

DIGITAL DIVIDENDS AND DIGITAL DISADVANTAGE:

The experiences and views of children with
disabilities in the digital environment



CENTRE FOR
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Human rights of children that are relevant to the digital environment





An International Children's Rights Priority

Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-21) and new Strategy (2022-2027)

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's next General Comment will be on Children's Rights in the Digital Environment

Learn about your rights in the digital environment

Council of Europe Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment

Presented for children and young people under the age of 18



www.coe.int/children

Building a Europe
for and with children



Recommendation
CM/Rec(2018)7 of the
Committee of
Ministers to Member
States on guidelines to
respect, protect and
fulfil the rights of the
child in the digital
environment.

New:

- *Child-friendly version*
- *Handbook for policy makers*

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

What's been missing?

Attention to the views of
children with disabilities

Outline

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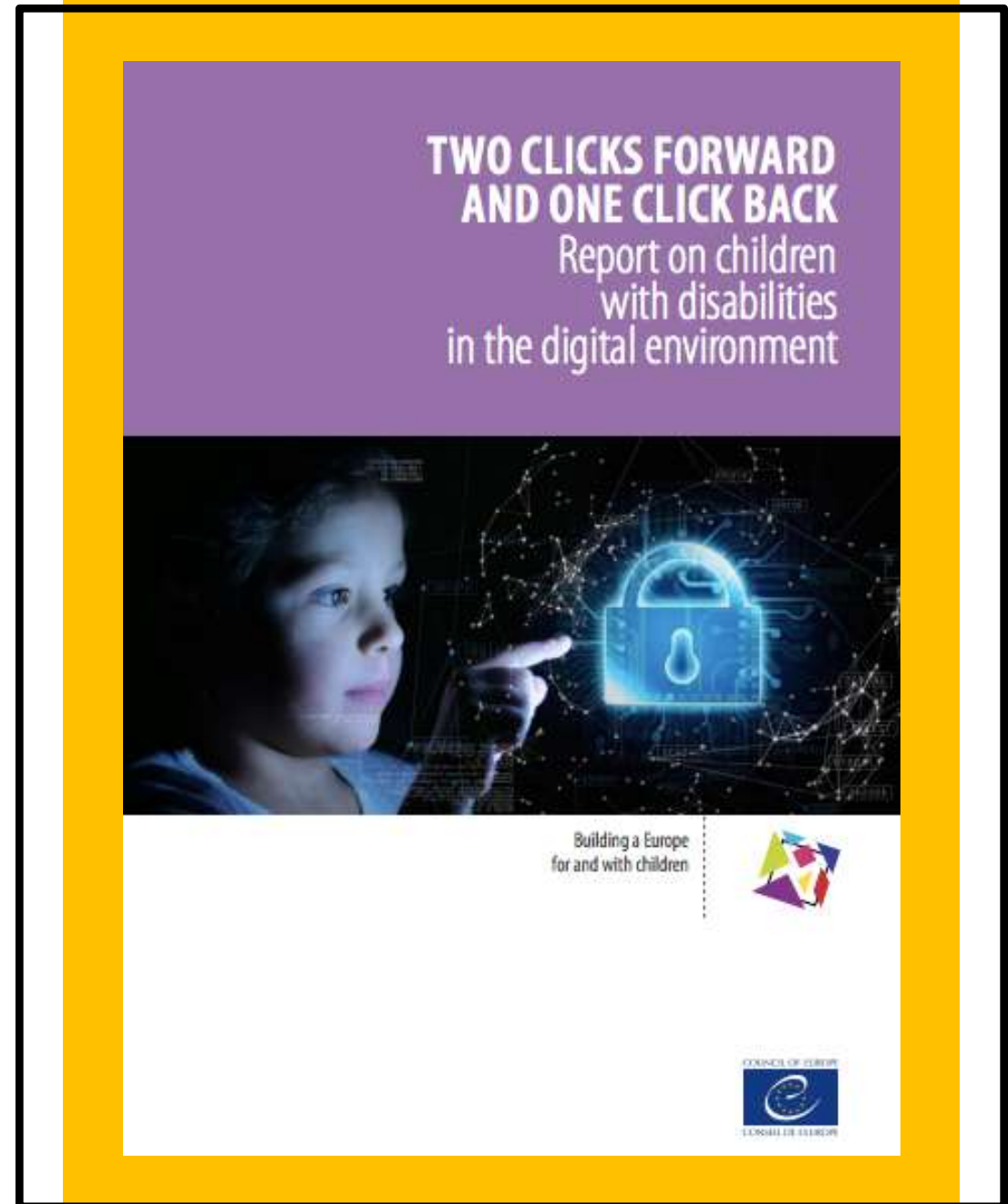
Children's views on what governments and others need to do

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Ensuring children are involved

1. The Study

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Our research partners

Ghent University: Geert Van Hove and Silke Daelman and The Children's Rights Knowledge Centre (KeKi vzw): Sara Lembrechts and Kathy Vlieghe.

Belgium



University of Rhein-Main: Rita Richter Nunes, Heidrun Schulze. The focus groups were conducted by Sviatlana Artsiukhova, Walter Christian Grötsch, and Andree Michel and Rita Richter Nunes.

Germany



Child Rights Information Centre: Viorica Cojocaru, Elia Cernolevschi and Smiljana Frick.

Moldova



University of Minho: Ana Paula Loução Martins, Natália Fernandes and António José Osório.

Portugal



University of Bilgi: Zeynep Kilic, Gozde Durmu.

Turkey



Children's Rights-Based Methodology

Lundy and McEvoy (2012)



Children's Research Advisory Groups

Eighteen disabled young people in total, age 13-17 (7 M, 11 F)

- Group 1: Children with intellectual impairments-(n=5 - 3M;2F)
- Group 2: Children with hearing impairments - (n=4 - 1M;3F)
- Group 3: Children with visual impairments - (n=3 - 2M;1F)
- Group 4: Children with physical impairments - (n=6 - 1M;5F)

The participants

TABLE 1 - The children and young people involved in the study

Country	Groups	No.	M	F	Age
UK Advisers	1 - Intellect	5	3	2	13-15
	2 - Hearing	4	1	3	13-17
	3 - Visual	3	2	1	14-15
	4 - Physical	6	1	5	15-16
TOTAL	5	18	7	11	13-16
Belgium	1 - Intellect	8	6	2	15-18
	2 - Physical	7	5	2	14-17
Germany	1 - Mixed	4	4	0	12-15
	2 - Intellect	5	3	2	13-14
Portugal	1 - Hearing	8	7	1	17-18
	2 - Intellect	7	2	5	12-19
	3 - Physical	1	1	0	xxxxx
	4 - Visual	5	5	0	11-14
Moldova	1 - Mixed	8	4	4	13-17
	2 - Mixed	10	6	4	13-17
	3 - Visual	6	1	5	13-15
Turkey	1 - Intellect	5	4	1	xxxxx
	2 - Intellect	5	2	3	13-17
OVERAL TOTAL	17	97	57	40	11-19



2. Children's Experiences

**“It’s exactly
the same
for me – no
different at
all.”**



Photo by Matt Artz on Unsplash

Diversity

Digital Access **(‘if there was a power cut, the world would end’)**

**Access to the digital environment is
resource dependent.**

**Access for those who speak English
is better than for those who
cannot.**

Digital Dividends

'(I can be myself when messaging. I am really, really funny.)'

'On the laptop I have a voice program. I also use this for work and school thing. I can speak over the headset and that writes for me. That's really cool.'

(physical impairment, Germany)

'Regarding the internet, these things, a few years ago it was worse, we can say so... Now there are many more things... There are books, music CDs...'

(visual impairment, Portugal)

'I use Google Maps, because this program is so helpful to find my way. I like the fact that it talks so I don't have trouble reading the screen.'

(intellectual impairment, Belgium)

Digital Disadvantage

(‘it’s so tiring’ (re: eye recognition))

‘Photographs [to enlarge school worksheets] take lots of storage and I then have to delete a hundred thousand million pictures and it’s really annoying.’

(girl, 15, visual impairment, UK)

‘In some games that require a high level of responsiveness, I have problems because of the spasticity which is also in my hands.’

(boy, physical impairment, Germany)

Dealing with danger (**'we are the safest kids on the planet'**)

**'Without my mother's permission I do not have access
to the internet.'**

(girl, 15, intellectual impairment, Moldova)

**'My parents protect me more compared with my
brother'**

(hearing impairment, Portugal)

**'It is the same ... the same to an adult woman, the
same to other adults, children, youths, ... they can't
free themselves from the dangers of the internet.'**

(boy, visual impairment, Portugal)

**'The PCs in the library don't have the programme installed... I have two options: I bring mine from home and put in in the library or I bring my mobile phone. Or, well, I stay there and watch the ships'
(Portugese saying meaning 'missing the opportunity')**

(boy, visual impairment, Portugal)

Digital Disruption
('Why won't they let us take it home?')

Decision-Making

'Teachers almost never ask our opinion, we have a perspective too you know, and perhaps it would be helpful if somebody really listened to us.'

(physical impairment, Belgium)

3. What do children with disabilities want?

Adults who know how to support them ("She freaks when it is Friday")

**'And the experts at school are not always the experts you know,
sometimes nobody knows how to solve certain problems with these
programmes...'**

(physical impairment, Belgium)

'It's important to have equipment in the school cafeteria like the one in McDonalds. Because when I go, it is hard to tell the employees what I want...!'

(hearing impairment, Portugal)

**Not to stand
out from their
peers
(‘I am odd
enough without
carrying an Ipad
everywhere’)**

Independence

'You know the light board they have that rolls by with your name. Well it's like red lights on a brown background and is sooo hard to see. If I was there by myself I wouldn't be able to see it myself and I'd be sitting there and miss my appointment...'

(girl, 15, visual impairment, UK)

Involvement
**(my most hated words are 'never
mind'. I do mind. I mind a lot)**

**'Establish a law: all the websites in the internet have to be adjusted for
visually impaired people. Whoever doesn't do this has to pay a penalty of
500 thousand Euros which could be for learning.'**

(visual impairment, Portugal)



**3. Involving children
with disabilities in
decision-making in
the digital
environment**

Article 7(3) of the UNCRC

States Parties shall ensure that children with disabilities have the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them, their views being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity, on an equal basis with other children, and to be provided with disability and age-appropriate assistance to realize that right.'

**“It’s not the gift of adults.
It’s the right of the child.”**

(Lundy 2007)

The Lundy model of child and youth participation

Space

HOW: Provide a safe and inclusive space for children to express their views

- Have children's views been actively sought?
- Was there a safe space in which children can express themselves freely?
- Have steps been taken to ensure that all children can take part?

Voice

HOW: Provide appropriate information and facilitate the expression of children's views

- Have children been given the information they need to form a view?
- Do children know that they do not have to take part?
- Have children been given a range of options as to how they might choose to express themselves?

Audience

HOW: Ensure that children's views are communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen

- Is there a process for communicating children's views?
- Do children know who their views are being communicated to?
- Does that person/body have the power to make decisions?

Influence

HOW: Ensure that children's views are taken seriously and acted upon, where appropriate

- Were the children's views considered by those with the power to effect change?
- Are there procedures in place that ensure that the children's views have been taken seriously?
- Have the children and young people been provided with feedback explaining the reasons for decisions taken?

Children's expertise in their own lives

Adults do not understand what it is like to be a child.

Adults with disabilities do not understand what it is like to be a child with a disability.

Children with physical disabilities do not understand what it is like to be a child with an intellectual impairment and vice versa

Girls with disabilities do not have the same experiences of boys with disabilities.

Dispelling some misunderstandings

S

1

'Best interests' does not equate to protection from harm.

2

It's in a child's best interest to enjoy all their rights including, for example, their right to seek, receive and impart information.

3

It's in a child's best interests (and their right) not to be discriminated against in the exercise of their other rights.

4

A child had an immediate right to be protected from harm but the response to a perceived danger should not be to deny them the enjoyment another right (e.g. to play) but to make the environment safe.

Conclusion

- **Children with disabilities have a right to be involved in the decisions that affect them.**
- **Only they know understand what it is like to be a child with their disability navigating the digital environment.**
- **If in doubt about how to involve them, start by asking them for advice.**