



Co-funded by the European Union



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

Technical interviews report: the qualitative study

October 2014



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ISSN 2045-256X

www.eukidsonline.net

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

O'Neill, B. and Staksrud, E. (2014). *Final recommendations for policy*. London: EU Kids Online, LSE.

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). *Preventive 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>

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

d'Haenens, L., Vandoninck, 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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Dürager, A. and Livingstone, S. (2012). *How can parents support children's internet safety?* <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/id/eprint/42872>

Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *EU Kids Online final report*. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39351>

Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Disadvantaged children and online risk*. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/39385>

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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>

Livingstone, S. and Ólafsson, K. (2011). *Risky communication online*. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33732>

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

The EU Kids Online network has been funded by the EC Safer Internet Programme in three successive phases of work from 2006–14 to enhance knowledge of children's and parents' experiences and practices regarding risky and safer use of the internet and new online technologies.

As a major part of its activities, EU Kids Online conducted a face-to-face, in home survey during 2010 of 25,000 9- to 16-year-old internet users and their parents in 25 countries, using a stratified random sample and self-completion methods for sensitive questions. Now including researchers and stakeholders from 33 countries in Europe and beyond, the network continues to analyse and update the evidence base to inform policy.

For all reports, findings and technical survey information, as well as full details of national partners, please visit www.eukidsonline.net

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SUMMARY

This is the technical report discussing the methodological decisions behind the EU Kids Online qualitative study: *The meaning of online problematic situations for children*¹.

The following highlights key stages in the procedure that followed that could apply to any cross-country research using qualitative interviews and English as the shared working language²,

Planning phase

In group discussion the national teams refined the research goals, the choice of interview types and sampling principles.

Based on this, the coordinator sought ethics approval from the lead university outlining principles, precautions and protocols (to address issues arising in the interview).

The coordinator drafted an interview schedule and national teams then discussed and refined this,

The coordinator conducted pilot interviews in one country, provided feedback to national teams who then discussed and refined the interview schedule.

Pilot phase

National teams conducted pilot interviews in the participating countries.

The coordinator developed some first level coding principles - so that everyone could see an English language summary of the interviews,

The national teams coded (i.e. summarised) the pilot transcripts into English – 2 people coded per country and discussed the coding.

The national teams collectively discuss the pilot interviews and refined the interview schedule accordingly. They discussed the coding principles again and revised them

accordingly. The coordinator checked that all national teams are coding in a similar way, providing feedback to assure this.

The coordinator drafted the second level coding scheme (Excel template) – to facilitate searching within and across interviews.

Interviews

The national teams conducted the interviews. As they were completed the first level coding was applied to the transcripts.

Coding

National team members chose interesting sections from the translated them into English.

All interviews were then coded at the second level on the Excel sheet.

Report writing

The teams divided up into sub-groups to analyse the material under different topics.

The teams produced the different section of the report.

The coordinator put the report together, reorganising the material to remove any overlap.

¹ <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/56972/>

² The documents discussed here and below (e.g. various forms. Interview guides, coding sheets) and examples can be found at <http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EU%20Kids%20III/Qualitative/Home.aspx>

PLANNING THE STUDY

Participants

The countries that eventually contributed to the qualitative report *The meaning of online problematic situations for children* were Belgium, the Czech Republic, Greece, Malta, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom – where the Czech team co-ordinated the research. However, the group discussing the methodological issues and contributing to decisions was far larger. This included researchers who had initially thought that they might be able to participate but after some interviews, for whatever reason, found that they could not. It also included researchers who from the start had not planned to conduct the empirical research themselves but who were nevertheless interested in the methodological issues and the procedure. In addition, member from the Australian affiliated project took part in the discussions and conducted parallel empirical research in Australia.

Planning: Research goals discussion

Although the EU Kids Online III proposal had stipulated that the project would carry out a qualitative study ‘Exploring children’s understanding of risk’, many of the details had to be worked out when the work package group first met. In the first workshop the following issues were discussed, questions raised and decisions taken

- We should not just focus on risks, nor was it necessarily always to start by discussing risks with children. We should also consider more positive aspects. For example, as regards the ladder of opportunities, do children use the internet for more high level purposes as they grow older? What excites children about the internet, what skills will it give them?
- As regards risks, what are children’s perceptions of these? What counts as risk and

harm in children’s eyes? How do they make sense of the experiences that researchers call ‘risks’? Do they not see some things as being a risky that adults perceive as being a risk? Do they take pleasure in some risks? (e.g. sexting). How do they distinguish between something that they think is negative for children in general and something that has really bothered them personally (and where might they might help?). What is most crucial to them?

- What are their strategies for coping with risks?
- In terms of raising questions within a more theoretical framework, to what extent is the social construction or parenthood and childhood different in different countries? Are there different understandings of what ‘good’ parents should do in terms of parental mediation of the internet? Are there different perceptions of what might be harmful for children online, or how they should behave?
- What are the issues around parental mediation in households? How much do parents trust children (which may influence their mediation strategies) and how much do children expect parents to trust them and to listen to them when negotiating? (This is in the light of current academic discussions of de-traditionalization - whether parent-child relationships are changing). What do children think it is legitimate for parents to do in terms of parental mediation, and when is that mediation an imposition/problem in their eyes and why? In general, therefore, what are the dynamics of the family context? And, apart from parents, what is the role and expectations of siblings in that context.
- What are the peer dynamics at work in shaping perceptions of online risk? What is it legitimate for peers to do in terms of mediation? What is their role?

In the light of the discussion above one key early decision was to avoid using the word ‘risk’ when formulating the more specific research questions, which became:

- What do children perceive as being potentially negative or problematic when using the internet?
- What impacts and consequences can such negative experiences have?
- How do they evaluate things that adults consider potentially problematic?
- What do children do to avoid these problematic experiences?
- What can children do after having such negative experiences?
- What coping strategies work best from children's perspectives?

Planning: Methodological discussions

Focus groups v individual interviews, online vs offline

There was a discussion of the pros and cons of individual interviews vs. focus groups and online vs. offline research. The key points raised were:

- In part the decision about which method to use is also dependent upon the research question asked (e.g. you may be able to actually see some of the collective peer negotiation of norms about risks taking place in focus groups – i.e. the social construction of perception of risks).
- In order to reduce the complexity of a comparative qualitative study one possibility would have been to have a more homogenous sample (e.g. older children). However, in the EU Kids Online reports we had previously recommended doing more research with younger children.
- Focus groups can be more difficult for younger groups (e.g. the Polish experience was that the first child to speak influenced the rest of the subsequent group interaction). But it can be managed with these young children (e.g. the Greek team's experience of working with 7-11 year olds). Interviews can also be managed with younger children using various research tactics (e.g. the Australian experience of children providing 'guided tours of their internet').

- One possibility would have been to have had focus groups with that same people that had previously been interviewed (in order to hear their views before they learnt about the group norms that emerge in the focus groups – see also below).
- There was a discussion of whether to (also) use online focus groups since they were cheaper and the data is already in textual form – this was important given that in some countries there was no money for transcription. However, the Australian experience was that they are not comparable with offline research. Online research may be more suitable for a child who spends a good deal of time online, but the data from online interview with more 'ordinary' children were less rich than the equivalent from offline interviews. With online methods it could also be more difficult to develop rapport with the child. Online interviews raised issues about the mechanisms for getting permission for the children to take part in the interviews and it could be difficult to conduct online interviews with younger children because they had difficulties typing.

Decision

- It was decided that we would use a combination of face-to-face individual interviews combined with face-to-face focus groups covering the ages 9-16.

The sampling strategy

There was a discussion of whether and how to organise research through schools:

- There was a discussion of whether we could go to places where children meet in the afternoon – where they will already know each other (youth centres, clubs). However, in Greece there are no such spaces, like youth clubs, where children meet.
- There is a difference between recruiting via schools and conducting the meeting there – in principle you could do the first, but meet elsewhere. However, there is still the issue of

getting permission to do the research. If you get the school's permission, you are allowed to do the research in the school itself. If you try to organise it outside there is a question of who gives permission for adults to conduct an interview or focus group in an unsupervised space.

- Because different school cultures might affect children's responses each national team agreed to Comparing notes, it was clear that in different countries there were different procedures (and degrees of difficulty) in going through schools. For example, in the Czech Republic, if the school director gives permission, you can do research there - you do not need to ask the parents. In Greece if you approach the pedagogical institute and ministry of education it takes longer to get permission. Again, it is easiest to ask the head of the school to give permission to do the research. In Italy it is difficult to do research in schools – they are resistant. It is possible, but you need to let them know long in advance. If you go to the ministry it takes months. In Australia you need ethics permission from school, parental permission and the child's consent.
- If we are asking sensitive questions in schools, this might bias the answers. The children might worry about teachers listening and acting on the basis of the answers they give. There was therefore a draw children from several schools. Although this was not to representative sample other variables were discussed, e.g. rural vs. urban, state vs. private schools. But in a small scale study you can only take it into account so many things.
- There were also discussions of whether to try and recruit children from the same classes within schools. One argument is that the children know each other would they open up and speak more freely? The counter arguments that because we are asking sensitive questions sometimes it is easier to talk to children they do not know (or know less well). It may also be easier to get permission if they are from one class. Ultimately, however, teams in some

countries may have no choice over the child because teachers would choose them.

- One issue was whether conducting focus groups followed by interviews with some of the same children from the groups - in past research using this approach some children had then commented what had been said in the early focus group. And this would have the advantage that some rapport had already been established. However, in our case after two sessions lasting a total of 90 minutes it was felt that the focus group children would be too tired to be interviewed.
- Other issues covered included the number of focus groups and interviews, age groupings and thresholds (e.g. 11-12, 13-14 and 15-16 or 11-13, 14-16) and whether there should be separate or mixed gender focus groups.

Decisions

- Country teams would decide what to take into account when choosing schools, but they should choose 3 schools and try to achieve some diversity.
- We would try to choose children from different classes.
- The interviewees would be different children from the focus group participants.
- In each country there would be 2 male and 2 female individual interviews from each age group 9-10, 11-3 and 14-16.
- In each country there would be one male and one female group for each age group 9-10, 11-3 and 14-16.
- There would be 2 focus groups, and 4 interviews in each school.
- There would be 5 children in each focus group, since this is likely to mean that everyone speaks.
- Where possible, Interviewees would be chosen randomly but from different classes.
- If some of the children interviewed do not talk much, we might consider having replacements.
- The children asked for would have the internet at home. Although we can be flexible for

countries where this is rarer, children must nevertheless use the internet to be eligible.

- Those children also use it regularly. Usually this meant almost every day but there could again be national flexibility if few children use the internet so frequently in a country.

Planning: Research Ethics

A research ethics form describing the goals, methodology and protocols teams would follow (e.g. if an interviewee reported abuse) were submitted to the LSE Ethics committee. Much of this was based on the ethics submission from the preceding survey, that had previously been approved by the LSE ethics committee. When the ethics for the qualitative research were accepted by this LSE committee, that once again sufficed for the institutions of the other participating countries – they felt they were covered by the approval obtained by the lead institution in the EU Kids Online network.

The minimum permissions we would collect would be from the school head/the teacher and the child. Half of the countries also needed to parental permission. Some countries also needed permission from national bodies. The coordinator created invitation and consent forms for parents, invitation and consent forms for schools/teachers, and a consent form to be signed by participating children.

Planning: Further methodological discussions

Interview planning

As noted above, the aim was to interview 12 individuals and 6 groups in each country. The individual interviews were intended to allow individuals to comment on sensitive issues that they might not do in a group and to give them more space to provide examples from their own lives and circumstances, rather than talking more generally. The group interviews (or focus groups) were intended to stimulate discussion through the participants feeding off each other's comments, sometimes providing examples from their own

lives, but also being will to talk more generally about topics, about the experiences they had observed and what they thought about them. It was anticipated that we might actually see some of the collective peer negotiation of norms about risks taking place in focus groups. Individual interviews would last about 45 minutes, focus groups about 90 minutes.

The interview structure

The coordinating team drew up some individual and focus group interview schedules and piloted them in the Czech Republic. These were then discussed in a second workshop meeting by the whole group, examples from that discussion being provided below:

- Many of the focus group question currently looked like the individualistic questions you might expect in an interview i.e. 'what do you do/like?' One danger is the children might not interact as a group but simply take turns to speak. What types of questions produce a group discussion?
- The group discussed one approach that might first get the children to brainstorm and provide the 10 most popular things that children in their (school) year do. These could be written on small cards. The cards could then be re-arranged on a continuum between relatively 'cool' and 'uncool' activities, requiring the children to negotiate where items should be and asking why they made those decisions (which may lead to some critical evaluations) The third stage would be for the researcher to give his/her own thoughts about mobile phones as an example - that it can have good and bad aspects – e.g. disruptive phone calls. Then we go back to the 10 activities and say what is good and bad/problematic about each.
- Another suggestion was try to tease out all dimensions of problematic aspects as soon as children report them, rather than coming back to them later.
- The group discussed providing scenario approach might provoke discussion, because the children do not have to talk about their own experiences. On the other hand, since the

scenarios are made up by the researcher and these stories might reflect their pre-conceived ideas e.g. about meeting strangers. One possibility was to prepare several scenarios and use the ones that best fit the discussion between the children.

Decisions

- Revisions were made to some questions before they were piloted in the different countries.
- Ultimately the various activities proposed above were not used in the EU Kids Online study but a variant was used in the Net Children Go Mobile project³.

Procedure for making the international research comparable

Even before the first workshop the coordinating group first reviewed existing qualitative studies that had been conducted in several countries to examine the procedures they had followed – e.g. how much had been translated and how much coded in the national language, how coding manuals had been compiled, whether national reports were formulated and then compared. This formed the basis of further methodological discussions.

- Since any interviews would be in the national language, and there was no money to pay for translating all the interviews into the common language English, the strategy was (a) for the interviewer to summarise all the main points of each part of the interview in English (b) to code these summaries so that those doing the analysis could search the interviews for different themes and (c) to translate fully some more (theoretically) interesting parts – given that those taking part in the project had agreed in general what the goals, and hence what might be interesting.

³ The focus groups there started by asking young people to list on post-it stickers the things they liked and disliked about smartphones and tablets, and their feedback was subsequently discussed in the group.

The pilot phase

Two pilot individual interviews (one for 9-10 year olds and one for older children) and two pilot group interviews (also one 9-10 and one older) were conducted in each country. The pilot tested:

- The interview schedules i.e. that the children of different ages could understand and answer the questions and could manage interviews lasting this long.
- That all national teams summarised the interviews in a similar way.
- The coding principles (e.g. what types of key codes like ‘risk perception’ emerged from the process, in addition to ones that had been suggested by the co-ordinator?).
- The ability to participate further in the project (some countries that could not manage to do the pilot, find the time to code sufficiently, or reach the minimum level left the empirical part of the project at this stage even if they still participated in the group discussions).

First level coding of the pilot interviews

The Czech team who were coordinating the whole qualitative study drew up instructions for the coding of pilots.

- A transcript was made of each interview in the national language.
- On the transcript each part of the pilot interview (sometimes one comment from the interview, sometimes several comments) was summarised using the ‘comment’ box function in Word. Each summary sentence was preceded by a key code (e.g. ‘Activities’, ‘Risk perception’). Some codes were common to all and supplied by the coordinator, some emerged from the very process of coding.

- In the national teams two members initially coded each pilot interview so that they could discuss where they coded differently and discuss the best way to code. (NB Subsequently one person coded each interview).
- As an exercise at one of the workshops pairs of researchers from different countries then coded two (different) pages from the UK pilot interviews (since they were in English) and discussed this process, feeding back into a collective discussion of coding (e.g. about how much to write then coding, avoiding misinterpretations).
- The coordinating team subsequently checked the coding ⁴on the pilot transcripts and provided feedback to each national team in case they needed to change the way they summarised material (e.g. if the summaries were too short or not clear enough).

General feedback from the pilots

- Children in the UK children found that the length of the interview was acceptable and it was understandable, but some children thought that the process of going back to what they had said earlier felt repetitious. It had proved impossible to set up a random way to select the children, especially since after the first visit to set up the interview children needed to take home parental consent forms before the interview. Ultimately teachers chose the children. Discussions with another UK researcher who interviews children for another project confirmed that this is normally what happens in school based research.

⁴ An example of coding can be found on the website.

- This was also true in Malta. The Maltese children had found it difficult to talk.
- In Italy the pilots with young girls went well – but they had been light or non-internet users, so the feedback was not so good. But they had a lot of perceptions.
- In Australia the interviews were less productive than the group discussions.
- The Romanians also could not select children in Romania – they had rich focus groups, poor interviews (there were problems getting information from the children in one-to-one interviews).
- In Spain it was the other way round – the focus groups were not so good, but the interviews were good.
- In Greece both focus group and interviews were good.
- In Belgium the interviews allowed the children to talk about more sensitive information. It was more difficult to get younger children to talk, but you could get them to show you things online and then talk about them.
- In Portugal they had had to wait a long time for the permission from the minister.

The qualitative researchers then relooked at the interview schedule and considered the interview process. Examples from the discussion are given below:

- One UK interviewer had used a video for his second pilot focus group since it had proved challenging to identify who was speaking when coding the first pilot group. The video also conveyed some of the non-verbal communication.
- To add the interview flow, if a risk experience is mentioned we should keep asking questions about it before moving on to the next issue.
- Younger children will often say ‘my brother...’, ‘my sister experienced X’ . The researcher can ask ‘if you were in her place

what would you have done?’ In other words, use projection techniques.

- In the schedule we have the question ‘What are you careful about when playing a game’– we should rephrase this as ‘Are there things you need to be careful of...?’
- We might rephrase the introduction to ‘We are interested in what you do on the internet or on a smartphone’.
- We might rephrase ‘There are other things on the internet that..’ By ‘Are there other things on the internet which you might watch out for?’
- We might rephrase ‘What is unpleasant ...by ‘Do you know anything that other people may be careful of?’
- Suggestion: ‘You mentioned things that are not OK....how did it affect you? Do you still think about it?’
- You could have ‘How do you feel about talking about the internet with me?’ right at the end
- As in the survey we should ask about intensity and duration of being bothered or upset: ‘How did it affect you? ‘Do you still think about it?’
- We might rephrase ‘Things on the internet...that are not alright’ by ‘What do you think is not alright?’
- If they child has no experience we might ask ‘Do you know anyone who has experienced that...?’
- We might mention a short story from newspaper and ask ‘What do you think, what would you do in the same situation?’
- In the introduction was could ask more about internet history: what did they do in the past compared to now, how did their online activities develop over time?
- We should ask about concrete experiences – e.g. ‘What did you do on the internet yesterday?’ (as a stimulus).
- Some children surprised when the researchers were interested in negative experiences – should we add a sentence to say that we will also speak about things that they do not like.

- For each risk – e.g. sexual images – we might think about referring to way in which it can be positive, and ways in which way can be negative
- We could ask ‘What kind of advice would they give to friend?’
- We might (carefully) push and raise issues if the children initially have nothing to say about them – e.g. ‘Does this happen in your school?’ ‘This point was mentioned by some children in our survey’ (from the open ended question).
- The children often do not think about smartphones as being ‘on the internet – we might ask them if they show peers things on their mobile or in some other way mention ‘on your mobile’.

The final individual interview guide and focus group topic guide can be found on the EU Kids Online website⁵.

The interviews and focus groups

Reflections: Recruiting was more difficult in some countries than others and caused delays. As noted earlier, in some countries several levels of permission were needed in the education system, (Australia) while in others (Portugal) even waiting for Ministers permission created delays. But even in countries where it is possible to approach schools directly, , like the UK, identifying a potential participating schools and getting permission could be a long process and their busy timetables meant that many schools refused when approached or agreed but subsequently dropped out. One UK junior school that agreed to take part insisted that in individual interviews a member of teaching staff should be present (which undermined the anonymity we had promised the children, given the topics were potentially sensitive).

⁵

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EU%20Kids%20III/Qualitative/Home.aspx>

Although the participating national researchers had agreed to cover the broadly the same topics, some topics were more and some less developed in particular national interviews, reflecting the research interests of the particular researchers (e.g. in one there was a good deal on sexual risks, in another relatively little on parental mediation).

Coding: The second level of coding

This stage was conducted by the co-ordinating Czech team, but included inputs from other national team members who were visiting from countries participating in the research. The team first drew up a template Excel sheet with codes relating to the content of the first level codes (e.g. the platform and device used, the nature of the risk, who was involved). A Word document with definitions and examples of how to use the codes was also prepared. The team then trained researchers in Brno to use the codes consistently.

The individual first level codes for each interview were then transferred to this Excel file, with one sheet per country (e.g. all Greek interviews on one sheet). The second level codes also appeared in the Nvivo version. The aim was to enable the teams conducting the analysis to search by these second level codes in order to find relevant material (e.g. on risk awareness, coping) .

Examples providing an overview of a coding sheet and a detailed section can be found on the website.

Coding: Translated sections

In addition to the first level coding, the national team members who coded also decided which sections of the interview transcript would be most interesting and translated these fully into English. Subsequently these were often used for quotations in the final analysis.

Reflections: The number of translations from different countries was uneven, with more translations for some countries than for others (in part reflecting the English language skills of different national team members and the time available to different national teams). That also

meant that in some cases only a fairly short piece was translated, whereas in other cases larger sections relating to the point were translated. There was a discussion of the fact that translation inevitably loses some of the richness of the original language.

When researchers had to make choices about what was most interesting, it could again reflect their personal research interests and also the fact that by then many knew which topics they would be working on for the final report (e.g. there were quite a few 'translations' of mediation issues in the UK interviews, given the UK representative was also leading the section of the final report on mediation).

Report writing: The division of labour for analysis

The same principle was followed as in the analysis of the quantitative data. Within the project sub-groups, in some cases containing members from several countries, looked at particular themes across all the national interviews (e.g. parental mediation, teacher mediation).

In one of the workshops after the first interviews but before the division of labour noted above, ad hoc sub-groups reflected upon, compared notes and reported back on what might be interesting themes to emerge from their own interviews. In other words, apart from teams focusing on one topic, everyone was first allowed to volunteer observations about any topic.

In a latter workshop the teams that had been set up to work on the specific topics (e.g. coping) provided examples of how they had conducted the analysis and issues arising and gave an initial report on some of their key findings. This allowed the different teams to share ideas about how to conduct and write up analyses in general.

Report writing: Analysing the data

Some national teams already had the Nvivo software and were used to using it to search qualitative data. For those who did not have NVivo and/or were not used to using it, searching could



be done in the Excel file itself (using filters to look for, say 'parent' + 'mediation').

In particular, the issue of how to make cross cultural comparisons was discussed in the penultimate workshop.

- The number of references to risks varied across countries, but that could reflect differences in the interviewees and differences in the interests of the researchers, rather than representing national variation.
- Researchers tend to know more about the context of their own country and in one-to-one discussions with they can compare notes with researchers in another country: e.g. comparing the history of TV and the history of the internet in the UK and Romania (suspecting this led to differences in parenting styles). When compare just two countries it is thus easier to make an argument that cultural differences may exist – but it is more difficult to do it comparing 9 countries.
- One problem of referring to cultural differences is that there were sometimes vast differences within countries e.g. in Spain, Andalusia in the south is very different from the Basque country in the north.
- To put the qualitative material into context, we could cite any appropriate data from the short report classifying countries (e.g. about parental mediation) or, indeed, we could refer to any relevant statistics from the main quantitative (D4) report, from the early EU Kids Online I report on countries (e.g. education systems), and from the EU

Kids Online report on variation in the coverage of country newspapers.

Decisions

- The Coordinator had assembled some statistics about references to risks in the different countries but it was decided not use them in the report because they probably did not represent real country differences, being more a product of the research process.
- In the report authors could add some background information about own country (e.g. the school system) that if they thought that would help clarify why a national difference might exist.

Reflections: In practice, many authors found it difficult to make arguments about cultural differences. In some parts of the report it states that these will not be discussed, in other parts there are references to the reasons for some potential national variations. Few statistics were referred to in practice and in general there was no systematic cross-cultural analysis.

Report writing: Adjusting the report sections

There was overlap in the material summarised in some of the chapters and sub-chapters and so one final set of decisions, taken by the Czech coordinating team, was to choose which material would appear where in the report when there was some repetition.

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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- Michael Dreier is project manager at the Outpatient Clinic for Behavioural Addictions Mainz in Germany
- Dieter Carstensen, Save the Children Denmark, European NGO Alliance on Child Safety Online
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- Lelia Green, Professor of Communications at Edith Cowan University, Australia
- Natasha Jackson, Head of Content Policy at the GSM Association, UK
- Amanda Lenhart, senior research specialist at the Pew Internet & American Life Project, USA
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