Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University

Institute for Research on Children, Youth and the Family

# Youth and social media I: Identity, relationships and online risks

Youth Development

Prof. David Šmahel, Ph.D.

Structure of the presentation

1. How much do youths use the internet and technology?
2. What youths do online?
3. The truth about „digital natives"
4. Internet and developmental context.
5. Identity and online identity.
6. Intimacy and relationships on the internet.
7. Gains and risks – classification, examples.
8. Conclusions.

EU Kids Online: Researching Kids in Europe
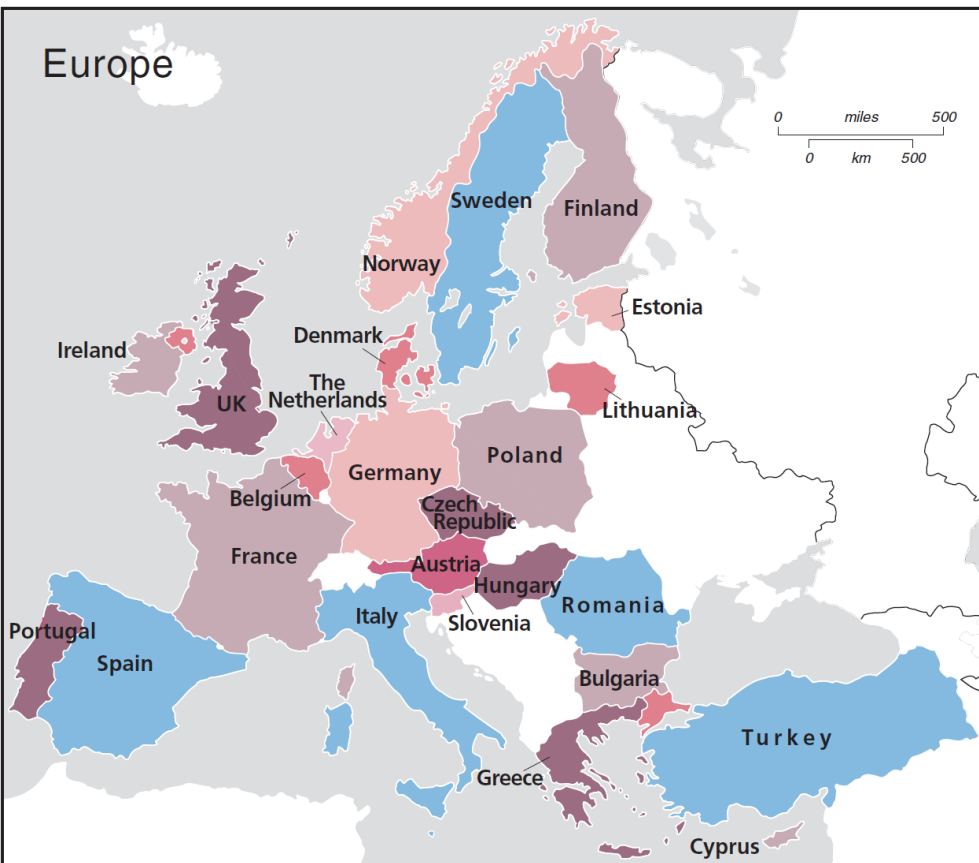
Quantitative research – 2010:

- See figure for 25 participating countries

- Random stratified sample

- 1000 9-16 year olds per country

- Interviews at home, face-to-face

- Self-completion for sensitive questions

- Data from child and parent

Qualitative research – 2013: 9 countries (Belgium, the Czech Republic, Greece, Malta, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and the United Kingdom), interviews and focus groups, 57groups, 113 interviews: N = 380 children
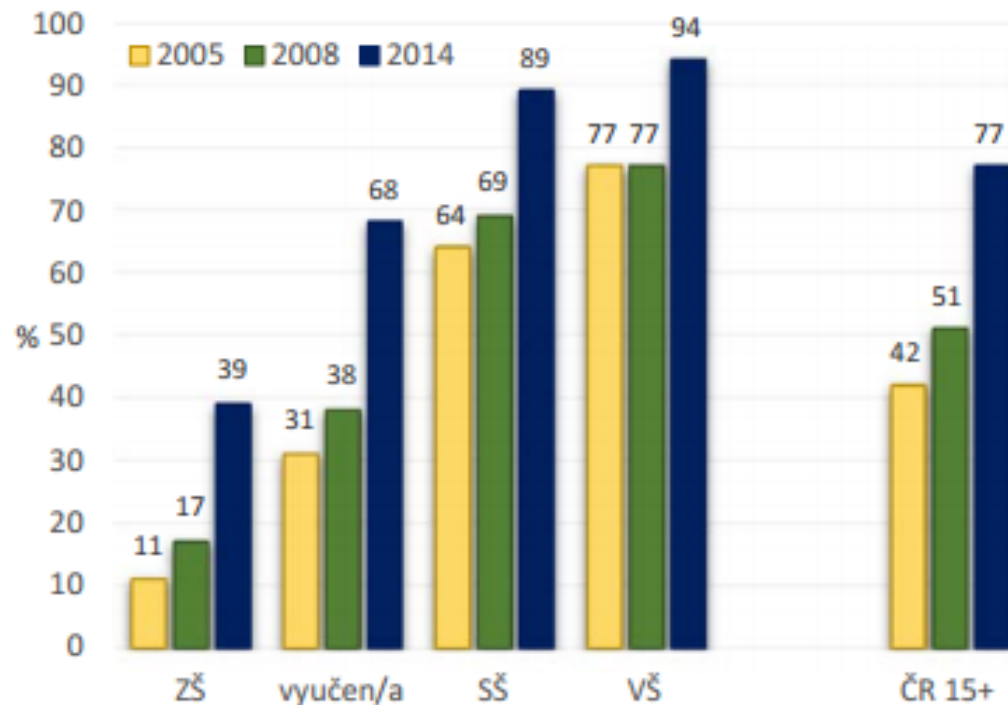
Internet in different age groups 2014
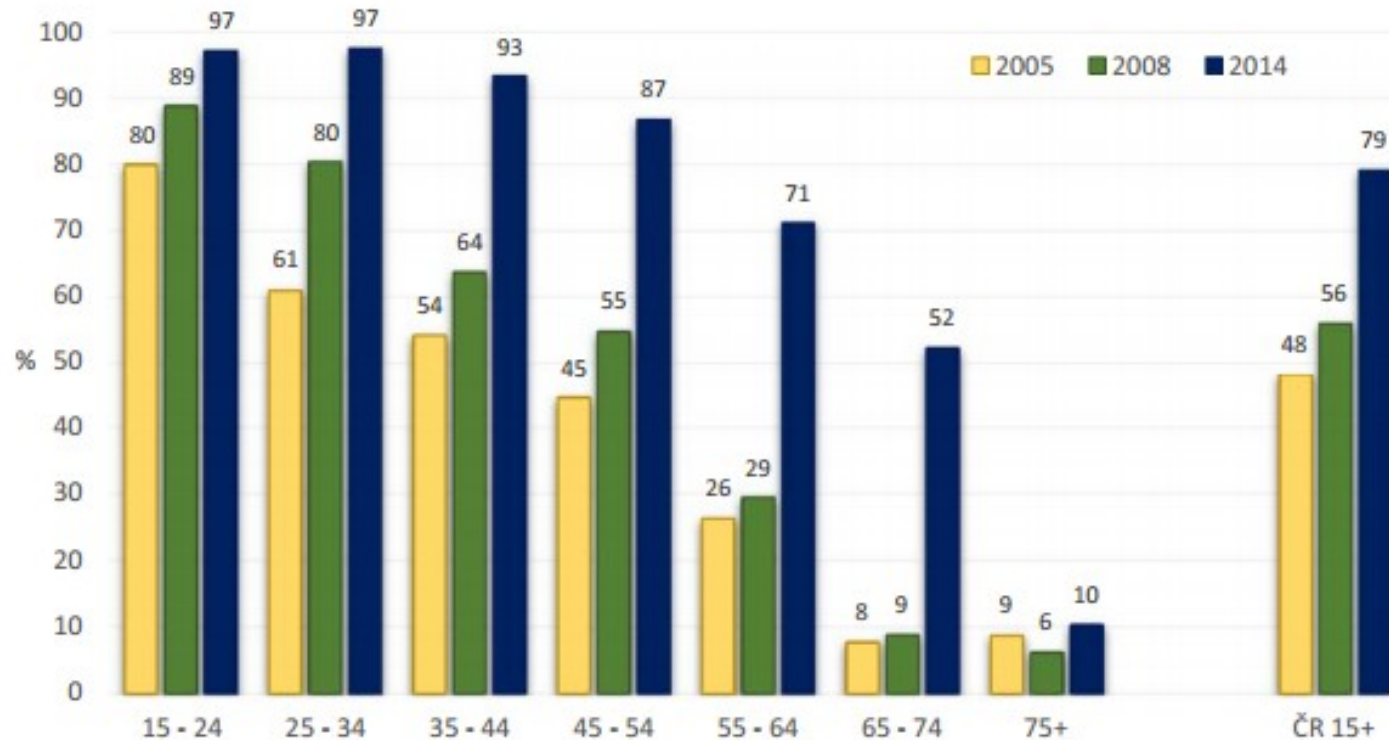
N(2005)=1749; N(2008)=2161; N(2014)=1316 (všichni)

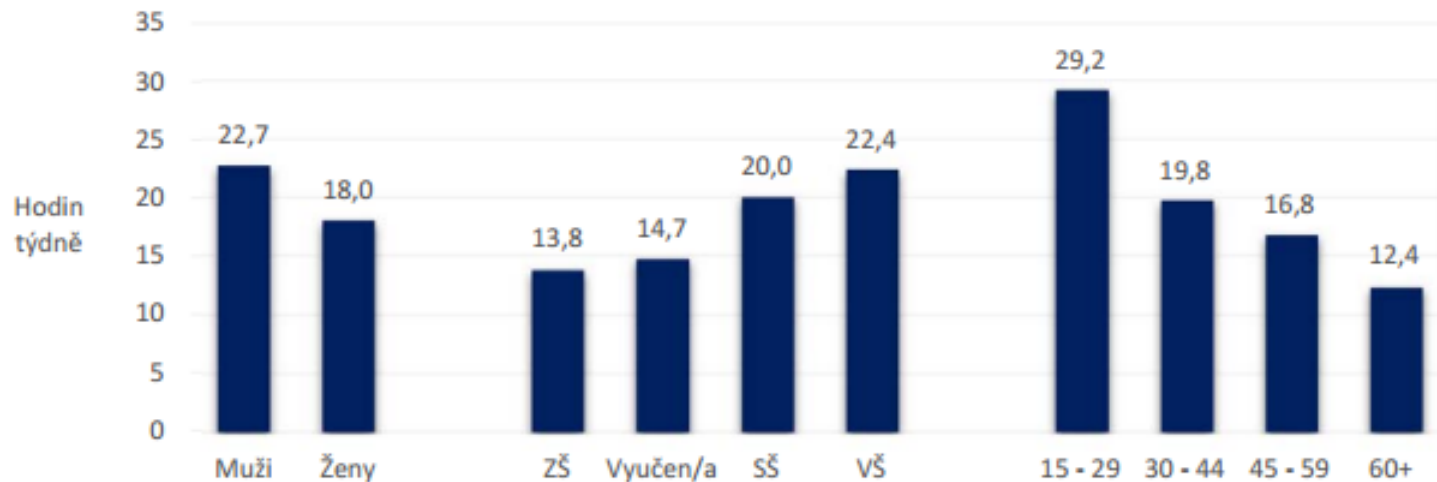(World Internet Project – Lupač, Chrobáková, Sládek, 2014)

Internet and education in 2014

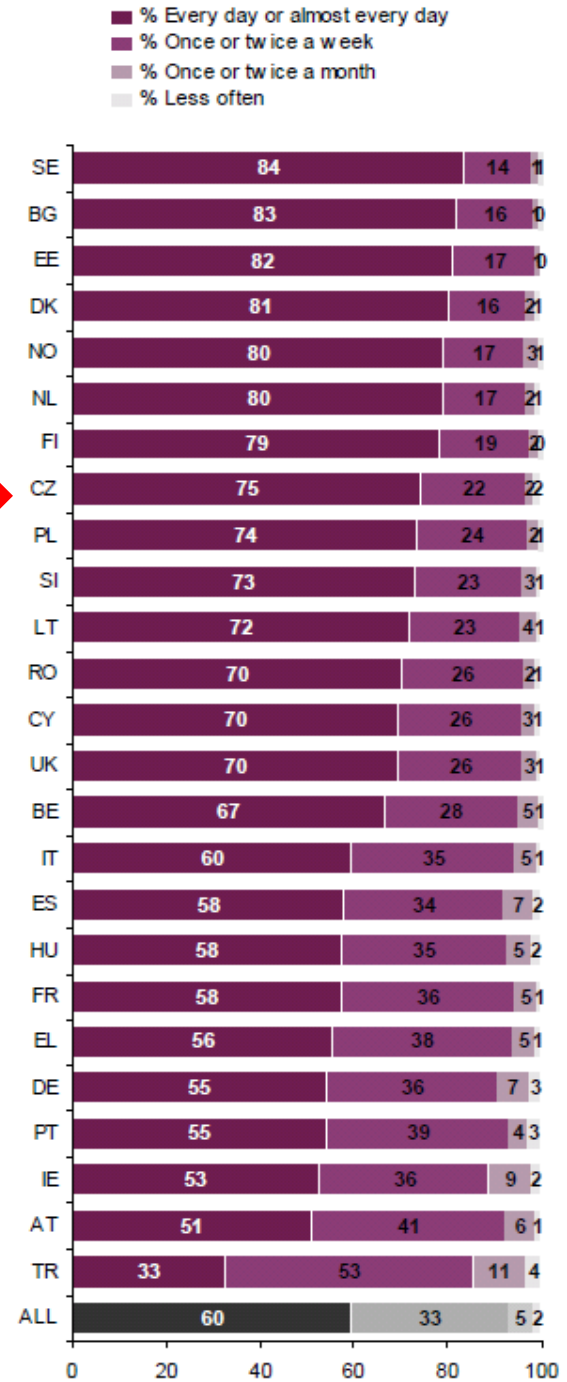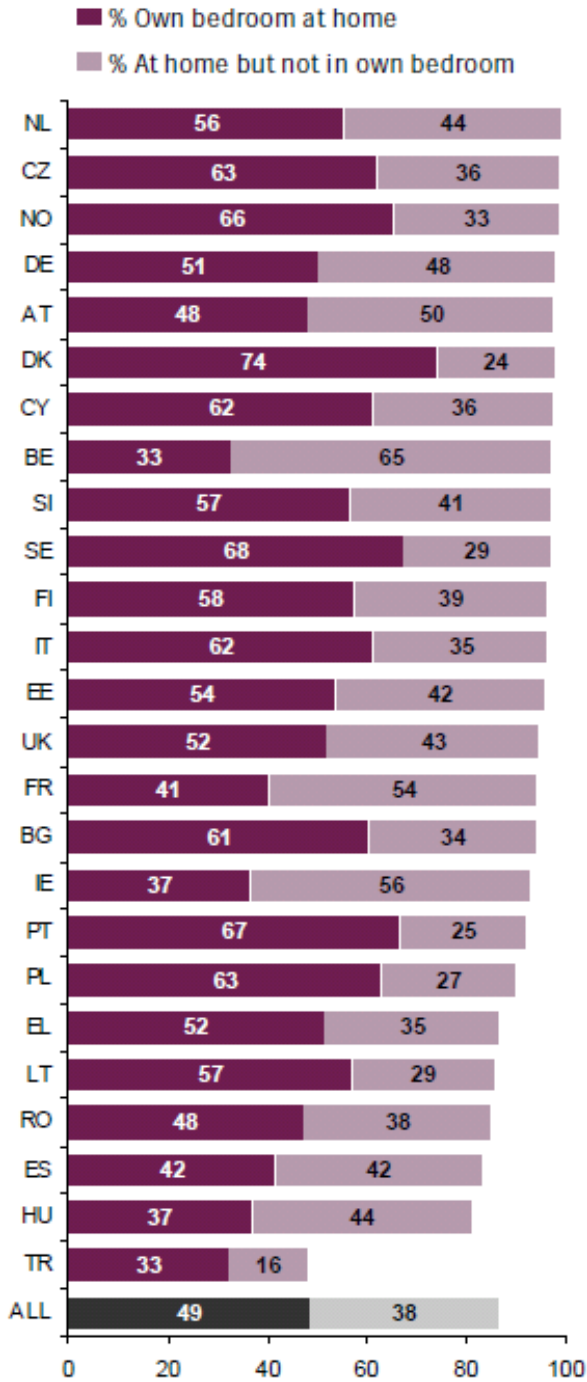N(2005)=1520; N(2008)=1853; N(2014)=1188 (všichni vyjma studujících)

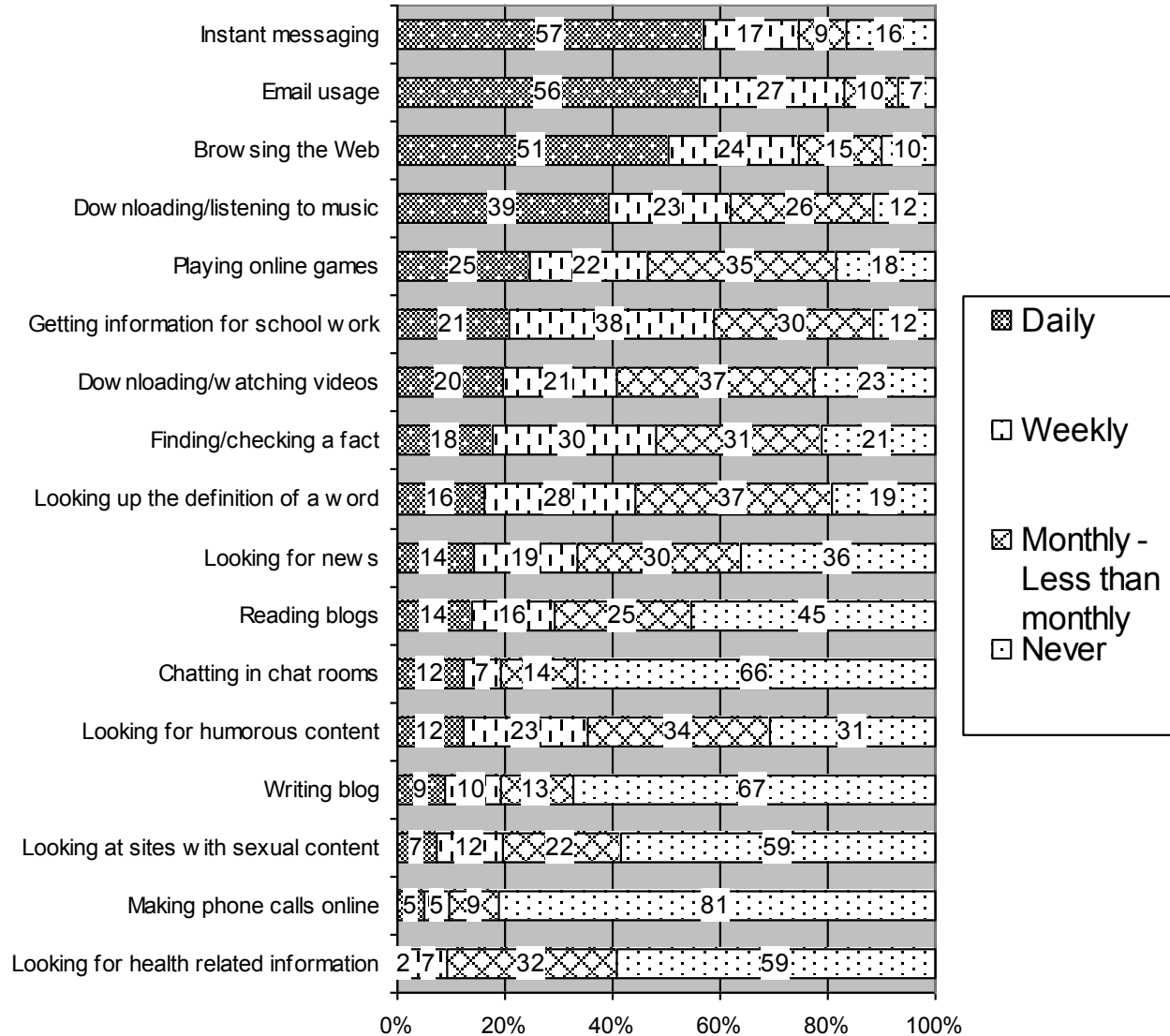(World Internet Project – Lupač, Chrobáková, Sládek, 2014)

(World Internet Project – Lupač, Chrobáková, Sládek, 2014)

Left chart — Access to the internet:
% Own bedroom at home / % At home but not in own bedroom

Country	% Own bedroom at home	% At home but not in own bedroom
NL	56	44
CZ	63	36
NO	66	33
DE	51	48
AT	48	50
DK	74	24
CY	62	36
BE	33	65
SI	57	41
SE	68	29
FI	58	39
IT	62	35
EE	54	42
UK	52	43
FR	41	54
BG	61	34
IE	37	56
PT	67	25
PL	63	27
EL	52	35
LT	57	29
RO	48	38
ES	42	42
HU	37	44
TR	33	16
ALL	49	38

Right chart — Frequency of use:
% Every day or almost every day / % Once or twice a week / % Once or twice a month / % Less often

Country	Every day or almost every day	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Less often
SE	84	14	1	1
BG	83	16	1	0
EE	82	17	1	0
DK	81	16	2	1
NO	80	17	3	1
NL	80	17	2	1
FI	79	19	2	0
CZ	75	22	2	2
PL	74	24	2	1
SI	73	23	3	1
LT	72	23	4	1
RO	70	26	2	1
CY	70	26	3	1
UK	70	26	3	1
BE	67	28	5	1
IT	60	35	5	1
ES	58	34	7	2
HU	58	35	5	2
FR	58	36	5	1
EL	56	38	5	1
DE	55	36	7	3
PT	55	39	4	3
IE	53	36	9	2
AT	51	41	6	1
TR	33	53	11	4
ALL	60	33	5	2

(Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig & Ólafsson, 2011):

What youth do online? (Canada + USA)

Activity	Daily	Weekly	Monthly - Less than monthly	Never
Instant messaging	57	17	9	16
Email usage	56	27	10	7
Browsing the Web	51	24	15	10
Downloading/listening to music	39	23	26	12
Playing online games	25	22	35	18
Getting information for school work	21	38	30	12
Downloading/watching videos	20	21	37	23
Finding/checking a fact	18	30	31	21
Looking up the definition of a word	16	28	37	19
Looking for news	14	19	30	36
Reading blogs	14	16	25	45
Chatting in chat rooms	12	7	14	66
Looking for humorous content	12	23	34	31
Writing blog	9	10	13	67
Looking at sites with sexual content	7	12	22	59
Making phone calls online	5	5	9	81
Looking for health related information	2	7	32	59

Children activities online
World Internet Project 2007: the Czech republic (12 to 18 years)

Activity	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Never
E-mail	62	28	4	5
Instant messaging (MSN, ICQ ..)	56	17	7	16
Downloading/listening to music	41	27	22	10
Playing online games	39	33	20	8
Getting information for school work	27	43	22	7
Downloading/watching videos	27	32	28	13
Looking for humorous content	25	33	29	12
Chatting in chat rooms	22	22	22	31
Looking for news	19	20	26	33
Finding/checking a fact	16	32	38	14
Reading blogs	11	16	31	36
Looking at sites with sexual content	2	8	15	71

Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants (2001)

Conception of M. Prensky (2001):

- **Digital Natives:** youths today are "native speakers" of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet.

- **Digital Immigrants:** Those of us who were not born into the digital world but adopted many or most aspects of the new technology.

- Digital natives: multitasking, random-access, graphics-first, active, connected, fun, fantasy, quick-payoff world of their video games - bored by most of today's education.

Prensky, M. (2001). Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants. *On the Horizon, 9*(5).

Digital natives: Critical review (2008)

Digital natives - two assumptions: (a) sophisticated knowledge of and skills with IT (b) particular learning preferences or styles that differ from earlier generations

- There is poor empirical evidence for both assumptions

- No evidence of widespread disaffection or of different learning style of current generations

- It is not clear if we need to change the education – generations do not differ so dramatically

- No need of revolution – rather evolution

Bennett, S. J., Maton, K. A. & Kervin, L. K. (2008). The 'digital natives' debate: a critical review of the evidence. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 39*(5), 775-786.

Digital wisdom (2009)

Rethinking the conception (Prensky, 2009):

- In 21th century, the distinction between digital natives and digital immigrants is becoming less relevant

- **Digital wisdom**: (a) use of technology to access cognitive power beyond our innate capacity (b) the wisdom in the prudent use of technology to enhance our capabilities

- Technology will not replace intuition, good judgment, problem-solving abilities, and a clear moral compass

Prensky, M. (2009). H. Sapiens Digital: From Digital Immigrants and Digital Natives to Digital Wisdom. *Innovate: Journal of Online Education, 5*(3).

Preferences of Online Communication

[I am more open on the Internet than in real life]
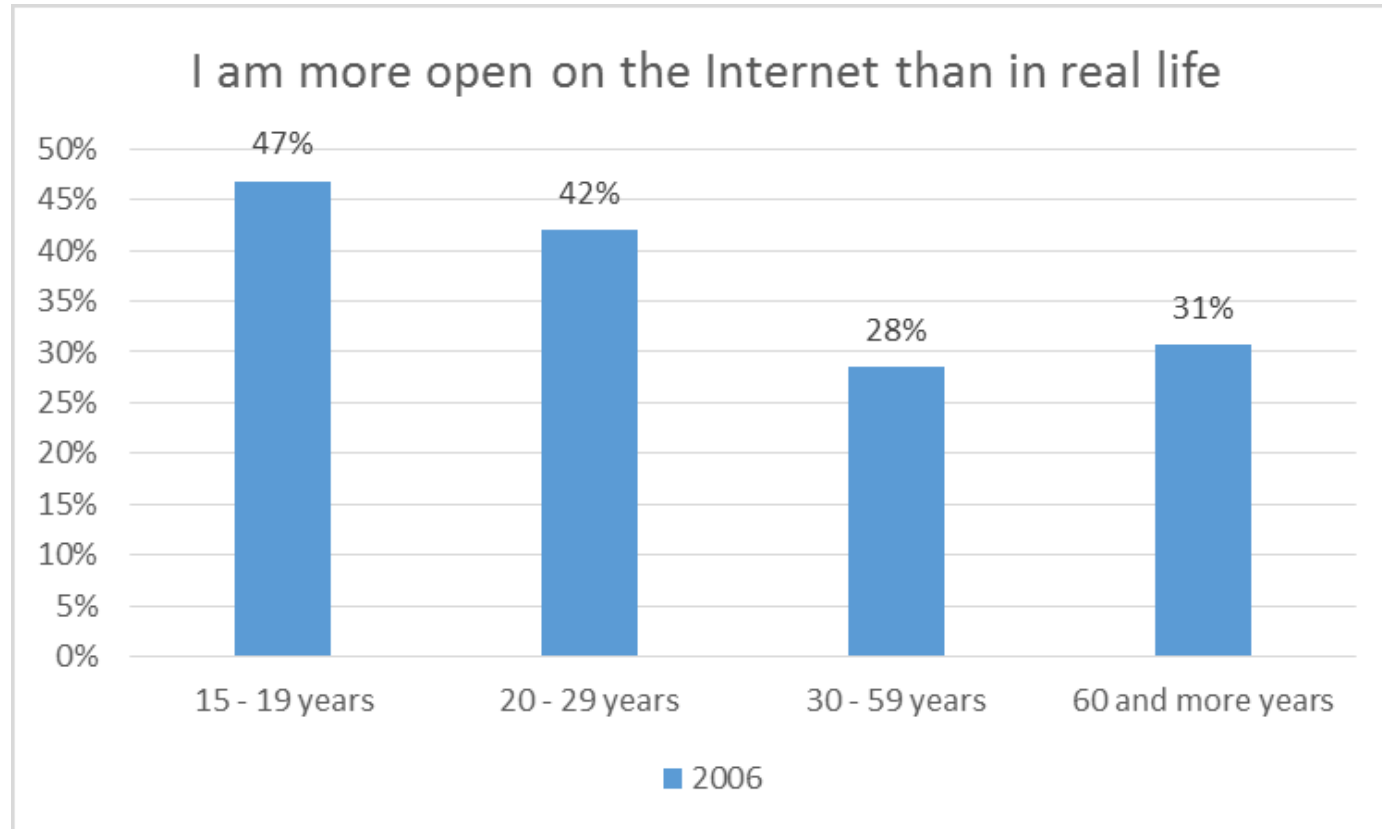
2006 -> Internet Generation!?!

Preferences: trends 2006 - 2014

[I am more open on the Internet than in real life]

Na intenetu jsem otevřenější než v běžném životě

[I am more open on the Internet than in real life]

Na intenetu jsem otevřenější než v běžném životě

Preferences: trends 2006 - 2014
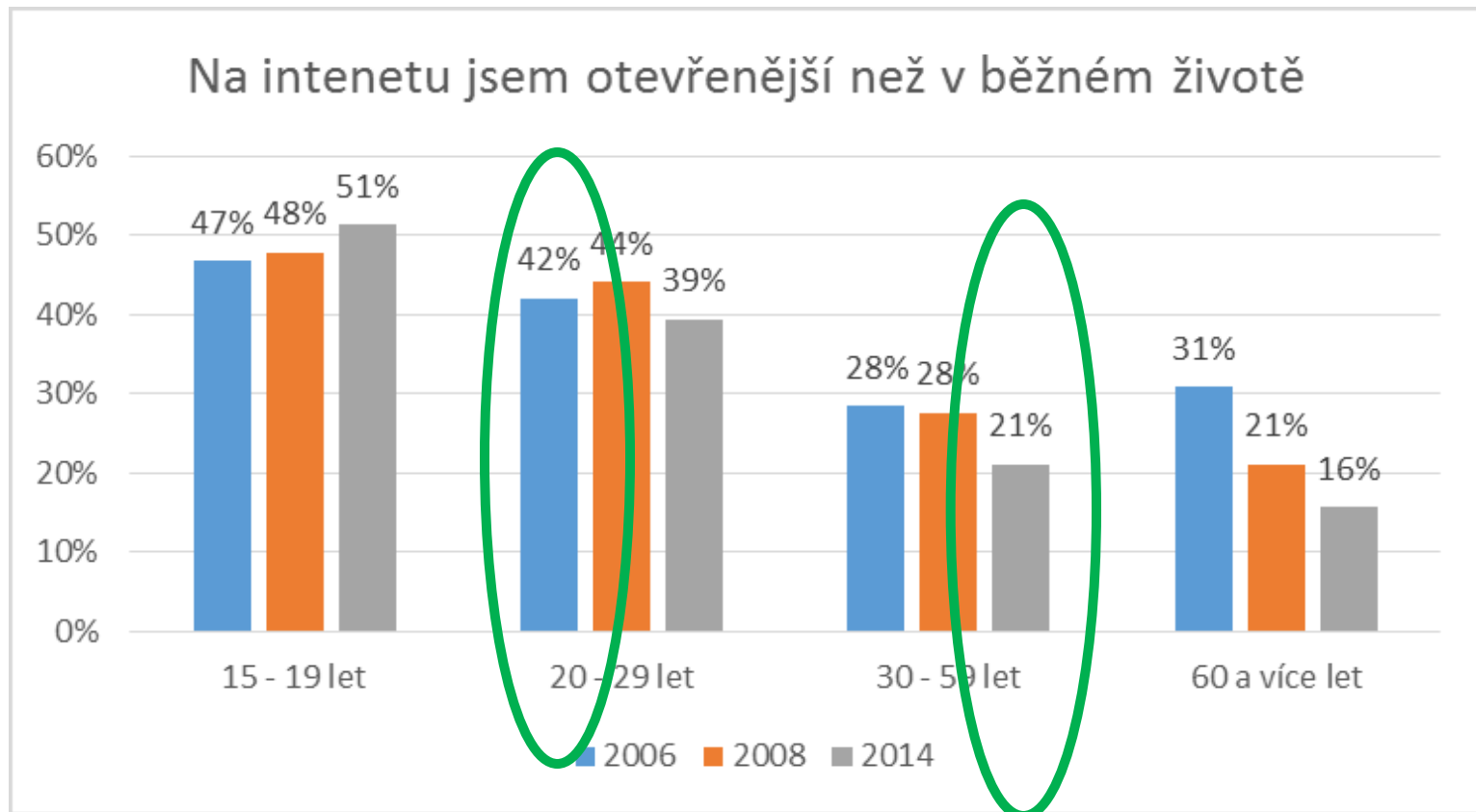
Preferences of online communication (score 1 to 4)
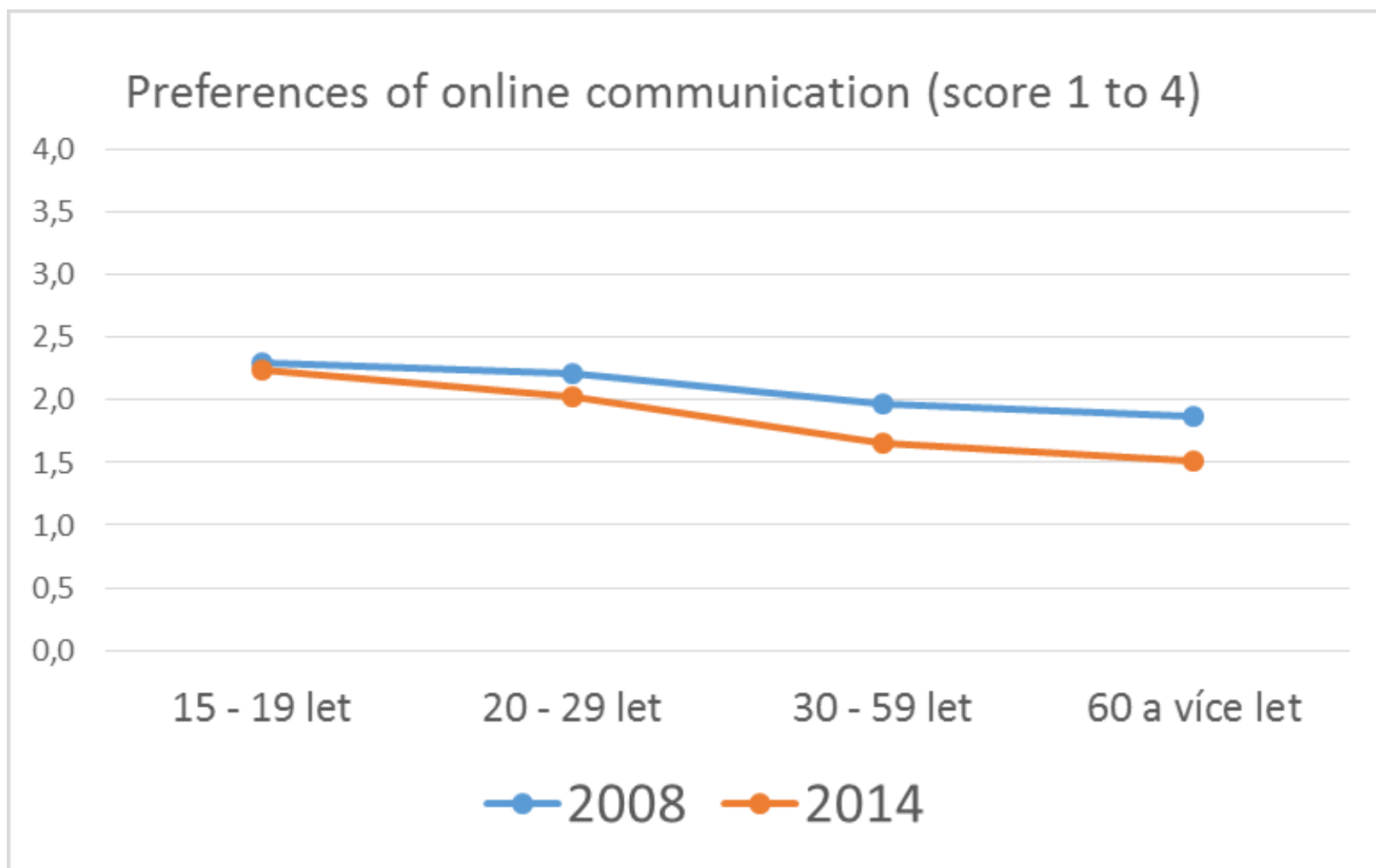
Virtual Generation does not exist …

- Preferences of online communication for youngest generation 15 to 19 years remains similar after 8 years

- Mostly slight decrease of online communication preferences for generations 20 to 59 years

-> Developmental differences are stable !

-> It seems there is nothing like "Internet generation"

But WHY? What are other factors?

Internet and developmental context

What role has the Internet in adolescents' development?

- Identity development
- Sexuality
- Intimacy and relationships
- Well being and health issues
- Ethic development

Dark sides: risks of the internet use – cyberbullying, meeting strangers, addictive behavior on the Internet

Characteristics of Digital Communication

- *Disembodied Users*
- *Anonymity*
- *Text-based Communication*
- *Self-disclosure and Disinhibition*
- *Use of Emoticons*

Differences? …   :-), :-(, ;-), :-o, :-D, :D, :- P, =O, :-O;

- *Media-multitasking and Multitasking*

What is identity and virtual identity?

Identity in psychological context

"An identity is, at least in part, an explicit theory of oneself as a person" (Moshman, 2005,p. 89).

According to this view, one's identity is a sophisticated conception of the self, one which should help to answer questions such as "who am I?", "where do I belong?", and "where am I headed?"

What is virtual identity and representation

Online identity - two meanings:
a) Set of data representing person (= virtual representation)
b) Identity in psychological sense

Virtual representation: is a "cluster" of digital data about a user in a virtual context and includes a name or more accurately, a nickname/ username, email address, online history, and status within that virtual setting.

Individuals can have different digital representations in different online contexts (e.g. multiple email addresses such as teacher@university.cz and stampcollector@something.cz).

Virtual identity: comprises the thoughts, ideas, visions, or fantasies that users attribute to their virtual representations. It is the transfer, perhaps unconsciously, of the thoughts, emotions, and other aspects of their self to their online selves (Smahel, 2003). Virtual identity is also comprised of personal and social aspects.

Tools for Online Identity Construction

Nicknames (usernames). In some online applications such as chat rooms, discussion forums, or textual online games, identity is often established through a nickname or username, which may convey information about users' gender (e.g., prettygurl245), sexual identity (straitangel), etc.

a/s/l code. In an effort to share basic facts about their identity in the Internet environment, young Internet users have come up with creative strategies. One such strategy that we found in our own research on online teen chat rooms is the "a/s/l" (age/sex/location) slot filler code (Greenfield & Subrahmanyam, 2003).

Photos and videos. Photographs and videos can be used for online self-presentation and are easy to uploaded in blogs, social networking profiles, and other similar user-generated sites.. Our study of 195 English blogs maintained by self-declared adolescents revealed that 60% of bloggers published their user pictures and younger bloggers were more likely to post pictures than older ones (Subrahmanyam, Garcia, Harsono, Li, & Lipana, 2009).

Tools for Online Identity Construction

Reco

Avatars. Within computer games (e.g., MMORPGs) and complex virtual worlds (e.g., Second Life), players' online identities or personae are avatars, which are adjustable, motion-enabled graphical representations. Depending on the online space, avatars can assume a variety of forms, ranging from human-like to fantastical creatures, and are typically 3D and animated.

Virtual identity: theory x empirical research

Theoretical view: Turkle, Kendall, Wallace … experimenting with identity, MAMA cycle (Moratorium Achievement …)

X

Empirical view: Greenfield, Subrahmanyam, Jochen, Valkenburg etc. …results from empirical data
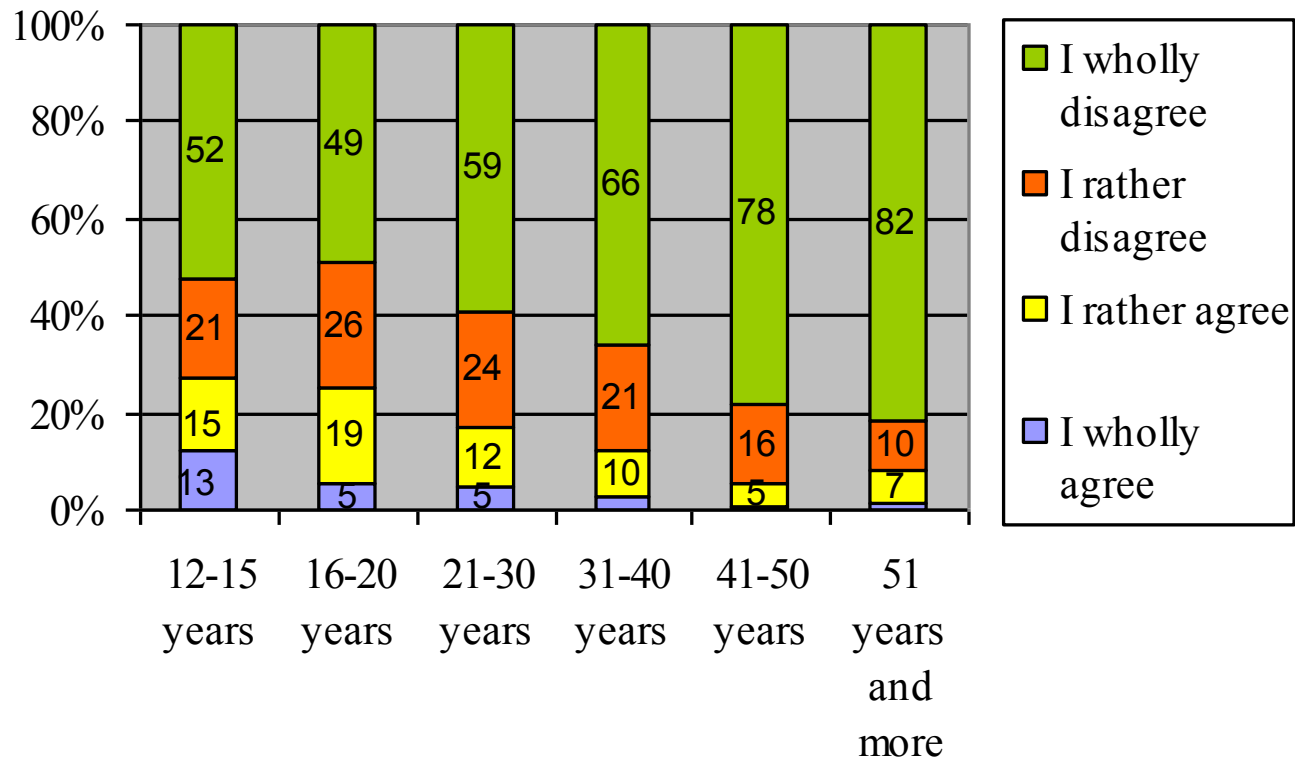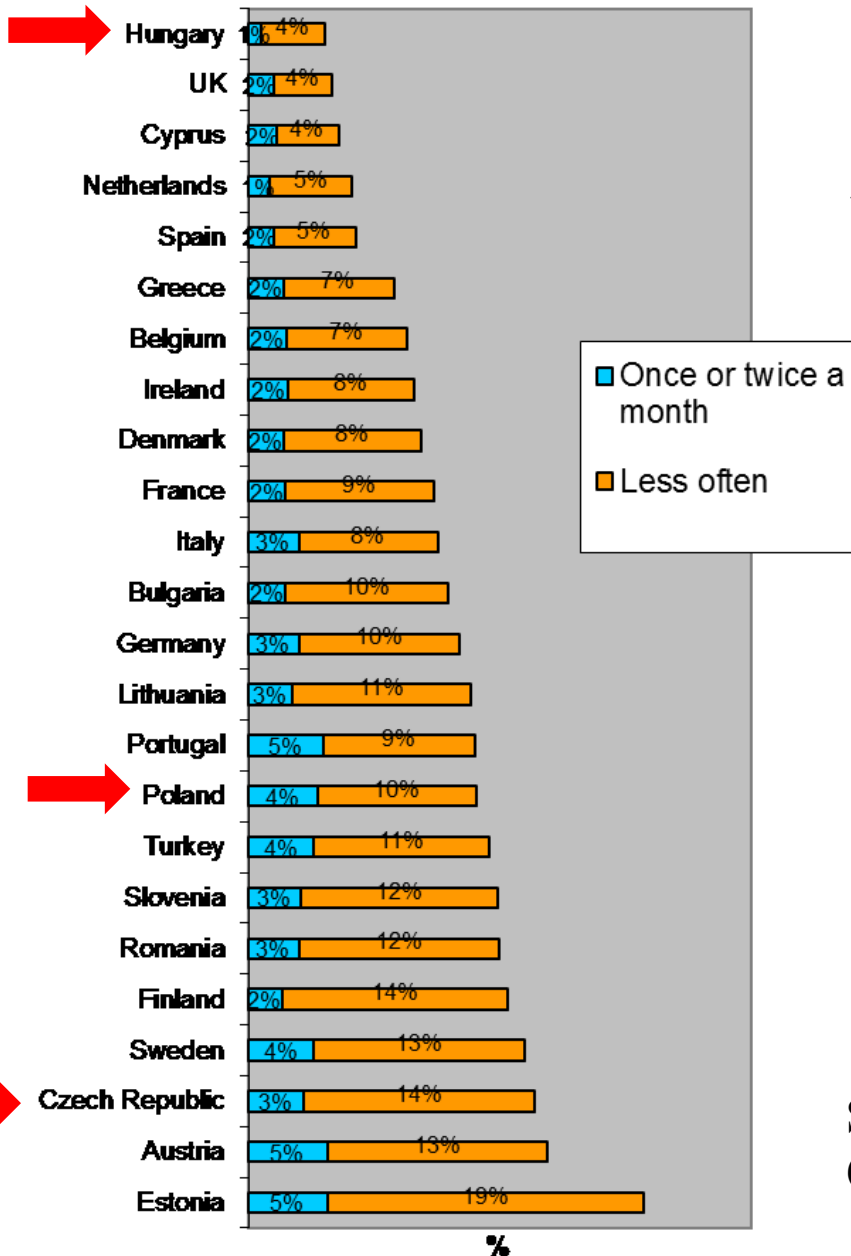
Pretending: age comparison

Figure 2: "Sometimes I passed myself off as someone else on the Internet" according to the age

„Pretended to be a different kind of person on the internet from what I really am"
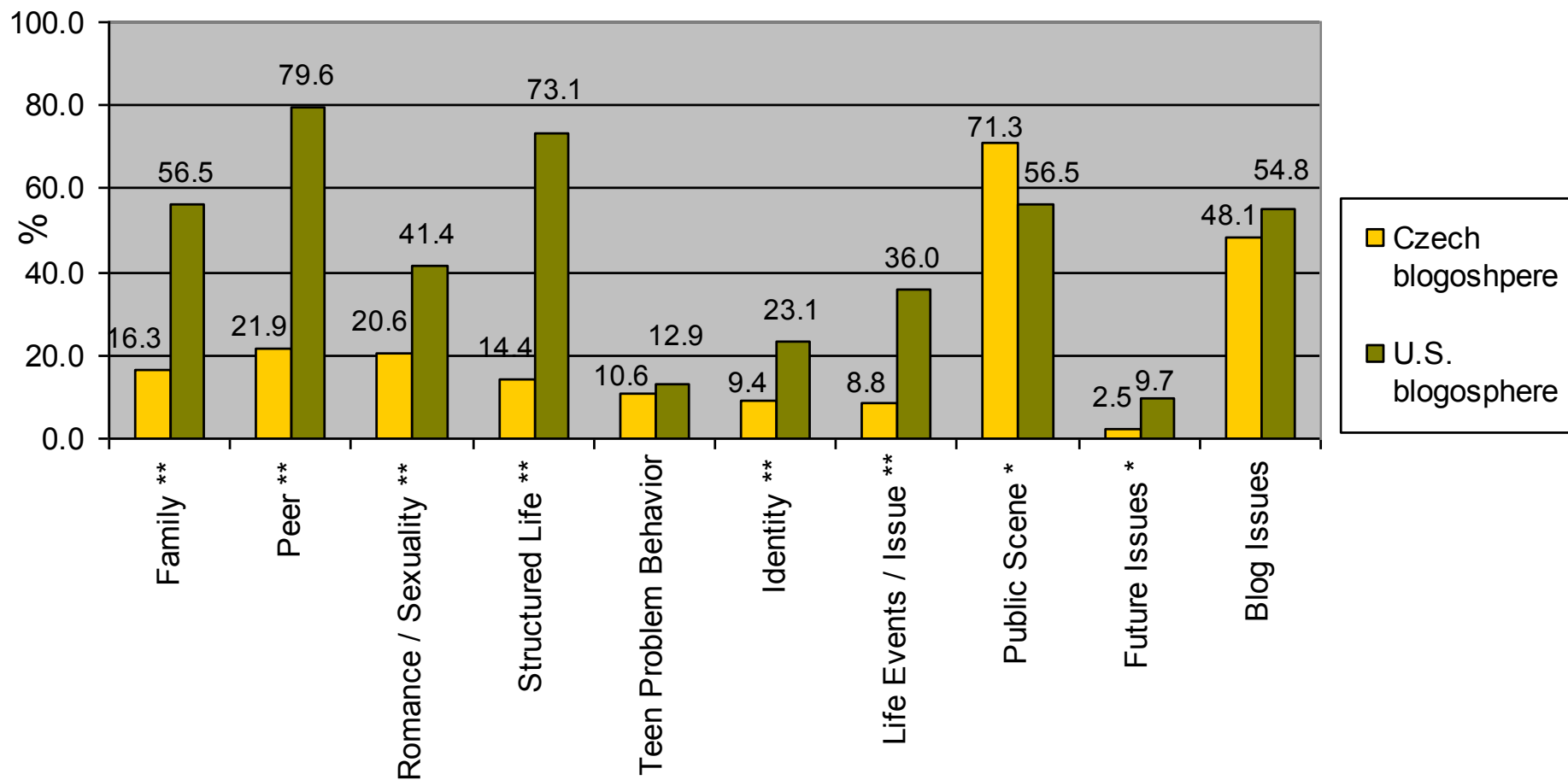
Source: (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig & Ólafsson, 2011):

Experimenting with identity

Experimenting with identity in sense of pretending to be someone else seems to be very rare.

→ so how youths deal with identity issues online?

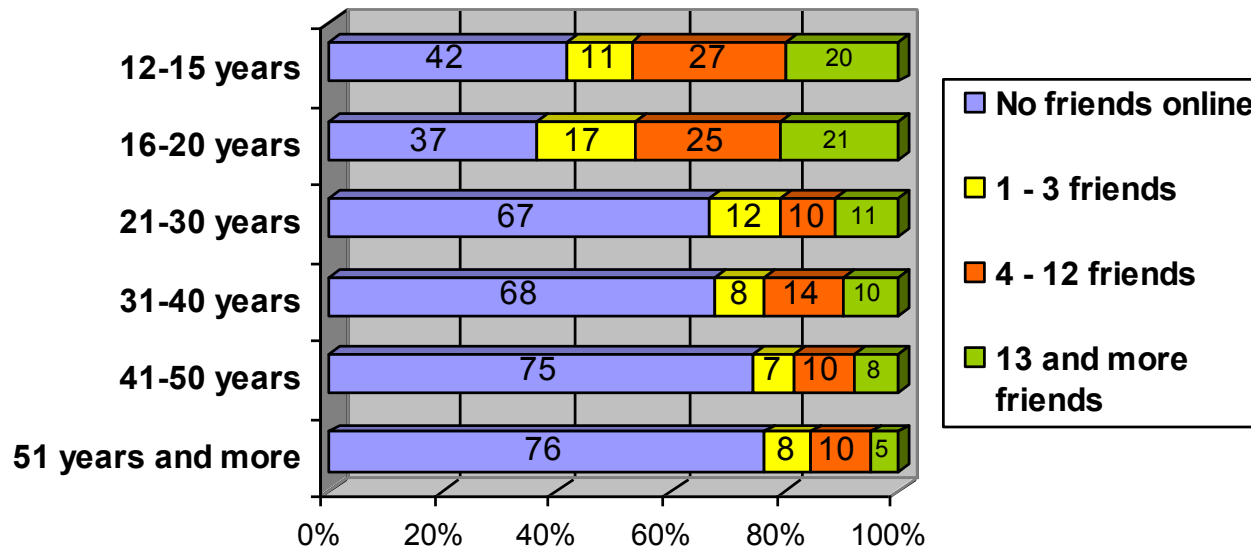# Experimenting versus self-presentation

What youths blog about?

Does internet bring something new or it is just analogy to meetings in pubs?

Number of online friends

„How many online friends who you have not met in person have you got?" 38% of Czech Internet users have such friends, corresponding to 21% from the whole population. No significant difference between men and women.

Numbers of friends online which people have according to the age

Age	No friends online	1 - 3 friends	4 - 12 friends	13 and more friends
12-15 years	42	11	27	20
16-20 years	37	17	25	21
21-30 years	67	12	10	11
31-40 years	68	8	14	10
41-50 years	75	7	10	8
51 years and more	76	8	10	5

$\chi 2$ (15, N = 917) = 95.9, p = .000, phi = 0.323

Meeting strangers (from interviews with children)

I was accessing the internet and YouTube when someone showed up wanting to talk to me. I felt scared and called my mother. I thought the person could stalk or harm me. I was afraid. My parents told me to ignore it, but it didn't help. I still felt very bothered by the experience. (girl, 9, Portugal)
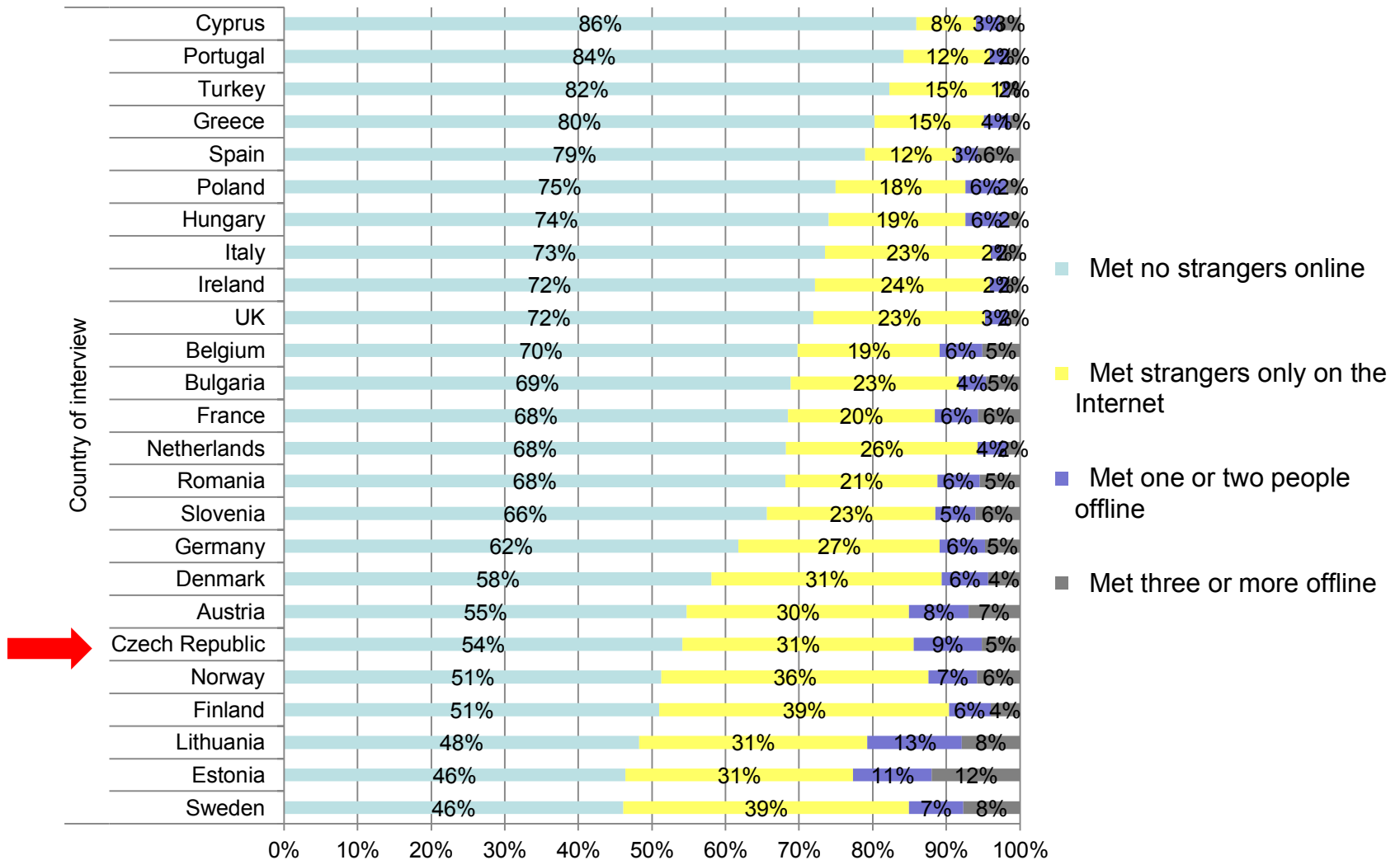
In blogs and Tumblr, I was contacted by others, but their identity was not disclosed. I was scared and bothered by this contact. I was scared because I felt exposed. (girl, 16, Portugal)

A stranger was asking me to meet up. I was scared and he kept contacting me as soon as he went online asking me to meet up. I did not speak to him and I blocked him. (boy, 9–10, Malta)

Meeting strangers online
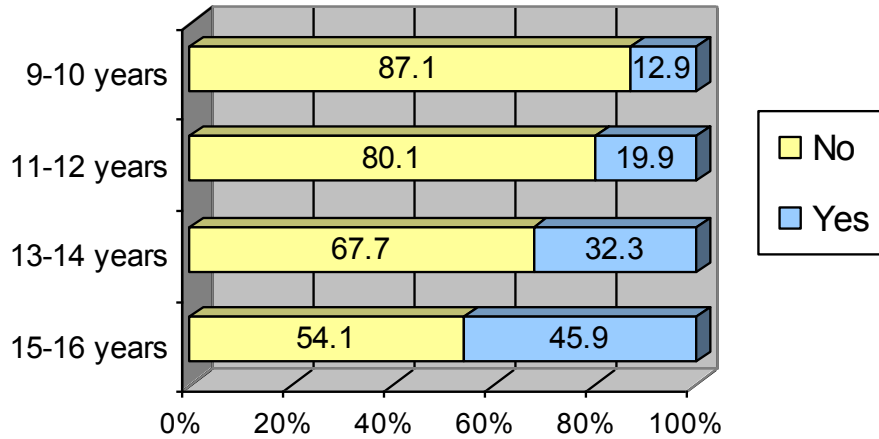
Meeting strangers on the Internet

Country of interview	Met no strangers online	Met strangers only on the Internet	Met one or two people offline	Met three or more offline
Cyprus	86%	8%	3%	3%
Portugal	84%	12%	2%	2%
Turkey	82%	15%	1%	2%
Greece	80%	15%	4%	1%
Spain	79%	12%	3%	6%
Poland	75%	18%	6%	2%
Hungary	74%	19%	6%	2%
Italy	73%	23%	2%	2%
Ireland	72%	24%	2%	2%
UK	72%	23%	3%	2%
Belgium	70%	19%	6%	5%
Bulgaria	69%	23%	4%	5%
France	68%	20%	6%	6%
Netherlands	68%	26%	4%	2%
Romania	68%	21%	6%	5%
Slovenia	66%	23%	5%	6%
Germany	62%	27%	6%	5%
Denmark	58%	31%	6%	4%
Austria	55%	30%	8%	7%
Czech Republic	54%	31%	9%	5%
Norway	51%	36%	7%	6%
Finland	51%	39%	6%	4%
Lithuania	48%	31%	13%	8%
Estonia	46%	31%	11%	12%
Sweden	46%	39%	7%	8%

Source: (Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig & Ólafsson, 2011)

Meeting strangers online

Figure 2: Contacted strangers online

Age	No	Yes
9-10 years	87.1	12.9
11-12 years	80.1	19.9
13-14 years	67.7	32.3
15-16 years	54.1	45.9

Figure 3: Met strangers from the internet offline

Age	No	Yes
9-10 years	97.8	2.2
11-12 years	95.9	4.1
13-14 years	91.4	8.6
15-16 years	83.9	16.1
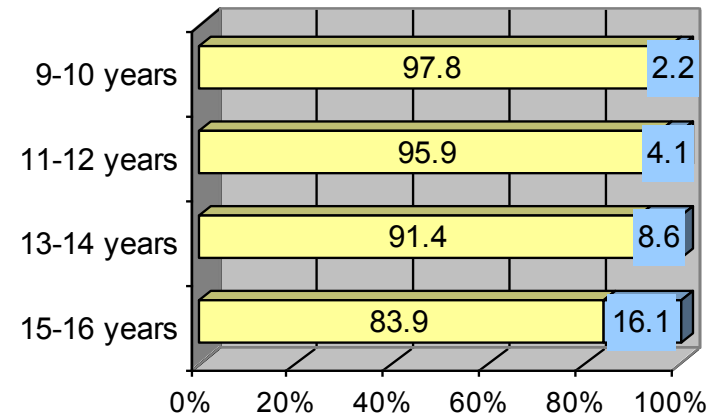
Online relationships – new patterns?

- In the context of different culture, the internet can bring new patterns in the behavior of people.

- For example a study from Mauricia revealed (Rambaree, 2008) that „dating" is tabu for younger youth – parents do not allow it and sexual education does not exists

- => the internet becomes the place of „virtual dating", youths search for information about sex, share such information, speak about it etc.

- Developmental need versus risks online

Conclusions - online relationships

- **The Internet have increased and widened adolescents' contact with the people in their lives (both, offline friends and strangers)**
- **The Internet allows them to accomplish the dual developmental tasks of autonomy from parents and establishing themselves within their peer groups from the relative comfort and safety of their home**
- **Family - reversal of traditional family roles that may disrupt family relationships (?)**

Is it dangerous?
What are online risks?

Risks and opportunities – analytical model
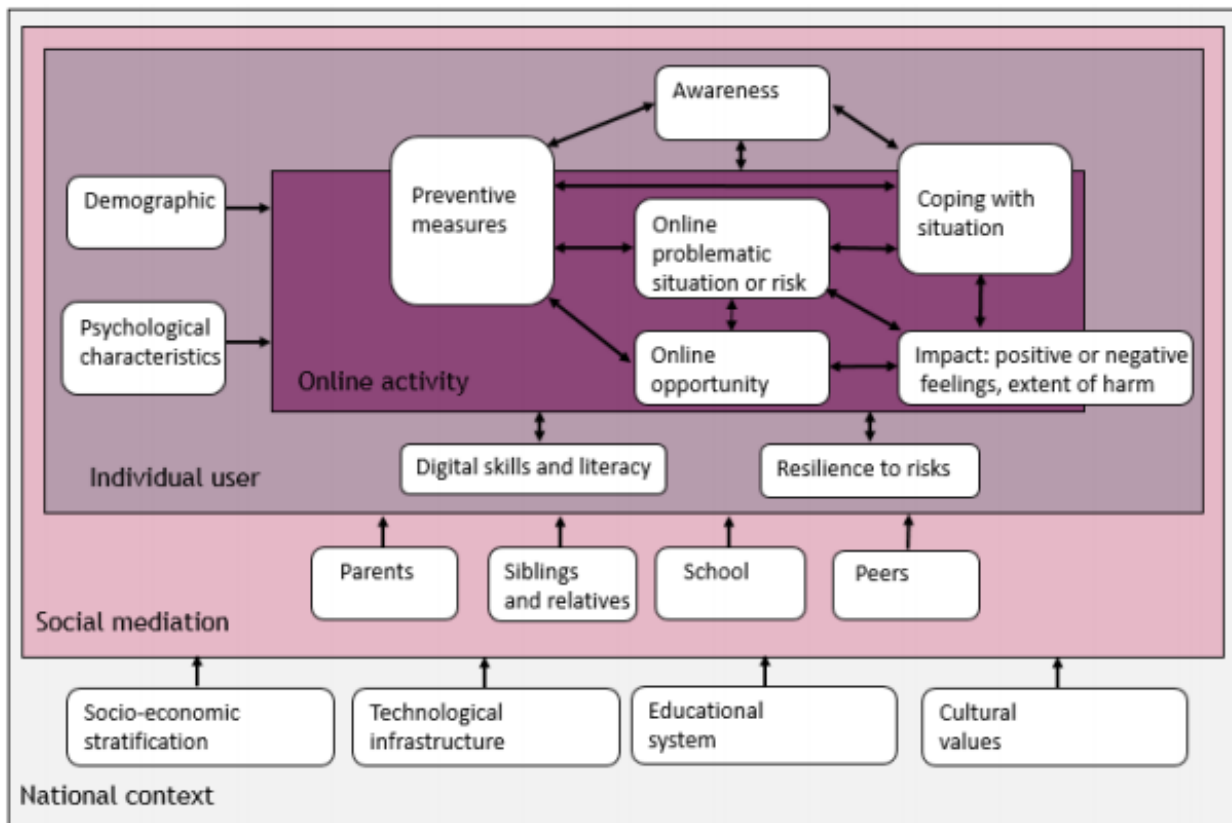
Smahel, D. & Wright, M. F. (eds) (2014). *Meaning of online problematic situations for children. Results of qualitative cross-cultural investigation in nine European countries*. London: EU Kids Online, London School of Economics and Political Science.

Problematic situations

What children perceive as problematic on the Internet?

1) Bullying, harassment and aggressive communication
2) Sexual content and communication
3) Meeting strangers
4) Privacy and the misuse of personal information online
5) Commercial content and communication
6) Health problems
7) Online addiction or excessive internet use
8) Technical problems

Smahel, D. & Wright, M. F. (eds) (2014). *Meaning of online problematic situations for children. Results of qualitative cross-cultural investigation in nine European countries*. London: EU Kids Online, London School of Economics and Political Science.

Problematic situations & development

Area of development	Content	Contact
Relationships - Peers & friendship	Vulgar content shared with peers	Hate messages Vulgar and nasty messages Exclusion from a group Being killed in game Hacked SNS profile Bullying by creating fake SNS profile about somebody Bullying by peers or strangers
Relationships - Romantic relationships	Adverts for dating sites	Reporting not existing relationships Publishing of attractive (sexualized) pictures to attract peers Publishing of unwanted pictures of previous partner as "revenge"
Relationships - Parents	Seeing inappropriate content without permission of parents	Conflicts child x parent because of internet Parents see child as addictive and force them not to be online
Socialization & school	Untrue information from internet used in school	Offensive comments on teachers School problems after being too much online School problems because of problems with technology (viruses, slow computer, slow internet)

(Smahel, Wright & Cernikova, 2014)

Problematic situations & development

Area of development	Content	Contact
Sexuality	Commercials with sexual content (youtube, games, web) Porn related pop-ups Pornographic materials shared among groups in SNS networks Sexual pictures or videos on web (Ask, Chatroulette) Watching live pornography Viruses put pornography	Sexting (sms, chat …) Sexualized phone or video talk Sexualized communication and comments Bullying with sexual content Intentional publishing of sexual pictures to attract peers (get likes) Recorded and shared virtual sex Commercial e-mails with sexual content Sexual requests from strangers
Identity & personal data	Fake accounts of celebrities or known people with untrue information Pop-ups or pages asking for personal data Viruses automatically posting stuff or messages on Facebook or sending e-mails	Stolen virtual identity of person (e-mail, SNS profile, avatar) Hacked account and posting untrue information Fake accounts of not existing people Sharing passwords with friends (from SNS or game profiles) Pretending to be someone else Lying about personal data Sharing personal data (address, phone number, photos etc.) Posting too private details Requests for personal information for strangers Meeting online strangers offline

(Smahel, Wright & Cernikova, 2014)

Problematic situations & development

| Area of development	Content	Contact
Health & well-being (included addiction)	Addiction on pornography or SNS Nightmares and bad dreams from games, sexual videos or aggressive content Sleeping problems from gaming or seeing nasty pictures Eyes problems Aggression after gaming Overuse problems: headaches, reduced eating, reduced sleeping, losing friends Seeing anorectic web sites Losing contact with reality Preoccupied by nasty or sexualized videos	Emotional problems after bullying or bothering contacts
Moral & Ethics	Racist content Illegal activities - downloads programs, movies, and music illegally	Racist messages Sharing illegal materials (programs, movies, music) in P2P networks
Values & Culture & Society (including commercial)	Videos with violence Finding untrue / false information Pop-ups advertising fake prizes Pop-ups for commercial goods	Fake e-mails telling you can win something Commercial e-mails

(Smahel, Wright & Cernikova, 2014)

Bullying

See www.eukidsonline.net for more information.

<u>From report</u>:
Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., Ólafsson, K. (2011).
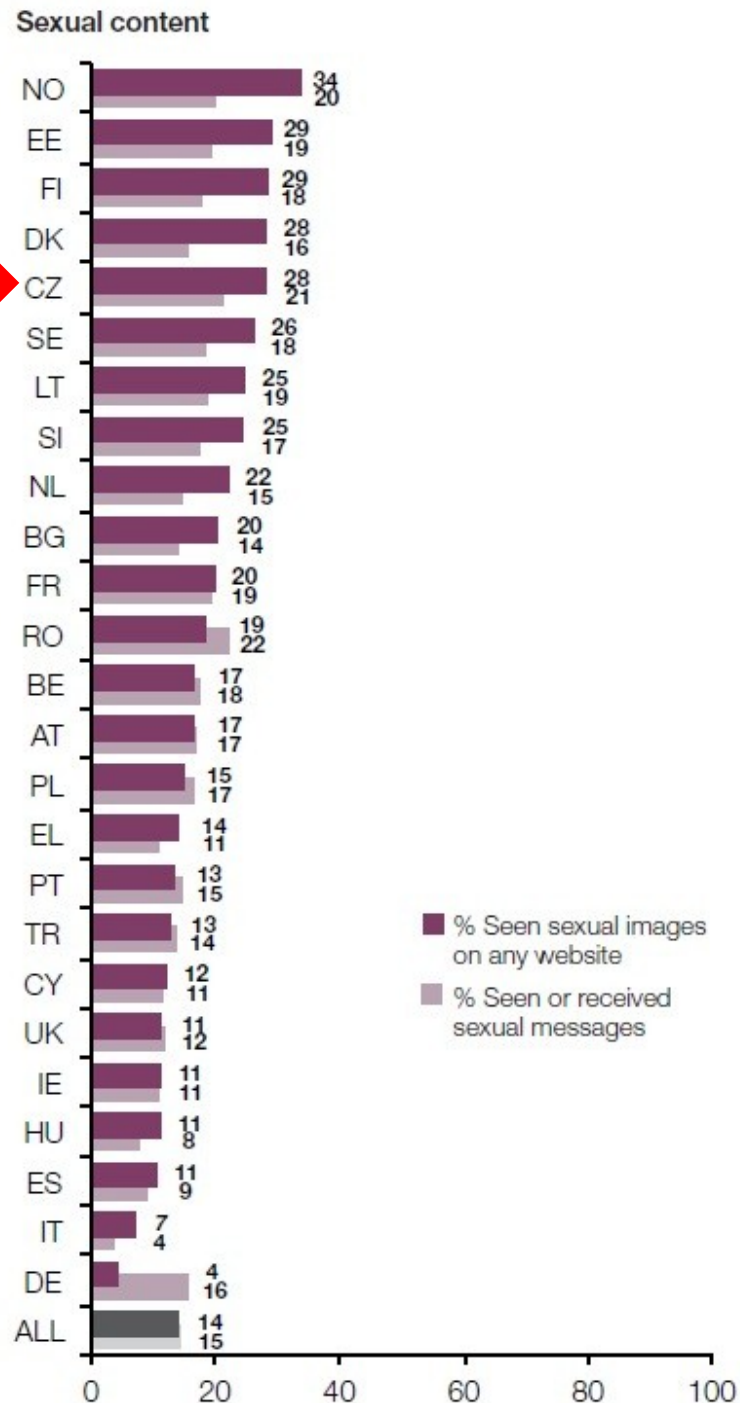*EU Kids Online Final Report.*
London: LSE.

Whether child has been bullied online or at all

■ % Been bullied on the internet
■ % Been bullied at all, online or offline
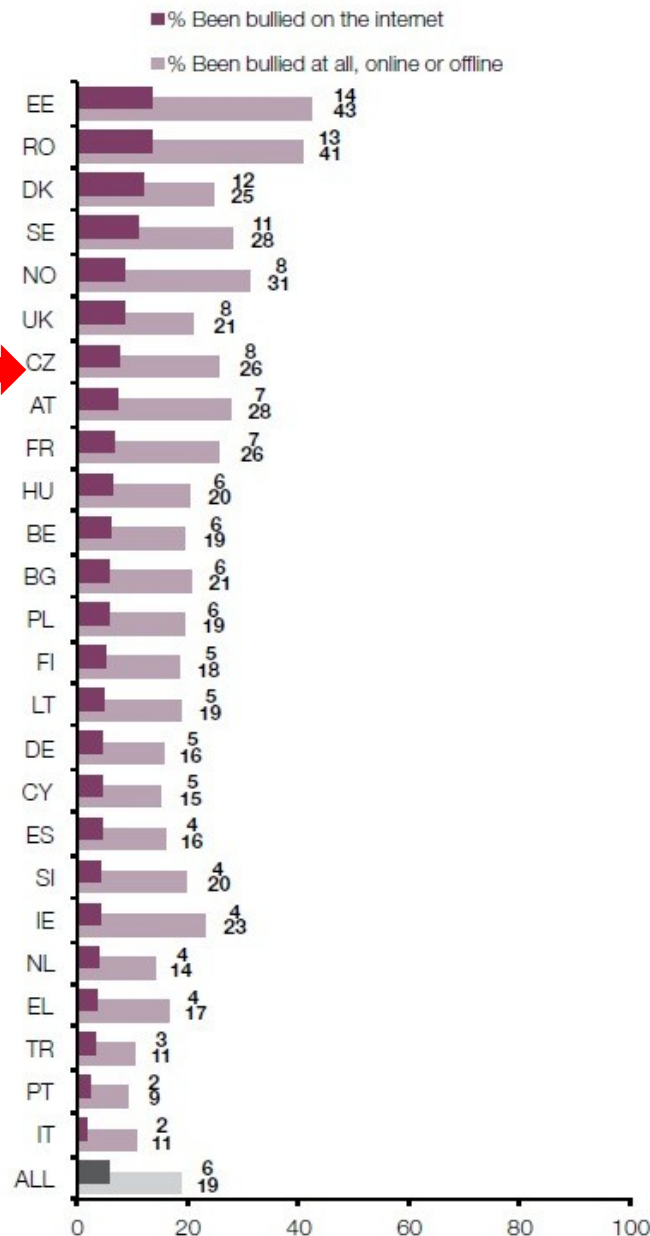
Sexual exposure

See www.eukidsonline.net for more information.

From report:
Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., Ólafsson, K. (2011).
EU Kids Online Final Report.
London: LSE.

Sexual content

Online risks versus internet usage

Encountering online risks by frequency of internet use

Livingstone, S., Haddon, L., Görzig, A., Ólafsson, K. (2011). *EU Kids Online Final Report.* London: LSE.
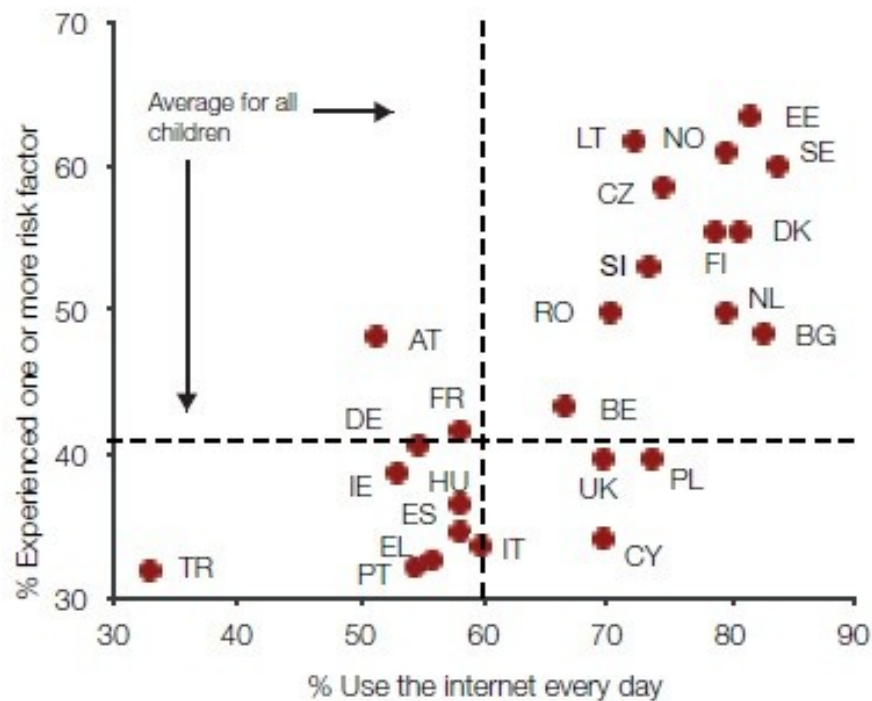
Problematic situations & development

- Many areas of youth's development are touched by online problematic situations, what confirms how closely are online and offline worlds interconnected (Subrahmanyam & Smahel, 2011)

- Online situations can negatively influence youth's health, relationships, moral, values and sexuality development, but as other research stated, youths with more offline problems tend to have more problems also online (Ybarra & Michelle, 2004)

- Some areas are not spontaneously reflected by children (i.e. civic participation, future profession)

- Broad variety of different problematic situations was revealed, but many of them have not only negative side, but children perceive them as positive in another context

Conclusions & Discussion

- Real versus virtual … everything is „real" from our subjective point of view
- What causes the internet in human development? Is there something new?
- It rather seems: old themes in new environment(s)
- <u>Online and offline worlds of youths are interconnected</u>
- Internet as a tool for maintaining traditional developmental tasks – identity, relationships, sexual development etc.

BUT
- New online environments can bring new challanges
- What will be the future? (3D online worlds? …)

For more information – see free access journal:
Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace   www.cyberpsychology.eu

Or book:

Subrahmanyam, K. & Šmahel, D. (2011). *Digital Youth: The Role of Media in Development*. Springer, New York.