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UK COUNCIL FOR CHILD INTERNET SAFETY

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Towards a better internet for children: Findings and recommendations from EU Kids Online to inform the CEO coalition

Aims

The EU Kids Online provides a rigorous evidence base to support stakeholders in their efforts to maximise online opportunities while minimising the risk of harm associated with internet use. This report presents new findings and analysis of the EU Kids Online 25 country survey, plus previously published findings relevant to EC Vice President Kroes' CEO Coalition initiative to make the internet a better place for children.

Key Findings

The survey shows that, of nine different kinds of parental worries about their child, online risks – being contacted by strangers (33% parents) or seeing inappropriate content (32% parents) - rank 5th and 6th. The evidence informs recommendations regarding industry initiatives for four of the CEO Coalition's aims designed to make the internet safer for children and so to allay parental concerns.

Simple and robust reporting tools

- 13% of children who were upset by an online risk say they have used reporting tools, and two thirds of those who used them found them helpful.
- Country differences are considerable: 35% of children who were bothered by an online risk have used reporting tools in Turkey, but just 2% of such children in Hungary.
- Children are more likely to use reporting tools when upset online if they come from a poorer home, if they are a girl, if they experience psychological difficulties, or if they are more active online.
- This suggests the tools meet a need and should be promoted more widely. Limited ease of use and effectiveness are likely to impede take-up.

Age-appropriate privacy settings

- 43% of 9-16 year old SNS users keep their profile private, 28% have it partially private and 26% have it public. Children who have their profile set to public are also more likely to display their phone number or address on their SNS profile.
- More efforts are needed to promote the use of privacy settings and make them user-friendly.
- Children are more likely to have a public profile if they cannot understand or manage the privacy settings, if they are a boy, if their parents have banned their SNS use, or if they experience psychological difficulties.

Wider use of content classification

- 14% of 9-16 year olds have seen sexual images on websites. This included 8% of 11-16 year olds who saw images of people having sex and/or genitals, and 2% who saw violent sexual images. 32% of all 9-

16 year olds who had seen sexual images said they were upset by them.

- Among 11-16 year olds upset by seeing online sexual images, 26% hoped the problem would just go away, 22% tried to fix it, 19% deleted unwelcome messages and 15% blocked the sender. Only 13% reported the problem online, though most of those found the result helpful.
- 21% of 11-16 year olds have seen potentially harmful user-generated content such as hate sites (12%), pro-anorexia sites (10%, rising to 19% of 14- 16 year old girls) and self-harm sites (7%).
- Those with more digital skills are more likely to encounter these content-related risks.

Wider availability and use of parental controls

- One in three parents (33%) claims to filter their child's internet use and one in four (27%) uses monitoring software. Overall, only a quarter of children (27%) and a third of parents think parents are effective in helping to keep children safe online.
- Parents are more likely to use filtering if they are regular and/or confident users of the internet themselves, if they are worried about online risks to their child, or if their child is younger and/or less experienced in internet use.
- It seems that the more filtering, the less online risk, but this is because younger children encounter less risk (since they use the internet less) but are more subject to parental control, and vice versa.

Policy Context

Policies for the promotion of a safer internet are based on an understanding of risks and risk-taking behaviour. The EU Kids Online network provides a substantial array of quantitative data relating to the online behaviour of children and young people. The CEO Coalition of European industry stakeholders, announced on 1 December 2011 by European Commission Vice President Neelie Kroes, seeks to make the internet a better place for children.

Methodology

In this large-scale quantitative study, a survey was administered face-to-face at home to a random stratified sample of 25,142 children aged 9-16 who use the internet, plus one of their parents, during Spring/Summer 2010 in 25 European countries.

Background

The *EU Kids Online* survey was funded by the EC's Safer Internet Programme. See www.eukidsonline.net

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