

Policy Shaping through Youth Participation

This session was a joint collaboration between Childnet International, Insafe, The Media Council from Denmark and the Media Council of Sweden.

The first half of this workshop discussed the importance of youth participation in influencing policymakers and provided practical examples of youth participation across Europe. The second half of this workshop demonstrated youth participation in action, showcasing with a roundtable discussion with youth and industry.

1) Initiatives and methods on how to involve youth in the policy work to make a safer internet

Moderator: Camilla Wøldike, Project Coordinator, The Media Council for Children and Young People, Safer Internet Centre Denmark

Panel

Lucinda Fell, Director of Policy and Communications, Childnet International, UK Safer Internet Centre

Sarah Sumpter, Insafe

Alex Amnéus, Project Coordinator, The Media Council, Safer Internet Centre Sweden

Youth engagement is a key part of the work of every Safer Internet Centre. The opportunities and challenges highlighted in this discussion, along with best practice examples from the UK, Denmark, Insafe and Sweden, aim to support other Safer Internet Centres when planning their own youth engagement initiatives.

Opportunities identified in the session:

Youth participation presents the opportunity to learn about young people's lives online and drive forward internet safety work. It also presents young people with the opportunity to have a voice in discussions about internet governance and approaches to internet safety that very much impact on their lives. Camilla pointed out, "children and young people use the internet a lot, so they should also have an influence". Young people don't have an easy route to speak to policymakers about online services that are central to their lives – it is a responsibility of Safer Internet Centres to facilitate this dialogue. Equally, policymakers are very interested in hearing from young people. In hearing about Childnet's Youth IGF Project Facebook's Richard Allan was quoted about the 2009 Youth IGF Project "The insights I gained from Childnet's Youth IGF Project were fascinating and of very high value... I can honestly say these were some of the most useful hours I spent on internet policy last year". Furthermore, facilitating youth participation can be a fantastic way of engaging industry and governments in discussions about internet safety and may present the opportunity to highlight and shape policies that really matter to young people.

Challenges identified in the session:

Ensuring young people are meaningfully engaged in these debates. It is very important to prepare and support young people, both before and throughout their engagement in youth

panels, to ensure they feel confident in expressing their views. There is a lot of jargon used in these kinds of discussions so these terms need to be made clear to young people.

Supporting young people to speak their own voice. In preparation it is important not to prescribe the opinions of the youth panellists; it is often helpful to provide them with a range of opinions so they can come to their own conclusions. The young people do not need to be experts; their value is their experience and they should be encouraged to talk about the things that really affect their lives.

Preparing the policymakers. It is not often part of their everyday experience so to make it a worthwhile experience they need support, particularly on the areas of discussion to be covered.

Not holding assumptions about how technologies should be used. All participants should listen to young people with open minds and listen very carefully to what young people are actually saying.

Practical challenges associated with bringing young people to international forums. Young people need to miss school and find it difficult to provide in-depth engagement on an ongoing basis. When travelling with young people there is often the need for chaperones. The costs of bringing youth panellists and their chaperones can mean a lot of funding is required. There are important preparations around child protection and risk assessments that should not be overlooked.

Recommendations identified in the session:

Let's work together. Sharing experiences in engaging young people in policy discussions would help to begin to overcome some of the challenges faced. The suggestion of creating a 'Youth IGF portal' where documents and ideas could be shared, to support other Safer Internet Centre's thinking of bringing young people to the IGF was warmly received, as was the consideration of setting up a remote hub so that groups of young people can join in the discussions of the IGF even if they can't attend the conference.

Examples of best practice:

1) Youth IGF Project: Lucinda Fell, Childnet International, UK Safer Internet Centre

Childnet International, a partner in the UK Safer Internet Centre, aim to make the internet a great and safe place for young people, through education, awareness and policy work. They ensure that they listen to young people and represent the voice of youth in their policy work.

The Youth IGF Project was established in 2009 to take the voice of youth to the Internet Governance Forum and respond to criticisms that while young people and their use of the internet were discussed at the forum, they were not present at it. In the first year, Childnet went out to schools across the UK to speak to young people about their online experiences, their rights and their hopes for the future of the internet. They created a video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SV9QrytuXDE> to introduce the IGF and developed resources so that teachers could run this debate in their lessons. By listening to young

people speak about these issues, Childnet were able to better frame the topics discussed at the IGF in an understandable and interesting way for young people. They spoke with a diverse group of over 1,500 young people across the UK, who had a wide range of opinions but an overwhelmingly positive response about being asked for their opinions on matters that greatly affected their lives. That year, two young people attended the IGF in Sharm-el-Shaikh and Childnet also hosted a parliamentary session in the UK to create a dialogue between young people, industry and government at a national level. To prepare the young people in the parliamentary session, the young people practised the debates in the morning and then were joined by government and industry bodies in the afternoon. The young people ranged in age from 9 to 16 years and had been identified in the school sessions as potential candidates based on their ability to share their voice and experiences.

In 2010, seven young people aged 14 to 17 were involved in the Youth IGF Project. Childnet introduced a summer camp to prepare the young people, where they heard from various stakeholder groups to hear a wide range of perspectives and understand their views. They all attended the IGF in Vilnius and took part in several workshop discussions.

In 2011, eight young people aged 15 to 17 were involved in the Youth IGF Project. They attended the summer camp, discussing the key issues and watching videos of key stakeholders being interviewed by Childnet, to guide and focus the discussion topics around access and diversity. The group attended the IGF in Nairobi, contributing to various panel discussions and meeting people by handing out “business cards” created for each young person with their statement of beliefs. Watch the video to see this year’s Youth IGF team presenting their ideas about internet governance: www.youthigfproject.com

2) Pan-European Youth Panel: Sarah Sumpter, Insafe

Youth panels are an important asset to the Insafe model – raising awareness and sharing good practice. Although there are various models, each Safer Internet Centre has a panel, which allows young people to come together a few times a year to discuss current issues regarding modern media and the internet.

Insafe saw the opportunity to bring together youth panel members from across the Safer Internet Centres and so created the Pan-European Youth Panel.

This year is the third year that the Pan-EU Youth Panel has attended the Safer Internet Forum, with 30 youth panellists and 6 winners of the Commission’s positive content online competition attending this year. In 2010 the youth panellists looked at research from the EU Kids Online Project and European Online Grooming Project. They looked at social networking, parents and online technologies, how youth panellists viewed their relationship with their parents, as well as online risk, particularly grooming and cyberbullying. Reports from 2009 and 2010 youth panel sessions are available online.

Insafe decided to create a virtual presence, to make better use of the Pan-EU youth panel and ensure they can continue their debates and influence throughout the year. The main aim was to create a place for all young European citizens to share their concerns and hopes and their views on online life. They encourage young people to blog about their views, discuss the issues in forums, and run quick polls. Insafe worked with the 2010 youth panellists to develop the website, and will continue to consult young people in further developing the platform. The site uses Facebook and Twitter to engage young people. They

are looking at further ways of disseminating the information and encouraging wider discussions across Europe by targeting teachers.

The Pan-EU Youth Panel have also been involved in consultations, for example, looking at how young people feel they are represented in the media and the stereotypes they are facing. The Play Decide Discuss role play game is used to begin a discussion of controversial issues. Youth panellists have been playing this game during the Safer Internet Forum 2011 to inform Insafe's work and the work of the wider European network. The youth panel members have formulated some policy requests that we can build on in future years – for example, Radu from Romania came up with the idea that politicians should encourage more positive media coverage of young people.

Further information is available on the Pan-EU Youth Panel website: www.paneuyouth.eu

3) Danish Youth Panel: Camilla Wøldike, The Media Council for Children and Young People, Safer Internet Centre Denmark

The Danish youth panel has been running since 2009. The panel consists of 9 young people aged 12-15 years who were selected because of their interest in online technologies, and their confidence to speak up in debates.

The youth panel have undertaken a wide range of activities, including blogging. Some key activities have included:

Wish list for educators. The youth panel made a list of wishes about how they would like to be taught and presented this to the Minister of Education.

SID 2010 Survey. On Safer Internet Day the youth panel members carried out a survey among their classmates, made a story about their experiences such as falling in love, hacking and digital bullying, and then had a peer-to-peer debate to learn from one another.

Privacy survey. In line with the themes of the IGF, they asked children aged 13-16 about privacy etc, and made educational resources for teachers. They were overwhelmed by the response, with over 4,000 replies to the online surveys with very informative answers.

Annual conference with telecom industry. This included a debate with young people, which received front page media coverage in Denmark. The discussion with Facebook proved to be very important as the suggestion of a youth panellist led to the introduction of the social reporting button.

Educational videos. They have created videos to raise awareness. For example, they created a video about the Facebook terms of use, interviewing young people to highlight how everyone uses Facebook but no one reads the Terms of Use. Facebook have made the Terms more simple since.

Wish list - the Danish centre would like:

More young people

More education/preparation

More co-operation across youth panels – national youth network

More exposure

4) Nordic Youth IGF Initiative: Alex Amnéus, The Media Council, Safer Internet Centre Sweden

The Swedish centre is in the process of planning a new project, the Nordic Youth IGF Initiative, aiming to bring together the Nordic countries youth panels to contribute to internet governance debates.

The objective is to involve youth in discussions about freedom of speech and democracy, and internet governance issues and its future. They would like to raise the level of the issues discussed, for example, they may discuss digital cultural expressions.

Their ambition is to empower youth through peer-to-peer exchange. They wish to strengthen regional cooperation across the Nordic region and address common issues. They wish to spread recommendations from the young people and set up formal meetings with informed youths and policymakers.

The Nordic Youth IGF Initiative will consist of 50 panellists aged 16-18 from across the national youth panels. They plan to launch the concept at a national level on Safer Internet Day. They will then hold the Nordic Youth IGF 2012 in Stockholm just before the euroDIG in June 2012. They hope that some young people will be able to attend the IGF in Azerbaijan in 2012. The young people will begin discussing these issues online on the run up to the Nordic Youth IGF 2012 and continue these discussions after.

They will disseminate the responses of the young people through reports and news letters and through the International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media which reaches a global audience.

2) Roundtable discussion on digital citizenship, online literacy and the future challenges to online safety

Moderator: Lucinda Fell, Childnet International, UK Safer Internet Centre

Youth panel

Marie Claire	Cyprus
Albert	Denmark
Joáo Pedro	Portugal
Radu-Alexandru	Romania
Emil Nils Johan	Sweden
Liam	UK

Industry panel

Lena Tønning Pedersen	Microsoft
Luc Delany	Facebook
Naomi Gummer	Google
Claire Rush	YouTube
Pascale Thumerelle	Vivendi
Michaela Angonius	Telenor

This section of the workshop provided a practical demonstration of youth participation. The moderator set the scene, explaining that when creating a dialogue between young people, industry and government at a national level in the UK, engaging young people is a roundtable discussion, with young people as participants alongside other panellists had been a very enjoyable way of doing this.

Opportunities:

A roundtable discussion presents the opportunity for young people to speak directly to policymakers in-depth and with support from the workshop moderator.

Policymakers are very interested in hearing directly from young people and having the opportunity to ask questions to the youth panel. As Naomi Gummer from Google pointed out, “policymakers need to be aware of what is actually being done online, rather than just listening to the myths that are perpetuated in the media”.

Challenges and recommendations highlighted by the youth panel in their debate:

Need to empower young people with tools to manage their identity online, and support them when it seems their identity online is out of their control. Although industry may provide tools so that young people can manage their privacy young people still do not feel they have complete control over their online lives. They felt that they can't manage their privacy because they can't control what others post about them. The youngest youth panellist who was 11 years old did not have a Facebook profile, but reflected that people do post photos of her and she often doesn't find out until much later. She rated her ability to manage her privacy as 1 out of 10, as she does not feel she has any power over what goes online about her.

Everyone can make a decision about how much to share, but default settings should protect privacy. Albert, a youth panellist, said that everyone has their own boundary about how much they share – some people like to share more, others are more private. The youth panel felt that default settings should be strict then people can decide for themselves how much to share.

How can we encourage very young users to think about privacy. Marie-Claire, the youngest youth panellist felt that she was sometimes having too much fun online to think about privacy.

We need to encourage young people to think about privacy (Recommendations from the panel and the floor included: making it simple, embedding it in the services they are using, integrating education into daily life, discussing reasons for protecting privacy including the wider implications for education and employment, and emphasising the fact that it is an issue for all ages). **We have a real opportunity with the Safer Internet Day theme to share safety messages that apply to all generations.**

Overview of the roundtable discussion

What are you doing online?

We heard from the youth panel about how they are accessing internet from a range of devices; computers, gaming devices such as Xbox 360s and PSPs, smartphones and tablets.

Interestingly when we polled them about their activities, the only activity every youth panellist was doing online was their homework or schoolwork.

- 5 of 6 were on Facebook.

- 3 of the 6 use other social networks.

- 2 of 6 were regular twitter users

- 5 of 6 listen and download music online

PRIVACY

How confident are you in managing your privacy online?

The youth panel varied in their confidence in managing their privacy, with scores out of ten across a wide range: 9.5, 8, 5, 5, 1

All of the young people agreed that although industry may provide tools so that young people can manage their privacy – for example, who they share their social networking profiles with – young people still do not feel they have complete control over their online lives. They felt that they can't manage their privacy because they can't control what others post about them. The youngest youth panellist who was 11 years old did not have a Facebook profile, but people do post photos of her and she often doesn't find out until much later. She rated her ability to manage her privacy as 1 out of 10, as she does not feel she has any power over what goes online about her.

As Luc from Facebook pointed out, it is really important to help young people understand how to behave in a world where you might have a record of things.

Do you care about your privacy online?

danah boyd has stated that one myth is that "kids don't care about privacy".

The youth panel felt that this isn't true. Albert said everyone has their own boundary about how much they share – some people like to share more, others are more private. He felt that default settings should be strict then people can decide for themselves how much to share. Marie-Claire, the youngest youth panellist felt that she was sometimes having too much fun online to think about privacy.

How should we be engaging young people in talking about privacy?

Lena, Microsoft – teachers can incorporate it into wider teaching. For example, by using social networks in Biology they might have a discussion about privacy settings, integrating the discussion into daily life.

Naomi, Google – make it as simple as possible. In the UK, Google have launched a big campaign with 5 tips on how to stay safe online which picture the issues in offline examples.

Philippa, Childnet – as an Education Manager she has found that with 16-18 year olds the best way to talk about the issue is in reference to your "Digital footprint". Older teenagers need to talk about the long-term implications for employment and university admissions.

Luc, Facebook – choices about privacy should be embedded in the service. In terms of education, he felt it should be less about a ‘course on privacy’, but more about how to behave well in modern communications and friendships.

Claire, YouTube – privacy is a safety issue for all age groups.

We have a real opportunity with the Safer Internet Day theme to share safety messages that apply to all generations.

UNDERAGE USE AND AGE VERIFICATION

What is the attraction for being on services under 13?

Marie-Claire, who is 11 years and not on Facebook, felt that sometimes she feels embarrassed that she is not allowed a profile. She also felt it would be easier as it is free, whereas she has to pay for texts.

Is the age limit right? Should they be allowed on?

As Luc from Facebook explained, young people want to use Facebook, but the law needs parental consent. As there is no good method for parental verification at the moment they would be breaking the law to open the service for under-13s.

But as the youth panel pointed out, COPPA was created in 1998 and a lot has changed since then. João Pedro suggested that industry needs to work with government, as the laws are irrelevant in the actual world.

EDUCATION

Can social media be educational?

One of danah boyd’s myths states that “there is nothing educational about social media”.

The youth panel did not feel this was true. João Pedro said he sees his social network as a community where he can ask for information.

Claire from YouTube highlighted ways that social media can empower people politically and that there is a lot of educational material on social media, such as Space Lab, which is encouraging people to come up with a science experiment for space and uploading a video explaining it to YouTube.

Who can people learn from about internet safety?

The youth panel had discussed who should be teaching people about internet safety across different ages. Liam pointed out that we all can use the people around us for support. Radu suggested that 5 year olds could learn through games and their parents, while teenagers are more likely to turn to peers for support. Albert provided the example of a Danish television

show which showed elderly people getting support online from teenagers volunteering in community centres.

Safer Internet Day is a great opportunity to highlight the need for different advice across ages – and that we should be using those around us to learn about using the internet safely, whatever our age.