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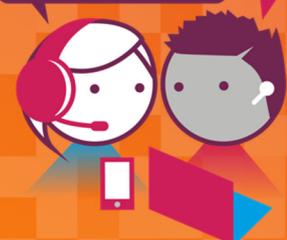
Online Experiences

From 9- to 17-Year-Olds

Findings of the EU Kids Online Survey in Germany 2019

Summary of the Key Findings

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The study is part of the European research network **EU Kids Online**, whose aim is to provide an internationally comparative database on the online use of children and young people.

The findings are based on a representative survey of **1,044 children and adolescents aged 9 to 17 and one parent each**.

The data collection was carried out between **22 June and 28 July 2019** as a Computer Assisted Self-administered Interview (CASI) by Ipsos among the children at home.

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Key Findings

The report provides an overview of the online experiences of children and young people – from the point of view of adolescents and their parents. The findings confirm once again that the Internet is part of children's and young people's lives and that they use the various possibilities in different ways. It is inevitable that they will also make negative experiences. The results show which experiences children and adolescents have on the Internet and what is burdening them, and at the same time give indications as to which topics and risks differentiate their view from that of adults.

Online experiences of children and adolescents

- On average, **children and adolescents aged 9 to 17 spend 2.4 hours online on a working day and 3 hours on the weekend.** Most of the children use the smartphone to explore the online possibilities. Watching videos, listening to music, school work, playing games and using social media slide shows are among the preferred online activities of young people. A quarter of young people use the Internet to interact with others who have the same interests or hobbies as themselves.
- **The self-assessment of the interviewed children and teenagers regarding various online skills is predominantly positive.** However, this does not mean that adolescents as "digital natives" have a complete repertoire of online skills. The comparison of means across all online-related skills shows that older children and adolescents rate their skills higher. With regard to individual abilities, the boys' self-assessment is somewhat more self-confident than that of the girls.
- **9 percent of children and young people have experienced something online in the past year that bothered or upset them** (e.g. something that made them uncomfortable, scared them or made them think they shouldn't have seen it). These experiences are diverse and range from common or offensive behaviour (e.g. others making fun of one's own content or photos being published without consent), unwanted contact by other (adult) users, sexual representations and messages to other problematic content (cruelty to animals, violence towards other people, chain letters etc.).
- The findings on specific risks are significantly higher. **User-generated content for example represents a relevant risk:** The responses show that a good quarter of adolescents have seen online/on the Internet content (pictures, videos) or discussions about the use of drugs (27%), bloody or violent images, e.g. of people hurting other people or animals (27%), or hate messages attacking certain groups or people (e.g. people of different skin colours, religions, nationalities or sexuality) (23%).
- **24 percent of children and adolescents say that they have been treated in a hurtful or nasty way – online or offline.** Of these, 6 percent have experienced it exclusively online, 34 percent offline, 60 percent both online and offline. 11 percent of the children and adolescents have said they have treated someone else in a nasty or hurtful way – more often offline than online.
- Topics that are regarded as risks in the public discussion are not always perceived as negative experiences by adolescents themselves. This is particularly evident in the example of sexual content: **54 percent of the 12 to 17-year-olds said they had come into contact with sexual images in the form of pictures, photos or videos in the last twelve months, mostly via the Internet.** The majority of boys (61%) said they liked it (vs. 19% of girls). 37 percent of those who saw sexual images last year also stated that they selected it specifically (more boys than girls).
- **30 percent of the 12- to 17-year-olds stated that they had been unintentionally confronted with intimate or insinuating questions in the last twelve months,** with girls being more affected (34%) than boys (23%).
- With regard to meetings with strangers whom one has met on the Internet, it can be seen that adolescents have a different understanding of risk or a different perception of risk than adults. While it is self-evident for adolescents to use online media to network, exchange and meet with others, parents seem to be predisposed to the idea that social media is used by strangers to gain children's trust and to gain them real trust. At least two thirds of adolescents rarely look for new contacts online. **12 percent met in person last year with a person they knew from the Internet and assessed this meeting predominantly positively or neutrally.** 54 percent of parents are worried that their child might be contacted by strangers on the Internet.
- Different opinions also seem to exist with regard to the unsolicited sharing and publication of (children's) photos by parents (**keyword: Sharenting**): **9 percent of the children and adolescents say that they have experienced this in the last twelve months (at least how and where).** In each case 6 percent asked their

parents to delete something that they had posted on the Internet or were angry about information that their parents had posted online. 4 percent say that they received negative or mean comments because their parents posted something about them or posted something on the Internet.

Parents' views

- **Parents are worried about their children's online use.** These are less worrying than the school performance of their children, but are sometimes greater than, for example, worries about health or that their children are taking alcohol and other drugs.
- Even if parents are worried about online use, only **6 percent believe that their child has had online experiences in the past twelve months that bothered or upset their child.**
- **The discrepancies between children's and parents' answers to individual risks are interesting:** These are particularly high when it comes to contact with sexual representations and content. The proportion of parents who believe that their child has come into contact with such content is significantly lower than the proportion of children who claim to have had such experiences. The difference can be traced back to the fact that parents are increasingly losing sight of what their children use on mobile devices, or that the children may deliberately keep the experiences to themselves as part of their sexual development.
- **Conversations** are the most common form of parental influence on their children's use of the Internet, with a focus on raising awareness of possible risks: 44 percent of parents regularly talk to their child about his or her online activities. 41 percent also explain why some websites are appropriate or inappropriate. One third of parents show their children how to use the Internet safely. Common activities (17%) or suggestions to try something new (14%) are less common in everyday family life.
- Parents are particularly **restrictive when it comes to online purchases in games or apps.** 45 percent of the parents said that there was a general ban on in-app purchases.
- **The parents of younger children in particular make use of technical regulations:** adblockers are the most widespread, having installed 29 percent of the parents in question. Almost a quarter (25%) also use devices or programs to block or filter certain websites or content. Comparable programs that filter apps that the child can download take up less of the parents' time (15%). Every sixth parent (16%) uses technical aids that determine the children's location. 12% of the parents regulate the daily use of the software.

- In addition to the family and the parents, the **school** is also an important place for media pedagogical support. This seems to refer primarily to rule setting and the prevention of negative experiences. Only 12 percent of adolescents state that they are encouraged to try things out on the Internet.

Need for action

The results provide differentiated indications of the challenges faced by adolescents in the context of their online use, how they assess them and how they deal with them. They refer to very different user practices that are associated with different risks. Accordingly, **target group- and risk-specific approaches** are needed to help adolescents exploit the potential of the Internet and keep the negative consequences as low as possible. The fact that all the actors involved (providers, parents, school/out-of-school educational work, the state and also children) must be addressed and involved within a multi-stakeholder approach has already been emphasised several times in other places. It should therefore be pointed out at this point that some aspects which have emerged as significant in the study and which should be taken into account in further discussions on the topic of growing up in digital media worlds:

On the one hand, there is a need for action with regard to the **understanding of risk among children and parents.** Some topics that parents are concerned about (e.g. meetings with strangers who have met the children online or sexual images) are apparently common practice for children and young people and, from their point of view, completely unproblematic.

It also shows that there are **differences in risk awareness.** Not all adolescents, for example, like it when their parents publish and distribute pictures of them online without consent. Mutual understanding about risks and rights is necessary to develop appropriate recommendations for action and measures.

A need for support can be identified with regard to **coping with possible risks.** This concerns content and interaction-related as well as commercial risks, but also problematic user-generated content and self-regulation of the duration of use. It would be helpful here to refer to existing counselling services or reporting tools, but also to media educational programs that provide adolescents with appropriate coping strategies - similar to the topic of bullying.

Finally, the findings also point to the fact that the **educational and participation opportunities of online media have not yet been fully exploited** and that adolescents are evidently still receiving too little stimulation from parents and educators. Even though the present report looks at a multitude of possible risks, the potential of digital media for education and participation should not be ignored and should also be taken into account in educational work