - be asked for personal information (but be wary of providing it to strangers).
Risks and opportunities are linked

- Research shows the more teens take up online benefits, the more risks they encounter
  - Conversely, safety initiatives to reduce risk tend also reduce opportunities
  - It is important to balance children’s protection against children’s rights (to opportunities)
  - This is relevant for police and parents
  - Like riding a bike, research shows more skill means more, not less, risk
Parental mediation patterns

- There are differences cross-nationally in parents preferred strategy for mediating their children’s online activities – including imposing time restrictions, sitting with their children as they go online and discussing internet use.

- But across countries parents tend to prefer these social strategies to technical mediation (filtering, monitoring software).
Parental mediation patterns

- More consistent across Europe is the tendency for:
  a) higher SES parents to mediate their children’s internet use more
  b) for girls to be more subject to such mediation than boys.

- With regard to age, the consistent finding is that of a U-curve: parental mediation increases with age until the age of around 10-11 years and then decreases again.
Parental mediation challenges

- Parental mediation is difficult to implement and has not (yet) been shown to be effective.
- Activities seen as risky by adults may be seen as opportunities to teenagers (making new friends, sharing intimacies, pushing adult boundaries, enjoying risk-taking).
- Teenagers value their privacy online and seek to protect it (especially from parents).
- They fear parents becoming more restrictive.
- Where they are more expert than parents, teenagers can often evade parental efforts to regulate use.
Research recommendations

- More focus on young children
- More focus on use of mobile applications
- More focus on the use of Web 2.0 applications and content creation
- More attention to some under-researched risks
- More attention to media literacy
- More attention to parental mediation (e.g. effectiveness)
- Gaps regarding the role of teachers
- Coping strategies
- Long term effects
- Fill the gaps in the evidence base in some countries
EU Kids Online II

- Survey of 25 countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom

- 1000 households per country

- Child + 1 parent, face-to-face interviews
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- Key areas: meeting strangers, cyberbullying, sexual harassment and pornography
- Asks for their evaluations
- 1st results: autumn 2010
- In depth results: autumn 2011
Thank you

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