

Press Release

Authors: David Smahel, Tijana Milosevic, Sonia Livingstone, Elisabeth Staksrud, Veronika Kalmus, Giovanna Mascheroni, Pavel Izrael, Uwe Hasebrink

Protecting Children's Data Online: Preliminary results of the EU Kids Online survey



Summary

Spyware and viruses are the most common data protection problem for the surveyed children. While relatively few children report to have lost money by being cheated on the Internet (between 2% and 5%), these numbers have slightly increased when compared to 2010. Between 5% and 10% of the children say they spent too much money on in-app purchases or when playing online games. While a common problem, spyware and viruses, however, seem to be less of an issue now than nine years ago.

These are some of the *preliminary* results from the new [EU Kids Online](#) survey, where we analyzed the data from nationally representative samples of 9-17-year-old children in five European countries *so far* —[Estonia](#), [Italy](#), [Norway](#), [Slovakia](#), and [the Czech Republic](#). [Survey results from a total of fourteen European countries](#) where we collected data in 2017/2018 from nationally representative samples are coming out soon.

In this press release, we focus only on data protection and e-safety issues for the five countries where the survey analyses have already been completed. We compare the latest (2018) results to the findings from our 2010 project: the European Commission-funded, nationally representative surveys in 25 European countries.¹ Both data collection waves covered a broad range of questions including online engagement, risks and rights.

¹ 25, 000 9-16-year-old children and one of their parents were surveyed in 2010, the full findings report is here: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/33731/>

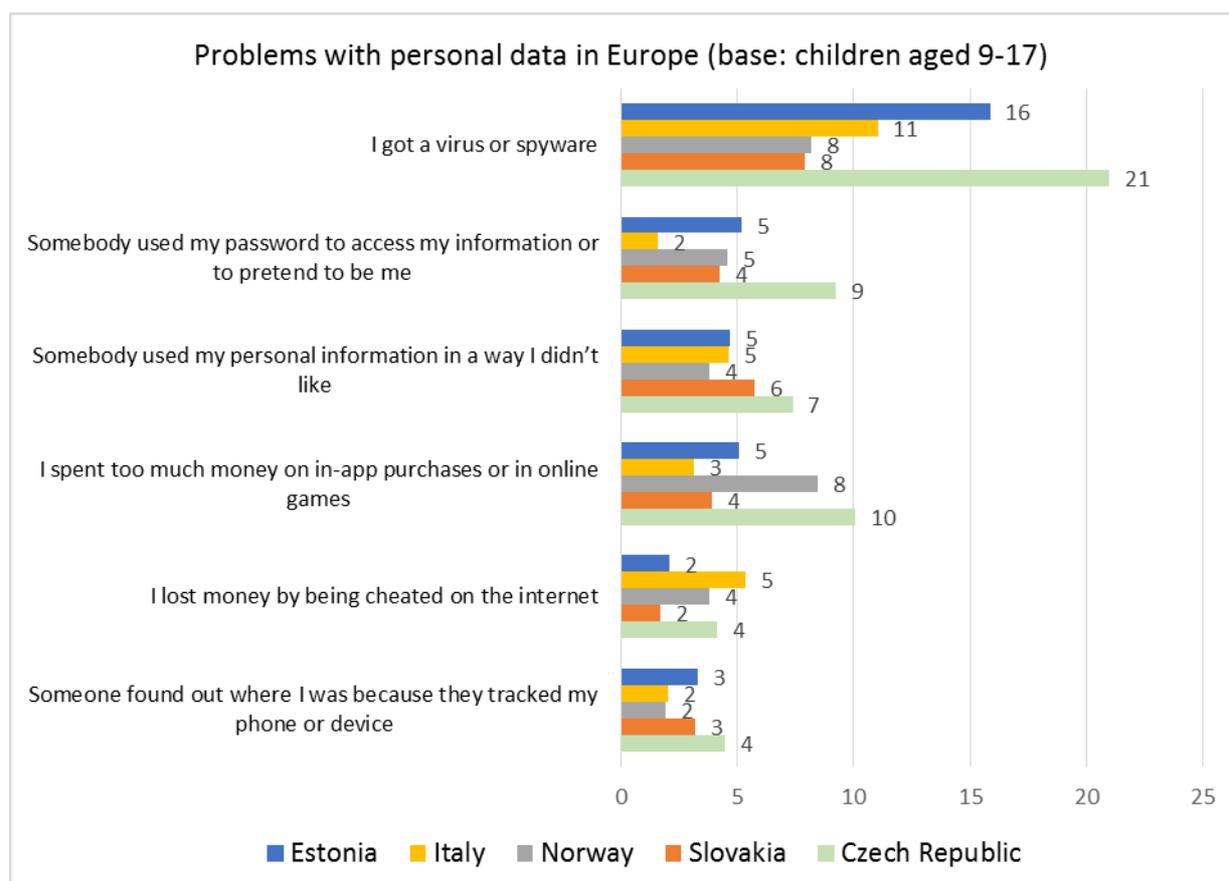
2018 results

In the Czech Republic, as many as 21% of the surveyed children experienced the problem with spyware and viruses, while fewer children reported this issue in Norway and Slovakia (8%). Between 2% and 9% of children in all the countries reported that somebody used their password to access their information online or steal their identity—pretending to be them and posting on their behalf. Children from the Czech Republic, yet again, lead with respect to this problem (9%), while their peers in Italy were the least likely to experience this issue (2%).

Between 4% and 7% of children reported that somebody used their personal information in a way in which they did not like. Between 5% and 10% of the children say they spent too much money on in-app purchases or while playing online games. Spending too much money online is most often reported by the Czech (10%) and Norwegian children (8%).

Relatively few children report to have lost money because they were cheated on the Internet (between 2% and 5%). Two to four percent of the children said someone found out where they were because their phones or digital devices had been tracked.

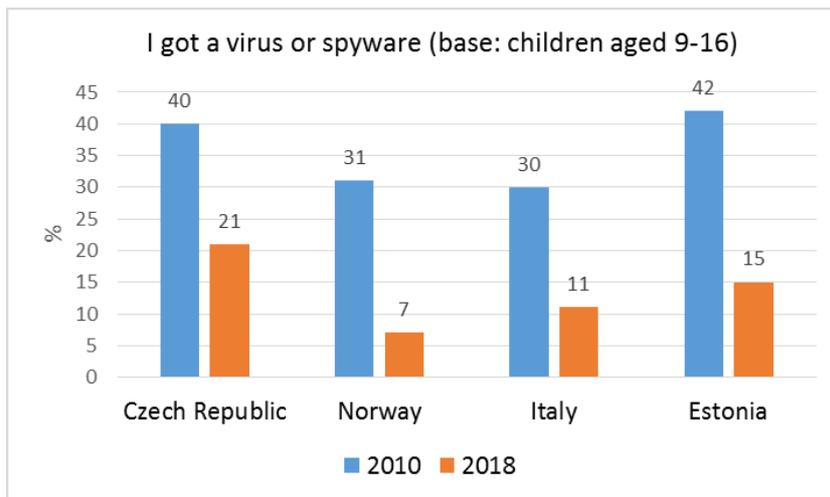
Figure 1. Data protection problems in 2018



Comparing 2018 to 2010

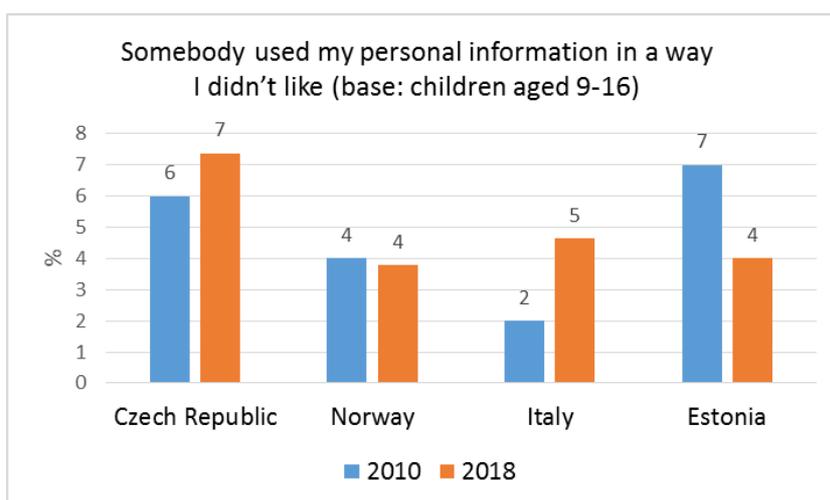
Comparing the preliminary results from 2018 to our 2010 survey,² we find that the problem with viruses and spyware has in fact considerably *declined* (see Figure 2). A possible explanation for the decline is that children are primarily using mobile phones as their main Internet access points rather than PCs and laptops, and these are less likely to encounter such issues. Alternatively, children may not be aware that their phones are beset with the problem.

Figure 2. Viruses and spyware³



The number of children who reported that someone used their personal information in a way they did not like (Figure 3) remained similar between the two data collection waves. In Italy, 2% of children reported misuse of personal information in 2010 and the same was reported by 5% of children in 2018. In Estonia, there was a decrease of 3% in misuse of personal information.

Figure 3. Misuse of personal information

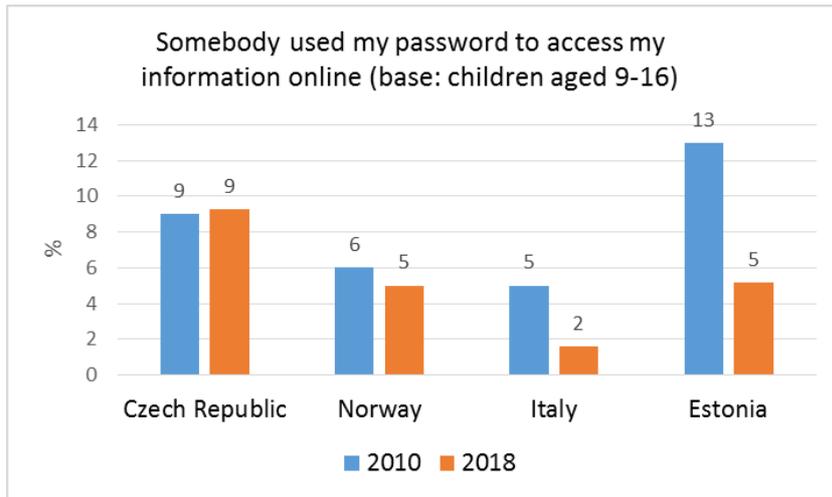


² Excluding Slovakia, where we do not have the results for 2010.

³ The 2010 sample included children age 9-16; and the 2017/2018 sample children age 9-17. The numbers in Figures 2-5 compare children aged 9-16 for both data collection waves.

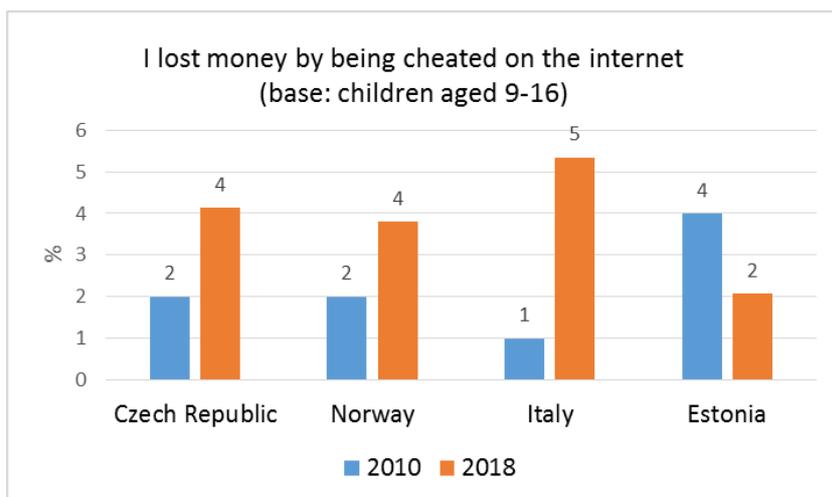
Today's children may have got better at protecting their passwords than their 2010 counterparts. Or perhaps they are better educated concerning their passwords. Fewer children reported that somebody used their password to access their personal information online (Figure 4). While the numbers stayed roughly the same between 2010 and 2018 in the Czech Republic, they dropped by 1% in Norway, 3% in Italy and 8% in Estonia.

Figure 4. Using password to access someone's information online



More children are reporting that they lost money by being cheated on the Internet (Figure 5): In the Czech Republic and Norway, the numbers have increased by two percent. In Italy, we even see a sharp increase: From 1% in 2010 to 5% in 2018. Only in Estonia is this issue less frequent problem now than in 2010.

Figure 5. Losing money by being cheated on the Internet



Authors' contact:

David Smahel, Masaryk University: smahel@fss.muni.cz

Tijana Milosevic, University of Oslo: tijana.milosevic@media.uio.no

Sonia Livingstone, LSE: s.livingstone@lse.ac.uk

Elisabeth Staksrud, University of Oslo: elisabeth.staksrud@media.uio.no

Veronika Kalmus, University of Tartu: veronika.kalmus@ut.ee

Pavel Izrael, Catholic University in Ruzomberok: pavel.izrael@ku.sk

Giovanna Mascheroni, Università Cattolica of Milan: giovanna.mascheroni@unicatt.it

Uwe Hasebrink, EU Kids Online network coordinator, Hans-Bredow-Institut:
u.hasebrink@hans-bredow-institut.de

Background information on the survey questions used for preliminary analyses:

In this press release, we focus on preliminary analyses of the questions related to children's problems with personal data protection and e-safety. The following questions were answered by 9 to 17-year-old-children between October 2017 and December 2018:

In the PAST YEAR, has any of the following happened to you on the internet? (yes – no)

- a) Somebody used my personal information in a way I didn't like
- b) The device (e.g., phone, tablet, computer) I use got a virus or spyware
- c) I lost money by being cheated on the internet
- d) Somebody used my password to access my information or to pretend to be me
- f) I spent too much money on in-app purchases or in online games
- g) Someone found out where I was because they tracked my phone or device

Methodology note (data collection method, sample size and representativeness for each country):

Czech Republic: school-based quota sampling, 89 schools, 2825 respondents in total.

Estonia: household-based sampling, CASI and CAPI, 1020 respondents in total.

Italy: household-based sampling, face-to-face CASI, 1006 respondents in total.

Norway: household-based sampling on tablets (interviewer present), 1001 respondent in total.

Slovakia: household-based sampling, CAPI, 1018 respondents in total.