

Three new reports now freely available

The EU Kids Online network has completed its first year

Three new reports from the EU Kids Online network have been completed - see below for a summary. Each can be freely downloaded from our [website](#).

We are delighted to welcome three new countries into our network - Ireland, Cyprus and Italy – making 21 countries in all.

Recent PowerPoint presentations and papers relating to the EU Kids Online network are also available on the [website](#).

To keep our work up to date, the details of more studies in the field of children and the internet have been added to our searchable online [repository](#), bringing this to a total of 295 projects identified and coded.

To support this work, we reissue our invitation to researchers, policy-makers and practitioners. If you know of any relevant research or research-related activities that impact on questions of children and young people's use, risk and safety online, please email P.Tsatsou@lse.ac.uk.

Report on Data Availability

The first of the reports now available on our [website](#) is:
Staksrud, E., Livingstone, S., and Haddon, L. (2007) *What Do We Know About Children's Use of Online Technologies? A Report on Data Availability and Research Gaps in Europe*.

The report examines the available research on children and the internet in the 18 countries originally participating in the EU Kids Online network. It provides a detailed analysis of the research identified in our online repository after 6 months (235 studies in all), in order to inform policy-makers, practitioners and academics working in the field of the nature of the evidence base, its availability and the key gaps.

The report has been produced in two versions:

- The short version, available in paper form (on request) and online, summarises all the findings, and includes 500 word national research overviews for each of the 18 countries (35 pages).
- The long version, available online only, provides a detailed account of all findings, with tables and figures (63 pages), plus an annex containing 2000 word national reports for each of the 18 countries (48 pages).

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The report aims to provide an account of:

- how much research exists regarding children and the internet, and its accessibility
- the nature of the evidence base, in terms of funding, methods, topics, risks, age of children and country studied
- the conclusions note the key features of the available research, the significant gaps in the evidence base, and the emerging issues and challenges for research.

Key research gaps are:

- Research on younger (primary school) children
- Research on platforms other than the fixed internet
- Research on peer-to-peer applications
- Research on children's perceptions of online risk
- Research on children's coping with risk, including media literacy
- Research on parents' coping with risk, including parental mediation and use of filtering or other safety tools
- Research on the effectiveness of parental mediation/use of safety tools
- Research on online risk to children in certain countries
- Research on certain types of risk (commercial risk, user-generated content, suicide or self harm sites).

Emerging issues and challenges are noted in brief below:

First, empirical research is highly time-sensitive -

- Research in this field becomes quickly out of date and findings must be regularly updated
- We greatly need multi-national research, so one country may learn from another, while recognising the specificities of diverse economic, cultural and social contexts
- Tracking studies are required to understand the long-term implications of online technologies
- The research agenda does not always suit the needs of the policy agenda, and it is more common to identify problems than to evaluate policy solutions.

Second, regarding the theories, methods and standards of research -

- We advocate multiple theoretical perspectives, so the various dimensions of children's internet use can be understood in relation to children's own perceptions, those of their parents, and the context of everyday internet use
- Although multidisciplinary, multimethod, contextual, and longitudinal research is particularly demanding, it remains sorely needed
Research is sometimes poorly reported, with key information missing, or it is difficult to gain access to – the quality, rigour and public accessibility of some research could be improved
- Nearly all research online activities and risks neglects children's lives offline (e.g. their social networks, their parenting, their attitudes to risk-taking or coping with psychological distress).

Last, we note that this is a sensitive and difficult field of research -

- The risk agenda is largely led by adult concerns and media-spread moral panics, and so focuses on pornography, stranger contact, violence etc.

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- It is insufficiently led by objective evidence of actual harm, whether criminal (e.g. incidence of sexual abuse or criminal abduction) or medical (e.g. incidence of youth suicide or self harm attempts)
- It is also insufficiently reflective of children and young people's own agenda of concerns (in which bullying, identity abuse, spam and race hate would figure much higher than pornography or even stranger danger)
- Research and policy often underestimates the ways in which it is inherent to childhood and especially adolescence to take risks, push boundaries and evade adult scrutiny.
- The pressing need for more research on younger children raises significant challenges regarding methodology and research ethics
- More discrimination is needed regarding the nature of children's online activities, including the ways in which they differentiate different kinds of pornographic or violent content or potentially harmful contact.

We conclude that research must follow use – tracking online activities for new populations, younger users, new risks, and so forth. Much depends on the researchers' grasp of children's experiences, including their approach to risk, for in many respects, children do not draw the line between risks and opportunities in the same way that adults do.

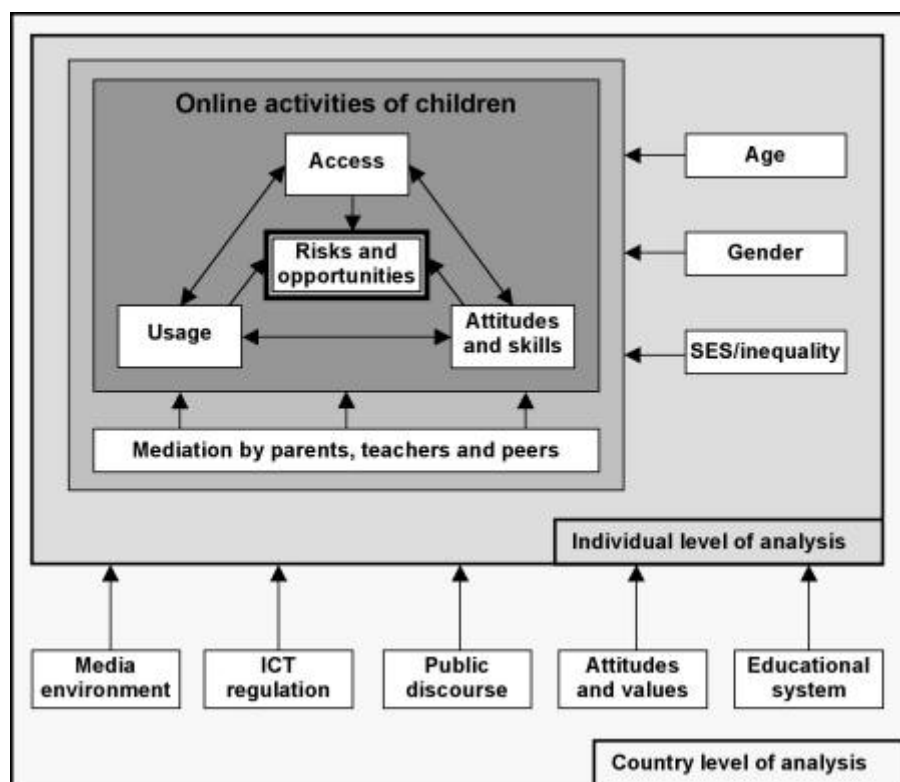
Report on the Three Country Comparison

The second of the reports now available on our [website](#) is:

Hasebrink, U., Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Kirwil, L., and Ponte, C. (2007) *Comparing Children's Online Activities and Risks across Europe: A Preliminary Report Comparing Findings for Poland, Portugal and UK*. (95 pages)

EU Kids Online is now comparing the actual findings the research identified above across 21 countries. However, first a comparative strategy was developed and tested on research from three countries - Poland, Portugal and the UK. This report will be of particular interest to readers in the three countries concerned. It also has a wider relevance for those interested in the issues and problems of cross-national analysis.

To focus the analysis of findings, the report constructs a model that links the key variables, on the basis of which a series of hypotheses could be derived and tested. See below:



These hypotheses concern pan-European similarities in findings as regards:

- child-related variables (i.e. effects of the child's age, gender and socio-economic status)
- internet-related variables (i.e. effects of internet access, usage, attitudes and skills, relation between risks and opportunities, and parents' internet related behaviour).

The report then considers factors that might account for cross-national differences in findings:

- the media environment in the different countries (i.e. the diffusion of the ICT infrastructure and further indicators of the media environment)
- ICT regulation in the different countries
- wider public discourses in the different countries
- attitudes and values in the different countries
- educational systems in the different countries.

It concludes with a discussion of the explanation for differences and similarities across countries, drawing out the implications, and lessons learned, for the comprehensive (21 country) cross-national comparison.

The report works with the following typology of online risks to children:

	Commercial	Aggressive	Sexual	Values
Content Child as recipient	Adverts, spam, sponsorship, personal info	Violent/ hateful content	Pornographic or unwelcome sexual content	Bias, racist, misleading info/ 'advice
Contact	Tracking/ harvesting	Being bullied,	Meeting strangers,	Self-harm,

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Child as participant	personal info	harassed or stalked	being groomed	unwelcome persuasion
Conduct Child as actor	Illegal downloading, hacking	Bullying or harassing another	Creating and uploading porn material	Providing misleading info/advice

Report reviewing Methodological Issues

The third of the reports now available on our [website](#) is:

Lobe, B., Livingstone, S., and Haddon, L. (2007) *Researching Children's Experiences Online across Countries: Issues and Problems in Methodology*. (64 pages)

This literature review is primarily intended for academics who wish to become familiar with the core methodological issues, lessons and debates that relate to researching children, researching the new online technologies, and conducting cross-national comparisons.

The first part reviews general approaches to research, dealing with questions of:

- what counts as research
- the plurality of approaches to research
- what is meant by methodology
- standards in empirical research
- mixed methods design
- the issues involved in analysing and reporting findings.

The second part considers how we research children, covering:

- whether to do research 'with' or 'on' children
- adults researching children, children as informants
- age, stage and development issues
- the reliability of children as informants
- ethical issues involved in researching children
- adapting extending existing methods of research when researching children.

The third part looks at how we research online technologies, considering:

- the new challenges involved in researching 'new' media
- understanding the changes taking place in new media
- extending familiar research methods to study online contexts
- specifically 'online' research methods
- the ethical issues entailed in online research on children.

The fourth part looks at cross-national comparisons, dealing with:

- why we should make comparisons across nations
- analytical challenges in comparative research
- practical challenges in cross-national research
- different approaches to cross-national research
- key decisions when conducting cross-national research
- methods of comparative data analysis

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- longitudinal analysis
- researching context in cross-national analysis.

The summary and conclusions provide an overview of:

- methodological challenges and debates
 - conceptualising children's relation to technology
 - researching the online environment
 - researching the European environment
 - looking ahead to producing a Best Practice Guide for doing research in this field (i.e. the next report planned by this working group, due in September 2008).
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Selected ongoing research

In addition to ongoing projects reported in the previous newsletter (available on our website) the Estonian participants in the project are currently researching 'Children and Young People in the Emerging Information and Consumer Society'. They will conduct a questionnaire survey in six Estonian schools this autumn, focussing on online media activities, including the use of dating websites, creative online activities and learning online.

Several EU Kids Online participants are working on PhDs and dissertations in this field:

- Andra Siibak from Estonia is doing a PhD on 'The Role of the New Media Environment in the Formation of Young People's Gender Identity'.
 - Cátia Candeias from Portugal is focusing on working class children who do not have access to the Internet at home, looking at how they use the access in public spaces and how they use the mobile phone for going online.
 - Elisabeth Staksrud from Norway is doing a PhD on children's use of new media in relation to different regulatory approaches towards content regulation (internet/ mobile/ computer games/ chat services).
 - Panayiota Tsatsou from the LSE is doing a PhD on digital divides in Greece, looking at culture and everyday settings of life, on the one hand, and at the role of decision-making, on the other.
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A quick overview of some of our other activities

In June, the UK team organised a seminar at the London School of Economics entitled *Critical evaluation of online risks for children*. It presented results from the EU Kids Online project, and also reported on a recent Dutch survey, a report of the use of ethnographic methods in Japan, a discussion on youth and online pornography, and a presentation on which risks are important for policy-makers.

One of the sub-projects of EU Kids Online planned for this October-November aims to examine media coverage of children and the internet in the participating countries. This will feed into our other projects: trying to understand how media coverage might influence some of the experiences in different countries and also have a bearing upon what is researched.

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For more information on these and other activities, contact details for each national team are available on our [website](#).

Please note

You received this alert because you have been in touch with us, because we know of your work, or because you have been recommended to us. If you are happy to receive these alerts, you need do nothing further. If you are not interested in news from this project, please email Panayiota Tsatsou (P.Tsatsou@lse.ac.uk) and we will remove you from the list.

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