Children’s rights and social media: Issues and prospects for adoptive families in Italy

# Details

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## Sample

Eight Italian adoption experts

## Implications For Parents About

Parenting guidance / support

## Implications For Policy Makers About

Other

## Other PolicyMaker Implication

Define adopted children's rights in relation to search for their family on social media

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Other

## Other Stakeholder Implication

Professionals

# Abstract

The worldwide spread of social media is changing the forms and rules of social relations, the boundaries of private and public spheres, and the definition of privacy and its protection. In reflecting on children’s rights in a digital age, the online experiences of adopted children and their families foreground the tension between the right to privacy and protection and children’s right to know about their origins. This article explores the Italian case through a qualitative study of professionals working in private and public foster and adoptive services. It analyses the risks and opportunities presented by social media in the everyday life of adoptive families, with particular attention to children’s rights and recommendations for families and professionals.

# Outcome

"The interviewees, based on their experience, agree that the use of social media to
gather information about origins and birth families at the national and international level
is more frequent nowadays, and identify 16 as the age when the search usually begins.
While at international level Instagram and Twitter are increasingly used because they
offer the opportunity to monitor and follow people anonymously and without reciprocity
(Whitesel and Howard, 2013), the most used social media in Italy is Facebook because
of its reach and the richness of information provided, including images, recent posts,
history, interests and friends.
[...] Due to the great number of intercountry adoptions in Italy, children’s search for their
origins is frequently international. Many Italian adoptees are adopted post-infancy,
meaning that they often have memories of pre-adoption life with their birth families and
siblings, and so the search for siblings by this cohort is particularly widespread.
[...] The professionals indicated that children’s motivations for searching for birth parents
are the desire to know their birth parents and origin, the need to have more information
about the reasons for the abandonment and the wish to reconnect with memories of early
childhood.
[...] The professionals interviewed stressed that the absence of mediation, dialogue with
parents or adults, and the immediacy of contact through social media are all risk factors."
(Aroldi Vittadini, 2017, pp. 744-745)