

# Pan European Youth Panel on Online Safety Safer Internet Forum 2010

*20<sup>th</sup> October Luxembourg  
Jean Monnet Building*

## REPORT



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## I. Introduction

Listening to young people's experiences has become more important for the Safer Internet Programme during the last years - this gives important input on awareness-raising strategies, tools and materials, as well as first-hand knowledge about how they use online technologies and their conception of risks and how to deal with them.

National youth panels are an important feature for the 30 countries which are currently members of the INSAFE network<sup>1</sup> as part of the awareness raising mandate of the Safer Internet Centres. The aim of these national panels is to ensure that young people's voices are heard and that their ideas and perspectives are taken into consideration when new awareness activities are being planned and policies made. By proactively consulting the key target group, the activities funded under the Safer Internet Programme can better meet the challenges of promoting safer and responsible use of online technologies and create policies and awareness messages that adequately meet their needs.

After Safer Internet Day 2008 and Safer Internet Forum 2009, this was the third time that the European Commission, with the support of INSAFE, could arrange a meeting of youth representatives at European level to discuss online safety.

## 2. Organisation of the Youth Panel

The event gathered 30 young people, aged 12 to 18, chosen by the national awareness centres and coming from 30 European countries (27 Member States, Iceland, Norway and Russia). Their parent or the accompanying adult who came to Luxembourg with them was involved in a parallel Parent's Panel meeting.

The aim of the Youth Panel meeting was to discuss issues related to the topic of Safer Internet Forum 2010 which this year focused on the results of two major research projects funded by the Safer Internet Programme: EUKidsOnline II, which surveyed children and parents in 25 European countries about internet use, and European Online Grooming Project, the first European research project that studies the characteristics and behaviour of sexual offenders who have used the internet to groom young people.

The young people were then able to voice their thoughts and opinion at the Safer Internet Forum that took place on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2010.

In the plenary session on the last day the video clip which was prepared by INSAFE with interviews to the youth panellist about privacy was broadcasted.

You can find it at <http://www.slideshare.net/SaferInternetForum/videos>

In order to 'break the ice' among the young people, an entertaining *ice-breaking* event, a treasure hunt, was organised by INSAFE co-ordinator on 19 October 2010 in the city of Luxembourg. This was an occasion for the young panellists to get to know each other.

During their staying in Luxembourg, the youngsters were divided into three groups guided by the following moderators: Philippa Green, Nadine Karbach and Kristina Alexanderson. INSAFE co-ordination team provided also valuable support to the group of young people and parents.

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1. For more information about INSAFE <http://www.saferinternet.org>

The themes discussed included Social Networks (eg. How do young people choose to sign up to a social networking site? Privacy versus Popularity, how social networking sites makes money), Online risks (Cyberbullying and Grooming), online games and parents' role (protection versus empowerment, raising awareness of parents etc).

The conclusions are outlined clearly in each of the Moderators' assessments of the meeting presented in the annexes.

### 3. Main Conclusions

Vis à vis of Social Networks:

- **PEERS**: The main factors in deciding what social networking site to use tend to be whether your friends are using them, ease of use and a free service.
- **PRIVACY**: It is difficult to say what privacy is, because many of the young people have different perceptions of privacy. They felt that the level of privacy you implement is an individual choice.
- **CREATIVITY**: Social networking sites are used creatively by young people but they often do not recognise their behaviour as being creative.

Vis à vis of Parents:

- **TRUST** - Teens would like to have/ keep trust from their parents that they use internet in a smart and responsible way.
- **COMMUNICATION** - Teens would like their parents being taught about internet and how to use it - what are the real risks - so that that they could communicate with them about the subject.
- **SUPPORT** - Teens feel they need that someone helps their parents as they have not the credit for teaching their own parent. It reverse the traditional link (in family hierarchy parents usually educate their kids not vice versa), not all families can deal certainly with this.
- **EDUCATION** - Teens feel that all internet troubles can be avoided by helping the users to become smart and internet literate users. Peer to peer education (teens to teens and parents to parents) seem to be the favourite model to achieve better internet literacy.

Vis à vis of Online Risks:

- **CYBERBULLYING**: the youngsters concluded that it isn't the same as bullying because online anyone could become a victim, but offline the victim of bullying usually were someone in the class. They thought that one of the major differences was the anonymous nature of the offender. Anyone could become a victim of cyber bullying. And the risk was that you didn't know who the offender of the bullying was.
- **GROOMING**: the youngsters wanted to know how the offenders explained their behaviour, why they do this. And the answer was that the offender usually blames the victim or the technology.
- **HOW TO HANDLE RISKS ONLINE**: The youngsters thought that education should play a major part. Parents are important, but not as important as teachers and the schools.

#### 4. ANNEX: Minutes from the 3 Youth Panel's groups

#### **4.1 Minutes from Group – Young people and Social Networks**

Moderator: Philippa Green, Childnet International



The group of teens for the youth panel on "Young people & Social networking sites" consisted of ten teens aged between thirteen and seventeen, four girls and six boys. They came from **Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, France, Greece, Latvia, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Sweden**. INSAFE supported the youth panel with a shadow moderator (Annick van de Velde) who kindly took notes of all the exercises and discussions. All teens from the youth panel attended the entire Safer Internet Forum and voiced their thoughts and opinions in all the panels on the topic "**Youngsters and social networking sites**" on 21<sup>st</sup> October as well as in the sessions about **mobile internet and reporting mechanism** on 22<sup>nd</sup> October.

## Young People and Social Networking Sites

The discussion began by establishing the different social networking sites that the young people are using. In order to answer this question the youth panel needed to define the term Social Networking Site (SNS).

In the discussion it was decided that in order for a site to be classified as a social networking site it does not necessarily need to focus on offering services such as communication tools and applications to share information. The youth panel noted how gaming networks, offering online multiplayer games and chat mechanisms are also perceived as being social networking devices. The collective definition that the young people decided we would use during this session was *"a site where you are part of a larger network, where users can contribute and generate content"*.

During the discussion it became clear that all panellists consider Facebook to be the prototype of a social network, it has become an important factor in the daily lives of all of the participants. Regional alternatives were also highlighted by the young people. The Spanish representative explains how Tuenti is a very popular site in Spanish speaking countries. She explains how it's not as easy to use as Facebook and serves more as a messenger service rather than focussing on applications and the sharing of files. In Latvia it was explained that Frype is a very popular regional SNS, in contrast with Tuenti the young person explains how Frype is seen as an easier version of Facebook. Other regional sites like Skyrock, Hi5, Hyves and IRC have previously been used by some of the panel members but they are no longer actively using these networks.

## How do young people choose to sign up to a social networking site?

Although regional SNS are being used by the youth panel, the most famous and frequently mentioned site is Facebook. During the discussion different participants talked about their motivation to create an account on Facebook. The majority of the participants use SNS to communicate with their friends and to share data, in most cases pictures and movies. Peer encouragement or the need to stay in contact with friends and family who live too far away are the most common triggers to actually create an account on Facebook. Its popularity can be attributed to different causes such as it's worldwide activity (Patricia - Spain), the user friendly lay-out and the possibility to stay in touch with friends and to share information (Ondrej - Slovakia) and, of course the fact that the service can be used for free.

## SNS as a business

Young people were asked to design their own SNS, the different groups had to think about the site as a profitable business but also as a site that will meet the user's needs. We had some interesting ideas and the groups were met with a number of challenges. All the 'ideal sites' came up with business schemes, the majority mirroring real SNS and using advertising as their primary form of income. One group suggested a secondary income in the form of charging for 'skins' in order to personalise your profiles, charging for more advanced games or partnerships with game producers.

However when faced with the issue of age limits all the groups found this a tricky subject to solve - even though all of the panel felt that current SNS should be doing more to enforce age limits. We had suggestions of using social security numbers, but this was criticised by our Slovakian representative as being a large risk if the site misused this content or was hacked. People may feel less inclined to use a service which held this type of information about its users. This activity really got the panel to think about the challenges these sites face with regards to balancing a business and protecting its users.

We discussed if advertising affected the panel when using these sites. In general advertising is perceived as annoying and can be very persistent. Although they are annoying, some participants argue that the trend of over-advertisement has lead to the situation where they barely even notice these messages, therefore they find them easy to ignore. All participants say they do not feel affected by advertisements and certainly don't feel the immediate urge to go clicking on the adverts.

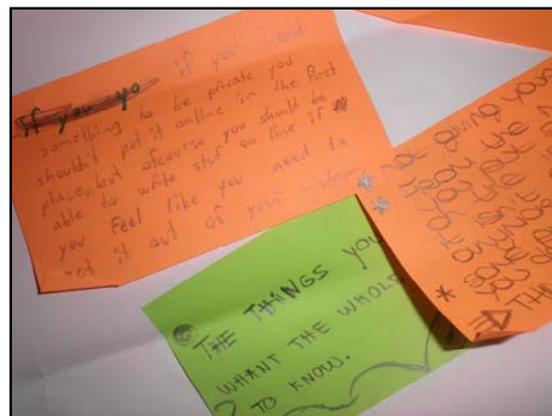
## Privacy Vs Web Popularity

The issue of privacy was discussed with the panellists, firstly they were asked: "What does privacy mean for you in the real world?" responses included:

- To have your own space
- Feelings
- Pin number
- Writing in your diary
- My personal life
- 

I then asked them "what is privacy online"

- Passwords
- For companies not to sell my information
- Not posting the things you wouldn't want the whole world to see
- There isn't privacy online



We then used the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Moral Compass to get young people to think about how online issues aren't always black and white. It got them thinking about their privacy and how in control they felt of their information and privacy when online. They were asked to place themselves on a scale describing how in control they felt, we had 4 young people who said they felt fully in control, 5 who found themselves middle of the scale and 2 who

felt that often their privacy was often out of their hands. Three of the participants have never changed the privacy settings of their SNS profile. The Swedish panellist was quite clear about his decision: *"things I put on there can be seen by everyone, but that's why I post it online in the first place, that's what these services are for"*. The other panellist said that they had made changes to their settings.

#### Case study:

The Belgium representative has set her privacy settings, however she goes onto mention that she has more than 1000 friends on her profile. She says that she has only accepted people that she has met in the real world.

Privacy was perceived very differently amongst the group some argued that popularity doesn't sacrifice privacy. But on the other hand some members of the panel felt that it is important to identify that there is a difference between "knowing someone" and "actually knowing someone". You could know someone exists, but that doesn't mean they are your friend and that you should accept and in turn allow them to see all of your personal details. These representative felt that you should only show this information to people you know well and see regularly, otherwise the fact your profile is private is meaningless.

The panellists all agreed that there should be education about online privacy in schools. A lot of users are unsure about what should be private; moreover they don't know the problems that can be caused by having an open profile.

#### Empowering and positive use of SNS

In order to establish the way young people have used SNS positively the panel then split into two groups and 'brain stormed' all the great things you can do on a SNS. The young people highlighted that SNS are fantastic for sharing content, whether video, photos or links; they also noted how it is a great way to find out about events in your local area and to promote yourself or your band. It is a way of sharing the types of things you like and dislike and means that you can feel involved in a group or community online. It was interesting to note that the panel said that they hadn't used SNS to support a cause or to fundraise, they didn't feel as though they are using the sites to be creative, it appeared that even though they are generating content they don't realise that this in itself is creative. A number of young people pointed out that they felt that schools could use SNS to heighten lessons. For example in Spain the representative explained how Tuenti is used by teachers to help during exam time, our Slovakian representative explained how SNS were used at his school by staff to share resources with pupils and they would then be graded on writing responses to one another and for critiquing each others work. The Belgium young person and I went on to explain how in our countries SNS are filtered and students and staff cannot have access during school time. The other panel members found this incredibly surprising.

### Main Conclusions from young person's panel

- The main factors in deciding what SNS to use tend to be **whether your friends are using them**, ease of use and a free service.
- **Advertising had little effect** on the Youth Panel - however some did point out that it could have a **subliminal effect** on them.
- It is difficult to say what privacy is, because many of the young people have **different perceptions of privacy**. They felt that **the level of privacy you implement is an individual choice**.
- **SNS are used creatively by young people but they often do not recognise their behaviour as being creative**. However the sites are not being used by the representatives to support a cause or to empower a community.

## **4.2 Minutes from Group - Parents & online technologies and online games**

Moderator: Nadine Karbach (media & communication student, University of Mainz)



The group of teens for the youth panel on "parents & online technologies" consisted of eleven teens aged between thirteen and sixteen, three girls and eight boys. They came from Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal and Slovenia. INSAFE supported the youth panel with a shadow moderator (Stephane Chaudron) who kindly took notes of all the exercises and discussions. All teens from the youth panel were attending the entire Safer Internet Forum and in particular shared their opinion in all the session on "parents & online technologies" as well as in the session about online-games.

With various methods we tackled the three topics of

1. Children's online activities and their parents' knowledge and perception about online opportunities and risks
2. How do parents balance between protection and empowerment?
3. Raising awareness of parents

## 1. Children's online activities and their parents' knowledge and perception about online opportunities and risks

The interactive exercise ("Trading cards") asked the teens to upgrade their individual set of statements (5 cards). In the end, everyone should have cards which truly reflect the teens own opinion by having not had less than three cards on the hand.

After finishing the exercise, the kids kept their cards, and we discussed some questions, I asked them. In general it showed that some teens had ten cards while others were happy with their three minimum cards.

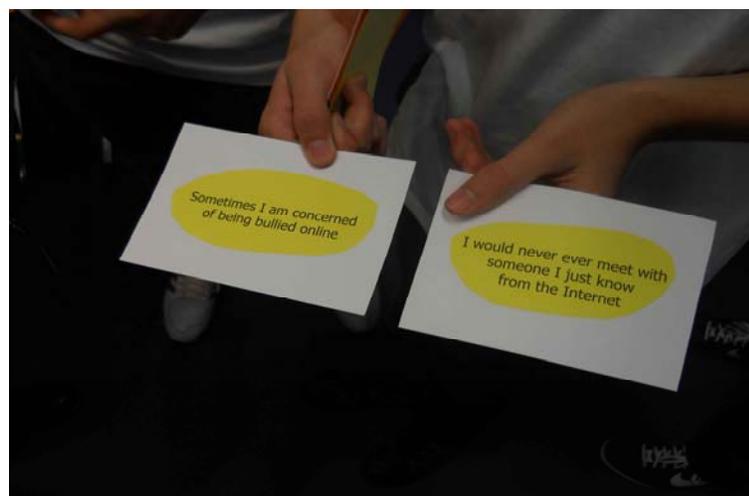
### Case study:

Talking about cyber-bullying, one teen reported that he has experienced being cyber-bullied once. He took copy of all conversations and made screen shots and reported it. Also another teen agreed on being cyber-bullied once, however, it was not a big issue to solve it alone and to do that quickly.

The teens reported that they were not surprised by the statements they received in the exercise. One teen said that the topics pretty much reflect what they do online.

Another teen said that he was quite surprised by the good amount of statements related to online-games, as he likes online-games very much and especially test browser-games very often with a good friend of him. At that point when they get bored, they switch to the next one and see how another one is working. By this they learn a lot about the online-games and what different games are available online.

One teen also reported that one of the statements was difficult to trade as nobody really wanted it; because **none of the teens could identify with it** ("I use my mobile to go online"). He does not use his mobile phone to go online, neither does he know one of his friends is doing so.



## 2. How do parents balance between protection and empowerment?

Our exercise asked the teens to position themselves along an imaginary line of which one end was defined as "agree/yes" and the other as "disagree/no". I read out statements about current parenting styles which I based on the latest European research results. After every statement I asked questions to some of the teens.

### Statement 1: "My parents are interested in what I am doing on the internet"

Reaction: All teens assembled in the "agree" section

- one teen felt that the parent are curious on what the teen does online and finds this behaviour intruding into the teens privacy
- Several other teens reported that their parents sending links to interesting stuff (hobby/sport related) or ppt.-presentations

### Statement 2: "My parents set specific times when I may use the internet"

Reaction: All teens except for one assembled in the "disagree" section

- one teen reported that she is allowed to be online for one hour per day which appeared to be due to recent incident
- others reported that they may use the internet without any time limit, yet they are obliged to finish homework before, feed the animal, help in the household
- Usage in the night is not allowed by any of the teens
- one teen said that in their household they have a laptop & wifi, so can use internet free

### Statement 3: "When you have a sister or a brother - are they treated differently by your parents than you are?"

Reaction: The majority of the teens assembled in the "disagree/no" section. Most of the teens indeed had a brother or a sister, so we could proceed with a couple of questions.

- Generally, the teens reported that there are no differences between the siblings and themselves
- one teen said that the brother has treated a little with priority when he has to study for exam

### Statement 4: "My parents check often what I am doing on the internet"

Reaction: the teens assembled mainly in the "disagree/no" section, few in the middle and few in the "agree/yes" section.

- one teen reported that the parents sometimes check pictures before uploading them online
- another teen said that the parents have trust and he would find it quiet disturbing when the parents would check his activities
- Parents checked the websites a teen visited two years ago. He did not feel comfortable with it. After they saw that the websites were ok, they stopped checking, a teen said

### Statement 5: "I argue with my parents about my internet use"

Reaction: The majority of the teens assembled in the "disagree/no" section.

- two teens stated that they argue with their parents about their internet use

- the majority of the teens don't argue with their parents, as they know that they first have to do their homework, for example

### 3. Raising awareness of parents

What do teens want their parents to do better in the dialogue with them about the internet? This question, we approached with our next exercise.

The teens noted down their ideas on three specific questions related to the awareness raising of parents. In three groups they examined the opinions of the other teens and presented them afterwards to the rest of the group.

**The first group presented the most stated opinions on this specific question: "I get angry when my parents do..."**

- spy on me (spy out facebook activities/putting stupid comments online)
- interrogating me (about private online life, for example)
- want me to do something despite what I think

Individual stated opinions were:

"I get angry when my parents clean the desktop of the computer (they hide my files and then they forget there they put them)"

"I get angry when my parents want to control what I am doing and when I am doing something"

"I get angry when my parents talk about something they don't understand"

"I get angry when my parents nag and want me to be upstairs with them, and not in the basement alone; It is better wi-fi in the basement"

"I get angry when my parents watch my chronicle (browser-history)"

**The second group presented the most stated opinions on the question:**

**"I would be sad when my parents would stop doing..."**

- talking to me
- let me learning/using (about) the internet
- letting me go somewhere (out)

Individual stated opinions were:

"I would be sad then me parents would stopping their job"

"I would be sad then my parents would stop doing letting me do something I love to do"

**The second group presented the most stated opinions on the question:**

**"I would prefer my parents to do..."**

- learn how to use the internet/understand the internet (what is it/ educate parents)
- being interested in what I do with it
- trust in me

Individual stated opinions were:

"I would prefer my parents to get wi-fi"

"I would prefer my parents to stop controlling so much"

"I would prefer my parents to let me do what I want"

## Risks & Benefits of the Internet - teens perspective in discussion

To examine teens perspective on current risks and benefits, the group was split in two and each group prepared their opinions for the upcoming discussion. The teens sat in two teams opposite to each other; the risk-team started the discussion, while the benefit-team ended it.

**Risk-Team:** the teens of the risk-group started with the enumeration of possible online risks. They named **cyber-bullying, money extortion** and the fact that one can meet **people who have cruel intentions**.

**Benefit-team:** the teens of the benefit-group argued that **it is safe to surf in safe social networks. When one follows the FAQ and the safety rules, everything will be ok.**

**Risk-Team:** one teen then asked how many people are actually paying attention to such rules. All they do is to tick the box that they accept the rules and the go on.

**Benefit-Team:** another teen said that one obviously needs to use **the brain and one owns common sense** to avoid any attacks on one's own privacy.

**Risk-Team:** the risk-team encountered that a **common sense might not help when people use a fake name** to commit a crime. That can happen even if the criminals IP-Address is known because they may use special software to decrypt it.

**Benefit-Team:** one teen said that one simply has to be smarter than the criminals then.

**Risk-Team:** A lot of people using internet however can be considered as weak users who are not smarter than criminals, the risk-team argued. **Internet uninformed users are a gateway for misuse.**

**Benefit-Team:** the teens of the team said that one person the entire world under the finger tip. However, more people are getting more and more educated about the possible dangers. Weak and uninformed users are getting less and less. **To be ok online everyone needs to use ones common sense and getting internet literate, and then everything should be fine.**

**Risk-Team:** one teen stated that in the beginning the internet was the realm of elite. Nowadays it spreads all over and reaches also the weak and uninformed users. Especially those **uninformed have to be educated to use the internet in a safe way.**

**Benefit-Team:** so, the internet is too blame for the fact that everyone needs to be educated to use it in a proper way, but maybe also the people simply use it in a wrong way, the benefit-team said.

**Risk-Team:** one teen came up with the opinion that the internet was created by people. So, when created by the people then the people can also take the responsibility what happens on the net. Additional, the team came up with the view that **the internet can magnify risks which already existed before the internet became popular.**

**Benefit-Team:** the benefit-team made their final argument by asking whether the technology of the internet is to blame in the end, or whether it may be the people who use the internet technology.

Afterwards, the members of the risk-team stated that it was extremely difficult to feel comfortable with the role and find arguments for the discussion, because **they see the internet mainly with its positive sides.**

### **Discussion**

Some points from the risk/benefit-discussion deserved some in depth reflection afterwards.

Our first question we approached was the subject of education about the internet and who the teens see in charge about it primarily.

In teens perspective it appears useful to have a kind of label for websites. In their view, the label should guaranty safe websites.

Primarily in charge the teens see teachers. They expect that teachers also teach about internet safety. In the teens opinion teachers need to be educated and trained for it.

We continued the discussion talking about whether the teens do you talk with their parents about risks online.

One teen said, that if he ever gets cyber-bullied, what is the matter of talking with the parents about it. Also with teachers it is doubtful to talk about it. The main reason to not talk to parents or teachers about it is that he sees no sense in it: what can they do about it?

The teens said that It is easier to tell about your troubles on internet with people who knows the tools and its risks. **Parents and teachers who are internet literate are easier to talk to.**

We also discussed the question who should train the parents and whether the teens do you themselves doing it or if they wish help from externals.

One teen said that it would be nice to educate their parents and that they think they could do it, yet some credibility from parent's side would be needed. In teens perspective, parents have their pride and may fear to admit that they don't know certain things about the internet. Yet, teens opinion is that **they really appreciate curiosity of parents and the openness to learn.**

Another opinion from one of the teens was that in order to use the internet safely one needs experience and that someone without experience will have difficulties in understanding how it works.

Many teens agreed on the idea that **parents should be educated by other parents.**

## Conclusions

Looking back on the day the teens reached the following conclusions which are summarized in the following key points:

- **TRUST** - Teens would like to have/ keep trust from their parents that they use internet in a smart and responsible way.
- **COMMUNICATION** - Teens would like their parents being taught about internet and how to use it - what are the real risks - so that that they could communicate with them about the subject.
- **SUPPORT** - Teens feel they need that someone helps their parents as they have not the credit for teaching their own parent. It reverse the traditional link (in family hierarchy parents usually educate their kids not vice versa), not all families can deal certainly with this.
- **EDUCATION** - Teens feel that all internet troubles can be avoided by helping the users to become smart and internet literate users. Peer to peer education (teens to teens and parents to parents) seem to be the favourite model to achieve better internet literacy.

## Annex: Exercise "Trading Cards" - Statements

11 kids - 5 cards each kid

Statements the kids agree on or do not, upgrading their set of cards through trading with the other peers [some statements were used twice]

List of statements:

- @ Sometimes I am concerned of being bullied online
- @ Most of the information on the Internet are true
- @ I would never ever meet with someone I just know from the Internet
- @ I am cool because I am online
- @ When I am not online, I am afraid of missing something
- @ I like to see what my friends are doing online
- @ Chatting is wasted time for me
- @ I like to stay up till late though the next day is a school day
- @ Cyberbullying is a topic which I discuss with my friends
- @ In chatrooms, I sometimes use a wrong user-name
  
- @ I like doing homework because I can use the internet for it
- @ Without internet something would be missing in my daily life
- @ Playing online-games is big fun
- @ I feel good when I have a high score in online-games
- @ I once made a comment online I was sorry about afterwards
- @ I like talking with my friends about online-games
- @ I don't like Online-Advertisement
- @ The internet help me to learn a lot of interesting stuff
- @ I like to go online with my mobile
- @ I use the internet to do my homework
  
- @ Learning for school is more fun since I use the internet for my homework
- @ Sometimes I am concerned about the privacy settings in my social network
- @ I like to show my pictures to my friends online
- @ In a chat-room, I already used the "report"-button
- @ I am the only one who knows all my online-passwords
- @ I never give away my online-passwords
- @ I am afraid that a stranger will contact me in a chatroom

### **4.3 Minutes from Group - Online risks – grooming and cyberbullying**

Moderator: Kristina Alexanderson



### **Risks Online**

We started the day by talking and brainstorming on the word "online", and the youngsters concluded with opinions that describe "online" in the following words:

- Internet
- fundamental
- freedom
- online guide
- mass media
- society
- communication
- connecting
- life
- entertainment
- banking
- information
- censorship
- invention
- convention
- anonymous
- networking
- work
- possibilities
- fraud
- being bullied
- friends
- social media

Overall the youngsters in this panel expressed a positive view of being online. When asked to come up with words that would describe "risk online", the following words came up:

- Friends with strangers
- Unsafe certificates
- Blackmailing
- Cyber Bullying
- Stealing money on the web
- Identity theft
- Viruses
- Violence
- Getting wrong information - Wikipedia
- Data mining
- Offenders
- hacking
- drugs
- pornography
- privacy
- publishing
- regret
- anonymous

During the discussions and from the report on EU Kids Online we can see that the youngsters know about risks in the three areas of **content** - pornography, **contact** - not meeting with strangers, **conduct** - publishing information that they would regret.

We talked about how they keep themselves safe online, and a general statement was that they make sure that the settings in, for example Social Media, make their information visible for friends only. They try to be aware of who they connect to online.

The youngsters in this group **separated their life online from their offline life**. These were two separate worlds and on the question of why, they frankly said that people are not the same online as offline. You don't know who is on the other end of the line, it could be anyone.

**The general statement was that there is a difference**. One of the girls said that in her country they didn't get any education about online risks and that made it difficult to see the two worlds as one, they knew the rules of the offline world, but felt more unsure about the online world.

It became clear, over the course of the day that **educational approaches vary significantly between the countries represented**. In Russia, for example, safer internet education has only been provided for the last three years or so, whereas in Iceland, they seem to have a very proactive approach with older youths touring the country to address younger children on online safety risks. In Holland there is a popular television programme for children aged 8-12 which gives tips on online safety.

Then we talked about:

### What is Cyber bullying?

In terms of defining what it is, the youngsters concluded that it isn't the same as bullying because online anyone could become a victim, but offline the victim of bullying usually were someone in the class. They thought that one of the major differences was the anonymous nature of the offender. Anyone could become a victim of cyber bullying. And the risk was that you didn't know who the offender of the bullying was.

Cyberbullying is more mental than physical. The perpetrator may not realise the seriousness of their actions. Cyberbullying is harder to trace - this may perpetuate the action? Definitions (or boundaries) of bullying may be different for every single person - some people may be more resilient. Bullying can be many to one (but not typically one to many)...young people may use fake accounts to make it look like there are more people involved in the bullying (hence impacting more on the victim).

And on the Internet the bullying didn't get physical.

#### Why does Cyber Bullying occur?

The general conclusion was that it occurred because of intolerance, because the offender can't tolerate differences. So the youngsters said that education about tolerance, when kids are very small, is important.

#### To what extent does Cyber Bullying occur? Do you know of cases of Cyber bullying?

All the youngsters knew about cases of bullying and could come up with examples. Some of them had been victims of offline bullying. And when we talked about to what extent cyber bullying occurs, the group left the definition of bullying being different from online. And all said that they thought it was the same.

#### What are the risks of becoming a victim of Cyber bullying and Online Grooming?

When we talked about who could become a victim, the group concluded risk factors are<sup>2</sup>:

- lonely
- bad awareness of themselves
- depressed
- the privacy settings (open identity on social networks)
- Parental problems

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<sup>2</sup> i.e. probably the same risks factors as for offline bullying. Victims in real life may be victims online too (the way people look etc).

### **Brainstorming (objectives)**

The brainstorming was about the risk factors for cyber-bullying - for example, what might make children and young people more vulnerable to being cyberbullied? What might their characteristics be? Again, these might apply to both the bully and the victim.

- Age? (The group felt the greatest risk age was between 12 and 16. Friendships go stronger with age - hence the risk of bullying decreases).
- Gender? (possibly more so girls than boys)
- Behaviour online/offline?
- The Youth culture?
- Social network?
- Family
- Knowledge
- Awareness
- Net-etiquette (or lack of it)

We talked about how to address these issues and the group said that they felt that some things are important:

- education
- the support of real-life friends
- parents and teachers being present online
- standards for how to behave online
- Education in tolerance
- regulations and someone that follows up that regulation
- dedicated support services (i.e. IM/chat service in Holland)

A lot of this time was given over to small group discussion - in groups of three or four, the young people shared their experiences of bullying (both online or offline, both experienced directly or through seeing friends as victims).

The youngsters spoke about different services that are popular in their respective countries that can contribute to the culture of bullying (i.e. Formspring), and about how young people put themselves 'up there' in the firing line to receive negative comments, so to speak.

The youngsters also shared their experiences of tackling issues. One youngster, for example, spoke about how his school had become a local hub for a reporting and support service for people who were experiencing issues online (Germany). Another spoke about the measures that the most popular SNS in his country (Hyves, Holland) has in place to support users - i.e. reporting functions, very granular user-specified viewing rights for all aspects of a profile, investigation of individual reports etc - but more education of users is needed, and the interface needs to be made simpler.

**The youngsters said that the parents are important, but they said that school is as important in helping kids to handle risks online.**

## What is Online Grooming?

On the topic of grooming the young people were not particularly familiar with the concept, had no experience of it, and didn't really feel it was a huge risk factor for them.

Half of the youngsters in the group had never heard of the word Grooming. In fact, what was apparent is that there is confusion over what might constitute grooming. When the phenomenon was described, **half of the group knew about action-taking to prevent online grooming**. Two or three kids had friends that had experience of being asked to send nude pictures of themselves.

One of the youngsters asked, for example, if it might be perceived as grooming if he was 'interested in an older girl online'. The conversation also touched upon issues such as sexting (i.e. consensually between teenagers).

It seems evident, that for young people, the boundaries are blurred, and there is confusion about what might be acceptable or unacceptable, legal or illegal.

In the parallel session of the Safer Internet Forum when discussing online grooming, the youngsters wanted to know how the offenders explained their behaviour, why they do this. And the answer was that the offender usually blames the victim or the technology.

We talked about Strategies, how to handle risks online. Other things mentioned included:

- Shock tactics
- Acknowledging achievements in this area
- 'Main players' need to take more responsibility (Facebook etc)
- 'Just block person and report content'.

The youngsters thought that education should play a major part. Parents are important, but not as important as teachers and the schools. That also came up as one of the issues on the Safer Internet Forum discussions, when one of the youngsters said:

"Educate us; tell us about real cases so we know what can happen. In life we learn by our mistakes, but if it goes wrong like in a grooming process, it goes very wrong, and to prevent that we need knowledge, so you have a major role in explaining and educating us. We can't know."

A summary of the discussion of this group is also available in the PPT presentation that Ms Alexanderson gave at the plenary session of the Forum on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2010: <http://www.slideshare.net/SaferInternetForum/online-risks-a-summary-kristina-alexanderson>