Protecting Children against Online Violence: Reflections from the EU Kids Online and Net Children Go Mobile projects

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10 June, 2014
Online opportunities and risks

• New technologies, and particularly social media, offer a myriad of opportunities:
  – greater access to educational materials
  – participation
  – information or socialization
  – entertainment

• However, they also create new opportunities for new forms of risks and sometimes also harm
HOW DO CHILDREN GO ONLINE?

88

- 15 – 16 year old spend 118 minutes online per day
- 9-10 year olds spend 58 minutes

7

- the average age of 1st internet use (Denmark, Sweden).
- 8 North EU countries
- 9 other EU countries

49%

- 33% go online via a smartphone or handheld device

88

- 49% of children go online in their bedroom
- 33% go online via a smartphone or handheld device

www.eukidsonline.net
Ladder of opportunities 9-16 years-old

Only a quarter of children do interactive and creative activities online (e.g. blogging, file-sharing, chatrooms or virtual worlds)

23% of children

More older than younger children reach this step, adding multiplayer gaming, downloading and sharing UGC

56% of children

This step adds in social media and news viewing, but not all reach it

75% of children

Most children also watch video clips online

86% of children

When children first go online, they focus on playing games and schoolwork

100% of children
SOCIAL NETWORKING

23% of 9-16 year olds had more than one profile.

9-16 year olds with SNS profile = 15.303
### Online Activities 2010 vs. 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>2010 (five countries)</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watched video clips (e.g. on YouTube, iTunes, Vimeo, etc.)</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used the internet for schoolwork</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visited a social networking profile</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Played games on own or against the computer</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used instant messaging</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Played games with other people on the internet</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published photos, videos or music to share with others</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downloaded music or films</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read/watched the news on the internet</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published a message on a website or a blog</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used a webcam</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Online Risks

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Conduct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child as receiver (of mass productions)</td>
<td>Child as participant (adult-initiated activity)</td>
<td>Child as actor (perpetrator / victim)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>Violent / gory content</td>
<td>Harassment, stalking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>Pornographic content</td>
<td>‘Grooming’, sexual abuse or exploitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Racist / hateful content</td>
<td>Ideological persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>Embedded marketing</td>
<td>Personal data misuse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Experiences of risk and harm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sexual images</th>
<th>Bullying</th>
<th>Sexual messages*</th>
<th>Meeting new people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experienced the risk at all</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced the risk online</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online perpetrators</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt bothered</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt bothered (§ of those who experienced the risk)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Fairly) upset (§ of those who felt bothered)</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Different countries = different concerns

- 55% of children recognise potential online harm
- 12% were upset by something online in the past year

"When I am playing games with my older sister on the internet, naked people pop up and it is very bad" (boy, 12, France)

"If people put your secrets on the internet. If people take pictures or videos of you and put them on the internet when you don’t want them to" (girl, 9, Ireland)

"All kinds of bullies, who can hurt person with words" (girl, 14, Estonia)

Thinking about your child, which of these things do you worry about a lot?
Lots of concerns, many relate to violence

What bothers kids your age?

- Fighting. People being cruel to animals and hitting them. (Girl, 11)
- Dead bodies, blood, sexual images/videos. Dying people. (Girl, 13)
- Death by beating. Inappropriate images, sexual images. (Boy, 12)
- Porn. Websites showing people doing suicide. (Boy, 12)
- Hate groups on Facebook being created about them. (Boy, 12)
- Graphic images like gore or pornography. (Girl, 15)
- Porn websites. Information on how to be anorexic, kill yourself, get drugs. (Girl, 15)
- Winding people up. Cyber bullying. Threatening. (Boy, 13)
- Bullying, racism, fighting, weird voice clips, too many webcam requests!! (Girl, 14)
- Freddie Kruger. Scary films. Facebook. YouTube. (Girl, 9)
- YouTube. Terrible videos. Terrible images. (Boy, 13)
Online risks in Brazil

Conduct-related risks

- Sharing personal information: 1% (Europe), 1% (Brazil)
- Sexual harassment or unwelcome 'sexting': 1% (Europe), 1% (Brazil)
- Sharing images or photos: 1% (Europe), 2% (Brazil)
- People saying bad things/damage to reputation: 2% (Europe), 10% (Brazil)
- Hacking/misuse of personal information/specific privacy...: 2% (Europe), 7% (Brazil)
- Unwelcome conduct in general: 4% (Europe), 3% (Brazil)
- Bullying (usually repeated aggression): 5% (Europe), 4% (Brazil)
- Other means of aggressive conduct: 5% (Europe)

Base: 15,444 online risks reported by European children and 1,582 online risks reported by Brazilian children.
What has changed since 2010 (1)?
More mobile devices to go online

- Boys
  - 15
  - 32
- Girls
  - 13
  - 31
- 9-10 yrs
  - 6
  - 18
- 11-12 yrs
  - 9
  - 26
- 13-14 yrs
  - 15
  - 35
- 15-16 yrs
  - 24
  - 43
- All
  - 14
  - 31

- Boys
  - 24
  - 44
- Girls
  - 22
  - 46
- 9-10 yrs
  - 19
  - 16
- 11-12 yrs
  - 25
  - 39
- 13-14 yrs
  - 25
  - 56
- 15-16 yrs
  - 21
  - 65
- All
  - 23
  - 45

- "other handheld devices (2010, 5 countries)"
- "mobile phones (2010, 5 countries)"
- "daily use of tablets"
- "daily use of smartphones"
What has changed since 2010 (2)?

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

- Boys
  - 2010 (25 countries): 41%
  - 2010 (5 countries): 44%
  - 2013 (5 countries): 47%
- Girls
  - 2010 (25 countries): 40%
  - 2010 (5 countries): 43%
  - 2013 (5 countries): 53%
- 9-10 yrs
  - 2010 (25 countries): 14%
  - 2010 (5 countries): 15%
  - 2013 (5 countries): 23%
- 11-12 yrs
  - 2010 (25 countries): 33%
  - 2010 (5 countries): 36%
  - 2013 (5 countries): 43%
- 13-14 yrs
  - 2010 (25 countries): 49%
  - 2010 (5 countries): 54%
  - 2013 (5 countries): 61%
- 15-16 yrs
  - 2010 (25 countries): 63%
  - 2010 (5 countries): 64%
  - 2013 (5 countries): 69%
- All
  - 2010 (25 countries): 41%
  - 2010 (5 countries): 44%
  - 2013 (5 countries): 50%
Tablet and smart phone users more likely to encounter one or more risks

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

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

(Mother of a 13-year old boy)
Violent material

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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% who say they can...</th>
<th>9-12 years</th>
<th>13-16 years</th>
<th>All* (users and non-users)</th>
<th>EU Kids Online 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Block unwanted adverts or junk mail spam</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delete the record of which sites they have visited</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change privacy settings on a social networking profile</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block messages from someone they don’t want to hear from</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Block pop-ups</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find information on how to use the internet safely</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The older the safer

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

Online violence: Old wine in new bottle?
More children ‘self-harming because of cyber-bullying’

The number of children admitted to hospital for self-harm has risen by 10 per cent in a year – with cyber-bullying a trigger, according to experts.

Cases, including one in four of girls from the age group, were driving the rise in self-harm, they said.

A nine-year-old boy from Stockport was to have his second operation this week after being injured by a knife.

More than 12,000 people aged 17 or under were taken to hospital in 2013 after intentionally harming themselves, figures obtained under the Freedom of Information Act show.

It represented a rise of nearly 3,000 cases in one year, with 5,300 more girls admitted at just under 8,800.

And the true number is thought to be far higher, as 42 of the 160 NHS hospital trusts in England refused to respond to the FOI.

Rachel Welsh, director of selfharm.co.uk, a support charity for young people, said cyber-bullying was ‘definitely one reason’ for the increase.

‘However, it’s also just the way the world is at the moment,’ she added. ‘It’s not as easy for young people to be bullied as it used to be, but at the same time they feel they are being trolled, and the internet there will probably be taboo for them when they leave school.’

‘Kids don’t see a future there is little opportunity.’

The number of youngsters injured in self-harm has more than doubled over the past five years, with boys the largest group among 12-year-old girls.

Among those aged 11 and under, boys were most likely to hurt themselves – but in the older age group, 4,845 girls were hospitalised, compared with 6,800 boys.

However, Mrs Welsh said the figures might not tell the whole story:

‘In teenage years, it can be so much harder for boys to come forward and tell us how they are feeling,’ she added.

‘Whereas a girl might cut herself, a boy might punch a wall. Often this is not recognised as self-harm.’

Teenage drivers ‘causing too many fatal accidents’

Teenage drivers are involved in more than ten per cent of road accidents where someone is injured, a study reveals.

But only 1.5 per cent of all motorists are aged 17 to 19 – spurring calls for newly qualified drivers to face restrictions after passing their test.

Trefor Prys, in Wales, saw 20 per cent of serious crashes involve a teenage driver – the highest figure in Britain. The RAC Foundation, which carried out the research, believes curfews and a limit on young passengers could save 1,600 lives a year, as it would reduce a motorist’s exposure to risk.

‘We should all be interested in preserving young drivers’ lives,’ said RAC director Prof Stephen Glaister.
Good or bad content?
It all depends on the context

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

So this is porn…I guess???
(Online) opportunities and risks go hand in hand 😊
Risks ≠ Harm (1)

• Not all risks result in harm and not all children are affected by risks in the same way

• Opportunities and risks go hand in hand:
  – The more online activities children engage in, the more children are skilled and self-confident (also to deal with online risks) and vice versa.
Do we want to “protect” our children like this?
Or like this?
Final Recommendations

- Media literacy and media education are essential to mitigate online risks, but also to fully take advantage of the opportunities new ICT offer.
Final Recommendations (2)

- Special attention for vulnerable groups is needed
  - children from certain minority groups, and children with disabilities, may be more likely to be bullied, harassed or exploited online
- EU Kids online concluded that online and offline vulnerability are interrelated
  - **Double jeopardy effect**: children with more psychological problems suffer more from online as well as offline risks
Final Recommendations (3)

- Develop **effective (research-based)** policy responses
- Develop coherent **state-based strategies** rather than several fragmented “one-shot” campaigns
- Introduce appropriate legislation & ensuring their **effective implementation**
- **Training of** law enforcement officials, teachers and other professionals working with children
- **Raise awareness** of online risks among children and their parents and caregivers
- Support recovery for children who have been exposed to abuse and exploitation
- **Collect & update data**
- **Create incentives for the private sector** to introduce measures to enhance children’s online safety
Final Recommendations (4)

- Evaluate the potential positive impact of the use of online technologies to support children (e.g. helplines, social or counseling services, etc.)
  - Few studies have referred to this, but they do show some encouraging results:

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

  Fukkink, R. & Hermans, J. (2009). Counseling children at a helpline: Chatting or calling?
Final Recommendations (5)

- «I am happy that I can finally talk to someone. I don’t dare to talk about it with anyone else because I feel so ashamed»
  
  (Extract from chat conversation with a 13-year old boy victim of sexual abuse)

- “I want him to stop doing this, but I don’t really know how to deal with it”
  
  (Extract from chat conversation with a 15-year old girl victim of sexual abuse)

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

Challenges
- Ethical issues: Professional secrecy vs. anonymity vs. the best interests of the child
  - e.g. Encourage children to report situations where the abuse is still ongoing
Big Challenge ahead

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