



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

News from Slovenia

In Slovenia, the ASAP project examined how preadolescents, parents, and teachers navigate digital life — and how communication gaps across generations can be bridged. Through hands-on learning units and national events, the Slovenian team promoted empathy, dialogue, and shared responsibility for digital wellbeing.

What we learned about digital life in Slovenia

Recent research in Slovenia shows that internet and social media use is widespread among young people, including pre-adolescents aged 11–13. While over 90% of households have internet access and nearly the entire population is online, digital skills remain low—**only 20% of Slovenians have above-basic digital competence.**

At the same time, young people in Slovenia are increasingly exposed to various online risks. A 2020 study revealed that half of children encountered disturbing online content, 32% had experienced cyberbullying, and over half had seen hate speech. About 17% reported unhealthy behaviors like skipping meals or losing sleep due to excessive internet use. While most feel generally safe online, many still struggle with false information and unpleasant experiences.

To address these challenges, Slovenia has developed several good practice initiatives. The [Safer Internet Centre](#) promotes online safety through awareness campaigns and support services. [Logout](#) offers free psychological counselling for youth affected by digital stress or online abuse. [ARNES](#) provides digital education for both students and teachers, while [Saferkidsonline](#) and [Project NEON](#) initiatives support children and families with practical tools and information to navigate the online world safely.

[Read here the research report](#)

What pre-teens experience online

Preadolescents in Slovenia are highly digitally connected: 98% of preadolescents own a personal smartphone, and nearly half (49%) received it before the age of 10. Preadolescents spend substantial time online: on school days, 30% of preadolescents spend 4+ hours daily online; on weekends, this rises to 50%.

Social media use is almost universal among preadolescents in Slovenia: they mostly use YouTube (93%), Snapchat (71%), TikTok (56%), and Spotify (56%). Most parents (98%) also use social media themselves, but they use different social media than their children, highlighting a generational digital divide: 89% use Facebook, 72% YouTube, 48% Instagram and 36% WhatsApp.



Around 15% of preadolescents encountered unpleasant or upsetting experiences online in the past year, most commonly involving cyberbullying, scary or inappropriate content, or online threats. Although many children confided in parents or peers, 28% did not tell anyone about the incident, showing that a notable portion of preadolescents may be dealing with online harm alone, underscoring the importance of open communication and support.

Closing the digital gap between generations: Learning Units activities

Based on field research, we saw that ASAP's learning units must be interactive, rooted in real life, and designed to build critical thinking, digital literacy, and inclusion — involving both students and parents.

In Slovenia, three units were piloted:

- Communication
- Emotions
- Onlife

Nearly 600 people took part — including over 450 pre-teens, 40+ teachers, and almost 100 parents.

One highlight? The Emotions unit. Kids, parents, and teachers tried two playful activities:

- Post-it compliments, to explore how kind words make us feel
- Emoji decoding, to reflect on how messages can be misunderstood online

Students found them fun and meaningful. One teacher even suggested adding insults to compare the emotional impact — and start deeper conversations..



Field research revealed a clear communication gap between pre-teens and their parents — it's as if they speak different languages when it comes to digital life.

To bridge this gap, we piloted the unit Communication: Building Bridges Through Dialogue, designed to promote empathy, active listening, and assertive communication. These skills help

reduce bullying and build resilience.

One key activity showed parents the difference between active and passive listening — a moment many found eye-opening. As one child said: “I know my parents are listening when they look me in the eyes and aren’t doing something else.”

Parents appreciated the session — and even suggested that children should experience it too.

National Events in Slovenia: Connecting Projects and People



Slovenia hosted two national events to share the results of the ASAP project and connect with other EU initiatives.

May 8, 2025 – Europe Day

At the event “Europe as We Co-Create It”, we presented how ASAP and other Erasmus+ projects support an inclusive, resilient, and digitally safe Europe. We focused on the role of parents and teachers in helping pre-teens grow as responsible digital citizens. Nearly 30 people joined online.

June 18, 2025 – FEM-Up Grand Final

At the final event of the FEM-Up project, we shared ASAP’s results with women entrepreneurs — many of them also parents. We joined a roundtable on innovation, digital wellbeing, and family empowerment. The hybrid event gathered over 50 participants.

A fun moment during ASAP

There were many inspiring moments, but the one we would like to highlight was the project staff being interviewed by students from a school in Bresso, near Milan. As part of the ASAP Editorial Board, these students stepped into the role of journalists and asked interesting—

though challenging—questions about my habits and views on social media. I was genuinely surprised by the depth and thoughtfulness of their questions.

And the funny part?

After the interview, the girl who interviewed Dr Marko Divjak handed him a simple drawing she had sketched during our conversation. It depicted the scene perfectly: the young journalists on one side and Dr Divjak, the interviewee, on the other.



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