

Association for Action Against Violence and
Trafficking in Human Beings - OPEN GATE/ La Strada

ONLINE EXPLOITATION AND CHILD TRAFFICKING RESEARCH REPORT



ONLINE EXPLOITATION AND CHILD TRAFFICKING

Research Report

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1. Terminology

There are different types of abuse related to abusing children online. The scope is not limited to the generally well-known forms of abuse. Online child sexual exploitation is difficult to detect because of the different forms of communication, especially when it is a combination of audio, text and video content. Thus, it is important for individuals to be aware of the forms and the terminology, because abuse online and offline have similar implications for mental health and may cause harm to the child.

Online child sexual exploitation refers to the usage of the internet or communication technologies as a method to facilitate the sexual abuse of children and adolescents. This can take place directly online or through a combination of offline and online interactions.¹ Online child exploitation may have an impact on any child, regardless of sex, age, race or economic background. It may have several different forms, which may include the following:

Grooming: A tactic offenders use in order to befriend or develop a relationship with a minor in order to gain their trust, lower their inhibitions and prepare them for sexual activity. This can be done through compliments or by giving gifts or money.

Sexual extortion: Coercing a victim into producing sexually explicit images or videos through threats, gifts, or manipulation.

Sexting: Sharing explicit images or videos over messages/text.

Child sexual abuse material (CSAM) collection, distribution, sharing or production: Any photos or videos of a child engaged in or is depicted as being engaged in explicit sexual activity.

Live streaming: When child sexual abuse material is broadcasted live to a viewer through streaming via the internet. Offenders pay, direct, and view this abuse from home.

Self-generated content: Self-produced content with inappropriate material.

1 The website of INHOPE <https://inhope.org/EN/articles/what-is-online-child-sexual-exploitation>



2. Introduction

According to the most recent information from the 2021 UNODC annual report², in the higher income countries, child trafficking is generally less detected and usually shares the features of sexual exploitation. In higher income countries in Europe or North America, child trafficking for forced labor comprises approximately 1% of the total number of victims detected. Most of the child victims globally are trafficked for sexual exploitation. Apart from sexual exploitation (72% of women-victims) and forced labor (66% of boys), children are also exploited for begging and forced crime, such as drugs trafficking, among other criminal acts. Human traffickers exploit victims in different ways and infiltrate the globalized legal economy by using victims in a plethora of economic sectors. In total, 50% of the victims that were discovered had been trafficked for sexual exploitation and 38% for forced labor, while 6% were forced to carry out criminal activity and more than one percent were forced to beg. There is plenty of evidence for the rise in the materials and content for online child sexual abuse, some of which are related to trafficking in human beings.³

The everyday digital platforms are used by human traffickers to advertise fake work offers and to sell exploitation services to potential clients who pay. Victims are being recruited through social media, and human traffickers are using the advantages of the publicly available personal information and the anonymity of online spaces to contact the victims. The exploitation opportunities through social networks skyrocketed since it became available through webcams and live streams, which created new forms of exploitation and reduced the need for the transportation and transfer of victims.

The term 'internet technologies' broadly refers to technologies such as platforms and social media applications, websites, communication applications or other types of applications designed for transfer of funds/money, images or text between individuals. The more precise term 'information and communication technologies' (ICT) is not used, as it pertains to all communication, including telecommunication, which would be too broad for this research.

The internet technology broadened the geographical scope of the operational activities related to human trafficking. The internet helps them operate across borders and at many locations simultaneously, while they physically exploit the victims at one location. Cyber developments are frequently featuring victims forced to do video performances, allowing the perpetrators to connect to potential clients who live abroad. This type of human trafficking has been identified in several countries and usually relies to the availability of video equipment and devices for digital recording and streaming of activities that stem from victim exploitation. The Association for Action Against Violence and Trafficking in Human Beings Open Gate⁴ would like to point to the fact that the age limit of the human trafficking victims is decreasing. In the last few years, most of the victims discovered by law enforcement have been children aged 12-18. According to the 2021 report of the National commission for combatting human trafficking and illegal migration⁵, last year a total of 48 human trafficking victims have been discovered. Out of this number, 39 persons are from Taiwan, while out of the remaining nine victims, three are children from Skopje, two are adults from Veles, there is a senior victim from Russia, as well as one child from Kumanovo, Kichevo and Prilep. In addition, there are mobile teams in five cities consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Interior (MOI), the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP) and the non-governmental sector. Last year, between August and December, the mobile teams were contacted by 260 citizens. Out of them, seven potential victims were identified.

2 2021 UNODC Annual report, p.10, https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tip/2021/GLOTIP_2020_15jan_web.pdf

3 The European Union Agency for Cooperation in Law Enforcement and Organized Crime Threat Assessment (2019).

4 Petreska, E., Six children were human trafficking victims last year - an article at Radio MOF for the online event organized by the Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis on the occasion of February 22, 2022, the European Day for Victims of Crime February 22, 2022, <https://www.radiomof.mk/shest-deca-bile-zhrtvi-na-trgovija-so-lugje-minatata-godina/>

5 2021 Report of the National commission for combatting human trafficking and illegal migration, Skopje, 2022, pp. 27-29, <https://rb.gy/jlac37>

Child trafficking is a type of trafficking in human beings that is carried out by recruitment, transportation, transfer, accommodation and accepting, in order to exploit and abuse children, in or outside the country. The children may be hoaxed and exploited by people they know or they do not know, usually through internet social media, attractive advertisements for making money quickly, masked communication with an adult, sexual harassment and exploitation online etc. The process of exploitation and child trafficking jeopardizes the psychological and physical development of children, as well as their health and education, and has severe and long-term consequences for the children-victims.

Human trafficking is a complex and challenging global crime that is being reinforced by the use of modern technology. The COVID-19 pandemic turned the way society works upside down, and consequently the various types of crime evolved and adapted to the new way of living. At the same time, poverty increased along with violence, employment opportunities plummeted, many people lost their jobs, and internet platform communication increased, making the citizens more vulnerable to human trafficking. The children were at home most of the time and used the internet to study, but also for entertainment. Thus, the risk for them also increased, and this also meant they needed more protection from internet-based violence and exploitation, including child trafficking. Self-generated content, which forces the child-victim to generate images and videos, soared. The violators record their interactions by photographing the victim, and then sharing the photos through online platforms or networks. The live streams of child sexual exploitation and payment for it has also been on the rise in the past few years. Later on, the moment the children realize what had happened and that they have been cheated, and their trust was misused, the trauma and the stress sets in. Victims who were sexually abused as children need long-term recovery in order to deal with their trauma.⁶

The risk of online exploitation is higher since the level of digital literacy in children, in general terms, is lower, and since they spend more time online without being aware of the dangers that are lurking. The governments remain focused mainly on identifying the traditional forms of human trafficking, without taking specific activities to provide early identification and to prevent online child exploitation.

Interpol's International Child Sexual Exploitation image and video database (ICSE) is an intelligence and research tool that allows specialized investigators to share data on cases of child sexual abuse. By using software for comparison of images and videos, the investigators may immediately establish links between the victims, the violent perpetrators and the locations. The database avoids duplication of effort and saves precious time by letting investigators know whether a series of images has already been discovered or identified in another country, or whether it has similar features to other images. It also allows specialized investigators from more than 68 countries to exchange information and share data with their colleagues across the world. By analyzing the digital, visual and audio content of photographs and videos, victim identification experts can retrieve clues, identify any overlap in cases and combine their efforts to locate victims of child sexual abuse.⁷

In order to tackle the risks of the increasingly digitalized society, including the one for children, the European Commission, in December 2020, proposed an ambitious reform in order to create a safer digital space which would provide protection for the fundamental rights of all digital service beneficiaries. The recent political agreement for the Digital Service Act shows that the protection of minors is one of the foundations of the new rules, that oblige companies to set the children's interests as a priority⁸.

Furthermore, within its vision to transform Europe digitally by 2030, the Commission proposed a European Declaration for Digital Rights and Principles on the occasion of the Digital Decade, which reflects the EU values such as strengthening and empowering children.

The 2012 Better Internet for Kids strategy (BIK) of the EU set a global benchmark, by leading and shaping the national policies in the EU. All member states have integrated elements of the Better Internet for Kids

6 Statement of the INTERPOL general secretary, May 25, 2022, at the World Economic Forum at Davos, <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2022/INTERPOL-Secretary-General-Online-child-sexual-abuse-at-record-levels>

7 The website of INTERPOL, International Child Sexual Exploitation image and video database (ICSE), <https://www.interpol.int/en/Crimes/Crimes-against-children/International-Child-Sexual-Exploitation-database>

8 Bundle of laws for digital services (DSA: Commission welcomes political agreement) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0212#footnote7>

strategy. In March 2021, the Commission adopted its first EU comprehensive strategy for the rights of the child, where it issued the updated BIK strategy. The updated strategy BIK+ is a digital framework for the rights of the child and reflects the recently proposed digital principle that “children and the young people should be protected, and they are entitled to have rights online”. Thus, the Resolution of the European Parliament for the Rights of the Child, the Conclusions of the Council for media literacy and the Recommendation of the Council for establishing a European Child Guarantee have been taken into consideration.

This new strategy is based on an extensive consultation process with the children, complemented by focused consultations with the parents, teachers, member states, the ICT and the media industry, the civil society, the academia and the international organizations.

For that reason, BIK+ aims at complementing and supporting the practical implementation of the existing measures for protection of children online, to foster skills development of children and to encourage them to safely shape their lives in the online space.⁹

When law enforcement authorities, especially the Ministry of Interior, adopted the new National strategy for combatting human trafficking¹⁰, a special action plan for children was also included and enacted. The 2018-2022 National strategy on cybersecurity and the 2018-2022 Action Plan¹¹ foresees activities for education of children and getting them involved in appropriate EU programmes through the EU Secretariat, but they are part of the planned activities for 2019. Since a new strategy on cybersecurity is about to be drafted, it is recommended that the number of activities and stakeholders for preparation of educational materials and events for raising awareness for the safe use of internet is increased.

In addition, the 2018-2025 Strategy on education¹² includes information on the accessibility of support services and educational multimedia resources online. The ICT curricula in primary and secondary education have been revised, and the ICT content has been given more prominence by the introduction of compulsory subjects in this area as early as the third grade in primary education, and a continuity of studying informatics has been provided in all four years of secondary education. However, one must take into account that there is no support provisioned for the teaching staff when it comes to education for safe use of the internet and digital security in order to prevent contact with malicious content and services online. Therefore, the key issues/questions that come up include how to protect children/juveniles on the internet, what is the capacity of the organizations and the educational institutions in the country for education and early exploitation of online exploitation, can the education system get the children/juveniles ready to be careful in the internet space, does the country, within its institutions, have sufficient human resources that are trained in dealing with these issues etc.

Thus, research must be carried out in terms of how exposed the children are to online exploitation and human trafficking, by mapping the current situation, the risk factors, and especially the practices of online child exploitation. The recommendations that stem from the research will be presented to the public and to all stakeholders that deal with human trafficking, and they will be used for creating future measures for protecting children from online sexual exploitation.

9 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, a Digital Decade for children and youth: the new European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+) <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52022DC0212>

10 <http://nacionalnakomisija.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/NACIONALNA-STRATEGIJA-MKD-ALB-ANG-25.10.2021.pdf>

11 2019-2022 National strategy on cybersecurity, MIOA https://mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/strategies/AP%20v1.13MK.pdf

12 Education strategy <http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Strategija-za-obrazovanie-MAK-WEB.pdf>



3. Goals and tasks of the research

The general goal of the research is to investigate the current situation, the challenges that they face and the help available to potential and identified online human/child trafficking victims, by means of prevention and providing appropriate services. In terms of strengthening the prevention for child trafficking, the research by all means must identify the basic elements of the best approach for reducing online child exploitation.

The tasks of this research include:

- ✓ To check the extent to which teachers and students are aware of this danger;
- ✓ To check whether the students report the potentially dangerous situations to their teachers at the school;
- ✓ To check how the schools deal with such cases;
- ✓ To check whether there are a strategy and resources (organizations, campaigns, programmes, educational material and informal activities) for raising awareness among teachers and students alike;
- ✓ To check whether there is a strategy, a plan for early prevention, warning and dealing with such developments at the schools;
- ✓ To check the way in which the parents can get involved in preventing and discovering activities related to online child exploitation;
- ✓ To present and analyze the online child exploitation case “Public Room”;
- ✓ To map the institutions/organizations that produce educational content and materials useful for the children, the teachers and the parents.

The main goal of this research is to probe how aware are the students and the teaching staff of child trafficking and of the different forms of online exploitation. Special attention will be given to recognizing and reporting potential incidents and cases of online harassment and exploitation. Thus, the elements of the good approaches for increasing their involvement in preventing child trafficking at a local and national level will be identified, and the development of educational programmes and approaches in dealing with online exploitation and child trafficking in all its forms will be encouraged.



4. Research methods

In order to collect the relevant information from the target group, these two methods were applied in the research:

- ***Semi-structured interview with the teaching staff***

The interview that was held with the teaching staff was semi-structured, and the main questions, in Albanian and Macedonian were prepared in advance (cf. the Annex), in order to obtain the answers and achieve the goals and tasks of the research that were set. The interview opened the door for some other sub-questions, and the researchers attempted to get answers for them, too. The information from the interviews was collected and recorded in several ways: firsthand, by in-person meetings with the collocutors on the school premises, by zoom, by telephone or by email, depending on the preference of the participants. The interview was individual and anonymous, and depending on the availability of the teaching staff, there was an option to have it organized as a focus group. Special attention was paid to ethical standards, as the participants were not named, nor were they required to reveal information that would in turn reveal their identity. After asking the questions, the participants were left to express themselves freely, without any additional pressure to talk on topics that made them feel uneasy. The interview questions are open-ended, they are general and objective, without leading the participants in a specific direction, in order to obtain their individual views and opinions.

- [Online survey with students](#)

The student survey was carried out online, by means of an online survey that was created (cf. the Annex) on an online platform (Google Forms). The link was shared with the school authorities, so that they could submit it to the students. They were expected to give candid answers, and it was pointed out that the answers that will be collected will be anonymous and that the survey will not be used for collecting any data related to their identity. The questions in the online survey were available in Macedonian and Albanian. They considered using the internet and the awareness of the dangers that exist when communicating online and when searching for information.

The research was carried out as part of the collaboration between the Association for Action Against Violence and Trafficking in Human Beings Open Gate - La Strada and the Ministry of Education and Science, on the basis of the memorandum of cooperation was signed for implementing activities in the primary and secondary schools in the country.



5. Target group

The research covered two target groups:

- 1) students and
- 2) the teaching staff.

Both target groups covered two levels of education: primary and secondary education

In primary education, eighth and ninth grade students from regular primary schools in the country were encompassed, aged 12-14.

In secondary education, students of first and second year were encompassed, that is younger and older minors (14-17). They are more aware of the inherent dangers of the internet compared to primary education children.

The teachers who took part in the research were the students' homeroom teachers, because they can give more reliable insight, as they are better acquainted with their students and their issues. The subjects these teachers teach are not at all relevant for this research.

In addition, the research also included the pedagogical-psychological service representatives from the targeted schools.

Chart 1. Regular primary and secondary schools in 2018/2019

	number
regular primary schools	987
regular secondary schools	132
students in the regular primary schools	188,102
students in the regular secondary schools	71,650
teachers in the regular primary schools	18,272
teachers in the regular secondary schools	7,479

In line with the data from the State Statistical Office (as of July 1, 2019¹³), there are 34 cities in the country, and they are classified into three groups by population. Out of all of them, 5 are large, 18 are medium-sized and 11 are small cities or towns.

13 <https://www.stat.gov.mk/KlucniIndikator.aspx>

Chart 2. Number of settlements in the country

	number
municipalities	80
settlements	1,783
cities	34

Officially, North Macedonia is divided in eight planning regions¹⁴ that are used for statistical, economic and administrative purposes. The research included **two municipalities in each of the eight planning regions, and in each municipality, there were two regular primary and one secondary school selected**, and the selection took into account the ethnic representation of the respondents, the type of education (general-secondary and vocational), as well as a relevant ratio of urban and rural-area schools.

In this way, a total of 48 regular schools were selected, 32 of which were regular primary municipal schools and 16 were regular secondary schools (Annex 1 - school list).

Out of every school, the research involved:

- 2 grades, which is one from the eighth and one from the ninth grade from the primary schools,
- one class from the first and one class from the second year in the secondary schools, picked at random,
- 5 class teachers per school, and
- one representative from the pedagogical-psychological service in the school.



6. Research plan

The research plan included the following steps:

- Interviews were carried out with the teaching staff;
- An online survey was done among students;
- The results were interpreted;
- The results were analyzed;
- Conclusions were made and recommendations were created;



7. Analysis of the usage of the internet

According to the Global Cybersecurity Index¹⁵, the Republic of North Macedonia is 38th out of 182 countries, which means that it is ranked high among the countries it has signed a bilateral and international agreements for cybersecurity and implementation of various protection mechanisms.

The European Commission Working Document - the North Macedonia 2020 Report¹⁶ also reveals that: "Regarding cybercrime, a total of 56 computer crimes were detected in 2019 (105 in 2018). No cases of production and distribution of child pornography were reported. Steps were taken to support the implementation of the strategy on cybercrime, including monitoring the darkweb. North Macedonia should continue to strengthen its law enforcement focusing on detection, traceability and the prosecution of cyber criminals".

Information and communications technologies (ICT) are believed to be the key factors for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The right use of the ICT improves access to basic services such as education and health, it creates new jobs and it strengthens communities. More specifically, cybersecurity

14 <https://br.gov.mk/плански-региони-на-р-македонија/>

15 <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/Pages/global-cybersecurity-index.aspx>

16 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2020-10/north_macedonia_report_2020.pdf

is part of the sustainable development goal 9, which is about industry, innovation and infrastructure, that is, “to build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and to foster innovation”. The digital nations must be equipped to provide innovative, yet safe use of ICT. A July 2020 study on the Sustainable Development Goals for North Macedonia¹⁷ notes that: “Even though North Macedonia is perhaps lagging when it comes to investment in innovation, research and science in comparison to the other countries in the region, there is still a considerable improvement in this area. In 2019 alone, North Macedonia increased the investments in innovation to a considerable degree”. The Global Innovation Index (GII),¹⁸ ranked North Macedonia 59th out of 129 countries in 2019, which makes it the country with the biggest growth in investment compared to 2018.

In 2020¹⁹, 81.4% (1,695,000) of the population (2,083,005) has used the internet, which is a 1.2% increase, and there were 1,833,689 phone subscriptions.

The Republic of North Macedonia is a signatory of the Lanzarote Convention²⁰ and a member of the We Protect model²¹. The data shows:

- 18.0244 subscribers of landline telephony per 100 citizens,
- 98.4558 subscribers of mobile telephony per 100 citizens,
- 19.9363 subscribers of landline (wired) broadband internet per 100 citizens,
- 67.4173 subscribers of mobile broadband internet per 100 citizens,
- 67.2537% households with a computer,
- 69.1605% households with home internet access,
- 79.1678% individuals who use the internet.

According to the data of the State Statistical Office²², in the Republic of North Macedonia, in the first trimester of 2021, 83.7% of the households had home internet access. The participation of households according to type of settlement with broadband internet in the total number of households was 87.1% in 2021. In the first trimester of 2021, out of the total population at the age between 15 and 74, the internet was used by 86.4%, and 80.5% were using it every day or nearly every day.

The use of the internet has already become a necessity, a need, a basic tool for work and communication, searching for data and information and for creating new content. Especially during the pandemic and quarantine, the internet became a tool for education and for carrying out teaching in the formal education. Thus, it is no surprise that the internet is used on a daily basis to a great extent.

The fact that 46.3% of the individuals have ordered/bought goods or services through the internet in the last 12 months is interesting, which means that internet use has already become a basic economic tool for investments and different business relations.

In that sense, it is necessary to raise the awareness for the security of the exchange of data over the internet and to establish whether the target groups, i.e., the individuals aged 18 and up, are sufficiently knowledgeable in terms of protecting their basic financial and personal user data on the internet.

Internet access is on the rise as time goes by. The percentage of individuals who use the internet (aged 15-74) is constantly on the rise, from merely 51.9% in 2010 to 70.4% in 2015 and to 83.4% in 2019. The percentage of internet use is proportional to the percentage of increase of internet access. In 2021, 83.7% of the households had internet access.

Most of the internet users, or a whopping 96.3%, have higher education. 90% of the internet users have secondary education, while 73.2% have primary education, according to the SSO.²³

However, most of the internet users are students and 99.8% of all the university and school students are using internet..

17 https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26387VNR_2020_Macedonia_Report.pdf

18 2019 Global Innovation Index, https://www.wipo.int/edocs/pubdocs/en/wipo_pub_gii_2019.pdf

19 <https://data.un.org/Search.aspx?q=North+Macedonia>

20 <https://www.coe.int/web/children/lanzarote-convention>

21 <https://www.weprotect.org/alliance/governments/>

22 State Statistical Office, website, https://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2021/8.1.21.38_mk.pdf

23 State Statistical Office, November 19, 2021, no: 8.1.21.38

According to the type of activity online, the State Statistical Office analysis has shown that in most of the cases, in the target group of 15-24 (or 91.1% of them) carry out the following activities online:

- ringing somebody up,
- video calls,
- webcam use,
- various applications.

88.3% of them actively participate in: social networks, messaging etc.

If we consider that these activities are in fact the ones that carry the greatest risks online, such as cyber harassment (harassment using digital technology), invasion of privacy, identity theft, exposing kids to offensive images and messages, the presence of foreigners who might be there to recruit children etc., it is of exceptional importance that efforts are invested in creating an educational strategy aimed at the children and the teaching staff that would help them use the internet in a safe manner.



8. Research results

The research was conducted between August 15 and September 25, 2022, since the Ministry of Education and Science issued the approval for conducting the research in June, when both students and teachers were already on their summer break.

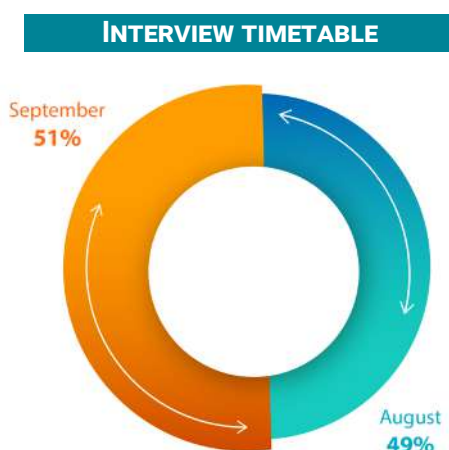
The additional challenge was the strike in education before the research, which extended the data collection period.

The results that were collected through the interviews and surveys will be interpreted and analyzed in the following pages.

Note: the insight into the research results has shown that the differences in ethnicity have no bearing on the way the respondents contemplate on this topic, so there is no special interpretation and analysis by ethnicity, which is separate from the other aspects. That means that the people who took part in the research perceive the issue in the same way, they face the same issues and they share the same standpoints and relationship towards the topic, regardless of ethnicity.

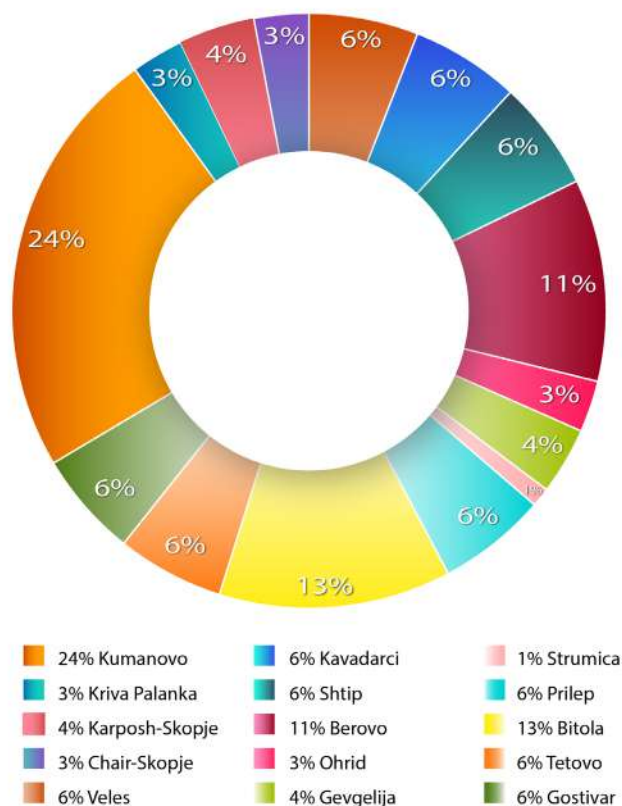
8.1. Overview and interpretation of the interview results

The interviews were used to gather the opinions of a total of 109 teachers and representatives of the pedagogical-psychological services at the schools.



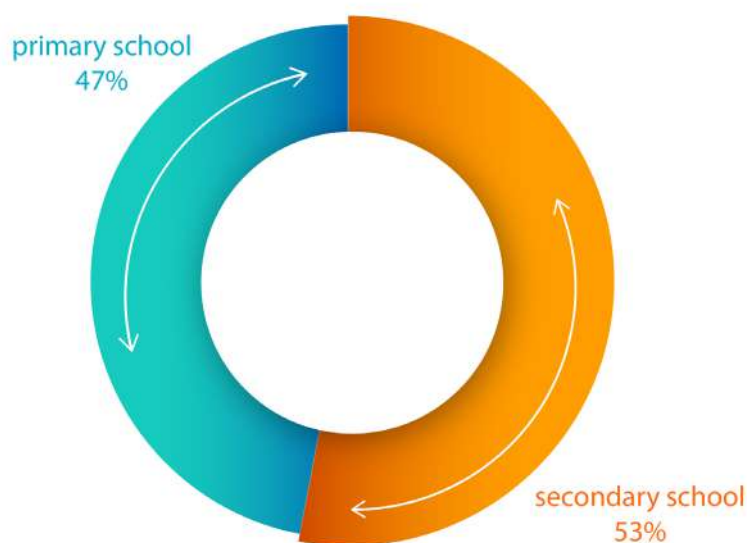
Half of the interviews were conducted in August (49%), and the other half in September (51%). Bearing in mind that the teaching staff was already on duty in the second half of August, no major obstacles in conducting the interviews were faced. In some schools there was greater interest, while in some smaller, and as a result there was a fluctuation of the number of teachers and teaching staff that was involved.

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS PER MUNICIPALITY



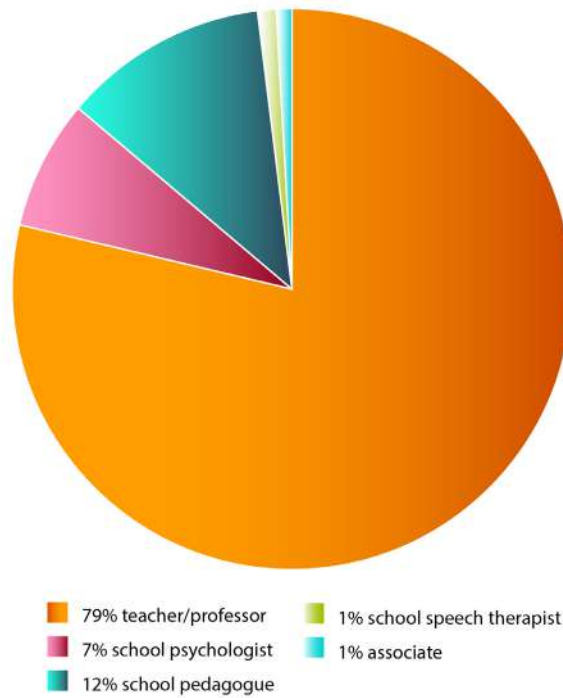
Most of the respondents come from schools in Kumanovo, and then from Bitola and Berovo. That is merely a testament to their willingness to participate and cooperate in this type of research.

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS PER TYPE OF EDUCATION



The percentage of respondents in primary and secondary education is virtually the same.

RESPONDENT OCCUPATION



According to occupation, 78.9% of the respondents are teachers/professors, and the others work in the school's pedagogical-psychological service.

At the onset, the respondents were asked: **Does the teaching staff communicate with the children through social media, and which social media does it use? Is such communication efficient?** Thus, 99% of the respondents said 'yes' also to using social networks as a communications tool, as a tool for sharing information. What follows are the most common answers:

- *Facebook, Viber. From experience so far, the efficiency of this type of communication is sufficient.*
- *In closed messenger groups, as a way of sharing information.*
- *Yes, namely: Viber, Messenger, Teams MK etc. where there is successful communication, that is cooperation.*
- *Since they work with younger students, communication through social media is mainly aimed at parents and indirectly with students, personally through a Facebook group of the class, which is frequently also used to share work materials and current information. A small share of participants at that age have their own, personal profiles and I sometimes communicate directly through Messenger, but only in order to receive information or to share some homework electronically.*
- *Yes, Facebook groups for the class, organized by subject. Communication is efficient for sharing information and learning materials.*
- *Communication through social media is necessary and makes contacting the children much easier.*
- *I rarely use social media for communication with students, only during class, if I send them tasks digitally. I only use Messenger.*

There are only two respondents who doubt the efficiency of using social networks for education, but they are avoiding using them for communication because of personal experience.

In terms of online exploitation and reporting, the respondents were asked the following questions: **Are the children aware of the risks and dangers of communicating on social networks? Can they recognize and report cases of online harassment and exploitation? Are they aware of the reporting mechanisms? Are the**

teachers aware of the reporting mechanisms?

Thus, most of the respondents replied that the children are generally aware of the potential cases of abuse and of the reporting mechanisms, but they do not use them because of fear and because of a subjective feeling that they'd done something wrong.

My opinion is that despite the lectures/projects that we have at school that help students meet both the risks and the dangers stemming from communication through social networks, they are still not sufficiently aware of these dangers. Some of the students and some of the teaching staff are not sufficiently aware of the reporting mechanisms.

In addition, most of them agree with the statement that the teachers do recognize the reporting mechanisms, *but not in a substantial way*. What they underline is that *the students should attend more training to be able to recognize such cases*. There are those who ask for trainings for both target groups:

- *I believe that neither the teachers nor the students have sufficient information to be able to recognize and report such cases.*
- *I believe they are not sufficiently acquainted with all the risks. Perhaps some do know, but I think most of them don't.*
- *My students get information about the risks and dangers from communicating through social networks at the discussions during the computer classes, but they are not informed about the reporting mechanisms. I have pointed out that they should inform their parents or me, as their teacher, about any suspicious activity, since they are still young.*

When it comes to reporting, the parents play a key role: *Yes, the children recognize and report, mostly to their parents, and we, as teachers, are aware of the reporting mechanisms.*

In terms of how well this content and programme is represented:

- *Yes, this topic is frequently represented at homeroom periods.*
- *On several occasions in the last few years, a number of projects on media literacy and protection when communicating through the media have been implemented, and regular workshops on digital violence are being organized. However, the students have not attended any regular information meetings, where they would listen to recommendations. That is why some of the students may not be fully aware of what they are supposed to do.*

The response to the question: **Are the students encouraged to report to the teachers and parents any potentially dangerous situations that may happen online?** was, generally speaking, that they are encouraged to do so, and in a multitude of ways at that:

- *From experience, the younger students share and like to share information on such situations in the school, in cooperation with the parents, and I know that they are usually controlled at home and that they are aware of what their children talk about through social media.*
- *Yes. The students are regularly encouraged to report to their parents, to their homeroom teachers, to associates or the subject teacher if they have come across any type of violence, including online.*

However, almost more than half of the teachers were doubtful whether it is reported appropriately and whether it is being reported at all:

- *I believe that not all students are encouraged to report certain potentially dangerous situations to the teachers and parents.*
- *Some students yes, some no!*
- *Yes, they are encouraged, but still not sufficiently, there is a certain aversion to that and a desire to conceal such events.*
- *In certain situations, they do report. Not always, as they do not comprehend the gravity of the situation.*
- *No. They believe they are sufficiently competent themselves to tackle any issue. Unfortunately, that is wrong.*

In terms of the studying materials they need, the following questions were raised: **Are the teachers informing the students about the dangers online? Do the teachers have enough educational material? Do they cover this topic with the students through formal and/or informal education (Erasmus programmes, cooperation with the NGO sector)?** Virtually all teachers agree that there isn't enough educational material on this topic in formal education. Everybody makes do with different materials available online if they want to create educational content for the class.

- *The teachers share information with the students about these types of issues, but mostly what they have learnt from their personal exploration, not from the support of the institutions of the country*
- *Yes, they inform them.*
- *They do not have educational material.*
- *They work, but they have no plan and no serious approach.*
- *Yes, the teachers discuss the dangers of the internet with the students at their homeroom period. They do not have educational material, unless they find something of their own accord. This is the most common topic for training of students, organized by the school's professional service in cooperation with NGOs and the police sector for internal affairs, OSCE etc.*

All the teachers replied that they have carried out some kind of activity on this topic, through various activities, *together with the school's professional service, through a multitude of workshops, through discussion with the parents, but also through the cooperation with the local community, which is the police from the Berovo police station.* However, *most of the teachers are not educated enough on the topic. This topic is frequently discussed at homeroom periods, as well, but also when the topics are related to the need for e-communication. The teachers make do with their own educational material.*

Schools in general, including teachers, are lacking when it comes to educational material for working with students on this topic.

When they read the question: **Do the students have sufficient educational material that can be used to get information about the internet-related dangers?** merely 15 of the 104 respondents, or 14%, replied that they do have material related to these topics. The other 86% agree that:

They don't have much, there have been some shows on TV recently, but I think that the target population for these shows does not watch them at all. As far as I could hear, no. The school psychologist provides educational material through power point presentations, but it would be nice if you sent us more educational material of this type. Some, however, believe that the students can look up this information online themselves: *They have materials available on social networks.*

- *No. The institutions do not have sufficient funds for such materials. Unfortunately, since the dangers are on the rise on a daily basis, the dangers are becoming more serious, while the trend of defense is lagging behind the trend of danger.*
- *There is a booklet on human trafficking, but any material would be welcome.*

When they read the questions: **Has your school had a case of sharing inappropriate content on social media, and online in general? Has it been reported and where? What measures have been taken? What challenges did you face?** most of the respondents replied that they have not noticed such a case. But, some have resolved such cases inside the school:

- *So far, we have resolved the issues at the school and we have had no need to report to other institutions.*
- *There have been a few cases, it was reported to the homeroom teachers, the pedagogical-psychological service, to the principal, to the parents.*

In terms of type of activity, it usually happens in the higher grades.

- *There was a case with a student in the higher grades, but I have no information as to what mea-*

asures were taken.

- *Posting pictures of the teachers online. It was reported and the appropriate measures were taken. There was one case, it was reported to the principal of the school and the professional service, the parents were invited to the school.*

And in terms of measures taken, the common one is to take away the mobile device:

- *Yes. The principal was informed, and as a result a ban on bringing mobile phones to the school was introduced, in order to prevent the sharing of inappropriate pictures and videos taken at the school.*
- *There was one case, several years ago. I don't know whether it was reported officially by the principal and the professional services, but the school authorities talked about it with the perpetrator. The content was erased. Because of this case, the students were banned from bringing their mobile phones to the school, and if they really have to, they leave them with the pedagogue and they pick them up when they leave.*

When they read the questions: **Do the teachers talk to the parents about the internet-related dangers and risks for students? In what way can parents get involved in informing their children for the internet-related dangers and risks?** Most of the respondents mentioned that the teachers are willing to talk openly and to get the parents more involved in terms of spreading information.

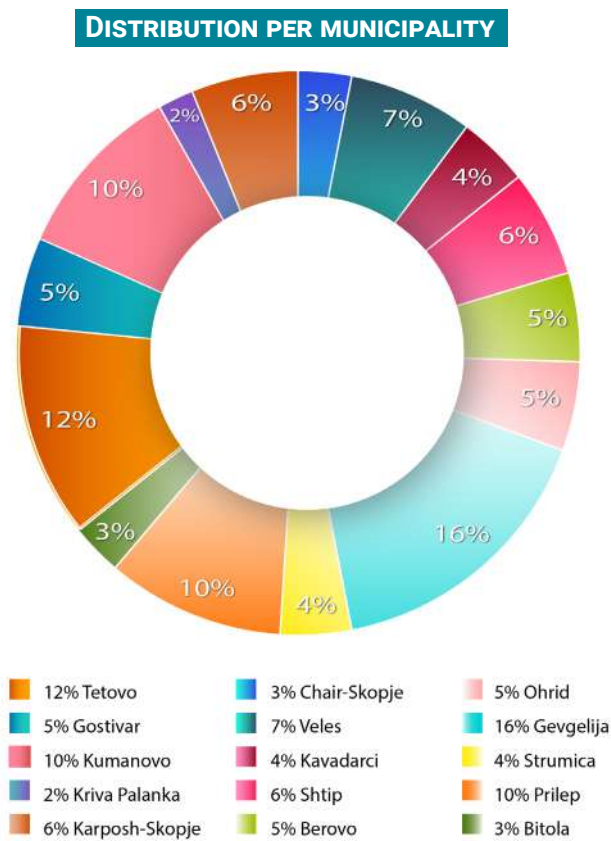
- *Purely in order to inform them, to remind them of such dangers. Even if they wanted to, they could not inform them more. Since the line institutions do not provide training for the teachers, they leave them to their own devices when it comes to monitoring the danger-related developments. They rely on their own resources, free time and personal ambition to develop personally in this area. Like in any other area, mainly, because the state only imposes obligations and demands from the teacher and nothing else.*
- *Yes, but the parents should have a greater bearing on the children in terms of their internet activities.*
- *The parents should be more informed about the internet activities of their children, and they should act accordingly.*
- *The parents have learnt about these dangers at workshops and at meetings with the homeroom teacher. Further control and information are always necessary.*
- *Yes, that is one of the topics at the parent-teacher meetings. The parents can contribute to raising awareness of the children just with education.*

The teachers talk to the parents about the internet-related dangers and risks, mostly at the parent-teacher meetings, by phone, and, if necessary, when resolving individual cases.

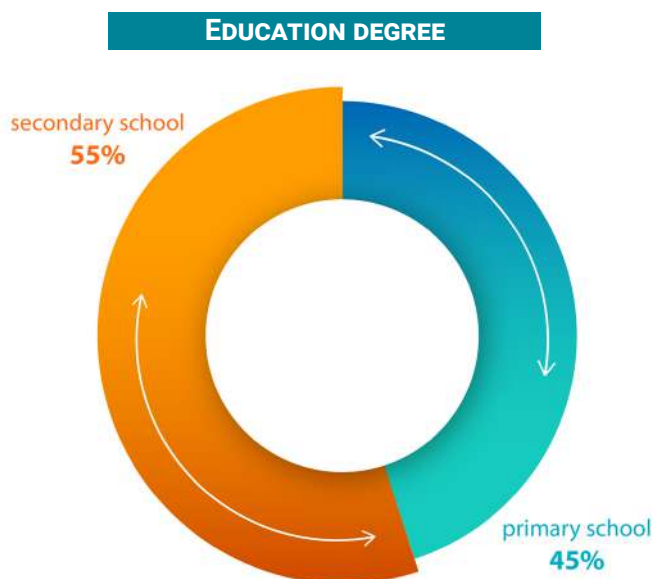
- *This topic is rarely discussed. The parents at times lack the mechanisms to reduce internet-related risks and dangers because they themselves are not educated enough to prevent this. The schools, even the municipalities, should conduct at least basic training for the parents and their education.*
- *Very rarely, at parent-teacher meetings or if such a case shows up, it is resolved individually.*
- *As a school, we haven't organized systemic, organized and regular meetings for advice and directions that would help parents discuss the topic with the students.*
- *I've personally discussed this topic at the parent-teacher meetings, because a student used his telephone camera inappropriately, for fun. When they are at home, the parents teach the children about such dangers, but perhaps educational workshops should be organized at the school for parents and children, in order to get everybody better informed.*
- *Yes, through the project entitled Joint Care for the Correct Guidance of the Young People, the parents are taking part in various activities, including such content.*
- *We are discussing this, but it is not enough, we must have workshops and educational material for parents and teachers.*
- *Yes, the topic is discussed with the parents. They can get involved through trainings, shared information, but the parents are frequently not interested in the whole topic.*

8.2. Overview and interpretation of the survey results

685 students replied to the survey. Now we will share the overview, presentation and interpretation of the results that were received.

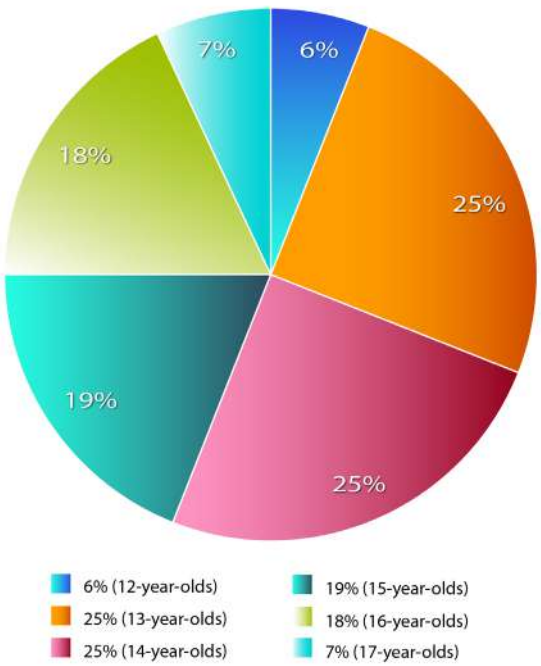


The distribution of the surveyed students per municipality mirrors the distribution done per methodology and the plan for implementation of the survey, i.e., two municipalities per every statistical region in the country. Thus, the largest number of students who accepted to be surveyed were from Gevgelija, 16% and Kumanovo, 10%, while no students were surveyed from Struga, even though they were duly invited through their teachers.



According to the level of education, 376 of the students (or 55%) are from primary education, and 309 (45%) are from the secondary education, which is in line with the planned ratio, which is the number of respondents to be nearly equal when it comes to degree of education. There were students from eighth and ninth grade of primary education and first and second year of secondary education.

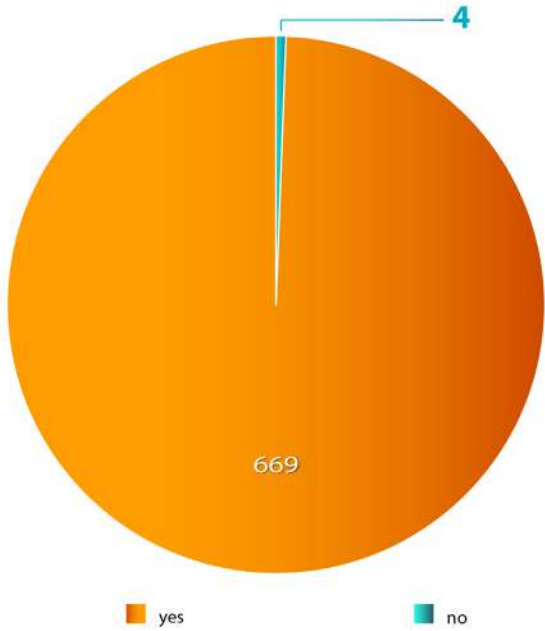
AGE



- These are the age groups of the students:
- 12 years of age - 41 respondents, or 6%,
 - 13 years of age - 172 respondents or 25%,
 - 14 years of age - 170 respondents or 25%,
 - 15 years of age - 133 respondents or 19%,
 - 16 years of age - 124 respondents, or 18% and
 - 17 years of age - 45 respondents, or 7%.

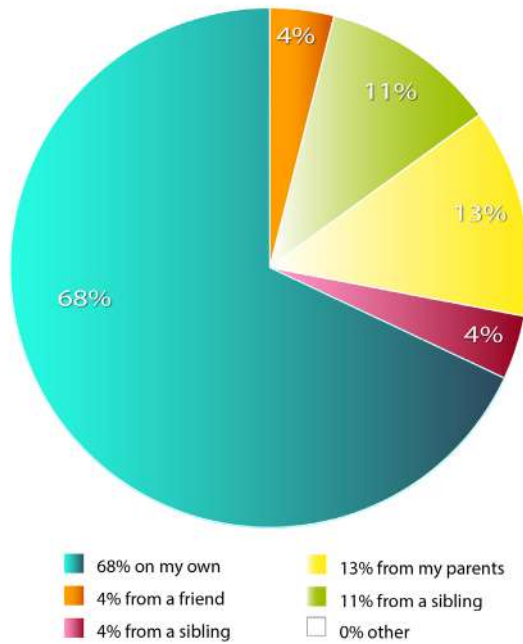
TOTAL number of students who responded: 685

ARE YOU USING THE INTERNET?



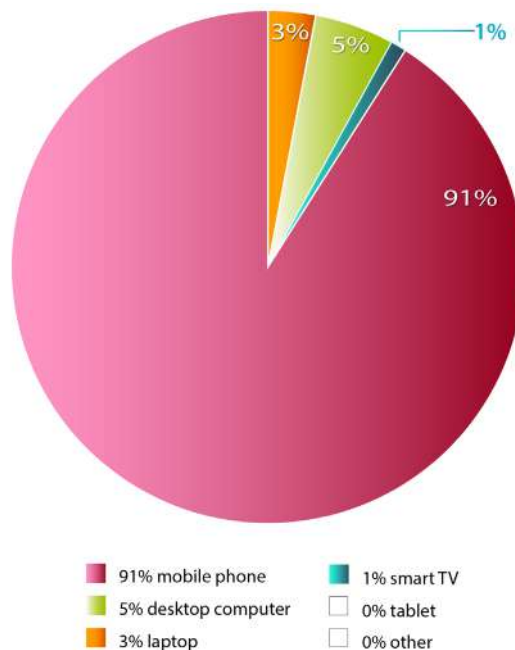
Virtually all respondents answered that they do use the internet. Only 1% of the respondents do not use the internet. This result was expected, bearing in mind the availability of the internet, the availability of the devices for accessing the internet and the opportunities it gives to young people.

HOW DID YOU LEARN TO USE THE INTERNET?



Most of the students (or 68%) learnt to use the internet on their own, and a smaller number learnt from their parents (13%), siblings (11%), relatives or a friend. The new technologies, as well as e-learning, as a method, promote independent learning from the internet. However, in order to learn how to use the internet and avoid all risks and challenges, digital literacy experts are required to steer the children towards using the internet in the right way. Thus, the digital literacy training should include at least educational materials for safe internet searches, it should explain which links are safe and how children can protect themselves while browsing, and how to be aware that they are not leaving digital fingerprints and digital traces that could be used to disturb the privacy of data, it should explain which content can be credible, how the children can access safe sites etc.

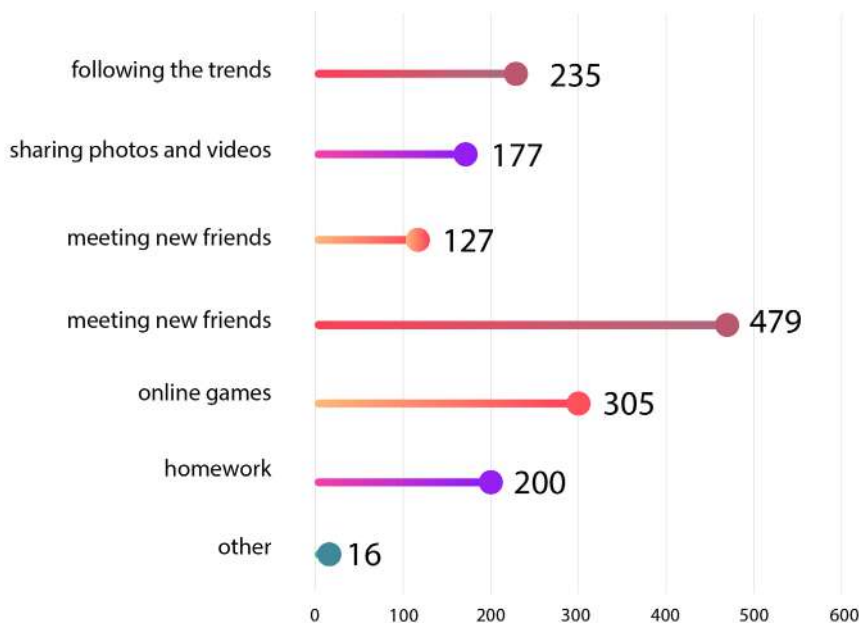
HOW DO YOU ACCESS THE INTERNET IN MOST OF THE CASES?



Most of the students, or 91% of the total number of respondents, usually access the internet through their mobile phone. Mobile phone use increased as more people can afford to access digital devices. However, one must take into account that the mobile phones are also functioning as computers, since they have data processing applications and services, a camera that can take photos and shoot videos, communication services (chats) where content can be shared. In that respect, the safe use of mobile phones, which is the

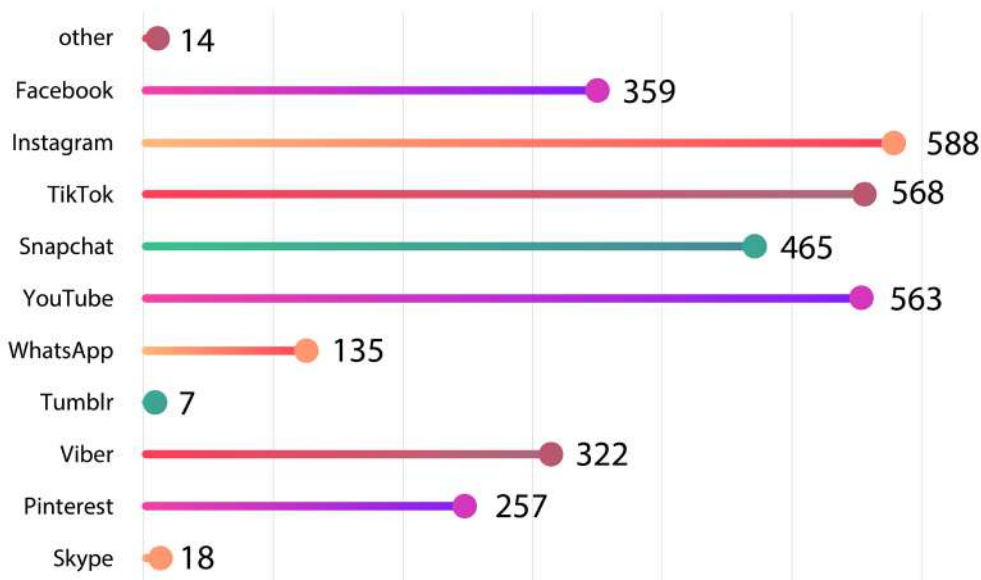
applications used by the phone, saving the data and sharing various communication platforms is a risk which is not discussed at school, nor it is learnt in informal education.

WHAT TYPE OF ACTIVITIES DO YOU DO ONLINE?



The answers to this question vary. The respondents had several answers to choose from, but in general, the internet is used mainly for fun and socialization. Thus, 479 out of 685 respondents, or 70%, mostly use it for hanging out with friends, while 44.5% use it for online games. One should note the risk of accessing various sites that offer games with sexual content, which do not check the user’s age, and as a result they’re very easy to reach, while at the same time they may important data about the users.²⁴

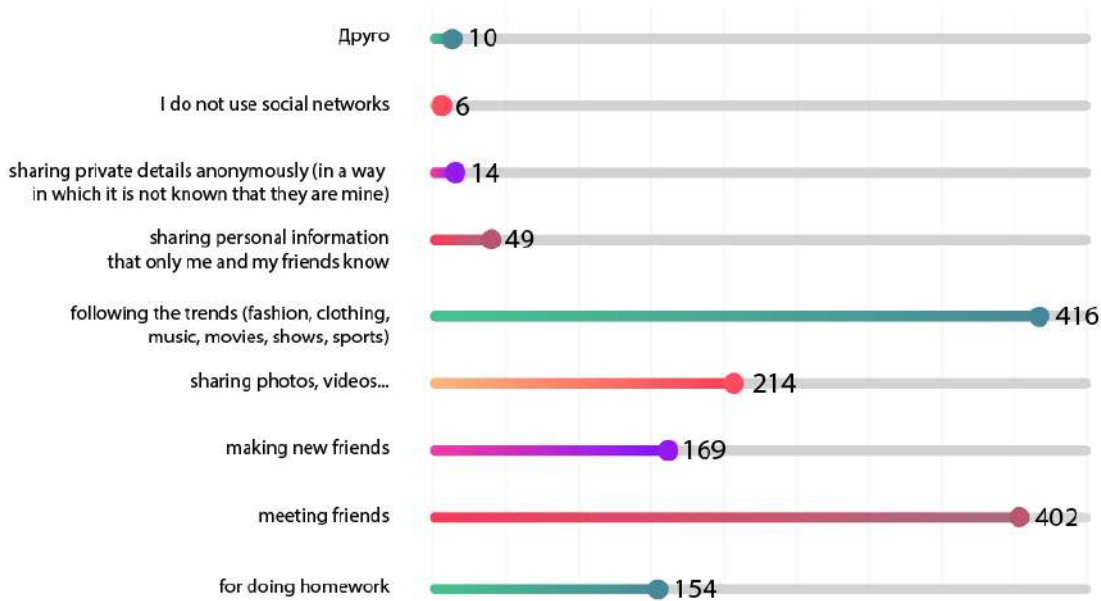
WHICH SOCIAL NETWORKS DO YOU USE?



The students had several potential answers to choose from, so they mostly use: Instagram (86% of respondents), YouTube (82% of respondents), TikTok (68% of respondents), Snapchat (67% of respondents), Facebook (52% of respondents), Viber (47% of respondents), Pinterest (37% of respondents). Most of these platforms, that is the most popular ones, have the option for direct communication, but also for downloading and attaching videos and/or photos. Thus, the method of communication is by sharing readymade content (produced by someone else), or by sharing original content (produced by the person who is streaming it).

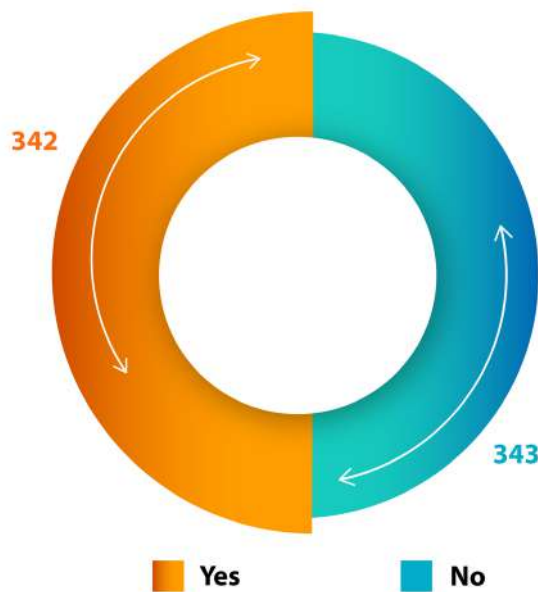
24 <https://endsexualexploitation.org/steam/>

WHAT DO YOU USE SOCIAL NETWORKS FOR PREDOMINANTLY?



Students had several potential answers to choose from. The largest percentage (61% of respondents) use social networks for following the trends (fashion, clothing, music, movies, shows, sports), but almost the same percentage use it to setup meetings with friends (59% of respondents), to share pictures, videos (31% of respondents) and to forge new friendships (25% of respondents). The response points to the increased use of the internet mainly for its social component, as a support for the already established social circle or for making new friends. A large number of respondents are focused on using social networks in order to be in touch with and to receive the latest information for different interests, but also for arranging meetings with friends.

DO YOU HAVE MORE THAN ONE ACCOUNT FOR THE SAME SOCIAL NETWORK, FOR EXAMPLE FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM, TIKTOK ETC.?

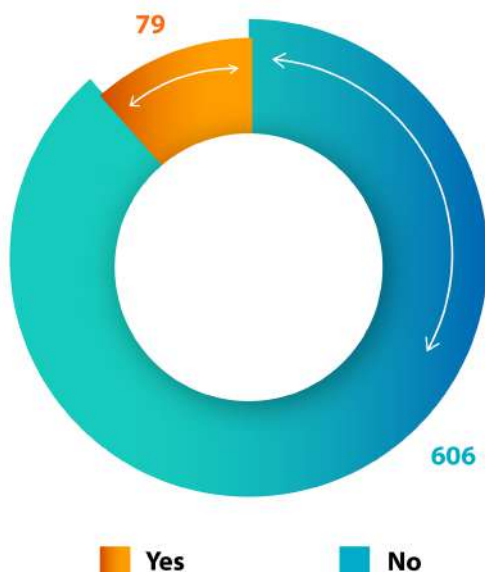


Half of the respondents mentioned that they have more than one account/profile for the same social network. According to a survey of more than 20,000 young people carried out in the most prestigious private schools in Great Britain in 2018²⁵, virtually 60% of children aged 11-18 have a considerable number of private social network profiles that they hide from their parents. They use private accounts, known as “priv”, to publish intimate, funny or daring photos and captions, to bully classmates, to experiment with their gender

25 <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/children-keep-second-profile-for-secret-posts-77p5kdrq>

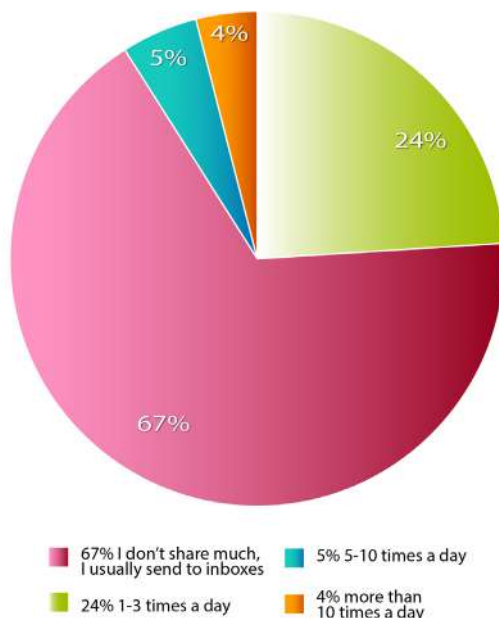
identity or to post “naughty” private messages to friends. This issue should especially attract the attention of the experts in digital security and in combatting human trafficking, not only in Great Britain, but in the other countries, as well, including us, but also to hire experts from sociology and psychology within the preventive mechanism for safe children on the internet.

DO YOU HAVE A JOINT SOCIAL NETWORK PROFILE WITH A FRIEND?



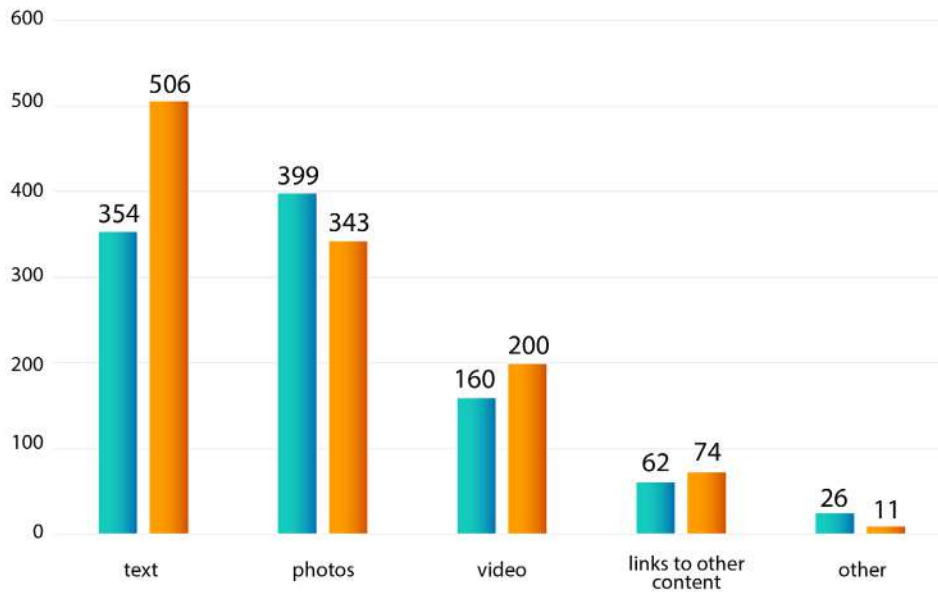
12% of the respondents stated that they have a joint profile on a social network with a friend and that this joint profile is usually used for games, socialization, fun, for sharing pictures and interesting moments. This also stimulates discussions on the risks and the potential of abuse of the joint profile, the protection of privacy etc. A large number of questions can be elicited as points of discussion and can become part of the educational bundle in the schools.

HOW FREQUENTLY DO YOU SHARE CONTENT ON SOCIAL NETWORKS?



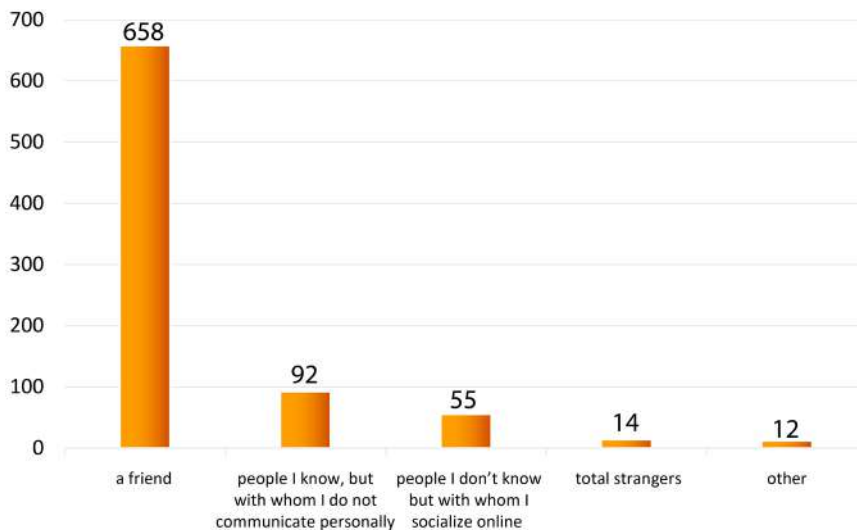
Most of the students (67%) stated that they do not share content publicly on social networks, but they prefer to send content through DMs or to the inbox. 24% of the respondents share content on social media between 1 and 3 times a day. Thus, one can conclude that sending messages means receiving messages with video/photos/text that can be produced by somebody else or not, but in any case, this communication is clandestine. The ignorance of the risks of abuse of the communication platforms is only a fragment of the low awareness and the lack of knowledge on how to use the internet and the services it provides in a safe manner.

WHAT TYPE OF CONTENT DO YOU USUALLY SHARE AND WHAT TYPE OF CONTENT DO YOU USUALLY RECEIVE?



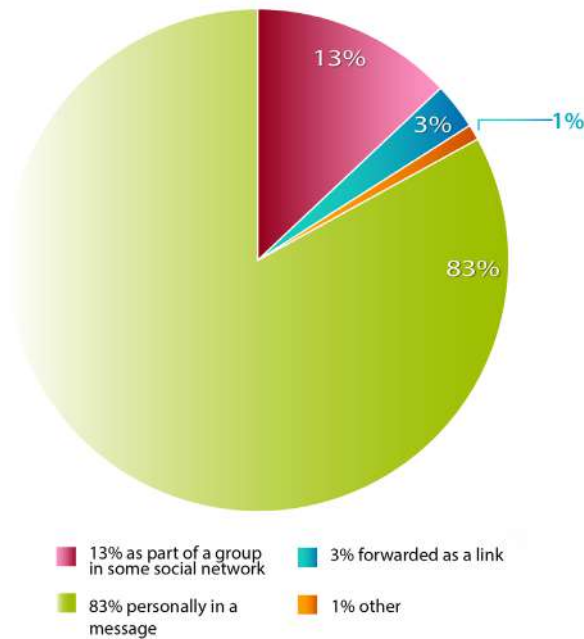
The students had several potential answers for this question to choose from. They usually share and receive texts (74% of respondents receive texts, while 52% only share it). Those who share photos (57%) outnumber those that receive them (50%). Nearly 30% answered that they receive videos and links to other content.

I RECEIVE MOST OF THE MESSAGES FROM:



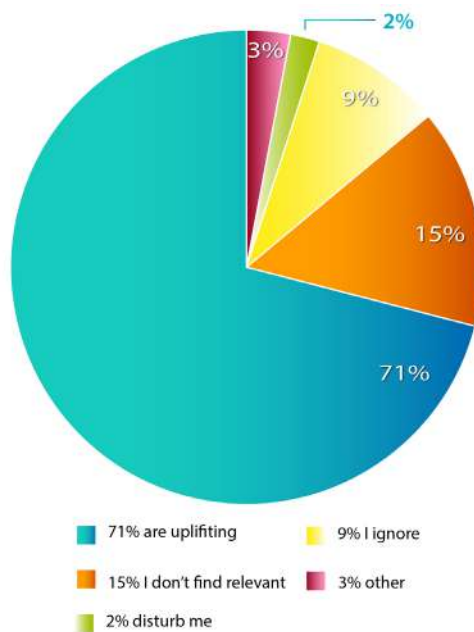
The students had several potential answers to choose from. However, most of them, or 96%, are using social networks mainly for communication with friends. A considerable number of students (13%) receive messages from people whom they know, but who are not in direct contact with them, and the fact that 8%, or 55 students have stated that they receive messages from people they do not know, yet they socialize with them, as well as from complete strangers (14 students) is worrying. Thus, 2% receive messages from total strangers.

I USUALLY RECEIVE THE CONTENT



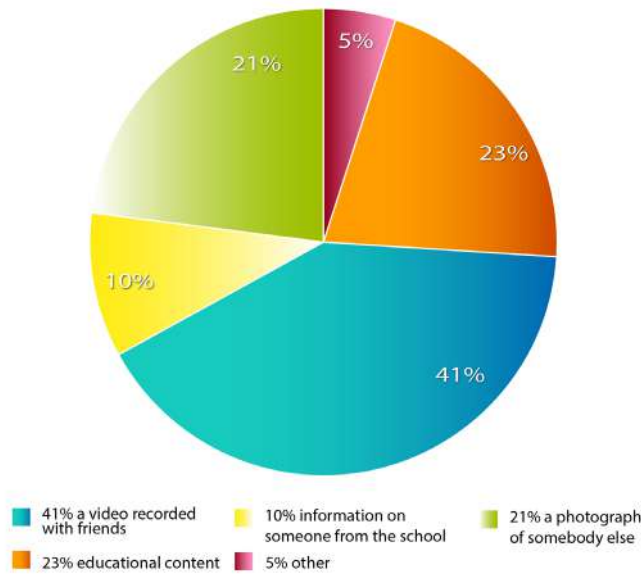
83% of the respondents answered that they receive content in private messages, and only 13% as part of a group on a social network. Generally speaking, the communication on social networks between students is carried out privately, with direct messaging.

THE MESSAGES I RECEIVE:



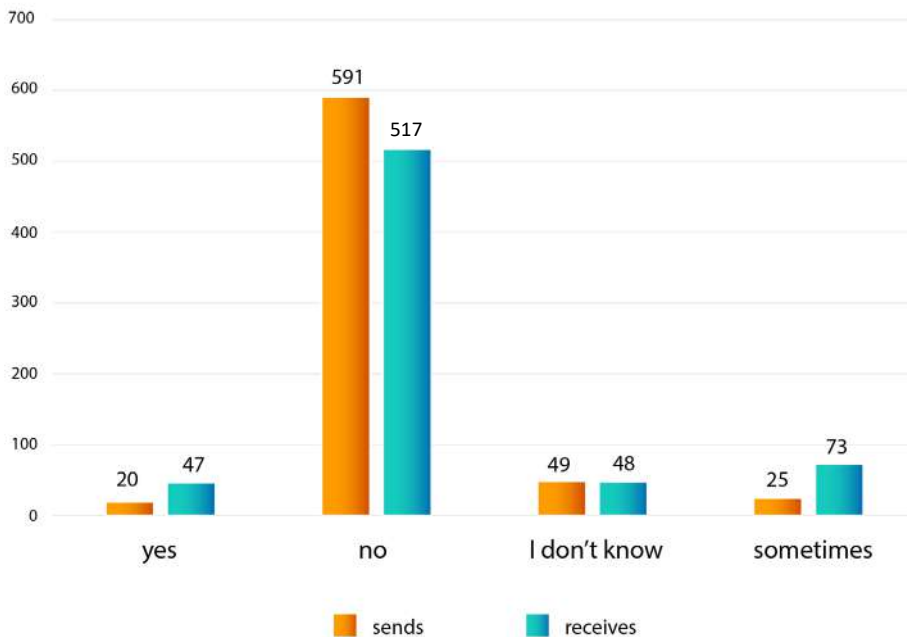
The fact that 2%, or 11 students, have stated that they find the messages they receive on social networks disturbing, is worrying. Thus, the reasons for the harassment and the consequences they have on the students warrant a more thorough examination and analysis.

OUT OF THE MESSAGES YOU RECEIVE, WHAT, IN YOUR VIEW, IS INTERESTING CONTENT?



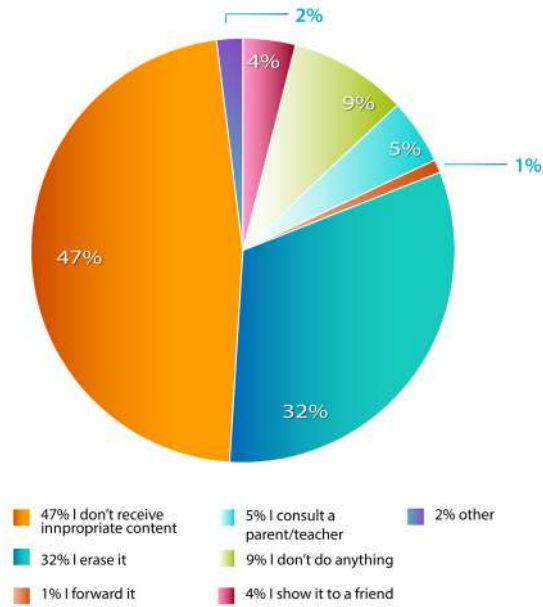
The respondents were asked to define what they consider interesting content. For 41% of the students, that means videos recorded with friends, for 23% it is educational content, 21% consider photographs of other people to be interesting content, but also 10% answered that they find interesting to read information about somebody from the school.

DO YOU SEND/RECEIVE INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT IN YOUR INBOX?



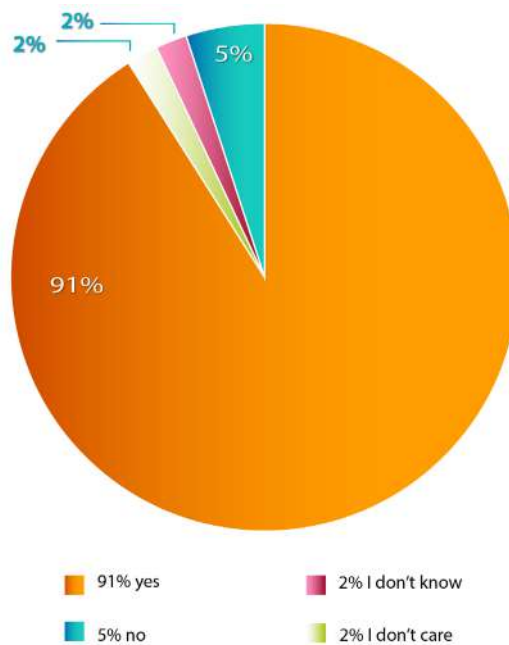
7% of the respondents students have sent inappropriate content in somebody’s inbox, while 14% students have received inappropriate content in their inbox. The number of people that have sent such messages is smaller, however the number of students who receive such messages is larger. In that sense, one can assume that less students are sending messages to more students, but the scope of the shared content is not large, it just has a larger incidence.

HOW DO YOU REACT TO INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT?



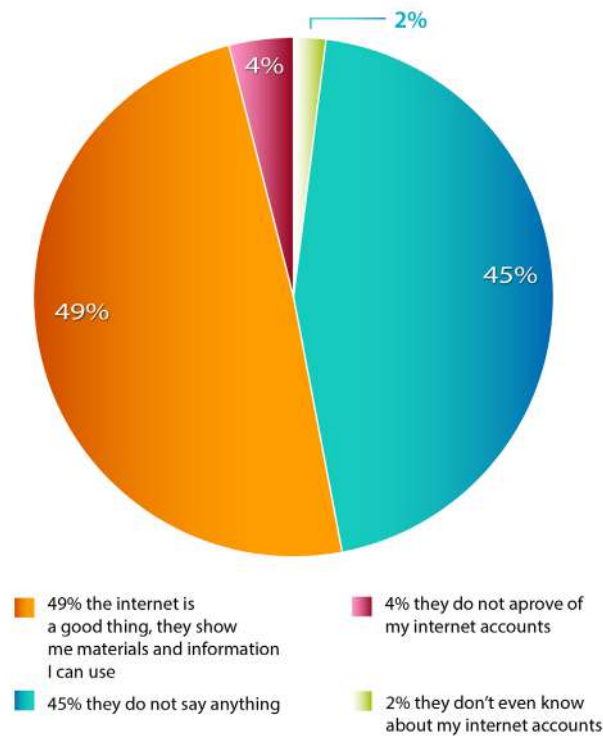
For the inappropriate content, 9% of the students do not take any action, 5% ask for help from a parent/teacher, 4% show it to a friend or they forward it, but 32% of students erase it, that is they do not report it to anyone or to any institution. Thus, it is of essential importance to promote report and response mechanisms in order to reduce the percentage of cases in which inappropriate content was shared, but also in order to ensure parents and teachers are involved as the basic target groups in the educational process, as they are part of the reporting mechanism, not just providers of education. The fact that some students take no action (and they do not report the issue to an institution or a representative) increases the risk even further.

DO YOUR PARENTS KNOW ABOUT YOUR SOCIAL NETWORK ACCOUNTS?



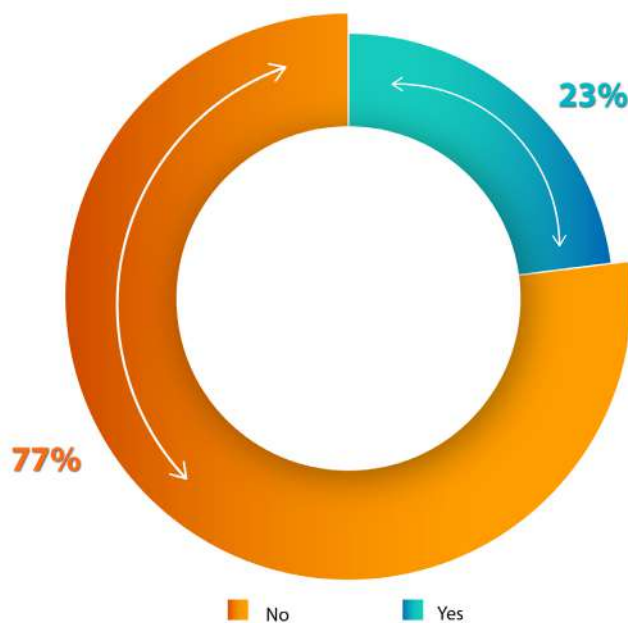
91 % of students replied that their parents knew about the profiles they have on the social networks. 2% of the students replied that they do not know whether their parents know about their social network accounts, while 5% of students believe their parents don't care at all. This points to the need of education and raising awareness of the parents for the security of their children online and the control of the access their children have to the internet.

WHAT DO YOUR PARENTS ADVISE YOU ABOUT YOUR SOCIAL NETWORK ACCOUNTS?



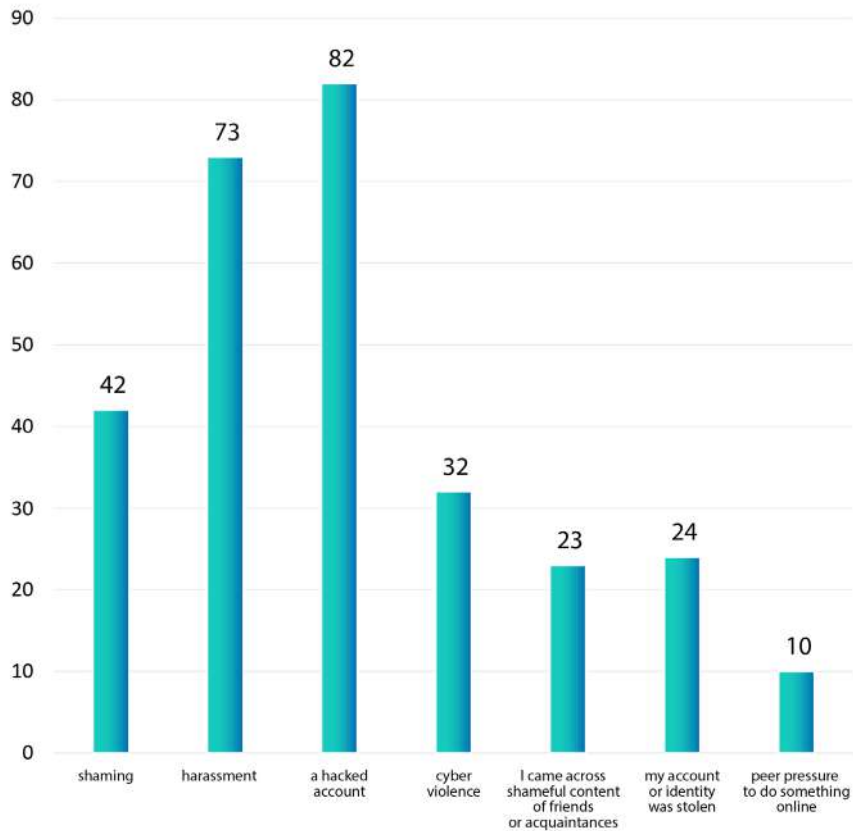
49% of the students replied that their parents show them which materials and information to use, while 45% of the students replied that they do not control what they are doing and they are not saying anything about that. 4% of the students replied that their parents do not approve of their profiles. If we take into account that there is a lot of software for parental supervision of the internet use of children, and the fact that some of it is freely available and user-friendly, the parents can easily become part of the control mechanism for safe internet use. Perhaps they should be promoted better, and parents should exchange good practices for various cases.

HAVE YOU HAD A BAD EXPERIENCE ONLINE?



23%, or 160 students, had a bad experience online. That figure is not insignificant, on the contrary, it should be an indicator that the students face various challenges online/on social networks, and they have no space in the public sphere (inside/outside of the school premises) to share their experiences and to learn something from that.

IF YOU HAVE HAD A BAD EXPERIENCE ONLINE, WHAT TYPE WAS IT?

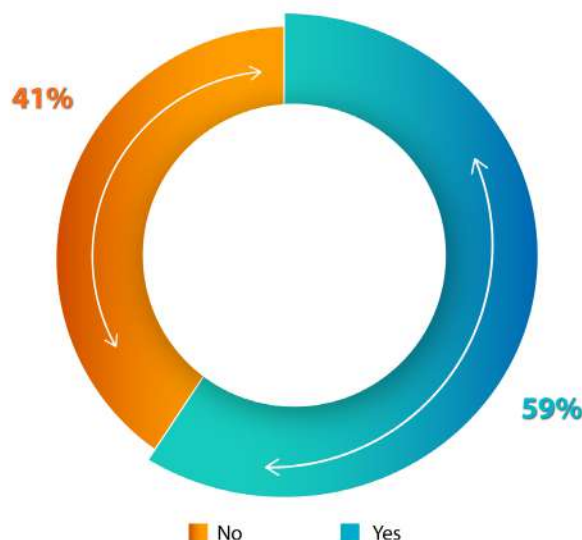


The respondents had several potential answers to choose from. Thus, 11% faced some type of harassment, the account of 12% of them was hacked, and 6% were ashamed in some way and 4.7% faced some type of cyber violence. 3.4% of the respondents pointed out that they came across shameful content of their friends or acquaintances online and 3.5% claimed their account/identity was stolen, while 1.5% of them were under pressure from their peers to do something online they do not want to do.

In such situations, 8% told their parents, and the same percentage of students blocked the profile of the person who harassed them on social networks, 6% ignored that person, that is they took no action, 2% told such persons to stop, while only 1.3% reported them to the police, and 1% erased all evidence (pictures, videos, messages etc.) they had shared with these persons. Only two students said they have reported this person to the school.

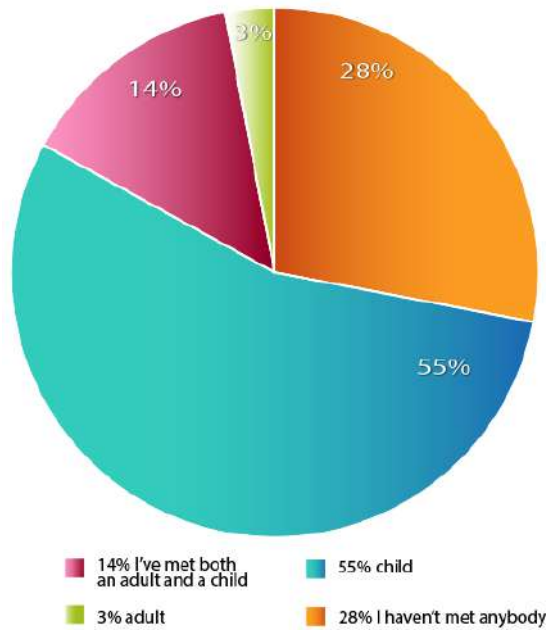
The fact that these situations were not reported and were ignored is a sign of failure of the institutions that are part of the mechanisms for reporting abuse of children or their data online.

HAVE YOU MET IN PERSON ANYBODY YOU HAVE MET ONLINE?



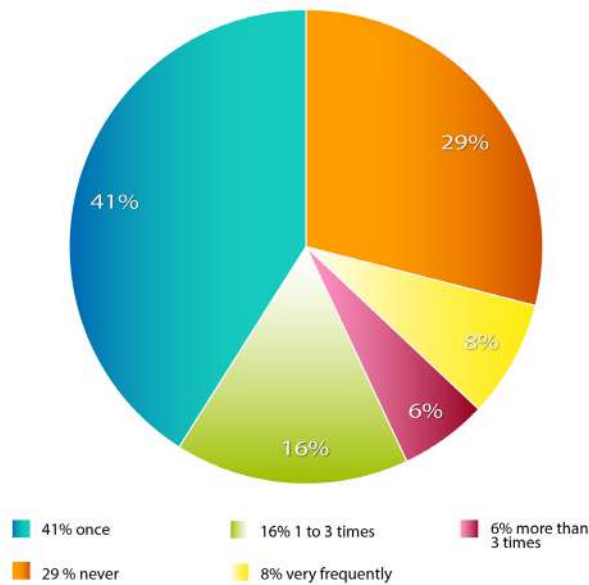
59% of the total number of respondents, that is 404 students, answered that after meeting the person online they have also met him in real life.

IF YES, WAS THAT AN ADULT OR A CHILD?



17%, or 115 respondents answered that they have met an adult in person after communicating online. This percentage is in fact showing the greatest risk for potential victims of abuse. One cannot assume that they all had negative experiences, but having in mind the age group of the respondents (12-17), still it must be taken into account that it is a vulnerable category that cannot be left to its own devices just like that. 55% replied that after communicating online, the people they usually met in person were their peers.

HOW FREQUENTLY DO YOU MEET SUCH PEOPLE IN PERSON?



71% of students, that is 485 students, have met in person the people they communicated with online at least once, and most of them met that person more than once.



9. Analysis of the case Public Room

The case Public Room²⁶ in our country showcased the challenges faced by the systemic and societal response to such issues. Namely, in early 2020, the Telegram communication app was used to create a private group called PUBLIC ROOM, where pornographic photos of minors, as well as photoshopped pornographic photos of children were being published and shared. The group Public Room, when the investigation started, had more than 8000 members registered.

In order to become a member of this private group in the Telegram communication app, the user has to think of a nickname and to leave their telephone number. What follows is a brief explanation of how the application Telegram works, so that it can be clear how difficult is for law enforcement to obtain the necessary information. In terms of exchange of messages, Telegram allows one-to-one communication for its users, but it allows one user to be able to communicate with many users by means of chats, channels and groups, where the users can exchange both text and non-text messages (files, audio and video messages). There are two types of chats: ordinary and secret chats. When you are using secret chats, you can select an option for the messages, photos, videos and files to self-destruct a certain period after they were created, read or opened by the recipient. These messages can't be forwarded, and they will disappear from the users' devices after a while.

The groups created on Telegram are available for chats, sharing or cooperation and can have up to 150,000 users. The news members of the group can see the whole message history the moment they log in. The default setting is that every group member can add new people, edit their name, change the name, but of course this can be limited by the administrator/administrators. The members can send and receive any type of file, up to 2 GB in size.

The app is constantly updated, and, disconcertingly for us, and especially for the victims, as well as law enforcement, as of recently the Telegram app allows for keeping the admins of a group anonymous (they do not show up in the group members list. This is especially an issue for law enforcement, when it needs to establish the identity of the person behind the anonymous profiles/accounts.

It is known that every social network and communication app has its own privacy policy and a policy for communicating with law enforcement. In fact, these companies are private and write their own rules, and they follow the law in the country where their principal place of business is, that is in the country where they are registered, which means that if in our country a certain illegal activity is considered a crime and is being prosecuted ex officio, perhaps it is not considered a crime in a third country, which is an issue from the beginning in the further investigation in the country where the investigation is taking place.

Specifically, that would mean that if in the Republic of North Macedonia the publishing and sharing of photos of somebody without their consent, or the creation of a profile on a social network with a photo of that person is considered a crime, which is punishable in line with Article 149, Misuse of personal data, from the criminal code of the Republic of North Macedonia, in another country it is not punishable by law and it does not represent a crime, so as a result, law enforcement will not be able to get the necessary data from that social network, that is it will have to launch the mechanisms for international legal assistance.

In this context, it is known that the Telegram communications app does not cooperate with law enforcement, that is it does not release the necessary data, such as for example the identity of the creator/administrator of a certain group which shares illegal content, the IP address where this group was created, the telephone number used to create that group etc., which, of course, is a burden to the investigation.

²⁶ <https://mk.voanews.com/a/6480517.html>;
<https://www.mkd.mk/makedonija/sudstvo/pornografsko-video-so-dete-ne-pogolemo-od-5-godini-imalo-vo-javna-soba-zatvor-od>
<https://akademik.mk/donesena-presuda-vo-predmetot-javna-soba/>

On the website of the communication app Telegram <https://telegram.org/privacy>, point 8.3, which is the section on law enforcement authorities, it says: *If Telegram receives a court order that confirms you're a terror suspect, we may disclose your IP address and phone number to the relevant authorities. So far, this has never happened. When it does, we will include it in a semiannual transparency report published at: <https://t.me/transparency>.*

And so in the Republic of North Macedonia, the Ministry of Interior has launched an investigation in order to discover the perpetrators that have created and administrated Public Room, and charges have been pressed against them in the competent basic public prosecutor's office. Thus, one female has claimed damages to the MOI because of a public communication where inappropriate content was being shared. Previously, this group was created on the Instagram app, and then on Viber, but the apps themselves blocked it because of their policies for action, and that is why the group moved to the Telegram communication app, which has other criteria and policies for action.

Immediately upon the launch of the investigation, in January 2020, after the relevant information was collected, the Ministry of Interior identified the owner/creator and one of the administrators of the group Public Room. They were both from Skopje, and they were interviewed officially.

At the same time with the investigation, the Ministry of Interior, in coordination with the competent basic public prosecutor's office, submitted an official request for information to the Telegram competent app and a request for closing the group, as well as for receiving other data relevant to the investigation.

Very quickly, this group on Telegram was deactivated.

After all the necessary evidence and materials from the investigation were obtained, the Ministry of Interior submitted the whole material, with the appropriate forms, to the competent public prosecutor's office, so that it can go ahead with the further measures and activities, that is, in order for it to be able to establish criminal liability of the suspects.

The basic public prosecutor's office in Skopje brought an indictment against both persons (the administrator and the moderator of the group Public Room), who are being charged for production and distribution of child pornography, in line with Article 193-a paragraph 3, and in relation to paragraph 1 of the Criminal code of the Republic of North Macedonia. Namely, between December 19, 2019 and January 28, 2020, both suspects, the creator and moderator of the group, respectively, were in charge of the content of the text and audio-visual content shared by the group members. However, they purposefully allowed the group to make available audio-visual content that showed obvious sexual intercourse with a child. Since there was still a risk that the perpetrators flee, influence the witnesses/aggrieved parties and cover up the traces for the crime they perpetrated, as well as a risk of them repeating the offense, the competent public prosecutor also submitted a proposal to the Basic criminal court - Skopje to extend the previously assigned measure, that is custody of both accused parties.

The prosecutor's office in this case launched a procedure for this crime, since during the pre-investigative procedure material evidence that points precisely to this legal qualification was discovered.

It is very important to emphasize that the public prosecutor's office - Skopje, through the Ministry of Interior, on January 27, 2020 contacted the company that owns the Telegram app, to get the accurate data for the user profiles of the creators, administrators and members of the group. However, the company failed to respond to the request. This data is necessary in order to establish the identity and so that the prosecutor's office can take legal action against the people involved in the group. Because of those reasons, the public prosecutor's office also made use of the mechanisms for international legal assistance, and, in line with the positive domestic and international regulations, it requested this data, but received no reply.

In March 2022, the Basic criminal court reached a verdict in the case Public Room. The accused parties, who were charged with production and distribution of child pornography, received 4-year prison sentences each. According to the court, the accused parties plead guilty because the first-accused party founded the group Public Room in the Telegram app, and the second-accused party, as the moderator, despite having to be vigilant when it comes to the content that was shared in the group, allowed for a video with pornographic elements with a child to be made available. Both accused parties had the responsibility to safeguard the text, video and audio-visual content in the group.

After the forensic analysis of the mobile telephones of the suspects, it was found that the mobile phone of the creator/administrator, that is the first-accused party, contained more than 102 thousand pictures and videos shared in the group Public Room, and in the mobile phone of the moderator, that is the second-accused party, 17 thousand pictures and videos that were also shared in the group Public Room were found. A video with sexual abuse of a child not older than five years, with a length of one minute and twenty seconds, which was found among the thousands of pictures and videos in the group Public Room, was sufficient evidence for the creator and moderator to receive four years imprisonment each for “Production and distribution of child pornography”, as foreseen and punishable by Article 193-a of the Criminal code of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Precisely because of the risk of fleeing, the court decided to keep both persons in house arrest until the decision became legally valid, and it confiscated their IDs.

This case, even though it had a multitude of shortcomings, also guided us how to improve our society, it gave an answer to all the questions that were raised when we heard about it. The development of information and communications technology made many things available quickly, and so we all became addicted to technology, the internet and the benefits the internet gives us. In many cases we deliberately allow part of our privacy to be publicly available in the electronic world, without thinking about the consequences.

That is precisely what happened in the group Public Room. The social networks are swamped in photos and videos of young people, in pornographic content. In certain situations, the young people deliberately share their personal photos that may be inappropriate to persons they trust at the moment, and later on, these people, without any justification, make these photos or videos publicly available, on their own accord and without the approval of the other person. The group Public Room was an example of this.

Not only our society, but also on a global level, we should improve, raise the moral at a much higher level, more effort should be invested in raising awareness of the young people for the dangers and risks inherent online, starting from the earliest age, and formally, through the educational process. The young people should be very careful in terms of what they are posting on social networks, they have to be aware of the negative consequences they may cause, they should make a distinction and respect themselves, their person and they have to have more self-confidence. All of these issues should be resolved systematically. Let us not allow the young people to be unwittingly forced into pedophile networks. Insecurity means constant fear, and fear takes over and robs people of most of their freedom. That results in deprivation not only of expression, movement, contact, but also of other spheres of life - the biological functions such as sleeping and eating, the social functions, such as the ability to perform a job etc.

Online harassment is not less painful or real or harmful than direct violence. Even though it is happening virtually, in the world of computers, one must not forget that the victims are real.



10. Resources and activities available to organizations and institutions

In the past few years, several initiatives in the area of protection of children online have been noted, but they are not enough. Namely, the website of **MKD-CIRT**²⁷ (the National Center for Computer Incident Response) has a banner entitled Surf Safe²⁸ which explains how to use the internet in a safe manner, but it is not updated with the challenges brought by the new technologies and the gaming industry. Also, MKD-CIRT has implemented a few other activities for raising the awareness of the young people about cyber-attacks, such as: phishing, cyber violence, vulnerability of network systems etc.

The most recent posts on the website of the **Agency for Personal Data Protection**²⁹, in the segment entitled YOUNG PEOPLE, have not been updated since 2017 and still contain information based on the old, obsolete Law on personal data protection.

The Ministry of Interior, however, provides no educational programmes or campaigns in the area of protection of children online. The most recent posts and warnings have to do with the increase in the number of cryptocurrency scams. The sector for computer crime and digital forensics at the Public Security Bureau, which is part of the Ministry of Interior, has warned about a recent development which is on the rise: namely, unidentified persons are using social networks or their private emails to target Macedonian users and send links to websites and services that promise easy money if the recipient performs certain tasks that are assigned daily by the service or app itself.³⁰

The Ministry of Education and Science does not have any educational content on this topic, but, during the pandemic, it has established that psychosocial support is the main goal in order to safeguard the mental health of children, students and parents. For that purpose, **the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy**, in cooperation with the University Psychiatric Clinic, launched a hotline for parents, children and young people.³¹ **Open Gate** also has such a hotline, i.e. the free SOS-telephone 080011111 available 24/7, and this hotline provides information to the public about the risks of human trafficking, it refers and supports adults and children who are potential victims and who are actual victims of human trafficking.

From the data available and from the answers to the survey³², it seems that there is no **National Safer Internet Center** in the republic of North Macedonia, while the **Faculty of Computer Sciences and Engineering** is the academic space in charge of organizing the celebration on the occasion of the Safer Internet Day. On the 2019 Safer Internet Day it was announced that they had organized a panel discussion using IT for the teachers in primary and secondary schools throughout the country in order to emphasize the importance of ensuring the internet is a safe space for children. However, no activities in this context have been organized since. The most recent analysis in this area, for the benefit of the teachers and students, was carried out in 2015³³, with the launch of the first, and so far the only parents' handbook for protecting child privacy³⁴, which outlines the reporting mechanisms and which offers advice for parents for free software for monitoring children online.

27 <https://mkd-cirt.mk/>

28 Web platform <https://surfajbezbedno.mk/>

29 <https://dzlp.mk/>

30 Communication from the MOI, July 23, 2022, <https://telma.com.mk/2022/07/23/mvr-predupreduva-na-zachestena-pojava-na-kompjuterska-izmama-so-kriptoaluti/>

31 Website of the Ministry of Health <https://mon.gov.mk/content/?id=3389>

32 Research carried out by the International Telecommunication Union, in cooperation with the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Europe/Documents/Publications/2022/North%20Macedonia%20National%20Child%20Online%20Safety%20Assessment%20report/North%20Macedonia%20National%20Child%20Online%20Safety%20Assessment%20report%20.pdf#page=20&zoom=100,92,756>

33 "Research and analysis of the replies of the questionnaire for students of secondary schools in the city of Skopje", project entitled "A class in privacy", Liljana Pecova Ilieska, MA, Directorate for Personal Data Protection, 2015, <https://rb.gy/wqjhze>

34 Parents' guide for protection of privacy and personal data of children online, Liljana Pecova Ilieska, MA, 2015, <https://dzlp.mk/sites/default/files/u1002/Vodic%20za%20roditeli.pdf>

There are also **private companies** that use blogs to inform the citizens about the challenges in the online world and which offer information on how to protect the children³⁵, as well as advice for the parents, but these blogs are isolated and there is no continuity.

The web platform **Safe Online**³⁶, even though its target groups are in education, has not updated its information and advice for children, teachers and parents since 2017.

The most recent material is the Guide on internet protection and security of children, published by the Institute for Social Affairs Skopje³⁷.

Macedonian Telecom, using commercial texts, promoted the Kaspersky Safe Kids app in the media³⁸.

The website of **MASIT - Economic Chamber for Information and Communications Technologies** offers information for private companies that offer educational seminars and schools for children aged 8-18.³⁹ This, Digital School is the first school launched in the Republic of North Macedonia that offers IT courses for children aged 8-18, and it has been offering its services since 2021⁴⁰.

UNICEF North Macedonia offers a separate website rich in content for protection of children online⁴¹.

The Council of Europe also offers plenty of educational material, educational videos and content aimed at children and teachers, a Booklet for prevention of child trafficking⁴², translated in many languages⁴³ and available for use both in formal and in informal education.

The website of the regional center **MARRI** offers tools for building capacity and raising awareness for human trafficking.⁴⁴

35 Website of Kabetel <https://kabetel.mk/en/zastita-na-decata/>

36 Website - Safe Online, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180211032602/http://www.crisp.org.mk/>

37 Website of the Institute for Social Affairs - Guide on internet protection and security of children, issued by the Institute for Social Affairs Skopje <https://rb.gy/jnz5c2>

38 Website of MKD.mk, which is an online medium <https://www.mkd.mk/makedonija/ekonomija/vrvna-onlajn-zashtita-na-decata-so-aplikacijata-kasperski-sejf-kids>

39 Website of MASIT, <https://masit.org.mk/?s=%D0%B4%D0%B5%D1%86%D0%B0>

40 Website of MASIT <https://masit.org.mk/members/digital-skul/>

41 Website of UNICEF, <https://www.unicef.org/northmacedonia/staying-safe-online>

42 Website of the CoE, Booklet for prevention of child trafficking, aimed at primary school students from the 6th to the 9th grade, <https://rm.coe.int/booklet-on-child-trafficking-for-6-9-grade-mkd/1680a4ba55>

43 Website of the CoE <https://www.coe.int/en/web/skopje/publications1>

44 Website of MARRI <https://toolboxes.marri-rc.org.mk/>



11. Conclusions

The goal of the research of the attitudes of the teachers about the potential dangers faced by students online was to check the extent to which teachers and students are aware of this danger, whether students report such situations to their teachers at the school, and how the schools tackle such cases.

First it was established that the teachers communicate with their students using social media, which they believe is a good tool for information sharing. In their view, the students are generally aware of the risks and dangers inherent in communication through social networks and the potential cases of misuse.

Many of the teachers are aware of the reporting mechanisms, but not extensively. In their view, the students should have more trainings to be able to recognize such cases, but also in order to use the reporting mechanisms which are available to them but are not used because of fear and a subjective feeling that they have done something wrong.

Still, the students are encouraged by their teachers to report potentially dangerous situations to them and to their parents, in a number of ways: by sharing information at homeroom periods or during the parent-teacher meetings. However, almost more than half of the teachers are doubtful whether it is reported appropriately and whether it is being reported at all.

In terms of the educational materials they need to inform students about the dangers of the internet, the teachers agree that formal education lacks sufficient educational material for working with students for safer use of the internet. Everybody makes do with different materials available online if they want to create educational content for the class. That means that teachers want to provide further education to students on this topic, but they are doing that individually, without having a planned, systematic and serious approach. Fortunately, in most of the schools that took part in the research, there have been no cases of sharing inappropriate content on social media, and online in general. When such cases appeared, they were resolved within the school and there was no need to report them to other institutions.

The teachers are ready to talk with the parents openly about the dangers and risks their children face online, and to get them more involved in terms of sharing information. Mainly, they do this at parent-teacher meetings, by phone, if necessary, and when they are resolving individual cases.

- **86% of the teaching staff** agrees that there is a **lack of educational material** that covers the new topics related to internet tools and digitalization;
- **68% of the students** that took part in the research, aged 12 to 17, **learnt how to use the internet on their own**, and a smaller share learnt it from their parents (13%), from their siblings (11%), from their relatives or a friend;
- **91% of the respondents** mostly **access the internet using their phone**;
- **70%** use it mostly for **hanging out with their friends**, while 44.5% use it for online games;
- They mainly use **Instagram (86% of the respondents)**, **YouTube (82% of the respondents)**, **TikTok (68% of respondents)**, Snapchat (67% of the respondents), Facebook (52% of the respondents), Viber (47% of the respondents), Pinterest (37% of the respondents). Most of the platforms, that is, those that are used the most, offer opportunities for direct communication, but also an opportunity for downloading and attaching video and/or photographic content;
- **61% of the respondents** answered that they are **using the social networks to follow the trends** (fashion, clothing, music, movies, shows, sports), but an equally large percentage use them to arrange meetings with friends (59% of the respondents), for sharing pictures, videos (31% of the respondents) and for forging new friendships.
- **Half of the students** have **more than one account/profile at the same social network**, and 12% have a joint profile with a friend which they mostly use for games, socialization, fun, and for sharing photos and interesting moments;

- **67%** have stated that they **do not prefer to share content on social networks publicly**, but that they prefer to send content privately, with direct messages to the inbox. 24% of the students share content 1 to 3 times a day.
- **74% of the respondents receive textual content**, and 52% of the total number of respondents only share textual content. When it comes to photos, the share of respondents who share photos is larger (57%) than those who receive them (50%), and almost 30% answered that they receive videos and links to other content;
- **96% of them** mainly **use social networks to communicate with friends**. A considerable number of students (13%) receive messages from people they know, but who are not in direct contact with them, and it is concerning that 8%, or 55 students, stated that they receive messages from people they do not know, but that they socialize with online. Also, 2% receive messages from complete strangers;
- **83% of the respondents receive content in private messages**, and only 13% as part of a group on a social network. Generally speaking, student communication on the social networks is private, with direct messages;
- **2%, or 11 students**, stated that **they find the messages they receive on the social networks disturbing**;
- The respondents were asked to define what “interesting content” means for them. For 41% that means videos recorded with friends, 23% replied that they think that educational content is interesting, 21% chose photos from other students, but also 10% responded that they find information about some classmates interesting;
- **7% of the respondents send inappropriate content to an inbox**, and 14% receive inappropriate content in their inbox. 9% of the students take no action, 5% of the students ask for assistance from a parent/teacher, 4% show this content to friends, forward them, but 32% of the students erase this content, that is they do not report it to anyone or to any institution;
- **91% of the students** have replied that **their parents know about the profiles** they have on the social networks. 2% of the students replied that they do not know whether their parents are aware of their accounts on social networks, and 5% of the students believe that their parents do not care;
- **49% of students** replied that **their parents show them which materials and information to use**, while 45% of the students said that they are not controlled in terms of what they do on social networks and that they say nothing about it. 4% of the students replied that their parents do not approve of their profiles;
- **23%, that is 160 students have had a bad experience online**; 11% have faced some kind of harassment, the account of 12% of the students was hacked, 6% were victims of shaming and 4.7% faced some type of cyber violence. 3.4% of the respondents noted that they have come across shameful content of their friends or acquaintances and 3.5% said that their account/identity was stolen, and 1.5% of them felt pressure from their friends to do something online they would rather not do;
- In such situations, **8% of them told their parents**, and an equal number blocked the profile of the person that disturbed them on the social networks, 6% ignored that person, that is they took no action, 2% asked the person to stop, while only 1.3% reported the person to the police, and 1% erased all evidence (pictures, videos, messages...) shared with these persons. **Only two students said they have reported this person to the school**;
- **59% of the total number of respondents**, that is 404 students, replied that **the person they met online they also met in person** later on;
- **17%**, that is 115 students, replied that they **met an adult in person after communicating online**. 71% of the students, that is 485 students, have met the people they have communicated online with in person at least once, and in a large number of cases they had met on more than one occasion.

As a result of this, the research contributed to raising the key issues that warrant further monitoring and thorough research. The first issue is the way children/minors are protected online, and how to use the internet safely, since they are not informed on this topic through formal education. The main solution would be to use the educational process to unite the teachers, students, and also the parents. The educational authorities should increase their capacity and focus more attention on this issue, which, due to the use of the internet, is becoming increasingly important in today’s modern society. Along those lines, the educational authorities should establish close cooperation and to use the capacities and resources that have been developed by the civil society organizations, that may be of great help precisely because of their flexibility and mobility. The education system must prepare the children/minors to be more vigilant online.



12. Recommendations

On the basis of the research results and the conclusions that have been made, the recommendations that contain elements of good practices for increasing the participation of teachers, students and parents in preventing the risks and dangers of the internet and preventing child trafficking at a local and at a national level in the country can be grouped in this manner:

Recommendations for institutions in charge of the educational process (Ministry of Education and Science, Bureau for Development of Education):

- To stimulate the development of strategies and approaches for dealing with online exploitation and child trafficking in all its forms.
- Development of protocols for action in schools in cases of online harassment and child exploitation.
- Development of protocols for interinstitutional coordination and cooperation *ante festum* (joint preventive activities) and *post festum* (reporting a case that was discovered, offering assistance and support, cooperation in order to uncover and resolve the case).
- Development of curricula and content with educational resources/materials for working with students.
- Development of educational content for informing the parents.
- Promotion of greater child participation in the development the institutional response and solutions for the security-related challenges for children online. The efforts for systemic involvement of children and young people in the development and creation of tools, software or other interventions for improving their online security must be intensified.

Recommendations for teachers:

- The students must be aware of and monitor the risks and dangers of using the internet.
- Using the available online resources for more frequent dissemination of information to students about the safe ways of using the internet.
- Creating creative content for clarifying and explaining the different forms of online harassment and exploitation to students so that they can recognize them easier.
- The students should be informed about and reminded on a regular basis about the ways and mechanisms for reporting dangerous situations they have faced online.

Recommendations for parents:

- Parents should be better informed about the potential risks and dangers for their children online.
- Parents should be incentivized to get more involved and have greater control of the way their children use the internet.

Recommendations for students:

- They should be better informed about using the internet safely.
- They should be informed about the potential risks, threats and dangers of using the internet.
- They should be better aware of the reporting mechanisms for dangerous situations while using the internet.

Recommendations for the bodies competent for criminal prosecution:

- They should organize preventive educational campaigns for teachers, parents and students about the dangers of the internet and the ways one can report online harassment or another type of exploitation.

Recommendations for the bodies involved in the social protection system:

- Informing the persons under protection, the refugees and the other displaced persons about the dangers that are lurking in the internet space.

Recommendations for civic organizations and non-governmental organizations:

- Constant coordination, sustainability and continuity of the capacity building programs for parents and teachers.
- They should use existing materials, but they should also update them because of the constant sudden changes in the internet sphere and the emerging technologies.
- They should increase the quantity and quality of their cooperation with the state institutions.

Annex 1 - a list of the schools that were part of the research

- 1. Vardar planning region**
 - 1.1. Municipality of Veles
Blaze Koneski primary school
Vasil Glavinov primary school
Kocho Racin primary school
 - 1.2. Municipality of Kavadarci
Strasho Pindzur primary school
Tosho Velkov Pepeto primary school
Gjorce Petrov secondary school
- 2. Eastern planning region**
 - 2.1. Municipality of Shtip
Dimitar Vlahov primary school
Slavejko Arsov primary school
Slavcho Stojmenski secondary school
 - 2.2. Municipality of Berovo
Dedo Iljo Maleshevski primary school
Nikola Petrov Rusinski primary school
Aco Ruskosvki secondary school
- 3. Southwestern planning region**
 - 3.1. Municipality of Ohrid
Grigor Prlichev primary school
Hristo Uzunov primary school
Sv. Naum Ohridski primary vocational school
 - 3.2. Municipality of Struga
Brakja Miladinovci primary school
Josip Broz Tito primary school
D-r Ibrahim Temo primary school
- 4. Southeastern planning region**
 - 4.1. Municipality of Gevgelija
Vlado Kantardziev primary school
Krste Misirkov primary school
Josif Josifovski secondary school
 - 4.2. Municipality of Strumica
Vidoe Podgorec primary school
Sando Masev primary school
Nikola Karev secondary school
- 5. Pelagonija planning region**
 - 5.1. Municipality of Prilep
Blaze Koneski primary school
Goce Delchev primary school
Mirche Acev secondary school
 - 5.2. Municipality of Bitola
Dame Gruev primary school
Sv. Kliment Ohridski primary school
Josip Broz Tito secondary school
- 6. Polog planning region**
 - 6.1. Municipality of Tetovo
Goce Delchev primary school
Sv. Kliment Ohridski primary school
Kiril Pejchinovik secondary school
 - 6.2. Municipality of Gostivar
Mustafa Kemal Atatürk primary school
Goce Delchev primary school
Gostivar secondary school
- 7. Northeastern planning region**
 - 7.1. Municipality of Kumanovo
11 Oktomvri primary school
Bajram Shabani primary school
Pero Nakov secondary school
 - 7.2. Municipality of Kriva Palanka
Joakim Krchoski primary school
Ilinden primary school
Gjorce Petrov secondary school
- 8. Skopje planning region**
 - 8.1. Municipality of Karposh
Jan Amos Komenski primary school
Vlado Tasevski primary school
Nikola Karev secondary school
 - 8.2. Municipality of Chair
Ismail Kjemali primary school
Hasan Prishtina primary school
Cvetan Dimov secondary school

Annex 2 - Questionnaires

Semi-structured interview - questionnaire for the teaching staff

1. Does the teaching staff communicate with the children through social media? Through which social media? Is such communication efficient?
2. Are children aware of the risks and dangers of communicating on social networks? Can they recognize and report cases of online harassment and exploitation? Are they aware of the reporting mechanisms? Are the teachers aware of the reporting mechanisms?
3. Are the students encouraged to report to the teachers and parents any potentially dangerous situations that may happen online?
4. Are the teachers informing the students about the dangers online? Do the teachers have enough educational material? Do they cover this topic with the students through formal and/or informal education (Erasmus programmes, cooperation with the NGO sector)?
5. Do the students have sufficient educational material that can use to get information about the internet-related dangers?
6. Has your school had a case of sharing inappropriate content on social media, and online in general? Has it been reported and where? What measures have been taken? What challenges did you face?
7. Do the teachers talk to the parents about the internet-related dangers and risks for students? In what way can parents get involved in informing their children about the internet-related dangers and risks?

Questionnaire for students

All the information received in this survey will be used solely for the purpose of the research.

Please submit truthful answers, so that we can get reliable data.

All the participants and answers in the survey will remain anonymous.

Thank you.

Which municipality do you attend school in?

What is your degree of education?

- primary
- secondary

1. How old are you?

- A) 12
- B) 13
- C) 14
- D) 15
- E) 16
- F) 17

2. Are you using the internet?

- A) Yes
- B) No

3. How did you learn to use the internet?

- A) Alone
- B) through a friend
- C) from my parents
- D) from a sibling
- E) from relatives
- F) ...

4. How do you access the internet in most of the cases?

- A) mobile phone
- B) tablet
- C) laptop
- D) desktop computer
- E) smart TV
- F) ...

5. What type of activities do you do online?

- A) homework
- B) online games
- C) hanging out with friends
- D) meeting new friends
- E) sharing photos, videos...
- F) following the trends

6. Which social networks do you use?

- A) Facebook
- B) Instagram
- C) TikTok
- D) Snapchat
- E) YouTube
- F) WhatsApp
- G) Twitter
- H) Tumblr

- I) Viber
- J) Pinterest
- K) Skype
- L) ...
- M) I do not use social networks

7. What do you use social networks for predominantly?

- A) for doing homework
- B) for meeting friends
- C) for meeting new people
- D) for sharing photos, videos...
- E) for following the trends (fashion, clothing, music, movies, shows, sports)
- F) for sharing of personal information that only me and my friends know
- G) for sharing private details anonymously (in a way in which it is not known that they are mine)
- H) ...
- I) I am not using social networks

8. Do you have more than one account for the same social network, for example Facebook, Instagram, TikTok etc.?

- A) Yes
- B) No

9. Do you have a joint social network profile with a friend?

- A) Yes
- B) No

10. For what purpose are you using the joint account?

11. How frequently do you share content on social networks?

- A) 1-3 times a day
- B) 5-10 times a day
- C) more than 10 times a day
- D) I don't share much, I usually send to inboxes

12. What type of content do you usually share?

- A) text
- B) photos
- C) videos
- D) links to other content online

13. What type of content do you usually receive?

- A) text
- B) photos
- C) videos
- D) links to other content online

14. I receive most of the messages from:

- A) a friend
- B) people I know, but with whom I do not communicate personally
- C) people I do not know, but with whom I socialize online
- D) total strangers

15. I usually receive the content:

- A) personally, in a message
- B) as part of a group on a social network
- C) forwarded as a link

16. The messages I receive:

- A) disturb me
- B) are uplifting
- C) I don't find relevant
- D) I ignore

17. Out of the messages you receive, what, in your view, is interesting content?

- A) a photograph of somebody else
- B) a video recorded with friends
- C) information on somebody from the school
- D) educational content
- E)...

18. Do you send inappropriate content to somebody's inbox?

- A) Yes
- B) No
- C) I don't know
- D) Sometimes

19. Do you receive inappropriate content in your inbox?

- A) Yes
- B) No
- C) I don't know
- D) Sometimes

20. How do you react to inappropriate content?

- A) I erase it
- B) I forward it
- C) I show it to a friend
- D) I don't do anything
- E) I consult a parent/teacher

21. Do your parents know about your social network accounts?

- A) Yes
- B) No
- C) I don't know
- D) I don't care

22. What do your parents advise you about your social network accounts?

- A) the internet is a good thing, they show me materials and information I can use
- B) they do not approve of my internet accounts

- C) they do not say anything
- D) they don't even know about my internet accounts

23. Have you had a bad experience online?

- A) Yes
- B) No

24. If you have had a bad experience online, what type was it?

- A) cyber violence
- B) harassment
- C) shaming
- D) a hacked account
- E) my account/identity was stolen
- F) peer pressure to do something online I would rather not do
- G) I came across shameful content of friends or acquaintances

25. What did you do?

- A) I reported the person to the school
- B) I reported the person to the police
- C) I told my parents
- D) I blocked them on social networks
- E) I ignored them/I did not do anything
- F) I told them to stop
- G) I erased all evidence (pictures, videos, messages...)
- H) ...

26. Have you met in person anybody you have met online?

- A) Yes
- B) No

27. If yes, was that an adult or a child?

- A) An adult
- B) A child
- C) I've met both an adult and a child

28. How frequently do you meet such people in person?

- A) 1
- B) 1-3 times
- C) more than 3 times
- D) very frequently