



European Monitoring Centre  
for Drugs and Drug Addiction



# Maximising opportunities, minimising risks – meeting the digital challenge for girls and boys

Annex 3



## Foreword

Digitalisation is rapidly changing our world and young people are on the frontline and technology is transforming the way we work, socialise, and engage with politics. In order to ensure Europe reaps the benefits of the digital revolution while protecting citizens, it is necessary to identify trends and risks.

**As the 2018 Chair of the JHA agencies' network, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) proposed** JHA agencies assess the impact of digitalisation on European citizens. The agencies have a clear mandate to protect boys and girls from the dangers of the digital world, which include trafficking in human beings, radicalisation, and incorrect and unreliable information. The agencies are committed to working together to minimise the risks children face through prevention, awareness raising about trustworthy online information, and education and assistance. In their contributions to this paper, the agencies present how the use of digital technologies help address the challenges outlined. Digital opportunities and risks are therefore often two sides of the same coin.

**EIGE's research shows that digitalisation is affecting girls and boys, and women and men, in different ways.** Gender norms are being replicated in the online world, where they often become exacerbated. Girls are more likely to be affected by cyber violence than boys, including sexual cyberbullying. They are less likely to engage in political discussions for fear of online backlash. Gender stereotypes in education and the labour market have resulted in only 17% of the 8 million ICT professionals in the EU being women.

Digitalisation also brings many opportunities in the struggle to increase gender equality and eliminate gender-based violence. Digital jobs offer a chance for better work-life balance, which helps make the lives of women and men more meaningful. The internet and social media can be powerful tools for social change, as we have seen with #MeToo.

This paper makes some initial proposals for actions that would enable EU institutions and Member States to harness the possibilities of digitalisation and empower digital citizens of the future.

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## Introduction

**More than half the world's population is connected to the digital world and numbers are rising, including in Europe.<sup>1</sup> The fast-paced digital evolution of recent decades has unequivocally revolutionised people's lives. It has brought tangible benefits to people's social, economic and political activity and their personal development through previously unimaginable opportunities.** It is also evident that the integration of digital technology into every facet of modern life is having a profound impact on human behaviour and a new culture is emerging. This has given birth to complex challenges and risks that undermine democratic values, human rights, gender equality and security.

With operational mandates to ensure freedom, security and justice in the European Union, the nine EU Justice and Home Affairs Agencies (JHA)<sup>2</sup> are themselves feeling the impact of the digital revolution, both in the mushrooming challenges and restraints they face and the systems and responses they must develop to address them. This paper aims to look closer at available JHA knowledge on the impact of digitalisation on young people, specifically boys and girls aged between 15-18 years.

It is the youth that are the largest online users<sup>3</sup> and the most tech savvy. With an increasingly tech-dependent future on the immediate horizon with social, economic, political and security implications, it is this generation that is on the digital frontline. The digital skills and experiences acquired in Europe today will help determine how that future unfolds. With millennials due to make up nearly half of the global workforce by 2020<sup>4</sup>, how these skills are used will also determine the economic competitiveness and social cohesion of the region.

A generation increasingly skilled at using digital technology is an asset for society but without the maturity or guidance on how best to use its talents, those skills pose a risk. Despite the growing body of research and policies on digitalisation and youth, there is a limited understanding of and response to its impact on teenage girls and boys. They are especially vulnerable as they navigate the digital world and assert their independence. Developing increasingly sophisticated digital skills as they grow older paradoxically not only opens up teenagers to more positive online opportunities, it also exposes them to risky<sup>5</sup> and potentially criminal behaviour without constraints of national borders. This has implications for their rights, security and for increased gender equality. The spotlight of both attention and action is mainly on crime, security and blocking access, and less so on measures to fulfil the potential of digitalisation.

Through their work, JHA agencies are either generally or specifically building the capacity of Member States to protect children or are informing and reaching out to the public. In 2018, coordinated by EIGE, each agency provided insights for this paper on how boys and girls are impacted by digitalisation in their area of work, and how they can contribute to negating risks, ensure security and promote gender equality and rights. This and greater collaboration between the agencies going forward offer scope to better understand the issue so as to realise the opportunities of digitalisation and minimise its risks through EU and Member State policies and programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> *Opportunities and risks of digitalisation for boys and girls, JHA network, Experts Meeting, CEPOL*

<sup>2</sup> CEPOL, EASO, EIGE, EMCDDA, eu-LISA, Eurojust, Europol, FRA, Frontex

<sup>3</sup> *Gender equality and youth: Opportunities and risks of Digitalisation, EIGE*

<sup>4</sup> *How young people view the digitalization of the world, Le Bacon-Gaillard, Digitalist magazine*

<sup>5</sup> *Balancing opportunities and risks in teenagers' use of the internet, the role of online skills and internet self-efficacy, S. Livingstone, E. Helsper, 2009*

## Opportunities offered by digital technologies

By 2014, 46 per cent of all children between 9-16 years in seven European countries already owned smartphones,<sup>6</sup> statistics that will have geographically and numerically expanded since. Undoubtedly, the internet, social media, and easy access to them, have provided girls and boys with extraordinary opportunities that have changed the ways in which they seek and acquire knowledge, interact with peers and society at large, and develop their interests and personalities. Uniquely creative outlets for self-expression and empowerment, digital platforms also impact on careers and economic prospects and facilitate social and political participation with knock-on benefits for inclusion and integration into new societies and economies. There is clearly significant potential to harness digital technologies for active youth citizenship and to deliver on a major concern of young people, namely – equal opportunities for all.<sup>7</sup>

The freedom and scope unleashed by online technologies have been embraced by girls and boys alike, as seen by their high level of participation on social media networks. They create new content, engage in online discussions, and follow debates, although gender disparities begin to show in how and why they engage and participate.<sup>8</sup>

While gender gaps exist virtually everywhere, gender equality or near equality has been achieved on two aspects: 92 per cent of 16-19-year-old boys and girls use the internet daily while 59 per cent of boys this age and 55 per cent of girls have above basic digital skills.<sup>9</sup> Despite this, girls indicate being less confident about their digital skills. For example, on average, 73 per cent of 15-16-year-old boys compared to 63 per cent of girls are comfortable using unfamiliar digital devices,<sup>10</sup> with long-term ramifications.

Currently, girls see few prospects for them in ICT careers despite their equal footing with boys in overall educational attainment. Insufficient digital skills in the European labour market have for long meant a large shortage of ICT specialists with women making up just 17 per cent of eight million ICT specialists, a statistic that has barely changed in a decade.<sup>11</sup>

For this to change and to achieve gender equality in terms of digital abilities and opportunities throughout adulthood, closer attention has to be paid to girls in digital curricula in schools. Boosting their confidence in the wider application of digital skills needs to start at an early age. Content for STEM education should also be broadened to ensure both girls and boys are reached. EIGE research shows that narrowing the gender gap in STEM education would create up to 1.2 million more jobs and increase long-term GDP by up to 820 billion Euros by 2050.<sup>12</sup>

A pre-requisite is digital training for teachers throughout their careers. It is estimated that only 20-25 per cent of students in Europe are taught by digitally confident teachers<sup>13</sup> in a profession heavily represented by women. Career-long training would also close gender gaps in digital skills among adults and ensure **teachers are equipped to pass on high levels of digital literacy. This includes strengthening children's critical thinking abilities to better judge online content.**

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<sup>6</sup> *Smartphones are bad for some teens, not all.* Odgers, Nature, 21<sup>st</sup> Feb, 2018

<sup>7</sup> *How young people view the digitalization of the world*, Le Bacon-Gaillard, Digitalist magazine

<sup>8</sup> *Gender equality and youth: Opportunities and risks of Digitalisation*, EIGE, 2018

<sup>9</sup> Eurostat 2017

<sup>10</sup> *Gender equality and youth: Opportunities and risks of Digitalisation*, EIGE, 2018

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> *Economic benefits of gender equality in the EU: How gender equality in STEM education leads to economic growth*, EIGE, 2017

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

Extending that training to parents and carers, who often lack the digital literacy to influence their more technologically adept offspring, would guide children to navigate the digital world more effectively and safely. Partnerships with the big tech companies could help fund such ongoing training and human investment.

## The underbelly of a changing culture

With digital technologies providing an unprecedented scope for self-expression, to obtain and share information, and to easily access people, goods and services across national boundaries, modern culture is irrevocably changing. EIGE research shows offline gender norms and behaviour being extended into the online world and exacerbated, adding a dynamic complex challenge to efforts towards gender equality and the elimination of gender-based violence. While fears of digitalisation driving the downfall of an entire generation are not supported,<sup>14</sup> online activities may, however, be perpetuating and even worsening existing inequalities. Digital opportunities and risks for girls and boys are, therefore, often two sides of the same coin with risks compounded by the dark web and its implications for cybercrime, security and justice.

According to JHA law enforcement agencies, cybercrime is one of the fastest growing and evolving areas in serious organised and transnational crime and a significant EU priority. However, a lack of legal synergies between EU Member States hampers Europe-wide investigations. These occur through uncoordinated parallel domestic investigations and conflicts of jurisdiction across borders; different national laws; victims across several countries; issues over the admissibility of e-evidence in court proceedings; and transferring criminal proceedings from one country to another. Conflicting legislation can also hinder law enforcement, such as data protection laws that contradict security measures.

### *Cyber violence*

There is mounting evidence that cyber violence is a growing phenomenon and girls are disproportionately affected. Girls are less likely to post comments or engage with political and civic issues for fear of online backlash. Among 15-year-olds, 12 per cent of girls report being cyberbullied compared to seven per cent of boys. After witnessing cyberbullying, 51 per cent of girls as opposed to 42 per cent of boys hesitate to engage in or disengage from social media for fear of abuse or judgement with consequences for their civic participation. Aggressive online behaviour is now expected and normalized within groups.<sup>15</sup>

The objectification of women and girls through online media, peer pressure to share explicit images or sexting for fun, contents of which are then shared without consent to the viral world, and victim-blaming, have also sexualised cyberbullying. Together with cyberstalking, cyber harassment, sexting and grooming, definitions of which languish in legal grey areas, children, and girls in particular, are more vulnerable to cyber violence than ever before.

The global reach of digital sharing ensures victims are impacted indefinitely beyond a specific location, moment or group. Efforts to address the many forms of cyber violence are hampered by insufficient awareness and understanding of cyberbullying and gender-based violence among law enforcement agencies and judicial authorities.

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<sup>14</sup> *Smartphones are bad for some teens, not all*. Odgers, Nature, 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2018

<sup>15</sup> *Gender equality and youth: Opportunities and risks of Digitalisation*, EIGE, 2018

## *Child sexual exploitation*

According to Europol's **European Cybercrime Centre (EC3)**, the internet is facilitating hands-on abuse of minors with child online sexual exploitation one of the worst forms of cybercrime. In a 2015 EU study,<sup>16</sup> estimated prevalence rates for online sexual abuse of girls were higher than for boys in almost all of a group of European countries, while other research by IWF found 77.1 per cent of online sexual content of 16-20-year-olds featured girls. Among children aged 15 years and younger, that figure was 93.1 per cent.<sup>17</sup>

A growing phenomenon is the sexual coercion and/or extortion of minors who have shared compromising images of themselves before being blackmailed for more sexual materials or money. Likely to be subjected to repeated demands, victims are trapped and isolated, and can self-harm or commit suicide. Of the 70 per cent of European countries reporting such cases to Europol, more than half indicate sexual coercion and extortion as a growing problem. Equally of concern is that 70 per cent of sexual extortion cases brought to law enforcement attention involve only minors, a concern compounded by lack of legal clarity on what to do with juvenile perpetrators.

## *Radicalisation*

While the role of the internet and social media in radicalising young people is acknowledged, scholars disagree on whether radicalisation occurs only through internet activities.<sup>18</sup> One 2017 study argues that due to traditional cultural and gender norms, the recruitment of boys and young men can more easily occur in physical spaces outside the home, but for women and girls, this happens more online and in private environments.<sup>19</sup> Online recruitment is also gendered with different roles and expectations for boys and men, compared to girls and women. Women are targeted with anti-feminism messages or called upon to fulfil a higher sense of purpose as wives and mothers, although military reverses in 2017 led to ISIS calling for women to take up arms for the first time.<sup>20</sup> Female suicide bombers may be unusual, but radicalised women and girls are not. A 2014 report estimated that 18 per cent of all European ISIS members are women and girls.<sup>21</sup>

The complexity around the radicalisation and online recruitment of boys and girls into terrorism or extremism underlines tensions between protecting fundamental rights and security. The issue of radicalisation should be addressed through a holistic, multidimensional approach, which goes beyond security and law enforcement measures only. To combat radicalisation, educational settings should foster citizenship and common values. Working with local communities and families should be increased and effective coordination among the various actors should be enhanced.

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<sup>16</sup> *Combatting child sexual abuse online. Study for the LIBE Committee*, P. Jeney, 2015

<sup>17</sup> *Emerging Patterns and Trends Report #1 Online-Produced Sexual Content*, IWF, 2015

<sup>18</sup> *Radicalisation and violent extremism – focus on women: How women become radicalised, and how to empower them to prevent radicalisation*, De Leede, Haupfleisch, Korolkova, Natter, 2017

<sup>19</sup> *Women, gender and Daesh radicalisation*, The RUSI Journal, E. Pearson, E. Winterbotham, 2017

<sup>20</sup> *Isis calls on women to fight and launch terror attacks for first time*, Dearden, The Independent, 2017

<sup>21</sup> *How ISIS attracts women and girls from Europe with false offer of 'empowerment'*, Dearden, The Independent, 2017

## *Hate speech*

When it comes to the impact of hate speech online on boys and girls, ELGE's research on youth and digitalisation has highlighted that the effects of hate speech and online harassment more generally affect young women disproportionately. After witnessing or experiencing online hate speech or abuse, 51 % of young women and 42 % of young men in the EU hesitate to engage in social media debates due to fear of experiencing abuse, hate speech or threats. The report analysed that cyber-harassment from peers and strangers often make young people, especially girls, restrict their political activities online (as they also do offline), thereby missing out on the full advantages of digital media.

FRA's paper "**Challenges to women's human rights in the EU: Gender discrimination, sexist hate speech and gender-based violence against women and girls**"<sup>22</sup> suggest that the increase in the use of information and communication technologies as tools to abuse women and girls underlines the need for taking specific action, such as removing content and developing codes of conduct. However, the internet can also be a powerful tool to promote human rights and to empower women and girls to exercise their freedom of expression, as in the Twitter and Facebook hashtag campaign #MeToo.

## *Child trafficking and smuggling*

According to a 2015 Eurostat report on Trafficking in Human Beings, 17 per cent of victims between 2010-2012 were 12-17 years-old. Where gender/age data was available, girls accounted for 13 per cent of trafficked victims in 2012, compared to three percent for boys. The European Commission has acknowledged that criminal networks have exploited the migration crisis to target vulnerable women and children. Trafficking networks frequently track digital platforms for sources of information on young people, particularly migrant children. Recognising this reality, EASO has used the digital world to reach out to potential migrants and potential victims of smuggling and THB including children. Through its Social Media Monitoring project, EASO has collected data which has been instrumental for the understanding of the general trends and discourse on social networks related to flight and migration, smuggling networks, document fraud and integration issues. When detecting cybercrime, some of which may affect vulnerable migrants including children active on the social media, EASO has relayed its findings to Europol.

Following the success of its research on Social Media, EASO has actively engaged in countering messages of smugglers through its online **pilot information campaign 'Journey to Europe'**. Given that the Internet, social media (Facebook in particular) and smartphones are widely used in Nigeria, EASO has used Facebook as the main communication channel for publicising, *inter alia*, video testimonials of Nigerian migrants, including victims of trafficking in human beings. The project aims to provide information to migrants and/or potential migrants from Nigeria, including children, to Europe about asylum in the EU and the dangers of travelling to Europe via smugglers, such as human trafficking, forced prostitution, sex trafficking, torture, modern slavery, forced labour, drowning at sea, domestic servitude, etc. in order to help them make informed **decisions**. **EASO's Facebook page has over 100,000 followers** and its video testimonials have been watched nearly 1m times.

## *Drug use and online gambling*

Analysis by EMCDDA points out that illicit drug use remains high in Europe. An estimated 18.9 million young adults aged 15-34 used drugs in the last year, with twice as many males as females reporting doing so.

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<sup>22</sup> [Challenges to women's human rights in the EU](#), FRA (2017)

Recent years have seen the appearance and use of new psychoactive substances on the drug market with the internet increasingly shaping drug-related behaviours and attitudes. Digital technology is also changing how people acquire drugs with social media reportedly contributing to an expansion in online drug markets.

Although gambling for money was the least common online activity among all schoolchildren in a 2015 mapping of internet use in 34 European countries by ESPAD23, 24 per cent of 15-16-year-old boys had gambled online at least once in the past 12 months, compared to eight per cent of girls the same age. Frequent online gambling was reported by an average of three per cent of respondents – six per cent of boys compared to one per cent of girls.

## Possible ways forward

Primary consideration in responses to opportunities and risks of digitalisation for boys and girls has to be in the best interests of children, taking their own views into account – a right enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Potential sources of harm can be addressed without unreasonably restricting access to digital platforms. Equipping them with relevant knowledge and critical thinking skills, possibly by making **digital literacy a “fourth pillar” of learning on par with reading, writing and maths**,<sup>24</sup> remains the most effective and empowering safeguard against digital risks. Equally important is ending social tolerance of gender violence in any arena. Changing attitudes to de-normalise cyber violence is a key path to gender equality.

### *Strengthened institutional responses*

Any institutional response needs to have a holistic approach, without resorting only to security and law enforcement measures. Those include areas as relevant as education, awareness raising, and research and data collection.

Better data and analysis, simple mechanisms making it easier for boys and girls to report abuse and seek help, improved coordination on investigations, technology and training can strengthen institutional responses.

EU-wide initiatives could include introducing or raising awareness of a national Ombudsperson for children and how s/he can help; establishing web-based national hotlines connected to child helplines and police that enable children and adults to report sites **violating children’s sexual rights, and appointing “web constables” who facilitate safe online communication with children and adults to prevent or respond to** cyber violence and child sexual exploitation – examples from Estonia. Current crime recording and analysis systems in Member States to better understand the prevalence, scope and nature of all cybersex crimes affecting children should also be upgraded.

Law enforcement needs to strengthen efforts to protect girls and women from hate speech online. Women who have experienced online sexist hatred describe the standard response they receive from the police as suggesting to simply take a break from the internet. Efforts should however be placed in the accountability of perpetrators.

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<sup>23</sup> [http://www.espad.org/sites/espad.org/files/ESPAD\\_report\\_2015.pdf](http://www.espad.org/sites/espad.org/files/ESPAD_report_2015.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> *Disinformation and ‘fake news’: Interim Report, Fifth Report of Session 2017-2019*, Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, House of Commons, 2018



For successful cybercrime investigations, the early involvement of Europol is essential. Centralising cases nationally and more effective international cooperation and coordination between JHA law enforcement agencies and Member States would strengthen investigations. Joint Investigation Teams (JIT) of relevant authorities from concerned Member States, with Eurojust and Europol participating, have shown promise in facilitating easy, swift cooperation and exchange of evidence and can be developed.

Because of the use of the digital technologies, EU wide Joint Operational Activities could take place at the same time targeting any child specific aspect. An example of such activity is Frontex Joint Operation VEGA Children 2018, which has been launched to tackle criminality associated with the movement of children at external air borders and to provide best practices on special protection needs that children identified during the operation require.

The Schengen Information System (SIS II) run 24/7/365 by eu-LISA is a highly efficient large-scale information system that supports law enforcement cooperation and external border control throughout the Member States of the European Union (and Schengen Associated Countries). The SIS II enables competent authorities, for example, police officers and border guards, to enter and consult alerts on specific categories of wanted or missing persons and objects. SIS II acts as an information sharing system between all the countries that use it and holds information in the form of "alerts". Each Person alert can contain biographical information such as, name, date of birth, gender and nationality. In addition to this, SIS II also stores fingerprints and photographs of the person an alert is related to. Although the legal basis of SIS II permits the storage of fingerprints, prior to this year they have only been used to confirm the identity of a person who has been identified following a check on his/her name and/or date of birth. Though this feature has been useful, the real added value of fingerprints is to be able to identify a person from his/her fingerprints alone. In order for this to occur, an Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) was launched by eu-LISA in 2018. It will also facilitate the identification of persons of interest, particularly those who have changed their identity to avoid detection.

Existing CEPOL training of law enforcers on various forms of cybercrime, including cyber violence against girls and women, could extend to clarifying understanding on the boundaries between sexting, grooming and sexual exploitation. Gender perspectives in cyber-related crime affecting children should be incorporated into the training.

Through capacity building activities EU Border Officials could also be informed about specific issues related to children. A wide variety of different digital methods are available, like e-learning, digital newsletters, etc. An example of this is the Frontex-FRA video on child protection, which is presented to border guards during operational briefings before deployment.

### *Stronger accountability and oversight*

The importance and complexity of digitalisation is reflected in a myriad of EU policies and initiatives relating to digitalisation, including, on a safer internet for children.<sup>25</sup> Adding a gender perspective to these and all EU policies on youth would significantly enhance the efforts of EU Member States to combat all forms of discrimination and gender-based violence. Proposals for strengthening digital opportunities include an intersectional analysis of vulnerabilities and obstacles to digital opportunities for boys and girls; establishing baselines and setting and monitoring gender specific targets on initiatives to bring more girls into the ICT sector; working with teachers on gender aspects of digitalisation and ensuring youth of all sexes are involved in the planning and decision-making processes.

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<sup>25</sup> For example, the *European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children and a Digital Agenda for Europe*

However, without laws to regulate certain types of behaviour, the effects of policies are undermined. The definition and inclusion of various forms of gender-based cyber violence in EU definitions of cybercrime is critical in addressing this violence. EU and Member States should also ratify the Istanbul Convention and apply it to cyber violence.

Although an EU legal framework on child sexual abuse exists, similarly comprehensive EU-wide legal instruments on cybercrime and their enforcement would significantly help to address the transnational nature of the phenomenon. This involves strengthening European law enforcement capacity to respond to and prevent cybercrime, including among relevant JHA agencies.

Currently, only a few EU Member States regulate or render social networks and digital service providers liable for spreading hate speech and inciting violence. Internet service providers and operators of social media platforms could therefore be encouraged to be more proactive in removing and enabling the reporting of discriminatory and abusive content, including sexist hate speech. Inspiration and guidance could be taken from the code of conduct on illegal online hate speech agreed by the European Commission and information technologies (IT) companies in May 2016. The code of conduct could be extended to cover sexist hate speech.

Furthermore, the tech and social media companies could be held more accountable for the spread of harmful content, timelier removal of content, better data protection, and ensuring terms of conditions are age appropriate and age ratified. Alternatively, rules on accuracy and impartiality standards for broadcasters could serve as a basis for standard setting for online content, as recently proposed in a British parliamentary committee report on disinformation<sup>26</sup>.

Children can also be encouraged to self-regulate and develop their knowledge of the boundaries between legal, ethical and acceptable. Gender elements should be included in codes of conduct to effectively capture and counter the gender dimensions of online hate speech, gender-based cybercrime, and to better understand the root causes.

### *Partnerships to solve a complex challenge*

The multi-faceted challenges of the digitalisation of boys and girls require a multi-disciplinary response. Education and prevention are key to unlocking opportunities, but only if all stakeholders and sectors are involved in identifying **and implementing solutions**. A 2017 report on cyberbullying for the EU's Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee noted the correlation between the quality of policy implementation and stakeholder involvement, stressing the importance of public sector engagement in ensuring safer internet activities.

Children and youth organisations such as the European Youth Forum are crucial actors and should be adequately supported in their work. The new EU Youth Strategy is a great opportunity to address the challenges raised in this paper.

Self-regulatory EU partnership initiatives such as the Alliance to Better Protect Minors Online could be scaled up or the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, aimed at boosting digital education and training to address ICT

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<sup>26</sup> *Disinformation and 'fake news': Interim Report, Fifth Report of Session 2017-2019*, Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, House of Commons, 2018

skills shortages in the labour market could be a blueprint for action on digital literacy that ensures safe online practices for children.

JHA collaboration on this paper has underlined that evidence of its impact remains scarce. The dearth of sex-disaggregated data also inhibits the identification of gender specific patterns. Partnerships on collecting and sharing sex-disaggregated data, including by JHA agencies, will significantly contribute to more effective EU responses.

## The role of JHA

Digital technologies are playing a big role in the work of JHA agencies focused on security, justice and border management. Despite a clear mandate to better protect boys and girls from the dangers in the digital world, including among others, trafficking in human beings, radicalisation and incorrect and unreliable information the JHA agencies cooperate in prevention, awareness raising about trustable online information and sources, education and assistance that can minimize risks for children, . In contributions to this paper, they underline how their own reliance on digital technologies can address the challenges outlined. JHA agencies can play an active, major role in countering false information related to asylum and widely promote correct information to children.

To prevent online radicalisation and recruitment of children and young people, Eurojust facilitates the exchange of lessons learnt from prosecutions and convictions for terrorist offences based on its casework and the information received from Member States on ongoing and concluded terrorism proceedings.

**Awareness raising digital campaigns are used to target children on a wide range of issues, such as Europol's SayNo campaign** that aims to raise awareness on online sexual coercion and extortion of children. Similarly, the EC3 has also promoted advice for young people and their parents and educators on the risks and consequences associated with becoming involved in cybercrime: **Cyber Crime vs Cyber Security: What Will You Choose?** **EASO's pilot information campaign 'Journey to Europe'** provides information to migrants and/or potential migrants about asylum in the EU and the dangers of travelling to Europe via smugglers, such as human trafficking, forced prostitution, sex trafficking, torture, modern slavery, forced labour, drowning at sea or domestic servitude.

**E-learning has become an increasingly important method for CEPOL's training of law enforcement officers** on all aspects of cybercrime, while the increasing role of digital technologies in crime overall has necessitated incorporating training in online intelligence and investigation methods.

Digital tools and platforms also provide opportunities for asylum case workers to facilitate their work. For instance, some of the guides made available online by EASO include a guide on age assessment and a guide on family tracing. An EASO online tool<sup>27</sup> helps Member State asylum caseworkers detect early signs of child trafficking, and ensure an appropriate individual response to the special needs of the particular applicant, including children. eu-LISA managed large-scale IT systems can be used to identify, track, rescue and assist registered missing or trafficked persons, including minors.

Child-specific statistics gathered during Frontex operations together with data from Member States on children and unaccompanied minors give a better understanding of trends pertaining to children at external borders and help identify vulnerable children with special protection needs, including victims of trafficking. These analyses also aim to help policymakers develop child-sensitive policies and measures.

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<sup>27</sup> <https://ipsn.easo.europa.eu/about-tool-0>

EMCDDA highlights how digital platforms are providing new opportunities for targeted health interventions on substance abuse, including for young people. They are playing an increasing role in collecting information on drug use and related problems. Monitoring of open source information, including drug user forums; on line shops; darknet, media reports, and web surveys are among the new methods used by the EMCDDA to complement regular monitoring data collection in order to get more timely information on new trends and emerging issues.

Building on previous analysis of cyber violence as a form of violence against women (VAW)<sup>28</sup>, EIGE's research for the 2018 Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU identified several gender differences in how digitalisation affects boys and girls aged 15-18 years. It highlighted the need for a gender perspective to be included in all digitalisation and youth policies.

Through its various research, including on how the digital world affects genders differently on issues such as cyber violence and cyberbullying or data protection and implications for children, FRA is providing insights into gender specific dynamics of digital behaviour.

A workshop in June 2018 at EIGE and this paper are initial moves to map a way forward on overcoming challenges together. Future steps to strengthen synergies for effective action on the theme of this paper have been identified.

Only close and well coordinated stakeholder engagement will ensure success in addressing the scale and complexity of the challenges posed by the transnational and inter-connected digital world for boys and girls. This includes among JHA agencies whose mandates provide the bedrock for European security, justice, equality and rights. A concerted effort to improve sex disaggregated data collection is crucial for informed action. Interventions need to focus on changing the digital culture through learning to create and mobilise responsible and empowered digital citizens of the future. EU political awareness and leadership on the opportunities and risks of digitalisation for boys and girls and their linkage to existing strategic policies is just as crucial.

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<sup>28</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/eiges-studies-gender-based-violence/cyber-violence-against-women>

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