

CFCI Summit

Session documentation

This document summarizes the key topics, insights and next steps arising from the CFCI Summit held from 15th to 18th of October, 2019 in Cologne, Germany.

Track:	Participatory cities
Title of session:	Children in the digital environment
Date and time:	Thursday 17 th of October 3.30 – 5.00pm
Facilitator and resource persons:	Gerison Lansdown, Sonia Livingstone and Mia Eisenstadt
Name of rapporteur:	Gerison Lansdown

Main topics and ideas discussed:

The aim of this session was to explore the implications of the digital environment for the implementation of children's rights and strategies that can be adopted to promote opportunities and access and to mitigate the associated risks. Digital technology has already changed the world – and as more and more children go online around the world, it is increasingly changing childhood. Youth (ages 15 – 24) is the most connected age group: worldwide, more than 70% of them are online, compared to less than 50% of the overall population. With smartphones, young people's online access is becoming increasingly private, personal and less supervised. Connectivity creates enormous opportunities, including for the most vulnerable children, but also brings with it new threats to children's rights from lack of access to intensifying traditional childhood risks, such as bullying and fueling new forms of abuse and exploitation. ICTs also have a potential impact on children's mental health and well-being.

Sonia Livingstone, Professor of social psychology from LSE presented 7 questions for CFCIs to consider and presentations were also made by three young people: Gabriel from Spain, Ailikhan from Kazakhstan and Shiya from China

Key insights, good practices and lessons shared:

1. A number of key questions and challenges were raised:

- How to provide tailored support for vulnerable children in the digital environment
- How can local authorities address or demand redress from global multinational companies
- How to raise awareness of digital matters among social workers, health visitors and the rest of the children's workforce
- How to address the tensions between parental rights and children's privacy
- How to promote access for all children across the community
- How to deal with the digital companies intrusion into children's data

2. Internet can be a huge opportunity for helping young people explore their identity, reach out to networks of others. However at the same time, it can expose them to bullying and other forms of abuse, including exposure to inappropriate material eg pornography or terrorist information. The answer is not to close down their access but rather to find ways of empowering young people to keep themselves safe online.

3. Social media is an effective means of CFCIs reaching out to wide numbers of children across the community. It enables children who might otherwise have difficulties in participating to contribute their views and to feel engaged, for example, children with disabilities, children living on the street. Municipalities need to ensure opportunities are available for children through, for example free wifi, internet cafes, devices at schools etc

4. Schools are increasingly using the Internet to communicate with parents and in so doing share information that children feel is a breach of their privacy – grades, internet usage, behaviours etc. There is a growing need for new codes of behaviour that recognise children’s rights to privacy while also acknowledging that parents also have a right to information.

5. In the current global political environment, children need, and indeed, are demanding that they are educated in digital citizenship to enable them to differentiate facts from advertising and ‘fake news’. The Internet has wide implications for the future of education and what is provided in schools. As so much information can be found online, children are increasingly in need of skills in seeking, analysing and evaluating information rather than provision of facts, and well as learning how to collaborate and network. This has profound implications for how we think about education in the future.