

Net children Go Mobile: A new European research project

Does mobile internet access mean more risks to children?
What new risks and experiences of harm are children faced with?
How do they cope with the new opportunities and risks?
Are parents ready for handling these challenges?

In 2010 the EU Kids Online data showed that around one third of European children accessed the internet from mobile phones and other handheld devices. Nowadays, **convergent mobile media** such as smartphones and tablets are increasingly popular among European children. Such a rapid adoption and the changes associated with mobile internet access at home, school and when out and about provide children with potential **new opportunities** (digital inclusion, digital literacies, learning, participation and sociability) while at the same time exposing them to **new risks** (excessive use, withdrawal from face-to-face interaction, commercial and privacy risks connected with geo-location services, etc.). However, **up-to-date and comparable findings** regarding the use of convergent mobile media are still lacking.

Giovanna Mascheroni, from the Coordinator team at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore of Milan, says: *Access to the internet from mobile devices may lead to an intensification of some of the risks that children may encounter online, such as exposure to sexual content, conduct risks such as cyberbullying and sexting. We need to empirically assess to what extent these risks are effectively increased, and how children perceive and cope with them.*

To bridge this gap, a new European project on children's online experiences through mobile media has been launched today.

Net Children Go Mobile is funded by the **Safer Internet Programme** in order to investigate Online mobile opportunities and risks through a quantitative and qualitative methodology with a specific focus on how the changing conditions of access and use of the internet bring **greater or lesser risks to children's online safety**.

Net Children Go Mobile includes researchers from **Denmark, Italy, Romania and the UK**. These countries are emblematic of socio-cultural and technological differences across Europe and differ in terms of the historical diffusion of mobile phones, the digital cultures of their youth, the incidence of online risks among children, and in terms of childhood and parenting cultures.

These changing media ecologies have to be considered when planning **policy and awareness initiatives** aimed at promoting children's online safety.

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