YOUNG CHILDREN (0-8) AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY A qualitative exploratory study - National report - ITALY

# Details

## Year

2014

## Issued

2014

## Language

English

## Authors

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## Type

Report and working paper

## Publisher

JRC

## Topics

* Social mediation
* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Literacy and skills
* Risks and harms

## Sample

Ten Italian families with at least a child aged 7

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

Despite the growing number of very young children who go online and who are using a wide range of technologies, little is known about children’s interactions with those technologies. This report presents a pilot qualitative study designed and implemented in collaboration with a selected group of academic partners in different European countries that aims at pioneering in Europe the exploration of young children and their families` experiences with new technologies. It presents its results and discuss the findings at cross-national level on how children between zero and eight engage with digital technologies such as smartphones, tablets, computers and games; how far parents mediate this engagement and their awareness on the risks-opportunities balance. The report concludes on recommendations to parents, industries and policymakers.

# Outcome

"Digital media have become a pervasive and taken for granted presence in most of the
households we visited. Nonetheless, they don't seem central in younger children's lives, since
they use technologies to pursue pre-existing interests, such as their engagement with
characters of popular culture and TV programmes, or cross-generational cultural practices
(e.g. use of new online technologies is aimed at socialising children's to generational cultural
products such as old cartoons, or developing intra-generational bonds between grandparents
and grandchildren). Children's interactions with digital media are shaped by parents'
perceptions and own experiences with ICTs, and tend to be very regulated.
While most children possess basic operational and safety skills, and some have also developed
advanced digital competencies, they lack the maturity to reflexively engage with online risks:
also children who have had negative experiences - mainly commercial risks or exposure to
inappropriate content - fail to recognise the possible dangers of their online media use.
Therefore, active mediation of technologies and online safety in the family context is vital.
However, parents engage in restrictive mediation more than active mediation, as they are
mainly concerned with potential overuse and associated health issues. They mediate children's
relationship with online technologies by setting rules that limit time and online activities. By
contrast, parents tend to postpone other online problematic experiences (such as exposure to
inappropriate content and risky contacts) to the future, thus failing to recognise that younger
children may already encounter negative experiences" (Mascheroni et al, 2014, p. 55)