Net Children Go Mobile

Policy recommendations.

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Report

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Go Mobile

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Report D5.1

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Contents

1 Summary of Recommendations

1. Wider use of mobile devices has made young people's internet use a much more private experience with less direct parental supervision. **Therefore, parents, more than ever, need to communicate with children about their online experiences.**

2. Industry and other stakeholders can help to create safer and better internet experiences for young people **by ensuring that supports such as content classification, age-appropriate privacy settings, and easy and robust reporting mechanisms on mobile devices and services, are widely available.**

3. Parental control tools for smartphones and tablets can help parents create a safer online environment for their children, especially the youngest ones. In order to enhance their uptake and effectiveness, **parental controls need to be user-friendly and flexible in terms of settings and functionalities, and tailored to children's needs, so as to be perceived as helpful resources rather than invasive tools.**

4. **It is important to encourage children to seek support when dealing with unpleasant online experiences.** While many do talk to someone when they encounter a problem online, one in three children still do not ask for help.

5. Given that children are more comfortable with mobile and online communication, **the development of safety apps that promote an active dialogue between parents and children should be encouraged.**

6. **Parents need to be made more aware of the potential risks of underage social networking.** They should be encouraged to supervise their children's SNS use and to take into account the child's age and agency. Nearly a third of 9-10 years and 3 out of every 5 11-12 year olds has a social networking profile, despite age restrictions. Many do so with the permission of parents and without restrictions or constraints.

7. Schools and teachers have a vital role to play in engaging children in online safety. **By integrating mobile media use into learning activities, schools could promote more positive and safer uses of these devices.**

8. Many children still lack basic safety skills: 2 out of every 5 children do not know how to use a report button while 3 out of 5 children do not know how to block spam. Similarly, two thirds of younger children do not know how to block unwanted contacts. **It is crucial therefore that digital literacy be integrated into the primary school curriculum to ensure that all children receive training in safety skills.**

9. Bullying remains the risk that causes most harm. Adolescents now report more bullying through SNS and phone calls than face-to-face. Despite evidence that children are more aware of the dangers of online harassment, **more needs to be done to promote safer and more responsible uses of mobile communication**. This should include raising awareness of privacy issues, reporting and blocking features, location-tracking functions, as well as the risks of escalation of exchanges that can occur through online 'social drama' (Marwick & boyd, 2014). Schools, in particular, can play a more active role, given that most social media communication happens between peers and schoolmates.

10. Especially younger children are usually not fully aware of **commercial risks**: while they are sensitive to in-app purchases, they are less concerned about the misuse of personal data for customisation and marketing. **Operators, industry, and content providers should promote a 'user-centric' approach to mobile privacy and more transparent payment procedures (especially for in-app purchases).**

2 Introduction

The aim of the Net Children Go Mobile project is to provide robust findings of patterns of online use, access, risk and opportunity in relation to children's mobile access to the internet and to examine the implications for risks, online safety and – for the purposes of this report – the important policy issues which arise. The use of mobile connected devices by children and young people in Europe has undergone remarkable development in recent years with 45% of 9-16 year olds, and 65% of 15-16 year olds now using tablets or smartphones to access the internet on a daily basis (Mascheroni & Ólafsson, 2014). Internet safety guidance, therefore, has to take account not just this dramatic change since the EU Kids Online survey in 2011 (S. Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig, & Ólafsson, 2011) but that, for many young people, mobile technologies are the way they now experience the internet.

Approaches to internet safety have much of the last decade focused primarily on fixed internet access and the desktop personal computer in a home setting. Safety guidance promoted the importance of ensuring computers used by children should be located in a public area of the household so that parents could supervise their use. Parental control settings are also widely advocated, particularly for younger children, to restrict access to unsuitable content. Parents are also advised to monitor the amount of time children spent online and to engage in dialogue with their children about their online activities.

2.1 Internet safety in the mobile environment

Internet safety in the mobile environment offers both continuities and fundamental differences to its fixed access equivalent. The diverse strategies developed to create a safer online environment apply no matter what the mode of access: making websites safer through content controls,

providing better moderation or reporting facilities where abuse arises and empowering users to manage their safety online apply in all online contexts. Yet, the mobile environment creates new challenges for safety and for policy. Parental supervision has no longer been a matter of keeping a watchful eye on children's use of the family computer, since children were provided with a computer in their own bedroom. However, mobile connected devices offer an even more personalised and more private user experience, beyond the supervision of parents and adults. Parental control tools, which operate at either the device or the network level, need to be separately configured to ensure they operate effectively for mobile internet use. Services, familiar in a desktop environment, may have different functionality in a mobile version with less visible safety features. And, importantly, mobile devices provide new ways of sharing information, including location-based data, that may have implications for young people's safe internet use.

Policy attention to mobile safety has included the development of the European Framework for Safer Mobile Use by Younger Teenagers and Children (GSMA, 2007) in additional to national self-regulatory codes for mobile telecommunications operators (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2009) as well as specific initiatives focusing on tackling illegal content or contact in the mobile arena (GSMA, 2008) and privacy (GSMA, 2012).

2.2 Self-regulation and policy for safer mobile use

Policy for the mobile environment in Europe consists of a combination of self-regulation in the form of codes of practice and co-regulatory schemes operating both at the European and at the national level. The rapid expansion of the mobile sector with the issuing of 3G licences in the period 2000-3 onwards was accompanied by a generally light-touch regulatory regime focused on the development of electronic services with as little interference as possible from the state. The E-Commerce Directive (Council of the European Union, 2000) exempts operators and internet service providers from any liability regarding

illegal or harmful content they carried on their networks, if it is not knowingly carried and that providers act expeditiously to remove it from their networks, once duly notified by competent authorities. This approach, in keeping with similar common carrier provisions in the US Digital Millennium Copyright Act (1998) (Speta, 2001) protects operators from having to police their networks whilst freeing them to focus on innovation in a fast-moving technology environment.

More powerful portable connected devices and the convergence of image, voice, data and video services on 3G and 4G services has, however, led to a greater focus on content and its regulation on mobile networks. When first launched, concern was expressed that adult content and services would be a major driver of growth for 3G services, raising particular issues for child protection (Reid, 2005). The European Commission recommended an industry self-regulatory framework to address content risks such as the availability of adult pornography, interactive services, unsolicited messages, commercial transactions, gambling and peer-to-peer file sharing (Ahlert, Alexander, & Tambini, 2003). Strategies adopted for dealing with these areas include a combination of content rating, filtering and blocking, notice-and-takedown procedures, public awareness campaigns and cooperation with national regulatory and law enforcement agencies.

2.3 Content Policies

The *European Framework for Safer Mobile Use by Younger Teenagers and Children* (GSMA, 2007) is a code of conduct for mobile network operators and service providers developed at the European level and implemented nationally by signatories. It covers four substantive areas:
- Access Control Mechanisms
- Raising Awareness and Education
- Classification of Commercial Content
- Illegal Content on Mobile Community Products and on the Internet

Specific commitments within the Framework include an obligation to ensure that where a service contains content that may be unsuitable for minors, the provider must provide suitable tools or controls to restrict its access. This applies not only to a company's own-brand commercial content but also to third party commercial content. Mobile network operators also undertake to support appropriate classification of content for own and third-party content, using recognisable national schemes, where available, while supporting pan-European developments such as the PEGI labelling scheme for games and online content.

The Framework also underpins existing legal requirements on operators to cooperate with law enforcement in the removal of illegal child abuse material. The Framework also commits signatories to support education and awareness-raising efforts, empowering parents and young people to use the internet safely and responsibly, ensuring that resources are available to report safety concerns.

The Framework for Safer Mobile Use has been widely adopted with over 83 mobile network operators implementing the scheme across Europe[1]. National codes of conduct operate in 27 of the EU's member states. A review of its implementation shows a high degree of compliance with its main provisions, the exceptions being the lack of a provision for reviewing safety standards once these have been developed and an inconsistent approach to implementing means for customers to report safety concerns across platforms (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2009).

The Mobile Alliance against Child Sexual Abuse Content is the industry's primary platform counteracting the use of mobile networks for illegal content (GSMA, 2008). Developed by the GSMA in 2008, it comprises all major network operators and underlines sector-wide support for hotlines and law enforcement agencies whilst promoting standard procedures for notification and take down of offending material. In this way, mobile networks align with fixed internet networks in its treatment of illegal content. An

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[1] http://www.gsma.com/gsmaeurope/safer-mobile-use/european-framework/

update to the policy in 2014 outlined procedures to prevent mobile payments being used to monetise child sexual abuse content (Mobile Alliance Against Child Sexual Abuse Content, 2014).

Provisions to support greater safety in access to content are also contained in the ICT Coalition Principles, a self-regulatory alliance of telecommunications, content and service providers as well in the commitments adopted by the CEO Coalition, the grouping of 33 companies convened by the European Commission as part of its Strategy for a Better Internet for Children (CEO Coalition, 2012). Both groupings support the provision of access controls on services which may contain content unsuitable for minors with appropriate controls to limit its access, such as PIN-protected access and age verification techniques, where they apply. In addition, strong support has been vouched for the wider use of parental controls as a vital tool to help parents limit or restrict children's access to content. The work of both is ongoing though reviews to date show that while access controls are widely adopted, availability of parental controls in the mobile arena is more limited and use of content classification is inconsistent (O'Neill, 2014; European Commission, 2014).

2.4 Contact and conduct policies

While much attention has been given to content risks on mobile networks, contact risks through extensive use of social media are just as likely to cause concern. Contact risks may arise from the easy and pervasive access to instant messaging and other communication platforms that give rise to privacy risks whereby children reveal more personal information than intended as well as to risks of bullying and harassment by others.

Policy initiatives have attempted to tackle contact risks on a number of fronts. The Safer Social Networking Principles for the EU were developed in 2009 in response to the risks posed by the wide use of social media platforms by children and young people (European Commission, 2009). The Principles were supported by all major SNS

providers. A consensual approach was adopted towards age-appropriate services supported by tools and technologies such as reporting facilities and privacy settings that made services safer for young people.. Evaluation of the principles has found broad compliance and some improvements in accessibility, user-friendliness and privacy protection for users (Staksrud & Lobe, 2010; Donoso, 2011). While all of the features and commitments given by social networking providers apply to the mobile environment just as much as to desktop versions, implementation to date for mobile versions is less well established and has not been fully evaluated. Rapid changes in the development of mobile services have, as a result, meant that principles established for one eco-system need to keep pace with new technology developments.

GSMA's Mobile Privacy Initiative (GSMA, 2012) is one example of an approach designed to integrate general safety principles across diverse actors and areas of the value chain of the internet. Addressing the rapid convergence of services for internet-enabled devices, the initiative sets out privacy standards and outcomes to which all signatories should conform: manufacturers in the design of new devices, and service and connectivity providers in the way that information is processed, stored and shared. Given that the mobile environment is far from being a vertically integrated system and now involves very different actors, including apps developers, third-party content providers, users themselves who upload and share data, as well as the primary service and network operators, privacy has now become a major challenge for the industry. While 'privacy by design' is widely discussed and supported by civil society and by leading technology groups, the reality is that in a highly diversified environment with differing legal requirements across the globe, it may be an aspiration that is increasingly difficult to realise.

Two specific conduct risks have received particular attention and have been the focus of policy initiatives. Cyberbullying is one of the risks that impacts most severely on young people, the effects of which are seldom trivial (Görzig, 2011). While bullying and its effects on young people is a complex social issue that requires a multi-

pronged response (Anti-Bullying Working Group, 2013), industry has focused on user education and enhanced reporting tools. Mobile network companies have sought to innovate in this area with the development of reporting apps to include specific categories for bullying and harassment. The Protegeles app developed by the Spanish Safer Internet Centre in conjunction with major mobile providers is one such example.[2] Coface, the confederation of family organisations in the EU, has also developed an app (#DeleteCyberbullying App) which will be available on all platforms and is designed to raise awareness among young people about how to deal with cyberbullying as well to provide access to reporting tools.[3]

Another area of risk, reported by young people themselves to be of major concern, is that of harmful, though not illegal, user-generated content (Sonia Livingstone, Kirwil, Ponte, & Staksrud, 2013). Children report that gory and violent content, pornography, as well as content related to self-harm and anorexia/bulimia, is something that is pervasive, frequently disturbing and difficult to avoid. As such, content is frequently shared and uploaded by users themselves, facilitated by ubiquitous availability of camera phones and easy to access content-sharing platforms, harmful user-generated content poses a major challenge for the industry and for child safety specialists. Industry groups including the ICT Coalition and the CEO Coalition have given commitments to promote greater use of advisory or labelling systems, advising children and their parents where such content may be present. However, the fact that such content – whether on YouTube or other platforms - is, by definition, not moderated presents obvious difficulties. Community policing and self-regulation in the form greater use of 'trusted flaggers' and more effective reporting is the most commonly promoted solution but requires uptake by the community of users to be fully effective.

2.5 The project

The Net Children Go Mobile project is co-funded by the **Safer Internet Programme** to investigate through quantitative and qualitative methods how the changing conditions of internet access and use – namely, mobile internet and mobile-convergent media – bring greater, fewer or newer risks to children's online safety. Participating countries include **Denmark**, **Italy**, **Romania**, the **UK**, **Belgium**, **Ireland** and **Portugal**, the latter three joining the project on a self-funded basis.

Drawing on the experience of network members within the EU Kids Online network, the conceptual framework is operationalised in a *child-centred*, *critical*, *contextual* and *comparative* approach (Livingstone & Haddon 2009; Livingstone *et al.*, 2011), which understands children's online experiences as contextualised and shaped by three intersecting circles: 1) childhood, family life and peer cultures; 2) media systems and technological development; and 3) the European social and policy context.

Accordingly the project assumes that the voice and viewpoint of children is crucial to understanding online opportunities, risks and any harmful consequences of mobile-convergent media use. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data will contribute to enhancing knowledge on children's uses of mobile-convergent media by providing clear, representative and cross-nationally comparable quantitative data, combined with in-depth qualitative and comparative research on children's social awareness and perceptions of mobile media risks. Moreover, the qualitative fieldwork includes group interviews with parents, teachers and other youth workers, in order to compare children's and adults' perceptions and awareness of mobile internet risks, and to provide empirical data that can inform awareness-raising initiatives and guide safety policies.

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[2] See: http://www.protegeles.com/
[3] See for details: http://deletecyberbullying.eu/app/

2.6 This report

This report is the third of several reports to be produced by the project team during 2013-14. It presents the policy implications of the findings of a survey that involved 2,500 children aged 9-16 who are internet users and their parents in Denmark, Italy, Romania and the UK between May and July 2013; and in Ireland between November and December 2013. A revised version of the report "Net Children Go Mobile: risks and opportunities" including data from Belgium and Portugal, will be released in May 2014; a second report on policy recommendations will be released in October 2014.

3 Policy recommendations

3.1 What has changed since the EU Kids Online data collection (2010)

Several developments since the EU Kids Online 2010 data collection show that interventions are still needed in terms of awareness raising for cyberbullying, exposure to sexual materials and negative user-generated content. A comparison between EU Kids Online and Net Children Go Mobile (Livingstone, 2014) shows:

- There is a rise in the use of mobile devices to go online, accompanied by a slight increase in the percentage of children who encountered one or more online risks.
- Tablet and smartphone users are more likely to encounter one or more online risks, at all ages, which indicates the need for awareness raising around the use of mobile devices, as well as increased safety messages which build on children's own agency for keeping themselves safe online.
- There is a rise in cyberbullying, especially experienced by girls, although the proportion of those harmed out of those who have been bullied has not changed. There is also a slight rise in exposure to pornography, though rates of sexting are unchanged. Also, there is a rise in meetings with strangers offline (but not online) and a rise in exposure to negative user-generated content (but not data misuse)
- Self-reports of harmful experiences online have increased, especially among girls and teens. The increased reported harmful consequences might also be the outcome of the greater awareness of children regarding the dangers of online communication.
- Smartphone users have more safety skills but, overall, skills have declined. Smartphone users need new skills to manage the complexities of a convergent media environment, especially young girls.

3.2 Mobile internet use

Locations
- The home is still the most common location for internet use, although the locations from which children access the internet are diversifying through the diffusion of portable devices.
- **Two out of three children (61%) access the internet from their own bedroom on a daily basis (with smartphones being most often used in the privacy of children's own bedroom)**. The increased privatisation of children's internet use is marked also by the preference of smartphones as the devices most frequently used on a daily basis. These findings suggest the home is still a strategic site for raising awareness on online risks and promoting safer and responsible uses of the internet.
- **The quality of internet access (more locations, more private use) is directly connected with age and years of internet experience**, suggesting that teenagers benefit from better online experience in terms of flexibility, ubiquity, and privacy.
- **As a third most common location for accessing the internet, the school** still remains a priority for targeting online safety for children.
- **Accessing the internet on the move** is still limited although on the rise, probably because not all children are provided with internet plans and they are restricted to going online in public wifi areas only. This might be an indication of parental mediation, as well as different costs of 3/4G packages and varying availability of wifi hotspots throughout the five countries.

Devices
- Smartphones and mobile devices in general are personal, portable media which are thoroughly and seamlessly integrated in children's and their parents' everyday life. Consequently, **the increasingly privatised conditions of internet use on mobile devices are likely to inhibit or challenge established parental mediation strategies** such as active mediation of children's online experiences.

- **Access to specific devices is still also age dependent**, with teenagers having more access to smartphones than younger children, although the trend is very clearly towards decreasing the age of acquiring the first smartphone.
- **Ownership of devices** does not necessarily coincide with use, suggesting on one hand that children might have access to more devices than they actually possess, but also that usage is restricted. Two factors might contribute: mediation and shared use. Tablet computers tend to be shared among family members. Ownership of devices is also age and gender specific.
- **Internet connectivity (both by subscription internet plans and free wifi)** varies by age and country, with those who are able to access both benefitting more from "ubiquitous internetting".
- **Digital divides still exist**, with 41% of Romanian children having a mobile phone that does not connect to the internet, as opposed to only 7% of the Danish children. However, children's use and ownership of smartphones is not directly related to their socioeconomic background, indicating that the findings can be interpreted in terms of second level digital divides theories.
- **Age of first internet use is dropping**, being now 8 years old, compared to the EU Kids Online average of 9, reported in 2010. Children also get a mobile phone or a smartphone at ever younger ages (9 years old for a regular mobile and 12 years old for a smartphone).

Activities
- Communication, sharing and entertainment activities top the preferences for online activities of children, with 56% of them listening to music and 55% watching video clips **at least once a day** (other popular activities are **visiting their SNS profile – 54% - and using instant messaging – 43%).** These are the activities that have increased substantially since 2010, compared to the EU Kids Online data. **Using the internet for school work** is still one of the top activities, although it has declined slightly since 2010.
- Mobile-specific activities, such as downloading free apps or indicating their

location are only practised by a minority of children on a daily basis.
- **Smartphones users engage more in each of the activities measured**, with the greatest differences from non-smartphone users found in communication practices, entertainment activities but also in the use of the internet for schoolwork. **The "anywhere, anytime" connectivity of smartphones improves the range and quality of young people's internet experiences**, but the mobile-specific activities, such as indicating their location, are low even among smartphone users.
- **The use of tablets also shows differentiations in the activities taken up**, with communication and entertainment activities being more common among tablet users (compared to non-tablet users). However, the differences between users and non-users are less marked than in the case of smartphones (though more marked for younger tablet users compared to non-users).

3.3 Social Networking and media sharing platforms

- **Social networking, sharing and entertainment activities have increased** from 2010 to 2013 compared to the EU Kids Online 2010 data (average increase from 61% to 67%).
- Country differences are notable. Social networking has been growing in Denmark, Italy and Romania - it has passed **from 75% to 81% in Denmark, from 46% to 79% in Romania**, and **from 57% to 64% in Italy.** However, it has **decreased from 67% to 58% of children in the UK** and **from 59% to 54% for Irish children**. The differences are explained by **lower numbers of underage users in UK, Ireland and Italy**, countries where children are **'protected by restrictions'**. (Helsper et al., 2013)
- The rates for underage SNS use (for Facebook the limit being 13 years old) also vary, with higher percentages in Romania (50% for 9-10 years old and 80% for 11-12 years old) and

Denmark (41% for 9-10 years old and 81% for 11-12 years old). The lower rates of underage use for Ireland, Italy and UK show that awareness campaigns have been more successful here and parental rules about SNS use more effective.

- **Parental regulation of children's use of SNS should take into account children's age and agency**. Where parents do not allow the use of SNS for the older the child the greater the tendency to break parental regulations and acquire a SNS profile (the probability of a child whose parents' do not allow SNS getting a profile rises from less than 10% for a 9 year old to 40% for a 15 year old).

- Although the age requirement for most SNS and media sharing platforms is set to 13 years old, **28% of children 9-10** have at least one profile on a SNS, while 57% of children 11-12 have a SNS profile. **However, most of these children do it with the explicit permission and support of their parents, even when they do not meet age requirements.** 34% of 9-12 have a SNS with the parents' supervision, and 62% have a SNS with no restrictions and constraints imposed by parents. The majority of children 12-16 who have a SNS profile have the full permission of the parents (83%). In other words, if the child has the permission of his parents (with or without restrictions), there is a probability of between 70 and 100% that he/she has a SNS profile, regardless of age.

- As the social networking platform most popular among European children, **Facebook should continue their active role in promoting the safe use of their service** (including age-sensitive privacy settings, ease of use of report mechanism). One should note the recent change in 'private by default' for 13-17 year olds as opposed to 'friends of friends', but introducing options of public viewing from others, meaning anyone can view what teenagers post, if they so choose. Unfortunately, this does not work if a child registers as being over 18. However, as other SNS become popular (e.g. Snapchat, Ask.fm), also these other providers/services should take up responsibility for ensuring safe use of their platforms.

- For media sharing platforms, country

differences are even more striking, with **more than half Danish children having their own accounts on media sharing platforms**, and just 17% of Italian youth doing so.

Contacts and privacy on SNS

- **Young people are generally aware of what accepting friends requests on SNS entails**, with only 12% saying they accept all friends request, regardless if they know the person or not and 27% accepting requests from people they do not know only if they have common friends.

- **The number of contacts on SNS continues to be age dependent, but there are also country differences,** with 66% of Romanian children declaring more that they have more than 100 contacts. **Romanian children are the ones who tend to accept requests from contacts they do not know** the most (18%), followed by UK (14%). Coupled with a high number of underage users, this makes **Romania still in need for targeted awareness raising measures**.

- **By contrast, in Denmark,** although the number of underage users is high, these have fewer contacts (under 10), which can work as a preventive strategy in the countries with 'supported risky explorers' (Helsper et al., 2013). Finally, Italy, Ireland and UK, belonging to the group of 'protected by restrictions' countries, both numbers of underage users and contacts on SNS are low or average.

Privacy on SNS

- Although many children keep their profile private, **one third report having a public profile (boys more than girls).** Country differences are marked, with 57% of Romanian children saying they have a public profile, while around 70% of children in Denmark and Italy have a private or partially private profile. Just 19% of UK children report having a public profile.

- **The information that children display on their profiles is relevant**, in addition to the profile being set to private or public. **The use of an incorrect age by 'underage' children** (above 60%) is linked to the practice of circumventing SNS age requirements. This might place children at greater risk of

exposure to unwanted content and contact.

- **Many children still display sensitive information on their profiles**, such as their home address or phone numbers (16% and 14%), younger children doing so more than teenagers. This indicates **the need for increasing awareness about the problems of posting personal information, among younger users** in particular, and **especially in the context of recently changed FB privacy settings for young users**.

3.4 Digital literacy and school

Skills

- The average number of skills related to internet use differs by country, from being the highest in Denmark (7 skills out of 12) to 5.1 skills in Italy. Compared to the ranking of countries in the EU Kids Online data, Danish and UK children outrank Romanian, Italian and Irish ones. However, when measuring smartphone and tablet related skills, Italian and UK children score highest, with 8.3 and 7.9 out of 11 skills, while Romanian children reporting an average of 6.7 skills. The explanation could reside in the unequal ownership and use of mobile devices across different countries, but also in differences in the domestication of these devices (their integration into everyday life) and of 'mobile cultures' (the way mobile phones have been used)

- There are strong **age differences across all the skills** measured, but there are **also gender differences** (e.g.as regards changing filter preferences or comparing website for accuracy of information)

- Skills are also differentiated by the use of smartphones, with smartphone users claiming a more general, critical understanding, and more safety and communicative skills than non-users.

- **A large proportion of children state that they do not know how to use the report button** (40%), which indicates a need for prioritising once more the ease and user-friendliness of this reporting mechanism. Also noteworthy, **only 43% report that they know how to block spam mail** and

unwanted ads.

- **Young users still need to develop more safety skills,** as only 35% know how to block messages from someone they do not want to hear from. More attention should be given to these kinds of skills in elementary schools.

- Although not directly comparable, only **53% of all children report that they know how to find information on how to use the internet safely,** whereas 63% of smartphone and tablet users say they know how to find information on how to use smartphones safely. The difference might be explained by the **variation in the quality of internet experiences of smartphone and tablet users** compared to non-users (better access-> more online activities-> more skills).

- Communicative abilities are now part of children's taken-for-granted everyday use, with 56% knowing how to post a comment online and 63% knowing how to upload and share content on social media.

- When it comes to **smartphone-specific skills**, such as downloading apps or connecting to a wifi network, many children claim to have these skills, although gender and age differences persist.

- Among the least claimed skills, blocking pop-ups that promote apps, games and services you have to pay for (47% of children) suggest that **younger children and younger girls in particular are more vulnerable to privacy and commercial risks on mobile media**.

Self-confidence in internet and smartphone use

- Children's self-confidence in their own internet abilities is high, with 37% reporting they know a lot about the internet. Compared to the EU Kids Online 2010 data for the five countries, the number of children who claimed that they "know more about internet than my parents" is similar (38%).

- By comparison, a large majority of children claim **they know more about smartphones than their parents** (56% very true) and that they know a lot about smartphones (52%), which makes it more important for parents to catch up with their children's use in order to effectively mediate their use of mobile internet.

Provision of positive content for children in national languages

- **Children's satisfaction with provision of positive online content** in national languages varies by country, with **Irish and UK children being** unsurprisingly **the most satisfied**, given the accessibility of English content.

- In other countries, **children's satisfaction is** lower (**lowest in Italy**), but has also decreased considerably in the other countries, thus increasing the gap between children who can access a wider variety of content produced both locally and globally, and those who are more reliant on locally produced content.

School mediation

- Though internet use in schools is unevenly distributed across the 5 countries surveyed, we cannot underestimate **the importance of schools and teachers as places to engage children in online safety education**, more significantly in areas where parents are less likely to be internet and smartphone users themselves. Schools are also spaces where children can experience mediation by their peers.

- The connection between the use of **smartphones and tablets to go online and the overall use of internet for school work** indicates the potential for school-based promotion of mobile devices for education purposes.

- With regards to the internet's and mobile internet's relation to school and education, several themes are worth distinguishing, which, even though interconnected, differ from one another and require different approaches when addressed by policymakers. In this respect, we could differentiate between (1) **risks** - school and teachers addressing these issues through promoting safer internet uses among the children - and (2**) opportunities** - where one focus could be on **digital skills** that help the child to get involved in more creative and meaningful online activities and another focus could be on encouraging **the transversal use of the internet and mobile internet** across most

or even all school classes. In general we refer to all these as 'digital literacy' or even 'media literacy' - although the use of such umbrella concepts can lead to a focus on just one aspect to the detriment of others (Vos, 2013).

- The school has three main advantages as regards mediating children internet use: (1) it has the potential to reach the greatest number of children in promoting and learning e-safety; (2) it could mitigate the first level digital divide (i.e. through lack of access to the internet) where it exists; (3) it could complement the role of parents in mediating children's internet use, or even supplement it in countries where parental lack of digital skills impedes adequate parental support; (4) it fits in with the new role of the school in the knowledge society, aiming not only to provide knowledge, but empower children to search independently for information on the internet and assess the degree of trustworthiness and relevance of any information found there.

- One in three children uses the internet as a tool for searching for information, both for school-related activities and out of curiosity, with more older children and girls (less than one in two children) using it for this purpose. However, 29% of children said that their teachers never or almost never encourage students to use the internet for school. There is considerable country variation in this respect - with just one in five children from Italy and Ireland saying teachers asked them to use the internet for school on a daily basis, while four in ten British children report the same. Nevertheless, overall less than one in three children report that teachers want them to use the internet for school on a daily basis (and for the youngest children 9-10 years old, only one in ten). A question than arises: why are teachers so reluctant? Is it a lack of trust in the quality of online information on the teachers' part, or a lack of digital skills and knowledge, or a more conservative approach to education, or even a mistrust of the internet as a medium in general following some media panic campaigns that stress only the risks of the internet? Or a combination of the above? All these possible motivations

have been mentioned in the focus groups with teachers in the qualitative part of the research. These should be carefully addressed by policy makers through initiatives aimed at increasing awareness of the opportunities of the internet as an educational tool- in order to make teachers themselves able to discover the whole range of online opportunities. Meanwhile trust among teachers can be enhanced by emphasising online opportunities as well as risks, promoting a more accurate image of the balance between risks and benefits of the internet. Still, at this level, a general recommendation for teachers would be to encourage more children's use of the internet as a tool for searching for information for both educational and entertainment purposes.

- A *sine qua non* for taking advantage of the educational opportunities of the internet in school is the very availability of the technology. Because of Net Children Go Mobile focuses on the mobile internet, we asked specifically about the availability of and rules regarding the use of wifi in schools.

- Regarding the availability of a wifi connection in school, the greatest gap our study reveals is between countries, with 85% of children from Denmark saying that wifi is available in their school versus only 42% of Romanian children. Our data are in line with the European Schoolnet Report (2013) that placed Romania in the last position and Denmark on top in terms of 'infrastructure provision'. If, as we mentioned earlier, one is to consider **school as a place that offers equal opportunities for children in order to mitigate possible digital divides** among children, schools should be more evenly equipped. Romanian children seem also to be less savvy than children from other countries, one in four saying they do not even know if there is at wifi in their school.

- As the above mentioned European Schoolnet study (2013) showed, the technological infrastructure varies from primary to secondary school, the latter being better equipped. Consistent with this finding, 74% of 14-16 years old children said that wifi is

available in school, though not always to students, (compared to 66% of 11-12 and 13-14 years old children). For the youngest group the difference is greater (only 50% saying this is the case) but this could be explained also through the greater number of younger children who do not know if there wifi is available in their school (33% compared to 11% of 11-12 and 7% and 6% for older groups).

- Beyond infrastructure provision, the general attitude of the school towards opening the internet to children (measured in our study by the accessibility of wifi to students at schools) creates a great discrepancy between countries. Danish children are the most unrestricted (only 4% saying they are not allowed to use the wifi and 56% reporting they are allowed to use it without any restrictions) and children from Italy are the most restricted (59% are not allowed to use the wifi network of the school).

- For various reasons, the argument is still ongoing if schools should provide totally unrestricted access to the internet or rather allow conditional access. However, it is questionable that schools should entirely ban access, as is the case with 59% of Italian children, 45% of Romanian and Irish children, and 34% of British children. More research is needed to explain the reasons for these school policies, and design appropriate policy interventions.

- This is also true for the use of smartphones in school. Our survey showed that 57% of children are not allowed to use their smartphones in school, with great age and country differences. Thus, across countries the percentage of those who are not allowed to use their smartphone in school y decreases by age, from 76% in the youngest age group to 39% among 15-16 years old. Older children are more likely to be allowed to use their smartphone in school with some restrictions (from 12% of children aged 9-10 to 37% of the older teenagers). 23% of children aged 15-16 are also allowed to use their smartphone in school with no restrictions, against 12% of the youngest children. Country differences are even more pronounced, varying from 18% of

Danish children who are banned from using their devices in school to 87% of Irish children. Once again more research is needed and findings from our qualitative study will provide further explanation of cross-cultural differences that need to be taken into consideration. However, as we said before, the total ban of using a tool that could have educational possibilities is not the most productive approach. Which is the best option between allowing use without any restriction or with some restrictions is of course a matter of debate, and could require cultural-specific solutions.

- While there are great expectations regarding the possibilities that school could supplement the role of parents in providing digital literacy and e-safety advice where parents are in greater difficulty, in reality the results show instead that teachers' mediation is weaker than parental mediation (and sometimes weaker than peer mediation) in all the aspects we have measured. Thus, 70% of parents, 67% of peers but only 54% of teachers help children when something was difficult to do and 69% of parents, 36% of peers and 55% of teachers explained why some websites are good or bad. When talking about internet safety, teachers are also ahead of peers but lag behind parents: 56% suggested to children ways of using the internet safely (against 69% of parents and 31% of peers); and 41% of teachers talked to children about what they would do if something on the internet ever bothered them (against 60% of parents and 32% of peers). Instead, when we look at children's willingness to search for help when something has bothered them on the internet, teachers are the less likely to be the sources of support that children appeal to (22%), after parents (41%) and peers (32%). Promoting measures that **encourage teachers to step up into a more active role in mediating their pupils' online safety** could be the solution, in addition to promoting media and digital literacy for educational purposes. Conversely, further research should look into the question of why children manifest such reluctance to seek teachers' support when negative online experiences occur. This may help policy makers find ways to increase children's trust and/ or the teachers' ability to properly react in such cases.

3.5 Mediation

Parental mediation

- Although the growing importance of online and mediated communication for young people is nowadays associated with a growing influence of peer culture in children's socialisation (Pasquier, 2005), parents are no less important in their role of guiding children in their use of new media.
- The characteristics of mobile devices (e.g. increased privatisation, smaller screens) pose **more challenges for effective parental mediation**.
- Active mediation of internet use, such as talking to children about what they do online, is influenced by the age of the child, with parents doing considerably more active mediation of young children's internet use.
- Country variations are smaller, but still considerable: parents in the UK (72%) and Ireland (71%) are more likely to actively mediate their children's internet use than parents in Denmark (61%) and Romania (65%), while Italian parents (68%) are average.
- The two most engaging forms of active mediation of internet use on the part of parent, namely sharing online activities with the child and encouraging the child to explore and learn things on the internet on their own, are the less common activity among parents (with 37% and 42%).
- As a overall remark, parental mediation seems to be linked with children perceptions that the parents know a good deal about what they do on the internet, **with Ireland and the UK** recording the top scores for both indicators whereas Romania and Denmark scoring low.
- **For the three most popular mediation strategies** teenage girls' use is more mediated than boys'. It is not clear if this is because of the parents' perception of girls being more at risk than boys, or because of the more openness of girls toward communicating with parents. In any case, a

closer relationship between boys and parents that favours children communicating about their online activities should be encouraged.

- **Gender variations** in parental active mediation for safety internet use are considerable (83% of girls mentioned at least two forms of mediation and 76% of boys). Two possible complementary dangers should be noted: enforcing **an erroneous image of girls being more at risk than boys** and neglecting the fact that boys also need parental mediation. A balanced parental attitude is necessary.

- Just less than half of parents of 9-12 years old children explicitly forbid them from having a profile on a SNS (given that the majority of SNSs have age restriction for 13 years).

- The most common (57%) restrictive measure parents adopt applies to **disclosing personal information,** followed by purchasing apps (56%) and registering geographical location (54%). At the opposite end of the spectrum, watching video clips on the internet is the most unrestricted activity. Moreover, the technical limitation parents use less is "a service or contract that limits the time child spent online" (13%).

- As prior studies showed (Livingstone *et al.*, 2011), **technical mediation is the least favoured mediation strategy**, with only one in four parents controlling, electronically monitoring or blocking some websites. If for older children technical mediation is questionable for ethical and strategic reasons (as limiting children's agency, for younger children this could be a solution to protect children from the unwanted content.

- Linked rather to general online security than to the idea of safety, using **software to prevent viruses and spam** represents the most common form of technical mediation. Still, less than one in two parents adopt this kind of protection.

- When talking about overall technical mediation (at least two forms mentioned), **country differences are considerable**, with a gap of 37% between Ireland, the country with the most frequent technical mediation and Romania where this form of mediation is the less frequent. Taking into account that this gap cannot be explained only by a lack of

interest or awareness of Romanian parents (for other forms of mediation the difference is much smaller), this could be explained by a lack of knowledge about the existence of such tools, or by the prohibiting cost of purchasing the required software.

- **Just one in ten parents adopt two or more technical tools to restrict their children's use of smartphones**, with small age differences (7% from the most to the less mediated age group), and with boys being more mediated than girls. Again, increasing the knowledge of parents about the existence of technical tools/ software possibly through default information provided by the service provider or retailer, could be considered.

Parental and peer mediation: a comparison

- The most common form of mediation, for both parents and peers, is **helping the child when something is difficult to do or find** on the internet.

- However, with the **transition from childhood to adolescence**, **there is a shift from parents towards peers.** There is a decrease with almost 20% in parents' support in terms of "Helping when something is difficult to do or find on the internet", moving from the younger to the older children. Meanwhile there is an increase of almost the same per cent in the digital support that adolescents find from their peers (more in the girls' cases than in boys'). Alongside the growing influence of the peer group in adolescence, this could also be explained by a limitation of parents' digital skills as regards more advance levels of use. Subject to further investigation to explain why this shift happens, one solution could be increasing parental digital skills.

- Talking about negative experiences, if younger children tend to appeal more to parents (boys 42%, girls 47%) than to peers (boys 23%, girls 26%), during adolescence parents and peers are equally mentioned as being supportive in such cases, with boys turning equally toward parents and peers (32%) and girls turning slightly more toward peers more than parents (46% vs. 43%). Beyond a natural increase in the influence of

the peers for adolescents, this finding might also suggest a weakness of parental support for older children in a situation perceived to be harmful by the child. In this case, **increased support for parents** (maybe from specialists that help them understand how to react and support the adolescent in online harmful situations) is required.

- Country variations in peer and parental mediation suggest that **peer support may compensate for lower parental engagement**. Thus, children are more likely to say that their friends engage in two or more forms of mediation of internet safety in **Romania** (68%) and **Denmark** (57%), countries where children are less likely to receive mediation from parents. Conversely, in Ireland, Italy and the UK, less than half the children report that their friends support them in at least two ways. (e.g. parents encouraging children to support their friends online, help each other when needed, intervene and ask for help on behalf of their friends when something bad happens.

3.6 Risks

Overall experiences of risk and harm

- The EU Kids Online project (2009-2011) showed that online risky experiences do not necessarily result in harm (Livingstone *et al.*, 2011). Rather, as children encounter more risks, they develop skills and build resilience. On the contrary, harm occurs among children who are exposed to fewer opportunities and fewer risks: they are the ones who feel more bothered when they have negative experiences online (*ibidem).*
- The Net Children Go Mobile project relied largely on the measurements developed in the EU Kids Online project, refining some questionnaire items after cognitive testing.
- **Overall experiences of harm seem to be on the rise since 2010 for four of the countries** involved: there is a rise to 39% from 28% for Denmark; 27% compared to 21% for Romania, 15% compared to 13% for the UK and 20% compared to 11% for Ireland. Only Italy remains at the same level in overall reporting of harm with 6%. The low figures for

the UK and Italy can be explained by the 'protected by restrictions' parental mediation model. Therefore we can still advocate the need to intensify policy measures directed at making the internet a safe and pleasant experience for children across Europe.

- **Smartphone users** report higher levels of harm (28%) than tablet users (25%) and children who use neither of these devices (15%).
- **Age and gender still matter for the overall experiences of harm,** with younger children and girls being more likely to have been bothered by something online.
- In addition, for all risks we inquired about, **children in Romania and Denmark report higher levels of harm**. Other country differences are notable, with tablet users in Romania and UK being more bothered than other children, smartphone users being more bothered in Ireland, and with smartphone and tablet users reporting similar levels of harm in Italy.
- The connection between use of mobile devices and children experiencing risk and being bothered reinforced the 'usage hypothesis', with more usage leading both to more opportunities and more risky experiences.

Cyberbullying

- **Cyberbullying that is perceived as harmful is mostly reported in Denmark and Romania**. Children in these two countries continue to report higher figures compared to the UK, Ireland and Italy (similarly to what was registered in 2010).
- There seem to be less age differences in terms of children's perceptions of the bullying experiences as being harmful. **Nonetheless, younger children report more face to face bullying and bullying through gaming websites, while adolescents report more bullying through SNS and phone calls**.
- **Smartphone and tablet users report more cyberbullying** than children who do not use mobile devices.
- **Being bullied and bullying others are not separate phenomena on the internet.** 51% of children who admit to having treated others in a hurtful or nasty way on the internet

or by using mobile phones have themselves been treated in a hurtful or nasty way by others.

Receiving sexual messages
- Receiving sexual messages that are perceived as harmful is more common among girls (although the general likelihood of receiving sexual messages is not differentiated by gender. Age differences are significant).
- Receiving sexually suggestive messages occurs mostly on SNS or via SMS/MMS and instant messaging, with smartphone and tablet users being more likely to receive them by SNS. Smartphone users are also more likely to receive such messages via text messages on their phones.
- Danish (22%) and Romanian (21%) children reported the highest levels of receiving sexual messages, whereas Ireland (11%), Italy and the UK (5%) report lower figures. Compared to the EU Kids Online 2010 data, sexting had increased in Denmark, has remained almost stable in Romania, Ireland and Italy and has decreased substantially in the UK. However, the number of children who have been bothered by the experience has increased in all countries except the UK.
- Policy initiatives are needed in countries where children are more likely to be bothered by sexual messages. Even in countries where the incidence of both risk and harm is lower, it is of vital importance to address the minority of children who are more vulnerable to the harmful consequences of sexting.

Meeting new people
- One in three children have been in contact online with someone they have not met face to face, the numbers being higher for Denmark and Romania.
- 12% of children have met such online contacts offline, and 3% have been bothered by the experience (girls more than boys).
- Smartphone users are more likely to get in touch with people they will later meet face to face via SNS , text messages and phone calls.
- Country variations are noted also for offline meetings, with Denmark and Romania reporting the highest numbers. For bothersome meetings, Romanian children are

more likely to report these, while only 5% of Danish children who took part in the survey report being bothered. Although the overall figure for offline meetings is low in I Ireland, half of them were a 'little upset'. Few Italian children were upset and none of the UK ones were bothered.
- Even in countries where meeting online contacts offline is less common, awareness-raising initiatives and safety programmes that promote a responsible management of online contacts are still needed.

Sexual images
- Exposure to sexual images differs by age and gender (more prevalent among boys and older children), although **younger children and girls are more upset from seeing such material online**.
- More children report having seen sexual images in Denmark (52%) and Romania (31%). Although prevalence of exposure is highest in Denmark, Danish children are the least upset, whereas children in the UK report the most being bothered.
- Smartphone users report that they have seen more online and offline sexual content.

Other inappropriate content and risks
- Negative user-generated content (NUGC), although common among children, has received less policy attention than sexting, cyberbullying or meeting strangers.
- Exposure to NUGC has increased from 24% in 2010 to 31% of children in our project, with hate and discriminatory messages and anorexic or bulimic content being the most frequently encountered.
- Other risks, such as misuse of private information online or getting viruses are also age-dependent, with older teenagers being exposed more to these risks.

Responding to risks
- When dealing with unpleasant experiences online, children resort to communicative responses, such as talking to parents and peers about what happened, and they are less likely to turn to teachers or others working with youth.
- Age differences are pronounced, with older

children relying less on parental support and more on peer support.

- Although peer and parental support is valued, one in three children still do not ask for it; therefore encouraging children to seek support when needed should be a priority in all countries.

4 Country-specific highlights and recommendations

4.1 Denmark

- Danish children are the ones most likely to use the internet on a daily basis at home and in other places. They are also the ones who benefit most from internet access in the school context (61% daily access from schools).

- Danish children show a slight preference for using smartphones over laptops for their daily internet use. They are **more likely (84%) to be smartphone owners** than children in Italy (45%) and Romania (26%).They are also **more likely to use a smartphone even if they do not own one**, pointing towards a greater availability of devices in Denmark.

- The average age when Danish children go online is 7 years old (lower than the average); .Even young children are allowed to go online.

- Despite being more likely to use the internet from a variety of places and devices, and despite being more skilled than peers in other countries, **Danish children report higher exposure to perceived harmful online experiences** compared to 2010. More specifically, girls are vulnerable to sexual risks. This finding suggests that awareness raising initiatives as well as forms of self- or co-regulation are still needed.

4.2 Ireland

- **Smartphones stand out as the most used device for internet access on a daily basis by Irish 9-16 year olds** in all contexts. Smartphones (35%) followed by laptops (29%) and tablets (27%) are the devices most used most to go online.

- Most internet use is, in fact still at home. 63% of children report using the internet several times a day or at least once a day at home.

Just under half or 46% of Irish children access the internet from their own bedroom on a daily basis, with 22% saying they do so several times per day

- **Greater integration of ICTs and use of the internet in schools is a policy priority in Ireland.** Irish children are the ones **less likely to access the internet on the move** (8%, similar to the Romanian ones) and less likely to access the internet at school (only 7% using it from school on a daily basis).

- Three quarters of young people rely exclusively on free wifi access to go online using their smartphone. This also is an area for policy attention and reinforcement of safety messages given that most internet use occurs beyond parental supervision.

- **A policy emphasis on 'doing more with digital' remains an important priority in Ireland. Young people's internet activities are predominantly confined to entertainment uses** (listening to music and watching video clips online) and **social networking,** especially for teenagers.. Notably, just under 40% of 11-12 year olds also have a social networking profile despite age restrictions underlining the importance of attention to the issue of underage use.

- **Cyberbullying is the area of conduct risk that requires most attention: 22% of children have experienced any form of bullying on- or offline.** 13% of 13-14 year olds say that they have been bullied on a social networking site. Girls are more likely to experience bullying than boys (26% for girls compared to 17% of boys). 20% of girls compared to 11% of boys say they were upset by what happened.

- **One of the most risks that young people encounter is seeing potentially harmful user-generated content.** 35% of girls aged 13-16 have encountered some form of harmful content such as hate messages (15%), anorexic or bulimic content (14%), self-harm sites (9%); sites discussing suicide 8% and sites where people share their experiences with drugs (7%).

- **Overall, 1 in 5 children in Ireland (20%) say that they have been bothered by something on the internet in the past year**, a doubling of the figure reported by EU Kids

Online in 2011. A quarter of 13-14 year olds and 37% of older 15-16 year say they have experienced something that bothered them or wished they hadn't seen. Young people need to be supported against such content risks with specific advice about how to report and block offending content.

4.3 Italy

- Along with British children, Italian children are **more likely to access the internet on the move** than their Danish and Romanian peers.
- Notably, they are among the **less likely to use the internet at school** (73% less than once a week or not at all) in all the countries surveyed. It is therefore important to increase the children's internet use for school activities while supporting online safety in the school. It is crucial to promote the use of the internet in schools as the school is the place where all children - independently from the family's socio-economic background or parents' use of the internet - can learn positive online activities and responsible behaviour. Perhaps a different policy on smartphone use in schools, and its integration in school activities, could help.
- Italian children are more likely to use laptops than smartphones daily and are **more likely to use both wifi and mobile internet plans** (51%) than children in other countries.
- Data regarding the use of social network sites are encouraging as far as underage users in Italy are considered. Whether this is the outcome of awareness raising campaigns targeting parents, or of media panics is not clear at this stage.
- **Italian children feel much more comfortable in using smartphones than their parents**. Therefore, **smartphone-specific awareness raising campaigns** should be addressed to parents, teachers as much as children themselves. Indeed, if adults make the common assumption that children are more skilled at using smartphones, the side effect is that they may well believe that children dp not need ny form of mediation aimed at raising awareness of mobile-specific risks, as well as online risks in general.

4.4 Romania

- Romanian children are the ones **most likely to access the internet daily in the privacy of their bedroom than anywhere else at home (60% compared to 40%)**. Therefore, policy should pay attention to this 'bedroom culture' and direct measures at increasing responsible and safe internet use of children, whereas promoting active parental mediation
- Along with Irish children, Romanian children are least likely to use the internet on the move; **they are also among the children to benefit less (11% daily use at school) from internet integration into school activities** (together with the Italian children).
- They are also more likely to use laptops daily (mostly because mobile devices are not yet integrated into their lives, compared to other European children)
- It is highly important to prioritise awareness raising related to the safe use of SNS and media sharing platform, particularly among underage users and their parents
- Romanian children and parents are still lagging behind when it comes to their digital competencies; therefore policy should be directed towards programmes of digital literacy.
- Smartphones and mobile devices might increase the digital generation gap; parents need to catch up with their children's use in order to effectively mediate their children's use of mobile devices

4.5 United Kingdom

- Together with Italian children, children in the UK are **more likely to access the internet on the move**.
- Children in the UK are more likely to use smartphones more than laptops daily.
- In terms of connectivity, UK children are the most likely to have a phone that does connect to the internet through both wifi and subscription plan (41%).
- UK children are also more likely (58%) to be smartphone owners than children in Italy (45%) and Romania (26%).

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