



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

News from Italy

In Italy, the ASAP project revealed a complex digital landscape shaped by independence, silence, and missed opportunities for dialogue.

While Italian pre-teens value social media for staying connected, they often face online risks alone — and adults aren't always prepared to help.

"We want to be heard!"

Italian pre-adolescents say it loud and clear: we want to be heard. In both school and family settings, **they often feel dismissed, judged, or not taken seriously**. Instead of being told what to do, they want open, honest conversations — and rules co-designed with adults, not imposed from above.

Social media plays a big role in their lives, offering connection and expression. Yet few realise the risks it brings. Their digital lives are fast-paced, visual, and mostly unsupervised.



Parents are **deeply worried about cyberbullying, online predators, fake news**, and screen addiction — yet often resort to monitoring instead of talking. Many rely on apps like Family Link but rarely sit with their children or talk about ads, privacy or emotional safety.

Teachers, meanwhile, want to help — **but lack clear protocols**, resources, and time. While many set online safety rules or talk about digital ethics in class, few students actually seek their support. The gap between adults' good intentions and students' perceptions is widening.

Italian students speak up: what the data says

- 88% of students use smartphones daily
- Many spend 4–6 hours online on weekends
- 70% say they can use the camera anytime
- 59% have free access to social networks

Most create their social media accounts without parental help.

When something goes wrong, they often don't turn to adults:

- 40% confide in friends
- 33% in parents
- Only 7% talk to teachers
- 17% tell no one

Their emotional responses?

Anxiety, anger, fear — and a sense of being alone

From fear to dialogue: what ASAP Italian Research calls for

Italy's research highlights an **urgent need for intergenerational trust**. Young people don't want more rules — they want to be understood. Parents and teachers need training, tools, and shared protocols to move from reaction to prevention.

Digital education isn't just about safety — **it's about building empathy**, critical thinking, and communication. And it starts with listening.

[Read here the research report](#)

Piloting the ASAP Educational Model with the Collaborative Editorial Board members

The ASAP Collaborative Editorial Board brought middle school students into active roles as co-researchers and content creators for ASAP actions.

More than just the occasion to pilot some ASAP activities, this group was empowered to craft articles, conduct interviews, and share insights from their own digital experiences — growing into young online journalists with a real voice in the project.



Participants in the Collaborative Editorial Board discovered and shared a lot regarding social media, communication, empathy, staying online, journalism and online media, information and fake news ... for instance, **how to ask sharper, more meaningful questions** — and how framing those questions thoughtfully changes the conversation entirely.

They learned that curiosity paired with clear thinking helps turn chaotic social media noise into thoughtful, critical dialogue.



A fun moment during ASAP

Many were the funny moments during the 3 years of project, and also the 5 cycles of Collaborative Editorial Board in Bresso's School.

During one of the editorial sessions, a student declared they'd invent a new "social vocabulary" by repurposing a funny emoji — a playful moment that sparked laughter, creativity, and a wider discussion on how emojis shape how we communicate online.

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