EUROBAROMETER

SAFER INTERNET FOR CHILDREN

QUALITATIVE STUDY IN 29 EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

SUMMARY REPORT

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Directorate-General Information Society and Media
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INTRODUCTION

❖ **The European Commission –** Directorate-General Information Society and Media – **has commissioned OPTEM and its European partners to carry out a qualitative study on the subject "Safer Internet for Children"** [1].

❖ **This study covers 29 countries** (the 27 Member States, as well as Iceland and Norway) **and it involves children :**

   ➢ Boys aged 9 to 10 years

   ➢ Girls aged 9 to 10 years

   ➢ Boys aged 12 to 14 years

   ➢ Girls aged 12 to 14 years

   all of whom have the possibility to access the Internet (although not necessarily at their home place) and use it at least once per month.

❖ **It aims at improving knowledge about :**

   ➢ **Internet usage by children, as well as mobile phone usage** (by those who own a mobile phone)

   ➢ **Their on-line behaviour**

   ➢ **Their perceptions of risk and safety related questions**

   The results of the study are to be used to contribute to designing the Safer Internet Programme, and to increase the impact of awareness building actions.

❖ The **methodology used is that of group discussions –** with, in each country, four groups of children (one in each of the above categories).

❖ National reports were produced in each of the 29 countries.

❖ **This report constitutes the overall analysis of the results based on the sections of the study conducted in each of the 29 countries.**

❖ It includes, in the Annexes

   ➢ The list of the partner-institutes involved in each country

   ➢ The composition of the groups

   ➢ The discussion guide used by the moderators

(1) Study conducted under the aegis of the Framework Contract Eurobarometer "Qualitative Studies", set up and managed by Directorate-General Communication A/4.

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. The children, Internet users, who were interviewed in this study appear, for most of them, to be extremely familiar with this tool. Learning to use the Internet was, for them, almost "self evident".

   A vast majority of them have access to the Internet at home, mostly through broadband connections.

   They use the Internet regularly and frequently ; however this frequency is correlated with age. 9-10 year old children typically say that they connect several times per week, minimum connection time being half an hour to one hour. 12-14 year old children generally use the Internet daily, often for one to three hours.

   All the children are more or less subject to explicit or implicit (self discipline) rules and limits in the use of the Internet, both as regards length and time of connection, nature of websites visited and on-line behaviour. They generally accept that these rules are legitimate and recognize that they are aware of risks, although some of them admit that they may occasionally disobey. Younger children (9-10 years) are clearly more closely constrained and supervised by their parents than 12--14 year old youngsters.

2. A remarkable convergence in Internet uses can be observed from one European country to the next.

   The most frequent uses are concentrated in two functions of a recreational, entertainement nature : online games (often the most frequent use quoted by the youngest children ; it continues to be an important activity among older boys, while this seems to be less a priority among girls as they get older), and looking for information on subjects that are of interest or browsing for fun.

   Looking for information for schoolwork is also a very frequent use (although naturally less attractive).

   The communication functions (instant messaging, having chats with friends, emailing) are clearly used more by older children – girls appear to be particularly eager to use them.

   Downloading (of music, films, videos, games, etc.) is also more widespread among the older groups – and more among boys than among girls for that matter.

   Other uses which are mentioned are less frequent : creating one's own blog or home page and posting texts, photos or music on the Internet ; reading and responding to friends' blogs or home pages ; downloading ring tones or images for the mobile phone ; sharing files (music, films, videos, games or others) or photos.

   Some functions are not cited very much : engaging in open chatrooms ; reading and responding to blogs/homepages of someone one has never met ; taking part in competitions ; making phone calls over the Internet. Yet the former may be under-declared.

3. The vast majority of the interviewed children have a mobile phone : overall three out of four of the 9-10 year old, and nine out of ten of the 12-14 year old. (Differences according to the countries can be noted, but they should be interpreted with caution, as this qualitative study is not meant to provide quantitative measurements).

   Mobile phone ownership provides great satisfaction and is a form of valuation.

Among the youngest children, keeping in permanent contact with their parents, an essential factor of reassurance for both, is a much advanced feature. Among the older children, it is mainly the contact with friends that is valued, and the phone is massively used for this purpose.

4. For mobile phone, just as for Internet uses, we find a considerable homogeneity in the surveyed sample : primarily making and receiving (voice) calls and (increasingly with age) sending and receiving text messages – a favourite and intense activity of many (cheapness, confidentiality, specific "culture" based on the "coded" language used between youngsters).

Taking photos/images is relatively widespread but not used by the majority. Sending photos/images seems to be relatively rare. Only small minorities use the mobile phone for listening to music, playing games and – even less so – connecting to the Internet by mobile phone (pointless when you have a computer at home, complicated, potentially risky because of viruses and, above all, too expensive).

In the unanimous opinion of children, use of the mobile phone is much freer and less supervised than use of the Internet.

The main limitation is of an economic nature as the children are bound, obviously, to a relative self control of their use, on pain of being regularly deprived of the function if they exceed the maximum amount of their mobile phone scheme or their prepaid card. Worries about the cost are particularly strong among children in the older age group.

Apart from the cost, the limitations mentioned are mainly of three types : instructions pertaining to "manners" ; abstaining from uses that are too costly (downloading, sending photos by MMS) ; and precautions relating to safety (such as not answering unidentified calls or text messages ; also abstaining from calling emergency numbers wildly or to play pranks).

5. When they are questioned about the problems and risks which they could experience when using the Internet or the mobile phone, the children say that they are overall informed and aware of these problems.

For the large majority, they relate far more to the Internet than to the mobile phone.

- Risks affecting the computer : viruses (the main sources of infection being unidentified emails and downloads); hacking (of password and personal details).

- Inopportune appearance of images or the mistaken access to undesired websites (violence, pornography) : this is admittedly perceived as disturbing, but children (notably the older ones) tend to minimize or play down their impact.

- Cons and fraud (illegal securement of bank details – although this primarily concerns their parents – dishonest proposals, false competitions, etc.).

- Anything that puts the child him/herself in difficulties or in danger : physical assaults and sex attacks by malicious adults with whom they might be in contact. Although most children are aware of this type of risk, it is generally not what they tend to mention first.

In their words, the children do seem to identify the risk factors and how to deal with them. Yet, although most of them say that they take the required precautions, some of them confess

that they have let themselves indulge in risky behaviours (giving their email address to strangers, going to a rendez-vous…), to have been the victims (and sometimes the authors themselves) of bullying – or they know other children to whom that has happened.

The risks linked to mobile phone usage (apart from cost and the possibility of downloading viruses, if connecting to the Internet) are mainly being bullied by unpleasant or threatening calls or text messages. This kind of practice seems to be quite widespread "sport" ; many have experienced it, and some have sometimes engaged in it themselves. It is anonymous calls (concealed number) that are the most disturbing.

But overall, relatively few children express a high degree of awareness of major risks in this respect.

Whether regarding risks relating to the Internet or the mobile phone, the children seldom show any inordinate anxiety, they show a great propensity to try and solve the problems by themselves or within their peer group – and would turn to their parents (or other adults) only in case of potentially "dramatic" problems.

6. When they are presented with a detailed list of Internet and mobile phone uses, the children's reactions show a more precise "hierarchy" of risks related to specific applications.

It is first and foremost the uses that imply the possibility of contact with adult strangers that are deemed to be the most risky : taking part in open chats/discussion forums ; reading and responding to blogs/websites of someone they have never met ; and (to a lesser degree) using instant messaging (MSN)/chats with friends (as ill-intentioned adults may intrude).

Second in the ranking of the main risks is anything that could affect the computer tool itself or cause the user problems (cost or reprimands) : downloading music, films, videos, etc. ; sharing files (of the same nature) ; downloading ring tones or screen backgrounds ; playing games online ; taking part in competitions.

As regards the mobile phone, one finds on the one hand uses that are potentially disturbing for the child him/herself – bullying by phone calls or text messages, sending of images (photos of oneself which risk appearing online and circulating) – and on the other hand the potentially costly uses (sending images by MMS, connecting to the Internet).

In a majority of cases, the respondents mention the latter, whereas bullying tends to be played down – perhaps partly volontarily, and with a propensity to self confidence in their own capacity to cope with and solve these problems should they come up.

7. This assumption – underestimation of certain risks – is confirmed by the children's answers when they are asked to express themselves on the following six main types of problems.

- The potentially incorrect nature of some information found on the Internet.

    This is a risk perceived as quite minor, the consequences of which are hardly dramatic, and the children generally appear to be able to deal with it (as we saw earlier, even the youngest are well experienced Internet users).

- Potentially shocking content – including images of a pornographic nature, scenes of violence, and sometimes racist or nazi sites.

The attitudes towards this type of risk are sometimes ambivalent. Some children – notably among older boys – show themselves to be openly curious not only of pornographic images, but also of children being badly treated: such "drifting" behaviours can be a cause of worry.

Girls generally show themselves to be more worried and more shocked than boys – and younger children more than older ones.

- Potentially dangerous contacts.

This topic was introduced to the discussion participants in the form of a story depicting a child who had unluckily established a contact with a person likely to be different from what he/she pretented to be, possibly an ill-intentioned adult.

The concrete character of this description causes a fairly large number of respondents – who had so far talked little on this subject – to become more talkative – and, for example, to acknowledge having already given their email address, their telephone number, or even agreed to meet someone.

It seems indeed that certain children adopt more risky behaviour than they say and think : in particular among older youngsters, who can show themselves to be too confident both in their own insight in unmasking false identities and interlocutors who they find especially friendly towards them – and they are reluctant to warn their parents (or only in the last resort).
Although they know the "answers" and the precautions to take, they do not all observe them.

- Harassment

Harassment – or bullying – as we have seen, is a question spontaneously called to mind in respect of the Internet and the mobile phone.

A good number have been confronted with this personally or via a friend or classmate ; many of them even acknowledge having engaged in this kind of persecution themselves.

A sizeable majority tend to minimize this problem – and claim that it's all about jokes of varying degrees of good taste, and nothing really different from types of behaviour that have always existed between children, only with new and modern resources.

However in some cases the degree of bullying or psychological ill-treatment may lead to genuine and, in some cases, dramatic disorders.

The youngest children are most sensitive to it – although in fact it appears that they are less often exposed to it.

The oldest ones, as for other types of risks, tend to play it down and believe that they are able to find a solution by themselves.

- Deceit as to the free nature of services or goods.

It is a risk that is commonly mentioned, both in respect of the Internet and, even more so, the mobile phone.

Nearly all the children declare that they are aware of it – older children have actually been more exposed to it, and boys more than girls (because they indulge more in downloading and game playing).

This type of risk is perceived as serious – be it only because they are directly affected in their freedom to use the Internet or the mobile phone (credit exhausted, sanctions being applied by their parents when they are led to talk to them about it) – yet rarely as dramatic as far as consequences are concerned. Moreover, a bad experience of this kind seems to have constituted a "good lesson" making the children more prudent for the future.

- Illegal downloads.

  This risk is also well known, at least on a theoretical level – but the children often minimize or question the illegal character of downloading.

  The illegal character is not always clear ; downloading solely for private use is not really regarded as fraudulent ; the argument of the harm inflicted on artists is not very credible or is rejected. Moreover, there is a widespread feeling of impunity – at the end of the day the risk of downloading a virus seems to be more dissuasive than the risk of a legal sanction.

8. When they are finally asked about the precautionary measures to take in face of these risks the children show themselves to be aware of them overall – but we saw that some of them, notably among older children, adopt actual behaviour that is not necessarily consistent with attitudes and stated principles.

   As regards the methods of alert envisaged in case of problems, turning to their parents is what they mostly declare that they would do ; but in actual fact some of the older children (notably boys) would actually avoid doing it or limit it to the most serious cases.

   Turning to such "authorities" as teachers, or the police, is very seldom envisaged without much reluctance. The same is true of specialist organisations, although in this respect the attitudes are more varied.

   The proposition of a warning button which you only have to click on to automatically notify the responsible authorities is better received (although not unanimously).

   Lastly, as regards information on problems and risks, the large majority of children feel they are well informed enough – but they do not deny that information is useful.

9. The results of this study lead us to conclude that the kinds of actions to be developed to warn children about the risks relating to the use of the Internet and the mobile phone are less information measures strictly speaking than actions aiming to make them more conscious and aware of the consequences, which many of them tend to deny or to minimize.

DETAILED RESULTS

CHAPTER I

THE INTERNET AND ITS USES

I.1 LEARNING HOW TO USE THE INTERNET

❖ It should be recalled that the children were recruited on their capacity for having access to the Internet. It is observed that a vast majority of them have Internet at home, with a predominance of broadband connections. A minority have low speed connections (in particular in Bulgaria, Iceland and Greece) or do not have Internet at home.

It is also seen that almost all mention other places where the Internet can be accessed and used, including chiefly access at school as well as at relatives' and friends' houses and, more marginally, in Internet cafés and libraries. Overall, however, use at home is the most frequent.

❖ **We are therefore dealing with a population that is extremely familiar with the tool, a veritable "Internet generation" for whom, as we will see, this is a "self-evident", almost "natural" activity.**

❖ **Learning to use the Internet, in this context, is most often described as a process you pick up easily and quickly, and one that never involves any problem,** far removed from "learning" in the possibly laborious sense of the term**.** Many children even say that they do not remember very clearly what they did or say they have "honestly" forgotten, so immediately assimilated and incorporated it has become as if by diffuse and unconscious impregnation.

"I just can't remember that I needed to learn how to use Internet. I just saw my brothers on-line all the time"(Girls group, 12-14 years, Iceland)

"There is nothing to learn" (Boys group, 9-10 years, Germany)

"It is in my blood. I am a computer freak" (Boys group, 9-10 years, Netherlands)

❖ **The learning methods are, overwhelmingly and in all countries, of two kinds that complement each other and combine: initiation by an elder and self-learning.**

➢ **Learning the basics in the family or with close relatives or friends appears to be the most widely shared rule.** The initiator is generally one of the parents (the father or the mother, the father slightly more often than the mother), sometimes the grandparents, older sisters or brothers, an uncle, or friends. In the vast majority of cases, the initiation thus occurs in a climate of considerable proximity, in a positive affective environment.

Most of the children stress on this occasion that they were only taught the basics, the main keys for entering the world of the Internet, and that they then perfected their knowledge by themselves, by observation, or with their peers, without having recourse to their parents again – except for a very specific problem (viruses in particular). Moreover these parents are sometimes readily described as less experienced than themselves, or as having discovered the Internet under pressure from their children (often with the pretext of searches for information for school projects). Some, mainly among the older children (12-14 years) – and more so in the boys' groups – even claim to have been their parents' instructors.

"My parents do not teach me, I teach them!" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Ireland)

"I know more about the Internet than my mother" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Netherlands)

> **Self-learning is claimed by almost all the children questioned.** In general, it follows the original initiation, but can also occur from the outset by observing one's parents or older brothers or sisters, and then proceeding by trial and error.

"Looking at my elder brother or my friends using it" (Boys group/girls group, 9-10 years, Italy)

"If you click on something and it's wrong, later on you already know that you should not click on it. I learnt it by myself" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Poland)

"I was watching my mother playing. She had to go to the kitchen to cook the meal and she let me play in her place, it worked, I liked it, and from there, I knew how to do it!" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Germany)

"I learnt on my own watching my sister. At our age we still have not computer literacy lessons at school, it is at the fifth grade" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Lithuania)

Apart from mere observation, games on the one hand and chats or instant messaging on the other hand are the two means of self-learning most commonly cited.

- Self-learning by means of on-line games and downloading seems more specific to boys (greater taste for competition), in the two age groups considered. In this case, help and information provided by classmates and fellow players are predominant, with children passing on the most entertaining websites to each other and telling each other about the new games they have discovered.

  "I haven't exactly learnt it, but merely getting used to it by surfing on the Internet" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Sweden)

  "Nobody showed me. You just log on, try a few times and off you go surfing on the Internet" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Slovenia)

  "My buddy informed me about a site where I can donwload ring-tones for free, and it is a safe site, without viruses... It's very cool !" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Greece)

- Self-learning by means of the relational (chats, e-mails and instant messaging) is more readily practised by girls, especially the older girls (groups of 12-14-year-olds).

  "My friend taught me how to take part in chats and since then we've done it together" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Austria)

  "My Mum just told me that 'E' thingumybob is the Internet and then I just found it out by myself" (Girls group, 9-10 years, United-Kingdom)

❖ **Learning at school is very often mentioned but almost always secondarily**. Considered to be "very basic" teaching, it is generally given by teachers perceived as not very nimble or with less expertise than the pupils themselves – with the exception of a few genuine IT experts, for example in some "information and communication technology" classes, in Ireland or the United Kingdom in particular.

"Mainly at home from my sister, something in school during informatics" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Czech Republic)

"We now have only a few lessons, but at school we are not allowed to access the Internet" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Italy)

We can add that learning at school is reported in quite varying ways depending on the countries. Some are reported to be more active in this regard (Denmark, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary) than others (France, Belgium, Spain, Cyprus, Romania, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, etc.). But it is still difficult to draw conclusions, since the mention of school as a source of learning can be associated with elements other than the national education policy (socio-economic and cultural level of the household, whether or not there are older brothers and sisters, how long there has been an Internet connection in the home, whether or not the child has own PC, etc.).

❖ **Overall, and to sum up, for the children questioned learning how to use the Internet appears to be a reflection of the tool itself: easy, immediate, of the relational and entertaining field, and simultaneously of a recreational, didactic and educational nature.**

I.2 INTENSITY OF USE OF THE INTERNET

❖ **As regards frequency of connection and the time spent on the Internet, a number of major converging trends can be drawn across all groups and countries.**

❖ **As a rule, children use the Internet very regularly and in a sustained fashion**. However, this frequency varies according to age:

➢ The youngest, aged 9 to 10, say they connect three to four times a week.

➢ The older children, aged 12 to 14, say that they connect every day, most often at the end of the day when they come home from school and, in theory, after finishing their homework.

➢ Weekends and holiday periods can lead to children connecting more (lack of anything to do, boredom, bad weather) or, on the contrary, connecting less in favour of other activities, sports and games outside.

❖ **Likewise, as regards the time spent on the Internet we find that this is quite similar from one country to another, with the same specific characteristics according to age and sex.**

➢ The minimum connection time is between half an hour and an hour. This is generally more the case of the youngest children (9-10 years) and in particular girls. The youngest children therefore connect, on average, both less often and for less time (for that matter, they are, as we will see later, subject to greater restriction and supervision by their parents than the older children). Even though we also find more regular users in this age category, in terms of both frequency and length of connection, they are not in the majority: thus young boys, who are more keen on games, can devote themselves to longer sessions, just as some girls, hooked on instant messaging (MSN) and chats, admit to spending more than an hour on it.

➢ The older children (12-14 years) commonly state that they are regularly on the Internet for sessions of two or three hours. This age category also seems to be less restricted by their parents (and/or more disobedient) and more inclined to use the Internet for various purposes – e-mails, chats, MSN, downloading (especially music), visits to websites, etc.

➢ Finally, some (typically one to two children in the groups of 12-14-year-olds) say that they are "hooked" or regard themselves as heavily "dependent", with daily sessions of three to five hours, or sometimes more. There are most commonly fans of online games (boys more so than girls) or inveterate fans of instant messaging and chats – more the case with girls, in particular those who have a broadband connection and, who, in some cases, say they are connected "all the time" when they come home from school, for hours on end.

❖ **Intensity of use**, in terms of frequency and duration, **of course depends on objective characteristics:**

➢ The presence or not of one or both of the parents, **of other users in the household**, brothers and sisters, the child's elders clearly benefiting from privileges of anteriority.

➢ Possession or not of a **personal computer with an Internet connection** (some children have their own PC but have to use the family computer to gain access to the Internet).

❖ As was the case for learning, **the school is not perceived as a preferential place for access to the Internet.** Apart from the fact that it is sometimes prohibited there, when it is allowed it is used to look for information for schoolwork and is more often than not quite strictly supervised and monitored by the teachers.

❖ Finally, as regards **ownership of a personal computer**, the following differences can be seen according to the countries and age categories:

➢ Broadly speaking, the equipment increases with age (sometimes more specifically for boys).

➢ The children who are not as well equipped, in the two age categories but especially among the youngest, are to be found in particular in Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia and Iceland (with the exception, in these three latter countries, of boys aged 12 to 14).

➢ The children who are best equipped are to be found mainly in Austria, Germany, Luxembourg, Greece, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Cyprus, Malta, the Czech Republic, Poland, Latvia, Bulgaria and Romania.

It should be stressed that these conclusions are purely **indicative**, since recruitment biases may have interfered – more or less strong correlation between Internet access (recruitment criterion) and possession of a personal computer according to the countries, distribution not strictly equivalent in terms of socio-economic and cultural categories.

❖ **Basically, and to sum up:**

➢ **Children who use the Internet generally show themselves to be regular and assiduous users**, all the more so as they get older.

➢ **They use the Internet mainly, and to a large extent, at home**.

➢ **Overall, they show themselves to be aware of the possible excesses and the risk of dependence.**

➢ **They are all subject, to some degree, to family rules** that limit the frequency and their connection time. More often than not they accept the principle of this – all the better when they are younger.

I.3   DEGREE OF FREEDOM IN USING THE INTERNET

❖ The children were questioned about the limits that are placed on them, explicitly or implicitly, by their parents when it comes to using the Internet.

On this point, as for the preceding ones, we see a marked homogeneity in replies in all countries, with the same main variables according to age and sex.

❖ **All the children, in the two age categories considered, are subject to limits in their use of the Internet and are warned of a series of risks.** Including when they do not report formalised bans and precise instructions on the part of the parents, all "know" that not everything is allowed, both in terms of the time spent and as regards the nature of the content of the websites.

❖ In addition, aside from rare exceptions (generally in the case of a few boys among the oldest children, aged 13 to 14), they do not consider the restrictions laid down as making them feel particularly "got at" and regard them as useful, legitimate and justified. **The very large majority of them feel that they enjoy a relative and reasonable freedom.**

"When I finish my homework I can sit for as long as I want on the computer" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Cyprus)

Among the girls, more especially, we even see quite often a degree of **self-discipline** and an appreciation of the trust placed in them by their parents, which is mentioned more rarely by the boys.

"I usually show my mum or dad what websites I am on" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Ireland)

"My parents trust me. In fact, there is no real danger, you don't buy a computer to visit porn homepages, there are better things to do" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Germany)

"I actually have set myself some kind of limits of spending time in the Internet" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Finland)

"It is self-evident which websites are not to be entered. Those for people over 18 years old" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Poland)

❖ **Overall:**

➢ **Children aged 9 to 10 are generally more subject than older children to the parents' authorisation to browse on the Internet.** Similarly, they use it more often in their company or presence, in a communal room, near to or within sight of one of the parents.

➢ **Children aged 12 to 14 seem to have more freedom, and are subject to fewer constraints,** especially if they have their own computer in their bedroom.

❖ **The main limits mentioned by children relate to the time when they can connect and the amount of time they are connected, behaviour in the family, the nature of the websites and on-line behaviour:**

➢ **The limit to the amount of time they are connected** is one of the rules laid down which is most easily mentioned. In all the groups, constraints of varying degrees of strictness are reported in this respect. The parents generally try to limit the connection time to a

"reasonable" period – around 30 minutes for the youngest children and around one to two hours for the older children.

➢ **The time when children connect is also subject to very clear and commonly shared principles:**

- In all cases, authorisation is given from the moment the child has finished his homework.

- The time when children go on the Internet should not disrupt family life (no disputes between brothers and sisters if the computer is shared) and its rhythms (in particular as regards meal times, time for sport, going out, etc.).

- It should not continue beyond a certain time, or result in bedtime becoming later (around 9 p.m. to 10 p.m. for the youngest children), and should not undermine sleeping time (in particular for the oldest children, who are asked not to "stay up").

  "My parents tell me not to stay more than one or two hours, because it harms your eyes. I would like to stay longer, but they are right" (Boys group, 9-10 years, Romania)

  "When my parents are at home, I use the Net a maximum of 45 minutes per day. When they are not, I use it the time I want" (Boys group, 9-10 years, Portugal)

  "My parents have not exactly approved it when I sometimes play all night even if it is weekend" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Finland)

➢ **The nature and content of the websites visited are generally mentioned.** This is a recurrent instruction given by the parents, which has been well internalised by most children, even if it may sometimes be disobeyed – in particular by some of the older boys. The priority here is to avoid:

- Websites reserved for adults, in particular those of a pornographic nature.

- Websites or games with violent, "terror" or "gore" content.

- Paying websites or websites that risk recording the user's details and leading to automatic reminders or door-to-door selling.

- Websites that risk spreading viruses (or are known to do so).

  "I am not allowed to go on Internet sites for adults to avoid various rubbish" (Boys group, 9-10 years, Lithuania)

  "I don't visit Russian-language websites, they are too infected by viruses" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Czech Republic)

  "I can only visit the sites that my anti-virus lets me to. If a red cross appears it is because we cannot go there" (Boys group, 9-10 years, Portugal)

  "Ha ha ha ! I am not avoiding these sites (pornographic ones) ! On the contrary, I search for them !" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Greece)

  "They (parents) have an old mentality" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Malta)

"They (the parents) will always find something" (Boys group, 9-10 years, Slovakia)

> ➤ **On-line behaviour.** This mainly concerns child protection but also the protection of the computer, the responsibility of the parents and the family budget.

- • **Giving your name, address or personal information on line constitutes the most serious prohibition in all the groups** – it is slightly more pronounced in the groups of girls and among the youngest children of both sexes. Likewise, it is forbidden to arrange to meet someone met over the Internet on a forum. However, it will be seen that a minority among the older children are ambiguous about this, saying, for example, that in the case of a rendezvous, you shouldn't go alone but accompanied by other children...

- • **Download things which are illegal or costly.**

❖ **A number of children** (in particular the youngest) **stress that the parents have set in place filters or alerts** (timers which warn when the period has ended and/or automatically shut off the connection), **whilst others indicate that the record of websites consulted is checked. Overall, they seem to put up with this.**

However, some of the older children (in particular girls, who are apparently subject to more supervision) have difficulty putting up with the parents' intrusion, in particular some mothers who monitor the MSN, blogs, e-mails, and on-line conversations.

❖ In some groups – particularly in the Netherlands, Finland, Estonia, Slovenia, Spain, Poland and Malta – depriving the child of the Internet is used as a dissuasive threat and applied as a punishment, for example in the case of excess or poor results at school.

❖ On the other hand the rules can be relaxed in the event of good results and at the weekend or during holidays.

❖ At the end of the day, **for most of the children, all these constraints that have been mentioned are aimed first and foremost at their own protection and are therefore generally speaking well accepted.**

> ➤ **Health** is reported in large numbers as one of the leading "good reasons" put forward for limiting the amount of time spent on the Internet.

- • The risk for the eyes, tired eyes are mentioned very often.

- • To a lesser degree, lack of sleep and concentration difficulties are also mentioned.

- • To a lesser degree, some reported parents' fears of harmful "radiation" (in particular in Finland, Hungary and Estonia).

> ➤ **Their physical protection and their psychological balance.** This is of course **the main reason for the limits imposed by parents** and identified by the children. **The vast majority do not contest their justification.** Even if a minority feel that the parents sometimes "exaggerate" the risks, more often than not they subscribe to the reasons put forward:

- • Protection against "improper" meetings, with "strange" adults, in particular.

  "One day on a website game, my mother told me that someone who said he was 16 was actually 55 ..., it scared me" (Girls group, 9-10 years, France)

- Protection against shocking and disturbing content that could cause nightmares (among young children in particular).

- The guarantee of the serious nature of studies.

- Protection against the risk of addiction.

  "Prefer not to risk you turn into an Internet addict, as it happened to some guys who needed serious therapies like drug addicted" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Italy)

I.4 SPECIFIC USES OF THE INTERNET

❖ The following list of possible uses of the Internet was put to the children so that each could indicate the kind of use most often made of the Internet .

- Searching for information for schoolwork

- Searching for information on subjects that interest me/surfing for fun

- Sending and receiving e-mails

- Using instant messaging (such as MSN)/chatting with friends

- Engaging in open chatrooms

- Creating my own blog/homepage and posting my texts, photos (and/or) music on the Internet

- Reading and responding to friends' blogs/homepages

- Reading and responding to blogs/homepages of someone I have never met

- Playing games on line

- Downloading music, films, videos, games or other files

- Sharing files (music, films, video, games or others)

- Sharing photos

- Downloading ring tones/images for the mobile phone

- Taking part in competitions

- Making phone calls through the Internet.

❖ We see a **remarkable convergence in the children's answers**: across all countries, they constitute a homogeneous community of users, with, moreover, the same major specific characteristics by age category and by sex.

❖ **The most frequent uses, across all groups and countries, are concentrated in two functions which are cited almost unanimously**. These are, significantly, two uses of a recreational, entertainment nature:

➢ **On-line games**: all the children ticked this box (it was also seen that games can be the key to entering the world of the Internet). This is often **"the most frequent" use among the youngest children** (girls and boys aged 9 to 10). This is an activity that continues to be dominant among the older boys but is less of a priority among girls aged 12 to 14, to the benefit of other uses (in particular instant messaging and chats).

➢ **Looking for information on subjects that are of interest or browsing for fun**: this is undoubtedly the most widespread use, all ages and both sexes taken together. However, it can be seen that the older children (both girls and boys) less often mark it as the most frequent type of use, with other uses competing with it (in particular all the communication functions).

"I like to look at sites about animals, especially about hedgehogs" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Austria)

❖ **The other "most frequent" functions are also shared to a high degree but with slight differences according to the age categories and/or sex.**

➢ **Looking for information for schoolwork**: this is a very frequent use among the vast majority of the children. But, unlike the previous recreational activity, it is clearly less attractive, since it is explicitly linked to schoolwork, of the order of a "requirement", more or less imposed by the school and the teachers, even though the children appreciate the speed and ease of research (which avoids having to use books).

It is the youngest children (both girls and boys) **and older girls who mention it the most. Boys aged 12 to 14 mention it conspicuously less than their juniors and girls of their age.**

"I use the Net for my school work. For "project area" the teachers ask us to do that. And for Portuguese language we also need to search on the Net and in books" (Boys group, 9-10 years, Portugal)

"Natural history papers you'll get when you go bio.edu.ee. You do copy-paste and get a '5' again !" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Estonia)

"Majority of teachers dislike our handwriting and require essays or papers to be printed. Pretty much of information can be found for school needs on Internet" (Girls group, 12-14 ans, Lithuania)

➢ **Downloading music, films, videos, games or other files**: this is a use not very often cited among the 9-10-year-olds (only by a small minority among girls), **and especially widespread in the older groups** (12-14 years) of both sexes but with a **predominance among boys.**

➢ **Using instant messaging (such as MSN), and having chats with friends**: this is a function used in particular **by girls** of both age categories, and very little by boys aged 9 to 10. **This is a use that clearly increases with age**: it is accentuated among girls of 12 to 14 (who use it even more than younger girls) and also appears popular among older boys. It would seem that this is one of the "natural" places, a preferential and specific place, for contacts and dialogue between young people, which is easy to use, free of charge and protected from adults' eyes.

"I chat on the Internet, when I have nothing else to do" (Girls group 12-14 years, Denmark)

"When talking on the phone you always risk that your mother or brother are behind the door to try to listen your conversation, while dialogue through MSN is definitely more discrete" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Italy)

"It's free ! Texts are like 10 p. a time. It's like a really quick email so that you don't have to keep waiting and you can reply to more than one person at a time" (Boys group, 12-14 years, United-Kingdom)

"I chat with friends on MSN and Stallet. It's OK because I only talk to friends I know" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Sweden)

➢ **Sending and receiving e-mails**: this is a frequent use but one which is the prerogative of the older children (in the 12-14 age bracket) of both sexes, although it will be noted that a number of girls aged 9 to 10, unlike boys of the same age, are beginning to use e-mail. All appreciate the immediacy of the contact, the capacity to maintain or forge links, and to be able to express one's opinions or feelings with a degree of ease, sometimes without the emotion and affects involved in a voice conversation.

"I check my emails every day, like my Mum and Dad" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Hungary)

"You may feel embarassed to express your feeling to a girl in a voice conversation, while with MSN you don't have such a problem" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Italy)

❖ **Other uses are less frequent and more specific to certain target groups.**

➢ **Creating my own blog/homepage and posting my texts, photos and music on the Internet:** this is a use of the Internet specific to the older children and girls in particular.

➢ **Reading and responding to friends' blogs/homepages:** very much linked to the previous use, it similarly concerns the older children and girls in particular.

➢ **Downloading ring tones/images for the mobile phone:** this is not a very frequent use, and one found slightly more among the older children.

➢ **Sharing files (music, films, video, games and others):** this is also quite an occasional use, slightly more frequent among boys, of both age categories (the search for and downloading of new games, in particular).

➢ **Sharing photos:** this is an occasional activity, mostly concerning the 12-14 age bracket, and slightly more so among girls than boys.

❖ **Finally, some functions are not cited very much:**

➢ **Engaging in open chatrooms:** this is quite a minority use, found more so among the older children (both girls and boys), with a slight majority of girls.

➢ **Reading and responding to blogs/homepages of someone I have never met:** this is a use mentioned quite sporadically (perhaps under-declared?), more so among the older children of both sexes.

➢ **Taking part in competitions:** this function is only mentioned very marginally, and more so by boys, especially younger boys.

➢ **Making phone calls over the Internet** is one of the least common uses. It appears to be especially interesting for some children in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe – Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania.

❖ **To sum up, we can note overall that:**

➢ **Use of the Internet by children is above all recreational.**

➢ **Types of use are added, and frequency increased, as children get older.**

- ➢ **Generally speaking girls** of both age categories **use the Internet in a more diversified manner than boys,** who concentrate more on a smaller number of functions.

- ➢ **The types of use indicated by older girls,** which are more numerous and varied than among boys, **are both of the relational variety** (messaging, chats, e-mails) **and of an educational nature** (search for information for schoolwork more frequent than among the younger girls).

- ➢ **Younger boys use the Internet almost exclusively for recreational purposes** (on-line games and surfing "for enjoyment and fun").

- ➢ **With age, boys** (aged 12-14) **diversify their use and, like girls, significantly develop the "communication"-type uses** (messaging, chats, etc.). On the other hand, the degree to which the Internet is used to look for information for schoolwork drops with age.

CHAPTER II

THE MOBILE PHONE

AND ITS USES

II. 1   USES OF THE MOBILE PHONE

❖ **It is important to emphasise that the vast majority of children taking part in the study had a mobile phone of their own:**

> ➢ More than three-quarters of girls and boys aged 9 to 10 have one.

> ➢ Nine out of ten girls and boys aged 12 to 14 have one.

> ➢ More often than not the mobile phone was received as a present (from parents, uncles or aunts, grandparents), and more rarely it was bought by the child himself (among the older children only).

> ➢ A few differences according to the countries can be noted (albeit with reservations, taking into account possible special features of recruitment):

>> • In Spain and Ireland, most of the youngest children (aged 9-10) do not have a mobile phone.

>> • In France, Belgium, Sweden and Malta, the proportion of owners is also less than the average (around half).

❖ **Those not having a mobile phone are found for the most part among the youngest children. They state, quite homogeneously, that their parents do not allow it**: with them, they declare themselves to be "too young to need one" and it seems that in general they put up with this, assured that they will have one later on or quite soon, "when they're older", i.e. on average around the age of 11 or 12, or when they move into secondary school.

There are, however, a few cases in which frustration is expresssed :

"Why should I listen to my mother? She tells me that she will not buy me a mobile phone, so that I won'*t talk on it all the time and all she does is talk on the mobile phone.*" *(Girls group, 9-10 years)*

More rarely, some report that their parents tell them of risks for their health – harmful radiation, hearing problems (for example in particular in Greece, Cyprus and Estonia).

❖ **Those who have a mobile phone show themselves to be very satisfied, and even "proud" to own one**. This is clearly a form of valuation, a kind of "rite of passage", the clear "sign" of access to a state of relative "maturity" and of belonging to a new group.

"Hardly anyone has got a mobile phone until their parents think they're really mature enough" *(Boys group, 9-10 years, United-Kingdom)*

❖ **Among the youngest children, keeping in permanent contact with their parents is advanced by a majority**. This is an essential factor of **reassurance**, on the part of the children and above all, clearly, the parents (and mothers, it seems, more especially), who are described by the children themselves as very concerned to be always able to contact them, wherever they are. The children, for their part, appreciate being able to call their parents in emergencies.

"I have a mobile and I only take it with me on weekends when I go out around the neighborhood with my friends. My parents call me when they want me to come home" (Girls group, 9 to 10 years old, Spain)

Some (but this is not the majority) see it as a means of excessive supervision by the parents (and some are sometimes tempted to turn off their phone).

❖ **Among the older children, it is mainly the contact with friends that is valued, and the phone is used predominantly for this, clearly supplanting contact with the parents** – even if this is still important, the children stressing in general that it is reserved for "serious" cases**.**

❖ **Having and using a mobile phone brings about (especially among the oldest children) a considerable worry about the cost**. Even if in the great majority of cases it is the parents who pay (generally in the form of prepaid cards, and less commonly in the form of a subscription), the children are prompted to control the use they make of their mobile quite carefully, on pain of using up their fixed amount too quickly and not being able to use the phone or being forced to pay the excess themselves out of their pocket money, which on average is very hard to cope with.

"My Dad pays for the plan and he says if I use more than 200 NOK per month, I have to pay for it myself. So of course I don't use it that much for this reason" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Norway)

"I can't come home and say I want to recharge my phone. I don't know what my mom would do – whether to charge up me or the mobile." (Boys group, 12 - 14 years, Slovakia)

❖ **For the uses of the mobile phone, here, too, we find a very considerable homogeneity of replies, across all the countries**.

➢ **Receiving and making calls** obviously constitutes one of the most frequent uses, for which, nonetheless, it is worth pointing out slight differences according to the age categories: it is clearly the most frequent use among the youngest children, whereas among the older children the sending and receiving of text messages becomes clearly predominant.

➢ **Sending/receiving text messages is the favourite and intense activity of children**, in particular, as we have just stressed, of the older children (aged 12 to 14).

Apart from the fact that text messages are "cheaper" than voice calls, sending and receiving text messages is part and parcel of a specific "culture" in these age categories. This very evidently involves a language of their own, which is "coded" and differentiated, attesting to a mutual recognition and the sense of belonging to a group. In a nutshell: "you phone your parents but you text your friends".

Furthermore, text messages are credited with a degree of confidentiality (more than a voice call, which someone can always overhear) and greater privacy (some say they sometimes send text messages "secretly", even during classes).

"Because it costs more money to phone. Well not always but if you don't want to actually physically say it, you can just text. I don't know, if it's more private, you can keep it quiet" (Girls group, 9-10 years, United-Kingdom)

It also seems that the text message function is used more by girls than by boys, in both age categories, confirming the greater proclivity to the written and the relational among girls, which was already noticed in use of the Internet.

➢ **Taking photos/images** is a not insignificant use, but not one practised by a majority. Generally speaking, the photos are then transferred to the computer rather than being sent by MMS, which is regarded as being far too expensive.

➢ **Sending/receiving/sharing images** is a function that is used very little. For some, this calls to mind reprehensible practices, namely the dissemination of degrading images of fellow students or teachers, practices which are also severely punished when discovered (some examples of pupils being expelled or given dissuasive punishments).

➢ **Connecting to the Internet by mobile phone** is a very marginal use, deemed by a very large number to be pointless when you have a computer at home, but above all too expensive, complicated and also risky, since it potentially generates viruses.

"I mainly use my phone for sending SMS and making phone calls. There is also the possibility to download songs by Bluetooth, but I don't feel like doing that, far too complicated" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Netherlands)

❖ In conclusion, we can point to some uses cited fairly sporadically:

➢ Listening to music.

➢ Games, particularly among boys aged nine to ten.

II.2 DEGREE OF FREEDOM IN USE OF THE MOBILE PHONE

❖ **In the unanimous opinion of the children, use of the mobile phone is much freer and less supervised than use of the Internet**.

❖ **The main limitation, mentioned spontaneously by a very large number, is of an economic nature and acts as an effective curb that is not easily negotiated.** As we saw above, children are bound, objectively, to a relative self-control of their use, in terms of frequency and duration, on pain of being regularly deprived of the function (the fixed amount being used up), unless they assume the costs of the surplus amount themselves (which they balk at doing). In this respect, they seem very aware of their own "responsibility" in protecting their degree of freedom and assume this, overall, with good grace.

❖ **Apart from the cost, other rules are generally called to mind** (in descending order of mentions)**:**

➢ **Instructions pertaining to "manners":** as for the use of the Internet, this involves not disrupting family life and family conversations (not at the table, no overly long calls in the presence of other people, etc.)

➢ **Obligation to turn off mobile phones in class**

➢ **Not answering unidentified calls or text messages,** out of a fear of fraud (slightly more so in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe) or improper meetings.

➢ **Not calling emergency numbers wildly or to play pranks** (police, fire brigade, medical emergency services; it seems that some parents sometimes lock these numbers)

➢ **Not downloading telephone ring tones (or games),** indicated by parents as being excessively expensive.

➢ **Not sending photos by MMS,** something which is also deemed to be far too expensive.

➢ **Not using the mobile too often for fear of effects on the health** (radiation) which are mentioned in particular by the parents of young children aged 9 to 10 in Greece, Cyprus and Estonia.

➢ **Not taking it to class for fear of it being stolen,** an instruction sometimes given to the youngest children, in particular in Poland and Hungary, where there seem to be a lot of cases of younger children's mobile phones being stolen by older children**.**

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CHAPTER III

PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROBLEMS AND RISKS

LINKED TO THE INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONES

III.1 SPONTANEOUS EVOCATIONS OF PROBLEMS AND RISKS

❖ The children were questioned about the problems, risks, and unpleasant or worrying aspects that they could experience when using the Internet or the mobile phone. They were also asked to explain what they did to protect themselves against these and to indicate the way in which this could impact on the way they used these two tools.

❖ **The main risks and problems mentioned are in large measure similar from one country to another.** Overall:

➢ **For the large majority, they relate far more to the Internet than to the mobile phone.**

➢ **The risks and problems associated with the mobile phone seem for the most part to be more minor and less bothersome or serious.**

➢ **We see a few recurrent differences between girls and boys, and between the two age categories considered.**

➢ **Overall, except in specific cases, most of the children do not reveal any dissuasive anxiety: they do not envisage changing their practices in the future, saying that they have been sufficiently warned, and for the most part feeling that they are already taking the necessary precautionary measures.**

❖ **Problems and risks spontaneously linked to the Internet.** These are of several kinds, ranging from "simple" technical concerns through to the risk of meeting malicious or dangerous individuals.

➢ **Risks affecting the computer**

• **This is of course basically infection by viruses. This is very often the spontaneous risk mentioned most immediately, in particular by the groups of boys**. This is clearly a problem which most of the children are very aware of and which they dread, because it hampers their use and can damage the hardware or software, all the more so since the tricks used by those who propagate viruses seem to be increasingly sophisticated, and are constantly renewed, so as to be liable to catch out even experienced Internet users.

The main sources of infection are unidentified e-mails and dowloads (music, films, games, etc.). The majority say that they are especially wary of e-mails that have come from a sender they do not know and attachments thereto (which should "never" be opened). They claim that they avoid certain websites, and as a rule are discouraged by their parents from downloading anything from any website (although it would seem that they do end up doing this from time to time).

"Game playing can be risky because something can get broken because the games sometimes freeze."(Boys group 9 – 10 years, Slovenia)

"Anti-virus" programmes are also seen by children as offering good protection, provided they are updated regularly.

"... Just download anti-virus software" (Boys group, 9-10 years, Slovakia)

It will be seen that it is **boys (and more so older boys) who deem this risk to be one of the most serious and frequent.** For that matter, they tend to put this one forward and relativise the others, in particular the risk of dangerous encounters, not because they minimise their intrinsic importance but because they say the latter are far more improbable and easily eluded (by refusing the contact).

- **Hacking.** A number of children show themselves to have been well warned of the risks of having their details and password "hacked" by unknown persons and then receiving e-mails infected with viruses or being harassed, insulted or threatened by unidentified Internet users.

  "The hackers are a danger, they may spread viruses that destroy the hard disk or copy all that we have in the computer, passwords, documents, etc." (Boys group, 9-10 years, Portugal)

  "Others could use my name or steal my email address to send stupid messages, but I don't think it is too much to be bothered about" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Sweden)

➢ **Anything that disturbs or attacks the Internet user or "contaminates" his browsing**

- **The inopportune sudden appearance of images or the mistaken access to undesired websites:** these are basically aggressive, violent images or videos of horrific or pornographic sites or scenes that appear unexpectedly – when the user is looking for information or browsing on another website – or which arrive in the e-mail in-box. A number of children report these and are clearly bothered by them.

  "One time I clicked into cartoonnetwork.dk, and all the characters appeared in many different ways, they were naked and everything." (Girls group, 9-10 years, Denmark)

  The youngest of both sexes, in particular, can show themselves to be offended or indignant and say that they quickly click to dispose of the intruder. The oldest are also shocked but often appear less virulent and more blasé when talking about them. Some of the oldest boys say that they themselves or friends of theirs have been able to watch these kinds of images, or even (although more rarely) have looked for them. Finally, some emphasise that they are sometimes exposed to far worse images when watching the television news.

  "Images on the Internet are not worse than those aired on TV" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Italy)

  These intrusions are admittedly perceived as very disturbing but they are deemed to be relatively harmless, except, as the oldest children readily stress, for younger children. The latter appear to be subject less often to this kind of drawback, either because they do not browse very much and are therefore exposed less, or because they do so with someone else or with a parent close at hand who is ready to step in, or because the parents have installed effective filters on the computer. The examples of "traumatic" experiences (violent disgust, nightmares) are, when all is said and done, quite rare.

  "I once accidentally saw a short trailer of a horror movie and could not sleep well for few nights because of that" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Finland)

"I've seen a video, a mate showed me, she looked and there was a title of a song, nice song, we were listening and in the end, you know, you could get a heart attack because there was a dead man's head there..." (Girls group, 12-14 years old, Latvia)

It can also be noted that some children sometimes hesitate in notifying their parents or fear that they will be surprised when these intrusions occur, out of fear that they will be considered as responsible and be punished or, worse still, be deprived of the Internet on this account. It is probable that in this respect some thus implicitly express a form of admission and guilt.

"It is very hard to tell the parents that pornographic sites have opened. They might think it was my fault." (Girls group, 9 – 10 years, Slovenia)

- **Intrusive advertising, pop-ups and spam.** Many children complain of this untimely and repeated bombardment, and are very irritated by it, although generally get rid of it without any great problem.

➢ **Anything that constitutes cons and fraud.** Mention is made here of a series of fraudulent practices specific to the Internet and the imagination of "hackers".

- **The illegal securement of bank details.** This is a risk mentioned quite often, especially by the older children. In this respect websites for the online purchasing of goods are perceived as potentially dangerous, but do not appear to concern them directly. They report rumours, tell of the misadventures of friends and relatives, or mention the comments made or warnings given by their parents.

"It is dangerous if you use your credit card on the Internet, because hackers can steal your personal details and credit card information and use them for their own purchases" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Greece)

- **Dishonest proposals.** Reference is made here to a whole series of "cons" and hoaxes that proliferate on the Internet. The vast majority of the children have been told about these, in particular by their parents but above all by word of mouth among friends, by the alerts that circulate on the Internet itself or (more rarely) thanks to specialist magazines, such as computer magazines or magazines aimed at teenagers.

  o **False competitions and false announcements informing the user he has won something,** which ask for the user's personal details in order for him to be able to secure the so-called prize.

  o **Supposedly free online games** which in fact it turns out you have to pay for.

  o **Attractive commercial offers** which demand payment by credit card and may mask a fraudulent securement of bank details.

➢ **Anything that puts the child himself in difficulties or in danger**

- **Physical assaults and sex attacks.** The children very clearly mention the risk of coming into contact with a malicious adult who might want to cause them harm, kidnap them, rape them (mentioned mainly by girls aged 12 to 14), injure them, or kill them (mentioned more so by the younger boys). The explicit mention of "paedophiles" is not uncommon. It should be stressed that this risk of physical attack could already have been mentioned spontaneously, and more or less explicitly, in the first part of the discussion regarding in

particular the limits imposed by parents to the freedom of use of the Internet, with the prohibition of communicating any personal details clearly being one of the most categorical and well argued.

"Some people with bad intentions can send SMS pretending they are someone else and give appointments to trap children" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Luxembourg)

This serious and specific risk does seem to be very much present in the minds of the large majority of the children, even if, at this stage in the discussion, it has not necessarily been put, or put back, at the head of the risks mentioned.

It is generally the older children who mention it more immediately (sometimes no doubt with a desire thereby to show their "maturity" and high degree of awareness of the potential danger) but the younger children can also show themselves to be very aware in this respect (slightly more so girls than boys in the 9-10 age bracket).

The risk factors and ways of protecting oneself are well identified overall:

° **Being especially vigilant when "chatting" on an open website (or on MSN).** The large majority of the children are aware that adults can interfere in children's forums and pass themselves off for a young person by misrepresenting their identity. Most of the children feel that they can be unmasked quite easily, by the kind of vocabulary and expressions they use and in particular by the questions they ask. For that matter, all of them tend to assert than in no circumstances do they impart personal details on this kind of forum. However, a minority of participants reveal that they have given their e-mail address to "unknown" people they have chatted to on a chat (apparently without any regrettable consequences).

° **Not replying to proposals made by strangers and never agreeing to go to a rendezvous** are instructions which are apparently well assimilated and respected. However, we find some examples of children who say they have gone to a rendezvous "accompanied by several others", or know friends who have done this.

A minority also express the desire to make "new" friends and indicate how attractive chats are for extending one's circle of friends. Some congratulate themselves on having thus made new and pleasant relationships with children of their own age.

"It is very easy to come across nasty paedophiles on chat sites like that. But you notice it when they open the conversation with asking if you are horny and things like that... and then you know what's going on" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Norway)

"You might think that you are talking to another person your age, but you could be talking to this 80 years old with sagging skin" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Ireland)

• **Physical threats or psychological pressure.** Apart from dangerous adults who might try to make contact with them, a number of children report unpleasant or stress-inducing and worrying "anonymous" messages (on account of having had experience of them themselves or knowing friends who have fallen victim to them). These may be threats of violence or death threats, insults, or comments that are hurtful or humiliating for the recipient.

As a rule, after the initial (sometimes disturbing) experiences, the children generally show themselves to be rather phlegmatic and declare themselves to be indifferent, treating the matter with scorn or as a joke.

When anonymous e-mails are involved, the answer is not to open messages from senders who are unknown to the recipient, or the origin of which is dubious, and to delete them.

On the other hand, some children are the subject of ragging, threats or abuse from their own friends. Some reply and seem to give themselves over to equally aggressive exchanges; others, who are more put out (particularly among the younger children), may talk about it to their parents, who will then solve the problem.

Finally, some children point out the risk of seeing manipulated/retouched photos or captions published on the Internet in a disagreeable or shocking manner. From this point of view personal "blogs", with photos placed on line, constitute one of the possible sources of this kind of annoyance, but also the mere exchanging of photos between friends.

- **The risk of addiction.** When the children are asked specifically about the problems and risks associated with the Internet, this risk is not spontaneously mentioned by a large number, whilst we have seen above that it is often mentioned in respect of the frequency and intensity of use. Here, it is called to mind more so by the youngest children, for whom excessive use of the Internet is virtually considered as a hard drug. It might be thought that in so saying they are reiterating their parents' instructions. No doubt still "beginners" in terms of use of the Internet, they are thereby subject to more supervision and more expressly warned against excesses by their parents or even their elder brothers or sisters.

- **Illegal downloads,** finally, are cited but in quite a sporadic fashion. Apart from possibly causing infection by a virus, they present the risk of prosecution, worries for the parents and severe punishments.

- Marginally, a few children mentioned the risk of being drawn into a **sect**.

❖ **The problems and risks spontaneously linked to the mobile phone.** As already mentioned, these are deemed in general to be far fewer and less serious than those associated with the Internet. In some groups (generally the youngest), the risks are even sometimes reduced to connection to the Internet by mobile phone, without any special mention of other risks.

➢ **Connecting to the Internet by mobile phone.** This is a risk that appears to be harmful in two respects: the prohibitive cost, which would be liable to "blow" one's credit, and the risk of viruses. Most often, it is indicated by the older children (in particular the boys) and is often unknown to the youngest. In any case, as we have seen this is a very uncommon use among young children.

➢ **Receipt of unpleasant or threatening calls or text messages.** This kind of practice, falling somewhere between a bad joke and harassment, seems to be quite widespread "sport" among young people. A large number of children seem to have experienced it, and some of them have engaged in it themselves, out of fun or in retaliation.

If this causes a major malaise, the children often turn first to their friends, or ask for the support of their elder brother or sister. Some, notably among the youngest children, prefer to – or would refer to – turn to their parents.

It is "anonymous" calls (concealed number) that are the most disturbing; the contact, the tone, the voice are "real" and can lead to genuine malaise. The solutions – cutting off the call and then switching off the mobile – are the most common reactions but are sometimes hard to cope with: you then dread the calls but balk at switching off the mobile and thus cutting yourself off

from your friends. Text messages do not have this "violence" and, what's more, are identifiable.

"These are bad jokes which the boys make to scare us girls. I also made jokes, but not such bad ones…" (Girls groups, 9-10 years, Romania)

"With mobile phones, people who want to make jokes, if they send SMS, you can always see the number" (Girls groups, 12-14 years, France)

> **Theft.** This is a risk mentioned in very unequal manner, according to the groups and the countries. It seems to be mentioned slightly more frequently in countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and more so by young children who are more vulnerable.

> **The risk of pathogenic radiation.** Some children (more so the youngest) mention this danger, and talk of cancers and brain tumours (in Luxembourg, Greece, Estonia). Some say they keep this risk to a minimum by not calling very often and keeping calls very short.

❖ **In the end, we see that children show themselves overall to be quite well informed of the risks associated with the Internet and mobile phones.**

❖ **Parents are of course privileged informers,** but they are sometimes perceived as excessively protective, which can lead, among some, to relatively intrusive behaviour or behaviour perceived as such (checking of the websites consulted, checking of e-mails) and hence a loss of privacy and self-censorship. In this respect, **children's peers, classmates, friends and brothers and sisters are interlocutors who are sought out more readily.**

❖ **In some cases, school seems to have played a role as well,** in particular in the introductory computing classes or during information sessions with associations, educators and/or policemen which are held in some schools (for example in Germany, Ireland, the United Kingdom, etc.).

❖ **The media are also a source of information and warning:** television programmes or series intended for young people (Portugal, Iceland, Poland, Lithuania) but also magazines for young people (Belgium).

❖ **A large majority of the children questioned do not show any inordinate anxiety and tend to reveal a degree of sang-froid.** The majority say they take all these matters "very seriously" and assure that they would warn their parents in the event of any "serious" problem. **However, it should be emphasised that they show a great propensity to solve their own problems within their peer group and would no doubt first turn to their close friends or their elder brothers and sisters.** Beyond that, it is the **parents** who would be notified, sometimes (in the case of a potentially "dramatic" problem) the police, and quite rarely teachers. We shall come back to this.

III.2   PROBLEMS AND RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH SPECIFIC USES

❖ To look at things in more detail, all the children taking part in the study were given the same list of uses of the Internet and mobile phones as before (cf. I.4). They were asked to indicate, in this list, the most disagreeable or worrying risks and problems with a system of red adhesive discs: one alongside uses that implied a problem, of whatever kind, and a second for those that seemed the most disagreeable or worrying.

❖ **The results of this consultation:**

  ➢ **Show a great homogeneity in the perception of risks, all countries taken together.**

  ➢ **Confirm the hierarchy of the risks incurred, and the children's good overall "declared" level of information and awareness.**

❖ **To sum up on the risks attached to the Internet:**

  ➢ **In all the countries, it is first and foremost the uses that imply the possibility of contact with adult strangers that are deemed to the most "risky":**

   • **"Taking part in open chats/discussion forums".** This is by far the activity perceived as the most risky since it is the most conducive to a possible contact with malicious or dangerous adults. However, it will be seen that the children all say they know how to protect themselves from this. It will be recalled that girls of all ages are more sensitive to this aspect than boys. This is especially true of the youngest girls.

   • **"Reading and replying to blogs/websites of someone you have never met".** This use stems from the same concern as the previous one: it still involves avoiding contact with an adult the child does not know.

   • **"Using instant messaging (MSN)/chats with friends".** Here, again, although to a lesser degree, ill-intentioned adults may intrude.

  ➢ **Second in the ranking of the main risks is anything that could affect the computer itself or cause the user problems** (excessive cost or reprimands)**:** in this respect, some uses can obtain high "scores of dangerousness", sometimes at the level of the preceding uses – "one" red disc – but without the same level of "seriousness" – fewer or few cases of "two" red discs being given.

   • **"Downloading music, films, videos, etc.".** Here the risk of the much-dreaded possible infection by a virus comes up again, but also the risk of illegal downloads.

   • **"Exchanging files (music, films, videos, games or others)".** This relates to the same concern as before.

   • **"Dowloading ring tones/screen backgrounds", "Playing games on line", "Taking part in competitions"** are potentially liable to lead to serious concerns – unexpected costs, cons, infection by viruses...

❖ **The risks attached to use of the mobile phone are also of two kinds and confirm the results already observed:**

> **Uses that are potentially disturbing for the child himself:**

- **"Making/receiving phone calls", "Sending/receiving text messages".** As we have seen, these are methods of harassment particularly appreciated by some young people, who seem at times both to be the victims of it but also responsible themselves.

- **"Sending/receiving/sharing images".** These are photos, and particularly photos "of oneself" which risk appearing on line, and circulating in a disagreeable manner within the school, in particular.

> **Potentially "costly" uses,** in terms of expenses (cost and use of connection time) or technical problems (viruses):

- **"Sending/receiving/sharing images".** This risk was already mentioned, but here it is taken from the cost point of view (economic and in terms of time)

- **"Connecting to the Internet by means of my mobile phone".** This is a fairly "virtual" risk for most of the children, who do not use this function and generally do not have it.

❖ **For the mobile phone, we can stress that in a majority of cases it is uses of the second type** (technical and economical) **that are predominantly advanced,** harassment by calls or text messages being cited less or completely ignored. This is often the case of older children, in particular the boys. One can presume here a relative under-statement on the part of young people, who are concerned to show a command of the problem and their capacity to deal with it themselves. This is the case in particular, for example, in Luxembourg, France, Germany, Finland, Norway, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania.

❖ In conclusion, we see that the **Internet and the mobile phone, preferred communication tools of children, are characterised by the same qualities and advantages** (pleasure, discovery, attraction for new and stimulating relationships) but also the same defects and disadvantages, and the same problems, abuses or pathologies (conflicts, risk taking, dangers, threats, ill-advised encounters) **as any relational behaviour.**

❖ **From this point of view, the "anonymous" character (under pseudonym) of exchanges on the Internet presents the other sides and risks of its qualities: the possibility of numerous encounters and great freedom of expression but also the lack of rules, ease of transgressions and capacity to deceive and trick. In this context, it is important to stress that, even though the children show themselves overall to be quite aware of most of these risks and readily say they are quite seasoned, they are nonetheless confronted with these problems at a very early age and may underestimate them, out of bravado or excessive confidence.** We shall come back to this in the next chapter.

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CHAPTER IV

REACTIONS TO THE PRESENTATION OF SIX CATEGORIES

OF PROBLEMS AND RISKS

IV.1 TRUTHFULNESS OF INFORMATION FOUND ON THE INTERNET

❖ We saw in the first chapter that looking for information on the Internet for school or in one's own interest was one of the most frequent ways in which the Internet is used.

❖ **The potentially incorrect nature of some information found on the Internet is a phenomenon of which almost all the children are aware.** These are "pieces of writing" which clearly do not have the same status or the same value as those of books or even part of the press (referred to as "serious").

In general, the unreliable nature of information found on the Internet has been discovered when a search has been made for information for homework. Most of the children have experienced this themselves or been warned of it, either by their classmates or by their parents, and sometimes by their teachers (who themselves, according to the children, are also misled by the Internet).

It will be noted that in this context the teachers more or less explicitly recommend the use of the Internet, but are themselves rarely specialised in teaching the right way to use it. In this respect, children who receive "poor marks", after incorrect information had been collected on the Internet, show themselves to be particularly frustrated and feel that they are being unfairly punished.

"Anyone can put up a site and say whatever" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Belgium)

"In TV ads, nothing is true, so is the Internet" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Hungary)

"I trust the books we use in school more than information I find on the Internet, and papers have to pay a fine if they print something that's not true" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Sweden)

❖ **Books, parents, teachers and the press are generally more credible then the Internet.**

"Information given by teachers, parents, books, is true. It is more true than what you find on the Internet" (Boys group, 9-10 years, Romania)

❖ **The majority of children distinguish two types of errors attributable to the Internet:**

➢ **Inaccuracy of data,** false data, inaccuracies, contradictions, information that has been become outdated and not been updated, the way of dealing with this risk being to check at least one other website (the older children), ask one's parents (the youngest children), and consult books (more so among girls).

"I always check the source and then the truthfulness of the information collected" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Luxembourg)

The search engines – such as Google, which is often cited – or sites of an encyclopaedic nature – along the lines of Wikipedia – are credited with ambiguous reliability, which varies according to the groups. The most optimistic give them a credibility rating of around 80% or more, whilst others place it around the 50% mark.

➢ **Deliberate lies and trickery** generally relate to rumours, "buzz" and fanciful news on all kinds of subjects – misleading announcements about public figures, doctored photos, false competitions, "chain" messages to be continued, accompanied by threats if you break the chain (pointed out in particular by girls), etc.

> *"Buzzes, making people think that something wrong is true. I know people who send buzzes, I send buzzes" (Boys group, 12-14 years, France)*

❖ **Overall, knowledge of the uncertain reliability of the information available or doing the rounds on the Internet is not very dissuasive**. All the children continue to use it as a source (and often a main and preferential source) of information. In fact:

➢ **Searches on the Internet present numerous advantages which the children show themselves unwilling to give up**: speed and ease of access, availability at home, more agreeable nature of the consultation (attractive presentation, images), regular updates, interdisciplinary nature and wealth of subject matter dealt with, large number of possible sources.

> *"I think it has the most information and it is the easiest way" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Iceland)*

> *"What do you do if you don't have the book you need ? You cannot say that you don't have the book and you'd have to go to a library to find information you need" (Boys group, 9-10 years, Malta)*

➢ **Possibility of checking on another website.** Following setbacks or when alerted by their friends or parents, most of the children generally consult two sites on the same subject, or a third if they obtain contradictory data from the first two.

➢ **Possibility of pinpointing unreliable sites and of consulting "serious" sites,** the children say they are capable of assessing the credibility of the sites:

• **Avoiding sites overloaded with pop-ups and advertising,** or which announce that the user consulting it is the "millionth" and has won a prize, inviting him to give his details.

• **Preference for "official sites"**, for example some newspaper sites, television news sites (BBC), "national" sites rather than foreign ones (in Finland, Iceland, Latvia), sites of recognised institutions (National Education, Ministries...).

> *"We can always double-check information together with our peers or teachers or use official sites that do not tell lies" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Greece)*

> *"When I go through a website rich in pop-ups and advertising I guess it's not a good one" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Italy)*

> *"You trust the official web-sites more" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Spain)*

> *"If it is a well known website like BBC News, you can trust it is because they have to keep their reputation up" (Girls group, 12-14 years, United-Kingdom)*

❖ **Whether it be the search for information (for school or for oneself) or deliberately untrue information, this is a risk clearly perceived as quite minor, the consequences of which are hardly dramatic and are, overall, experienced in a distant and light-hearted manner.**

> *"It is not really problematic" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Austria)*

> *"You find truthful and untruthful stuff, but it is OK overall. I do not think it is a problem really" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Bulgaria)*

IV.2 POTENTIALLY SHOCKING CONTENT

❖ **As we saw in Chapter III.1, the children often cited this risk very spontaneously.** It is confirmed here that a good number of them are disturbed, bothered and in some cases sometimes traumatised by it.

The following are mentioned:

➤ **Images of a pornographic nature.** These seem in fact to be the most frequent. Almost all the children questioned seem to have been exposed to them.

"When pop-ups with porn open up, that's not bad. After all, everybody has had a look at one point or another" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Austria)

➤ **Scenes of extreme violence or torture.** These are also very often cited, with, for example, real scenes filmed in Iraq (the hanging of Saddam Hussein) or elsewhere (decapitations) or acts of cruelty to animals being called to mind. These are clearly the most shocking and the ones with the greatest consequences. Some children say they are upset by them on a long-term basis.

"I was very shocked (by a violent scene) and my heart beat very fast. I then showed it to my mother" (Boys group, 9-10 years, Austria)

"I was shocked by violent videos, short videos from Iran or Iraq, people who got their heads cut off" (Boys group, 12-14 years, France)

➤ **"Racist" or "Nazi" sites.** Not mentioned until now, they appear here but are only cited by a minority, basically in Germany, the Netherlands, Slovakia (with a mention of the "Rodem" site), and Romania.

"You find information telling things about Black people that are untrue. I think it is not a good thing to discriminate people because of the colour of their skin" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Romania)

❖ **In fact, at this stage of the discussion, this risk appears more ambivalently, some children – in particular the oldest boys – showing themselves to be openly "interested" of course by images of a pornographic nature, but also by "horror" videos or "gore" games, or by clips showing children really being ill-treated** ("happy slapping").

It is clear that for some (nonetheless a minority), **the Internet is an ideal place for infringement and habituation to violence, with, it would seem, alarming abuses**: numerous mentions of videos of brutalities recorded live and often carried out on girls, incitement to real violence, by imitation, in particular among boys, displayed (or affected) cynicism in the face of cruel or frightening scenes.

"Rotter.com, there they have rather gory pictures, a guy's head caught between helicopter blades, brains had flown all over the place.. (..) Absolutely all kinds of disgusting stuff. Some are really disgusting, some are funny. There's nothing preventing you from sleeping later but I don't sit and admire them" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Estonia)

"Happy slapping' is really hilarious ! They just hit strangers and film it" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Netherlands)

"One boy in my class watches Wrestling on television after 10 p.m., and at school he imitates everything he sees, throwing chairs, fighting ... He thinks he is the fighter in the class" (Boys group, 9-10 years, Romania)

"Some of the stuff they put on YouTube is quite horrible, what they do to people, but it's still quite funny !" "I go on like YouTube and look on the videos on there. I tell mum and dad to come and have a look. They just laugh at it and stuff" (Boys group, 12-14 years, United-Kingdom)

❖ **On average, across all ages and countries, girls show themselves to be markedly more critical and more shocked than boys** (in particular the older boys). They often denounce boys' taste for this kind of content, especially pornographic material but also material of a violent, cynical and barbaric nature.

"All Internet users have personal interests. Adults definitely go to 'bad sites' intentionally, the same is true for boys. Girls have other interests" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Lithuania)

❖ **Reactions to "shocking" material differ according to its nature:**

➢ **Erotic or pornographic material** is, in the case of the majority, removed without anyone being called on.

"There is no point in telling, everyone knows that such things exist. It's no crazy news that a naked woman popped up. They laugh as us then..." (Girls groups, 12-14 years, Estonia)

However the youngest children tend to warm their parents. Others quickly "close" the window (girls in the majority), some (mainly boys) admit more or less readily to "having a look" at it.

In fact, the oldest girls and boys avoid talking about it to their parents, not only because they do not regard it as a serious problem, but also because they do not want to bring up these questions with them (not to mention some boys who feel more or less guilty about it). Some comment that the parents themselves would be uncomfortable and embarrassed by it (pointed out in particular in Austria and Finland). This no doubt remains a sensitive and problematic point.

"I would first try to get rid of it by myself, if it does not work, by checking my anti-virus programme and if all of that is useless then I ask a friend. There is always one who knows what to do" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Germany)

"If I look at pornographic pictures on the Internet by mistake and your parents are around, there is always this embarrassing silence" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Austria)

It should also be noted, as was already stressed before, that the oldest children show themselves to be quite "blasé" but are worried in particular about younger children, especially their younger brothers and sisters, who they say they protect and warn and encourage to be careful.

"It depends on how mature you are" (...) "These pictures could have harmful effects, especially for children who are younger than us, such things may influence them badly" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Malta)

➢ **Pornographic material of a paedophile nature.** This kind of material is only mentioned very marginally (without it always being possible to ascertain whether the children have been exposed to it or whether they have simply heard about it), but, unlike the previous types of material, it always leads to (or would lead to) the **parents** or the **police** being notified.

"It depends what content it is... I would tell if it was a paedophile one" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Iceland)

➢ **Material of a violent nature, scenes of torture, videos of people being beaten up or "happy slapping".** These are quite widely cited, occurring most often after a poorly formulated search (too general key word) or, sometimes, sent in attachment anonymously but also by schoolmates.

Generally considered to be sickening, and sometimes seriously traumatic, these images are most often immediately removed. However, it should be stressed that some children, boys and in particular the older boys, welcome them with a certain pride and some say they have a lot of fun with them.

These may be particularly violent games but also, and more worryingly, scenes of deaths (news videos like the execution of hostages or of Saddam Hussein, suicides), and sometimes "real" scenes of brutality meted out gratuitously on unknown people or even on classmates, who are beaten up and filmed "especially" so that the images can be put on the Internet. Most of the children show themselves to be very shocked and frightened, especially girls who are more often the victims of this kind of bullying or who feel more threatened.

Faced with this latter kind of material, the large majority of children would denounce it to their parents or teachers. The fact remains that a minority does not regard this violent behaviour as absolutely reprehensible and do not, it seems, systematically avoid and curb it.

"Postal is a maximally bloody game. If you play it at once, you become inured to anything" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Poland)

"We say together it is disgusting, and that's it" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Slovakia)

"Well, the other day I received a link to YouTube where a girl from my school got really beaten up. But what can I do ? They will call me a bitch and beat me up" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Netherlands)

"Once, someone sent me a clip where they beat a girl. It was awful and I told my parents" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Bulgaria)

❖ **Overall, the children say they definitely want to avoid receiving these kinds of images with a violent content.** We have seen that, for pornographic scenes, the attitudes are more ambiguous.

The youngest boys and girls of both age categories are more particularly in favour of an effective system of avoidance. For example, it is suggested that these (pornographic or violent) sites should be paid for and therefore automatically reserved for adults. Others imagine that it should only be possible to consult them or for them to be placed on line after a particular time, as for films screened on television that are forbidden to minors.

IV.3   POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS CONTACTS

❖ To illustrate the risk, the children were told a story of a young person of their age who, after putting his/her profile on line on the Internet and gradually giving his details, had established a relationship with someone he/she did not know, and could prove not to be a child of his/her age but someone very different who could lead him/her to do things he/she shouldn't do, or even be an ill-intentioned adult. The participants were asked to react to this story, and in particular to say whether that had happened to them personally or to someone they knew.

❖ **It is worth emphasising that, as for shocking material, at this stage of the discussion and in most of the groups, the children show themselves to be more verbose than previously** (cf. III.1 on spontaneously perceived risks)**: in comparison with their previous statements, they are then more inclined to acknowledge having already given their e-mail address or telephone number or even agreed to meet someone**.

"Similarly as it was with a mobile, someone may do it on GG or somewhere else... on some sites... but most often on GG... When someone talks with us, he may pretend to be a person in our age, or even younger, and this might be someone else. Or he may pretend to be your colleague." (Girls group, 9-10 years, Poland)

"I discussed with someone about my schoolwork and after a while this person invited me to a private chat room where he then asked her my number. Back then I din't know better and unfortunately gave my number and the person started calling. I believe that he was about 50 years old" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Finland)

"I met him at a station and then it was an old, nasty, 44 years old man. Then I walked away ! I have never told my parents about it ! They would get angry. It might have consequences, I might have my mobile phone taken from me" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Denmark)

"Once I accompanied a friend to see someone whom she had met on the Internet. We had taken a gas spray along and we had to use it because he was a 50 years old man and he annoyed my friend" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Hungary)

"We had talked to one person, who gave us an appointment, we went there and we saw that it was someone older. We left!" (Girls group, 12-14 years, France)

" This happened to my cousin. She was talking on the internet with someone she thought was 8 years old, but he was old. One day he came to her house and rang the bell. My cousin was alone in the house so she did not open the door." (Girls group, 9-10 years, Cyprus)

❖ **In fact, in almost all the groups in a large majority of countries, we collect a number of personal anecdotes or anecdotes from the child's close circle, attesting to real, potentially dangerous contacts.** It is virtually only in Sweden, the Baltic States, Cyprus and Malta, that the children report this appreciably less.

❖ **It therefore indeed seems that some children adopt more "risky" behaviour than they say and think**. In particular young people aged 12 to 14 can show themselves to be very confident, both in their own insight in unmasking false identities and interlocutors who are especially "friendly" towards them.

On listening to them, these types of behaviour are still quite rare, but it is probable that there is understatement in this regard, all the more so since they admit their hesitancy in speaking about it to their parents and therefore, probably, adults in general (and, in the case at hand, the discussion leader).

"I would tell anybody except my parents, I would be too much afraid that my mother finds confirmation of what she fears and prevents me from going to chat rooms" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Germany)

It is clear that, among the older children, and more so among girls than boys, contacts with strangers have a scent of adventure, an unsettling and appealing character. A good number talk about it as though it were an exciting "game", including when they think they have identified an adult who they then have fun "shooing away".

It is also noted that, through a common distancing mechanism, as the older children feel the younger children are more vulnerable, so boys, in particular the oldest, often say they are less concerned or not concerned and less exposed than girls. Moreover, a number of them feel that girls are looking for new friends more often than boys, and are especially appreciative of "fine-sounding words" and flattery, and are therefore more susceptible to being tricked and taken advantage of.

❖ **Overall, as we have already seen, in the event of a problem, the youngest would turn without hesitation to their parents (or, if not, to their elder brothers or sisters). On the other hand, it is confirmed that the older children tend more to solve the problem within their circle of close friends and would only call on their parents in the very last resort.** Here we find the desire for privacy, in particular among young teenagers (13-14-year-olds), who are looking for self-affirmation and relational autonomy, and fear finding themselves overly supervised and forbidden from using the Internet. In this respect, some regard their parents as improperly and excessively worried, feeling that they "make too much of it". As for the teachers, they are disqualified, from this point of view, since they are not close enough.

"Parents seem to think you are stupid, but one hears from others and learns to be careful" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Sweden)

❖ **The majority feel they have enough answers:**

➢ Never give your address or phone number to someone you don't know.

➢ Leave the forum if you have doubts.

➢ Look carefully at the way the interlocutor expresses himself and the questions he puts, which may be revealing as to his age.

➢ Only chat with your friends, and don't allow strangers into your list of contacts.

➢ Ask to see the person by means of a webcam.

➢ Visit reliable, well-controlled and well-run websites (reserved for children with effective filtering).

➢ Never arrange to meet someone you don't know who you've met on the Internet.

"Don't give your personal data on the Internet, nor your mobile phone number to people you don't know" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Luxembourg)

"I did it once, someone started talking to me over the chat, asking questions, etc. I pretended I wanted to see him, I played with him for a while and then I left the chat" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Bulgaria)

"I ask who it is and if he has a webcam, to see him" (Boys group, 9-10 years, Luxembourg)

"Now you can identify who it is you are talking to, thanks to the computer's IP address" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Luxembourg)

"For example, if he writes you something back, like, let's meet tomorrow somewhere, you mustn't go as you don't know the person at all. [...] It's a rule, as, say, if you have to meet him somewhere, it can be dangerous, but if you just exchange messages, then it's OK." (Girls group, 12-14 years, Latvia)

❖ **In any case, despite the apparent relatively relaxed attitude of the oldest children, the majority of the children questioned regard the risk as serious, showing themselves to be aware and well-informed.** It seems that, aside from parental instructions and recommendations, they are subject to various warnings: information in some schools, for example in the form of playlets (United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark, Greece), public campaigns (Norway, Poland, Germany in some cases), television programmes (including some on the trafficking of organs and children forced to film paedophile scenes, in Portugal and Poland) and, of course, news items.

IV.4 BULLYING

❖ **Harassment, as we have seen, is a risk spontaneously called to mind in respect of the Internet and the mobile phone.** The children mentioned in particular: mockery, "leg pulling", insults, threats, disagreeable comments and slander, sent by e-mail, put forward on discussion forums, left on blogs, telephoned anonymously or sent by text message.

"Somebody might molest you over the phone."(Girls group 9-10 years, Slovenia)

❖ **A good number – essentially among the older children, for whom this seems to be akin to a "sport" and one very much in vogue – have been confronted with this personally or via a friend or classmate. Many of them acknowledge having engaged in this kind of persecution themselves, either on their own or collectively.**

❖ **A sizeable majority, especially among the older children, say that these are disputes and ragging that are commonplace between young people, and claim that it's all about jokes and making fun, in varying degrees of good taste.** In fact, many see it as being the continuation, albeit with new and modern resources, of types of behaviour that have always existed between children.

"It's a part of life!" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Ireland)

"It's not dangerous, it may just be a quarrel" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Belgium)

❖ **However in some cases the degree of bullying or psychological ill-treatment goes beyond a good "joke" and may lead to genuine disorders:**

➢ Nervousness, anxiety, depression.

➢ Insomnia, nightmares.

➢ Refusal to go to school.

❖ **The youngest children (both girls and boys) are potentially most sensitive to it**, although in fact it appears they do not fall victim to it very often and claim, in any case, that they would talk about it to their parents. Conversely, the oldest children make a point of honour of solving the matter "between them", without the intervention of adults,** only possibly calling on friends or older brothers and sisters or the older brothers of friends. Here there is a kind of collective "conspiracy of silence", a refusal to "denounce", and a shared desire to keep the matter "between us".

"My friend had placed some of my pictures and my email address on the Internet. I talked about with my mum who told me to discuss it with this friend and we got solved" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Finland)

"Aegmaha.com, there usually and YouTube too, sometimes they get really bad" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Estonia)

❖ **Generally speaking, the children aged 12 to 14 feel they are perfectly able to make the bullying stop:**

➢ Answer back in the same way, trade insults (most often, and overwhelmingly among the boys).

➢ Ignore the provocation, and do not reply (more so among girls).

➢ Argue face to face with the harasser.

➢ On chats or MSN, *"block"* the unpleasant or insulting interlocutor, and point him out to the site administrator.

➢ Change e-mail address or telephone number.

❖ **Despite this general minimisation of the phenomenon, reduced to a mere "game", it should be pointed out that more serious, at times dramatic cases were mentioned, which could be the tip of an iceberg of untold malaise that is larger and runs deeper:**

➢ Girls who have had to change school (United Kingdom).

➢ Large number of racist insults or verbal or physical abuse linked to religion, in particular targeting Muslims (Sweden, Italy).

➢ Suicide of one Filipino girl in Italy (not via Internet but falling under the same phenomenon of harassment by her classmates).

❖ To conclude, and as a sign of this malaise which is perhaps collectively dissimulated, we can note that some refrain from harassing others when they have been the victim of it themselves. This is a way of confessing to the suffering felt and, therefore, the scruples about inflicting it on others and the inability to do so.

"I did it in the past until I experienced it myself. Now I no longer do it" (Boys group, 9-10 years, Austria)

IV.5   DECEIT AS TO THE FREE NATURE OF SERVICES OR GOODS

❖ **This is a risk that is commonly and spontaneously called to mind, both in respect of the Internet and, even more so, the mobile phone.**

❖ **It is confirmed that almost all the children, in all the countries, are aware of it and have been warned of it,** either because they have personally had a disappointing experience in this regard – payment demanded for a service or item that they thought was free of charge or very attractively priced, non-receipt of an order, unwanted subscription, participation in a competition which in the end had to be paid for, etc., or because friends or parents, who themselves have been "conned" have told them about it. It was virtually only in Norway and Poland that the issue was not raised much.

❖ **It is mainly the oldest children who are concerned and who declare themselves most often to have fallen prey to this.** The youngest children seem overall to be less exposed, but generally just as well warned by parents and friends.

❖ **The most "risky" activities from this point of view are mainly:**

  ➢ Downloading mobile phone ring tones or screen backgrounds.

  ➢ Downloading games, music or videos that are supposedly "free".

   "That happened to me. I wanted a polytone that cost 0.20 and then it ended up costing 20 euros" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Spain)

  ➢ Ordering an item that is stated to be free or very attractively priced.

  ➢ Participation in a competition or replying to a promise that the participant would win something, which turns out in fact to be deceptive and has to be paid for.

  ➢ Subscribing to an offer the "small print" of which the user has not seen or not read properly.

  ➢ Going onto an on-line shopping site.

❖ **For many, the mobile phone is slightly more risky than the Internet,** in particular due to the "easier" nature of consumption of their credit by means of their card.

  "The Zeus Club, they used up all of your credit with the SMS messages, and you couldn't get out of it" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Spain)

❖ **The oldest boys seem slightly more exposed than the girls** (more readily inclined to download files and to play games).

❖ **Overall, this type of risk is perceived as "serious" but not as serious as other risks** (in particular potentially dangerous contacts, shocking material or harassment).

  After all, it is only a question of money, even if many (in the end forced to "pay out of their own pocket") show themselves to be displeased, very irritated or mortified.

  "A bad experience from a chat room is for life but money comes and goes!" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Malta)

❖ **In their great majority, the children confronted with this problem talked about it or would talk about it with their parents, who are seen as the most liable to "settle" the matter – in both senses of the term.** In general, the parents intervene effectively – either by paying the bill or denouncing the transaction (some children have thus learnt that orders placed by minors are invalid). **However, a minority balk at notifying their parents** (some turn to their grandparents, who are more indulgent), out of a fear of being punished and having limits placed on their use of the Internet or their mobile.

❖ In a small minority of cases, for serious "cons", the police would be called in (by some children interviewed, for example in Slovenia and Slovakia).

❖ **In all cases, a bad experience of this kind seems to have constituted a profitable and exemplary "lesson".** All then promise not to order anything from then on without exercising extreme caution and notifying their parents, never giving bank details, only frequenting "reliable" sites with a good reputation, and leaving dubious sites or sites asking for "registration".

IV.6 ILLEGAL DOWNLOADING

❖ **As for the previous ones, this risk was very often mentioned spontaneously.**

❖ **In the vast majority of cases, across all countries, children know that most of the downloads are illegal, but they minimise, deny or justify the practice.**

➢ **Whether it is "illegal" or not is not always clear.**

➢ **"Everyone does it",** the mass nature of the behaviour "putting it in the clear" to some degree ("why not me, too?") but also making the sanction very difficult and not very credible. Moreover, the example set by parents (who themselves often like downloading things) constitutes, in the children's eyes, an implicit form of authorisation.

➢ **The download is for personal and private purposes,** and therefore less serious than systematic recording for fraudulent resale.

➢ **The websites are assumed to remunerate the artists.**

➢ **The argument of the harm inflicted on artists is not very admissible and not very credible.**

➢ **CDs and DVD are too expensive, and most children cannot afford them.**

"It's illegal, but it does not look like it is illegal" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Denmark)

"But I do not understand that it is illegal" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Belgium)

"It is wrong but not our fault" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Belgium)

"Downloading is illegal, it is not punishable whereas sharing the files is punishable" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Finland)

"Dad does it all the time" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Norway)

"People download, but if is just for themselves, it is less serious than downloading for burning and reselling" (Boys group, 12-14 years, France)

"I don't really feel guilty. It wouldn't be on the Internet if it was like really illegal, they wouldn't have it there" (Boys group, 12-14 years, United-Kingdom)

"They have a lot of money ! They don't need my money" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Czech Republic)

"I really don't care, it's not my problem. Singers and actors are rich enough" (All groups, Italy)

"We pay because we are spending megabits !" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Portugal)

❖ **In fact, for the very large majority, there is a considerable feeling of impunity and, in a way, the conviction of a form of "legitimacy", if not legality, in downloading.**

❖ **Only a minority says they are aware of the harm created and the "immorality" of this behaviour.**

❖ **Many nonetheless suggest clearer rules and the possibility of "modest payment".**

❖ **Almost all state that they are prepared to carry on downloading, and do not see themselves refraining from doing it.**

❖ **At the end of the day, the risk of downloading a virus seems to be more dissuasive than the risk of legal proceedings.**

CHAPTER V

INFORMATION ON THE RISKS AND METHODS OF ALERT

V.1 PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES ENVISAGED BY THE CHILDREN

❖ At the end of the discussion, the children were asked to indicate the precautionary measures they felt were useful and, in particular, those that they would advise a younger brother or sister to take.

❖ **The children unanimously list the bulk of the instructions already mentioned during the discussion and enumerated in the previous chapters.**

   To sum up, they generally insist on three major types of precautionary measures:

   ➢ **Those that protect the child from more or less serious attacks:** anything that prevents contacts with strangers, i.e. never revealing your personal details, refusing to meet in person, being very vigilant during chats on open forums, avoiding websites with pornographic, shocking or frightening content, "closing" these immediately, and consulting the parents or an adult if in doubt or if need be.

   "There simply should be a warning, because when I entered a website of kennels, there was a note that if I enter further, there will be drastic scenes and pictures. And if someone has got frazzled nerves, he shouldn't watch it." (Girls group, 12-14 years, Poland)

   ➢ **Those that reduce the risks of "cons" and extra costs:** avoiding sites for online shopping, strictly respecting the confidentiality of bank details, deleting pop-ups and other attractive but deceptive proposals, refraining from rashly downloading games, ring tones and music or answering announcements telling you you've won something fabulous.

   ➢ **Those that protect the computer itself:** only visiting known, reliable websites in order to avoid uploading a virus or having your password "hacked".

❖ Depending on the individuals and the acuteness of their own concerns, the emphasis is often placed more on one aspect or another. But **it can be noted that on average the children – including those of the youngest age category – show themselves to be significantly more prudent, rigorous and prescriptive in the instructions they give to their younger brothers and sisters, than they are for themselves.** In particular among the oldest, we see that they would readily encourage the youngest to call on their parents, whereas generally speaking they often rule out the idea of calling on their parents themselves, preferring to "get by" on their own or with their friends.

   "To be careful about websites they are entering, or when they are 7 or 8, to enter websites under their parents' care." (Girls group, 12-14 years, Poland)

❖ We can also note a few other instructions that are given to the youngest children, albeit less often: don't "make excessive use" of the Internet or the mobile phone, don't upload photos of yourself on the Internet.

V.2 METHODS OF ALERT ENVISAGED

❖ **In the event of a problem, or an unpleasant or worrying situation, we see overall a great convergence of attitudes and the same slight differences according to age categories, sex and type of difficulties.**

❖ Despite the reluctance on the part of older children to "worry them unnecessarily" or excessively and despite the fear of having their use limited by them, **parents are the most natural and obvious means of recourse and support.** They are the closest people and those in the best position to reassure and find the right solution.

"I do not download, only if I hear a tune I like, I ask my father to do it" (Girls group 12-14 years, Denmark)

For the youngest children, calling on their parents is the preferred course of action in almost all cases.

The oldest children – and in particular boys – explicitly avoid calling on their parents and this recourse is reserved for serious cases. We can recall that for them, their older brothers or sisters, their "best" friends (thus people with a close affective relationship but without the parents' status of authority) are the most natural and obvious means of recourse.

"There is no need to worry my parents over nothing. It has to be a real emergency or else, I prefer to handle myself" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Sweden)

"First my friends! And if it is more serious I would tell my mother about it, but not rightaway because she will immediately begin to worry!" (Girls group, 12-14 years, France)

"I ask my brother before going into the site" (Boys group, 9-10 years, Spain)

❖ **In a virtually unanimous fashion (but for rare exceptions), the children almost never envisage going to their teachers**: they are judged to be people with whom the children have a distant relationship, from an affective point of view, and who are objectively ineffectual or powerless. The only case in which their assistance is felt would be interesting concerns technical problems (viruses), provided they are specialist teachers or IT experts or when the problem is directly linked to school. More rarely still, the school's "educational adviser" or "chaplain" (in Ireland) is mentioned.

"I would never discuss with the teacher. That would be a last resort. You don't really have a close relationship with your teacher" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Norway)

❖ There is also considerable consensus **as to the police: the police would only be involved in extremely serious cases** (risk of death, paedophile threat, serious harassment, etc.) **and in the last resort.** More often than not, the parents would be notified first, and they would then judge the expediency or need for calling the police or not.

"If we called the police, they probably would not believe us and would not even check although they ought to." (Boys group, 12-14 years, Slovenia)

"No, we could not call the police unless it was like a murder online, even then I would first go to mom" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Iceland)

❖ **Contacting a specialist organisation by calling a special free telephone number.** This proposal jogs the memory of some children, who recall having heard of this kind of organisation (for example in Belgium, Luxembourg and Portugal).

   Reactions to this solution are very varied, but overall not really enthusiastic or do not reveal much conviction. There is the worry, in particular, about whether the call would be anonymous (children prefer anonymity), whether the person taking the call would actually listen to the child and believe him or her, and the extent to which the interlocutor could actually take any steps, and the consequences this could have (fear of being "pointed out"). Most of the children do not imagine actively taking the step of making the call.

   However, in some cases this could constitute a better course of action than turning to teachers or calling the police.

   Girls seem slightly more interested than boys by this possibility of making a phone call, showing themselves to be more sensitive to direct contact and the idea of "specialists" listening to them. We can also recall that they often feel more exposed than boys (dubious proposals, harassment, etc.).

❖ **Contacting this organisation by e-mail elicits even less interest and support.** In this respect, writing down what one wants to say does not seem suitable (difficulty in expressing the problem) and e-mail, in any case, involves a variable and unforeseeable delay in receiving an answer.

❖ **Using a warning button which you only have to click on to automatically notify the responsible authorities** is a proposal which is greeted **rather neutrally or favourably**. Many see it as a "good idea". Some liken it to the "red cross" which appears on some sites and makes it possible to notify the administrator or remove an intruder.

   This "tool" is thus relatively interesting, but is one that seems quite limited: it would only concern chats and, what is more, its effectiveness is not guaranteed.

   A minority (basically boys) find the proposal "ridiculous" and openly make fun of it.

   "Somebody would still press it and clog the system in a moment" (Boys group, 9-10 years, Czech Republic)

V.3   ATTITUDES TOWARDS INFORMATION ON PROBLEMS AND RISKS

❖ **The very large majority of the children feel they are amply and sufficiently informed of the risks they run on the Internet or via the mobile phone.** Some even show a degree of saturation, which is a way of showing their command of the subject or playing down the importance of the problem.

"No thanks! Otherwise, I will never touch the Internet again" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Belgium)

❖ **However, this feeling does not mean that they reject information on these matters.** A minority, moreover, say that they have learnt something during the discussion, often as to the illegal nature of downloads (a way of showing their "good faith").

❖ **Once again, parents are still a preferred source of information and above all of warnings** (although at times they can become a nuisance in this respect).

❖ **For many, school seems to be a more suitable place for these kinds of teaching methods (provided this is dispensed by external, specialist speakers giving information and advice).**

Interactive meetings with specialists, teachers, associations and policemen, possibly in the presence of the parents and with the possibility of question-and-answer sessions, would be appreciated. In schools where these have already been held, the pupils show themselves to be satisfied (Germany, Ireland, Sweden, Estonia and Greece).

❖ **Dissemination by Internet** – specialist sites, newsletter, etc. – **is also an interesting channel of information.** This is the wish expressed in particular in Germany, Luxembourg, Finland, the three Baltic countries, and in countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

❖ **Information campaigns, in particular on the television, are also deemed to be useful and effective.** Some children (girls in particular) make special reference to a campaign which struck them, highlighting the case of a child thinking he is communicating with a child of his age but where we discover that the latter is in fact an older adult (Norway, Spain, Portugal, Poland and Bulgaria).

❖ **Finally, some would like exchanges of experiences, and the sharing of solutions;** this could be done on a dedicated website or in a cybercafé.

"A conversation like this is good. You learn new things. I didn't' know that downloading music from the Internet is punishable" (Girls group, 9-10 years, Slovenia)

"I think that parents may have a tendency to beat around the bush ! So I think it would be better if someone came and carried out some talks at school" (Girls group, 12-14 years, Malta)

"There is a weekly program on TV about the risks that exist now when using the Internet, the anti-virus they recommend, etc, etc" (Boys group, 12-14 years, Portugal)

ANNEXES

ANNEX I

PARTNER INSTITUTES

(AT)	Austria	Karmasin Motivforschung (Vienna)
(BE)	Belgium	EADC – Yellow Window (Antwerp)
(BG)	Bulgaria	Alpha Research (Sofia)
(CY)	Cyprus	Synovate – Cyprus (Nicosia)
(CZ)	Czech Republic	MARECO (Prague)
(DE)	Germany	Echanges Marktforschung (Cologne)
(DK)	Denmark	Ulveman Explorative (Copenhagen)
(EE)	Estonia	TNS EMOR (Tallinn)
(EL)	Greece	FOCUS (Athens)
(ES)	Spain	Advira/Escario Research (Madrid)
(FI)	Finland	Marketing Radar (Helsinki)
(FR)	France	CSA (Paris)
(HU)	Hungary	Ad Hoc Plus Research (Budapest)
(IE)	Ireland	TNS – MRBI (Dublin)
(IT)	Italy	Market Dynamics International (Milan)
(LT)	Lithuania	Baltic Surveys (Vilnius)
(LU)	Luxembourg	Ilres (Luxembourg)
(LV)	Latvia	TNS Latvia (Riga)
(MT)	Malta	MISCO (Valletta)
(NL)	Netherlands	PQR (Amsterdam)
(PL)	Poland	BSM (Warsaw)
(PT)	Portugal	TNS Euroteste (Lisbon)
(RO)	Romania	Data Media (Bucharest)
(SE)	Sweden	Kommunicera (Stockholm)
(SI)	Slovenia	RM Plus (Maribor)
(SK)	Slovakia	Psymareco (Bratislava), in cooperation with MARECO
(UK)	United Kingdom	Andrew Irving Associates (London)
(IS)	Iceland	Capacent/Gallup (Reykjavik)
(NO)	Norway	Synovate/MMI (Oslo)

ANNEX II

COMPOSITION OF THE GROUPS

	Boys 9-10 years	Girls 9-10 years	Boys 12-14 years	Girls 12-14 years
Austria	10 (Vienna, 18.04.07)	9 (Vienna, 17.04.07)	9 (Vienna, 18.04.07)	8 (Vienna, 17.04.07)
Belgium	7 (Antwerp, 13.04.07)	7 (Antwerp, 13.04.07)	6 (Brussels, 20.04.07)	8 (Brussels, 20.04.07)
Bulgaria	6 (Sofia, 19.04.07)	6 (Sofia, 16.04.07)	6 (Sofia, 17.04.07)	8 (Sofia, 18.04.07)
Cyprus	8 (Nicosia, 24.04.07)	8 (Nicosia, 25.04.07)	8 (Nicosia, 23.04.07)	8 (Nicosia, 23.04.07)
Czech Republic	9 (Prague, 12.04.07)	9 (Prague, 16.04.07)	8 (Prague, 12.04.07)	9 (Prague, 16.04.07)
Germany	8 (Cologne, 29.03.07)	8 Cologne, 28.03.07)	8 (Cologne, 29.03.07)	8 (Cologne, 28.03.07)
Denmark	9 (Höje Taastrup, 17.04.07)	8 (Höje Taastrup, 18.04.07)	9 (Höje Taastrup, 18.04.07)	8 (Höje Taastrup, 17.04.07)
Estonia	8 (Tallinn, 17.04.07)	9 (Tallinn, 18.04.07)	7 (Tallinn, 17.04.07)	8 (Tallinn, 18.04.07)
Greece	9 (Athens, 19.04.07)	8 (Athens, 20.04.07)	9 (Athens, 16.04.07)	9 (Athens, 17.04.07)
Spain	9 (Madrid, 23.04.07)	9 (Madrid, 26.04.07)	9 (Madrid, 26.04.07)	8 (Madrid, 24.04.07)
Finland	8 (Espoo, 24.04.07)	8 (Espoo, 23.04.07)	8 (Espoo, 23.04.07)	8 (Espoo, 24.04.07)
France	7 (Paris, 02.05.07)	7 (Paris, 02.05.07)	9 (Paris, 02.05.07)	8 (Paris, 02.05.07)
Hungary	8 (Budapest, 18.04.07)	8 (Budapest, 17.04.07)	8 (Budapest, 17.04.07)	8 (Budapest, 18.04.07)
Ireland	10 (Dublin, 11.04.07)	8 (Dublin, 16.04.07)	8 (Dublin, 11.04.07)	8 (Dublin, 16.04.07)
Italy	8 (Milan, 18.04.07)	7 (Milan, 19.04.07)	6 (Milan, 18.04.07)	6 (Milan, 19.04.07)
Lithuania	10 (Vilnius, 17.04.07)	9 (Vilnius, 19.04.07)	9 (Vilnius, 16.04.07)	8 (Vilnius, 18.04.07)
Luxembourg	6 (Luxembourg, 24.04.07)	7 (Luxembourg, 19.04.07)	7 (Luxembourg, 20.04.07)	10 (Luxembourg, 26.04.07)
Latvia	8 (Riga, 18.04.07)	8 (Riga, 18.04.07)	8 (Riga, 19.04.07)	8 (Riga, 19.04.07)
Malta	8 (Valletta, 09.04.07)a	8 (Valletta, 09.04.07)	8 (Valletta, 11.04.07)	8 (Valletta, 11.04.07)
Netherlands	8 (Amsterdam, 11.04.07)	8 (Amsterdam, 11.04.04)	8 (Amsterdam, 12.04.07)	8 (Amsterdam, 11.04.07)
Poland	9 (Warsaw, 16.04.07)	7 (Warsaw, 13.04.07)	9, (Warsaw, 16.04.07)	9 (Warsaw, 13.04.07)
Romania	8 (Bucharest, 22.04.07)	7 (Bucharest, 21.04.07)	8 (Bucharest, 21.04.07)	8 (Bucharest, 22.04.07)
Portugal	8 (Lisbon, 09.04.07)	6 (Lisbon, 10.04.07)	8 (Lisbon, 11.04.07)	8 (Lisbon, 12.04.07)
Sweden	6 (Stockholm, 07.04.07)	6 (Stockholm, 07.04.07)	6 (Stockholm, 07.04.07)	8 (Stockholm, 07.04.07)
Slovenia	8 (Maribor, 13.04.07)	9 (Maribor, 12.04.07)	9 (Ljubljana, 18.04.07)	10 (Ljubljana, 17.04.07)
Slovakia	9 (Bratislava, 16.04.07)	9 (Bratislava, 12.04.07)	8 (Bratislava, 11.04.07)	8 (Bratislava, 10.04.07)
United Kingdom	7 (London, 19.04.07)	8 (London, 17.04.07)	8 (London, 19.04.07)	8 (London, 17.04.07)
Iceland	8 (Reykjavik, 24.04.07)	7 (Reykjavik, 25.04.07)	6 (Reykjavik, 26.04.07)	7 (Reykjavik, 27.04.07)
Norway	9 (Oslo, 30.04.07)	8 (Oslo, 30.04.07)	10 (Oslo, 26.04.07)	10 (Oslo, 26.04.07)

ANNEX III

DISCUSSION GUIDE

SAFER INTERNET STUDY
DISCUSSION GUIDE
(29.03.2007)

Introduction

Hello, my name is …….. and I work with …….., the research agency in charge of the study which brings us here together today.

The subject of the study is how children/youngsters use the Internet and mobile phones.

Have you a clear idea of what we are and what we do?

> ➢ Ask the children if they know the terms opinion surveys/polls and what they associate with them

> ➢ Explain to them that the purpose is to understand what people do and think – and that they should express themselves quite freely

> ➢ Reassure them that whatever they say will be dealt with confidentially – i.e. their words may be taken as examples of children's views, but without ever being associated with their names ; in particular, what a child participant says will not be repeated to his/her parents.

To start with, I will ask each of you to introduce him/herself with a few words : who you are, if you have brothers and sisters, if you have access to the Internet and how – your own computer, your parents' computer, at school, at friends', at an Internet café – and also if you have a mobile phone.

THEME I.   THE INTERNET AND INTERNET APPLICATIONS

Let us talk about the Internet.

I.1   Before we start discussing how you use the Internet, I would like to know how you learnt to use it.

> ➢ Spontaneous reactions

> ➢ Probe :
> - Self learning or learning from others
> - From whom? Other children (Who? friends, brothers or sisters?), adults? (parents, teachers, other adults ?)

I.2   Could you tell me how and how often you use the Internet and how much time, roughly, you spend on it ?

> ➢ Spontaneous reactions

> ➢ Probe :

> - Regular or variable Internet usage ? What does it depend on ?
> - To how much time do the children estimate their usage of the Internet (time spent on average, per day or per week)

I.3   Can you use the Internet as you wish and as often as you wish, or do you have any limits, rules or recommendations given by your parents – or anything you think your parents would like you to do or not to do although they may not really have told you.

➢ Spontaneous reactions

➢ Probe :
  • If limits/rules/recommendations/implicit rules : what are they ?
  • For each of the limits/rules/recommendations/implicit rules : perceived justification and degree of agreement
  • If no limits/rules/recommendations/implicit rules : how would they feel if they were given any?
  • Which ones would they (or not) accept/agree with ? : perceived justification and degree of agreement

I.4   We have prepared a list with various possible uses of the Internet.
May I ask each of you :

  • To put **one green sticker** to each of the applications you use
  • To put **a second green sticker** to the applications you use most

➢ Distribute the table.

➢ Let the participants fill it in.

  Check that the one sticker/two stickers system has been understood.
  Check that each participant has written in his/her first name.

➢ Collect the questionnaires, and quickly identify the most frequent applications.

I.5   I can see that some applications are used more than others.
What are you particularly interested in or do you particularly like in these Internet applications?

➢ Spontaneous reactions

➢ Probe : frequent applications not elicited in spontaneous reactions

MOBILE PHONE AND MOBILE PHONE USAGE

II.1 Some of you also have a mobile phone.
For those of you who have one, please tell me how you use it ?

➢ Ask successively each of the (mobile phone owning) participants
Let each one express him/herself freely. Then probe :

- With whom (friends, parents, in which circumstances ?)
- What is it most often used for (verbal conversations, SMS, other applications)

Others among you do not have a mobile phone. Can you tell me why ?

➢ Probe for reasons (cost ; parents' wish that their children do not have one ; others)

II.2 Mobile phones can also be used for sending or receiving photographs (MMS), taking part in chats, or connecting to the Internet. Do you also do that ?

➢ Ask again each (mobile phone owning) participant:

- If he/she has already used these functions (which one(s)), what he/she gets out of it or – if not used – why?

II.3 Do you use your mobile phone freely, as you wish and as much as you wish, or do you have any limits, rules or recommendations given by your parents – or anything you think your parents would like you to do or not to do although they may not really have told you.

➢ Spontaneous reactions

➢ Probe :
- If limits/rules/recommendations/implicit rules: what are they ?
- For each of the limits/rules/recommendations/implicit rules : perceived justification and degree of agreement
- If no limits/recommendations/implicit rules : how would they feel if they were given any?
- Which ones would they (or not) accept/agree with ? : perceived justification and degree of agreement

II.4 Here is now a short list of mobile phone uses.
In the same way as for Internet uses earlier, could you please :

- Put **one green sticker** to each of the applications you use
- Put **a second green sticker** to the applications you use most

➢ Distribute the table.

➢ Let the participants fill it in.

Check that the one sticker/two stickers system has been understood.
Check that each participant has written in his/her first name.

➢ Collect the questionnaires, and quickly identify the most frequent applications.

THEME III.   INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE RELATED PROBLEMS AND RISKS

III.1   Besides it being something useful and pleasant, are there also problems or risks in using the Internet or mobile phones – I mean things that you don't like or find scary ?

➢ Spontaneous reactions

➢ Probe :

- Types of problems/risks mentioned
- Problems/risks related to Internet usage/to mobile phone usage
- How are the children aware of these problems/risks (Personal experience ? Being warned about them ? By whom ? Another child ?
- Adults – which adults ? An institution/authority ?)
- How serious do they feel these problems/risks are ?

III.2A Have these problems changed the way you use the Internet ?

➢ Spontaneous reactions

➢ Probe :

- Limitations in (volume of) usage
- Precautions taken ; of their own initiative/under the influence of parents

III.2.B Have these problems changed the way you use your mobile phone ?

➢ Spontaneous reactions

➢ Probe :

- Limitations in (volume of) usage
- Precautions taken ; of their own initiative/under the influence of parents

III.3   Here is a table with the list of both Internet and mobile phone applications on which you put the green stickers earlier.
Please place **one red sticker** next to the applications which you feel may involve problems of any kind, and **a second red sticker** for those which you regard as most annoying or scary.

➢ Distribute the table**.**

➢ Let the participants fill it in.
Check that the one sticker/two stickers system has been understood.
Check that each participant has written in his/her first name.

➢ Collect the questionnaires, and quickly identify the applications most selected as involving a risk.

III.4   Let us discuss these problems more in detail, by taking each of those which you have most mentioned.
Why do you think that this application may involve a problem ?

➢ Take successively each application often mentioned as involving a problem or risk, and elicit the nature and the degree of problem/risk.

THEME IV   REACTIONS TO THE PRESENTATION OF SPECIFIED PROBLEMS OR RISKS

I am now going to tell you about certain problems, as they are seen by adults who worry about them – and you will tell me how **you** feel about them.

IV.1   One of the problems may be that the information you find on the Internet is not necessarily true.
How do you feel about it ? Generally speaking, do you think we can have trust in what we find on the Internet?

➢ Spontaneous reactions

➢ Probe :

- What is overall the degree of credibility of the Internet ?
- How does it compare with other sources (parents, teachers, friends, television, books…)
- Why is the Internet more or less credible ?
- Examples of inaccurate things seen on the Internet. What was it about ? How did you realize that it was not true ?
- How serious is this problem/risk felt to be ?

IV.2   Another problem that worries adults is the risk of being sent or coming across images or other contents that can be deeply shocking – than can include scenes of violence, brutal scenes, racism or pornography.
How do you feel about it ?

➢ Spontaneous reactions

➢ Probe :

- Has it happened to you ? What was it about ?
- What did you do ? Talk to someone about it ? Who ?
- What would you do if it happened to you, or what would you advise a friend to do if it happened to him/her ? Talk to someone about it ? Who ? What practical advice would you give ?
Moderator : also probe how serious is this problem/risk felt to be.

IV.3   Another risk that worries adults is that children engage in relations with a stranger with whom they have talked online – someone they have never met face to face.
Let us take an example.
X/Y is a child of your age.
He/she likes to play games or post his/her profile on the Internet, and he/she starts talking online with someone to whom he/she gradually gives personal information like his/her MSN address, his/her mobile phone number, his/her name, or where he/she lives, or starts sending pictures of him/her.
He/she thinks this person is a child of his/her age and someone really nice, but it may turn out to be someone quite different, who might encourage him/her to do things he/she should not do, or even an adult with bad intentions.
(Moderator : For boys group, use a typical masculine first name of your country (X) ; for girls groups, use a typical feminine first name (Y)).
How do you feel about it ?

  ➢ Spontaneous reactions

  ➢ Probe :

   • Has it happened to someone you know ? How, in which situation ?
   • Do you think it could happen to you ? How do you communicate and make friends online ?
   • (If happened) What did you do ? Talk to someone about it ? Who ?
   • What would you do if it happened to you or what would you advise a friend to do if it happened to him/her ?
     Moderator : also probe how serious is this problem/risk felt to be.

IV.4   Another worry that adults have is that some children use online communication to behave badly with another child because they do not like him/her. That can be, for example, by talking about him/her on MSN without including him/her, or sending him/her anonymous nasty messages.
How do you feel about it ?

  ➢ Spontaneous reactions

  ➢ Probe :

   • Has it happened to you? How, in which situation ? Have you received nasty messages ? Have you maybe sent nasty messages to others yourself ?
   • Do you think it could happen to you ?
   • (If happened) What did you do ? Talk to someone about it ? Who ?
   • What would you do if it happened to you or what would you advise a friend to do if it happened to him/her ?
     Moderator : also probe how serious is this problem/risk felt to be.

IV.5   Another risk that we have heard of is being cheated, for example when downloading a file which seems to be free of charge but has to be paid for, or when taking part in a competition.
How do you feel about it ?

  ➢ Spontaneous reactions

  ➢ Probe :

   • Has it happened to you ? In which situation ?
   • What did you do ? Talk to someone about it ? Who ?
   • What would you do if it happened to you or what would you advise a friend to do if it happened to him/her ? Talk someone about it ? Who ?
     Moderator : also probe how serious is this problem/risk felt to be.

IV.6   Another problem may be that many children download music, films, games or other contents without paying.
Perhaps this has happened to you as well : have you downloaded something without paying ?

➢   Record responses, then continue :

In many cases, this content is material which the makers (musicians for example) need to make money from to make a living and therefore should be paid for.
Are you aware of this ? What can be the consequences, do you think ? Do those children know that it is illegal/not allowed ? How do they deal with it ?

➢   Probe :
  • Awareness of doing something illegal/awareness of consequences
  • What did/would the child participants do in such a situation?
  • How serious is this problem felt to be ?

THEME V.   RISK RELATED INFORMATION AND REPORTING

V.1   When you think back about it, after our whole discussion, are there any precautions which would now feel would be useful to take in using the Internet and mobile phones – or something you would advise a younger brother or sister to do ?

➢ Spontaneous reactions

➢ Probe :

- Precautions (and related risks) which the discussion has made the children (more) aware of
- Propensity to take these precautions in reality

V.2   If you saw or experienced something you find uncomfortable or scary, and you wanted to inform someone about it, what would be the easiest way for you to do it ?

➢ Spontaneous reactions

➢ Probe :

- Talk to your parents about it
- Talk to a teacher about it
- Inform the police
- Contact a specialist organisation by calling a special free-phone number
- Contact that organisation by email.
- Having a report button that automatically informs the relevant authorities just by clicking

V.3   How would you like to learn more about the problems and risks related to Internet and mobile phone usage?

➢ Spontaneous reactions

➢ Probe :
- Propensity to learn more about problems and risks
- Nature of information sought
- From which types of sources/through which channels

END OF DISCUSSION.

DISTRIBUTE AWARENESS MATERIAL FROM THE NATIONAL NODES OR OTHER NGOs

INTERNET APPLICATIONS USED   **First name**

Searching for information as a part of my school work	
Searching for information on subjects which interest me/surfing for fun	
Sending and receiving emails	
Using instant messaging (MSN)/chatting with friends	
Engaging in open chatrooms	
Creating my own blog/homepage and posting my own texts, photos, music on the Internet	
Reading and responding to friends'blogs/homepages	
Reading and responding to blogs/homepages of someone I have never met	
Playing on-line games	
Downloading music, films, videos, games or other files	
Sharing files (music, films, videos, games or others)	
Sharing photos	
Downloading ring tones/images for my mobile phone	
Taking part in competitions	
Making phone calls through the Internet	

MOBILE PHONE APPLICATIONS USED   **First name**

Making and receiving phone calls	
Sending/receiving SMSs	
Taking photos/images	
Sending/receiving/sharing images	
Connecting to the Internet through my mobile phone	

PROBLEMS/RISKS RELATED TO INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE USAGE

INTERNET APPLICATIONS   **First name**

Searching for information as a part of my school work	
Searching for information on subjects which interest me/surfing for fun	
Sending and receiving emails	
Using instant messaging (MSN)/chatting with friends	
Engaging in open chatrooms	
Creating my own blog/homepage and posting my own texts, photos, music on the Internet	
Reading and responding to friends' blogs/homepages	
Reading and responding to blogs/homepages of someone I have never met	
Playing on-line games	
Downloading music, films, videos, games or other files	
Sharing files (music, films, videos, games or others)	
Sharing photos	
Downloading ring tones/images for my mobile phone	
Taking part in competitions	
Making phone calls through the Internet	

MOBILE PHONE APPLICATIONS

Making and receiving phone calls	
Sending/receiving SMSs	
Taking photos/images	
Sending/receiving/sharing images	
Connecting to the Internet through my mobile phone	