

PREFACE

The rapid development of new information and communication technologies (ICT) and the Internet in the past 15 years have had a massive impact on people's everyday life and have significantly changed the way in which people communicate and interact. Today, approximately 52 % of the European population is online (with considerable differences between European countries, ranging from 91 % in Norway to 20 % in Moldova). For young people in Europe aged 6 to 17 years, Internet use is even higher with an average rate of 75 %. In many countries like Finland, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Germany and the UK, 95 % of young people (or even more) are online. In recent years the development of social media, the mobile Internet and the increasing convergence between the Internet and mobile phones has made new information and information technologies even more attractive to young people. For most of them, new media are an integral part of their everyday lives and a life without new media seems almost unimaginable.

However, apart from numerous undeniable benefits, the rapid development of ICT and the Internet has also had a negative impact on the lives of young people, such as the development of cyberbullying. Firstly, cyberbullying incidents were reported in the media as early as in 2000. However, it was not until 2002 that the first research paper on cell phone cyberbullying was published in Europe (Norway). It took another few years for the attention of the media, the broader public, and policy makers to be attracted to the problem of cyberbullying, due to several suicides that resulted from cyberbullying incidents. Today, the public in most Western countries is aware of the cyberbullying problem and in many countries it is also on the agenda of government and policy makers. While only 2 to 3 years ago there were only relatively few materials, web sites, campaigns, projects and training materials tackling cyberbullying, the number has increased significantly since then. Also, in terms of research there have been considerable efforts in recent years. The topic of cyberbullying has not only been the subject of numerous studies; there has also been the first transnational networks of researchers, such as the COST Action ISO801 "Cyberbullying: coping with negative and enhancing positive uses of new technologies, in relationships in educational settings", a network of 28 European countries and Australia. Also, there have been various research and practice-oriented projects and initiatives both on national and International level.

This book results partly from the CyberTraining project, a cooperative project of partners from Germany, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Bulgaria,

Switzerland and Norway. The project was funded by the Leonardo da Vinci Programme of the European Commission between 2008 and 2010. The CyberTraining project¹ developed a research-based training manual for trainers who work with parents, schools and young people affected by, or interested in, cyberbullying. In autumn 2010 the training manual was made available in form of the eBook ‘Tackling Action Against Cyberbullying’² in English, Spanish, Portuguese, German and Bulgarian languages. The creation of the training manual built on a comprehensive research-oriented phase that gathered information on trainers’ needs and preferences as well on the situation in partner countries involved in the project – Germany, Ireland, Spain, Portugal and the United Kingdom. Stipulated by suggestions made by evaluators from the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission and the discussions at project meetings, the partners agreed that a training manual that aimed to reflect the state-of-the-art of cyberbullying research should not only build on insights about cyberbullying in the partner countries, but also has to consider research findings from other countries. Thus, this book results from our efforts to present you with a more comprehensive overview about the latest state of research on cyberbullying in Europe and beyond.

The focus of this book is on examining the cyberbullying phenomenon from various perspectives. The first two chapters provide an overview about cyberbullying and ICT in Europe: While Peter Smith (UK) outlines the European perspective of cyberbullying research, Ortega and Mora-Merchán (Spain) introduce the topics of cyberbullying, ICT and social networks. The following chapters provide an overview about the latest state of research in the United Kingdom (Cowie & Colliety), Ireland (Mc Guckin, O’Moore & Crowley), Germany (Jäger, Arbinger & Lissmann), Portugal (Amado, Matos & Pessoa), Switzerland (Baumberger, Bondolfi, Flaction & Olivier), Spain (Mora-Merchán et al.), Bulgaria (Mihaylova), Italy (Guarini, Brighi & Genta), Greece (Sygkollitou, Psalti & Kapatzia), France (Blaya), the Scandinavian countries (Frisen & Slonje), Poland (Pyzalski), the Benelux countries (Steffgen, Vandebosch, Völlink, Deboutte & Dehue), Japan (Kurihara, Ushijima & Nakamura), the United States (Ybarra, Mitchell & Lenhart), and Australia (Campbell, Spears, Cross & Slee). Each of these chapters follows a similar structure: it outlines the country’s sociodemographic aspects, its educational system, existing anti-bullying curricula and national anti-bullying policies as well as an overview about overall figures on the use of ICTs. Furthermore, the authors provide an overview about the emergence of cyberbullying in their countries, the

¹ <http://www.cybertraining-project.org>

² <http://www.cybertraining-project.org/book>

different terms and definitions used for labeling cyberbullying, the responses by the media, the public and policy makers, as well as outcomes of the main studies conducted in the respective countries. All chapters conclude with an outline of approaches tackling cyberbullying in the authors' countries. In the final chapter, Mora-Merchán, Del Rey, and Jäger summarize the lessons learned from the content of the book by contrasting the main findings from the various countries.

Though the number of studies and research initiatives on cyberbullying has increased considerably in recent years, cyberbullying research is still in at a rather early stage. As the different chapters of this book reveal, we already know a lot about different aspects of the cyberbullying phenomenon and we profit from 20 years of research on more 'traditional' forms of school bullying. However, what is also evident is the fact that the findings thus far are not conclusive and that that comprehensive models that could integrate the major findings still need to be developed. We hope that this book will contribute to the understanding the cyberbullying problem and that it will encourage further initiatives, both in terms of research and practice.

This book would not have been possible without the contributions and support from many people whom we would like to thank. Most of all we have to thank the authors of the chapters, who hopefully did not have a too hard time with us :-). We are very pleased and proud that we were able to solicit contributions from some of the leading experts on cyberbullying from Europe, Australia, the United States, and Japan. We would also like to thank the dedicated partners from the CyberTraining project from Germany, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, the UK, Bulgaria, Norway and Switzerland as well as our two external evaluators Gareth Long Project Management who worked in a collegiate and dedicated manner with us for two years on a common EU-project. With their commitment, creativity and team spirit, they made this more than 'only' a project. Last but not least, we would like to thank the team of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) in Brussels who have always been patient with answering our many questions and of course the Leonardo da Vinci Programme of the European Commission that made the CyberTraining project possible.

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