Challenging online situations reported by Italian and Portuguese children in 2018

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## Authors

Ponte C.

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## Topics

* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Content-related issues
* Literacy and skills
* Risks and harms

## Sample

The article presents Italian and Portuguese results (Mascheroni Ólafsson, 2018; Ponte Baptista, 2019) based on the core EU Kids Online questionnaire and optional modules.
The Italian survey's fieldwork, conducted in November-December 2017, followed the random walk method for finding and interviewing children in their households, the same approach used in the EU Kids Online 2010 and NCGM. A nationally representative sample of children (N=1001) answered directly to the interviewer, while sensitive questions related to risk and possible harmful experiences were self-reported in conditions of privacy.
The Portuguese survey's fieldwork, conducted from March to June 2018, involved a
representative sample of schools. Children from the 4th grade of basic education to the 12th grade (N= 1974) answered to the questionnaire in ICT rooms, in conditions of privacy. They had to read the questions and then reported their answers using CAPI system, a procedure that implied a greater expenditure of time and effort from the child. Italy added the modules on Hate Speech and Cyber bystanders, and Portugal added the modules on Digital Citizenship and Internet of Things.

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

Based on the results of the EU Kids Online survey (2018) in Portugal and Italy, this article analyses two issues related to the growing dissemination of hate messages and fake news: firstly, how Italian and Portuguese children and young people aged 9-17 are coping with negative online content and conduct. Secondly, how they report their informational skills and their relationship with the news content. In comparison to previous surveys conducted in both countries (EU Kids Online 2010, Net Children Go Mobile, 2014), the results reveal an increase in negative online experiences – such as exposure to hate messages, to violent and gory images, or being the victim or perpetrator of cyberbullying. Although the levels of troubling experiences are much higher in Portugal, Italian and Portuguese children present relatively similar patterns of coping. In both countries informational skills relating to surfing or searching for accurate information are reported much less frequently than technological or social digital skills. Gender and age are significant in these two issues. These results underline the need for empowering children with human values and critical literacy, as part of a culture of digital rights and responsibilities.

# Outcome

"Comparing two countries allows us to place each one in a relative position. Their differences are quite marked in the data concerning disturbing situations and ways of dealing with them, negative UGC, cyber bullying, skills and search for information. In regard to other topics, such as the key people to talk to when something negative happens, the results are quite similar. One should not forget that children’s answers are not only based on self-reporting – whose rates may not coincide with the ones concerning outcomes – but also that the surveys were given under differing conditions. To what extent the Portuguese results were affected by the fact that data collection occurred at schools is a question that must wait for further results from other countries.
Furthermore, the broader picture provided by these quantitative results should be addressed with
qualitative approaches (e.g. observation and discussion of practices and situations). Positioning children and young people as active discussants of these results is part of a next step, following the activation of a participatory practice of the Global Kids Online.
A final note addresses hate speech as one of the most harmful effects of the internet system. Governments, social platforms and news media can certainly contribute towards reducing hate speech, but all the institutions that are closer to young people – from family to school and local communities – also have roles.
Moreover, young people should be recognised not only as vulnerable victims but also as active agents against such messages of cyber hate, as the recent Council of Europe campaign pointed out" (Ponte, C., 2019: 176).