FOCUS GROUP TOPIC GUIDE

Research goals of the focus groups and the interviews:

- What do children perceive as being potentially negative or problematic when using the internet?
- What do children perceive as positive and beneficial when using the internet?
- What impacts and consequences can online negative experiences have?
- How do they evaluate things that adults consider potentially problematic?
- What do children do to avoid these problematic experiences?
- What can children do after having such negative experiences?
- What coping strategies work best from children's perspectives?

THE FIRST BLOCK OF THE FOCUS GROUP

(a) Introduction, overview of online activities – this takes the first 25 min. (approximately):

- Welcome, introduction of researchers and the EU Kids Online project

- Instructions regarding the focus group: "We are interested in what children/young people do on the internet, what they enjoy and do not enjoy, we are interested also in unpleasant issues connected with the internet."

- **Instructions: At the beginning we will introduce ourselves. You will each tell your name and try to describe what you do on the internet most often. You can also tell us what you enjoy the most on the internet.**

  o *The pupils can be asked one after another in a circle. A more playful way can be chosen, (e.g. passing a stuffed toy – the person holding the toy can speak).*

  o *Each pupil says in brief what s/he does on the internet and what s/he enjoys.*

- *The researcher notes down activities mentioned by the pupils and will talk them over later. The researcher structures the activities thematically.*
  E. g. **Many of you mentioned Facebook…**
  Or: **Some of you mentioned games…**

  Or: **Some of you mentioned downloading videos...**

  o **… what exactly do you do there?**
    … what games do you play? What are they about?
    … what do you like about it?
    Has anything interesting happened to you there recently?

    ▪ *These questions can be discussed for quite a long time, <u>about 20 minutes</u>, so that the children can recall their experiences and reminiscences.*

    ▪ *At this point they may mention some "risks" spontaneously -> researchers will note the ideas down on the board/ on a piece of paper - and discuss them later.*

- *If the children discuss a risk spontaneously, we do not interfere.*

(b) the following 20 min. (approximately):

- *We now inquire about the risks directly, first in relation to activities that were discussed before.*

  - **Have you experienced anything on the internet (on Facebook, while playing a game, …) that was not very pleasant?
    Are you careful about anything (on the internet, while playing, …)?**

    - *Note down the risks again.*

    - *Spontaneous discussion is welcome.*

    - *We can ask about the risks we are interested in in more detail.
      E. g. typically in games, or on Facebook, children meet strangers from the internet:*
      And on Facebook, do you have people you don't know personally in your list of "friends"?

      Has anyone you don't know written to you?

      Have you met anybody on the internet that you did not know personally before?

      Did you meet in person anyone you first met through the interent?

- *If the list of risks described through activities is exhausted, we inquire about other possible risks in general:*

  - **There are other things on the internet that are not alright?
    What other things are you careful about?
    What other things that are not very pleasant can happen to you on the internet?**

    - **Can you think of anything else?
      Try to think of as many things as possible.**

    - *It may happen that children will mention very specific things: e.g. "it's unpleasant when someone writes insults or sends ugly things." We can ask the children to clarify or explain such things.*

  - *(If the focus of the first block is exhausted and the pupils have no more ideas and there is still plenty of time, we can go back to activities:* **And what else do you do on the internet except (the things we have already discussed)?** *Or we can start discussing the issues of the second block.)*

THE SECOND BLOCK OF THE FOCUS GROUP

a) *About 30 minutes: The aim is to discuss the most important risks (if many were mentioned) in depth, or all the risks if possible.*

- *Sum up the risks you have noted down on paper or on the board:*
    - **You mentioned various things which are not OK on the internet:**
      …
      … (inappropriate news, vulgar pictures, viruses/bugs, aggression, stealing identities…)
      Now we are going to talk about them.
    - **Which of them do you think are (the worst/ the least pleasant)? Why?**

- *Choose one of the risks.*
    - *Build on the introduction – recall who mentioned a risk and ask about more details, use the words the children used.*
        - E.g. **Gerda, you said you got an "unsuitable message" in a game. Can you tell us more about it? What did the message contain, who sent it to you?**
    - *Continue asking the group:*
        - **Has anything like that happened to anyone else?**
        - **Anyone else – can you imagine something like that happened to you?**
    - *Coping, reaction to the incident:*
        - **What did you do about it?**
        - **(Have you learned anything from the experience? How would you react if something similar happened again?)**
    - *Importance of the risk, degree of the risk, risk versus harm:*
        - **(How did you feel at that time?/ What did it feel like to you?)**
        - **You said it was not a problem for you. What could have been different that might have made it unpleasant or problematic?**
          or
          Can you try to think when *((such a situation))* **is fine and when not? When is it /does it start to be a problem?**
    - *Prevention – coping prior to the risk:*
        - **Can anything be done to prevent this from happening in future?**
        - **Can you do anything to avoid such an experience?**

Notes:

- *Make inquiries about the risks we are interested in – see above – when there's a suitable situation. (E.g. under what circumstances would it be OK to meet someone they only know only from the internet.)*

- *Make inquiries about the strategies we are interested in – e.g. whether the children tell someone when they have encountered something unpleasant on the internet, and whom they tell.*

- *When the children do not react directly, ask again, in other words (especially in the second block).*

b) Conclusion – about <u>10 minutes</u>:

- *Sum up what has been discussed, mention the positive aspects, compliment and thank the children.*

- **How did you like talking about the internet with us?**

- **Is there anything important to you we haven't mentioned?**

- **If you want to follow any issues you have talked about, you can contact us** *(we will be at school on that day, or we can give them contacts)* **or …** *(contact person at school – educational consultant, school psychologist, help lines – will be developed in any country).*

- The participants will be told that if they want to withdraw from the study, their data will not be used.