Findings of the EU Kids Online Project

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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

EU Kids Online
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.
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.
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>Content</th>
<th>Commercial</th>
<th>Aggressive</th>
<th>Sexual</th>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child as recipient</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>Contact</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>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct</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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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prevalence of risks

- Giving out personal information (1\textsuperscript{st}) – around half of online teenagers, with considerable cross-national variation (13% to 91%)
- Seeing pornography (2\textsuperscript{nd}) - around 4 in 10 online teens across Europe, but again considerable cross-national variation (25% - 71%)
- Seeing violent or hateful content (3\textsuperscript{rd}) - 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 (4\textsuperscript{th}) : 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
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
EU Kids Online II

- Key areas: meeting strangers, cyberbulling, sexual harassment and pornography
- Asks for their evaluations
- 1st results: autumn 2010
- In depth results: autumn 2011
Thank you

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