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Multidimensional Methodology and Socio- Technical Requirements

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Meaning
CYP	Children and Young People
AMN	Amnesty International Italia
EUN	European SchoolNet - EUN Partnership AISBL
KID_ACTIONS	Kick-off preventing and responding to children and Adolescent cyberbullying through innovative monitoring and educational technologies
PAT	Provincia autonoma di Trento
WP	Work package
YEU	Youth for Exchange and Understanding
FBK	Fondazione Bruno Kessler
BE	Belgium
IT	Italy
GA	Grant Agreement

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This deliverable D2.4 describes the “**Multidimensional methodology and socio-technical requirements v.1**” for the European project **KID_ACTIONS - Kick-off preventing and responding to children and AdolesCent cyberbullying through innovative mOnitoring and educatioNal technologies** (<https://www.kidactions.eu/> - REC Action Grant / REC-RDAP-GBV-AG-2020). The deliverable type is “**R**” (i.e. document, report), while the dissemination level is “**Public**”.

We analyse the outcomes from the previous deliverables of **KID_ACTIONS Work Package 2 (WP2) – Socio-technical requirements and multi-dimensional methodology**, namely: **D2.1** - Focus Group for Stakeholders and Target Groups’ Needs Assessment; **D2.2** - Semi-Structured Interviews with Key Experts; and **D2.3** - Online Survey on Youngsters’ Perception of the Phenomenon. All these outputs and activities as well as this deliverable D2.4 followed and is following the ethical, data protection and privacy-related principles as defined in the **KID_ACTIONS Grant Agreement (GA)**, **D1.1** - Project Management Plan (including the Data Protection Impact Assessment - DPIA and Joint Controllership Agreement - JCA) as well as **D1.6** - CPPs (Child Protection Policies).

This deliverable is part of **Task 2.3 - Drafting the KID_ACTIONS socio-technical requirements and multi-dimensional methodology (M5-M24)**. More specifically, an overview of the key findings of the **desk research** focusing on cyberbullying will be first presented, giving insight on the discussions around a definition of cyberbullying, the impacts, and drivers of cyberbullying as well as the coping and prevention strategies.

In addition to that, a **summary of the KID_ACTIONS focus groups** will be included, examining the outcomes of the focus groups that took place in Rome and Brussels aiming at relevant stakeholders on the topic of cyberbullying and involving educators and youth workers. The results of the **in-depth, semi-structured interviews (conducted remotely) with key experts** will later be summarized, focusing on their views about current policies, interventions, and existing technological and non-technological solutions to combat cyberbullying. Moreover, the perception of the youth on the phenomenon of cyberbullying will also be studied based on the key findings of the European and Italian **KID_ACTIONS surveys** conducted in the form of an online questionnaire targeting children and young people between 11 and 19 years old. Furthermore, this deliverable will consider the **socio-technical requirements of the KID_ACTIONS platform**, where an analysis of the existing policies and technologies used to fight cyberbullying and support victims will be carried out. Additionally, the youngsters’ perspective about technologies used to combat cyberbullying will be examined, based on insights gathered from the online survey, focus groups, semi-structured interviews and desk research. A presentation of policies regarding social media monitoring will also be found in this deliverable acknowledging the importance of monitoring the platforms that young people use. Finally, the need for development of a platform aimed at combating cyberbullying will be emphasized.

The final sections of the deliverable will establish **correlations** between the Desk Research, Semi-Structured Interviews, Focus Groups and Online Survey, as well as between WP2, WP3 and WP4. The main objective is to create **methodological approaches and guidelines** answering the needs detected through the key findings presented throughout this deliverable.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cyberbullying refers to intentional and repeated harm that others inflict via a digital device (Hinduja and Patchin, 2009) and is usually defined in the literature as “an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself” (Smith et al., 2008, p.376). Although cyberbullying is regarded as a serious health and growing social problem (Dehue, Bolman & Völlink, 2008; O’Reilley et al. 2021) and a significant amount of literature on cyberbullying exists, to date there exists no universally accepted definition (Peter & Petermann, 2018).

Although evidence suggests that **(offline) bullying and cyberbullying are not completely separate phenomena**, there are a number of features that distinguish online from offline bullying (e.g. Smith, Del Barrio and Tokunaga, 2013) such as the fact that cyberbullying can potentially reach a larger audience, and cyber bullies can be “anonymous” and physically “distant” from their victims making perpetrators less aware of the potential damage inflicted on victims (Smith et al., 2008; Tokunaga, 2010). Traditional definitions of bullying include aspects such as the intentional, repetitive character and the imbalance of power. However, aspects such as repetition or imbalance of power between perpetrator and victim may be less relevant in online contexts and, therefore less reliable for determining the incidence of cyberbullying (Smith, 2011).

In this context, KID_ACTIONS aims to address cyberbullying among children and adolescents through **interactive education and gamification** within formal and non-formal learning settings at the EU level. This project will support teachers, educators, and youth workers in fostering effectiveness and efficiency in education about risks and consequences of cyberbullying, raise awareness among young people and encourage reporting by victims and bystanders. Finally, one of the main outcomes of the KID_ACTIONS Project is the creation of a Digital Education Platform aiming to raise awareness of and combating cyberbullying through prevention and response strategies, presented via a gamified approach.

This report addresses the **multidimensional methodology and socio-technical requirements (v.1)** of the Project and the KID_ACTIONS Platform, taking into account the state-of-the-art knowledge and current trends, as well as the requirements and needs of all stakeholders and target groups observed through the desk research, focus groups, semi-structured Interviews and online surveys conducted within the scope of **WP2 - Socio-technical requirements and multi-dimensional methodology of KID_ACTIONS**. This deliverable aims to provide guidelines and approaches on how to engage all stakeholders and target groups in the daily use of the KID_ACTIONS Digital Education Platform (WP3) and in the co-creation of a targeted training and educational path (WP4).

2. DESK RESEARCH

2.1 Preamble

A **desk research into cyberbullying** focusing on literature published after the year 2000 and including academic articles and outcomes of various projects, as well as research reports compiled or assigned by various policy bodies (e.g. the European Commission of the European Union, etc.), has been conducted under **Task 2.1 - Consolidating knowledge on the challenges of cyberbullying among young people** (M1-M4) of **WP2** (see also ANNEX I - EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL (PILOT COUNTRIES) POLICIES AND PRACTICES).

This desk research has been implemented on **two levels**: international and national. Findings from the **international strand** of the desk research are included in the main body of this report and focus on the following areas: definition, scope, impacts, drivers, risk factors, coping strategies, prevention and intervention strategies, and policies. Based on this body of findings, recommendations on further steps towards decreasing risks of cyberbullying are made and listed at the end of this publication as well. Findings from the **national strand** of the desk research can be found in the annexes and focus on summarizing main developments in the policy and project areas in the following **selected countries**, according to KID_ACTIONS WP2: **Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia**.

Overall, cyberbullying is a rather well researched phenomenon with first mentions of the term from slightly pre-2000s and the main body of literature booming in the second decade of 2000s. Despite this positive trend, it needs to be noted that **no universal definition** has been used, and each research operationalizes the term cyberbullying in a slightly different way. This creates trouble not only in international comparisons, but also in comparisons of research that focuses on **various target groups**. Nevertheless, there are commonalities, which suggest that cyberbullying largely goes hand-in-hand with traditional bullying, and that impacts of cyberbullying on its victims can be at least as devastating as those of the traditional bullying, potentially even more severe. Most importantly, cyberbullying can create vicious circles of violence in which victims can become bullies, creating further potential for severe consequences of other young people.

Connected to the fact that there is no universal definition of cyberbullying, the desk research also shows that **different countries tackle this phenomenon differently** and there are only a **few internationally binding legal frames** of reference when it comes to cyberbullying. This results in striking differences in dealing with cyberbullying, both in terms of scope (or attention), and in terms of approach.

On a positive note, there are quite a few **prevention and intervention strategies** around, featuring complete methodologies and, both online and offline, concrete tools to be used to decrease risks of cyberbullying. In order for these strategies to be successful, they need to be well **adapted to the particular national and local context** since, as mentioned above, national policy contexts vary greatly. Moreover, they should bring together **all main players: students, young people, teachers, educators, and parents**. At the same time, it shows that paying close attention to phenomena such

as school and youth center climate, parental and teacher-student (educator-child) relationships, or empathy and aggression in young people can, in itself, be much helpful also in reducing risks of cyberbullying as these help create **healthy communities**, in which deviant behaviour such as cyberbullying has little chance of succeeding.

2.2. Definition of cyberbullying

Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2021) states that the word “*cyberbullying*” itself was first used in 1998, but despite a rather long tradition of using the term, **defining cyberbullying is still a difficult task**, since no commonly used definition exists in (a) political or (b) research documents (Pozza et al., 2016; Notar et al. 2013). Most frequently, when defining cyberbullying, traditional bullying (i.e., bullying in real-world situations) is used to provide a basic frame of reference, since that is a relatively well-researched area and both phenomena show similarities (UNICEF 2021; Englander et al. 2017; Pozza et al. 2016; Gradinger et al., 2010).

There are three “*core characteristics of bullying behaviours*” (Englander et al. 2017: 149): **intention, repetition, and power imbalance** (Council of Europe 2020; Englander et al. 2017; Van Hee et al. 2018; Méndez et al. 2019). Bullying definition utilizing all the three core characteristics is well summarized by Pozza et al. (2016: 20): “*Bullying is generally understood as an aggressive and intentional act or behaviour carried out by a group or an individual repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself.*”

When it comes to cyberbullying, there are organizations and authors who use this very definition of traditional bullying, applied to the online space, as done by Pozza et al. (2016: 20): “*The term cyberbullying is used to describe bullying taking place on the Internet mostly through mobile phones and social media. Cyberbullying corresponds, thus, to an equally aggressive and intentional act, carried out through the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs)*”. On the other hand, similarly, by UNICEF (2021): “*Cyberbullying is bullying with the use of digital technologies. It can take place on social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms and mobile phones. It is repeated behaviour, aimed at scaring, angering or shaming those who are targeted.*” As already mentioned, this **approach utilizing definition of traditional bullying** widened to encompass ICTs is used by many organizations and authors (OECD 2021; Council of Europe 2020; Ronchi, Molnar, Barberis 2020; US Government, Department of Health and Human Services 2020; Smith 2018; OECD 2017; Thomas et al. 2017; Przybylski, Bowes 2017; Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children 2016; Udris 2015; Gradinger, Strohmeier, Spiel 2010; Deater-Deckard 2008; Smith et al. 2008; Sánchez et al. 2016; Garaigordobil, Larrain 2020; Khan et al. 2020; Mascia et al. 2021; Khine et al. 2020; Escortell et al. 2020).

There are, however, also authors and organizations who see **cyberbullying as more specific and distinct from the traditional bullying**, listing additional characteristics of cyberbullying. Pozza et al. (2016: 23-24, emphasis added; see also Cuadrado-Gordillo, Fernández-Antelo 2020) list the following: “*The use of electronic or digital means; Intentional harm; Imbalance of power; Repetition; Sense of anonymity and lack of accountability; Publicity.*” Apparently, the virtual setting in which cyberbullying takes place brings new variables into play, most notably the specificity of the online environments, such as: “*the huge size of the potential audience; continuous access; the permanency of online content; the ease of copying and distributing material; and a lack of oversight*”

of online behaviour.” (Campbell & Bauman, 2017 in Ronchi, Molnar, Barberis 2020: 14, emphasis added; see also Lindfors, Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä 2012; Martínez, Rodríguez-Hidalgo, Zych 2020; Lazuras et al. 2019). The US Government, Department of Health and Human Services (2020) adds that cyberbullying is “persistent, permanent, and hard to notice”, while Przybylski and Bowes (2017: 19; see also Udris 2015; Bergmann, Baier 2018) also point out that “cyberbullying has the potential to cause more harm than traditional bullying due to the relative anonymity of perpetrators in many cases, larger audiences, increasing prevalence, and permanence of posted messages.”

Additionally, cyberbullying is also typical by **crossing the physical boundaries** of traditional bullying. While traditional bullying tends to occur in schools or public places, leaving victims the haven of their own homes, the **widespread reach of the online technologies** causes these boundaries to disappear (Englander et al. 2017; Sánchez et al. 2016). Cyberbullies can therefore reach their victims at all times, even at home (OECD 2021; Deater-Deckard 2008; Bergmann, Baier 2018).

Given the common definition is not easy to find in the existing literature, some publications provide **examples of behaviours** that fall under the umbrella term “cyberbullying”. Such lists are useful in further understanding the nature and variability of cyberbullying behaviour, and may include the following (UNICEF 2021; similarly, also Council of Europe 2020 and US Government, Department of Health and Human Services 2020):

- *“spreading lies about or posting embarrassing photos of someone on social media;*
- *sending hurtful messages or threats via messaging platforms;*
- *impersonating someone and sending mean messages to others on their behalf”*

Pozza et al. (2016: 165-166; see also OECD 2021; Smith et al. 2008; Khan et al. 2020; Khine et al. 2020; López-Meneses et al. 2020; Jun 2020) show another, rather extensive, list of cyberbullying behaviours (see Figure 2 and Figure 3).

Pozza et al. (2016: 28) also comment on various cyberbullying channels: *“Cyberbullying can be carried out through different means, such as mobile devices, Internet, messaging (e.g. instant messaging, chat programs, text/audio/video programs, multimedia messages, gaming devices and social networks). Initial research in this area showed that the most common channels to perpetrate cyberbullying were phone calls and text messages. However, the rapid pace of ICT innovation determined changes in patterns. Nowadays, cyberbullying is increasingly performed through social networks (mostly Facebook, followed by Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr and YouTube).”*

Behaviour	Definition
Exclusion	the rejection of a person from an online group provoking his/her social marginalization and exclusion ¹¹⁷⁰ .
Online harassment	the repetition of harassment behaviours on the net, including insults, mocking, slander, menacing chain messages, denigrations, name calling, gossiping, abusive or hate-related behaviours. Harassment differs from nuisance in light of its frequency. It can also be featured as sexual harassment if it includes the spreading of sexual rumours, or the commenting of the body, appearance, sex, gender of an individual ¹¹⁷¹ .
Griefing	the harassment of someone in a cyber-game or virtual word (e.g. ChatRoulette, Formspring, etc.) ¹¹⁷² .
Flaming	the online sending of violent or vulgar messages. It differentiates from harassment on the basis that flaming is an online fight featured by anger and violence (e.g. use of capital letter or images to make their point) ¹¹⁷³ .
Trolling	the persistent abusive comments on a website ¹¹⁷⁴ .
Cyberstalking	involves continual threatening and sending of rude messages ¹¹⁷⁵ .
Cyber-persecution	continuous and repetitive harassment, denigration, insulting, and threats.
Masquerade	a situation where a bully creates a fake identity to harass someone else ¹¹⁷⁶ .
Impersonation	the impersonation of someone else to send malicious messages, as well as the breaking into someone's account to send messages, or like posts that will cause embarrassment or damage to the person's reputation and affect his/her social life ¹¹⁷⁷ .

Figure 1: List of cyberbullying behaviours as presented by Pozza et al. (2016: 165-166), part I.

Fraping	the changing of details on someone's Facebook page when they leave it open (e.g. changing his political views into Nazi supporter) ¹¹⁷⁸ .
Catfishing	occurs when someone steals you're the child's online identity to recreate social networking profiles for deceptive purposes ¹¹⁷⁹ .
Outing	occurs when personal and private information, pictures, or videos about someone are shared publicly without permission ¹¹⁸⁰ .
Dissing	occurs when someone uploads cruel information, photos or videos of children online ¹¹⁸¹ .
Tricking	occurs when someone tricks someone else into revealing secrets or embarrassing information, which is then shared online ¹¹⁸² .
Grooming	befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child, and sometimes the family, to lower the child's inhibitions for child sexual abuse.
Sexting	the circulation of sexualized images via mobile phones or the internet without a person's consent ¹¹⁸³ .
Sexcasting	is similar to sexting but it involves high definition videos of sexually explicit content ¹¹⁸⁴ .
Happy slapping	aggressive or degrading behaviour conducted and recorded by a bystander and the video is then forwarded to other people's phones or posted on a website ¹¹⁸⁵ .
Threats	to damage existing relationships, threats to family, threats to home environment, threat of physical violence; death threats ¹¹⁸⁶ .

Figure 2: List of cyberbullying behaviours presented by Pozza et al. (2016: 165-166), part II.

In order to better understand the cyberbullying situation, it is also useful to state the **main roles of persons involved**, these are (Pozza et al. (2016: 20):

- **Perpetrator(s)** – a bully or bullies, i.e., the person(s) who conduct cyberbullying activities.
- **Victim(s)** – i.e., the person(s) who are targeted by cyberbullying activities.
- **Bystander(s)** – i.e., the person(s) who witness the cyberbullying activities.

There are **two types of perpetrators**: entitlement bullies (those who believe they are superior to others and therefore have the right to bully others), and retaliators (those who have been bullied themselves and use cyberspace to get revenge). In addition, there are also **two types of bystanders**: those who are part of the problem (i.e., either do not intervene, or encourage the bullying), and those who are part of the solution (i.e., stop the bullying, stand against it) (Notar, Padgett, Roden 2013: 4; see also Lindfors, Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä 2012). Other authors distinguish roles of the bystanders to a greater detail, such as “*assistants of the bully (i.e. who encourage the bullying), reinforcers of the bully (i.e. who reinforce the bullying), defenders (i.e. who comfort the victim, take their side or try to stop the bullying) and outsiders (i.e. who ignore or distance themselves from the situation)*” (Van Hee et al. 2018: 4).

Some authors also point out that one person can have **different roles**, and thus can become both the perpetrator and the victim of cyberbullying. This specific case is referred to as “**victim-perpetration**” (Thomas et al. 2017: 2). When defining cyberbullying, it should also be noted that there is a growing body of literature which suggests that traditional bullying and cyberbullying “*can often happen alongside each other*” (UNICEF 2021), or that “*cyber victims had also often been traditional victims and cyberbullies had often been traditional bullies*” (Notar, Padgett, Roden 2013: 5). In connection to these roles, the term “**cybervictimization**” has been used to describe the fact that someone became a victim of cyberbullying. As an example, a study may suggest that “[c]ybervictimization has been associated with anxiety” (Udris 2015: 60).

Certain types of cyberbullying can also be identified, such as direct and indirect. “**Direct cyberbullying** refers to actions in which the victim is directly involved (e.g. sending a virus-infected file, excluding someone from an online group, insulting and threatening), whereas **indirect cyberbullying** can take place without awareness of the victim (e.g. outing or publishing confidential information, spreading gossip, creating a hate page on social networking sites)” (Van Hee et al. 2018: 7) Other authors also distinguish “**psychological cyberbullying**” to cover activities such as spreading rumours, mocking other people, humiliating or excluding someone; and “**sexual cyberbullying**”, which cover sending or sharing sexually explicit photos, or prompting engagement in sexual activities online (Bergmann, Baier 2018: 7).

As technologies grow omnipresent, cyberbullying becomes a phenomenon attracting more and more scientific attention, as shown in Figure 3, which depicts **evolution of scientific production in the area of cyberbullying** (López-Meneses et al. 2020).

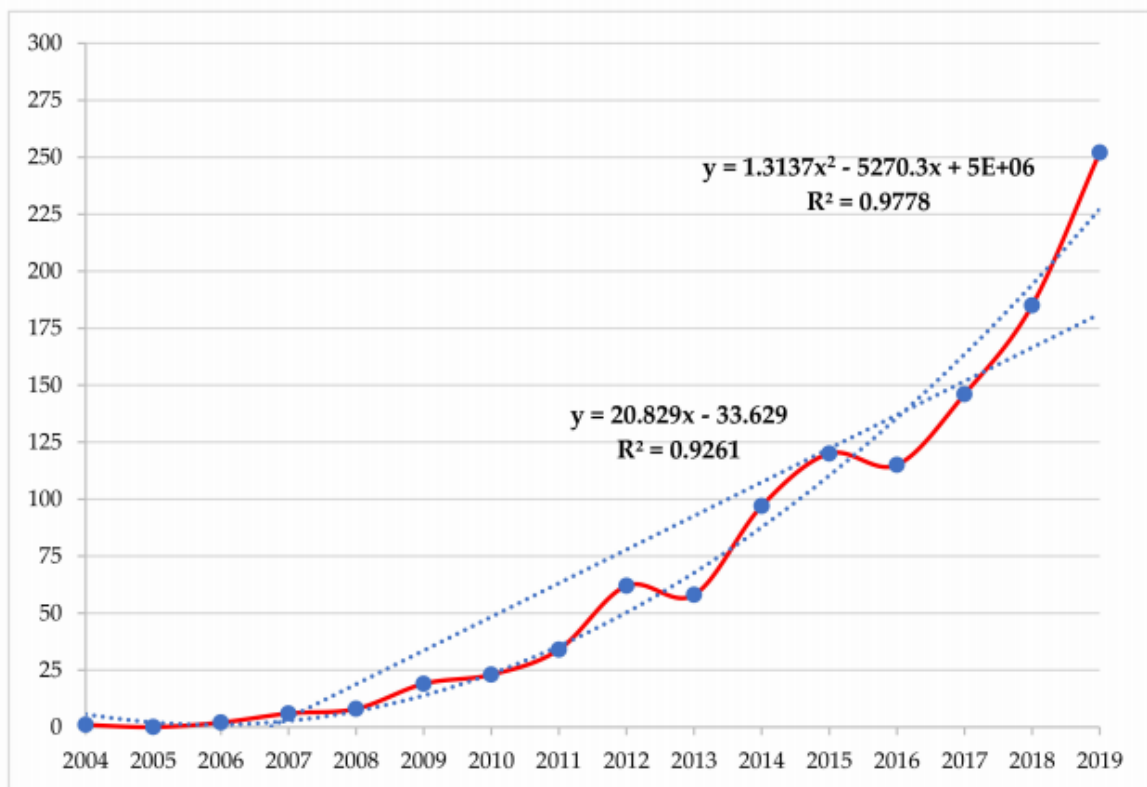


Figure 3: Evolution of Scientific Production as Identified by López-Meneses et al. 2020: 10

2.2.1. Key findings on definition of cyberbullying

For the purpose of this report, we will use a commonly accepted and widely cited definition of cyberbullying: **“Cyberbullying refers to intentional and repeated harm that others inflict via a digital device”** (Hinduja and Patchin, 2009). We have chosen this definition because it includes the most common defining attributes of cyberbullying as identified through the concept analysis carried out by Peter & Petermann (2018), namely: 1) using information and communication technologies, 2) the cyberbullying behaviour is directed toward one victim, 3) it is done intentionally, and 4) should cause any kind of harm. Peter & Petermann (2018) further argue that repetition should also be considered as important attribute, due to possible more devastating consequences of cyberbullying incidents if someone is cyberbullied for long periods of time and more frequently (see Ybarra, Espelage, & Mitchell, 2014 as cited by Peter & Petermann, 2018).

2.3. Scope of cyberbullying

Primarily, it needs to be noted that “[a]s a result of the absence of a commonly agreed definition of cyberbullying, the measurement of the phenomenon differs from country to country and from study to study. For this reason, data must be considered with extreme caution” (Pozza et al. 2016: 26; see also Przybylski, Bowes 2017; Van Hee et al. 2018; Modecki et al. 2014; Lindfors, Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä 2012; Khine et al. 2020) In order to keep findings in this chapter readable and as clear as

possible, definitions used in various studies are not quoted in here, but the focus is on information describing the scope of cyberbullying phenomenon in different contexts.

The most common unit of measurement in cyberbullying is the **“victimization rate”**, which refers to the percentage of respondents who indicated being victims of cyberbullying behaviour in a given period (usually in the past year or in the past several months). Hence, **in this text the term cyberbullying victimization rate or cybervictimization rate refers to the percentage of young people who were victims of cyberbullying in the target populations at the time when the research was conducted.** There are also studies, which map the rates of cyberbullying perpetration, usually referred to as **“cyber-perpetration rate”** (Martínez, Rodríguez-Hidalgo, Zych 2020: 2) which, similarly to the measure described above, provide a percentage of people who are identified as cyberbullying perpetrators in the target population. Some studies also measure both rates together, quoting **“cyberbullying occurrence”**, which describes a percentage of young people in the target population who have become either a cyberbullying victim or a perpetrator.

In the **United States**, according to School Crime Supplement to the National Crime Victimization Survey conducted in 2017 in young people 12 to 18 years old, 15% reported some form of cyberbullying (US Government, Department of Health and Human Services 2020). Youth Risk Behaviour Surveillance System showed that in 2019 an estimate cyberbullying victimization rate was **15.7%** in high-school students (ibid.).

When it comes to the **European Union**, Pozza et al. (2016: 27) show that EU Kids Online reported an overall cyberbullying victimization rate of 6% among 9-16-year-olds in 2010, and Net Children Go Mobile reported an overall cyberbullying victimization rate of 12% in the same age group in 2014. **EU Kids Online** (Smahel et al. 2020) reported an overall average victimization rate of **23%** in 2020 (both online and offline), and out of these 23% of young respondents, 5% reported online victimization. In this latest EU Kids Online report, however, the data do not represent the EU: they contain countries from outside of the EU and do not contain all EU Member States (Smahel et al. 2020).

OECD (2019: 130-131) concludes that the average cyberbullying victimization rate is about **15%** (see Figure 3; the sample is from 2013-2014 and only covers 11-, 13-, and 15-year-olds), and also points out that there are differences in cyberbullying victimization rates on the national levels and in gender perspectives, with cyberbullying victimization rates almost in all countries higher in young girls than in young boys. It seems **young girls** are more endangered by the cyberbullying phenomenon than young boys (OECD 2019; Przybylski, Bowes 2017). However, there are also authors who are doubtful if this is a generally valid finding (Lindfors, Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä 2012; Bergmann, Baier 2018). The **ambiguity in gender differences** can well be caused by differing methodologies, research instruments, target groups, and of course also national realities (including, for instance, a potential for girls to report the cyberbullying more often in comparison to boys underreporting it, etc.), as is stressed again below when dealing with country-specific cyberbullying research.

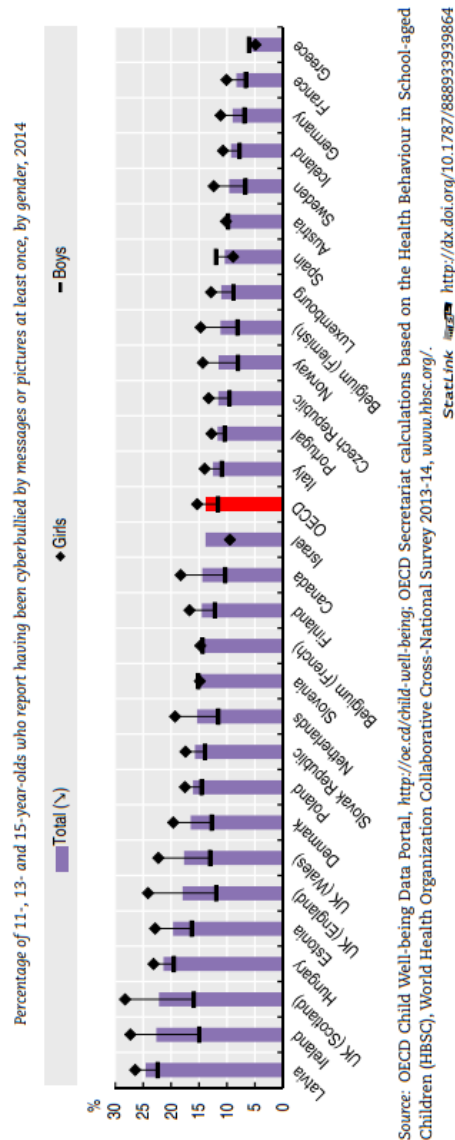


Figure 4: Cyberbullying Rate as Reported by OECD (2019: 131).

Lindfors, Kaltiala-Heino, and Rimpelä (2012: 1-2) conclude that cyber-victimisation rates “among Western adolescents” are between 9% and 34%, while cyber-perpetration rates are between 4% and 21%. A more recent review by Garaigordobil (2018; in Garaigordobil, Larrain 2020) quotes **1% to 10% of cyberbullying victims**. Modecki et al. (2014: 607) analysed 80 studies and in these saw occurrences of cyberbullying (both cyber-victimisation and cyber-perpetration) of **around 15%**, which was only about half of the occurrence of traditional bullying (calculated by the authors at about 35%). At this point, the importance of measurement approach needs to be, again, stressed, since some of the figures found in the literature can differ widely from the estimates above (for example, cyber-victimization rates as high as 57% and cyber-perpetration rates reaching to almost 18% [Martínez, Rodríguez-Hidalgo, Zych 2020]).

It is very important, when identifying cyberbullying in the data, to carefully **distinguish between one-time events and long-term processes**, as one of the key aspects of (cyber)bullying is its **repetitive nature**. Therefore, **not all instances of online aggression should be considered cyberbullying**. This is well explored by Lindfors, Kaltiala-Heino, and Rimpelä (2012) who provide results for occurrence of bullying “during the past year” and “weekly” among Finnish 12- to 18-year-olds, with figures dropping dramatically when taking into account only repetitive behaviour, which corresponds best with the definition of cyberbullying, as shown in Figure 4.

	Boys					Girls					All	p sex	p age, sex
	12 yrs. (326)	14 yrs. (735)	16 yrs. (690)	18 yrs. (537)	Total (2288)	12 yrs. (356)	14 yrs. (999)	16 yrs. (962)	18 yrs. (911)	Total (3228)			
Cyber-bullying during the last year													
Victim	10	13	9	9	10	14	14	11	7	11	11	.496	.000
Victim, bullying serious and disturbing	2	2	1	1	1	4	3	3	3	3	2	.000	.016
Bully	8	13	12	10	11	5	13	8	4	8	9	.000	.000
Bully-victim	3	6	4	3	4	2	5	3	2	3	4	.052	.000
Weekly cyberbullying													
Victim	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	.259	.819
Bully	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	.001	.003
Witnessed cyberbullying of friends during the last year	11	10	10	10	10	16	19	17	10	16	13	.000	.000

Figure 5: Results of Cyberbullying Research Reported by Lindfors, Kaltiala-Heino and Rimpelä (2012: 4).

Overall, the lower prevalence of cyberbullying in comparison to traditional bullying seems to be one of key findings across the analysed body of literature (Modecki et al. 2014), with some authors concluding that, generally speaking, **traditional bullying is about twice as common as cyberbullying** (Thomas et al. 2017).

An interplay between traditional bullying and cyberbullying also occurs. Most authors agree that **the two phenomena largely overlap in occurrence** (Sánchez et al. 2016; Przybylski, Bowes 2017; Martínez, Rodríguez-Hidalgo, Zych 2020). This leads to a conclusion by some researchers that cyberbullying may simply be yet another channel for aggressive behaviour and bullying in general (Modecki et al. 2014; Przybylski, Bowes 2017), and that in many cases traditional bullying and cyberbullying occur simultaneously, combining the traditional and cyberbullying mechanisms towards one victim (Lindfors, Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä 2012; Khine et al. 2020). As some authors put it: “*cyberbullying is rarely experienced alone*” (Waasdorp and Bradshaw, 2015 in Thomas et al. 2017: 2).

Further data focusing on national level cyberbullying detection show differing results based on the changing **national reality contexts**, various research target groups, and differing methodological approaches (different definitions as well as different detection tools). Przybylski and Bowes (2017) state that among the 9-16-year-olds in the UK, the cybervictimization rate was 8% compared with the victimization rate of 21% in case of traditional bullying in 2012. Save the Children (2016 in Garaigordobil, Larrain 2020) states that in Spanish adolescents, there are about 9% of victims of traditional bullying and about 7% of victims of cyberbullying. Bergmann and Baier (2018) explored cyberbullying prevalence in Germany on a sample of almost 15 000 14- to 15-year-old students and found 2.4% of the sample to comply with their definition of a cyberbully and another 0.4% to comply with their definition of a sexual cyberbully. Martínez, Rodríguez-Hidalgo, and Zych (2020) looked at

the situation in Peruvian Amazonia and on a sample of about 600 young people between ages 12 and 19 found that in the domain of traditional bullying, there are about 24% of victims and about 5% of bullies, while in cyberbullying arena, the victimization rate was about 14% and there were about 6% of cyberbullies. Thomas (et al. 2017) explored cyberbullying in Australian youth population (about 3000 of 11-17-year-olds), and detects about 13% of victims, 2% of perpetrators, and 2% of victim-perpetrators (victim-bullies, those who at the same time were a victim and the perpetrator of bullying). As is visible from the results above, unless a unified methodology is used (as is the case in OECD study shown above), there is little potential for comparisons and each of the national or regional level results would need to be treated extremely carefully and would fully only apply to the one context in which the results were found.

Evidence suggests that **some groups of CYP (children and young people) are more likely to become victims of cyberbullying**. For example, those with disabilities (MacArthur & Gaffney, 2001), those with mental health conditions, those from lower socio-economic indices (d'Haenens et al., 2013), LGBTI+ community (Garaigordobil and Larrain, 2020). Research shows that young people with behavioural and emotional mental health conditions do experience high levels of bullying and cyberbullying (Hart and O'Reilly, in press).

The **impact** cyberbullying can have on a personal level depends on several factors. These include individual characteristics (e.g. personality traits of bullies and victims, the capacity of the victim to cope with the incident), contextual factors such as the form of the cyber aggression, the media employed to inflict harm (Slonje & Smith, 2008; Smith et al., 2008), but also the (social) support available for victims (e.g. at home, school, through their peers or through trusted persons in their environment). This means that cyberbullying can impact different children in different ways depending on the mechanisms and support they have at their disposal and the (personal) strategies employed to tackle this type of aggression (e.g. more or less effective coping strategies).

It should be noticed that apart from the methodological issues repeatedly mentioned above and connected to researching cyberbullying, one standalone issue is **the reluctance of the cyber-victims to share their experience with others**. Khine et al. (2020) states that only half of the students who were bullied shared this with anyone else.

Finally yet importantly, **Covid-19 pandemic** affected the lives of most children and adolescents in Europe dramatically. The lockdown affecting most European countries in spring 2020 saw the sudden **shift of most children's activities into the digital world**. Since then, children's schooling, leisure time, social contacts, home life have mostly been conducted at home via digital media. Embracing new tools and services and spending several hours per day online changed dramatically daily schedules. The online world offers opportunities and new possibilities, substituting face-to-face interactions. However, it opens the door to well-known **online risks** (inappropriate content, overuse, cyberbullying, cyberhate, disinformation, misuse of personal data, cyber-risks, etc.) (Lobe et al. 2020; Karmakar & Das, 2021).

Results of the EU-JRC report "**How children (10-18) experienced online risks during the Covid-19 lockdown - Spring 2020**" (Lobe et al. 2020) show that half (51%) of the total children in the sample have never encountered cyberbullying situations, meaning also that **the other half has been a victim of at least one of the four cyberbullying situations** monitored by the survey: (1) "Nasty or hurtful

messages were sent to me”, (2) “Nasty or hurtful messages about me were passed around or posted where others could see”, (3) “I was left out or excluded from a group or activity on the Internet” and (4) “I was threatened on the Internet”. Moreover, **a quarter of children reported to have encountered all four situations.**

2.3.1. Key findings on scope of cyberbullying

- Scope of cyberbullying victimisation and perpetration **cannot be clearly determined across country borders**, due to the following downsides of available research publications:
 - inconsistent definitions;
 - inconsistent research tools;
 - inconsistent target populations;
 - reluctance of both victims and perpetrators to report cyberbullying.
- Different research data suggest that **cyberbullying rates** are about **half of those of traditional bullying.**
- Repeated findings show **that traditional bullying and cyberbullying overlap** to a large extent, making standalone cyberbullying only a minor phenomenon in terms of scope, and rather suggesting that cyberbullying is a complementary process or extension of traditional bullying. In other words, while traditional bullying can occur in itself, cyberbullying is often overlapping with traditional bullying.
- Bullying and cyberbullying in **young people from vulnerable groups** needs to be considered when exploring scope of these phenomena, since it may widely differ from the scope in the general youth population(s).
- **Covid-19 pandemic** opens the door to well-known online risks (inappropriate content, overuse, cyberbullying, cyberhate, disinformation, misuse of personal data, cyber-risks, etc.).

2.4. Impact of cyberbullying

Both bullying and cyberbullying are associated with **higher levels of multiple problematic phenomena impacting young people**, namely (for details see the following studies: Udris 2015; Campbell et al. 2013 in Ronchi, Molnar, Barberis 2020; Cross et al. 2009 in Ronchi, Molnar, Barberis 2020; Przybylski, Bowes 2017; Cook et al. 2010 in Thomas et al. 2017; Juvonen et al. 2003 in Thomas et al. 2017; Lereya et al. 2013 in Thomas et al. 2017; Holt et al. 2015 in Thomas et al. 2017; Ttofi et al. 2016 in Thomas et al. 2017; Lindfors, Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä 2012; Sánchez et al. 2016; Martínez, Rodríguez-Hidalgo, Zych 2020; Garaigordobil, Larrain 2020; Khan et al. 2020; Khine et al. 2020; Méndez et al. 2019; Escortell et al. 2020; Chen et al. 2020; Richard et al. 2021; Nguyen et al. 2020; Calvete et al. 2019; Akanni et al. 2020):

- | | |
|--|--|
| ● Academic problems and failures | ● Depression |
| ● Aggression and hostility | ● Deterioration of chronic health conditions |
| ● Anxiety | ● Externalizing problems (e.g. problem video gaming) |
| ● Decreased self-esteem | ● Generally low mental well-being |
| ● Delinquency and deviant peer affiliation | |

- Generally low caregiver-adolescent connectedness
- Interpersonal sensitivity
- Paranoia
- Psychosis
- School conduct problems
- School absenteeism
- Self-harm
- Social difficulties
- Somatization
- Substance use
- Suicidal thoughts
- Suicide attempts

Cyberbullying specifically, however, seems to have **more profound negative impacts on its victims** than the traditional bullying (Ronchi, Molnar, Barberis 2020; Smith 2018; Sánchez et al. 2016). Reasons for the more severe impacts of cyberbullying can lie in two of the defining traits of cyberbullying: **the publicity and the ubiquity of cyberbullying**. Cyberbullying can reach a wider audience so that *“hundreds or thousands of visitors might see a humiliating picture or message on a website”* (Smith 2018: 3). While traditional bullying usually is spatially limited to school or other public grounds, cyberbullying does not have such boundaries. Therefore, **cyberbullying can occur “24/7”, giving the victims “no respite”** (Smith 2018: 3). It is for these reasons that both the traditional bullying and the cyberbullying have been labelled **“a major public health problem”** (Przybylski, Bowes 2017: 19; see also Lindfors, Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä 2012; Sánchez et al. 2016; Khine et al. 2020; Méndez et al. 2019; Cuadrado-Gordillo, Fernández-Antelo 2020).

Interestingly, the most affected group of young people seem to be those who are not only victims of bullying, but those who, at the same time, also bully others, so-called **bully-victims** (Lindfors, Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä 2012). As some authors put it (Thomas et al. 2017: 2): *“Those who report experiences of both victimisation and perpetration represent a particularly high-risk group who show poorer functioning than victimisation or perpetration alone.”* Another particularly risk group of young people are victims of a **combination of the traditional and cyberbullying**, as these victims seem to be particularly highly affected by the negative associated phenomena listed above (Smith 2018).

Both traditional bullying and cyberbullying can be **especially harmful in young people from vulnerable groups**, as demonstrated by research conducted in the LGBTI+ community (Garaigordobil, Larrain 2020). Apart from suffering from the negative effects listed above, some research shows that these effects can be more severe in **LGBTI+ community** than in majority youth (Ybarra et al. 2014 in Garaigordobil, Larrain 2020; Garaigordobil, Larrain 2020). In the words of Garaigordobil, Larrain (2020: 78), the impacts of traditional and cyberbullying on LGBTI+ community *“can be devastating”*.

2.4.1. Key findings on the impact of cyberbullying

- A vast palette of **mental health issues** occurs as impacts of both traditional bullying and cyberbullying.
- Apart from mental health issues, **further problems** in the areas of schooling (academic problems), interpersonal relationships (with caregivers as well as with others), or even physical health (suicide, self-harm, somatization, or substance use) can be found in young people in connection to both forms of bullying.

- Some authors argue that **cyberbullying can cause more harm than traditional bullying** due to its publicity and ubiquity.
- Traditional bullying and cyberbullying can have **notably harmful effects on the following groups of young people**:
 - Victim-perpetrators (victim-bullies, bully-victims), who are both a victim and a perpetrator.
 - Victims of a combination of traditional bullying and cyberbullying.
 - Young people from vulnerable groups.

2.5. Drivers of cyberbullying perpetration

Cyberbullying perpetration is linked to several conditions in young people. These conditions can be divided into two larger categories: environmental factors and psychological traits. Among the **environmental factors**, the following are debated in the literature (for details see the following studies: Bergmann, Baier 2018; Khan et al. 2020; Khine et al. 2020; Yudes, Rey, Extremera 2020; Calvete et al. 2019; Akanni et al. 2020; Notar, Padgett, Roden 2013):

- **Environmental factors**
 - **Low school performance**
 - *“For students who spend a large part of their days in school and find their relevant peer group there, school performance provides a comparative dimension that is crucial for self-esteem. Poorer performance in school can be perceived as degrading and frustrating, leading to more frequent aggressive behaviours against others.”* (Bergmann, Baier 2018: 3-4)
 - **Low quality of youth-teacher relationships**
 - *“Adolescent bullies are likely to perceive the relationship with their teachers negatively, as suggested by the present study. This negative perception may be related to being in the ‘bad book’ of their instructors. (...) [B]ullies have trouble following rules, and do not often have a good relationship with their teachers and parents.”* (Akanni et al. 2020: 6)
 - **Low quality of children-parents’ relationships**
 - weaker emotional attachment
 - low levels of parental control, especially in the area of information and communication technologies
 - low levels of parental attention
 - lack of parental support
 - **Media consumption**
 - High violent media consumption
 - General Aggression Model: *“... the consumption of violent media can, among other things, result in the cognitive storage of aggressive behavioural scripts that are more likely to be activated in the event of conflict.”* (Bergmann, Baier 2018: 3-4)

- Desensitization of media violence: “*watching excessive violence on television and play violent video games, (...) desensitize them to aggression and violence*” (Khan et al. 2020: 7)
 - High levels of Internet usage
 - “*Individuals who spend more time on the Internet will (a) develop greater expertise with the use of technology and (b) probabilistically be more likely to become involved with cyberbullying as victim or perpetrator due to the time spent online.*” (Kowalski et al. 2014: 40 in Bergmann, Baier 2018)
- **Substance abuse**
- **Traditional bullying victimization**
 - “*... victims of school bullying are almost twice as likely to become cyberbullies. (...) The Internet offers bullying victims an opportunity to process their frustrations about their own negative experiences through aggressive behaviour in a more or less anonymous form*” (Bergmann, Baier 2018: 3-4)
- **Cyberbullying victimization**
 - “*Victims of aggressive online behaviour are more likely to turn to cyberbullying themselves. The switch from victim to bully is observed in various forms of aggressive behaviour. (...) ... 58.3% of cyberbullies are also victims of cyberbullying.*” (Bergmann, Baier 2018: 3-4)
- **Traditional bullying perpetration**
 - “*... aggressors in school engage more frequently in cyberbullying, too. (...) ... perpetrators of school-based bullying are three times as likely to engage in online bullying.*” (Bergmann, Baier 2018: 3-4)

To summarize the environmental factors increasing cyberbullying perpetration, it shows that cyberbullies are more likely to be low achievers in school, come from problematic family backgrounds, can consume high amount of violent contents, can have substance abuse problems, and can also be victims of cyber or traditional bullying, as well as perpetrators of traditional bullying.

Unlike in the case of environmental factors, the domain of **psychological traits** is much less clear. In general, there are several psychological traits that seem to be linked to cyberbullying (for details see the following studies: Bergmann, Baier 2018; Escortell et al. 2020; Martínez, Rodríguez-Hidalgo, Zych 2020; Khan et al. 2020; Mascia et al. 2021; Falla, Ortega-Ruiz, Romera 2021; Lazuras et al. 2019; Cuadrado-Gordillo, Fernández-Antelo 2019; Yudes, Rey, Extremera 2020; Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al. 2020; Notar, Padgett, Roden 2013):

- **Psychological traits**
 - **Self-esteem**
 - **Low levels of affective and cognitive empathy**
 - **Low levels of agreeableness** (e.g. low in friendliness and tact)
 - **Low levels of conscientiousness** (e.g. not very careful or not very diligent)
 - **Higher levels of emotional instability or neuroticism**
 - **High levels of aggression**

- **Behavioural problems**
- **High levels of moral disengagement**
- **Low levels of emotional intelligence**

When it comes to self-esteem, some authors believe **low self-esteem** (Martínez, Rodríguez-Hidalgo, Zych 2020) can be a driver of cyberbullying based on the Theory of Social Comparison Processes: *“People with low self-esteem strive to increase it. One possible way to do this is to degrade the self-esteem of others to compensate for their own low self-esteem. Cyberbullying, which includes psychological attacks, insults, and other affronts, serves this purpose well.”* (Frey, Irle 1993 in Bergmann, Baier 2018: 3; Khan et al. 2020) On the other hand, in some studies, low self-esteem did not prove to link with cyberbullying, and some authors argue: *“cyberbullying may not be the preferred strategy to deal with negative self-esteem. Adolescents with low self-esteem may be less able to direct their aggression against others than against themselves. Compensation strategies would then be more likely to be in the form of alcohol and drug use, for example.”* (Bergmann, Baier 2018: 10). Based on these debates, some authors suggest that rather than being a predictor of cyberbullying perpetration, low self-esteem may be a predictor of cyberbullying victimization. *“The relation between low self-esteem and victimization might be explained by the fact that perpetrators look for victims who are less capable of defending themselves”* (Martínez, Rodríguez-Hidalgo, Zych 2020: 3). Furthermore, some authors link high self-esteem with cyberbullying perpetration (Khan et al. 2020). Overall, it seems that self-esteem is not a reliable predictor of cyberbullying perpetration (or victimization), as there are no consistent associations between the two phenomena.

Less ambiguous results can be found in case of **empathy**. While most authors focus on the domain of affective empathy, i.e. the ability to become emotionally sensitive to situations or feelings of others, some authors also stress the importance of cognitive empathy, i.e. the ability to see problems from the perspective of other people. Generally, authors see low empathy as predictors of cyberbullying perpetration (Khan et al. 2020; Martínez, Rodríguez-Hidalgo, Zych 2020; Mascia et al. 2021: 3), reasoning that *“[t]hose who cannot empathize with others cannot understand the psychological harm that their actions cause.”* (Bergmann, Baier 2018: 3-4) Some studies even suggest: *“cyberbullies are significantly less empathetic than bystanders.”* (Pfetsch et al. 2014 in Bergmann, Baier 2018: 3). Some authors even state that high levels of cognitive and affective empathy can *“serve as protective factors against [cyberbullying]”* (Mascia et al. 2021: 3).

Mascia and colleagues (et al. 2021; see also Falla, Ortega-Ruiz, Romera 2021; Lazuras et al. 2019; Cuadrado-Gordillo, Fernández-Antelo 2019) point out that higher levels of **moral disengagement** and cyberbullying perpetration are linked, as it enables the cyberbully to keep his actions in line with inner moral standards despite them being harmful. This happens through some specific practices (Bandura et al. 1996 in Mascia et al. 2021: 2, emphasis added; see also Falla, Ortega-Ruiz, Romera 2021; Lazuras et al. 2019):

- **“Moral justification**, where the individual cognitively restructures harmful conduct as acceptable behaviour;
- **Euphemistic labelling**, which refers to language being sanitized in order to make harmful conduct appear benign;

- **Advantageous comparison**, in which the individual compares harmful acts with more reprehensible activities, so that they are viewed as having minor consequences;
- **Minimizing or misconstruing consequences**, which occurs when the results of a harmful act are minimized, ignored, or distorted to relieve the perpetrator from feelings of self-condemnation;
- **Displacement or diffusion of responsibility**, in which the harm done by a group can be attributed to others' behaviour, thus disowning personal responsibility;
- **Attribution of blame**, in which victims are considered to have brought their suffering upon themselves;
- **Dehumanization**, in which victims are stripped of human qualities."

As is apparent from the concrete examples of moral disengagement behaviours above, some aspects of cyberbullying may be prone to using these techniques, making young people who are using them more likely to engage in cyberbullying, such as **anonymity or absence of face-to-face interaction** (Mascia et al. 2021).

Some studies show that **low levels of emotional intelligence** are associated with cyberbullying (Méndez et al. 2019; cf. Yudes, Rey, Extremera 2020), but it needs to be noted that this is a complex concept defined as "*the capacity to process emotional information accurately and efficiently, and to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions*" (Yudes, Rey, Extremera 2020: 2). Therefore, it usually also includes aspects such as emotional management and can therefore overlap with some of the psychological traits mentioned above (e.g. empathy, or moral disengagement).

2.5.1 Key findings on drivers of cyberbullying perpetration

- Cyberbullies usually experience downsides at school (low-achievers, poor relationships with teachers), at home (poor relationships with parents), and in other setups (substance abuse, traditional and cyberbullying victimization).
- Cyberbullies can be **unemphatic, unfriendly, or aggressive** to other people, with poor ability to manage their own emotions.
- Ability to use flawed logic to find excuses for their own **immoral behaviour** can be typical for (cyber)bullies, as that corresponds to high levels of **moral disengagement**.
- **Decreasing perpetration of cyberbullying has a potential to decrease victimization** not only directly (less perpetrators mean less victims), but also indirectly (less victims mean fewer potential perpetrators, as victimization is, paradoxically, one of the predictors of becoming a bully).

2.6. Risk factors of cyberbullying victimisation

Similarly, to identify drivers of cyberbullying perpetration, some authors set out to identify **risk factors influencing the likelihood of becoming a cyberbullying victim**. Among the risk factors, we can, again, distinguish between the **environmental factors** and **psychological traits**. The following environmental and psychological traits can be listed (for details see the following studies: Cuadrado-Gordillo, Fernández-Antelo 2020; Rodríguez-Enríquez et al. 2019; Escortell et al. 2020; Jun 2020; Kenny et al. 2020; Lee, Jeong, Roh 2018; Akgül, Artar 2020):

- **Environmental factors**
 - **Low social connectivity and high anti-social behaviour** (e.g. low reliability of friend relationships or low interactions with parents)
 - **Physical disability**
 - **Obesity**
 - **History of parental maltreatment**
 - **History of discrimination**
 - **Higher levels of Internet usage**
- **Psychological traits**
 - **Higher levels of emotional instability, neuroticism, or mental health condition(s)**
 - *“Students who score high on neuroticism are more likely to feel negative emotions and use maladaptive methods to cope with stress and may therefore express their discomfort more openly on SNSs [social networks]. Cyberbullies could easily exploit these disclosures and harass these individuals.”* (Rodríguez-Enríquez et al. 2019: 5)
 - **Low levels of conscientiousness (e.g. not very careful or not very diligent)**
 - *“... adolescents with low scores for conscientiousness were more often the targets of cyberbullying. This may be because cautious and serious students are more careful about what information they share on SNSs [social networks]. Thus, high conscientiousness could increase the risk for being a victim of traditional bullying but decrease the risk for being a victim of cyberbullying.”* (Rodríguez-Enríquez et al. 2019: 5)
 - **Higher levels of extraversion**
 - *“Extroverted people are energized, talkative, and enthusiastic, and they enjoy social activities and parties. They are also more prone to openly share their thoughts and emotions and take pleasure in public demonstrations. However, sharing of personal information in SNSs [social networks] can be a problem, because it becomes available for exploitation by cyberbullies.”* (Rodríguez-Enríquez et al. 2019: 5)
 - **Higher levels of openness to experience**
 - **Higher levels of anger**
 - *Anger is “a component that is characterized by a state of excitation derived from conditions of threat or frustration, leading to uncomfortable emotions of varying intensities, from mild irritation to intense fury.”* (Escortell et al. 2020: 2)

Overall, for instance, cyber-victims **can come from problematic family backgrounds**, and can be **discriminated against on various grounds** (e.g. race, gender, sexual orientation), and they are likely to **be in trouble making friends**. They are often open in sharing information, but potentially **unaware of possible repercussions** of such actions.

2.6.1. Key findings on risk factors of cyberbullying victimization

- **Young people from vulnerable groups** are likely to become cyberbullying victims.
- **Poor relationships with friends and parents** can contribute to the **vulnerability** of young people towards cyberbullying.
- Victims are likely to be **open in engaging in online activities**, but with **little awareness of potential threats** or pitfalls of their actions.

2.7. Coping strategies of cyberbullying victims

Cyberbullying victimisation can be somewhat mitigated by employing **coping strategies**. Transactional model of stress and coping proposed by Lazarus (Guarini et al. 2019; Brighi et al. 2019; Yang 2021) introduces two main types of coping strategies: problem-focused coping strategies and emotion-focused coping strategies.

Problem-focused coping strategies (PFCS) focus on problem-management and aim at solving or modifying the cause of distress and, in this case, the cyberbullying situation. **Emotion-focused coping strategies (EFCS)** tackle the emotional response to cyberbullying and aim at management of the negative emotions related to cyberbullying experience (Guarini et al. 2019; Brighi et al. 2019). Some authors see PFCS as effective, since they result in taking an action (e.g. seeking help, blocking the online offender), while the EFCS are labelled as ineffective, since they involve passive adjustment to cyberbullying (e.g. blaming oneself or hoping the cyberbullying will stop without any activity from the outside) rather than actively trying to find solutions (Guarini et al. 2019).

It is for these reasons that **PFCS** are seen as a desired aim of various interventions or preventive measures: *“to empower students by targeting their attitudes, problem solving skills, and their sense of control and to assist them to respond more effectively to being victimized”* (Guarini et al. 2019: 3). PFCS has also been seen as a **pathway to resilience**, which in the context of cyberbullying means *“being able to deal with a negative experience online, i.e., not remaining passive but displaying problem-solving coping strategies in order to protect oneself from future harm”* (Vandoninck, d’Haenens, Roe 2013 in Brighi et al. 2019: 2). Resilience as such is, furthermore, labelled to be one of the protective factors against cyberbullying, moderating its effects on victims (Brighi et al. 2019).

Under these broader categories of PFCS and EFCS, some authors (Machackova et al. 2013) also distinguish *“technical solutions”* (e.g. blocking the attacker), seeking support, or retaliation and **confrontation strategies**. These authors also argue that the victims may utilize a variety of strategies, and even combine those that belong to the PFCS and EFCS. They also point out that *“inaction”* can also be considered a coping strategy.

It needs to be noted that cyberbullying as well as traditional bullying can also lead to harmful coping strategies in young people such as self-isolation or self-harm (Anti-Bullying Alliance, not dated). Self-isolation refers to the efforts of victims to avoid contact with bullies, which can lead to avoiding social contact in general. As one of the victims interviewed during the Anti-bullying Alliance research notes: *“All the way through year 10 and 11, I ate my lunch in the toilet”* (ibid.). Self-harm, on the other hand, *“is often a reaction to stress, and/or a coping mechanism to deal with anger or emotions*

that are difficult to deal with" (ibid.). The risk of self-harm occurrence is increased by bullying victimisation (ibid.).

2.7.1. Key findings on coping strategies of cyberbullying victims

- **Problem-focused coping strategies** are seen as **effective**, since they consist of active measures to address the cyberbullying itself such as seeking help, blocking online attackers, or confronting them.
- Problem-focused coping strategies can also contribute to **building resilience towards online threats**, with potential to mitigate cyberbullying effects on young people.
- Cyberbullying can also lead to **harmful coping strategies** in young people such as self-isolation or self-harm.

2.8. Prevention and intervention strategies against cyberbullying

Prevention strategies aim at minimizing the risk of cyberbullying occurring in the first place, while the **intervention strategies** focus on eliminating cyberbullying behaviour, which already occurred (see also ANNEX I - EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL (PILOT COUNTRIES) POLICIES AND PRACTICES). Despite a seemingly clear-cut difference between these two types of activities, the literature review shows that, more often than not, the prevention and intervention go hand in hand. Strategies often aim at reducing cyberbullying and the line between preventing it from occurring and reducing its occurrence via interventions, is rather fine in reality. It is due to this interconnectedness of the preventive and intervention practices that this section deals with both, to keep as true to the reality of cyberbullying reduction as possible. At the same time, strategies and tools are two terms used in this section: they both refer to an approach that can be used to prevent or intervene in cyberbullying.

As already stated in the section 2 of this text dealing with the scope of cyberbullying, it seems that cyberbullying and traditional bullying occur simultaneously in the vast majority of cases, and only rarely alone. This important finding has implications for tackling cyberbullying, as some authors suggest that focusing only on cyberbullying may not be sufficient, due to its deep rootedness in aggressive behaviour as such. Therefore, several approaches are named in the literature in connection to cyberbullying.

Tackling aggression in young people generally may be, according to some authors, a more effective approach to reducing cyberbullying than engaging in any specific mechanisms for prevention of cyberbullying (Modecki et al. 2014). Focusing on, and further developing and utilizing general aggression preventive initiatives, such as anti-violence programs could, hence, decrease both traditional and cyberbullying occurrence according to those authors. Examples of such strategies are listed below, but are not further explored, as these constitute a standalone and wide study area:

- [VetoViolence by Centres for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Youth Violence Prevention Strategies by Centres for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
- [Youth Violence Prevention by Children's Safety Network](#)

- [Violence Prevention: The Evidence by the World Health Organization](#)
- [European facts and the Global status report on violence prevention 2014 by the World Health Organization](#)

Designing comprehensive prevention programs that tackle both traditional bullying and cyberbullying are recommended by other authors (Martínez, Rodríguez-Hidalgo, Zych 2020).

Tools focusing directly on cyberbullying are introduced and recommended by further scholars (Van Hee et al. 2018). There are some tools that can tackle cyberbullying directly in line with the suggestions of these authors:

- Parental control tools, such as [NetNanny](#), which blocks some web content based on keywords (e.g. profanity, insults, etc.) can be named as an example of a straightforward approach, with similar services also provided by various security tools, such as [ESET](#). This approach, however, can fail to detect subtle or implicit signs of cyberbullying (see also Ronchi, Molnar, Barberis 2020).
- Machine learning and natural language processing methods are used to design intelligent systems scanning online content and signalling when potential cyberbullying signs are detected. These focus on identifying both the explicit and the implicit signs of cyberbullying. Van Hee et al. (2018) used machine learning method based on “*linear SVM classifier*” (support vector machine classifier), in order to get “*signals of cyberbullying*”. The team verified the method as useful, and they claim this approach could work in different languages. In order to detect cyberbullying, machine learning models were based on the following databases which were subsequently manually annotated and fed into the machine learning algorithms (see also Van Hee et al. 2018: 5; Sprugnoli et al. 2018; Brambilla et al. 2019; Menini et al. 2019):
 - CREEP (<http://creep-project.eu/>)
 - CAW2.0 workshop (<http://caw2.barcelonamedia.org>)
 - MySpace (<https://myspace.com>)
 - FormSpring (<http://www.formspring.me>)
 - Other similar studies also use data from YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, MySpace, Kaggle and ASKfm.

In addition, in line with the recommendations of the above-mentioned authors, there are **other approaches to fight cyberbullying**:

Gamification can be used in cyberbullying detection (Álvarez-Bermejo et al. 2016). For instance, a combination of augmented reality (smartphone app and QR codes on students’ t-shirts) can create a tool to track interaction of students in the online world (ibid.). Another example of gamification-based approaches to tackling cyberbullying is *Cybereduca 2.0*. (<http://www.cybereduca.com>; Garaigordobil, Martínez-Valderrey 2018).

Various educational strategies focusing on young people are suggested to put in place, in order to minimize occurrence of cyberbullying, and often coming in ready-to-use bundles, such as the following. However, it needs to be mentioned that some of the approaches and strategies

mentioned below are not assessed enough and require more monitoring and evaluation to prove their effectiveness.

- Prev@cib Bullying and Cyberbullying Program (Ortega-Barón J. et al. 2019),
- ROOTs (Bowes et al. 2019);
- ACT Out! Social Issue Theater (Aglely et al. 2021);
- Brief Internet Cyberbullying Prevention Program (Garaigordobil; Martínez-Valderrey 2015);
- ConRed “Conocer, construir, convivir en Internet y las redes sociales” (Knowing, building, and coexisting in Internet and the social networks) Program (Garaigordobil, Martínez-Valderrey 2015);
- The cyberbullying prevention WebQuest course (Garaigordobil, Martínez-Valderrey 2015);
- Cyberprogram 2.0. (Garaigordobil, Martínez-Valderrey 2015; Garaigordobil, Martínez-Valderrey 2018; Garaigordobil, Martínez-Valderrey 2016);
- Developing Healthy and Egalitarian Adolescent Relationships – DARSI (Galende et al. 2020);
- Online Pestkoppentoppen (Jacobs et al. 2014);
- NoTrap! (Abreu, Kenny 2018);
- Theory of Reasoned Action-TRA (Abreu, Kenny 2018);
- Brief Incremental Theory of Personality (ITP) program (Galende et al. 2020);
- P.E.A.C.E. (Preparation, Education, Action, Coping, Evaluation) pack program (Guarini et al. 2020).

Some of the **most common non-digital components of educational programmes tackling cyberbullying** are as follows (for details see the following studies: Khan et al. 2020; Méndez et al. 2019; Martínez, Rodríguez-Hidalgo, Zych 2020; Rodríguez-Enríquez et al. 2019; Lindfors, Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä 2012; Yudes, Rey, Extremera 2020; López-Meneses et al. 2020; Jun 2020; De Luca, Nocentini, Menesini 2019; Guarini et al. 2019; Council of Europe 2020; Ronchi, Molnar, Barberis 2020; González-Alonso, Guillén-Gámez, de Castro-Hernández 2020; Salimi et al. 2019; Myers, Cowie 2019; Pozza et al. 2016; UNICEF 2021):

- Digital literacy and safe usage of the communication technologies, including ethics of online communication;
- Cyberbullying information, awareness, and prevention (including importance of bystanders in preventing cyberbullying);
- Promotion of positive values;
- Development of social skills, such as communication competence;
- Promotion of mental hygiene and stress coping methods;
- Promotion of prosocial behaviour, quality peer relationships, and healthy self-esteem, core self-evaluation (gratitude), and empathy;
- Racism and xenophobia prevention;
- Promotion of intercultural education;
- Development of emotional intelligence;
- Legal framework related to prosecuting cyberbullying activities, securing digital footprints of the perpetrator’s activities, etc.;
- Wise interventions (focusing on the ability of young people to take action and/or change their behaviours in line with their own values; for more see López-Meneses et al. 2020);

Close involvement and capacity building of parents and teachers (equally can relate to **educators and youth workers**) are seen to be very important due to the role they play in children's and young people's lives.

Teachers (educators / youth workers): There are some common strategies teachers have at their disposal to prevent and intervene in case of cyberbullying (De Luca, Nocentini, Menesini 2019):

- authoritarian-punitive strategies (i.e., threats, discipline, expulsion);
- individualized support by the teacher for cyberbullying victims as well as bullies;
- supportive-cooperative intervention by all classmates to help other stakeholders (parents, teachers, etc.) to deal with cyberbullying ;
- concrete prevention and intervention programmes they can implement in their classrooms (e.g. *Media Heroes*, *Asegúrate Program*, or *RPC program* ["*Relazioni per Crescere*", "*Relationships to Grow*"]); Guarini et al. 2019; Del Rey, Ortega-Ruiz, Casas 2019).

In order to **boost efficiency of the educational strategies as well as to support teachers and educators** in cyberbullying interventions, educational staff should be offered opportunities to increase their competences and become aware of the cyberbullying phenomenon, its implications, prevention and intervention measures (De Luca, Nocentini, Menesini 2019). Research shows that teachers and educators who see themselves as more competent are also more likely to intervene in case bullying occurs in their classes (De Luca, Nocentini, Menesini 2019; Guarini et al. 2019). Following further education areas can be offered to teachers in order to boost their **self-efficacy** in relation to cyberbullying (De Luca, Nocentini, Menesini 2019; Guarini et al. 2019):

- Information and awareness on cyberbullying, including the legal framework
- Intervention strategies, including competence development in teachers themselves
- Monitoring and detection strategies
- Best practice sharing among the teachers

Parents: education and empowerment of parents are also mentioned as a tool for cyberbullying prevention, focusing on high-risk Internet behaviours (Méndez et al. 2019; Jun 2020).

- **Whole-school approaches:** Some authors also suggest the following: complex strategies towards cyberbullying prevention, incorporating teacher and parental training, in-class activities with the young people, as well as digital tools and wider communities (Anti-Bullying Alliance not dated; Council of Europe 2020). As is the case in the following schemes:
 - *Tabby Improved Prevention Program* (Sorrentino, Baldry, Farrington 2018; Guarini et al. 2019),
 - *Cyber-Friendly Schools* project (Guarini et al. 2019),
 - *The Dating Matters Comprehensive Teen Dating Violence Prevention Model* (Vivolo-Kantor et al. 2021),
 - *Tutoría Entre Iguales (TEI) program* (Ferrer-Cascales et al. 2019),
 - *Green Dot Bystander Intervention Program* (Villarejo-Carballido et al. 2019),
 - *Cyber Friendly Schools (CFS) program* (Villarejo-Carballido et al. 2019),
 - *Medienhelden Programme* (Villarejo-Carballido et al. 2019),
 - *Date-e Adolescence* (Galende et al. 2020),

- *KiVa Antibullying Programme* (Guarini et al. 2019; Pozza et al. 2016; Clarkson et al. 2016; Garaigordobil, Martínez-Valderrey 2015; Arsenault 2017).
- Similarly, some concrete potential strategies combining expertise of various stakeholders (schools, parents, community, and bystanders) are available at [StopBullying.gov](https://www.stopbullying.gov).
- Helplines and similar: channels through which cyberbullying victims can reach out and ask for help are another important prevention and intervention tool. These channels should be in place and awareness of these mechanisms should be high in young people (Jun 2020). Examples of such can be various hotlines or helplines (Ronchi, Molnar, and Barberis 2020) or computer-based programmes as well as smartphone applications (Pozza et al. 2016).

In order to summarize the various strategies and tools mentioned above, recommendations by Pozza and colleagues (2016: 83) can be extremely helpful when tackling cyberbullying. In line with their recommendations, and essentially summarizing main points from the list above, it is crucial to focus on:

- Engage in regular and systematic monitoring and data collection;
- Include young people directly in tackling cyberbullying;
- Focus on prevention;
- Create a safe environment within and outside of schools;
- Engage schools directly and systematically in preventing and tackling cyberbullying;
- Offer regular and systematic capacity building opportunities for teachers as well as parents;
- Establish reporting channels for victims or bystanders;
- Provide support to cyberbullying victims and their families.

As for the impacts of the prevention and intervention strategies outlined above, some are evaluated based on general research findings (e.g. healthy self-esteem is correlated with lower cyberbullying occurrence and hence prevention strategies aimed at supporting healthy self-esteem in young people are considered to be working as long as the self-esteem of young people is affected as a result of the prevention strategy implementation), while the ones designed explicitly for purposes of tackling cyberbullying tend to be evaluated in a more targeted manner. All of the aforementioned prevention and intervention strategies have a track record of **proven impact**, but as methodologies for impact measurement differ, so do the concrete results. Nevertheless, all of the abovementioned prevention and intervention strategies seem to be **lowering the occurrence of cyberbullying in young people**. It also needs to be noted that **prevention is deemed generally more useful** in tackling cyberbullying than dealing with cyberbullying outcomes.

2.8.1 Key findings on prevention and intervention strategies against cyberbullying

There are different types of interventions, tools and resources available to prevent and tackle cyberbullying. Unfortunately, concrete evidence on the ability of intervention programs to prevent or reduce cyberbullying remains scarce (Gaffney, Farrington, Espelage and Ttofi, 2018). Some

common **prevention pathways** include decreasing a) aggression in youth in general, b) bullying and cyberbullying together, cyberbullying only.

The following **approaches** can be used when tackling cyberbullying prevention:

- **Internet monitoring and control tools** (even if they are generic e-safety tools);
- Intelligent **machine-learning methods** to cyberbullying monitoring;
- **Gamification-based tools**;
- **Education** of young people, teachers/educators, parents;
- Complex cyberbullying prevention and intervention strategies, **bringing together all vital stakeholders** (youth people, school personnel, parents, and wider community), and utilizing available online and offline tools. There are numerous ready-to-use tools, such as educational programmes, intervention bundles, or complex strategies.

All of the aforementioned approaches to preventing cyberbullying seem to be working to some extent, but **their impact is difficult to compare** as many of these interventions or programmes are not evaluated and, if they are, they are usually assessed using different methodologies.

2.9. Policies to prevent and tackle cyberbullying

When looking into **policies** preventing and tackling cyberbullying, it needs to be noted that the **absence of a common definition** is, once again, one of the major problems when comparing any national policies with one another.

In 2016, as Pozza et al. (2016:25) note: “*only fourteen EU Member States provide an official definition of this phenomenon namely Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Spain*”. And, as shown in Figure 6, these definitions are not consistent, and include various aspects of cyberbullying (for details see section 2.2. Definition of cyberbullying).

Table 5: The main features of Member States’ definitions of cyberbullying.

Country	Intentional harm	Repetition	Imbalance of power	Use of electronic or digital means	Anonymity	Detailed list of behaviours covered	Direct reference to bullying
Austria	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Bulgaria	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Cyprus	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Czech Republic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Finland						<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Germany	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Hungary	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Ireland				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Italy				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Luxembourg	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Malta				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Netherlands				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Spain	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Figure 6: Official definition of cyberbullying across the EU as reported by Pozza et al. (2016: 168).

Cybercriminal offences involving youth are getting a lot of attention. International organisations trying to prevent children from becoming an online victim were sprouting up. The **national policies became a patchwork of laws**, which led to the need to create international measures and regulations. Now there are many international and European initiatives, legislations and conventions in the fight against cybercrime, but the **EU Member States (MS) are still required to implement measures** into their own legislation and policies to be effective (EUCPN 2018).

It is for these reasons that focusing on **international policies and measures** makes most sense when it comes to establishing a common international framework for tackling cyberbullying. As Pozza et al. (2016) show, there are legally (a) binding and (b) non-binding policies and measures. The **legally binding international prescriptions** can be listed as follows (Pozza et al. 2016; see also ANNEX I - EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL (PILOT COUNTRIES) POLICIES AND PRACTICES):

- **Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** “establishes that children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence, physical or mental” (ibid. 37; Guarini et al. 2019).
- **Council of Europe’s European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR)** includes matters such as “the right to privacy (Article 8 of the ECHR), the right to respect private and family life (Article 9 of the ECHR), the freedom of expression (Article 10 of the ECHR) and the prohibition of discrimination (Article 14 of the ECHR).” (ibid.: 39)
- **EU Charter of Fundamental Rights** covers similar areas as the ECHR. (ibid.: 39)
- **Council of Europe’s European Social Charter** includes “Article 17 (a) [which] establishes the protection of children against negligence, violence or exploitation. This is particularly relevant given that bullying and cyberbullying have been recognized as forms of violence.” (ibid.: 39-40)
- **Council of Europe’s Convention on Cybercrime (the Budapest Convention)** “deals with crimes committed via the Internet and addresses violations of network-security such as the illegal access to a computer system, illegal interception, damaging, deletion, deterioration, alteration or suppression of computer data. It also obliges Member States to establish adequate investigative powers and procedures to tackle cybercrimes.” (ibid.: 40)
- **Council of Europe’s Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data** “protects individuals against abuses related to the collection and processing of personal data. It establishes that personal data undergoing automatic processing must be obtained and processed fairly and lawfully and be stored for specific and legitimate purposes. The Convention also guarantees the individual’s right to know what information is stored on him/her and to have it corrected.” (ibid.: 40)
- **Council of Europe’s Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (the Lanzarote Convention)** contains “Article 23 [which] requires Member States to criminalize acts of solicitation of children for sexual purposes through communication technologies. The Lanzarote Committee has adopted an opinion on this provision, which invites the States Parties to consider extending the criminalization of solicitation to cases when the sexual abuse is not the result of a meeting in person but committed online” (ibid.: 40)
- **Council of Europe’s Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education** requires the Member States “to combat all forms of discrimination and violence, especially bullying and harassment” (Council of Europe 2020).

Apparently, the abovementioned legally binding international mechanisms do not refer to cyberbullying explicitly, but rather cover various areas which overlap with cyberbullying, such as violence, sexual abuse, personal data protection, or discrimination. In particular, the experts

stressed the importance of **education and age appropriate** information in combating cyberbullying and promoted the use of the **Lanzarote Convention and the Budapest Convention** as legal instruments which can increase the protection to children who fall victims of these crimes (see also Pozza et al. 2016; Guarini et al. 2019).

2.9.1 Key findings on policies tackling cyberbullying

- **National policy contexts in relation to cyberbullying differ greatly**, and at the same time, there are not many international legally binding measures. Interestingly, none of the international legally binding frameworks is explicitly tackling cyberbullying, but rather focuses on related phenomena (violence, sexual abuse, etc.).
- **Education and age appropriate information** in combating cyberbullying can increase the protection to children who fall victims of these crimes.

3. STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the following sections, we summarise the key findings related to the views and recommendations of the KID_ACTIONS stakeholders collected within **Task 2.2 - Assessing needs and expectations of relevant stakeholders and target groups** (M1-M4) of **WP2**. Different groups of stakeholders were consulted in the **first semester of 2021** to get their views as regards the most pressing issues related to cyberbullying as well as their recommendations about potential mechanisms to prevent and respond to cyberbullying incidents. Firstly, the key findings from the **focus groups** with relevant stakeholders (e.g. teachers, educators and youth workers), will be addressed, followed by the **semi-structured in-depth interviews with key experts** and lastly the **online survey on youngsters' perception of the phenomenon**, targeting children and young people aged 11-19. These findings are also included in the following deliverables: **D2.1** - Focus groups for stakeholders- and target groups-needs assessment, **D2.2** - Semi-structured interviews with key experts, and **D2.3** - Online survey on youngsters' perception of the phenomenon.

3.1 Focus groups outcomes

3.1.1. Introduction

This section summarises the results of the **KID_ACTIONS focus groups for key stakeholders**. The Consortium conceptualized and implemented two focus groups. The first one was held in Brussels (BE) and the second one was held in Rome (IT). Both focus groups were conducted **remotely** on April 29th, due to restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic during spring of 2021 (see **D2.1**).

The focus group in Brussels had thirteen participants from twelve different countries, (Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia, Malta and Spain), whereas the focus group in Rome had fourteen participants, all coming from Italy.

The focus groups were aimed at relevant stakeholders on the topic of cyberbullying and involved educators and youth workers, who were able to share their perspectives on understanding, preventing, and responding to cyberbullying. Both focus groups covered four main sections: **1) Preventing and responding to cyberbullying, 2) Strategies and resources for preventing and responding to cyberbullying, 3) Preventing and responding to cyberbullying: identifying priorities, and 4) Digital tools.**

The focus groups in Brussels and in Rome were **semi-structured** in character, whereby a set of questions was formulated prior to the focus group and the discussions derived from there, to provide space for individual, detailed responses, and the unfolding of unanticipated themes.

Table 1: Overarching themes and key questions for the focus groups

Overarching themes	Key questions to be answered
Preventing and responding to cyberbullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do key stakeholders and potential target groups of the KID_ACTIONS platform consider as effective strategies to prevent/respond to cyberbullying? What do key stakeholders and potential target groups of the KID_ACTIONS platform consider as the main challenges for preventing/responding to cyberbullying?
Resources and (digital) tools for preventing and responding to cyberbullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What kind of online resources or tools would, in the eyes of the stakeholders, be useful for the fight against cyberbullying? For whom should these be primarily designed?
Programmes and approaches: What kind of programmes and approaches do you believe would be effective for preventing and responding to cyberbullying?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KID_ACTIONS project will create digital tools on prevention and response to cyberbullying, which will be part of bigger, educational programmes available for schools and youth workers. What should that educational programme contain and how should it be structured? Should the educational aspect tackle short educational activities, or should it focus on more long-term regular activities?

3.1.2. Focus group in Belgium

A) Preventing and responding to cyberbullying

Regarding the prevention and response to cyberbullying, the discussion during the focus group was conducted with the intention of addressing 1) effective **strategies** for preventing and responding to cyberbullying, 2) the main **challenges** for preventing and responding to cyberbullying, as well as 3) the **key lessons learned** to prevent and respond to cyberbullying.

- Firstly, the participants considered the effective strategies to prevent and respond to cyberbullying, identifying **education on digital citizenship, community involvement, and peer-to-peer learning approaches** as main priorities.

- The importance of the **role that schools and the community as a whole** play was highlighted, putting emphasis on the need for training activities for all relevant parties and the need to involve young people at all stages. Participants also referred to the importance of creating and applying protocols and school policies that are focused on responding to cyberbullying. Further, establishing a safe space at schools was equally supported.
- A **coordinated response** to the problem of cyberbullying and external support in the form of helplines and hotlines for victim support was underscored. Finally, **campaigns** covering broader issues such as hate speech should also be considered as strategies targeting cyberbullying.
- As for the main challenges, participants discussed the **lack of common understanding of what cyberbullying is**, as well as the lack of understanding of digital citizenship and social media literacy. Moreover, the generational gap in the use of technology creates a serious obstacle and further enhances the need for open and honest conversations.
- Finally, regarding the key lessons learned to prevent and respond to cyberbullying, the participants mentioned that the prevention of cyberbullying is only going to be fruitful, if there is **education and community involvement** of all relevant stakeholders. Further, an integrated and multidisciplinary response, as well as the Involvement of young people in all stages of the process are necessary. Lastly, empathy and other social skills, as well as broader concepts covering the issue of cyberbullying, are more than relevant in this process of analysing preventive and responsive actions.

B) Strategies and resources for preventing and responding to cyberbullying

When addressing effective strategies or educational approaches in raising awareness and prevention of cyberbullying, **educators and youth workers referred to the importance of education in the online environment, campaigns raising awareness of the social digital environment, and the promotion of digital citizenship, contributing to a healthy and safe life online.** The participants also mentioned the importance of theatre, sport, and art to create empathy and trust among young people. Additionally, the participants mentioned the need to involve young people and engage with people they relate or look up to, demonstrating the importance of cooperative learning and peer-to-peer education.

Anonymity was also mentioned as an important factor contributing to the level of success of a strategy. Specifically, maintaining anonymity is important for young people to feel safe to share their experiences with cyberbullying situations. Further, confronting young people with their actions with **engaging tools** such as images and involving young people as a group and not individually could have a critical impact. Finally, the participants stressed the importance of **deleting the Winner/Loser dynamic** from the discussion.

C) Preventing and responding to cyberbullying: Identifying the priorities

Participants answered three questions covering their priorities, tools, and resources available to them, and relevant educational activities. Noteworthy is that under this section educators were more interactive, meaning that the input provided could mostly be applicable in the context of **formal education.**

The participants identified important aspects, such as **community involvement, the need for open discussions, peer-to-peer interactions, education regarding media literacy, development of empathy and the promotion of digital citizenship**. The participants also noticed that more needs to be done on the prevention of cyberbullying to reduce incidences of the problem, but there is also a need for more response mechanisms. Regarding tools and resources, participants only mentioned general digital tools, not necessarily focused on bullying or cyberbullying. These priorities can be targeted into **raising awareness around cyberbullying, promoting peer-to-peer programs and activities, and creating better response strategies for adults** (e.g. teachers, parents, youth workers).

D) Digital tools

During the discussion about **digital tools**, it is important to note that not many were mentioned, mainly focusing on the use of educational movies or games, the cyberbullying first-aid app, and solidarity campaigns that support cyberbullying victims. On the question about the main target group of the digital tools, participants made clear that any tool to be used by young people needs to be **co-created with young people**.

3.1.3. Focus group in Italy

A) Preventing and responding to cyberbullying

- The discussion drew on the issue of **media literacy**, which is of an increasing importance: raise awareness and educate young people to a proper use of technology is necessary to prevent and tackle cyberbullying. In particular, participants stressed the need to combine a technical approach (how to use it) with a social and emotional one (how to act and react to it). In addition, media literacy should entail an adequate involvement of older generations, as they tend to misunderstand the relationship between young people and technology (using the so-called “generational lens”).
- Secondly, participants discussed the need to provide younger generations with a **safe environment** where they can express themselves and their emotions without the fear of being judged. The importance of a safe learning place in addition to the chance to invest in emotions has constantly been remarked: in fact, working on emotions is a precondition to developing empathy, understanding, and motivating students to take responsibility and to take action. Theatre and drama activities were often mentioned as fruitful and effective tools, in these regards.
- Participants also agreed on the idea that definitions matter: it is of utmost importance to have a deep understanding and a **common definition of cyberbullying** as a phenomenon. In fact, cyberbullying differs from bullying, as it has a more transversal nature (gender, age, social status, and geographical areas), but with less visible displays (subtle and difficult to identify). This does not only regard youth workers and educators, but also parents, who often struggle to have a clear understanding of the phenomenon. Finally, participants also agreed on the idea that timing matters as well, since preventing and responding to cyberbullying requires good timing to take action.
- The preliminary discussions on preventing and responding to cyberbullying ended with a focus on the **challenges** observed and experienced. According to participants, it is hard to

find appropriate approaches that manage to support young people without being manipulative. In addition to this, tools and methods often proved to be outdated, as youth workers are not very familiar with new technologies and digital devices. Lastly, the COVID-19 outbreak increased the use of digital tools while reducing chances of inclusion, social aggregation and social control.

B) Strategy and resources for preventing and responding to cyberbullying

As far as **strategies** are concerned, during the focus group participants referred to different activities for different stages of addressing cyberbullying (from raising awareness to responding), and mostly formal education tools were mentioned. **Drama and theatre activities** have been considered as very adequate for emotional, psychological and group work dimensions. Participants also highlighted the importance of **images and multimedia**, which are effective in involving and educating younger generations. Accordingly, **video and photography workshops** were suggested as strategic activities. During the focus group, then, emerged the need to invest on medium and long-term strategies, rather than single classes and lessons on the topic. A longer and wider perspective is, in fact, instrumental to create safe environments and to develop learning processes. Another important aspect is the **use of anonymity** and the **development of apps and tools** that allow it. Certainly, maintaining anonymity may be helpful to make young people feel comfortable and to share their emotions, fears and experiences. Last but not least, the **involvement of parents and adults** has been remarked once again.

C) Identifying priorities

As a further step, participants were asked to identify the **top priorities for educators and youth workers** to tackle cyberbullying effectively. Drawing on the theoretical framework and the matrix provided by researchers, both educators and youth workers agreed on the priority to focus on **understanding/discussing with peers** and responding as a **community/society**. These are key factors in order to develop empathy and to convince people to take action.

Another priority, particularly stressed by youth workers, is **working with witnesses and bystanders**, as well as informing about legal implications and consequences of cyberbullying. This would lead to the empowerment and a more active involvement of the community as a whole. Finally, **further training** was deemed necessary. In fact, participants were just partially satisfied with past projects and the instruments currently available, stressing the need to concentrate on the emotional and psychological dimension.

D) Digital tools

Finally, the focus group concentrated on digital tools, even if participants were not very familiar with them and with their usage. They mostly referred to **general apps and tools**, such as social media, video and live-stream platforms, gaming apps and the like. These tools have on one hand the advantage of reaching wider audiences, sharing experiences, and **creating safe spaces by guaranteeing anonymity** or the creation of avatars. On the other hand, they also have drawbacks: for instance, limiting physical contact and interaction, which helps to trigger empathy, but also exposing young people and pupils to over usage, difficult to limit and control. Once again,

participants mentioned the **need to involve and educate adults** (e.g. teachers, educators, parents and youth workers) to new technologies and digital devices.

3.1.4. Conclusions

The **outcomes** of the focus groups in Belgium and Italy were **similar**. The participants in both focus groups generally agreed on the importance of a **coordinated and multidisciplinary approach** to cyberbullying. This understanding presupposes the creation of a definition of cyberbullying that is agreed upon and understood by young people and adults equally, which encompasses the subjectivity of the topic. Furthermore, both groups focused on the importance of education and community involvement when it comes to understanding, preventing, and responding to cyberbullying.

Regarding **education**, the participants in the focus groups in Belgium and Italy mentioned the importance of educating young people and adults on subjects of **social media literacy, digital citizenship, and the online world**. Certainly, it is necessary that young people are knowledgeable about the risks and benefits of the online world, know how to behave online, and understand the online space as a societal space. Similarly, **it is necessary that this education be extended to adults**, emphasizing the need for teachers, educators, parents and youth workers to be knowledgeable about the online space, to be present in the channels that young people use, and to be prepared to recognize and respond to cyberbullying situations. Furthermore, the participants in both focus groups also mentioned that this education aspect also needs to entail **working on emotions**, developing empathy, and overcoming the notion of cyberbullying as a winner/loser dynamic.

Moreover, the participants highlighted the importance of **community involvement**, mentioning that not only is it important to put young people at the centre of the discussion, but it is also necessary that society is involved in this process. Thus, not only are teachers, educators, parents, and youth workers important stakeholders in the fight against cyberbullying, traditional media, ICT companies, external support stakeholders (helplines, hotlines and even security forces), and bystanders also need to participate in this process.

Lastly, in terms of recommendations, the participants mentioned the **need for better investment in prevention, and the need for response mechanisms**. Certainly, the participants mentioned that there are not enough response mechanisms and that these should have more focus.

3.2. Interviews outcomes

3.2.1. Introduction

This section summarises the results of the **in-depth, semi-structured interviews** (conducted remotely) with key experts in the field of cyberbullying regarding their views about current policies, interventions, and existing technological and non-technological solutions to combat cyberbullying. In total **15 interviews** were conducted in April-May 2021 with 17 experts with the aim of getting a deeper understanding of cyberbullying among children and adolescents, strategies and (digital) resources for preventing and responding to cyberbullying and the impact and effectiveness of

cyberbullying initiatives. The interviews were carried out as part of KID_ACTIONS Work Package 2 (WP2) 'Socio-technical requirements and multi- dimensional methodology' (see **D2.2**).

3.2.2. Methodology

In April-May 2021, 15 in-depth interviews with 17 experts were conducted with the aim of getting a deeper understanding of cyberbullying among children and adolescents, strategies and (digital) resources for preventing and responding to cyberbullying and the impact and effectiveness of cyberbullying initiatives. During two interviews, two experts were present.

While the original plan was to carry out the interviews face-to-face, the **COVID-19 pandemic** in Europe rendered a change of strategy necessary. Therefore, the experts were instead **interviewed remotely** via the online conferencing system, namely Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

The interviews were conducted following the interview protocols developed for this purpose. The **protocols** distinguished between five overarching themes for the interview:

- Cyberbullying among children and adolescents
- Preventing and responding to cyberbullying: Strategies
- Preventing and responding to cyberbullying: Actors
- (Digital) resources for preventing and responding to cyberbullying
- The impact and effectiveness of cyberbullying initiatives

Following these themes, a set of questions were formulated. The interviews were designed in a semi-structured fashion to provide space for individual, detailed responses and to allow for the emergence of unanticipated themes. Moreover, the protocols differed slightly depending on the expert profile. For instance, educational experts were asked specific questions as regards how schools currently deal with cyberbullying incidents while representatives of IT companies were asked to explain how cyberbullying was dealt with in their platforms. Furthermore, the researchers were free to inquire into any issue relevant for the research aim raised by the interviewees. Consequently, the length of interviews varied between 60 and 90 minutes.

Before any data was collected, the interviewees were informed on how the collected data would be stored and processed, and their **informed consent** was obtained. The interviews were video recorded, and the **interview transcripts have been anonymized**. Research data obtained by the project partners was collected and stored by each partner carrying out the interviews in secure databases at their institution, for the purpose of elaborations during the project.

All the interviews were carried out in English and were fully transcribed. We lightly edited the transcripts for clarity and readability throughout, for example removing incomplete short phrases or repeated words. Subsequently, the transcripts were hand-coded according to emergent themes, and then grouped together focusing on the overarching themes that led this report and which are summarised below in Table 2.

Table 2: Overarching themes and key questions for the semi-structured interviews

Overarching themes	Key questions
Cyberbullying among children and adolescents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do experts/ researchers perceive the problem of cyberbullying among children and adolescents in their respective countries? What do they consider the main challenges connected to cyberbullying?
Preventing and responding to cyberbullying: Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do experts/researchers consider necessary for a successful prevention and response to cyberbullying?
Preventing and responding to cyberbullying: Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to experts/researchers, which actors are key to successfully prevent and respond to cyberbullying? [e.g. peers, industry (social media platforms, gaming platforms, online providers, etc.), parents, teachers, educators]
(Digital) resources for preventing and responding to cyberbullying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which types of (digital) resources/interventions do experts/researchers perceive as useful for the prevention of and response to cyberbullying? What are the main pros and cons of digital tools to combat cyberbullying? What are the main challenges to develop such tools, especially in terms of privacy and ethical aspects?
The impact and effectiveness of cyberbullying initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are experts/researchers aware of initiatives or campaigns that have been impactful or prompted behavioural changes?

3.2.3. Key findings from the interviews with experts

3.2.3.1. Cyberbullying among children and adolescents: the experts' views

Cyberbullying refers to intentional and repeated harm that others inflict via a digital device (Hinduja and Patchin, 2009) and is usually defined in the literature as *“an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself”* (Smith et al., 2008, p.376). Although cyberbullying is regarded as a serious health and growing social problem (Dehue, Bolman & Völlink, 2008; O’Reilley et al. 2021) and a significant amount of literature on cyberbullying exists, to date there exists no universally accepted definition (Peter & Petermann, 2018). From the interviews we carried out, we could observe that it is, indeed, **challenging to agree on a single definition of cyberbullying**, even for the experts interviewed. Despite these differences, the experts interviewed agreed on several aspects, which are summarised below:

- Despite definitional differences, **all experts agreed that cyberbullying is a serious problem and a big concern for many young people nowadays**, especially because the incidents have the potential to reach bigger audiences than offline bullying and because the aggression can be perpetuated online, leaving victims with the impression that they “cannot escape from it”.
- **Cyberbullying can have a wide range of negative consequences** not only for the (psychological) wellbeing of victims, but also of all those involved in the online bullying incidents, including the perpetrators.
- The experts coincided that **cyberbullying should not be considered as a completely new problem** disconnected from other forms of hurtful and potentially harmful behaviours. As expert 3, a researcher from the UK, indicated *“it's just the methods that children use to target each other have evolved and changed over time. But actually, that the kind of behaviour and the consequences of the behaviour have certainly been problematic for a very long time.”*
- Although cyberbullying is a concerning problem, **it is challenging to determine how common it really is**. When asked about the prevalence of cyberbullying in their respective countries, different experts pointed out that it is difficult to know how many CYP have been involved in incidents of cyberbullying, either as victims and/or perpetrators. In fact, some interviewees mentioned that the prevalence of cyberbullying depends largely on how cyberbullying is defined or understood by CYP, i.e. the operational definition employed in research, as well as on the age group under study.
- Some experts mentioned that although cyberbullying incidence seems higher during adolescence, **the age of initiation seems to be decreasing. Indeed, some experts mentioned that they were starting to notice cyberbullying behaviour amongst 11- and 12-year-olds**, for instance, via online gaming platforms.
- During the interviews different experts indicated that one key challenge today is the fact that different types of **aggressive behaviour have become widely accepted and even normalised especially in online platforms such as social media or video game platforms**. Some experts also referred to the fact that we are living in a society that is more polarised than ever before and that public figures, political leaders as well as influencers have a powerful influence on young people, but unfortunately, not all public figures are positive role models. As an educator and teacher trainer from Belgium explained: These negative types of behaviour *“open the door towards other forms of aggressive, not respectful behaviour”* and have a negative impact especially among the most vulnerable CYP.

3.2.3.2. Preventing and responding to cyberbullying: actors and strategies

Experts referred to the importance of acknowledging that **cyberbullying as well as other forms of online aggression such as hate speech are everybody's responsibility**. Although they acknowledged the importance of schools in helping tackle the problem and especially in raising awareness about the issue, experts also stressed that **schools cannot solve the problem on their own** and therefore, a **multi-stakeholder approach** involving not only children and teachers, but also parents, other

professionals working with children, civil society, policymakers and governments as well as the ICT and the media industry is required, if effective solutions are sought.

Many schools are ill prepared to prevent, detect and respond to cyberbullying

- Many experts highlighted that **not all schools and their personnel are well equipped to deal with cyberbullying incidents**. Besides, CYP are usually confronted with cyberbullying incidents outside school and therefore they do not disclose the incidents to their teachers or other school staff as they may feel that the problem is unrelated to school, others may not trust their teacher or school's staff capacity to offer adequate support of solutions. Therefore, even if schools wished to intervene, they are many times unable to do so either because they are unaware of the incidents or because they lack the capacity to deal with them.
- According to one of the educators interviewed, **schools do have a key role to play in the prevention, detection, and response to cyberbullying, but many times school personnel are overwhelmed with work and responsibilities**, and many do not really know how to handle these types of incidents. Therefore, educating school personnel about how to adequately prevent, detect and respond to cyberbullying incidents, even when these do not happen at school, remains crucial.
- **Children and young people also need to be taught to disclose, they need to feel empowered, but above all, they need to trust that disclosing such hurtful incidents will help**. Unfortunately, confirming existing research that states that when upset by something online, **most children rarely turn to teachers or other professionals for help**, most interviewed experts coincided that teachers and adults in general (e.g. parents and other professionals working with children) are ill prepared to handle (cyber)bullying incidents. Therefore, educating adults so that they can foster a supportive relationship of trust with CYP can have a positive impact in tackling cyberbullying and helping children build resilience.
- Another challenge identified by experts is that schools tend to look for advice only after incidents occur. In the experts' opinion, **more attention should be given to structural solutions** beyond simply responding to incidents. These should include having clear, realistic and well-communicated protocols for school personnel to react when incidents take place, having adequate, usable school-policies in place, informing the whole school community about these policies and protocols and following them whenever incidents take place.
- As regards **school protocols and policies**, experts stressed that school policies **should not just be a "written paper" to tick the box**. Instead, they should be living, child-friendly documents, ideally co-created with CYP themselves. Experts also referred to the need for more sustainable approaches. One lesson about cyberbullying or a single awareness raising campaign will not make a difference and it is highly unlikely that they will lower the incidence of cyberbullying. Therefore, sustainable approaches are needed if positive results are expected.

Strategies to combat cyberbullying

- When asked about effective strategies to combat cyberbullying the experts referred to different programmes, types of resources and tools both to prevent as well as to respond to cyberbullying. However, many also pointed out that to date **very little is known about the**

impact and efficacy of most programmes and interventions to tackle cyberbullying and, thus, it remains important not just to implement these programmes but also to properly assess them.

- CYP's ability to handle **cyberbullying varies greatly from child to child** and depends on several factors including personal and environmental ones.
- In the experts' views, it is important to understand that not all cases of cyberbullying require the same type of approach. For this reason, it is important to **differentiate between serious and less problematic cases**. Moreover, many children involved in cyberbullying may also suffer from other deeply rooted problems, such as being victims of domestic violence. In such cases, targeted professional interventions and comprehensive, systemic approaches are required.
- **Vulnerable children** require additional, tailored support because, as explained by some of our interviewees apart from their personal problems and difficult environments (e.g. problematic home situations); they also usually lack support networks and tend to be isolated. This negatively affects their capacity to build the necessary resilience to tackle problematic situations such as cyberbullying.

What is needed to combat cyberbullying?

Although experts focused on different aspects, there was a clear consensus that the following aspects are essential to successfully combat cyberbullying:

- **Start with prevention efforts and support children build resilience from a young age**, teaching them to deal with adversity as part of a normal learning and developmental process.
- It is important **not to limit children's autonomy and ability to develop their own mechanisms to develop resilience**.
- **Open communication** and offering enough opportunities for children to disclose and discuss the problem are key.
- **Finding solutions together** with the children is important. **Open, pro-active dialogue** can help educators and other professionals working with children to collaborate in finding solutions together. To achieve this, teachers and other professionals working with children must act as facilitators, providing enough opportunities for CYP to express themselves and share their opinions, while avoiding being judgemental or too authoritative.
- **Child-centric approaches** that put children at the centre of solutions are needed. In particular, **peer-to-peer based- approaches were considered among the promising strategies** to raise awareness and to prevent incidents from happening in the first place, as well as to foster a caring school environment.
- **Positive role models** who help promote pro-social behaviour were also thought to be necessary, especially among young people.
- Despite the importance of letting children guide activities and conversations, it is important to let CYP feel **supported and guided by adults without being judged**.
- As regards which competencies are important for CYP to develop, experts highlighted different aspects such as **learning to cope with one's emotions, self-regulation and building empathy**. However, the experts also highlighted some challenges related to the online world. For instance, the fact that the lack of social cues (e.g. in written interaction) could

affect the ability of CYP to respond more empathetically to forms of online aggression such as cyberbullying.

- Interviewees also indicated that awareness-raising campaigns and **working with public broadcasters and VIPs** in these campaigns as positive role models could be impactful.
- It is important to develop strategies to prevent and adequately respond to cyberbullying specifically for adults. In the case of parents, schools usually complain that parents do not engage. Experts also acknowledged that **it is important to educate and support parents**, but also **stronger home-school cooperation is required**.

3.2.4. Digital and non-digital resources for preventing and responding to cyberbullying

- Experts have different opinions as regards the usefulness of digital resources for preventing and responding to cyberbullying. In general, they agreed that **some of the main advantages of using digital or online-based tools to combat cyberbullying are that the tools can be available at the time and the place where the incidents take place**.
- Experts also mentioned that because kids spend so much time online and much of this time is spent on entertainment activities, therefore, digital tools could have the potential to be **“fun”** and **more motivating for kids to use**. At the same time, they could be useful to **reach CYP**.
- There was a common view that **digital tools should only be used if they bring an added value**. Using technologies just for the sake of doing something “cool” or because we assume kids will like it was considered as the wrong approach and a potential waste of resources.
- To be a real added value, **digital tools must be co-designed with users, keeping their interests and needs in mind, but also taking into consideration the context of use** and infrastructure available. Issues such as the lack of accessibility to personal or school devices should also be taken into consideration. Failing to understand users’ interests, needs and contexts of use increases the risk of developing apps, platforms or games that “no one uses”. In other words, **if the app, game or digital tool is not designed with users in mind it may fail to engage the target group and it will probably be “deleted” and will not be used again**.
- **Technical and logistical aspects also need to be taken into consideration when developing digital tools**. For instance, CYP may not want to download an educational or self-help App on their personal devices because of privacy concerns or other reasons; schools may lack the infrastructure to download and use apps or games on school devices; schools with adequate infrastructure may have intricate procedures in place to “borrow” school’s devices or use computer labs, which may discourage teachers from using technology-based resources in their classes; Wi-Fi connections may not work well when all students are connected; and so on and so forth. All these **potential barriers need to be taken into consideration** when developing apps, serious games or online-based educational resources.
- Beyond accessibility, some experts pointed out that what is really challenging nowadays is that CYP are used to such realistic, immersive and complex video gaming platforms with rich graphic interfaces and multiple functionalities, which **it is impossible for a serious game developed with limited budget to “compete” with such platforms**. Therefore, many times kids play a game once at school because it is part of a class, but the chances are big that the game will not be played again. Therefore, experts warned us that **it is important to be realistic in terms of expectations**

and to invest resources wisely. Once again, understanding users' expectations, needs, accessibility to devices and connectivity, as well as their (potential) contexts of use is essential to make the right decisions.

- **In terms of privacy, self-help or an anti-bullying App or game may offer some benefits,** for instance, giving the possibility to **report incidents anonymously. Nonetheless, digital tools can also pose unintended (privacy) risks.** For instance, because CYP share their devices among friends, finding out that a peer has a self-help app installed on their personal devices may cause embarrassment or even additional bullying.
- Some experts referred to **the importance of outreaching.** It is not enough to develop an App, game or any type of intervention. For it to be effective, it is crucial to **educate potential users about how to use correctly the resources or how to implement an intervention, offering guidance and support during the implementation process.** Failing to accompany the intervention process may imply that the tools and resources are discontinued, failing to achieve the primary objectives for which they have been developed. Conversely, accompanying closely the intervention process brings the possibility of assessing the tools' impact to continue improving it.
- As regards the impact and effectiveness of cyberbullying initiatives, little is known about what seems to work. Unsurprisingly, **different experts referred to the importance of monitoring and assessment,** especially nowadays that so many apps and interventions are easily accessible online. As explained by one of our interviewees: *“there’s a huge range of digital apps to promote mental health and help support emotion, and anxiety. And I think that the problem with the world of apps is that there’s literally millions of apps, and hardly any of them are tested or regulated. And so that in terms of quality assurance, it’s worrying because mental health is so important.”* (Expert 3, Researcher/Academic, UK).

3.2.5. Conclusions

As widely acknowledged in the literature, the **17 experts interviewed** for this report agreed that cyberbullying is a serious, complex issue that affects children and young people (CYP) globally, and which can have severe consequences for the (psychological) wellbeing of victims as well as for the bystanders and perpetrators themselves. Although cyberbullying tends to be considered as a relatively new phenomenon with peculiar characteristics, there are in fact **many aspects of cyberbullying that are also common to offline bullying** and other forms of offline aggression and, therefore, experts stressed that cyberbullying should not be considered as a completely new problem disconnected from other forms of hurtful and potentially harmful behaviours.

When asked about the prevalence of cyberbullying in their respective countries, different experts agreed that it is difficult to know exactly what number of children have been involved in incidents of cyberbullying. Some mentioned that **determining the prevalence of cyberbullying is not straightforward** because it depends largely on the operational definition, the age group under study, but also on if children report it. If children do not disclose these incidents, it is difficult to know for sure how big the problem is. Despite the uncertainty as regards the exact prevalence of cyberbullying, all experts agreed that it is a **serious problem and a big concern for many young people nowadays,** especially because of the sustained impact it can have on victims and the fact that victims “cannot escape from it”. They also coincided that although cyberbullying incidence seems higher during adolescence, **the age of initiation seems to be decreasing** and a higher

incidence of cyberbullying amongst 11- and 12-year-olds is starting to be observed compared to some years ago.

The experts interviewed acknowledged that **cyberbullying is everybody's responsibility**, and they stressed the important role that schools, parents, the industry, civil society, as well as governments and CYP themselves can play to help tackle the problem. Their **recommendations** include:

- **Continue educating and working with school personnel and educators** so that they can adequately prevent, detect, and respond to cyberbullying incidents, even when these do not happen at school.
- CYP need to be taught to disclose when incidents happen, but they also need to feel that disclosing such hurtful incidents will help. Therefore, **educating adults and providing useful, practical resources and tools** so that they can foster a supportive relationship of trust with CYP can have a positive impact in tackling cyberbullying and helping children build resilience.
- **Vulnerable children require additional and tailored support**, because they usually encounter personal problems, difficult environments but they also usually lack support networks and tend to be isolated, which negatively affects their capacity to build the necessary resilience to tackle problematic situations such as cyberbullying.
- **Start with prevention efforts from a young age** and support children to learn to deal with adversity without limiting children's autonomy and ability to develop their own mechanisms to develop resilience.
- **Teach children to cope with their emotions** and to develop self-regulation empathy.
- **Encourage peer-to-peer based- approaches** to raise awareness and to foster a caring school environment. This will help prevent incidents from happening or from escalating beyond control.
- **Better policies and regulation** as well as increased accountability from the ICT sector remain crucial.
- Among the several strategies referred to by the experts, **open communication** and offering enough opportunities for children to disclose and discuss the problem were considered as essential. Potential strategies that work include **open, pro-active dialogue** as the basis to collaborate in **finding solutions together**. At the same time, adults, including parents and professionals working with children **must be well prepared to offer adequate guidance and support**.
- When it comes to raising awareness about phenomena such as cyberbullying. Interviewees indicated that **awareness-raising campaigns** and **working with public broadcasters and VIPs** in these campaigns as positive role models could be impactful.
- Several experts highlighted **the importance of child-centric approaches** and the need to put children at the centre of the solutions developed.
- As regards the use of digital resources for preventing and responding to cyberbullying, experts have different opinions, but in general, they agreed that **one of the main advantages of using digital or online-based tools to combat cyberbullying is that digital tools can be available at the time and the place where the incidents take place**.
- There was a common view that **digital tools should only be used only if they bring added value**. To be a real added value, digital tools should be **co-designed** with users, keeping their interests and needs in mind, but also taking into consideration the context of use and the

infrastructure available. **Failing to understand users' interests, needs and contexts of use increases the risk of developing apps, platforms, or video games that "no one uses".**

- To date, little is known about the effectiveness of programmes and interventions to reduce (cyber)bullying. Experts referred to the importance of **monitoring and assessing** the effectiveness of these programmes and strategies.
- An important contribution of the KID_ACTIONS project will be developing resources and tools that **target not only CYP, but also parents, teachers, youth workers and other professionals** working with children both in formal and informal education. Our aim is to support wider educational efforts and, thus, help reduce the incidence of the harmful.

3.3. Survey outcomes

3.3.1. Introduction

This section describes the results of the KID_ACTIONS survey that was completed by children and young people (CYP) from several European countries in April / May 2021. An online questionnaire in English (**European survey**) and in Italian (**Italian survey**) was created and disseminated in a targeted manner by WP3 partners among their networks in EU countries (see **D2.3**). We aimed at the nine **pilot countries** of the KID_ACTIONS project, namely **Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia**. To reach this aim, we specifically leveraged on the consortium networks on selected countries. Furthermore, due to the online nature of the survey, we could not control that CYP from countries other than the pilot ones filled in the survey as well. Because the survey asked about CYP's country of residence and not nationality nor country of origin, we decided not to exclude respondents from countries beyond the pilot countries.

The aim of this section is to **capture the perception children and young people (CYP)** have on the phenomenon of cyberbullying and on their views about existing mechanisms and tools available to them to prevent and respond to cyberbullying. The survey also included a series of questions to **find out CYP's preferences as regards strategies and tools** that they feel are necessary or desirable to combat cyberbullying. This section summarises the key findings of this online survey.

3.3.2. Methodology

One **online survey** was developed and made available to potential respondents via the open platform SurveyMonkey (as regards privacy-related issues, see D1.1). The questionnaire was available in **English (EU version) and in Italian (Italian version)**. The complete **questionnaires** can be found in Annex I of deliverable D2.3. Both in Italy as in Europe, the administration of the questionnaire was targeted using the KID_ACTIONS partners' networks to reach youngsters from the KID_ACTIONS pilot countries: Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia. The data for both the EU and the Italian survey was collected in parallel over a course of three weeks, starting **from the 7th of May until the 30th of May**. Due to the **considerable difference in sample size in the European (N=146) and in the Italian surveys (N=997)**, the data collected through both surveys was analysed separately using the **statistical software SPSS 28.0.0.0**.

The **survey contained 25 questions** and started by informing participants about the goals of the research and asking for their consent as well as for parental consent in the case of respondents younger than 18 (see Annex II of D2.3). Only respondents who provided their informed consent and parental consent, in the case of CYP younger than 18, had access to the online survey. Participants were reminded that their information was protected by the GDPR rules, and that their participation was voluntary and, therefore, they could quit the survey at any point if they wished so.

The survey contained 25 questions focusing on the following topics:

- **Participants' information** (e.g. gender, age, country of origin and living situation).
- **Online and offline (free time) activities** (e.g. reading books, practising sports, playing videogames, using social media apps, etc.).
- **Cyberbullying perception and attitudes.**
- **Cyberbullying prevention and response.**
- **Perceptions of CYP on use of digital educational tools.**

Findings are reported in percentages. Note that due to rounding the sum of numbers in certain graphs or tables might add up to between 99% and 101%. Where this is the case, a note has been added.

3.3.2.1. Sample characteristics

We initially aimed at the **nine pilot countries of the KID_ACTIONS project**, namely Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia. However, we only specifically leveraged on the consortium networks on selected countries. Furthermore, due to the online nature of the survey, we could not control that CYP from countries other than the pilot ones filled in the survey. Because the survey asked about CYP's country of residence and not nationality nor country of origin, we decided not to exclude respondents from countries beyond the pilot countries.

In total 146 respondents fully completed the English version of the survey (hereinafter also referred to as the "European survey"; i.e. young people reached via the YEU and EUN networks), **while 997 respondents fully completed the Italian version of the survey** (hereinafter also referred to as the "Italian survey"; i.e. young people reached via the Amnesty and PAT networks). Only participants who fully completed the survey are included in the analysis. The mean age of the EU sample is **17.2 years**, while the one of the Italian sample is **14.3 years**.

Because of the large difference in sample size, **we opted for presenting the results of the English and the Italian surveys separately** (please also see D2.1). A possible explanation for the difference in sample size is that the survey that was distributed in Italy was available in Italian. On the contrary, only an English version of the survey was distributed in the other countries, where English is not an official language. This may have caused difficulties to understand the survey questions and could have set a higher threshold for CYP to participate. It is also likely that other factors such as the dissemination strategy (e.g. schools and youth organisations were targeted rather than individuals) may have played a role in explaining the difference in sample size. Unfortunately, because the survey was distributed online, we cannot be certain of what these other factors are.

Because the survey was made available online, we could not control that the survey was filled in exclusively by EU youth or by children from the pilot countries of this study. Therefore, the **original sample** contains responses from CYP from 16 **countries** (see Table 3). For details of the Italian sample, see Table 4.

Table 3: Sample characteristics EU survey

Country	Participants	Mean age	Gender
Serbia	53	17.4	32 Female 19 Male 2 Prefer not to say
Estonia	19	17	10 Female 9 Male
Czech Republic	16	17.1	10 Female 6 Male
Turkey	13	15.9	11 Female 2 Male
Germany	9	19.2	7 Female 1 Male 1 Prefer not to say
Ireland	9	16.3	6 Female 2 Male 1 Prefer not to say
Italy	6	16.2	4 Female 2 Male
Other countries	21	17.9	13 Female 7 Male 1 Prefer not to say
Total	146	17.2	93 Female 48 Male 4 Prefer not to say 1 Other

Note: Table 3 summarises the participants' mean age, the mean age is the age participants are in 2021 or turn into, and gender by country. Other countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Madagascar, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia, and The United States) are the countries that have 5 participants or less.

Table 4: Sample characteristics Italian survey

Italian survey	Participants	Mean age	Gender
Italy	997	14.3	563 Female 414 Male 17 Prefer not to say 3 Other

3.3.2.2. Limitations

The **European survey** has a **limited sample size** (N=146), which makes it difficult to see clear trends in the data. The **Italian survey** has a **higher response rate** (N=997). Because the survey was filled in online, the conditions under which the participants answered the questions are unknown. Due to

the different countries that participated and the influences of the pandemic, some participants might have filled out the questionnaire in a school setting, while others in other settings such as their home. The presence (or absence) of others, especially adults such as parents or teachers or peers, could also have an impact on the answers that the participants gave.

We also observed a considerable **decrease in the response rates in the second half of the survey** in both the EU and the Italian responses. It is likely that due to the length of the survey and the fact that the survey was filled online, and without researcher’s supervision, some participants may have become tired and quitted the survey before having fully completed it. Incomplete responses were not considered in the analysis.

Last, the questionnaire is a **self-report**, this is a widely adopted method to measure the prevalence of bullying (Menesini & Nocentini, 2009). This method relies on the honesty of the participants; however, there is a chance that some participants may give socially desirable answers (Betts, 2016; Menesini & Nocentini, 2009). In addition, because of the **sensitivity of the topic**, one cannot discharge the possibility that some participants may feel uncomfortable with some questions and may prefer not to answer them.

3.3.3. Key findings for the EU survey

In this section of the report, we summarise the **key findings** of the responses given by participants of the **EU survey**.

3.3.3.1 Children and young people’s free time and online activities

The European adolescents surveyed perform a wide range of online and offline activities. When asked about **how they spend their free time**, most of the participants indicated that they usually spend their free time with friends (74%) or on social media (71.9%). Other popular activities included reading books or comics (49.3%), practicing sports (53.4%) and other hobbies (43.2%). The least popular activities were playing videogames (38.1%), playing an instrument/singing/theatre (22.6%) and participating in organized leisure time initiatives (e.g. youth centres) (21.9%).

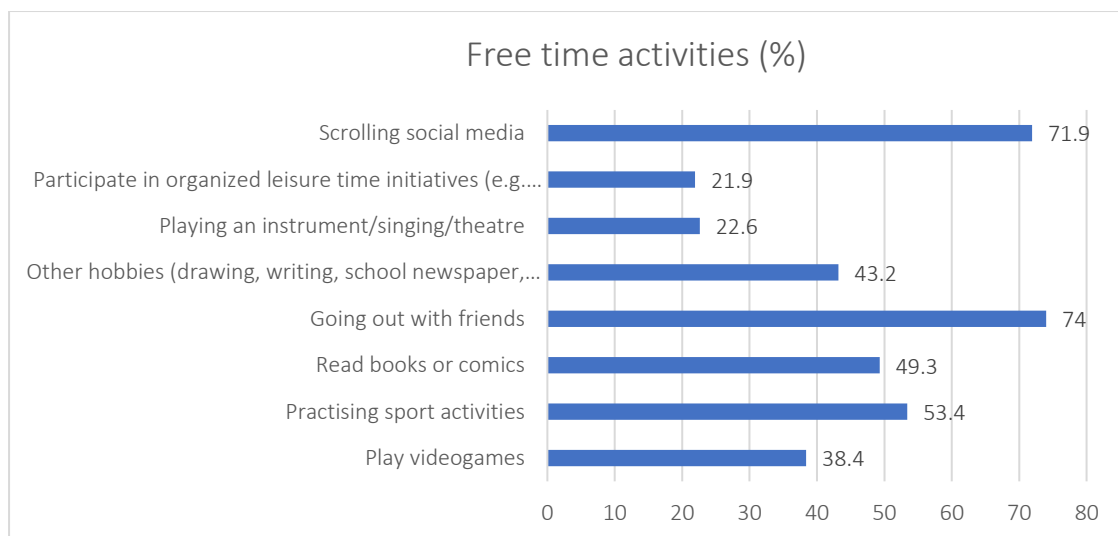


Figure 7: 'What do you do most often in your free time?' (N=146)

As regards the use of **videogames**, only 22% of respondents indicated that they played videogames daily while most respondents (46%) indicated that they only played videogames once a month or less often. 14% claimed that they play videogames once a week or less and 19% 2-4 times a week.

As regards their **social media** consumption, most EU respondents indicated that they used the following social media services: Instagram (90%), YouTube (82%), WhatsApp (65%), Messenger (65%) and Facebook (56%). Other less popular social media services or Apps include TikTok (47%), Snapchat (45%), and Spotify (42%).

As regards the **frequency with which they employ social media**, most surveyed CYP indicated that they use social media platforms daily. However, the frequency with which they use social media varies greatly from less than one hour to more than 6 hours per day (See Fig. 8). In terms of the amount of time spent on social/messaging apps, most participants state spending at least 1 or 2 hours online a day (41.8%) or 3- 5 hours a day (39%). Only a small percentage of the respondents claimed to be online more than 6 hours a day (11%) or less than 1 hour a day (8.2%).

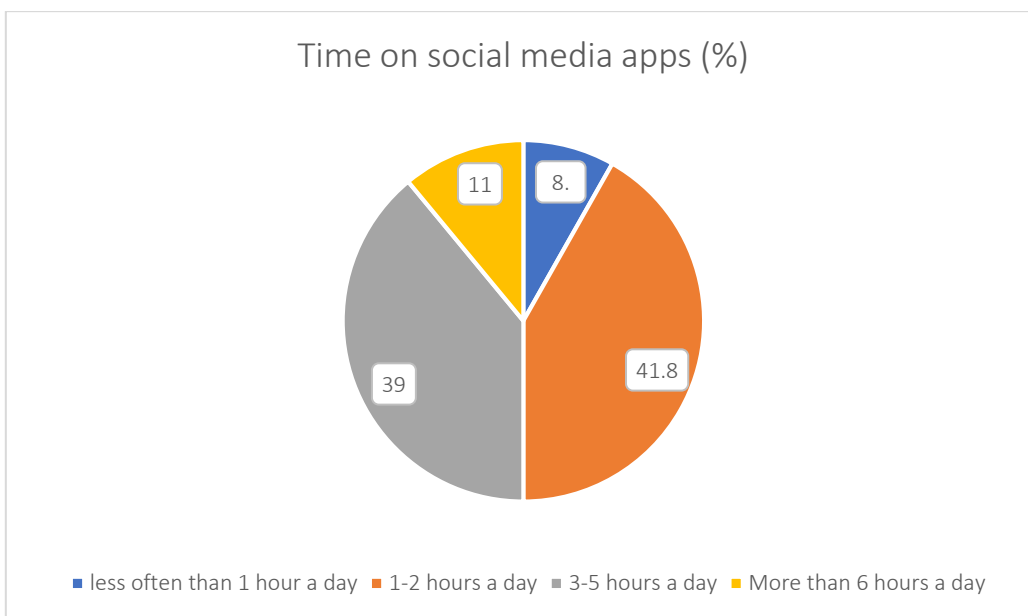


Figure 8: 'How much time do you spend on social/messaging apps?' (N=146)

To find out **if parents mediate or restrict to some extent CYP's use of social media platforms**, respondents were asked if their parents had given them indications or constraints about the use of social media. The figure below illustrates CYP's responses.

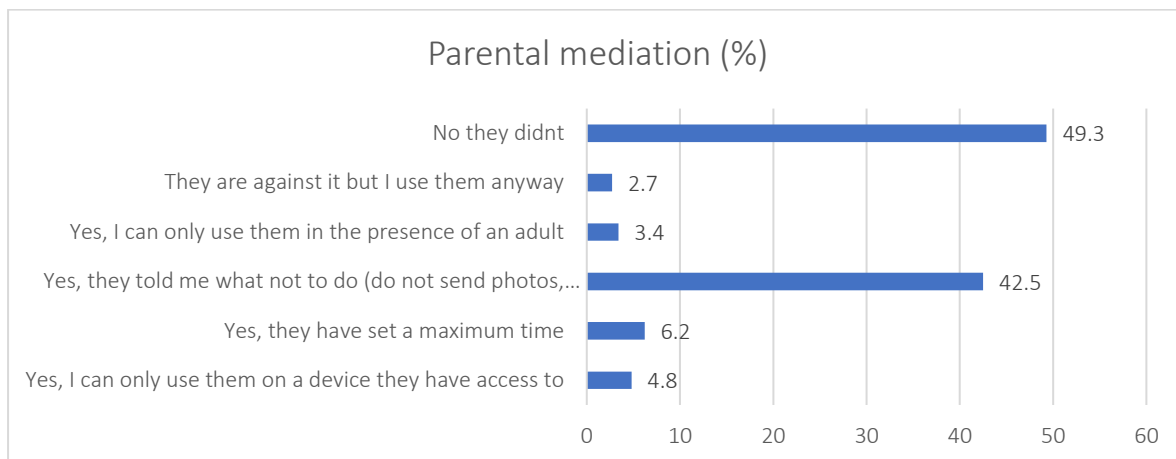


Figure 9: 'Have your parents given you indications/constraints about the use of social media?' (N=146)

In the EU sample, it is striking to observe that most responses are distributed almost exclusively between two answer options. The question 'have your parents given you indications/constraints about social media use' was answered by 49.3 % with 'No, they didn't'. The other big group of participants (42.5%) replied with 'Yes, they told me what not to do (do not send photos, do not visit some sites, do not communicate with the unknown, etc.)'. Of the participants, 6.2% indicated that their parents have set a maximum time for social media use. Only a small group of the participants (4.8%) indicated that they could only use social media on a device their parents have access to. 3.4% of respondents claimed that they could only use social media in the presence of an adult while 2.7% of respondents indicated that their parents were against the use of social media, but they used it anyways. Given that the mean age of the EU sample is 17.2 years, it is not surprising that most participants reported low levels of parental mediation.

3.3.3.2. Children and young people's experiences and perceptions of cyberbullying

To understand what youth, perceive to be cyberbullying participants were asked to select different **types of behaviours that they considered as cyberbullying**. Since in the survey we did not adopt a strict definition of cyberbullying as proposed in the literature, but rather we decided to rely on what CYP perceive as cyberbullying, the survey can only help us to gather information from the singular perspectives of the respondents which may significantly differ previous studies and even from participant to participant.

Table 3 below illustrates the answers of CYP to the question 'What do you understand as cyberbullying?'. This was a multiple-choice type of answer; therefore, participants could select as many answer options as they deemed necessary (See Table 5).

Table 5: 'What do you understand as cyberbullying?' (N=146)

What do you understand as cyberbullying?	%
Nasty or offensive comments on your profile or nasty or offensive posts about you	84.9

Embarrassing photos being put online without your permission	80.1
Fake online profiles being created with an intent to defame you	78.1
Rumors and lies about you on a website	74.7
Nasty messages online or in the mobile phone	71.2
When you send mean text messages or pics to another person	70.5
Offensive chat on online gaming	50
When you pretend to be another person online	49.3
Being excluded from online groups and forums	37.7

When looking at the answer options selected by the EU participants it becomes clear that CYP consider a wide range of online behaviours as cyberbullying. Interestingly, the most often selected options were ‘Nasty or offensive comments on your profile or nasty or offensive posts about you’ (85%), ‘embarrassing photos being put online without your permission’ (80%), ‘fake online profiles being created with an intent to defame you’, more than three fourths of the participants agreed that this is cyberbullying. The only acts that received under 50% of the responses were ‘when you pretend to be another person online’ (49%) and ‘being excluded from online groups and forums’ (38%).

To find what the participants consider to be the **most severe forms of cyberbullying**, the participants were asked to rate different types of aggressive online behaviours on a scale from 1 – 5, with 1 labelled as ‘not serious at all’ to 5 ‘very serious’. As illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6: ‘Please express which of the following acts you consider the most severe on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is not serious at all and 5 is very serious’ (N=146)

Which of the following acts do you consider the most severe? (%)					
	Not serious at all	Not serious	Neutral	Serious	Very serious
Forcing/blackmailing someone to do things they do not want to do	6.8	5.5	8.9	13.7	65.1
Gossiping about someone / telling around things about someone	8.9	17.1	27.4	28.1	18.5
Being excluded/marginalized from online groups*	15.8	17.1	29.5	19.2	18.5
Spreading embarrassing content about others against their will*	6.8	2.7	8.2	21.2	61
Receiving sexually explicit content or unwelcome sexual proposals*	6.8	7.5	7.5	24.0	54.1

Receiving content where other people were put in an unpleasant situation (e.g. someone being teased)*	6.8	6.8	17.8	24.0	44.5
Someone's account being hacked to disseminate unwanted personal information.	6.2	6.8	13.7	19.9	53.4

*Due to rounding the numbers in this table to one decimal the sum of numbers might add up to between 99.9% and 100.1%

The results show that the majority of participants (N=146) consider forcing or blackmailing someone to do things they do not want to do (79%), spreading embarrassing pictures of someone (82.2%), receiving sexually explicit content or unwelcome sexual proposals (78%) and hacking someone's account to post unwanted personal information (73.3%), receiving content where other people are put in an unpleasant situation (68.5%) as serious or very serious offenses. Gossiping about someone and being excluded/marginalized from online groups were considered as less serious forms of aggression. As a matter of fact, 46.6% of respondents considered gossiping about someone and excluding others from online groups (37.7%) as serious or very serious.

The participants were also asked if in the past 12 months, they had been **offended or made fun of via social media or apps** and they were asked to indicate if the reason for having been made fun of were related to gender, religion, opinions, physical appearance or manner of speaking, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or socio-economic disadvantages. From the 146 participant, less than half of the participants (45.2%) indicated that they were made fun of or were offended for one or more of the reasons above. Of these, 76% indicated that the reasons for having been offended online were their opinions; 46% because of their physical appearance or manner of speaking and 29% being made fun of because of their nationality.

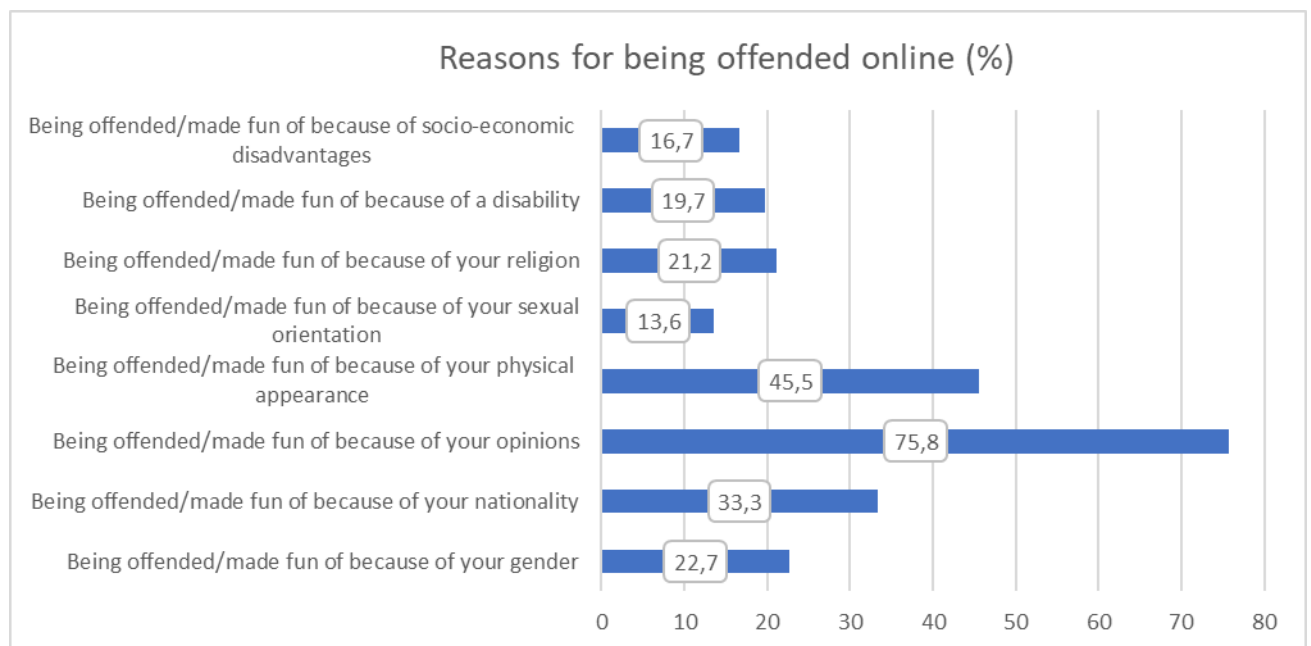


Figure 10: 'In the past 12 months, have you been offended for one or more of the following reasons via social media or apps?' (N=66)

Base: All participants who reported having been offended or made fun of online (N=66)

Next to the different reasons, the participants felt they had been offended online, the participants were asked how this had happened (See Fig. 11).

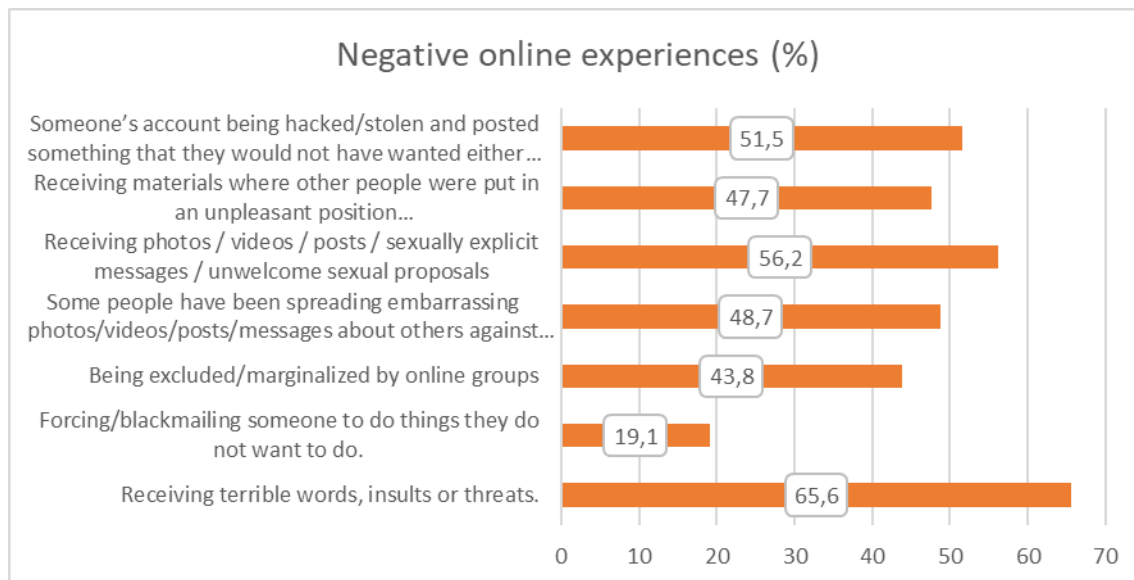


Figure 11: 'If you have ever been offended/made fun of via social media or apps in the past, please specify how this happened' (N=105)

Base: All participants who reported having experienced offensive acts online (N=105)

From all respondents 71.9% indicated having been offended/made fun of online. Among the CYP who reported having been offended or made fun of online (N=105), 65.6% indicated having received terrible words/insults or threats, and another large group of the participants (56.2%) claimed to have received sexually explicit content or messages or unwelcome sexual proposals online. A smaller group (51.5%) indicated that their account had been hacked/stolen and that posted something that they would not have wanted either disseminated personal information. 48.7% claimed to have had embarrassing photos/videos/posts/messages shared with others against their will. Around the same number of participants (47.7%) indicated that they received materials where other people were put in an unpleasant situation (e.g. photos/videos/posts/messages where someone came teased). Only 43.8% of the participants indicated that they experienced being excluded or marginalized by online groups. The smallest group of participants (19.1%) indicated that they experienced being forced or blackmailed someone to do things they do not want to do.

The survey included a series of questions to find out **how CYP have responded or would respond to cyberbullying incidents**. The rationale was to explore a sensitive topic and we need to rely on the respondents' desire to share information. Nevertheless, while we cannot be sure about the truthfulness of each response, the aggregate data suggests some interesting findings, especially when it comes to the role of the family in supporting CYP tackle incidents of cyberbullying. As matter of fact, participants were asked how they had reacted or how they would react to incidents of cyberbullying. They could answer to a series of statements such as 'I pretended it was nothing', 'I asked for help from parents or another adult'. In parallel, they could select how quickly they responded to that situation by selecting one of the following options: 'immediately', 'after some days', 'after some weeks' and 'never'. A majority of the respondents seemed to ignore the situation

indicating that they had laughed about it (79.5%) had or by trying to avoid the situation (78.8%) by pretending it was nothing (61.4%) or by passively accepting the situation (61.4%). As regards disclosing the incident, 74.2% claimed that they had shared it or would share it with peers such as friends or siblings. Interestingly, only 59.1% indicated that they would ask their parents or other adults for help. Only 32.6% claimed that they had taken or would take revenge.

It is concerning that such a high percentage of CYP have not disclosed or would not disclose incidents of cyberbullying to adults. It is important to carry out more research to understand the motives leading to this. According to the experts interviewed as part of KID_ACTIONS WP2 (D2.2), many experts believe that children and young people prefer not to disclose incidents of cyberbullying because they do not trust that disclosing such hurtful incidents will help. Unfortunately, confirming existing research that states that when upset by something online, most children rarely turn to teachers or other professionals for help (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009; Perren et al., 2012; Li, 2006), most interviewed experts coincided that teachers and adults (e.g. parents and other professionals working with children) are ill-prepared to handle (cyber)bullying incidents. Therefore, educating adults so that they can foster a supportive relationship of trust with CYP can have a positive impact in tackling cyberbullying and helping children build resilience.

Respondents were also asked **if they had received help when /if they had experienced cyberbullying**. Almost half of the respondents (46%) indicated that they did not need to receive help because they had never experienced bullying, 21.9% indicated that did not receive any help, 17.1% answered that they received help ‘to a certain extent’ and only 15.1% of the respondents indicated having received help (see Figure 12).

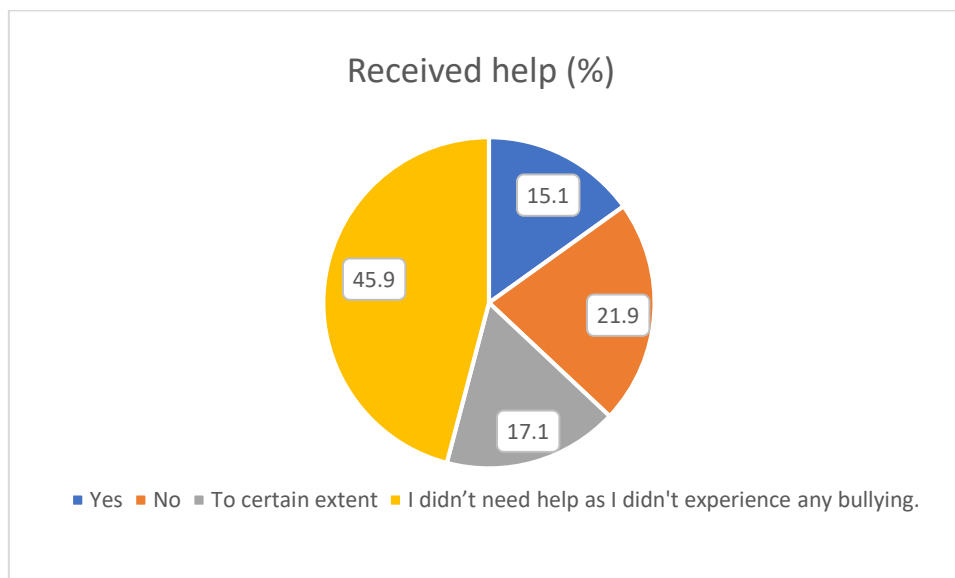


Figure 12: 'If you ever experienced cyberbullying, did you receive help when you needed it?' (N=146)

CYP were asked to indicate **how, in their opinion, victims of cyberbullying should be supported by adults and peers**. The participants could select the options 1 – 5, with 1 being the most important for them and 5 the least important (see Table 7).

Table 7: 'What kind of help do you expect, or would you expect if you were a victim of cyberbullying?' (N=146)

What type of help do CYP expect? (%)					
	Most important	Important	Neutral	Less important	Not important
I expect my parents to take me seriously, to reassure and support me in finding a solution*	45.2	7.5	11	8.2	28.1
I expect my friends will believe me and support me in finding solutions	37	13	10.3	12.3	27.4
I expect that an adult will reassure me and propose solutions	28.1	18.5	21.2	15.1	17.1
I expect that my parents or an adult will report the cyberbullying to the authorities*	32.2	13.0	21.2	13.0	20.5

*Due to rounding the numbers in this table to one decimal the sum of numbers might add up to between 99.9% and 100.1%

As observed in Table 7, CYP approximately half of the respondents attach great importance to parental support. As matter of fact, 45.2% of respondents indicated that what they considered most important is that their parents take them seriously, to reassure and support them in finding solutions. 37% of respondents found their friends' support most important and expect their friends to believe them and support them in finding a solution if they were a victim of cyberbullying. This in contrast to a smaller group of the participants (28.1%) who indicated to expect an adult to reassure them and propose solutions as most important. Approximately one third of the participants (32.2%) indicated that they expect their parents or an adult to report the cyberbullying incident to the authorities as most important.

3.3.3.3 Prevention and learning

The final part of the questionnaire focused on understanding **what CYP think would be helpful to combat cyberbullying** and can help us better understand what to pay attention to in developing tools and resources to combat cyberbullying within the KID_ACTIONS project. The participants were asked to select strategies that they considered as helpful to prevent bullying. They could tick as many boxes as they wished (see Table 8).

Table 8: 'How can we prevent bullying from happening?' (N=146)

Ways to prevent bullying	%
We need to talk and learn how to treat everyone with respect	84.2
We need to learn to accept other people and their differences	82.2
We need to be supportive of each other	74.4
We need to learn where to ask for help	71.9
We need to learn how to stand up for those who are bullied	70.5
We need to learn how to use the technology responsibly	69.2

We need to talk about the problems we are experiencing openly	67.8
We need to understand why bullies bully	54.8
We can simulate situations with educators and peers and discuss the best way to respond to bullying	52.7

Most CYP chose the options: ‘We need to talk and learn how to treat everyone with respect’ (84.2%) and ‘We need to learn to accept other people and their differences’ (82.2%). Other popular options included ‘We need to be supportive of each other’ (74.4%), ‘We need to learn where to ask for help’ (71.9%), ‘We need to learn how to stand up for those who are bullied’ (70.5%), ‘We need to learn how to use the technology responsibly’ (69.2%) and ‘We need to talk about the problems we are experiencing openly’ (67.8%). The least popular answers were ‘we need to understand why bullies bully’ and ‘we can simulate different situations with educators and peers and discuss the best ways to respond to cyberbullying’ (52.7%).

For **future developments in the direction of a tool to help tackle cyberbullying** the following questions focused on the ideas CYP might have regarding this. The participants were asked if they would like the idea to incorporate *the use of Internet and social media in an online game to teach students how to be respectful to others online (N=146)*. This was received with great enthusiasm from CYP, with 63.7% voting ‘yes’ and only a small group (6.2%) voting ‘no’. However, it is important to note here that in total almost one fourth of the participants were not sure about this idea (23.3%) or indicated that ‘they did not know’ (6.8%).

It was interesting to see that more than half (56.2%) of all the respondents thought it would be useful to learn about cyberbullying and its prevention through educational online games. However, many participants indicated that they thought this would only be useful ‘if combined with discussions with peers and educators’ (31.5%). Only a small group did not think it would be useful to learn about cyberbullying and its prevention through educational games (7.5%) and 4.8% indicated ‘I don’t know’.

CYP were also asked **what kind of games they would like to play to learn more about cyberbullying**. More than half of the participants responded that they would like to play a game that ‘gives examples of different situations and potential solutions (56%)’, a slightly smaller group would like a game that ‘tells stories that can empower them to be strong in case they or their friends experience cyberbullying (50.7%) while only a third of the respondents (32.2%) liked the idea of a game that gives CYP the opportunity to be ‘a superhero that deals with bullies by solving situations’. Finally, the CYP indicated that they would prefer to download an application to their phones or tablets (45.9%). A smaller group of the respondents indicated that they would like to play through a browser or any devices (computer/phone/tablet) (28.1%). The third option was to select ‘both’, 26% of the respondents indicated that they preferred this option.

3.3.4. Key findings of the Italian survey

In this section of the report, we summarise the key findings of the responses given by the **Italian respondents**. In total, **997 respondents with a mean age of 14.3 years** completed the survey. Of

these 563 were female (56.5%), 414 male (41.5%), 3 identified themselves as other (0.3%) and 17 preferred not to say (1.7%).

3.3.4.1. Children and young people's free time and online activities

To understand **where the Italian CYP spend most of their free time**, they were asked to select from a list which online and offline activities they performed most often (see Figure 13).



Figure 13: 'What do you do most often in your free time' (N=997)

Most participants indicated that they go out with friends (76.2%) or practice sport activities (61%). Almost half of the participants (46.5%) indicated that they often spend time scrolling on social media and 42.4% like to play videogames. Other activities included reading books or comics (33.1%) and performing art-related activities (e.g. playing an instrument, singing, theatre) (23.7%). The least popular activity was participating in organized leisure time initiatives (e.g. youth centres) (7%).

As regards **the frequency with which CYP play videogames**, 22.1% of respondents indicated that they played videogames daily while most respondents (38.1%) indicated that they only played videogames once a month or less often. 14.8% claimed that they play videogames once a week or less and 25% 2-4 times a week.

As regards their **social media consumption**, most Italian respondents indicated that they used the following social media services: WhatsApp (86%), YouTube (74%), Instagram (59%), TikTok (49%), and Spotify (43%). Neither Facebook (8%) nor Messenger (3%) were popular among the Italian CYP.

As regards **the frequency with which they use social media**, most surveyed CYP indicated that they use social media platforms daily. However, the frequency with which they use social media varies greatly from less than one hour to more than 6 hours per day (See Fig. 14).

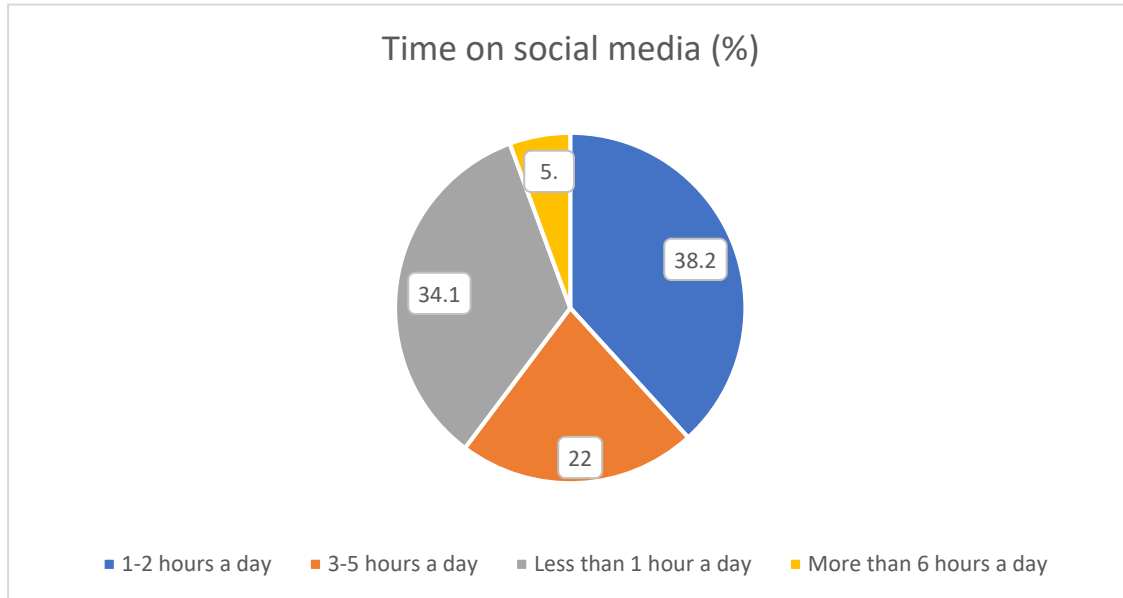


Figure 14: 'How much time do you spend on social/messaging apps?' (N=997)

In terms of the **amount of time spent on social/messaging apps**, most participants state spending at least 1 or 2 hours online (38.3%) or less than 1 hour per day (34.1%). A smaller group of participants claim to spend 3- 5 hours a day (22%). Only 5.6% of the respondents claimed to be online more than 6 hours a day.

To find out **if parents mediate or restrict to some extent their CYP's use of social media platforms** participants were asked if their parents had given them indications or constraints about the use of social media. They could select multiple options that applied to them. In the figure below, the possible answers are listed.

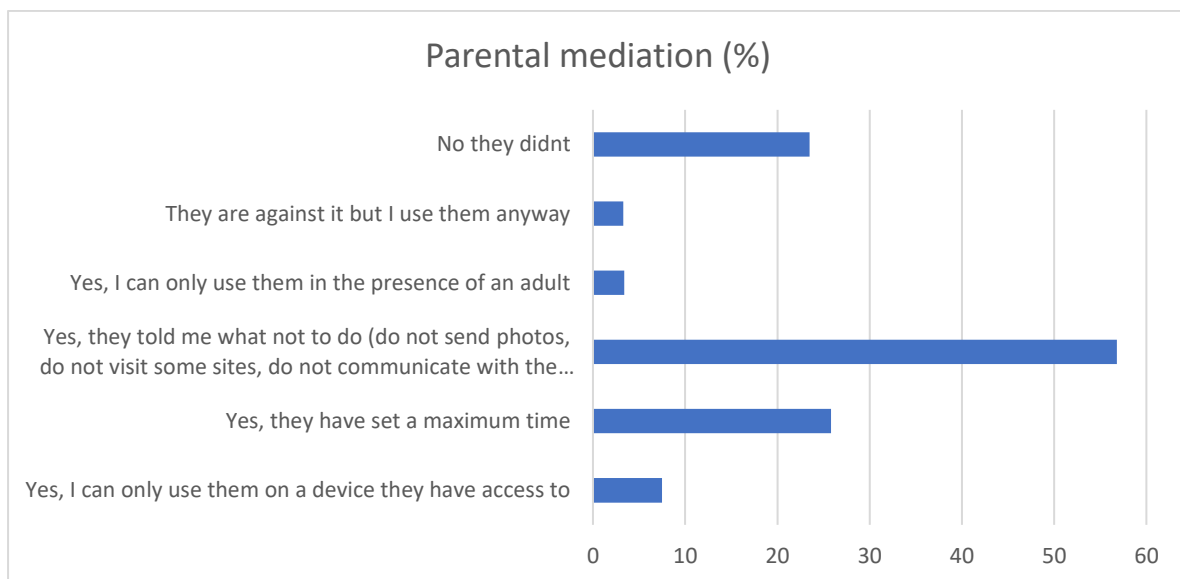


Figure 15: 'Have your parents given you indications/constraints about the use of social media?' (N=997)

In the Italian sample, it is striking to observe that most responses are distributed almost exclusively among three answer options. The question ‘have your parents given you indications/constraints about social media use’ was answered by 56.8% of the participants with ‘Yes, they told me what to do (do not send photos, do not visit some sites, do not communicate with the unknown, etc.)’. 25.8% of respondents indicated that their parents had set screen time limitations and 23.5% indicated that their parents ‘did not give them any instructions’. Only 7.5% of the participants mentioned that they can only use social media on devices that their parents have access to. 3.4% of the respondents claimed that they could only use social media in the presence of an adult while 3.3% of the respondents claimed that their parents were against social media, but they used it anyways.

3.3.4.2. Children and young people’s experiences and perceptions of cyberbullying

To understand **what the Italian youth perceive to be cyberbullying**, participants were asked to select different types of behaviours that they considered as cyberbullying. This was a multiple-choice type of answer; therefore, participants could select as many answer options as they wished. See Table 9 below for the answer options.

Table 9: What do you understand as cyberbullying?’ (N=997)

What do CYP consider as cyberbullying?	%
Embarrassing photos being put online without your permission	78.4
Nasty messages online or in the mobile phone	74.5
When you send mean text messages or pics to another person	69.2
Fake online profiles being created with an intent to defame you	58.1
Rumours and lies about you on a website	58
Offensive chat on online gaming	52.9
When you pretend to be another person online	25.8
Being excluded from online groups and forums	23.7
Nasty or offensive comments on your profile or nasty or offensive posts about you	15.1

When looking at the answer options selected by the Italian participants it becomes clear that **CYP consider a wide range of online behaviours as cyberbullying**. Interestingly, the most often selected options were ‘Embarrassing photos being put online without your permission (78.4%)’, ‘Nasty messages online or in the mobile phone (74.5%)’, ‘When you send mean text messages or pics to another person’ (69.2%), ‘fake online profiles being created with an intent to defame you’ (58.1) and ‘Rumours and lies about you on a website’ (58%). Behaviours such as ‘when you pretend to be another person online’ (25.8%) and ‘being excluded from online groups and forums’ (23.7%) and ‘nasty or offensive comments on your profile or nasty or offensive posts about you (15.1%) were the least selected options.

To find out what the respondents consider to be the **most severe forms of cyberbullying**, CYP were asked to rate different types of aggressive online behaviours on a scale from 1 – 5, with 1 labelled as ‘not serious at all’ to 5 ‘very serious’. As illustrated in Table 10.

Table 10: 'Please express which of the following acts you consider the most severe on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is not serious at all and 5 is very serious' (N=997)

Which of the following acts do you consider the most severe (%)					
	Not serious at all	Not serious	Neutral	Serious	Very serious
Forcing/blackmailing someone to do things they do not want to do*	3.3	4.1	13.0	34.1	45.4
Targeting/gossiping about someone / telling around things about someone	4.4	7.3	21.1	37.1	30.1
Being excluded/marginalized by online groups*	9.5	16.1	30.4	27.4	16.7
Some people have been spreading embarrassing photos/videos/posts/messages about others against their will	3.3	1.3	3.9	16.1	75.4
Receiving photos / videos / posts / sexually explicit messages / unwelcome sexual proposals	4.1	5.4	10.4	19.4	60.7
Receiving materials where other people were put in an unpleasant position (e.g. photos/videos/posts/messages where someone came teased)	4.0	3.2	12.5	27.0	53.3
Someone's account being hacked/stolen and posted something that they would not have wanted either disseminated personal information*	3.6	1.4	4.1	12.9	77.9

*Due to rounding the numbers in this table to one decimal the sum of numbers might add up to between 99.9% and 100.1%

The results show that the majority of participants consider spreading embarrassing pictures of someone (91.5%), hacking someone's account to post unwanted personal information (90.8%), receiving sexually explicit content or unwelcome sexual proposals (80.1%), receiving content where other people are put in an unpleasant situation and forcing (80.3%) or blackmailing someone to do things they do not want to do (79.5%) as serious or very serious offenses. Gossiping about someone and being excluded/marginalized from online groups were considered as less serious forms of aggression. In fact, only 67.2% considered gossiping about someone as serious or very serious, and only 44.1% considered being excluded or marginalized by online groups as very serious.

The participants were also asked **if in the past 12 months they had been offended or made fun of via social media or apps** and they were asked to indicate if the reason for having been made fun of were related to gender, religion, opinions, physical appearance or manner of speaking, sexual orientation, religion, disability, or socio-economic disadvantages (see Figure 16).

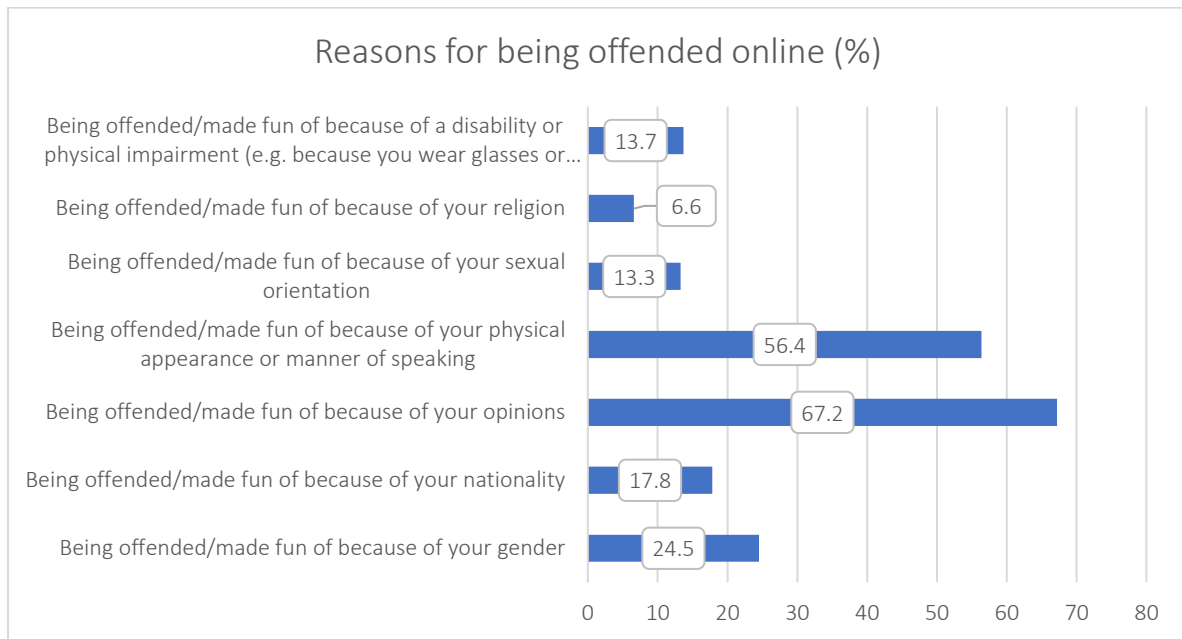


Figure 16: 'In the past 12 months, have you been offended for one or more of the following reasons via social media or apps?' (N=241)

24% of the respondents indicated that they had experienced some form of online aggression. Of these (N= 241), 67.2% indicated that the reasons for having been offended online were their opinions. 56.4% of the CYP, which suffered from some aggression, claimed being made fun of because of their physical appearance or manner of speaking and 24.5% because of their nationality.

Next to the different reasons the participants were offended online, the participants were asked **how they were offended online** (see Figure 17).

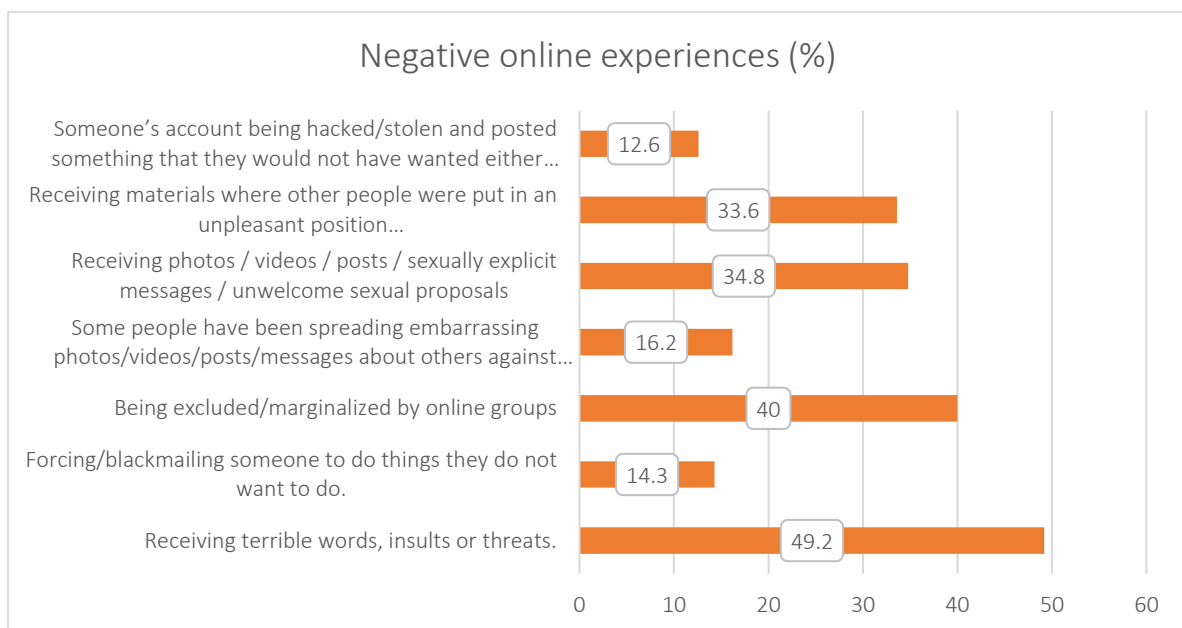


Figure 17: 'If you have been offended/made fun of via social media or apps in the past, please specify how this happened' (N=512)

51.4 % of the respondents indicated to have experienced at least one of the negative online experiences presented as answer options. Of these participants (N=512), 49.2% indicated having received terrible words/insults or threats. Another large group (40%) indicated that they had experienced being excluded or marginalized by online groups. 34.8 %, claimed to have received sexually explicit content or messages or unwelcome sexual proposals online and 32.6% indicated that they received materials that put other people in an unpleasant situation. Only 16.2% selected the option ‘spreading embarrassing photos/videos/posts/messages about others against their will’. The smallest group of participants (14.3%) indicated that their account had been hacked/stolen and posted something that they would not have wanted either disseminated personal information.

Participants were asked **how they had reacted to incidents of cyberbullying in the past**: ‘They could answer to a series of statements such as, ‘I pretended it was nothing’, ‘I asked for help from parents or another adult (e.g. educators, teachers, coaches, psychologists)’ and, in parallel, they could select how quickly they responded to that situation by selecting one of the following options: ‘immediately’, ‘after some days’, ‘after some weeks’ and ‘never’. Of all the respondents, 59.5% indicated that they did respond to cyberbullying to at least one of these questions. Of these, 77.5% indicated that they had tried to avoid the situation; 74.4% of the participants indicated that they shared it with their friends or with their brothers or sisters; 69% claimed to have laughed about it; 65.8% indicated that their response to cyberbullying was to ask their parents or other adults for help; 61.9% indicated that their response was to pretend it was nothing and 47.9% passively accepted the situation. The smallest group of the participants (34.4%) indicated that they took their revenge personally.

It is interesting to observe that, **as opposed to the EU responses, a considerable higher percentage of CYP claimed to have disclosed incidents of cyberbullying to adults**. It is important to **keep in mind, though, that the Italian and European samples are not comparable**. Moreover, none of the samples is representative of the population under study and the sample size differences are big. It is also important to keep mind that the respondents’ ages varied considerably in the two samples. In fact, the mean age for the Italian responses was 14.3 as compared to a mean age of 17.2 for the EU. The difference in age could help explain the fact that more respondents within the Italian version of the survey claimed to have reported cyberbullying incidents more often than the European respondents. Other factors such as cultural differences, contextual factors and even personal differences could also play a part in explaining this difference. Therefore, we must be cautious when interpreting these results. It remains important, though, to keep investing efforts so that adults can foster a supportive relationship of trust with CYP. This can have a positive impact in tackling cyberbullying and helping children build resilience.

Last, CYP were asked to indicate **how, in their opinion, victims of cyberbullying should be supported by adults and peers**. The participants could select the options 1 – 5, with 1 being the most important for them and 5 the least important (see for details the Table below).

Table 11: ‘What kind of help do you expect, or would you expect if you were a victim of cyberbullying?’ (N=997)

What type of help do CYP expect? (%)					
	Most important	Important	Neutral	Less important	Not important

I expect my parents to take me seriously, to reassure and support me in finding a solution*	49.6	10.4	5.9	8.8	25.2
I expect my friends will believe me and support me in finding solutions	35	20	11	13.1	20.9
I expect that an adult will reassure me and propose solutions including talking to my parents*	30.5	20.7	17	13	18.9
I expect that whether my parents or an adult will report the cyberbullying to the authorities	31.4	16	18.5	13.2	20.9

*Due to rounding the numbers in this table to one decimal the sum of numbers might add up to between 99.9% and 100.1%

As observed In Table 11 approximately half of the respondents attach **great importance to parental support**. 49.6% of respondents indicated that what they considered most important is that their parents take them seriously, to reassure and support them in finding solutions. 35% of respondents found their friends' support most important and expect their friends to believe them and support them in finding solutions if they were a victim of cyberbullying. 31.4% of respondents indicated that they expected their parents or an adult to report the cyberbullying incident to the authorities as most important. Only 30.5% indicated that they expect an adult to reassure them and propose solutions as most important.

The participants were also asked **if they received help when/if they experienced cyberbullying**. The answer options were as follows: 'Yes', 'No' 'To a certain extent', 'I didn't need help as I didn't experience any bullying' (see Figure 18).

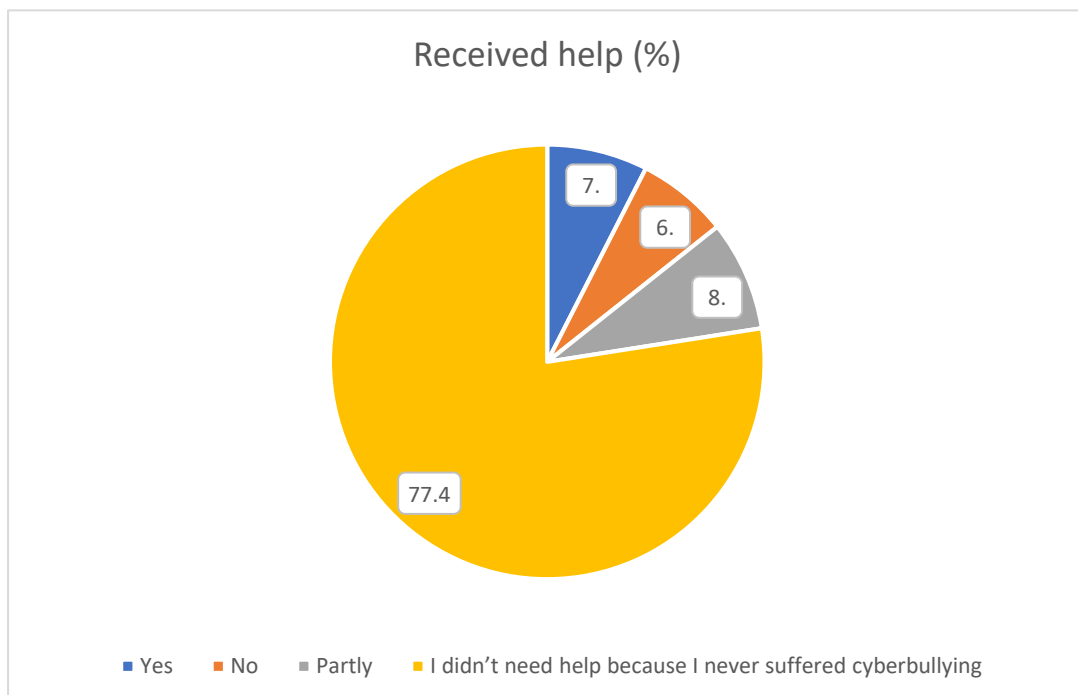


Figure 18: 'If you ever experienced cyberbullying, did you receive help when you needed it?' (N=997)

Of all respondents, 77.4% claimed that did not need to receive help since they had never experienced cyberbullying (7.5% of the respondents indicated that they did receive help, against 6.8% who claimed not having received help. 8.2% of the respondents answered that they received help 'to a certain extent'.

3.3.4.3. Prevention and learning

The final part of the questionnaire focused on understanding **what Italian CYP think would be helpful to combat cyberbullying** and can help us better understand what to pay attention to in developing tools and resources to combat cyberbullying within the KID_ACTIONS project. Table 12 below shows the answers the participants selected to the question 'How can we prevent bullying from happening?'. They could select as many options as they wished.

Table 12: 'How can we prevent bullying from happening?' (N=997)

Ways to prevent bullying	%
We need to talk and learn how to treat everyone with respect	80.1
We need to learn to accept other people and their differences	77.3
We need to talk about the problems we are experiencing openly	45.6
We need to understand why bullies bully	49.8
We need to be supportive of each other	67.1
We can simulate situations with educators and peers and discuss the best way to respond to bullying	39.9
We need to learn where to ask for help	70.3
We need to learn how to stand up for those who are bullied	71.7
We need to learn how to use the technology responsibly	74.7

Most of the CYP chose the options: 'We need to talk and learn how to treat everyone with respect' (80.1%), 'We need to learn to accept other people and their differences' (77.3%), 'We need to learn how to use the technology responsibly' (74.7%). 'We need to learn how to stand up for those who are bullied' (72%), 'We need to learn how to ask for help' (70.3%) and 'We need to be supportive of each other' (67.1%). The least popular answers were 'We need to understand why bullies bully' (49.8%), 'We need to talk about the problems we are experiencing openly' (45.6%) and 'We can simulate situations with educators and peers and discuss the best way to respond to bullying' (39.9%).

To have a better understanding for **future developments in the direction of digital tools to help to tackle cyberbullying**, the survey included some questions to understand the perspective of CYP on this. The participants were asked if they would like the idea of digital tools or an online game to teach students how to be respectful to others online. The majority indicated that they would like this idea (64.7%), only 6.1% answered 'No'. However, a larger group of the respondents indicated 'I am not sure' (15.3%) or 'I don't know' (13.8%).

The participants were asked **if they thought it would be useful to learn about cyberbullying and prevention through educational digital tools / games**, more than half of the respondents indicated that they would like this by selecting 'yes' (53%). A small group answered 'no' to the question (8.9%), indicating that they did not think it would be useful. Almost one fourth of the participants only thought this would be useful *if combined with discussions with peers and educators* (23.5%). 14.6% selected 'I don't know'.

To know more specifics on the **preferences of CYP** when it comes to digital tools /games about cyberbullying, the following question was asked: 'What kind of games would you like to play to learn more about cyberbullying?' They could select multiple options. More than half of the respondents would like to play a game that 'gives examples of different situations and potential solutions' (59%). 42.7% would like a game that is 'Telling stories that can empower me to be strong in case I or my friends experience cyberbullying' (42.8%). A smaller group of the respondents selected the option 'Being a superhero that deals with bullies by solving situations' (22.5%).

Finally, the respondents were asked what they would prefer, to download an app on their phones/tablet or to play on a browser on any device (computer/phone/tablet). More than half of the respondents indicated that they would prefer to download an app on their phones of tables (51.7%) compared to only 16.6% who indicated that they would like to play on their browser on any device (computer/phone/tablet). Almost one third of the respondents expressed no preference and selected the option 'both' (31.7%).

3.3.5. Conclusions of the KID_ACTIONS survey

Both the Italian and EU surveys show some interesting findings regarding CYP's use of social media, their perception of cyberbullying and their insights as regards potential ways to respond to it. Both in the EU and in the Italian samples, we could observe that **digital media play an important part in CYP's lives**. For instance, a majority of the EU CYP and almost half of the Italian CYP like to spend their free time scrolling on social media. Among the social media platforms employed by CYP, the most popular were Instagram, YouTube and WhatsApp both in Italy as in the EU as well as Messenger in the EU. Although less popular than social media, in both the Italian and the EU surveys about 20% of respondents indicated to play videogames daily.

As regards forms of **parental mediation**, it was interesting to observe that half of the EU respondents claimed not to receive any restrictions nor indications from their parents as opposed to only 24% of Italian respondents claiming not to have received any parental restrictions nor indications. Interestingly, however, is that (almost) half of the EU respondents indicated that their **parents told them what to do and what not to do online** (EU=42.5%). Among the Italian respondents more than half (56.8%) indicated that their parents told them what to do and what not to do online. Italian respondents also indicated considerable higher screen time restrictions (23.5% of Italian respondents as opposed to 6.2% of the European participants). Given that the mean age of the EU sample is 17.2 years, it is not surprising that participants reported lower levels of parental mediation than in the Italian sample where the mean age is 14.3. **Previous research has considered parental involvement essential in preventing cyberbullying** (Young & Tully, 2019). Better understanding in how parents' guide their children online can give insights for possible interventions aimed at training parents and other adults to improve on this.

Both the EU and IT sample show that CYP **consider a wide range of online behaviors to be cyberbullying**. The majority among the EU respondents indicated *all* the presented offensive online acts as cyberbullying, such as, sending mean texts, pretending to be someone else online, nasty messages online, nasty comments on a profile and spreading offensive posts, rumors and lies on a website, offensive chat on online gaming, fake online profiles and embarrassing photos being put online without someone's permission. However, approximately 75% of the Italian respondents did not consider 'being excluded from online groups' 'pretending to be another person online' and 'nasty or offensive comments on your profile' as cyberbullying. Additionally, most of the CYP considered forcing / blackmailing someone into doing things they do not want to do and the spreading of embarrassing content about others as *very serious*. The differences in perception of cyberbullying could be, at least partly, explained by the fact that the survey did not provide a detailed definition of cyberbullying (consciously). This means that respondents could interpret the concept of cyberbullying in different ways (Tokunaga, 2010 as in Peter & Petermann, 2018). It is also

necessary to specify the lack of a common definition of cyberbullying at the European level and that the national definitions in this regard are diversified, as described in the first chapters of this deliverable.

A little under half of the respondents indicated that they had been **offended online for a specific reason** (e.g. because of gender, religion, physical appearances, sexual orientation, disability or socio-economic disadvantages), with the largest group being offended because of their opinions and the second largest group reporting being offended because of their appearance. This finding is in line with previous research where evidence was found that **appearance is one of the most commonly reported reason for being cyberbullied** (See Cassidy et al., 2009; Mishna et al. 2010 as in Berne, Frisen & Klink 2014). Most of the respondents that claimed having been offended online indicated that this happened **by receiving terrible words, insults, or threats**. The second largest group for the EU respondents experienced receiving sexually explicit content or messages or unwelcome sexual proposals more often. The second largest group for the Italian respondents were more often excluded or marginalized by online groups.

As regards to **coping mechanisms**, more than 75% of the EU respondents often responded to cyberbullying by 'laughing about it' or 'trying to avoid the situation'. For the Italian respondents the largest group also indicated that they 'tried to avoid the situation' (77.5%). This finding is in line with existing research showing that a common mechanism for CYP when tackling cyberbullying is trying to avoid the situation. For instance, the EU Kids Online (2020) survey showed that from all the countries more than a fifth of the children chose to ignore the problem.

In the Italian sample, a large group also claimed to disclose the incidents to their peers (EU=74.2%, IT=74.4%). Interestingly, a smaller group (EU=59.1%, IT=65.8%) asked their parents or adults for help. This finding could be an indication that **it is important to continue investing efforts to encourage parents and adults to become more involved and trusted in tackling cyberbullying with their children**. Despite the smaller group that would ask their parents for help, CYP consider that **parental support is very important** to deal with cyberbullying incidents. In fact, when asked what types of support they considered most important to support victims of cyberbullying, a large group (EU=45.2%, IT=49.6%) found it most important for their parents to **take them seriously, reassure them and support them in finding a solution**. It is interesting to observe that although CYP have high expectations in their parents' support, many still do not feel like disclosing cyberbullying incidents to their parents or other adults. One possible explanation, which was also brought to light by several of the experts interviewed as part of KID_ACTIONS D2.3 is that many CYP do not feel satisfied about the ways adults react, the support offered when sensitive, or harmful experiences, such as cyberbullying, are disclosed to adults. This shows **the importance of also educating / training adults** and, in particular, teaching them adequate strategies to react and to offer adequate support to CYP when sensitive or harmful experiences are disclosed.

When the respondents were asked **if they had received help** after experiencing an incident of cyberbullying, the Italian respondents answered with an overwhelming majority (77.4%) that they did not receive help because they never suffered cyberbullying. It is interesting to see that only 45.9% of EU respondents gave this answer. We must be cautious when comparing these results because as previously mentioned, one of the big differences between the EU and the Italian participants, apart from the sample size, is the fact that the EU participants have a considerably

higher mean age. Therefore, the difference in response could, at least partially, be attributed to the **significant age difference in the samples**.

It is important to listen to what CYP consider is important to prevent and combat cyberbullying. In our surveys most of the respondents (EU=84.2%, IT=80.1%) consider that **talking and learning to treat everyone with respect** and **accepting other people and their differences** (EU=82.2%, IT=77.3%) are the most important aspects to prevent cyberbullying. Almost three quarters of the Italian sample agreed on another important aspect to prevent cyberbullying, namely, **learning how to use the technology responsibly** (EU=69.2% IT=74.7%). As regards the use of educational tools / games, almost two thirds of CYP claimed to like the idea of **learning about respect through an online educational tool / game**. Half of the participants indicated that they thought this would be helpful. 25% of the participants indicated that they thought online educational tools / games would be helpful, but only if combined with discussions with peers and educators. Interestingly, most of the respondents seemed interested in a tool / game that would give examples of different situations and potential solutions. This finding is interesting because it supports the idea that **CYP expect practical resources** that teach them in concrete ways how to deal and respond to different types of cyberbullying incidents.

However, it is important to take into consideration that participants, on this occasion, **were not asked about traditional strategies to tackle cyberbullying**. Therefore, it is not possible to infer from the current datasets if digital tools, videogames or the use of social media area are preferred over the other types of traditional strategies such as school councils, peer-to-peer support, or experts' talks. Further investigation is necessary to better understand what CYP's preferences are as regards both non-digital and digital tools and resources to combat cyberbullying, as well as to better design tools and games that are appealing and effective for CYP to learn about cyberbullying, through empowering stories and/or different situations and solutions to combat such phenomenon.

Finally, despite some shortcomings highlighted in this report, **the findings from the survey are useful to inform the development of solutions, resources and tools to combat cyberbullying** and specially to guide the co-design of the technical solutions that will be delivered during the KID_ACTIONS project (see WP3 and WP4).

4. TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

4.1. Technologies and digital tools to fight cyberbullying: What are the pros and the cons?

Due to the multi-faceted nature of cyberbullying, **strategies** aiming at preventing it and providing effective response vary. However, since cyberbullying takes place in online environments, the role of technologies must be separately examined. As already referred to in the Desk Research chapter (Section 2.8. Prevention and intervention strategies against cyberbullying), there are **a number of European and national projects** that aim or have aimed at developing digital technologies focusing on fighting cyberbullying and/or related online risks such as hate speech.

For example, the [Friendly Attac project](#) studied and developed an innovative ICT tool to help youngsters to deal with cyberbullying issues. By means of highly personalized virtual experience scenarios, providing players with immediate feedback in a safe computer-mediated environment, Friendly Attac attempted to modify relevant determinants of behaviours related to the roles of bullies, bystanders and victims. Another relevant example is the [AMiCA](#) (Automatic Monitoring for Cyberspace Applications) project (2013-2016) aimed to mine relevant social media (blogs, chat rooms, and social networking sites) and collect, analyse, and integrate large amounts of information using text and image analysis. The ultimate goal was to trace harmful content, contact, or conduct in an automatic way. Similarly, the “[Detect Then Act](#)” project uses human activism and artificial intelligence (AI) to monitor online hate speech and campaign with positive counter-narratives.

Other examples include [Hatemeter](#), a REC project that aims at systematising, augmenting and sharing knowledge on Anti-Muslim hatred online, and at increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of NGO/CSOs in preventing and tackling Islamophobia at EU level, by developing and testing an ICT tool (i.e. HATEMETER platform developed by the KID_ACTIONS coordinator FBK). Moreover, the [European Observatory of Online Hate](#) gathers a consortium of 4 partners tasked with conducting a two-year investigation into and reporting on the fundamental nature of the dynamics of online hate, how hate manifests itself, the connections between the perpetrators and their influence as well as disinformation strategies. This investigation will involve the collaborative development of a monitoring tool using innovative AI tools developed by Textgain. Lastly, the EIT Digital project [CREEP](#) (Cyberbullying Effects Prevention, coordinated by the same coordinator as KID_ACTIONS that is FBK) seeks to develop technologies for the early detection of cyberbullying phenomena through the monitoring of social media and the communication of preventive advice and personalised recommendations tailored to adolescents’ needs through a virtual coaching system (chatbot).

During the first semester of 2021, KID_ACTIONS consulted with various stakeholders regarding potential strategies and interventions to combat cyberbullying, within **Task 2.2 - Assessing needs and expectations of relevant stakeholders and target groups (M1-M4) of WP2**. In particular, experts including educators and representatives from the youth work sector, as well as children and

young people (CYP), were inquired about the **usefulness of digital tools** to combat cyberbullying. The views of experts and CYP were diverse, and they all pointed out both **pros and cons** in their use. For example, during the **focus groups** with educators and representatives of youth work associations (see also D2.1 and Section 3.1 Focus groups outcomes), it became evident that participants struggled with mentioning digital tools that are useful in preventing and responding to cyberbullying. This could have happened due to a lack of digital tools that are specifically focused on cyberbullying, lack of knowledge of such tools, or lack of access to them. Indicatively most of the digital tools mentioned were general and not specifically related to cyberbullying. This seems to suggest that **digitalization is part of education**, but that does not necessarily mean that young people, educators, parents or youth workers are using digital tools to understand, prevent and respond to cyberbullying. Despite the fact that two focus groups are very limited in terms of the number of participants, it is still interesting to observe the **limited awareness regarding the use of digital tools to combat cyberbullying**. This could indicate that digital tools are not popular or are not made available for teachers, educators, youth workers or even young people.

Regarding the **use of digital resources for preventing and responding to cyberbullying**, experts interviewed agreed that one of the main advantages of using digital or online-based tools to combat cyberbullying is the fact that such tools can be **available** at the time and the place where incidents take place (see also D2.2 and Section 3.2. Interviews outcomes). There was a common view that digital tools should only be used if they bring benefits. This will require **co-designing tools with users**, keeping their interests and needs in mind and taking into consideration the context of use. Generally, according to the outcomes of **deliverable D2.1 on KID_ACTIONS focus groups**, it could be considered that the **advantages** of using digital tools to prevent and combat cyberbullying are the following: 1) **multimedia potential**, 2) the possibility of **reaching out to a wider audience**, 3) the possibility of **creating safe and anonymous space for interaction** and 4) **longer time to reflect and fulfil tasks**.

Nevertheless, there are also a number of **technical and logistical aspects** that need to be taken into consideration when developing digital tools. For instance, although a considerable number of young people may prefer the possibility of downloading an app for their devices, over using the platform on a browser, **deliverable D2.2 on semi-structured interviews with key experts** have showed that: 1) users may also not want to download an educational or self-help App because of **privacy concerns**; 2) **schools may lack the infrastructure** to download and use apps or games on school devices, face Internet accessibility/connectivity issues, and may also have discouraging procedures for the teachers to use digital tools and/or the computer labs. **Understanding users' expectations, needs, accessibility to devices and connectivity**, as well as their **(potential) contexts of use** is essential to make the right decisions.

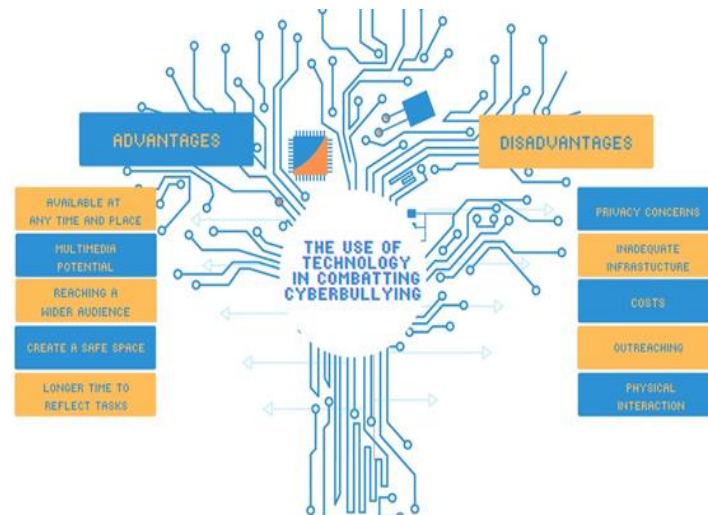


Figure 19: Advantages and disadvantages of the use of technology in combatting cyberbullying

Additionally, the research conducted within the KID_ACTIONS Project informed us about the need to be **realistic in terms of expectations** for any digital tool or online platform to be created. Certainly, experts in semi-structured interviews and the focus groups have argued that it is **impossible to compete with the most common video games and social media platforms that young people use nowadays**. Thus, a platform or IT tools created with limited funding must be carefully pondered and **the investment must be wise**, to guarantee that the platform will not be rendered useless.

Another challenging aspect is that of **outreaching**. The effective use of digital tools requires **educating potential users** about how to use the resources correctly or how to implement the intervention, and finally **supporting them during the whole implementation process**. Finally, it should be noted that some experts argue that **empathy can be enhanced by exploiting digital tools**. Within the research conducted by the KID_ACTIONS Project, especially **considering the pandemic context and lockdowns, several educators and youth workers expressed their preference to work offline** or to **exploit the potentials of digital tools in the educational settings** with the support of teachers and educators.

Furthermore, the use of digital devices could be limiting among children due to some **legal constraints**. For instance, the age at which children can give **consent for the processing of their personal data by Internet and social media** providers differs across Europe (see Article 8 of the EU GDPR on “Conditions applicable to child's consent in relation to information society services”), meaning that the use of social media may be restricted to older or younger children in certain EU Member States: “[...] *in relation to the offer of information society services directly to a child, the processing of the personal data of a child shall be lawful where the child is at least 16 years old. Where the child is below the age of 16 years, such processing shall be lawful only if and to the extent that consent is given or authorised by the holder of parental responsibility over the child. Member States may provide by law for a lower age for those purposes provided that such lower age is not below 13 years*”. However, the **use of digital educational platforms** or tools such as the KID_ACTIONS Platform and its components (see D1.1 and D3.1) in formal or informal educational contexts with the **presence of teachers and educators** will be allowed only with **prior informed consent of the young users that can give their consent or parental consent in the case of a minor**,

as pointed out in D1.1, in the Joint Controllershship Agreement - JCA and in the Data Protection Impact Assessment - DPIA of this project.

4.2. Young people's perspective about the technologies used to fight cyberbullying

The **online survey**, carried out within Task 2.2 - Assessing needs and expectations of relevant stakeholders and target groups (M1-M4), provided specific questions in order to **understand what young people consider helpful to combat cyberbullying** and, in particular, **what they think about the use of new technologies to prevent and fight against it** (see D2.3 and Section 3.3. Survey outcomes). When asked to select the strategies they deem helpful to prevent cyberbullying, 69.2% of respondents to the European Survey and 74.7% of participants in the Italian Survey selected the option **"We need to learn how to use technology responsibly"**. This clearly shows the need and the will of young people to become aware of and familiar with new technologies and digital tools to tackle cyberbullying.

The survey, then, wanted to investigate further developments in the direction of a tool that can help tackling cyberbullying. In particular, participants were asked if they like the idea of incorporating the use of the Internet and social media in an **online game**, teaching the students how to be respectful with others online. This idea was met with **particular enthusiasm**, both from the European respondents (63.7% voting yes) and the Italian ones (64.7% voting yes). This broad consensus might be explained by the highly spread use of social media among youth, as it was detected in *Question 14* of the Survey. However, it is important to note here that in total almost one fourth of the participants were not sure about this idea or indicated that 'they did not know'.

Participants were also asked **whether they thought learning about cyberbullying and the prevention of cyberbullying through an educational game / tool would be useful or not**. In this case, 56.2% of the European respondents and 53% of Italian ones answered yes, while another considerable share of participants answered "yes, if combined with discussion with peers and educators" (31.5% of Europeans and 23.5% of Italians). Thus, on one side, there is broad consensus among youth considering the **use of new technologies as useful to combat cyberbullying**; on the other, there is **less agreement related to the way of doing it** (whether by using social media, online gaming, or even combining these new technologies with discussions with peers and educators).

Finally yet importantly, the survey asked the participants **which kind of tools / games they would like to play to learn more about cyberbullying**. In particular, they were offered different options referring to different typologies of games: the majority of European respondents (56%) voted for tools / games providing specific situations and offering multiple options to solve them; 50.7% opted for tools / games telling stories about cyberbullying, which can empower them and their friends to prevent and combat the phenomenon; 32.2% of participants voted for a tool / game in which a superhero fights against cyberbullying. As far as the Italian respondents are concerned, 59% voted for tools / games providing specific situations and offering multiple solutions; 42.7% liked the idea of telling empowering stories, while only 22.5% opted for a superhero game.

4.3. Social media monitoring and analysis to fight cyberbullying

It is important to emphasise that the purpose of the social media monitoring activities within the KID_ACTIONS project, described under **Task 3.1 - Social media monitoring and analysis for cyberbullying detection** (M1-M24) of **WP3** on the Digital Education Platform, is only to collect a large pool of cyberbullying examples from social media (e.g. Twitter), to create a knowledge store of the project upon which the integrated KID_ACTIONS Digital Education Platform and its components can be built (T3.2-3.3) and for the following co-creation, training, piloting and roll out sessions (WP4). The digital component related to this activity (see also D3.1 for technical specifications and D1.1 for ethics / data protection aspects) will be initially **deployed and refined during the co-creation phase** involving both educational staff and youngsters (at M8-11 within T4.1), and be **continually updated and experimented within the training, piloting and roll out phases** (T4.2 at M16-M19 - T4.3 at M20-23; D3.2 at M19), and until the end of the project (D3.3 at M24).

For the purposes of this project, cyberbullying can be defined as the intentional and repeated harm that others inflict via a digital device (Hinduja and Patchin, 2009). Given the subjectivity of the issue, it is necessary to comprehend the **multitude of circumstances that lead to cyberbullying situations**. Indeed, it is important to understand the categories of such phenomenon, and which are distinctive personal characteristics that may trigger cyberbullying incidents. Therefore, based on the content of the deliverable **D2.3: Online Survey on Youngster's Perception of the Phenomenon** (see also a summary on Section 3.3. Survey outcomes), **seven categories of cyberbullying** must be considered:

- Gender
- Nationality (Xenophobia)
- Sexual orientation/identity
- Religion
- Physical appearance or manner of speaking
- Disability or physical impairment
- Socio-economic disadvantages

Based on these categories, social media monitoring and analysis can be performed through the **observation of social media platforms** over a certain period. Considering the scope of this project, it is suggested to monitor the **social networks in which young people are present** (e.g. Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, gaming platforms, and other relevant online spaces). During this process, the main contents (including keywords and hashtags) related to the topic of cyberbullying will be monitored, in order to conduct a more in-depth analysis of cyberbullying among young people. Firstly, **resorting to an Artificial Intelligence (AI) platform the posts/comments are analysed**, and it is determined if they contain the selected keywords. Secondly, it is necessary to **examine if the post containing the keywords are, in fact, cyberbullying**, a process that may need to be done **manually**.

Considering the complexity and subjectivity of the topic of cyberbullying, and in an attempt to simplify the process of media monitoring, **two or three neutral keywords can be initially identified per macro-category of cyberbullying**, building the database from there. The analysis resulting from this process will be more particular and in-depth, the more the keywords are associated with certain topics or other keywords. It is important to disclaim that the words in the following tables are **merely suggestive** and can be replaced by other keywords, maintaining their **neutral character**. In addition, we emphasise that both keywords and hashtags in Table 12 and Table 13 are to be considered as an **initial list**, which will be **integrated and/or modified through the KID_ACTIONS co-creation activities** (WP4).

Table 12: Possible neutral keywords for social media monitoring

	English	French	Italian
Gender	Masculinity	Masculinité	Virilità
	Girl	Fille	Ragazza
Sexual orientation/ identity	Homosexual	Homosexuel/Homosexuelle	Omosessuale
	Transgender	Transgenres	Trans
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam
	Muslim	Musulman	Musulmano/a
	Jews	Juif/Juive	Ebrei/ebree
Nationality	Immigrant	Immigrant/Immigrante	Immigrato/Immigrata
	Patriot	Patriote	Patriota

	Arab	Arab/Arabe	Arabo/Araba
	Latino	Latino/Latina	Latino/Latina
Physical appearance or manner of speaking	Overweight	Surpoids	Sovrappeso
	Black/White	Noir/e - Blanc/Blanche	Nero/Nera - Bianco/a
Disability or physical impairment	Mental health	Santé mentale	Salute mentale
Socio-economic disadvantages	Poverty	Pauvreté	Povertà

Table 13: Possible hashtags for social media monitoring

Gender	#woman; #man; #LGBTI+; #stayhome; #frape #gender; #teoriagender
Sexual orientation/identity	#nohomo; #burnallthegaysonlegion88, #gaystapo #ifmysonisgay; #gender #teoriagender #gaysneedtodisappear; #qanon
Religion	#stopislam; #jewworldorder; #nomuslimbanaustria ; #résistants; #aunomdupeuple; #woolwich ; #islam ; #muslim; #allmuslimsmustdie; #killalljews; #slaughterchristians”; #holocaust ; #qanon; #proudboys; #greatawakening
Nationality	#chinavirus; #rapefugees; #startofschool; #greatreplacement; #patriotes; #résistants; #aunomdupeuple; #qanon; #plandemic #greatreplacement; #acasaloro
Physical Appearance or Manner of speaking	#qanon

Disability or Physical impairment	#qanon
Socio-economic disadvantages	#qanon; #plandemic; #deepstate; #pizzagate

4.4. KID_ACTIONS Digital Education Platform: co-design and development

The development of an IT platform like the **KID_ACTIONS Digital Education Platform** (WP3; see D3.1 and subsequent deliverables D3.2 and D3.3) aimed at combating cyberbullying needs to be done based on the **insights of the main target groups** of such a toolsuite, namely young people, teachers, educators, parents, and youth workers. The design of this platform needs to take into consideration the needs, expectations, and context of the target audience. Furthermore, it is important to consider the **relevant stakeholders** to involve in the development process and, evidently, the **resources available** for the creation and implementation of the platform.

Within the context of the KID_ACTIONS Project, the **socio-technical requirements and data** necessary to develop the platform and its components under **WP3** (please see D3.1 for a preliminary overview) comes also from further relevant WPs and deliverables such as **WP2** (D2.1, D2.2, D2.3 and D2.4) and **WP4** (D4.1, D4.2, D4.3, and D4.4), which will inform the consortium about relevant **stakeholders’ and target groups’ needs and expectations**, as well as about the **contexts, challenges, and other relevant material**. Therefore, with the information gathered through those means, this section intends to provide insights that might be relevant for the creation of a platform on the terms proposed by the project.

Firstly, this section will elaborate on **general considerations** regarding cyberbullying, the response to this problem, and the use of digital tools. Secondly, it will address the **insights coming from the WP2 tasks**, namely survey, focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and desk research implemented during this project.

4.4.1. General considerations

The data gathered within the focus groups organized in Brussels and Rome (D2.1 and Section 3.1 Focus groups outcomes), as well as those of the semi-structured interviews (D2.2 and Section 3.2. Interviews outcomes) and desk research (Section 2. DESK RESEARCH) realized within the scope of the KID_ACTIONS Project, has informed us that cyberbullying is a **cross-sectoral problem** and that it needs

a **coordinated and comprehensive response from all the relevant stakeholders and target groups**, namely young people, teachers, educators, parents, youth workers, bystanders, schools, youth centers, and other institutions, including ICT companies. Ultimately, the coordinated responses will also be the most sustainable through the test of time, which in turn will provide the most positive results. Additionally, coordinated responses are also related to their content. In that sense, our research has shown that, although designing comprehensive prevention programs that tackle bullying and cyberbullying is highly recommended, focusing on cyberbullying may not be sufficient. Indeed, the experts consulted in semi-structured interviews and focus groups have mentioned the **importance of focusing on human relations and creation of empathy**, as a means to combat cyberbullying. Furthermore, the data from the previous deliverables have also informed about the importance of **combining digital tools with offline group work and relevant educational activities**. This **multidisciplinary approach** seems to be the most productive and preferred by teachers, youth workers and young people themselves. Finally, the experts consulted mentioned the importance of having mechanisms responsible for **monitoring and assessing the platform**, which are necessary to measure the impact and effectiveness of any tool that is developed within the KID_ACTIONS Project.

4.4.2. Insights from the research

The design and development of a platform to combat cyberbullying among young people needs to take into account the **needs and expectations of its stakeholders and target groups**. The KID_ACTIONS Project implemented an **online survey** (D2.3 and Section 3.3. Survey outcomes), whose respondents were young people between the ages of 11 and 19, as well as **semi-structured interviews with experts** (D2.2 and Section 3.2. Interviews outcomes), and **two focus groups** (D2.1 and Section 3.1 Focus groups outcomes), which will provide further insights for the development of the platform. This section will address the insights gathered from the youngsters that participate in the abovementioned tasks. Here, it will consider the needs and expectations of young people, as well as the methods that are more effective among this audience. In addition, it will examine how such a platform can be useful for adults - parents, teachers, youth workers -, pondering also on their needs and expectations.

Firstly, it is necessary to consider some technical aspects on the development of a platform aiming to combat cyberbullying. It is essential to **involve young people throughout the processes of design, creation, implementation, testing, assessment, and so on**, which has been stated on multiple occasions during the focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The relevance of any platform designed to combat cyberbullying among young people will be more relevant the more this group is involved in the process. Furthermore, it is important to understand the channels and tools that young people use and cater to those preferences to guarantee that the platform is considered useful and effective by young people.

The survey on youngster's perception of the phenomenon of cyberbullying informed us that young people consider that the most effective strategies in preventing bullying are: 1) **talking and learning how to treat everyone with respect**, 2) **learning to accept other people and their differences**, and 3) **talking about the problem they experience openly**. Certainly, this has also been supported by experts, who argue the relevance of **increasing empathy** in young people and **learning to cope with one's emotions**. These aspects are aligned with a social understanding that could be taken into

consideration when developing a platform, creating a **space where young people can openly, yet anonymously, engage with their peers and support each other.**

During the expert interviews, it was noted that **gamification is important** because it is helpful in simulating and displaying the dangers of cyberbullying, and it can be effective in lower age groups. Certainly, the youngsters that took part in the online survey have confirmed their interest in gamification, stating that they are interested in the use of educational games to combat cyberbullying either through a standalone educational game, or through the combination of an educational game and discussions with peers, suggesting, as previously mentioned, the **usefulness of combining digital tools with offline activities.**

Lastly, it is important to consider **the impact that the platform could have among the adults** (teachers, parents, youth workers, and other educators). Certainly, input from experts during the semi-structured interviews and focus groups shows that **adults are inadequately prepared to tackle cyberbullying situations**, being necessary to support them with the tools and resources that will allow them to address cyberbullying and support children and young people. Therefore, the platform could include this aspect, **providing training about cyberbullying, building reliance, and creating empathy, as well as education on existing and future tools for preventing and responding to cyberbullying.**

5. KEY FINDINGS AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

In this chapter, the **key findings** of Task 2.1 - Consolidating knowledge on the challenges of cyberbullying among young (M1-M4) and Task 2.2 - Assessing needs and expectations of relevant stakeholders and target groups (M1-M4), as well as the identified needs and **methodological approaches** elaborated within Task 2.3 - Drafting the KID_ACTIONS socio-technical requirements and multi-dimensional methodology (M5-M24) will be presented (WP2). Key findings and methodological approaches are based on the outcomes of the desk research, focus groups, semi-structured in depth interviews and online survey, conducted within the scope of the KID_ACTIONS Project, which have focused on the **relevant inputs for the methodology and socio-technical requirements** and, ultimately, for the development of the **KID_ACTIONS Digital Education Platform.**

The research conducted during this project has considered the state of the art on the topic of cyberbullying, as well as inputs from key experts and target stakeholder groups in the fields of education and cyberbullying, including policymakers, ICT specialists, teachers, youth workers, and young people. This varied demographic has allowed for a **comprehensive understanding of the topic**, the existing mechanisms to prevent and respond to cyberbullying, in addition to the challenges in effectively preventing and responding to cyberbullying.

Summarily, the **need for coordinated and multidisciplinary response to cyberbullying** was reiterated in multiple moments of the research, highlighting the important server response that involves all members of society, including policymakers, parents, teachers, youth workers, children and young people, bystanders, traditional media, social media companies and ICT companies in general. Effectively, this **community involvement is necessary to achieve effective and efficient strategies to combat cyberbullying.**

Furthermore, **it is necessary to educate all members of society on the topic of cyberbullying.** Certainly, it is imperative to educate young people and adults alike on the risks and opportunities of the Internet to decrease the generational gap between the groups, and to provide adults (parents, teachers, youth workers) with the knowledge and tools to be able to recognize and intervene in cyberbullying situations. Moreover, this education should be extended on topics of emotions, empathy, and building resilience, referred to on multiple occasions throughout the research and recognized by young people themselves.

Lastly, the previous deliverables **D2.1, D2.2 and D2.3** as well as the previous sections of this deliverable **D2.4** have provided relevant input for the development of the **KID_ACTIONS Digital Education Platform**, drawing on possible characteristics considered crucial for the meaningfulness of this digital tool. Here, it is imperative to emphasize **the importance of understanding the needs and expectations of young people and always involve them in the co-creation process (WP4).**

The following sections will analyse these key findings in more detail, aiming to identify commonalities and most salient issues regarding cyberbullying, its prevention, and responses together with the existing needs and gaps, which KID_ACTIONS project could potentially fulfil via the educational and digital tools developed in further steps of the project.

All the approaches and scenarios described further consider **co-creation as an overarching principle** and a crucial requirement for the successful development of mechanisms, policies, and actions for the prevention and fight against cyberbullying. Essentially, there is a clearly strong **need for a multi-stakeholder approach to cyberbullying**, involving children and young people, teachers, parents, youth workers, as well as other professionals working with children, civil society, policymakers, and governments as well as the ICT and the media industry, if effective solutions are sought. In this regard, emphasis has been given to the crucial importance of **involving children and adolescents in all stages** of the processes presented further and ensuring that they have an equal say in the discussions and a seat at the decision-making table.

5.1. Community involvement

During the research process, the experts consulted emphasized **the importance of community involvement for the prevention and response to cyberbullying.** It is important to acknowledge that cyberbullying as well as other forms of online aggression such as hate speech are everybody's responsibility, which not only implies the policy changes previously mentioned, but also the education and intervention of teachers, educators, parents, youth workers, young people, bystanders, and other relevant actors on topics related to cyberbullying.

Identified need #1: Raise awareness of cyberbullying in teachers, educators, youth workers, parents, and young people. It is imperative that all actors are aware of the cyberbullying risks, of how it is defined and how it can be detected, and of various strategies and tools to tackle it.

Approach #1: Create awareness-raising activities and campaigns, using concrete examples of cyberbullying, such as online harassment, grieving, flaming, trolling, impersonation, fraping, catfishing, dissing, and many others. Utilize national legal frameworks and internationally binding treaties that relate to cyberbullying (e.g. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child or the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights) to strengthen the campaigns. The awareness-raising campaigns should resort to public broadcasters and VIPs, as positive role models could be impactful.

Identified need #2: Young people who are victims of cyberbullying and bystanders need to feel comfortable to share their experience and make adults aware of the cyberbullying they face or know of.

Approach #2: Create channels through which young people can share their experiences with cyberbullying. These can include helplines, online platforms and computer programmes, apps, or even clear, realistic, and well-communicated protocols for school personnel, youth workers and/or educators (adults in general) to react when incidents take place, having adequate, usable policies in place, informing the whole school or youth centre/organization community about these policies and protocols and following them whenever incidents take place. By putting these mechanisms in place and ensuring that they are well known among the young people, and that young people know how these channels work, the chance of early reporting of cyberbullying increases.

It is important that these channels also focus on providing enough counselling and long-term support to victims of bullying and cyberbullying to (a) help them process their experience in a safe manner, and (b) prevent them from becoming retaliators (i.e. bullies in their own right), as part of targeted professional interventions and comprehensive, systemic approaches. Counselling tools can come in various ways, from online and app-based counselling services to school-based or youth centre/organization professionals. In the community involvement approach, there are several target groups to be involved in the actions organized. Further, needs and proposed approaches are presented **per target group** due to specifics of the environment their impact can be the most effective and meaningful.

5.1.1. Teachers

Identified need #1: Teachers need to be educated on the topic of cyberbullying, focusing on (1) employing appropriate and available prevention strategies, (2) recognizing cyberbullying in students, and (3) knowing applicable policy and legal framework and intervention options. It is necessary to:

- Raise awareness of and increase use of existent and evidence-based aggression prevention initiatives to prevent cyberbullying.
- Create awareness of and increase use of existent and evidence-based cyberbullying prevention initiatives and educational programmes to prevent cyberbullying.
- Create awareness of and increase use of existent and evidence-based machine learning methods.

Approach #1: Education on subjects of social media literacy, digital citizenship, and the online world is essential. Create a curriculum with a specific set of educational activities and tools on the topics of cyberbullying regarding prevention models and knowledge how to recognize and respond to it. Further topics of interest are: overall social media literacy and digital citizenship, online hate speech, and other related topics, which would consolidate the self-esteem and confidence to support young people in need. Providing specific topics related training, sharing platforms, and peer learning opportunities can all contribute to **empowering teachers to prevent, recognize, and intervene** in cases of cyberbullying. Regarding **digital tools**, there are software available in some national realities and teachers should be aware of their use and advantages with a **training** on this subject, which would be relevant and useful.

Identified need #2: Impacts of cyberbullying are widespread (e.g. health domain, school performance, social problems, deviant behaviour), and can serve as **red flags** in detecting

cyberbullying occurrence. This is true for both victims and perpetrators. In other words, if a young person exhibits detrimental changes in their behaviour, cyberbullying (as well as traditional bullying) should be explored when looking for the causes of such changes. Probing whether the young person is a victim of cyberbullying is as important as exploring if they are a perpetrator.

Approach #2: Curriculum for teachers focused on strengthening emotional, psychological, and social skills of youngsters together with training of teachers on how to support young people they are working with on daily basis. This approach would ensure that whenever traditional bullying occurs, teachers are empowered to react and support, also to examine the possibility of cyberbullying occurrence. As research shows, traditional bullying and cyberbullying overlap in occurrence and hence detecting one type of bullying should automatically lead to further investigation aiming at exploring the other type of bullying. This ensures that each bullying case is well understood and can be treated in the best possible manner.

5.1.2. Educators and youth workers

Educators and youth workers are here defined as those working with young people in educational contexts out of formal/school education such as non-formal education, informal learning settings in youth organisations/centres, outdoor activities, sports etc. These contexts can be held at local, national and/or international level, but ensure active participation of young people, peer learning and acquiring skills, knowledge and attitudes on a certain topic.

Identified need #1: Cyberbullying is topic not well explored in the field of youth work and non-formal education. Similar to teachers, **educators and youth workers also require to be trained on the topic of cyberbullying** focusing on (1) acquiring knowledge on the prevention of cyberbullying strategies in direct work with young people, (2) developing set of skills to create safe space for young people and open discussions in informal circumstances, and (3) knowing applicable policy and legal framework and intervention options, including victim support in case of cyberbullying

Approach #1: To be ready to work on the topic of cyberbullying, including empowerment of young people, educators and youth workers require a **set of training activities, which will provide them with consolidated knowledge about the topic, educational methodologies ensuring a holistic approach towards the overall empowerment of young person** regardless of their personal traits, aiming to prevent cyberbullying and victimization.

Identified need #2: Youth workers interact with young people in informal circumstances and **can be an additional safety net for young people** when it comes to cyberbullying prevention and reaction. However, **they need tools** focused on strengthening emotional, psychological, and social skills of youngsters to be able to design the most effective activities for direct work with young people.

Approach #2: Curriculum with tools and approaches based in sports, theatre, community work, which would support educators and youth workers initiating conversations with young people and creating safe space of trust, sharing experiences and peer through support platforms online or face to face. As one of the main goals is embedding the values of solidarity, empathy and respect among young people, educators and youth workers require a training cycle to ensure they are equipped with skills and knowledge to do so in a creative and interesting manner for young people, as this is very relevant for prevention of cyberbullying among other topics. Additionally, educators and youth

workers would benefit from being trained to identify early signs of bullying and cyberbullying, properly intervene and/or involve parents or relevant social services.

5.1.3. Parents

Parents play and important role in the overall and holistic approach to prevention and fighting against cyberbullying among young people. We are listing a potential action KID_ACTIONS project can take regarding involving parents directly in this multidimensional approach. It is recommended that **parents are always involved and informed** about the actions that teachers, youth workers and educators are taking when working with children and young people on this specific topic due to its sensitivity.

Identified need #1: Previous research shows that **parental mediation is needed** in preventing cyberbullying and the results of KID_ACTIONS survey show that (almost) half of the EU respondents indicated that their parents told them what to do and what not to do online (EU=42.5%). Among the Italian respondents, more than half (56.8%) indicated that their parents told them what to do and what not to do online. Even though the parental control tools are not a remedy in themselves, they can play a positive role in preventing or recognizing cyberbullying, **especially in lower age groups of young people**. Some software solutions are standalone and potentially financially demanding (e.g. NetNanny), while some are potentially rather available, given they are integrated in some software solutions already in place in some households (e.g. ESET).

Approach #1: Parents must be **well prepared to offer adequate guidance and support to children and adolescents**, however at the same time, they need to have guidance and support too. Tools such as KID_ACTIONS Digital Education Platform can be a source of information for parents and create awareness among them (teachers, youth workers and educators too) of the existent and evidence based parental control tools. It can also provide information on cyberbullying, empowering children and adolescents to think, act and react with respect towards each other. Additionally, **training and counselling sessions for parents** can be organized in close cooperation with teachers, educators and youth workers online or face-to-face.

5.1.4. Young people

Even if **young people** are further on addressed as one target group, it is essential to emphasize that young people are **not a homogenous group** and that their needs may vary depending on their personal traits (gender, background, religion, sexual orientation, etc.) and consequently the methodological approaches that might be relevant and they may respond to positively. One of the most important aspects of social activities of young people is going out and hanging out with friends, according to KID_ACTIONS online survey results. Based on this finding, it is recommended to ensure that activities for young people and related approaches are **suitable for group work, interesting, interactive, and boosting young people's creativity and active participation. Cooperative, collaborative, and peer-to-peer approaches** are very useful in preventing and responding to cyberbullying and should be the priority together with education on specific topics (social media literacy, digital citizenship, online world), while not forgetting the importance of **the co-creation principle**. Involvement of young people during the whole process is the key element in guaranteeing the effectiveness of any policy, strategy or digital tools aiming at fighting the phenomenon of cyberbullying.

Identified need #1: Even if young people are considered **digital citizens** as they are growing up with the technology, they are at the same time very **vulnerable and susceptible to different influences and behaviours online**, described already above.

Approach #1: There are several approaches that can be used to create a **safe and empowering environment for young individuals** to recognize cyberbullying and act appropriately:

- Educational approach and community-based work need to be **long-term** instead of focusing on one off or single lesson activities, no matter of the educational context (formal/non-formal/informal);
- Education incorporating **technological tools** (social media literacy) should be associated with empathy, emotions and different soft skills and attitudes;
- **Peer-to-peer approaches for awareness raising and campaigning:** young people can and should act as role models, therefore, they need to take active part in the creation of campaigns and protocols. Peer to peer-based approaches are considered to be among the promising strategies to raise awareness and to prevent incidents from happening in the first place.

Identified need #2: **Young people from vulnerable groups** can more likely become victims of cyberbullying and they should be specifically targeted in preventive efforts. Based on research findings, it is reasonable to assume that they are more likely to become cyberbullying victims. This does not necessarily only cover ethnic, religious, or sexual minorities, but also disabled young people, those living in poverty/situation of socio-economic difficulties, etc.

Approach #2: When **developing the digital platform or face-to-face activities**, it is important to be aware that young people from vulnerable groups. It is recommended to ensure that:

- **the terminology used is adequate and youth friendly**, because complex language can be repulsive to young people and make them even feel incompetent to participate in the activities presented;
- **the duration of the activities or tasks needs to be adjustable and with different levels of difficulty**, to ensure every young person feels comfortable to participate no matter of the level of knowledge or education
- **the content should be in national languages:** if young people come from minority groups or are of younger age, they might not feel comfortable communicating in English or other majority languages, therefore ensure that the content is provided in national languages or that translation is available;
- **young people need to remain anonymous if they wish:** Therefore, using tools guaranteeing anonymity when sharing their experience or simply participating in an activity is crucial;
- **creative expression is important to young people:** therefore, they should be encouraged to choose how they want to learn, get informed and act on the topics such as cyberbullying, especially if young people from vulnerable groups.

Identified need #3: **Preventing cyberbullying should be the main aim.** When doing so, the focus should be on improving areas, which are helpful for prevention.

Approach #3: There are several aspects and approaches that can help reduce dangers of cyberbullying among young people such as **open and honest communication, proactive dialogue, and creation of safe spaces**. Further, the needs and approaches are described in more details:

- **Ensuring good relationships between the youth, their parents and their teachers / educators**
Healthy relationships based on trust and respect are a backbone of healthy groups, communities, and societies. Supporting healthy relationships on various levels is key to preventing many antisocial and harmful behavioural patterns and any opportunity to work towards healthy relationships should be utilized. **Open communication** and offering enough opportunities for children to disclose and discuss the problem were considered as essential. Potential strategies that work include **open, pro-active dialogue** as the basis to collaborate in **finding solutions together**. The need for this is demonstrated on the responses given by young people in the KID_ACTIONS surveys. We need to continue investing efforts to encourage parents and adults to become more involved and trusted in tackling cyberbullying. A large group (EU=45.2%, IT=49.6%) found it most important for their parents to take them seriously, reassure them and support them in finding a solution. Although CYP have high expectations in their parents' support, many still do not feel like disclosing cyberbullying incidents to their parents or other adults. One possible explanation, which was also brought to light by several of the experts interviewed as part of KID_ACTIONS D2.2, is that many CYP do not feel satisfied about the ways adults react or the support offered when sensitive or harmful experiences, such as cyberbullying, are disclosed to adults. This shows the importance of also **training adults** and, in particular, teaching them adequate strategies to react and to offer adequate support to CYP when sensitive or harmful experiences are disclosed with their children. These strategies can be implemented **through continuous work on the topic, incorporating different methods ensuring young people's creative expression and freedom** (theatre, arts, sports, creative workshops).
- **Creation of spaces (literal and figuratively) that are safe and free of judgement for discussion and sharing or simply feeling free to express their identity**

Different strategies and approaches can be utilized to respond to the need to provide younger generations with a **safe environment where they can express themselves** and their emotions without the fear of being judged. Many are based in non-formal education and youth work methodologies where “no judging” and “no stupid questions or correct answers” approaches are deeply embedded principles of work. **Children and adolescents also need to be taught to disclose, they need to feel empowered, but above all, they need to trust that disclosing such hurtful incidents will help**. This change does not happen in one day or with an authoritative approach. Therefore, **open communication** and offering enough opportunities for CYP to disclose and discuss the problem are key and that disclosing hurtful incidents will help. Therefore, **educating adults** and providing useful, practical resources and tools so that they can foster a supportive relationship of trust with children and adolescents can have a positive impact in tackling cyberbullying and helping children build resilience.

- **Increase of empathy in CYP as a protective factor against cyberbullying**

Healthy empathy, as shown in research, is one of key elements that plays a role in preventing cyberbullying. Supporting CYP in developing empathy towards others via various trainings, non-formal learning opportunities, or simulations can play a positive role in cyberbullying prevention. As already described, education aspect also needs to entail working on emotions and overcoming the notion of

cyberbullying as a winner/loser dynamic. Therefore, it is important to **teach children and adolescents to cope with their emotions and to develop self-regulation empathy**. Ongoing Covid-19 pandemic or any situation entailing social distancing and the lack of physical interactions accompanying the online world could result in limited development of skills such as empathy, which are extremely important in the reduction of cyberbullying incidence. **Drama and theatre activities (as well as art and sports)** have been considered as very adequate for emotional, psychological and group work dimensions. Teachers, educators and youth workers also highlighted the importance of **images and multimedia**, which are effective in involving and educating younger generations. Accordingly, **video and photography workshops** are suggested as strategic activities. In the KID_ACTIONS survey most of the respondents (EU=84.2%, IT=80.1%) consider that **talking and learning to treat everyone with respect** (EU= 82.2%, IT=77.3%) and **accepting other people and their differences** (EU=82,2%, IT= 77.3%) are the most important aspects to prevent cyberbullying. Almost three quarters of the Italian sample agreed on another important aspect to prevent cyberbullying, namely, **learning how to use the technology responsibly** (EU=69.2% IT=74.7%).

Specific actions are needed in **increasing awareness of the moral disengagement practices among CYP**, making sure they can recognize and stand up against them. Specifically, moral disengagement are practices which enable a person to find excuses for an immoral behaviour by twisting the meaning of their own actions, for example by dehumanizing the person who is being harmed (e.g. by saying “*He is just a Facebook profile, come on...*”). Educating young people in recognizing these strategies and standing up against them by pointing them out as logical fallacies can help turn young people from neutral bystanders to active opponents of cyberbullies.

- **Increase of awareness of sharing personal information online in young people**

Being careless with personal information in the digital world is the first step to becoming an easy target of a cyberbully. This includes both a direct online behaviour (e.g. sharing something directly and publicly on social networks), and indirect online behaviour (e.g. sharing private pictures with specific people). **Making sure CYP recognize these risks** can minimize them, consider impacts of their own online behaviour, and even help each other in staying safe when engaging in online environments. It can help prevent cyberbullying by minimizing potentially harmful online content CYP leave in cyberspace. It is necessary that children and adolescents are knowledgeable about the risks and benefits of the online world, know how to behave online, and understand the online space as a societal space. Similarly, it is necessary that this education be **extended to adults**.

- **Start with prevention efforts and support children and adolescents build resilience from a young age**

Children and adolescents should be supported in **developing resilience towards cyberbullying** by knowing and using problem-focused coping strategies, i.e., such modes of behaviour that exercise control and action to mitigate trouble the young person is in. CYP should be able to seek help (e.g. of parents, teachers, siblings), employ defence techniques online (e.g. blocking attackers), or confronting the bullies. This helps prevent cyberbullying and eliminates harmful coping strategies in CYP (e.g. self-isolation or self-harm). Educational approaches should incorporate **dealing with adversity** as part of a normal learning and developmental process, without limiting children’s and adolescents’ autonomy and ability to develop their own mechanisms to develop resilience. CYP should feel comfortable and be offered enough opportunities to discuss any relevant issues they might be facing.

- **Ensure bystanders are part of the solution not of the problem**

It is important to educate CYP on what to do in case they encounter cyberbullying directly (i.e. someone is attacking them), and indirectly (i.e. someone is attacking their friends and others). Research shows that neutral bystanders are virtually legitimizing cyberbullying behaviour, hence not being neutral, but worsening the situation. **Equipping children and adolescents with strategies they can use in the cyberbullying context** can help them speak up and make a difference.

5.2. Digital tools, educational platform and usability

When developing digital tools, the **purpose, target groups** and their **learning benefits** need to be clear. Such tools either alone or as part of a platform need to be **developed based on the insights of CYP, teachers, educators, parents, and youth workers** – basically all the target groups mentioned above to ensure the **holistic approach to the problem of cyberbullying**.

Identified need #1: There are several **concerns** expressed by experts, youth workers, teachers, educators, and young people that need to be addressed when developing the KID_ACTIONS digital tools and the educational platform under **WP3** such as:

- **The issue of privacy** – as already mentioned, users must be able to remain anonymous, which is crucial if CYP are expected to be honest, open and feel safe to interact and share.
- **Lack of infrastructure** from both ends - (1) developers, due to potential limited funding which might restrict the effectiveness of digital tools in combatting cyberbullying; (2) users, due to lack of adequate equipment or high-speed Internet.
- **Low levels of outreaching** – no matter if the platform is app- or web-based, if the purpose and learning objectives are not clear, interface is not youth friendly or the tools and information are not presented in a user/youth friendly manner, it will not be used.
- **Lack of understanding of users/CYP needs** – tools that do not respond to users' needs, especially of CYP, will hardly be used.

Approach #1: To address the needs and concerns above, digital tools should be **co-designed with users**, keeping their interests and needs in mind, but also taking into consideration the context of use and the infrastructure available. **Failing to understand users' interests, needs and contexts of use increases the risk of developing apps, platforms, or video games that "no one uses"**. If the app, game, or digital tool is not designed with users in mind, it may fail to engage the target group and it will probably be "deleted" and will not be used again. For it to be effective, it is crucial to **educate potential users about how to correctly use the resources or how to implement an intervention, offering guidance and support during the implementation process**.

Different experts referred to the importance of monitoring and assessment, especially nowadays that so many digital tools and interventions are easily accessible online. To make the tools sustainable and useful, they need to undergo at least 2-3 cycles of piloting, feedback, and improvements to be considered successful.

Not all tools can be used as standalone – **combination of online and offline methods** in activities is sometimes the best and most successful when tackling topics such as cyberbullying. **Developing new tools is also not always the best solution**. An alternative approach is to use tools that already available

online and combine them well with face-to-face or even online activities planning. Such tools are Internet monitoring and control tools, intelligent machine-learning approaches to cyberbullying monitoring, and gamification-based tools. Some approaches **utilizing gamified elements** show promising results. Especially in case of lower age groups, such approaches could be helpful in simulating and showcasing dangers of cyberbullying.

As regards the **use of digital educational tools / games**, almost two thirds of KID_ACTIONS survey respondents claimed to like the idea of learning about respect through an online educational game. Half of the participants indicated that they thought this would be helpful. 25% of the participants indicated that they thought online educational tools / games would be helpful, but only if combined with discussions with peers and educators. 59% of CYP were interested to play a game that 'gives examples of different situations and potential solutions' (59%). 42.7% would like a game that is 'telling stories that can empower me to be strong in case I or my friends experience cyberbullying' (42.8%). A smaller group of the respondents selected the option 'Being a superhero that deals with bullies by solving situations' (22.5%). This finding is interesting because it seems to support the idea that CYP expect **practical resources**, which teach them in concrete ways how to deal and respond to different types of cyberbullying incidents.

For each of the potential requirements regarding digital tools and educational platform, it is important to incorporate the following: (1) **co-creation with target groups, testing/piloting with feedback and incorporating the feedback**; (2) **training of teachers, parents, educators, youth workers on how to utilize the tools and ensure their applicability to their daily work with young people and children**.

These feedback and socio-technical requirements will be taken into account during the development activities of KID_ACTIONS WP3 on the Digital Education Platform, thanks to the already planned **WP4 - Training and educational path**. The main objective of WP4 is to **co-create, pilot and roll out the KID_ACTIONS digital and non-digital tools** with secondary school students and youngsters of youth centres across the EU (i.e. young people aged 11-19), as well as with their teachers and educators. To reach this objective, we will provide **innovative educational toolkits tailored to children's and adolescents' needs to be experimented and tested in a real environment together with the KID_ACTIONS Digital Educational Platform (WP3), involving trained educational staff and young people in a National Pilot and a European Pilot**. The potential of the KID_ACTIONS solutions to prevent and tackle cyber-bullying will be, therefore, validated in both formal and informal learning settings, and in different educational contexts and countries (i.e. Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Serbia).

[Recommended approaches overall can lead to very useful and needed contributions to cyberbullying prevention and intervention strategies bringing together all vital stakeholders.](#)

6. CORRELATIONS WITH KID_ACTIONS WP3 AND WP4

Previous chapters have described the methods used to identify the socio-technical requirements and key findings that are the basis for the multidimensional methodology and approaches suggested to be utilised further in the project implementation, specifically on how to **engage all stakeholders and target groups** in the daily use of the **KID_ACTIONS Digital Education Platform** (WP3) and in the co-creation of a **targeted training and educational path** (WP4), thus representing one of the key results for **ensuring the replicability of the project approach** beyond the end of the project (WP5). Based on the key findings and methodological approaches, **WP3** aims to develop the backbone of the **KID_ACTIONS Digital Educational Platform** starting from the socio-technical requirements defined in this deliverable (WP2), which will then be improved and validated in WP4. Specifically, this WP will:

- **Implement tools to monitor and analyze social media**, with the goal to detect cyberbullying phenomena and automatically identify typical scenarios, patterns and offense types having as targets children and adolescents of secondary schools and youth centers across Europe aged between 11 and 19 years old;
- **Extend and improve existing digital and non-digital tools, based on natural language processing (NLP) and gameful education principles** and developed in past European projects such as CREEP (EIT Digital 2018-2019), to simulate cyberbullying scenarios and increase kids' awareness on the phenomenon, taking in input the co-creation activities foreseen in WP4;
- **Integrate the outcome of the social media monitoring process and the digital and non-digital tools developed through the co-creation process in the KID_ACTIONS Digital Educational Platform**, which will be used by young people to raise their awareness on cyberbullying and to empower them in understanding and countering this kind of phenomena.

Based on the **co-creation principle**, CYP will be directly involved in co-designing, testing/piloting and giving feedback to digital tools and platform developed in WP3.

WP4 - Training and educational path will focus on **co-creation, piloting and roll out the KID_ACTIONS digital and non-digital tools** with **secondary school students** and **youngsters of youth centres** across the EU (i.e. CYP aged 11-19), as well as with their **teachers and educators** who will be **trained** to support and be protagonist of this process. Partners in charge of the **KID_ACTIONS pilots**, namely the 'National (Italian) Pilot' and the 'European Pilot', will directly engage with teachers, educators, youth workers and CYP in **Italy, Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Slovakia, Germany, Estonia, Serbia, Slovenia and Belgium**, to prevent and tackle cyberbullying in **both formal and informal learning settings and in different educational contexts and countries**.

6.1. National Pilot (Italy)

Within the **National Pilot** (WP4), the KID_ACTIONS digital and non-digital tools will be co-created and then piloted with children and adolescents, teachers, educators and youth workers belonging to: **a) the network of secondary schools of PAT** in the territory of the Autonomous Province of Trento (Italy), i.e. junior and senior high schools, among which we will select about **200 students (aged 11-19) of at least 5 schools** at the local level; **b) the Amnesty network** dedicated to the Italian senior high schools named “Human Rights Friendly Schools”, among which we will select about **300 students (aged 14-19) of at least 3 secondary schools** at the Italian level, i.e. in Bari, Brescia and Pescara (see WP4 for more details on the activities).

Firstly, the Innovation and IT Office of the Vocational Training, Higher Education, and IT System Unit of **PAT**, as a partner of the project "KID_ACTIONS" invited the local schools to participate in the project activities through an open “**Call for Action**” (PAT Communication no. 0260447 dated 16.04.2021). The objective was to involve the **5 secondary schools of PAT** indicated in the Grant Agreement in a transparent manner (i.e. 3 middle schools and 2 high schools), which will participate in the co-creation activities, train-the-trainer, piloting and roll-out sessions. **Each school will involve two classes**, second and/or third class for the first-grade secondary school (middle schools) and first and/or second class for the second-grade secondary school (high schools), during the school year 2021/2022.

The **criteria** described in the Call were the following:

- *Geographical distribution*: The aim is to also involve peripheral schools, not only located in the Trento city center (capital of the Autonomous Province of Trento), in order to compare contexts and situations arising from different types of school population.
- *Schools with limited experience of European projects*: It is considered important to involve more schools in international collaborations and, with this criterion, the aim is to engage schools with less experience in European projects.
- *Participation in the planning phases of the "Abitare la rete" (Live the network) projects (see also D1.6)*: It is recognised as a “significant” criterion to have experiences in local projects aimed to combat cyberbullying such as the one implemented in Trento “Abitare la rete”.

The following **requirements** were specified regarding the **educational staff** to be involved in the project activities by the schools:

- to be employed with permanent contract as a national schoolteacher by the Autonomous Province of Trento;
- having passed the probationary period;
- to be in service in the next school year (2021-2022) in a second or third class of secondary school or in a first or second class of secondary school;
- if possible, ensure continuity to the project activities implementation during and after the project period (i.e. 2021-2022 and 2022-2023);
- willingness to participate in each phase of the project and to be engaged in the planned activities;
- interest and sensitivity towards the issues addressed in the project.

The evaluation commission of the Professional Training, Tertiary Training and System Functions Unit of PAT, considered the eight applications received (6 from the first-degree secondary school and 2 from the second-degree secondary school), and the criteria defined in the Call has **identified the following schools suitable to participate in the activities of the KID_ACTIONS project:**

- ITT Buonarroti, Trento (high school);
- Il Don Guetti, Tione (high school);
- IC Arco (middle school);
- IC Trento 6 (middle school);
- IC Fondo-Revò (middle school).

Secondly, **Amnesty Italy** will involve the secondary schools (high schools) originally supporting KID_ACTIONS from the project designing phase and namely they are:

- IISS “Galileo Ferraris”, Via Togliatti 4, 70056 Molfetta - Bari (high school);
- IIS “Giovanni Falcone”, Via Levadello 10, 25036 Palazzolo sull’Oglio – Brescia (high school);
- Liceo Classico “G. D’Annunzio”, Via Venezia 41, 65121 Pescara (high school).

They have been chosen from the **North, Centre, and South of Italy** to guarantee the greatest national coverage for KID_ACTIONS project activities and they come from Amnesty International’s “**Human Rights Friendly Schools**” network, a network of secondary schools counting in Italy more than 30 schools. The Human Rights Friendly Schools aim to empower young people and promote the active participation of all members of the school community to integrate human rights values and principles into all areas of school life. They **place human rights at the heart of the learning experience** and makes human rights an integral part of everyday school life. From the way decisions are made in schools, to the way people treat each other, to the curriculum and extra-curricular activities on offer, right down to the very surroundings in which students are taught, the school becomes an exemplary model for human rights education.

6.2. European Pilot

Within the **European Pilot** (WP4), the KID_ACTIONS digital and non-digital tools will be co-created and then piloted with children and adolescents, teachers, educators and youth workers belonging to the **YEU network**, among which we will select about **500 young people (aged 11-19) in at least 20 schools and youth centres in Bulgaria, Greece, Cyprus, Slovakia, Germany, Estonia, Serbia, Slovenia and Belgium**. Youth for Exchange and Understanding (YEU) will focus on non-formal settings and contexts of youth organisations and centres, however, not excluding cross-sectoral cooperation with formal education (schools) at national levels. European piloting will be implemented in **9 countries** across Europe aiming at grasping **different cultural and geographical contexts** on the topic of prevention and fighting against cyberbullying.

The process will encompass the following:

- **Co-creation with young people** of the digital and non-digital tools on topics of the project through organizing 3 sessions (each of 2 days) in Belgium, Greece and Serbia with young people from 9 countries attending.
- **Train-the-Trainer activities** through organizing 3 regional two day training for 15-20 people from the involved countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Slovakia, Slovenia and Serbia)
- **Piloting and rolling out activities:** The newly trained trainers will organize 2 sessions per country in schools or youth centres and reach out to 55 young people per country.

6.3. Timeline

Schools, youth organisations and centres will be asked to participate in the project activities as follows:

Co-creation activities – October 2021 - March 2022

The co-creation activities involving teachers, educators and students in the class group aim at analysing the use of the digital components described in D3.1, pre-existing platforms, and considering the integration of new features and functions. The meetings will include face-to-face lectures (or online if needed) and interactive workshops with brainstorming activities, dialogues and reflections.

Train-the-Trainer activities - April 2022 - June 2022

"Train-the-Trainers" activities involve teachers and educators who will be supervisors of the students during the piloting and kick-off sessions. These activities will take place over two days and will aim to illustrate the content, methodologies and tools offered by the KID_ACTIONS educational toolkits / digital platform and to train educational staff to inform, motivate and inspire young people.

Piloting and roll-out sessions - September 2022 - November 2022

The piloting activities of KID_ACTIONS involve secondary school students together with their teachers and educators trained in the "Train-the-Trainers" activities. Piloting sessions will be organised in the selected schools / youth where the KID_ACTIONS Digital Education v.1 platform and educational toolkits will be tested and validated. The aim is to collect feedback on the content and functioning of the tools. Format of the activities – online or face-to-face – will depend on the Covid-19 related measures in each of the countries.

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ANNEX I - European and national (pilot countries) policies and practices

European policies and practices

Call for a Code of Good Practice on the Internet to Combat Cyberbullying: During the International Conference on Combating Bullying between Students, ministers from twenty countries, including Germany, Estonia, Greece, Slovakia and Slovenia, signed a call to combat cyberbullying. This call is not legally binding, but it was hoped to pave the way to effectively combat cyberbullying. The call emphasized *“the need to establish, respect and strengthen common legal principles to protect Internet users, especially minors, as well as good practices for the use of personal data”*, while complying with international norms on freedom of expression. Furthermore, the call called on the adoption of key ethical standards by social media networks (e.g. the anonymity of minors, the collaboration between platforms and cyberbullying prevention structures). Lastly, the call emphasized the importance of education and digital literacy to build tolerant and respectful societies offline and online.

EU Kids Online: see, in particular, info on Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

European Safer Internet Centres (SIC) advise and assist children, parents, teachers and carers on digital questions and fights against online child sexual abuse. SICs are currently co-funded by the European Commission under the [Connecting Europe Facility programme](#). They operate in EU Member States as well as in Iceland, Norway and the United Kingdom. Under the new financing framework, the actions will be funded through the [Digital Europe Programme](#). Safer Internet Centres co-operate and exchange resources and best practices at the EU level through the portal [betterInternetforkids.eu](#), the EU hub for child online safety. They usually offer three kinds of services:

1. a national awareness centre organized by the Insafe network
2. a helpline, also organized by Insafe
3. a hotline organized through the International Association of Internet Hotlines (INHOPE).
4. youth panels

The European Network Against Bullying in Learning and Leisure Environment (ENABLE) is an EU-funded school- and centre-based intervention implemented in **Belgium**, Croatia, Denmark, **Greece**, Romania and the United Kingdom since 2015. It aims to combat bullying in children’s educational and leisure environments, with a focus on addressing the wider culture that enables bullying to exist.

Combating Bullying: A whole-school approach (ComBuS): The project was funded by the European Commission and implemented during 2016 - 2017 by a consortium of seven partner organisations in six EU countries, including Spain, Romania, **Greece**, Italy, **Cyprus** and Ireland. It was a whole-school approach addressed to students, teachers, parents, school leaders and staff to combat bullying in schools. The project aimed to raise awareness of bullying in schools and implemented strategies to combat it, including exploring the origins of bullying beyond the school environment.

National policies and practices

Belgium¹

- **Applicable law:** There is no specific law addressing cyberbullying. A relevant law, however, that can be used in such situations is Article 145 bis of the law of June 13, 2005, on electronic communications. Articles 442 bis, 443, 444 and 448 of the Penal Code are also relevant through the notion of moral harassment (*harcèlement moral*). Imprisonment and firm fines are provisioned for “*whoever will have harassed a person, when he must have known that he would seriously affect the peace of the targeted individual*”. Noteworthy is that in April 2018, for the first time in Belgium, a tribunal sentenced an anonymous user who harassed a woman on Twitter and in September 2018 a young man of 25 years old was found guilty of “*viol à distance*” and indecent assault.²
- **Policy Paper Flemish Minister of Education 2019 - 2024** addresses the need for digital competencies and the impact of technological evolution on the learning environment.
- The **Belgian Safer Internet Centre - Child Focus** exists to promote safer and better use of the Internet and mobile technologies among children and adolescents. As an awareness centre, Child Focus offers children, parents, teachers and other professionals’ advice and tips on how to avoid risks when using the Internet and take advantage of its potential. Child Focus works with a large network of national stakeholders to develop tools, give advice and disseminate information. All material is available in Dutch, French and occasionally also in German. An important material is also the pedagogical paper produced by Child Focus “[Stop au harcèlement](#)”.
- **Help Lines:** Childfocus chat - The Child Focus helpline was launched in June 2011 with the aim of offering children, young people, parents and the general public advice on how to deal with harmful contacts, conduct and content. The helpline is also closely linked to Child Focus’s awareness-raising website. To facilitate contact with its diverse target groups, the services of the Child Focus Helpline are available via the website, by phone, SMS and email. There is also the free and anonymous helpline 103, which is accessible from 10.00 to midnight every day. The helpline of the Flemish Department of Welfare, Steunpunt Algemeen Welzijnswerk, en de Vertrouwenscentra Kindermishandeling is also available if the complaint is related to any kind of cyber harassment. Phone: 1712. Finally, the complaint line Phone: 0800 20808 of the Commissioner for Children’s Rights of the Flemish Parliament exists, if the complaint is related to cyber harassment of an under 18 years of age person. The complaint line listens, investigates and moderates. That means that anyone can call them for advice.
- **Youth Panel:** “Young people contribute to the design of awareness-raising actions, tools and materials. The consultation strategy for young people consists of two different pillars. Firstly, the SIC is in permanent contact with French- and Dutch-speaking young people via two Facebook groups with 10 participants each. Participants are aged between 13 and 17 years old and inform the SIC about what they are doing on the web and why. Secondly, the SIC regularly sets up meetings with larger groups of young people in order to obtain representativeness and enlarge its scope.”

¹ Useful Information is available [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

² More info is available [here](#) and [here](#).

- **CyberHelp APP:** This is a joint initiative by the Belgian Federal Police, Mons University, the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, non-profit organisation *Sors de ta bulle* and Child Focus launched in January 2020. The app is intended for students who are being cyberbullied and they can report it through the app, which includes a button that enables them to take a screenshot of their chat history with a bully and send this content to the people in charge of dealing with such situations at their school. Schools that sign up for the project also undertake to sanction bullying. Evidence can be saved and reported instantly.
- **Important sites:** The [official site of the police](#) as well as the [official site of the General Directorate of Security and Prevention](#) have a section dedicated to Cyber-Security offering advice and useful information for the audience. Other sites providing information on cyber-bullying are [webetic.be](#), [clicksafe.be](#), [cyberhate.be](#), [stopcyberhate.be](#) as well as the official [site of UNIA](#), the equality body of Belgium.
- The [Flemish Anti-Bullying Intervention](#) was launched in 2004 and its goal is to reduce bullying in schools through changes in the school and social environment. The practise focuses on three groups: adult stakeholders (including teachers, staff and parents), students, and those involved in bullying as either bullies or victims. The project's main objective is to raise awareness regarding bullying and to develop social skills and strategies to help address, confront and handle bullying.

Bulgaria

- **BIK – Better Internet for Kids:** tool used to compare and exchange knowledge on policy making and implementation in EU member states on the themes and recommendations of the European Strategy for a Better Internet for Kids. In Bulgaria there are no significant policies that address the four pillars of BIK:
 - a. **High-quality content for children and adolescents:** No existing policy in this area in Bulgaria.
 - b. **Stepping up awareness and empowerment:**
 - i. Education and media literacy are part of broader policies and education programmes.
 - ii. General awareness and empowerment are part of broader policies – mentioned in the National Programme for Child Protection (State Agency for Child Protection).
 - c. **Creating a safer environment for children online:** No specific policy, but also mentioned in the National Programme for Child Protection.
 - d. **Legislation and law enforcement against child sexual abuse and exploitation:** Penal Code.
- There is **no formal coordinating body** for policies relating to children's use of the Internet.
- **Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre:** It is facilitated by an advisory board (Public Council on Safer Internet Use). It is dedicated to raising awareness, training, consulting and acting on reports about online sexual abuse and exploitation of minors. In 2017, the Safer Internet Centre developed [two parallel projects](#):
 1. **From Digital Competence to Digital Citizenship:** Methodology for primary school students that use elements of Montessori pedagogy to develop five core

competencies: a) information literacy, b) communication and cooperation, c) creating digital content, d) safety and e) solving problems. It can be integrated into schools' curricula.

2. **From Digital Childhood to Digital Citizenship:** Creation of an expert council to update the methodology and develop a new Digital Media Literacy (DML) guidebook.
- **Cyberscout Training Programme (2017):** The programme uses peer-to-peer training methods for raising awareness of the risks of the Internet and the ways to combat those risks among children from 9 to 15 years old. The goal is to create young cyber scouts across Bulgaria who are young people who use the Internet in a safe and responsible manner and serve as an example to their peers.
 - **Mechanisms for reporting cyberbullying:**
 - Cybercrime Department of the Ministry of Interior
 - Bulgarian Safer Internet Centre

Cyprus³

- **Applicable law:** There is no specific law regarding cyberbullying. However, there is the "[National Strategy for a Better Internet for Children in Cyprus](#)" which aims to inform and educate on digital security issues students, teachers and parents, so that they become alert and responsible users of digital technologies. It concerns the period between 2018-2023 and includes an action plan for its implementation and monitoring.⁴ The work for this document is set up under the Cyber Security Strategy of the Republic of Cyprus, for the National Program on Education/Information, especially for children, teachers and parents. The National Strategy has taken into account the guidelines of the European strategy "Better Internet for children" and adopted ideas from other strategies and actions at the national, European and international levels while adapting the recommendations to the Cypriot context.
- On a general note, there is a [list](#) of relevant articles that could be deemed applicable in cyberbullying situations namely: the Law of 2018 on the Protection of Natural Persons Against the Processing of Personal Data and the Free Movement of this Data (Law 125 (I) / 2018); the General Regulation on Data Protection (EU) 2016/679 of 27 April 2016; the 2014 Law on Preventing and Combating Sexual Abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Pornography; the Law on the Processing of Personal Data Law 138 (j) / 2001; the on the regulation of electronic communications and postal Services Law-112 (i) / 2004; the Law Providing for the Protection of Privacy of Private Communication 92 (I) / 96 and the Law providing for the maintenance of telecommunications data for the purpose of investigating serious criminal offences 183 (j) / 2007.
- The [CyberEthics](#) (Cyprus Safe Internet Center) project, which has been operating in Cyprus since 2006, promotes the safe use of the Internet in Cyprus and serves the needs of all people living on the island. It focuses on fighting child pornography, racism, gender discrimination

³ Useful information is available [here](#) and [here](#).

⁴ On the [site](#), it was saying that it concerned the period 2017-2020. The [link](#) to the strategy refers to the period of 2018-2023.

and inappropriate use of other people's personal data. CyberEthics is co-funded by the European Union Safer Internet Program (2012-2014).

- **Cybersafety:** In connection to the centre, Cybersafety project I was launched during 2016 - 2018 and since 2019 Cybersafety II has been in force. The CyberSafety II project continues the work of the Cyprus Safe Internet Center, with the participation of even more stakeholders, in order to promote a secure online culture and to strengthen the creative, innovative and critical citizens of the digital society in which we live. The project is implemented through:
 - educational programs, through which the active participation of children and adolescents, teachers and parents is encouraged;
 - a Helpline 1480 ensuring that all users can receive real-time advice and support on issues related to their use of the Internet and digital technologies;⁵
 - a Hotline 1480 ensuring that all users can report illegal content or actions related to child sexual abuse content;
 - tools to support new priorities at the European and national levels, such as protecting personal data and tackling cyberbullying.
 - In addition, a [Youth Panel](#) which allows young people to express their views and exchange knowledge and experiences concerning their use of digital and online technologies, as well as tips on how to stay safe. They also advise on the strategy for the creative use of digital and online technologies with safety and responsibility, help create innovative resources, and disseminate eSafety messages to their peers and other audiences. The CYberSafety Youth panel also participates in the Better Internet for Kids (BIK) agenda in Europe.
- Another institution providing important information on cyberbullying matters is the **Cyprus Pedagogical Institute** through an [awareness portal](#), which is the main source of raising awareness material that the CYbersafety project is proposing. Moreover, the Department of Educational Technology offers amongst other annual recurring programs regarding the use of digital technologies and the Internet.
- **Little educators for Internet 2.0** is a Program of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, which aims at the involvement of students in the education of other people for the creative use and safe use of the Internet. With the guidance of their schoolteachers and the support of experts in the subject, young educators are invited to develop an action plan for their school unit and to plan and implement actions, to inform on issues related to the Internet.
- **Safe School for the Internet** Program aims to provide information concerning Internet issues and to cultivate relevant skills targeting students, teachers, parents and generally the wider school community. The Program also aims to help the participant schools to anticipate and address the dangers that may arise from using the Internet. Schools that choose to participate in the Program can claim the certification of their school as a Safe Internet School by implementing the appropriate actions. Schools will also be offered the opportunity to get in touch with experts and collaborators of the CyberSafety Center.

Estonia

⁵ For the statistics check [here](#)

- Call for an **Internet Code of Good Practice to Combat Cyberbullying**.
- The **NGO KivaSchoo** deals with bullying in schools, but it generally does not include cyberbullying.
- There are **reporting mechanisms in schools**, by which people can file complaints to schools (or employers in the case of bullying in the workplace).
- There are **legal provisions in Estonia that criminalise hatred and discrimination** based on ethnicity, race, religion or political views (Constitution, article 12), and that determines that incitement of hatred is an offence against equality because it represents a danger to the life, health or property of the targeted person (Penal Code, article 15). However, these legal provisions do not cover online hate speech or cyberbullying, unless it can be proven that it results in danger to life, health or property of the targeted person.
- There is **no specific mechanism in place to report hate speech and hate crimes**⁶.
- **KiVa Programme**: It is an anti-bullying program developed in Finland and applied worldwide. It is research-based and provides schools with tools to combat bullying.
- **#SuurimJulgus (Greatest Courage)**: Campaign aiming to raise awareness of cyberbullying. It is a joint project involving Telia (a communications operator), the Estonian Union for Child Welfare, the Ministry of Education and Research, and other partners, and was launched in 2017⁷. Ultimately, young people can contact a helpline when they are facing situations of cyberbullying. Furthermore, it also provides information and materials to students, parents and teachers on how to deal with cyberbullying situations.
- **Targalt Internetis**: The goal of the project is a charter Internet use by young people and their parents and the prevention of the spread of child sexual abuse material online. It includes training sessions and seminars for children, parents, teachers and social workers; awareness-raising events; creation of materials for children, parents and teachers; assistance and counselling (Helpline); a web-based hotline (**Vihjeliin**); cooperation with other Estonian and European stakeholders and participation in INHOPE and INSAFE cooperation networks.

Germany⁸

- Use of **criminal law provisions** that are not specifically directed at the online world. E.g.:
 - Stalking (section 238 of the German Criminal Code)
 - Child abuse (section 176 of the German Criminal Code)
 - Insult (section 185 of the German Criminal Code)
 - Defamation and Intentional Defamation (sections 186 and 187 of the German Criminal Code)⁹
- The **Act to Improve Enforcement of the Law in Social Networks** (2017) introduced compliance obligations for social networks, which are now required to remove content that is unlawful

⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/estonia-nationalreporting-en/pdf/16808a36c3>

⁷ <https://www.telia.ee/en/uudised/campaign-against-cyberbullying-launches-in-estonia/>

⁸ https://eucpn.org/sites/default/files/document/files/thematic_paper_youth_internet_safety_0.pdf

⁹ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cybercrime/-/germany-action-against-cybermobbing>

under the German Criminal Code. The act also determines that social networks can be fined up to 50 million Euros for failing to respect compliance obligations¹⁰.

- Call for an **Internet Code of Good Practice to Combat Cyberbullying**.
- **FearNot! A computer-based anti-bullying programme to foster peer intervention:** Computer app aimed at children between the ages of 6 and 12. The child plays the role of the “friend” of the victim, being able to influence the storyline. The app was implemented and evaluated in Germany (and the UK) in the school year of 2007-2008.
- The **German Safer Internet Centre** includes the “Internet-Beschwerdestelle.de”, the awareness centre “klicksafe”, the hotline “jugendschutz.net” and the child and youth telephone helpline “Nummer gegen Kummer”¹¹.
 - [Internet-Beschwerdestelle.de](https://www.internet-beschwerdestelle.de): It has been active since 2004 and it informs Internet users about online safety and allows them to submit complaints.
 - [Klicksafe](https://www.klicksafe.de): It is an awareness campaign that promotes media literacy and safe and proper utilisation of the Internet and new media. The work done by Klicksafe is focused firstly on education/awareness-raising for issues related to Internet safety (“awareness leading to improvement”). The project targets children and adolescents, as well as parents, teachers, educators, organisations, institutions, enterprises and providers of Internet pages. Moreover, Klicksafe Youth Panel is group of students (media scouts; representatives from different secondary schools) who help younger students navigate the online world.
 - [Jugendschutz.net](https://www.jugendschutz.net): It entails a multidisciplinary approach, whereby it combines research, measures against violations of the protection of minors, as well as sensitization of providers, parents and young people to the risks of the Internet. The platform supports young people, parents and professions with brochures, flyers and even child-friendly websites, such as [Click tips](#) and [Kompass Social Media](#). It is, ultimately, a hotline/an alert platform for reporting illegal content online (e.g.: child pornography, racism and xenophobia); it looks closely at risks in services specifically attractive to young users.
 - [Nummer gegen Kummer](https://www.nummer-gegen-kummer.de): It is a contact point (helpline) for young people and parents dealing with any kind of problem, including cyberbullying, sexual abuse, suicidal thoughts, etc. Those seeking help talk to trained volunteer counsellors who can provide information about professional help or recommend useful sources of information.
- [FragFINN.de](#): Similar to a search engine (e.g. Google) but targeting a younger audience. It includes child-appropriate Internet offers and campaigns on youth media protection and media literacy (in German).
- [Schau Hin!](#): the initiative provides information on media and media use empowering parents to educate their children on the media, its opportunities and risks.
- [Medienschouts](#): Similar to the Bulgarian initiative. Peer-education approach.

¹⁰ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cybercrime/germany#{%225438123%22:0}}>

¹¹ <https://www.internet-beschwerdestelle.de/en/partner.html>

Greece¹²

- **Applicable Law:** There is no provision under the Greek Legislation directly referring to cyberbullying. However, aspects of some criminal activities that compose "bullying" have been included in Article 312 of the Penal Code. In cases of cyberbullying, Articles 348A, 348B and 348C of the Penal Code (child pornography, attracting children for sexual reasons and child pornography, respectively) could also be applicable. Article 22 of Law 2472/1997, which punishes the offence of illegal dissemination of personal data, is also relevant.¹³ Generally, a list of general applicable articles can be found.¹⁴
- **The school community has a duty to protect all its members and provide a safe, healthy environment.** In Greece, a circular is sent to secondary schools for the "collection of good practices of secondary school for prevention and response to violence and aggression among students", after a proposal of the Ombudsman for Children.
- The [Hellenic Center for Safe Internet](#) started operating in July 2016 under the auspices of the Institute of Technology and Research and more specifically of the Institute of Informatics. It is the official representative in Greece of the Pan-European Organizations INSAFE / INHOPE that formulate the European strategy for a safe and quality Internet as well as the representative of Greece for the Expert Group on Safer Internet for Children of the European Commission. It provides information, assistance and support to young and old Internet users by developing three distinct actions
- Through the website [SaferInternet4Kids.gr](#) one can be informed and get material related to the safe use of the Internet and the use of social media networks. This information portal is addressed to parents and teachers as well as to teenagers and children and includes appropriate multimedia material, which is approved by the Ministry of Education and Religions.
- Through the [Helpline](#) (available by phone at +30210-6007686), specialized psychologists provide support and advice in cases of harmful content and conduct, such as excessive Internet use, bullying or exposure to inappropriate online content. The helpline operation is part of the prevention centre of the Diagnostic Imaging and Prevention Centre. It primarily addresses minors, parents and educators, but can also be consulted by the public, industry, government, and public services.
- The [Open Line of Complaints](#) called SafeLine is the hotline for reporting illegal content and conduct on the Internet. SafeLine's primary concern is the elimination of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) from the Internet, with the fight against illegal content on the Internet being its priority. It collaborates with Internet service providers, the Greek Research and Technology

¹² Useful information is available [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

¹³ <https://www.lawspot.gr/nomika-nea/i-nomiki-diastrasi-toy-sholikoy-ekfovismoy-bullying> and <https://symvstathmos.files.wordpress.com/2019/02/ce9dcebfccebfcceb8ceb5cf84ceb9cebaf8ccf82-cea3cf85cebcecb2cebfcf85cebbceb5cf85cf84ceb9cebaf8ccf82-ce9fceb4ceb7ceb3cf8ccf82-ceb3ceb9ceb1-cf84cebf-cyberbullying.pdf> and [here](#).

¹⁴ <https://dian.gr/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/The-Greek-Law-towards-Cyberbullying.pdf>

Network, the Greek School Network, with research and cultural institutions, and with the Greek police and INTERPOL through the European Agency INHOPE¹⁵.

- The **Greek Youth Panel** is composed of 27 members from various locations in Greece coming from various educational levels. They participate, exchange opinions and receive education from events organised at the pan-European level.
- **CyberKid** of the Cyber Crime Division of the Hellenic Police can also report instances of cyberbullying, hate speech online and any kind of crime online.¹⁶
- **Curriculum-based Anti-bullying Programme**: This anti-bullying intervention, ongoing since 2013, aims to address bullying at schools, particularly among children between 6 and 12 years of age. The practice has four objectives:
 - to decrease overall bullying and victimisation;
 - to increase the number of children helping the victims of bullying (defenders) and reduce the number of children who remain separate from the bullying situation (outsiders);
 - to enhance students' confidence to encourage their intervention in bullying situations;
 - to promote positive interactions between peers.
- **Life Without Bullying**: In force since 2015, this initiative aims to raise awareness around the eradication of bullying among children, adolescents and their parents. It is designed and implemented by the non-profit organisation *Κέντρο Μέριμνας Οικογένειας και Παιδιού* (KMOP – Children and Family Care Centre). The program includes:
 - An online platform where children and adolescents who are victims of bullying can get direct, free of charge, anonymous and confidential advice and support, parents and educators can express concerns, exchange views, seek advice and discuss ways to prevent and eradicate bullying through this platform, children, adolescents, parents and adults access the electronic library including helpful information related to bullying;
 - in-person training sessions that are delivered to students at schools;
 - social campaigns and strategies;
 - events in Greece to promote awareness of the website.

Italy

Italian law provides certain concrete protection measures related to the cyberbullying phenomenon:

- [Law n. 71](#) (2017) Provisions for the protection of minors for the prevention and contrast of the phenomenon of cyberbullying.
- [Law n.69](#) (2019) Protection of victims of domestic and gender violence - it introduces into the penal code (in article 612-ter, Criminal Code) the crime of illicit diffusion of sexually explicit images or videos, Revenge Porn (a term which the legislator, however, does not use).

¹⁵ For statistics check [here](#).

¹⁶ For more information on its work and reporting structure see [here](#).

The right to be forgotten based on the EU regulation 2016/679 has been introduced into the Italian law:

- Italian Government Legislative Decree No. 196 of 2003, the so-called Privacy Code;
- Italian Government Legislative Decree No. 101 of 2018 ,containing provisions to supplement and amend the Privacy Code of 2003. The new regulations have been in force since 19 September 2018.

Best practice examples concerning cyberbullying in the Italian context:

- **The SIM T: Safer Internet Month in Trentino**
 - Organized by the Family Agency and the Digital Citizenship Area, whose start date always coincides with the international Safer Internet Day (SID).
 - Since 2013, the SID international event in Trentino has been accompanied by SIM T (Safer Internet Month Trentino), a month-long calendar of initiatives involving the whole community and in particular schools, both as students and as parents and teachers.
 - In each of its editions, SIM T has seen the participation of an average of 1,500 students from lower secondary schools and the first two years of upper secondary schools, who have been involved in workshops organized in the participating institutes (each year different for their address and territory), during the closing performances at the Santa Chiara Auditorium in Trento, and in thematic conferences in the schools' auditoriums.
- **Safer Internet Day Women - SIDonne: la riflessione su genere e nuove technologies**
 - In 2014, SIM T was accompanied by Safer Internet Day Women (SIDonne), introducing and accompanying an in-depth study on how women are seen on the web. The aim of the debate was to discuss the difficulties in the relationship between genders and the web.
- **SIM T Year 2018: the "Digital Family Responsibility" novelty**
 - Alongside workshops, meetings and conferences, the latest edition of SIM T 2018 saw the launch of the "Digital Family Responsibility" trial. Starting from the consideration that today's young people are born and grow up immersed also in the virtual world, in coherence with the mission of the Family Agency and observing the activities of SIM T, the need to actively involve families in this new educational course in which the web replaces or diminishes parental authority has become increasingly evident.
 - The initiative, experimented for the first time in 2018, involved 32 groups of parents and children enrolled in various schools, and at the end parents and children reported on the experience and received the first "Digital Family Responsibility" certificates.
- **Teatrocounseling®**
 - These techniques lead the group to a simulation work that actualizes, in the here and now, the relational complexity proposed by the social world. In other words, the simulation mechanism is recreated to understand the other, simulating in myself and in the group context, the other's state of mind to reveal, in the protected setting of the fiction of the guided encounter, other truths, ways out or emotions.
- **"Bully free schools" certification**

- The "bully free school" UNI/PrD 42:2018 certification is issued by the CSQA, a nationally accredited body, and is designed to help schools set up a professional intervention procedure in the event of bullying or cyberbullying.
- The certification represents a set of "actions" that the school puts in place: a training plan for teachers, ATA (administrative-technical-assistant) staff, students and parents; precise procedures to deal with any phenomena that can be traced back to bullying, ranging from the process of reporting it, its taking charge, the management of the problem that has emerged and the measures put in place to resolve it.
- **Legality projects: PAT Iprase (Istituto provinciale Ricerca Aggiornamento Educativo)**
 - These initiatives aim to support and accustom students to exercising their citizenship by using the Net and the Media in a critical and conscious way, to know how to respect specific rules, to be competent citizens of today.
- **PAT [Bullies volunteering at Anffas](#)**
 - Initiative to raise awareness of the most vulnerable people and to work together in the voluntary sector
- **[Programma KiVa](#)**
 - KiVa is a Finnish anti-bullying programme developed, with funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture, by the University of Turku. The programme is evidence-based, which means that the effectiveness of the KiVa programme has been scientifically proven. KiVa offers schools a wide range of tools and materials to tackle bullying.

Serbia

- **Programme for Prevention of Digital Violence:** It was developed by the Serbian Minister of Education, in collaboration with UNICEF. The programme focuses on the prevention of digital media abuse, and its target group were students of primary and secondary schools, plus their teachers and parents. Young people and adults alike were trained to identify and respond to cyberbullying and to use the Internet safely. Within the scope of the programme, the book "Cyberbullying - Prevention and Response" was developed and distributed to all participating schools. Furthermore, a Facebook SOS application was created to help students exposed to cyberbullying, as well as a Facebook page called "Choose your words, put a stop to hate!" (along with a campaign under the same name), to raise awareness about the use of digital media¹⁷.
- **Family Safe Net Project:** Launched 2018/2019 by UNICEF and Telenor (communications company), and implemented by the Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and the Uzice Child Rights Centre NGO. The project developed a digital guide to online safety ("[Children and Internet – Smart from the Start](#)" available in Serbian), aimed at children, parents/guardians, teachers, educators in general. The guide provides information on how to use the Internet and digital devices in a safe manner. Furthermore, a series of cartoons on this subject were developed.¹⁸

¹⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/state-report-serbia/pdfa/168094afec>

¹⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/serbia/en/press-releases/first-digital-childrens-guide-online-safety-serbia>

- **National Contact Centre for Child Safety on the Internet:** Established by the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications in 2017. It is a central system for applications, education and counselling regarding child safety on the use of the Internet and digital tools. Citizens can report harmful, inappropriate or illegal content or behaviour on the Internet; have access to educational material; receive advice on benefits and risks of using the Internet and safe methods for using new technologies.¹⁹
- **Smart and Safe Platform:** Established by the Ministry of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications. The goal is to educate and raise awareness of digital literacy, digital competencies and digital security culture among all citizens of Serbia. Specifically related to child security on the Internet, the platform has:
 - A contact centre dealing with the prevention and response to dangerous situations for children in the digital environment. The Center cooperates with the Prosecutor's Office for High-Tech Crime, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Education, the Centers for Social Work and health centers.
 - Tools with information on digital safety
 - A digital library European and National information on topics related to children safety (e.g. sexual abuse, child safety on the Internet, bullying, and others).

Slovakia²⁰

- **National Concept of Children's protection in the digital environment**
- **Criminal Code** provisions applied to cyberviolence. E.g.:
 - Stalking (section 360a of Criminal Code)
 - Defamation (Section 373 of the Criminal Code)
 - Harm Done to Rights of Another (Section 375, 376 of the Criminal Code)
 - Manufacturing of child pornography (Section 368 of the Criminal Code)
 - Establishment, Support and Promotion of Movements Directed at the Suppression of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms (Section 421 of the Criminal Code)
- Call for an **Internet Code of Good Practice to Combat Cyberbullying**.
- The **Slovakian Safer Internet Centre** has operated since 2007 and it exists to promote safer and better use of the Internet and mobile technologies among children and adolescents. The awareness centre (AC) is a crucial part of SK SIC with the responsibility for informing and empowering children and youth (including children and youth at risk as described further), parents, teachers, social workers, and caretakers about better and safer use of the Internet, building on enhanced digital resource centres (repositories). The centre continuously implements the goals and aims of the Safer Internet Programme, Safer Internet Plus programme and CEF in Telecom instrument. SK SIC operates 10 websites and 7 social media pages.
- **National online helpline services** for reporting and dealing with harmful contact (grooming), conduct (cyberbullying) and content are operated by Linka destkej istoty (LDI; Child safety line).

¹⁹ <https://www.srbija.gov.rs/tekst/en/129990/child-safety-on-the-internet.php>

²⁰ Useful information is available [here](#) and [here](#)

- The **Slovak hotline**, operated by eSlovensko Bratislava, has been in operation since 2010 and is responsible for receiving and managing reports and data on online illegal child sexual abuse. [Stopline.sk](#) has the function of a national centre for reporting illegal content or activities on the Internet. As a result of the cooperation of all parties involved in this project, the regular publication of statistical information on illegal content and activities on the Slovak Internet.
- The **youth panel** is a national empowerment network of young representatives used as an advisory body on safer Internet issues. The youth panel helps to tailor the activities and tools within the project to better address the needs of young people.

Slovenia²¹

- There is no official definition of cyberbullying in **Slovenian legislation**²². You may find a list of relevant legislative actions [here](#).
- Call for an **Internet Code of Good Practice to Combat Cyberbullying**.
- **Safer Internet Centre Slovenia** is the national project promoting and ensuring a better Internet for kids. This is an EU-initiated and co-financed project by the European Union's Connecting Europe Facility (CEF); in Slovenia financial support also comes from the Ministry of Public Administration and the Information Security Administration of the Republic of Slovenia. The project is run by a consortium of partners coordinated by the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana, Academic and Research Network of Slovenia (ARNES), the Slovenian Association of friends of youth (ZPMS) and the Youth Information and Counselling Center of Slovenia (Zavod MISSS). The project is the continuation of a series of previous projects undertaken within the Safer Internet Programme and CEF Programme in Slovenia since 2005. The Safer Internet Centre Slovenia has three components: an awareness centre, the toll-free helpline, TOM telephone, for young people and their parents who find themselves in Internet-related trouble (116 111) and the hotline, Spletno oko. More specifically:
 - National Awareness Centre Safe.si: aims to raise awareness through online and offline activities on how to use the Internet and mobile devices in a safe and responsible manner²³. The [Slovenian Safer Internet Centre](#) (SIC) exists to promote safer and better use of the Internet and mobile technologies among children and adolescents. As an awareness centre, Safe.si raises awareness of its five target groups about safe and responsible use of the Internet and new technologies. The project aims to provide children, teenagers, parents, teachers and social workers with knowledge and tools for guiding, empowering and helping children and teenagers in the digital world.
 - National Helpline [TOM TELEFON](#): counsellors hold confidential conversations with victims of cyberbullying, especially children and adolescents. The counsellors receive adequate training. The helpline TOM TELEFONE also informs and raises awareness of problems faced by young people. It also works directly with children in schools providing various materials on cyberbullying. Anonymity and confidentiality of the

²¹ Useful information available [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)

²² <https://rm.coe.int/slovenia-nationalreporting-en/pdf/16808a38e0>

²³ <https://safe.si/center-za-varnejsi-internet/o-centru>.

conversation and callers are guaranteed. Additionally, questions can also be asked via the contact form on the website of Tom Telefon. A chat room is also available several times a week.

- [Hotline Spletno oko](#): the platform serves as an anonymous online reporting tool for illegal online content, such as child abuse, child pornography, and hate speech.
- Another Institution providing important support around the topic of cyberbullying is the [Agency for Communication Networks and Services \(AKOS\)](#). AKOS has developed the [Gledoskop.si](#) online portal which aims to provide and monitor media content to younger audiences in a responsible manner. It is an important complementary tool for the classification of content that is potentially harmful to minors. It is aimed at supporting unified perceptions of potentially harmful elements among audio-visual media service providers, promote accurate labelling and consequently improve age ratings and protection of children.
- Similarly, an online portal for media and information literacy ([MIL](#)) - [MiPi](#) was developed by AKOS. MiPi was established in June 2019 on a separate domain, with Gledoskop as a part of the whole project. MiPi covers various aspects of MIL that stem from AKOS' competencies and is aimed at raising public awareness of the importance of critical use of media and ICT, responsible creation and message sharing, and the benefits and risks of ICT. Through this website, AKOS also offers advice on information safety, Internet safety, cybersecurity, privacy, data protection, disinformation, media consumption for children, and so on.

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