Children and e-Society: European Research Findings on Opportunities and Risks

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Children are widely seen as central to the development of e-society: as direct beneficiaries and indeed often identified as the primary targets of information society policies, particularly those geared towards enhancing learning opportunities, access to information and building inclusiveness and participation in society. The European Union's *Digital Agenda* places a safer and better internet for children at the heart of its policy platform. And yet, more often than not, children's e-society participation has been a cause of concern and anxiety for policy makers, particularly with ever-increasing early adoption of new internet technologies and services by children and young people. Such concerns have been motivated by the responsibilities held by public agencies to ensure adequate protection for young people whilst seeking to encourage and foster children's online opportunities. Thus, e-society may be said to constitute a set of tricky policy dilemmas and challenges with regard to children's participation. To date, the balancing of risks and opportunities has been informed more by assumptions of the benefits and the dangers that e-society might pose for children and young people. *EU Kids Online*, a pan-European survey of children's use of the internet, has attempted to fill this research gap by providing the first fully comparable data on issues of risk and safety gathered directly from children themselves in 25 European countries. Research findings focus on the extent of children's embeddedness within e-society, examining dimensions of e-literacy, the availability of appropriate e-content and resilience in relation to risks encountered online. It is important to argue for greater policy and research attention to children's perspectives on e-society, as a means of fostering greater trust and participation for society as a whole.

EU Kids Online, http://www.eukidsonline.net