

Report from EuroDIG 2012 in Stockholm

Workshop #1:

“Child protection and child empowerment: two sides of the same coin?”

The workshop presented a panel discussion featuring 5 panelists, including 2 young people. One from Norway and one from Denmark. Each panelist discussed their views on the direction they see the Internet is moving when it comes to the variety of issues that impact young people’s use of the Internet. The discussion was also opened for participants from the floor.

Children and young people do not see the Internet as being separate from the real world – the Internet is part of their lives. The need to involve more youth in the discussions on the shape of Internet was stressed, as young people are not only the future, but also want to be seen as the present. It was stated that: “We are not just young people waiting to become adults, we are simply young people and we want to be included and heard as such”.

Children have the right to information and the right to protection, however the means of protecting children change as the Internet develops. Children have different levels of knowledge when it comes to surfing the Internet and many of them use various Internet services without fully understanding them. Parents are responsible for children’s online safety education, however they also need to be empowered to be capable to empower their children.

There were some tensions around the rights of parents. It was suggested that parents did not have any absolute or unqualified rights to decide what is good and bad for their children to do online. The guiding principle always had to be what was in the interests of the child. A balanced and proportionate way needs to be found to resolve such questions. Parallels were drawn with the real world, where many services are available from the age of 18 or indeed other ages lower than that. Why could similar standards not apply online? The challenge of keeping vulnerable children safe online was also brought up. What obligations do service providers have for them? It was suggested that it cannot be right to assume that every child is net savvy and net smart in relation to every aspect of the Internet, nor that every child is blessed with parents or a home where they will always be supported and helped. There is a very broad spectrum of children and families and we have to cater for all of them, not just some, not just the majority.

Further in debate the question of effectiveness of self-regulation was raised with reference to the case of Habbo hotel, where the UK police has traced 80 victims, all of who had been targeted through Habbo Hotel despite the presence of 250 moderators and special software (Habbo hotel was one of the signatories of the „Social Networking Sites Principles for the EU”).

An interesting example from Holland was also raised where specially trained police officers routinely logged on to various social networking sites looking for inappropriate individuals or inappropriate behaviour.

Finally several people argued that the debate about filtering or not filtering was becoming rather sterile and blocking wider discussions about a much wider range of issues which were also very important in this area

Moderator:

Ann Katrin Agebäck, Senior adviser from Swedish Media Council

Key participants:

Deborah Bergamini, Sub-Committee on Media and Information Society, Council of Europe
Parliamentary Assembly

John Carr, eNACSO

Albert Geisler Fox, 15 years old, Youth representative, Denmark

Erik van der Sandt, Office of the Dutch Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings

Adelina Trolle Andersen, Youth representative, Norway

Organising team / focal point:

Focal Point: European NGO Alliance for Child Safety Online (eNACSO), network
coordinator

Marie Bach Drivsholm / John Carr

