



A Systemic APproach to social
media and pre-adolescents through
thinking skills education

News from Portugal

What happens when students, teachers and families sit down to truly reflect on what it means to grow up in a digital world?

In Portugal, the ASAP team from COFAC Lusófona University explored this question through field research, classroom pilots, and a powerful national event. What they found: pre-teens are navigating increasingly complex online experiences — often without the tools they need.

What we learned about social media and pre-adolescents in Portugal

Teachers in Portugal reported worrying trends: misuse of mobile devices, offensive messages, and unauthorised photo sharing are common. Behind these behaviours lie deeper gaps — limited digital literacy in schools and low legal awareness among students.

But there's good news: when students feel supported, they open up. Teachers often act as trusted adults, and schools that foster open, safe conversations can play a crucial role in shaping responsible digital habits.



[Read here the research report](#)

What the pilots revealed

During the pilot phase, Portuguese schools tested the ASAP learning units using active, student-centred approaches. Through games, debates, and creative activities, students reflected on their digital habits, emotional responses, and values.

Teachers highlighted how these sessions created space for meaningful dialogue and helped build a sense of shared responsibility in the classroom. Everyone — students, educators, even families — came away more aware of the importance of empathy, respect, and safe digital conduct.

Portugal's Learning Unit: "Onlife"

The Portuguese team developed a learning unit focused on students' digital identity and online presence. It invited pre-teens to reflect on how they present themselves online, how their actions impact others, and how empathy and responsibility matter — both on- and offline.

Activities were designed to involve not only students, but also teachers and family members, helping the entire learning community grow more conscious of digital citizenship in practice.

National events: highlights from Portugal

The ASAP National Conference in Portugal took place on May 30, 2025, at ISLA Gaia (Lusófona partner). With the theme "Between the School and the Screen: Promoting a Digital Life", the event brought together educators, researchers, and stakeholders to discuss how schools can help students grow into thoughtful digital citizens.

Students themselves played an active role in the event, voicing their hopes and challenges — reminding us that listening to young people is key to building a better digital future.

A fun moment during ASAP

During a workshop on digital dilemmas, a student took on the role of the teacher — sparking laughter, but also deep reflection on the teacher's role in digital education.

Another touching moment: a class came together to support classmates with cognitive disabilities in discussing how digital media affects their friendships. A small gesture, but one that showed how empathy and inclusion can be nurtured through the right activities.

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