



**Resilience and staying safe in face of risks**  
-  
**Focus groups with young people with risk behaviours online**

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**Introduction – *The researches***

- Over the last two decades more than 200 studies have been made that focus on various aspects of child online sexual violence
- A significant number of children and young people practice behavior which could potentially lead to negative repercussions
- Not all those interacting online with unknown people, have been exposed to unwanted sexual solicitations or other negative repercussions (Wolak et al 2008).
- Individual and environmental risk factors that led to sexual abuse were identified
- Also resilience in relation to young people's online behavior was focused on strategies aimed at reducing risks



## Introduction – Pending Issues

- ✘ *What is young people response to unwanted approaches, and how do young people identify individuals that pose a risk of online sexual violence? Are they conscious of their own risks?*
- ✘ *Which strategies do young people usually use to stay safe online?*
- ✘ *Do young people perceive their world as undivided or do borders between the online and offline world still exist?*
- ✘ *Are there any groups of young people who are at greater risk of online sexual violence than others?*
- ✘ *Are there any differences between these groups in how they establish agency in a virtual world, negotiate online relationships, stay safe online and distinguish between the online and physical world?*



## Introduction – Project ROBERT phase 3

Young people in residential care

Young people with some form of disability

### Focus Groups

Young people from the general population

Young LGBT people



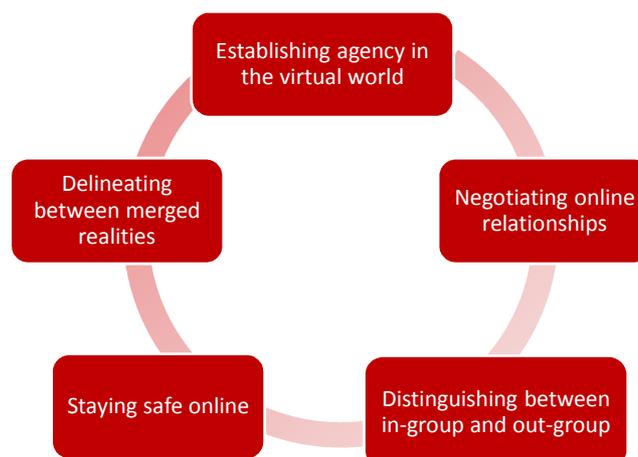
## Introduction – Project ROBERT phase 3/ Aim

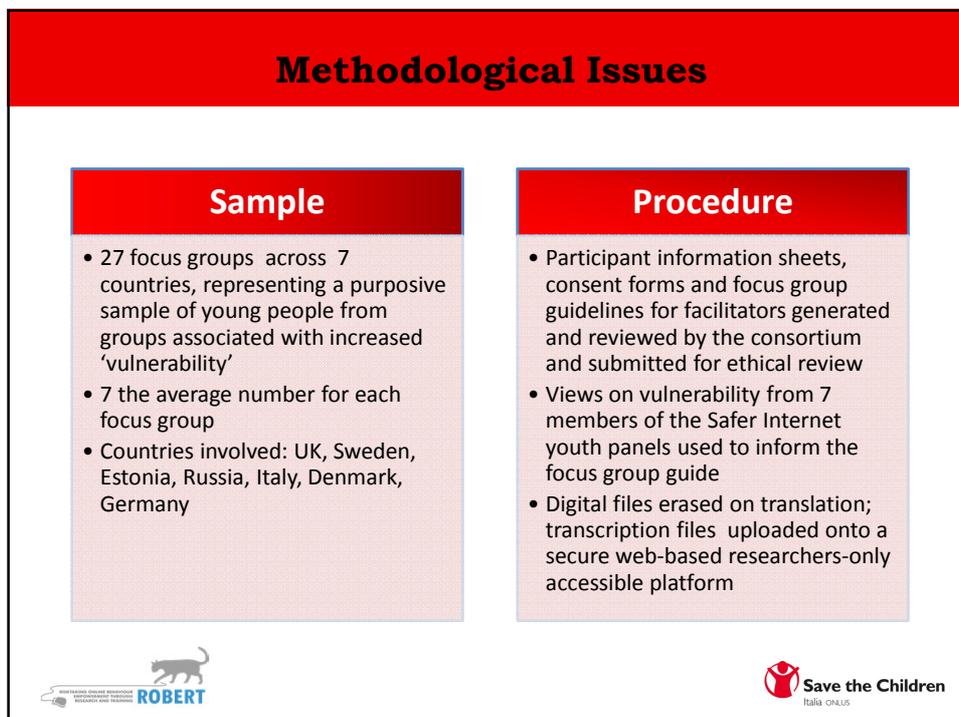
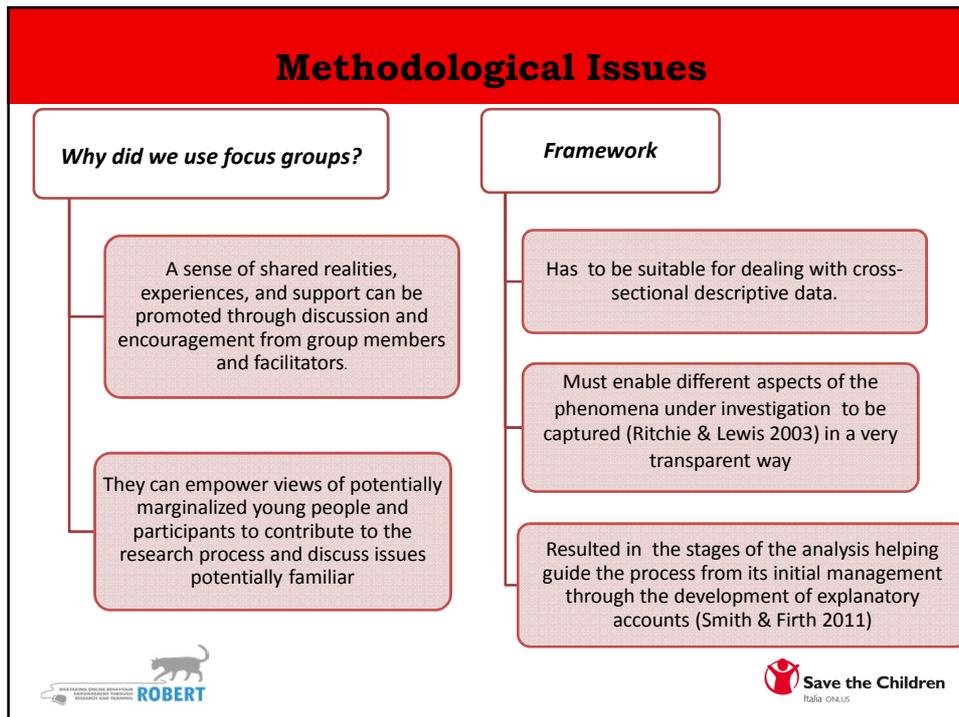
### Obtaining qualitative information about:

- adolescent's online behaviour
- their need to socialize, communicate and discover themselves and the world
- behaviours that lead to risktaking and their possible links to sexual victimization
- the strategies they use to avoid victimization itself



## Introduction – Areas





## Methodological Issues – *Data Analysis*

### Three phases of the framework analysis process



## Research results - 1

### *Establishing agency in the virtual world*

#### **Internet use or availability**

- There are differences between countries and different groups of young people: for children living in residential care, variation in access is also seen in terms of before and after- moving into residential care, also related to money access.
- Young people have multiple platforms for accessing the Internet: tablets, smartphones, ipods...

#### **Structured and/or constructive use of the Internet**

- sharing of information, helping with schoolwork, communication with other people are common activities without dramatic differences across the focus groups, GLBT groups use the net to offer and receive support in a safe space

## Research results - 1

### *Establishing agency in the virtual world*

#### **Reasons for using social networks, chats and webcams**

- Sustain local friendships established offline, rather than to make new contacts with strangers
- Important link to people who may be similar to themselves (LGBT groups)
- Communicate with friends /family, especially for young people living away from home, or with specific disabilities

#### **Selective use of information on the Internet**

- The majority demonstrate a high level of awareness about potential problems in making personal information available
- Considerable ambivalence about putting images up, especially ones that might be thought to be sexual
- More selective sharing of personal information, particularly observed in the LGBT groups



## Research results - 2

### *Negotiating online relationships*

#### **Response to unwanted approaches (proactive and passive)**

- For some, the unwelcome approach is not perceived troublesome and they tend to respond passively, by ignoring or not responding to it
- For the majority, their responses are immediate and pragmatic and take the form of "blocking" or deleting the person or refusing to "add" them in first place
- Some would exert control by doing things "for fun" or continuing the exchange within groups indicated that they perceive themselves *active* in negotiating online their own terms
- LGBT groups express more active responses in terms of continuing the interaction differently from other members who terminate contact immediately or shortly after it is initiated
- LGBT groups appear to be more proactive in reporting the individual, particularly when their own attempts to resolve the situation, by blocking the person, are unsuccessful



## Research results – 2

### *Negotiating online relationships*

#### **Approaches made to others**

- more active & cautious approaches both in place
- These approaches may be for the purpose of actively seeking support from others
- males adopt more direct approaches

#### **Offline meetings**

- Mixed results: disappointing and negative consequences; positive, particularly if time had been spent in getting to know the person online
- Many advocate being accompanied by someone else to the first meeting or ensuring the meeting was in a public place, for both males and females

#### **Sexual exploration online**

- A few of the focus groups use the online environment to explore their sexual identity
- Only males and LGBT members. Heterosexual females do not explicitly report exploring sexuality online like males or lesbian girls



## Research results – 3

### *Distinguishing between in-group and out-group*

#### **Identifying persons of risk**

- People from different countries
- People suggesting a simple intuition that something is not 'quite right', perceived by girls
- People showing a behaviour beyond the boundaries of what is considered to be normal netiquette
- Males from LGBT groups cite age difference as a potential factor

#### **Relating risk to the self**

- In two-thirds tendency to externalize the harm-risk through Internet use, by assigning probabilities of risk to either an out-group or to themselves when younger or to younger kids
- A sense of being either stronger or more intelligent than those who are most likely at risk
- Tendency to project risk on to females, perceived by both sexes

#### **Identity formation**

- Perception that being part of the virtual world is essential to establish one's place in the world
- In the presentation of themselves online the profile picture and the relationships are important
- For LGBT community the Internet plays a considerable role in relation to sexual orientation, with individuals seeking support, information and refuge



## Research results - 4

### *Staying safe online*

#### *Instructions, Support, Responsibility of external parties, Location of risk.*

- Ask practical help about the more technical aspects of engaging safely online and go to others for help
- Avoid particular sites and limit the information provided
- Some accept that some level of risk is inevitable online, others perceive the online space as being associated with significant risk
- Parents and tutors hold accountable for providing access & rules to computers
- School, police and Internet Providers are responsible for prevention
- For yp in residential care and yp with disabilities, the family unit can expose the individual to greater online risk than institutional living



## Research results - 5

### *Delineating between merged realities*

- Many feel that the behaviour of others online holds no real danger for them
- They are aware the physical reality behind an online façade could be very different, and that not everyone online speaks the truth
- A relationship based solely online is very different from one held in the physical world
- The issue of trust raised with the young people generally feeling that they could share their thoughts with whom they knew well
- It is much easier to communicate with others online rather than face-to-face
- The way in which relationships are conducted online are influenced by levels of confidence with an impact of self-esteem in relation to risk



## Conclusion

***What is young people response to unwanted approaches, and how do young people identify individuals that pose a risk of online sexual violence. Are they conscious of their own risks?***

- Ambivalence expressed on the opportunities that the Internet afforded and their responses to them, particularly unwanted approaches by others to which young people reacted proactively and passively, with young LGBT people more likely to be assertive
- A simple instinct that something is not 'quite right' or behaviour as beyond the boundaries of what is considered to be normal online etiquette within those individuals' experience that would alert the young person to potential risk
- There's a tendency to make attributions that risk is solely related to 'others', and that their own risk-taking occurs when they are somewhat younger and more gullible than they are now



## Conclusion

***Which strategies do young people usually use to stay safe online?***

- The majority seems aware of online risks, with many restricting the availability of personal information to people they do not know

***Do young people perceive their world as undivided or do borders between the online and offline world still exist?***

- Answers mixed, many are aware the physical reality behind an online façade could be very different, and that not everyone online spoke the truth: and they could only truly share their thoughts with someone they knew well

***Are there any groups of young people who are at greater risk of online sexual violence than others?***

- In the young people's point of view risk is seen to be a gender-related issue, with females being identified as physically and emotionally vulnerable more than males, and related also to levels of self-confidence and self-esteem



## Conclusion

*Are there any differences between these groups in how they establish agency in a virtual world, negotiate online relationships, stay safe online and distinguish between the online and physical world?*

- They looked very similar to the young people from the EU Kids Online surveys: all of them knew about risks, developed ways of staying safe but some also took risks.
- Differences in level of access with some looked after children having more limited access.
- Some do seek out new friendships online but nearly all of them see their online relationships as being extensions of offline friendships, even when they are started online.
- Differences in terms of agency with the LGBT groups more often using the Internet to meet others, especially where they feel that their sexual orientation stigmatizes them, but they also offer support to each other online.



## Just to say



**FOR PARTICIPATING**

