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UK COUNCIL FOR CHILD INTERNET SAFETY

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## Country Classification – Opportunities, Risks, Harm and Parental Mediation

### Aims

This report updates and deepens the understanding of cross-national differences among the countries surveyed in EU Kids Online. Where the previous classification was based simply on the percentage of children in each country who used the internet daily, and who had encountered one or more risks, this report examines the range and type of online opportunities, risks and harm experienced by the children in each country. It also takes into account the ways in which parents mediate or regulate their children's internet use in each country. This approach allows us to show how European children cluster in terms of opportunity, risk and harm, and parental mediation characteristics, and how these clusters or groups of children are distributed differently over the different countries. It also enables a classification of countries based on the presence of different types of children and their home environments.

### Key Findings

- Clusters of countries are most clearly distinguished in terms of sexual content risks. Children who are bullied or who give away personal data are uniformly distributed across the countries. Using these and many other factors, the report identifies four country clusters overall: unprotected networkers, protected by restrictions, semi supported risky gamers, and supported risky explorers:

    o Unprotected networkers (AT, HU, LT, SI)

    o Protected by restrictions (BE, FR, DE, GR, IE, IT, PT, ES, TY. UK)

    o Semi-supported risky gamers (BG, CY, CZ, EE, PL, RO)

    o Supported risky explorers (NO, FI, SE, DK, NL)

- This new analysis reveals that differences within countries are substantially larger than differences between countries, whether measured in terms of online opportunities, risk of harm or forms of parental mediation. The advantage of such pan-European similarities is that it makes sense for policy makers in one country to learn from the best practice initiated in another.

- The analysis makes it clear that, to anticipate the online experience of any individual child, a host of factors must be considered – merely knowing where they live is insufficient as a guide to the opportunities or risks they may experience.

- Findings detailed in this report give hope that parents' mediation strategies will develop positively and constructively alongside the use of their children's internet use. Nevertheless, based on the patterns of children's online risks, harm and parenting practices across Europe there is the possibility of a more negative pattern developing in some countries. Specifically, there are grounds for concern that both too much parental restriction and the lack of support for children's online use might lead to higher levels of harm when risk is encountered.

- In countries with relatively restricted or moderate levels of use (and risk taking), policy makers, industry and third sector stakeholders should work alongside educators and parents to make sure that further and broader engagement in the future is not accompanied by parental mediation strategies that are

passive and likely to lead to more harm, or restrictive, which is likely to deny children the opportunities that are available online.

- Best practices in clusters of countries with more experienced users and parents with more involved mediation strategies can serve as guidelines for how to achieve this. Beyond this, each child will also require individually tailored mediation related to their social environment and experiences and, of course, in those rare cases where a child has come to more serious harm, counselling and trained advisers must be available.

- The report includes a portrait of each of the 25 countries included in the EU Kids Online survey. It also includes nationally-specific policy implications based on these findings.

## Methodology

Adopting an approach that is child-centred, comparative, critical and contextual, EU Kids Online II designed and conducted a major quantitative survey of 9-16 year olds experiences of online use, risk and safety in 25 European countries. In this report, the following statistical techniques were used. First, scales were created in relation to the topic of the particular section. A description is given in each section of these scales and how they were created. Then cluster analyses were used to group children according to the scores on these scales. Subsequently, the proportion of children in each group was calculated for the different countries. These proportions were used in a cluster analysis in each section that led to a classification of countries for each section. The final step (section 4) used a K-Means cluster analysis on the 25 countries based on the proportion of children in each group per country. In the report Ns, averages and percentages are for the total sample, weighted by overall weight. Multivariate analyses were performed without weights.

## Background

Cultural differences, information and communication technology (ICT) diffusion and policies, family dynamics, the educational system and other country-specific traditions and values have all been suggested as influential factors for country differences in internet opportunities taken up, risks and harms encountered and parental mediation. In this report we analyse the EU Kids Online data to come to a new classification of countries, which is slightly more complex and paints a richer picture than the older model. This report uses the data in the survey on the range of opportunities young people encounter online, the types of risks that young people experience online and whether they subsequently suffer harm from these and, last but definitely not least, the strategies that parents employ across Europe to safeguard their children's well-being online.

**Source** The EU Kids Online network

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**Full report** This is available at:
http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/EUKidsOnline/EU%20Kids%20III/Classification/Home.aspx

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