

Realising children's rights in the digital age: The role of digital skills

Methodology

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The EC-funded research network ySKILLS aimed to identify the actors and factors that undermine or promote the wellbeing of children aged 12–17 in a digital age. This report synthesises its findings to inform child rights organisations, advocates and duty bearers, and researchers concerned with child rights. It reviews new evidence from the ySKILLS to determine whether gaining digital literacy facilitates the realisation of children's rights. It also examines the opposite possibility: is there evidence from ySKILLS research that the insufficient realisation of children's rights impedes children in gaining digital literacy?

The findings are mapped onto 11 child rights principles applicable to the digital environment. These principles encompass the full range of articles in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC). They were originally formulated by the Digital Futures Commission (<https://digitalfuturescommission.org.uk/>) and further developed by the ySKILLS project. The principles, in turn, are mapped onto the European regulatory framework, to establish how children's rights and digital literacy have already been substantially incorporated into legislation and policy.

Methods of mapping ySKILLS evidence onto child rights principles

We organised several workshops with ySKILLS researchers to map the ySKILLS evidence onto child rights principles, following an iterative, reflexive process that aimed to:

1. Consider different models of child rights frameworks and select the approach best suited for the purposes of ySKILLS. As a result, we chose to combine the child rights into different principles, selected which ySKILLS findings would be used, and collated resources and evidence across the wide range of methods used in ySKILLS, including a longitudinal survey, practice tests, fMRI, qualitative research with vulnerable groups, secondary data analysis, systematic review of the evidence, etc.) and EU Kids Online comparative survey findings.
2. Deliberate on how well the ySKILLS evidence relates to children's rights and their interdependencies. Different child rights principles were workshopped by the ySKILLS researchers who suggested links to different types of evidence. This produced a model for mapping the evidence (see Figure 5).
3. Test the proposed model for mapping the evidence and the child rights framework using two principles and some emerging findings. This helped to finalise the mapping model and reflect on possible areas of difficulty, such as accuracy of represented findings and consistency across ySKILLS outputs. Measures to mitigate these were put in place.



Figure 5: ySKILLS workshop mapping evidence onto children’s rights



- 4. Verify the mapping in terms of accuracy, consistency and gaps. The completed mapping was checked by the ySKILLS network during a specially designed workshop. Some gaps were identified, and more evidence was suggested based on most recent analyses. Some corrections were also made (i.e., in relation to early project findings that were later refuted by the analysis of the full dataset; superseded findings were removed) (see Figure 6).

This mapping process (as well as all outputs from the final stages of the project) was supported by regular meetings of a working group of selected ySKILLS researchers representing the empirical, theoretical and synthesis/output strands of the project and working on Work Package 7.

We also held an online stakeholder event where we discussed the findings and recommendations from WP7. The final reports were updated incorporating the suggestions and recommendations from the stakeholders.

Figure 6: Workshop to verify the mapping of the ySKILLS evidence with children’s rights

