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MAGAZINE

# 1st KID_ACTIONS EU Policy, Research and Practitioners Forum

December 9, 2021

## On 29 and 30 November 2021, the Forum organized in the context of the European REC project KID_ACTIONS, took place in Trento, at the premises of the project coordinator FBK

Different stakeholders – educators, researchers, youth workers, representative from NGOs, industries and many more were invited to participate and discuss the important matter of preventing and responding to cyberbullying.

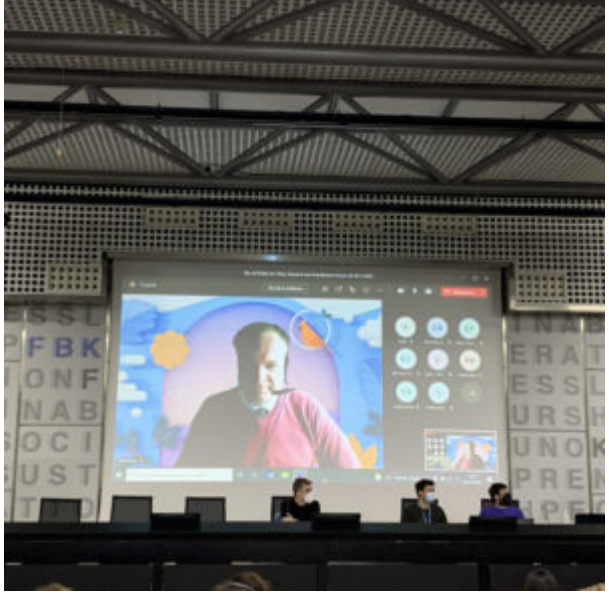
During its first semester, the KID_ACTIONS project conducted 17 interviews with international experts (scholars, educators, NGOs, civil society, industry representatives). **Normalization or acceptance of online aggression; low confidence of children; ill-preparation of schools & adults to prevent, detect, respond to cyberbullying; scarcity of knowledge about the impact of the interventions to cyberbullying are considered as the main challenges in preventing and responding to cyberbullying** by interviewees. Not to mention the influence of the Pandemic on online bullying – more time spent online and especially emotional stress had a big influence on the rise of cyberbullying. For example, **In Italy, over 50% of children have not only been exposed to bullying but also become perpetrators themselves during the Pandemic**.

According to the **research findings**, **the impact of cyberbullying depends on individual characteristics** (personality traits of bullies and victims; capacity to cope with the incident); **contextual factors** (a form of cyber aggression; media employed to inflict harm); (**social**) **support** available for victims.

Cyberbullying can have devastating effects on the victims, but it can also negatively affect the health and well-being of a class, school, family, and community. The suggestions brought by Veronica Donoso, Senior Consultant at European Schoolnet which is partner in the project, are to start with **prevention efforts from a younger age**, support children to deal with adversity and their emotions; develop self-regulation and empathy. The **detection of hate and abusive**

**langu** ional linguistics.

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The second panel attended by Prof. Valerio Basile (University of Turin), Prof. Anita Lavorgna (University of Southampton), Prof. Federico Faloppa (University of Reiding), Dr. Michelle O'Reilly (University of Leicester), Dr. Davide Cino (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore), Prof. Heidi Vandebosch (University of Antwerp) shed a light on the 'reality' of cyberbullying 'in the field'.

According to Prof. Basile, **although the detection of direct threat or offence can easily be done by computers in multiple languages, detection of more implicit expressions of bullying or abuse remains a difficult task for Natural Language Processing**, for example, as it happens that many times the source is not actually in the language, but is in the image. **Another challenge in the field is the privacy of data**, typically cyberbullying is considered as a private phenomenon, found in private conversations, to which researchers cannot have access.

Prof. Faloppa emphasized the **importance of interdisciplinary networks** that can target and tackle these issues from different perspectives and advocate, monitor, combat and contrast and collect new data and methodologies. In addition, engaging with people offline to collect their experiences, emotions, letting them rearticulate their experiences in which they have been victims, or even the perpetrators of cyberbullying or hate speech could provide a broader perspective to better fight cyberbullying.

**Empowering young people is an important part of the solution**. The keynote guest speaker – **Alex Holmes**, deputy CEO of The Diana Award, who shared his experience as a founder of the peer-to-peer support programme Anti-Bullying Ambassadors, a network of trained young people dedicated to preventing peer on peer violence and bullying ended the first day of the forum with these remarks: “Considering the complexity of language, different meanings and interpretations of different terminology across the world, machine learning, and artificial intelligence yet is not able to pick up the context of the language or understand the differences between a joke and something harmful compared to something offensive. **This remains a human problem**”.

**Preventing cyberbullying requires a global and not country approach**. Research and joint working between platforms and academics need to happen more frequently and we must also put pressure on governments to invest in education programmes, mental health, and more.

On the **2nd day** of the Forum, a specific session was dedicated to the current status of the design and development of the **Digital Education Platform and Training and Educational Toolkit** presented by Alessio Palmero Aprosio, Federico Bonetti, Enrico Maria Piras (FBK) and Gareth Cort (European Schoolnet). A stakeholder roundtable attended by Dorotea Riccobono (Teacher in Trento), Claudia Matera (ALL DIGITAL), Lydia El-Khouri (Textgain), Laura Higgins (Roblox), Debora Barletta (No Hate Speech Movement Italy), Sara Ceretelli (COSPE), Caridad Alarcon Sanchez (OBESSU), Angie Wright & Bill Howe (StopHate UK) was the opportunity to exchange best practice and feedback from the practitioners’ perspective and receive user inputs into package, scaling, exploitation, and use of the methodology, as well as technological and non-technological tools.

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The KID_ACTIONS Project aims to address cyberbullying among children and adolescents through **interactive education and gamification within formal and non-formal learning settings** at the EU level. The project objective is to support teachers, educators, and youth workers in **fostering effectiveness and efficiency in education** about risks and effects of cyberbullying, **raise awareness among secondary school students** and youth centres and **encourage reporting** by victims and bystanders. The project will end in December 2022 with another Forum to be organized in Brussels.

Stay tuned!

**PERMALINK**

https://magazine.fbk.eu/en/news/1st-kid_actions-eu-policy-research-and-practitioners-forum/

**TAGS**

- #Cyberbullying
- #education
- #TogetherAgainstCyberbullying
- #Youth

**RELATED MEDIA**

- KID ACTIONS European REC project's website: https://www.kidactions.eu/
- VIDEO "METTIAMO FINE AL CYBERBULLISMO" - Amnesty International Italia : https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=228937399372212

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