

Erasmus+ Programme

Key Action 2 - Cooperation Partnerships in School Education

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# DESK RESEARCH COUNTRY REPORT

R2.1.1\_si

# Slovenia



ASAP



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the European Union

A Systemic Approach to social media and pre-adolescents through thinking skills education  
Grant Agreement No. 2022-1-IT02-KA220-SCH-000090043

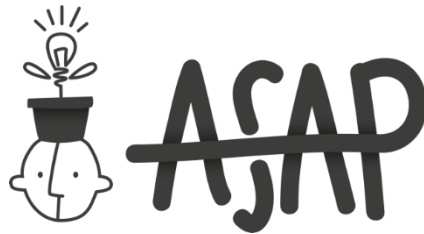


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# Desk Research Country Report: Slovenia

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## Document Information

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<b>Short Description</b>	This report presents the results of desk research conducted in Slovenia within the ASAP project. It explores the complex relationship between pre-adolescents and digital/social media, with particular attention to cyberbullying, online risks and digital wellbeing. In addition to analysing statistical data and national research findings, the report highlights good practice initiatives, legislative frameworks, and strategies aimed at enhancing digital literacy and fostering safer, more responsible media use among young people in Slovenia.

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## Executive Summary

The Slovenian Desk Research Report, developed within the framework of the ERASMUS+ project ASAP – A Systemic Approach to social media and pre-adolescents through thinking skills education, aims to provide a concise and comprehensive overview of the intersection between pre-adolescents, digital media, and the Slovenian context. Below, the key findings are summarised and grouped under the following topics:

### 1) Statistical Data

- Slovenia's total population in January 2022 was 2.08 million with 112,286 preadolescents (aged 10 – 14 years), which account for almost 5.4% of the total population (SiSTAT, 2022a).
- 1.87 million people were using the Internet (90% of the entire population) (DataReportal, 2022) and 93% of Slovenian households have access to the Internet connection (SiSTAT, 2022b).
- There were 1.61 million users of social media (not necessarily unique users; individuals using various social media platforms might have been counted several times) in 2022 (DataReportal, 2022). However, there is no information on the exact number of Slovenian (pre)adolescent users of social media.
- Although substantial progress has been achieved recently in terms of digitalization, the digital competences of Slovenes are still rather low – with only 20% of individuals expressing above basic digital skills (European Commission, 2022).

### 2) National research on social media and preadolescents

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, an international study on "kids' digital lives in COVID-19 times" (KiDiCoTi) was implemented. The data for Slovenia revealed the following results (Safe.si, 2022a):

- 54% of kids were more concerned about the increasing use of digital technologies (compared to the period before lockdown).
- 17% of kids reported skipping meals and irregular sleep patterns due to ICT overuse.
- 33% of kids reported actively trying to downsize the use of ICT and failing to do so.
- 60% of kids reported that they feel safe online; however, 30% reported that they were exposed to false news, and 14% reported that their exposure to unpleasant internet experiences had risen.
- 50% of kids have already experienced upsetting and bothering situations online and 32% of surveyed kids have been victims of cyberbullying (hurtful messages were either sent to them or passed around or they were excluded from a group or directly threatened on the Internet).
- 62% of kids have already been exposed to hate speech; however, they did not notice a rise in hate speech during the pandemic.
- 57% of kids have stumbled upon user-created harmful content (such as drug abuse, sexual content etc.) with 15% reporting the rise of such content interactions.
- 88% of kids (the highest percentage in the participating countries) have never been victims of personal information abuse.

- 25% of kids have had experiences with malware/viruses, but only 3% reported a rise in such experiences.

International Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study, which was carried out in 2018, revealed the following findings for Slovenia (NIJZ, 2019):

- There were 10.2% of (pre)adolescents playing internet games daily and showing signs of addiction, most of those being 13-year-olds.
- There were approximately 8.3% of (pre)adolescents displaying problematic use of social media.
- 40.4% of adolescents aged from 11 to 17 have daily online contact with close and distant friends.

### 3) Good practice examples

- **Safer Internet Centre Slovenia** has been established as the national project to promote and ensure a better internet for kids. It has three components: a) Awareness Centre Safe.si, b) Helpline Tom telefon, c) Hotline Spletno oko (Safe.si, 2022b).
- **Logout – Centre for Digital Wellbeing** provides free psychological help and support to children suffering from the mental health issues caused by social media, digital burnout, digital addiction and to victims of online abuse as well. Apart from (individual) counselling, the Logout experts also deliver various prevention-oriented lectures and workshops dedicated to kids as end-users, but also to parents and teachers (schools).
- **ARNES – The Academic and Research Network of Slovenia** is a public institute that provides network services to research, educational and cultural organizations. An important part of Arnes' role in the research and education community is user education and transfer of knowledge. Among others, Arnes conducts and delivers massive open online courses (MOOCs) on the safe use of modern ICT technologies, such as MOST-V for educators and MOST-VO for primary school students aged 9-14.
- **Saferkidsonline** is a web portal with excellent collection of educational materials for children and their parents related to online and digital safety. The site and all the materials are available in Slovenian language.
- **Project NEON** aims to promote non-violence among children, also tackling issues of digital violence and online safety. The project's activities are intended for (pre)adolescents, younger children and their parents, as well as for professional workers and educational institutions.

### 4) Legislation and regulation

- There is no law in Slovenia that would protect users against Internet abusive behaviour specifically.
- The rights of Internet users, together with privacy and security issues are regulated by the Electronic Communications Act, an EU-compliant law (Uradni list RS, 2022).
- The Slovenian Information Commissioner's Office offers help in securing personal data, but it also educates users on the formal steps they can take, should they find their rights have been violated (Informacijski pooblaščenec RS, 2022).
- Recently, the Guidelines on the use of screens in children and adolescents have been prepared by a consortium of experts. They are primarily intended for all professionals who work with

children and young people in education, health care or other professional services (Medical Chamber of Slovenia, n.d.).

## Introduction

This report, developed within the scope of the ERASMUS+ project ASAP – A Systemic Approach to social media and pre-adolescents through thinking skills education (2022-1-IT02-KA220-SCH-000090043), aims to provide a concise and comprehensive overview of the intersection between pre-adolescents, digital media, and the Slovenian context. It collects and examines data from studies and initiatives conducted over the last years seeking to analyse the evolving role of digital media in the lives of pre-adolescents. This report provides the context analysis of available data, research, good practices and strategies for dealing with social media uses and misuses in the school context, educational programmes/activities to prevent and combat cyberbullying and enhance digital/social media literacy among pre-adolescents in Slovenia.

By examining existing data, this report aims to equip readers with a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding pre-adolescents' interactions with digital media in the Slovenian context. It also aims to provide valuable insights to contribute to the ongoing discussion on pre-adolescents, digital media and online safety, presenting a basis for informed decision-making and critical reflection.

The report provides structured and relevant information on the following topics: 1) statistical data, 2) national research on social media and (pre)adolescents, 3) good practice examples, 4) legislation and regulation and 5) conclusions.

## 1. Statistical data

Since its beginning, the Internet has grown and become an integral part of modern people's lives. With all the benefits it offers, it also brought to the surface many issues that are often subtle but challenging to overcome. Internet abusive behaviour, from non-substance addictions to Internet Gaming Disorders, bullying, obesity etc. has become a national problem in every country, not excluding Slovenia. There have been many projects and initiatives regarding this problem, for example Internet or non-chemical addiction centres, institutes, and programs, (Kamli, 2022; Program Mira, 2022; Rozman, 2019) as well as many international projects financed via European commission and Erasmus+.

Social media take a centre seat with its many users, uses and accessibility. Various platforms are open to access and (ab)use not only by adults but by youngsters especially. And even though, or perhaps because of Slovenia's digitalization policy (OECD, 2022) and its rush to achieve its goal as the fifth most digitized country in Europe, we might have been unprepared for all the challenges. The results of the 2020 Digitalization strategy are showing that even though great progress has been made in the digitalization area, the ICT (information communication technology) competencies are still rather low, which can lead us to believe that the general public is not entirely aware of the possible threats that ignorant use of the internet can bring (GOV.SI, 2022). The Digital and Society Index (DESI) in 2022 shows that the human capital of Slovenia is lagging behind compared to the Digital technology integration, with only 20% of individuals expressing above basic digital skills (European Commission, 2022). Perhaps, that might be a problem to solve first and it has already been identified by the European Commission (2021). Some progress has been made in early 2022 with a new Act on Promotion of Digital Inclusion (Uradni list RS, 2022a) that aims to upbuild digital competencies of foremost youth.

Slovenia's total population in January 2022 was 2.08 million with 112,286 preadolescents (aged 10 – 14 years), which account for almost 5.4% of the total population (SiSTAT, 2022a). 1.87 million people were using the internet (90% of the entire population) and the numbers increased within a year (from 2021 to 2022) by 41 thousand users (DataReportal, 2022)

Out of the above-mentioned 1.87 million people in Slovenia, there were 1.61 million users of social media (not unique users<sup>1</sup>). Because 77.5% of these internet users are using social media platforms, and most of them require their users to be above 13 years of age, we can only assume that many Slovenian preadolescents are social media users (DataReportal, 2022). Sadly, there is no information on the exact number of Slovenian (pre)adolescent users of social media.

Social media is a term used for platforms that enable their users to interact outside their immediate environments, and each of these platforms has specific primary use with (pre)adolescents using their services in various ways and potentially exposing themselves to various abusive behaviours online. With 93% of Slovenian households having an internet connection, and 196,305 households having children (Statistical Office Republic of Slovenia, 2022), and considering that smartphones and school

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<sup>1</sup> Individuals using various social media platforms might have been counted several times.

computers also have access to the internet and social media sites, we can safely assume, that most (pre)adolescents have access to various social media sites.

## **2. National research on social media and preadolescents**

Even though there are obvious advantages of social media platforms, which have especially come to the front during the COVID pandemic, there are also many already identified consequences of internet abuse.

### **General internet addiction**

Especially obvious during the pandemic, general internet addiction has been on the rise worldwide, affecting interpersonal relationships, and the mental and physical health of those suffering from it. Some of the symptoms include obsessive thoughts about one's internet past and future activities, changed tolerance and withdrawal symptoms, losing track of time spent on the internet and change in sleep patterns, depression etc. (Selak et al., 2018). According to an international study by HBSC, in Slovenia there were 10.2% of (pre)adolescents playing internet games daily and were showing signs of addiction, most of these being 13-year-olds in 2018 (NIJZ, 2019, p. 75).

### **Social networking addiction**

According to Griffiths (Griffiths et al., 2014), social networking addiction is manifested as compulsive use of social networks, which are akin to behavioural addiction. Its main symptoms are like those of general internet addiction. The addicted person prioritizes social networking over real-life interactions, neglects everyday responsibilities, often thinks of social sites when they are not using them, etc. (Griffiths et al., 2014). In Slovenia, the findings of the above-mentioned study by HBSC, there were approximately 8.3% of (pre)adolescents displaying problematic use of social media (NIJZ, 2019, p. 75).

### **Loneliness**

Loneliness can also be defined as a lack of belonging. In adolescents, the psychological state of loneliness is influenced by a low level of interpersonal skills and (mis-)understanding of social relations, poor self-esteem, assertiveness, reticence, and timidity (Kostanjšek, 2022). The young therefore tend to seek this feeling on social media platforms. The same, above-mentioned study has found that 40.4% of adolescents in Slovenia aged from 11 to 17 have daily online contact with close and distant friends (NIJZ, 2019, p. 79). Additionally, a positive correlation between feelings of loneliness and problematic use of social media has also been found by research, held among 273 preadolescents (Kostanjšek, 2022).

### **Obesity due to the lack of physical activity**

An abundant amount of time spent in front of computer screens, lack of physical activity and irregular eating schedules all contribute to the potential for obesity, especially among the younger population. Uncontrolled use of social and gaming sites along with improper advertising and feeding schedule can contribute to declining health and obesity among the younger population. However, a direct correlation between the sole use of social networks and obesity in Slovenian youths has not been found (Krošelj, 2018, p. 55).

### **Experience and exposure to online risks**

During the lockdown period imposed by Corona-19, in the spring of 2020, the European commissions' Joint Research Centre carried out a survey that included 11 European countries, including Slovenia. The survey aimed to find out how much time did kids, aged between 10 and 18 years, spend online, how exposed they were to online risky situations and how did the kids and their parents react to the mitigation of online risks (Lobe et al., 2021).

Some of the findings regarding Slovenia's kids are as follows (Safe.si, 2022a):

- 54% of kids were more concerned about the increasing use of digital technologies (compared to the period before lockdown).
- 17% of kids reported skipping meals and irregular sleep patterns due to ICT overuse.
- 33% of kids reported actively trying to downsize the use of ICT and failing to do so.
- 60% of kids reported that they feel safe online; however, 30% reported that they were exposed to false news, and 14% reported that their exposure to unpleasant internet experiences had risen.
- 50% of kids have already experienced upsetting and bothering situations online and 32% of surveyed kids have been victims of cyberbullying (hurtful messages were either send to them or passed around or they were excluded from a group or directly threatened on the Internet).
- 62% of kids have already been exposed to hate speech; however, they did not notice a rise in hate speech during the pandemic.
- 57% of kids have stumbled upon user-created harmful content (such as drug abuse, sexual content etc.) with 15% reporting the rise of such content interactions.
- 88% of kids (the highest percentage in the participating countries) have never been victims of personal information abuse.
- 25% of kids have had experiences with malware/viruses, but only 3% reported a rise in such experiences.

Although there have been other pre-corona pandemic surveys and analyses on the issues of social media influences on (pre)adolescents, they all are over 5 years old and we are not confident that the findings would represent a valid point of view, with internet and social media use is on the constant rise. And considering that ICT addiction is recognized as a non-chemical addiction, Slovenia does have several NGOs that are able and available to help (NIJZ, 2017). They are described in more detail in the next section of the report.

### 3. Good practice examples

As mentioned above, Slovenia has various support systems for people in need, but they are mostly either project or project results. Nevertheless, these institutions can be considered as best practices and, we hope, they are here to stay.

#### 3.1. Safer Internet Centre Slovenia

Safer Internet Centre Slovenia has been established as the national project to promote and ensure a better internet for kids. The project is co-financed by the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA), in Slovenia, the financial support also comes from the Government Information Security Office". The project is run by a consortium of partners coordinated by Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana, Academic and Research Network of Slovenia (Arnes), Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth (ZPMS) and Youth Information and Counselling Centre of Slovenia (MISSS). Safer Internet Centre Slovenia has three components: a) Awareness Centre Safe.si, b) Helpline Tom telefon, c) Hotline Spletno oko (Safe.si, 2022b). They are all briefly described below.

##### Awareness Centre Safe.si

[Safe.si](#) (Safer Internet Centre) is "an awareness point about the safe use of the Internet and mobile devices for children, teenagers, parents and teachers". They offer various educational workshops, advice, and activities for safe internet use, supporting children, parents, and educators. The public can find various literature, guides, video tutorials and mobile applications that can be used to safeguard younger users of the internet. Their news section is filled with articles on internet safety, their help centre is full of advice on various possibilities for reporting any internet safety breaches (Safe.si, 2022c).

##### Helpline TOM telefon – telephone for children and adolescents

"[TOM telefon](#)" is available to the public but especially the young for seeking support and advice in any sort of stressful situation. Although TOM is primarily made for personal conversations, it also educates and is active in the schooling system. The initiative was verified by the Slovenian Ministry of social security. Their platform is filled with valuable information on internet safety. They go visiting various schools and give lectures on internet safety and the possibilities of protecting oneself from harmful internet activities also (TOM telefon, 2022).

##### Hotline Spletno oko (Internet eye)

[Spletno oko](#) is a "point for reporting images of child sexual abuse on the Internet" (Spletno oko, 2022). They gather anonymous reports of images of sexual abuse of children which are transferred to the Police. Their work not only entails gathering but also educating the public about the rights of those abused. Their areas of operation are images of child abuse, sextortion, sexting, and grooming (Spletno oko, 2022).

### 3.2. Logout – Centre for Digital Wellbeing

[Logout](#) provides free psychological help and support to children suffering from the mental health issues caused by social media, digital burnout, digital addiction and to victims of online abuse as well.

Its mission is on improving the digital well-being of all people, but especially youngsters, by providing treatment, help, information, education, and raising awareness on balanced and healthy use of media and technology. Logout offers psychological help through counselling via various programs, such as Logout&Restart (for internet addictions), Digital Diet (for excessive use of digital media), Logout&SpeakOut! (for sexually abused children), Preventive help for individuals and families (informational program for scheduling a healthy use of ICT), Recharge&Connect (for parents of children with troublesome use of ICT), etc. Their help is available by order, mainly in the form of educative lectures, which can be held online. Their main target groups are youth that is having trouble with internet abuse or are showing signs of internet addiction, but they are also active in preventive activities, especially in the form of educating, raising awareness and informing not only the general but professional public on issues of internet overuse (Logout.org, 2022).

Among various preventive programs and workshops, **Youth and Cyberbullying workshop** is the one related to online violence. The aim of the workshop is to inform and educate young people how to recognize when cyberbullying occurs and how to respond to it. In the workshop, children and young people learn about online violence, its consequences and ways of protection against online violence. Logout experts and the participants discuss about victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying and also address the passive role of the observer, as it has been demonstrated that young people often do not know what online violence is and can find themselves in the role of perpetrator or victim without even realizing it (Logout.org, 2022).

Also, Logout experts provide psychological counselling and support for children and young people who have experienced various online abuse and risky online behaviour such as sexting, grooming, threats, stalking, bullying, identity theft, racism, etc. (Logout.org, 2022).

### 3.3. ARNES – The Academic and Research Network of Slovenia

[Arnes](#) is a public institute that provides network services to research, educational and cultural organizations (primary and secondary schools, universities etc.), and enables them to establish connections and cooperation with each other and with related organizations abroad. An important part of Arnes' role in the research and education community is also user education and transfer of knowledge. Arnes thus conducts lectures and workshops, prepares professional aids and materials and among others, conducts and delivers massive open online courses (MOOCs) on safe use of modern ICT technologies.

#### *MOOC on safe use of Internet and devices for adults (MOST-V)*

The MOST-V course is intended primarily for those employed in education, as well as for all other adults who are interested in the topic of internet safety. The course aims to develop digital competences related to the safe use of the Internet and modern technologies (according to the European competence framework DIGCOMP) and is centred around three key areas: 1) device protection; 2) protection of privacy and digital identity; 3) protection of health and the environment.

The course is held for three consecutive weeks (Arnes, 2023a). So far, there have been 17 implementations of the MOST-V course with around 11,000 participants in total<sup>2</sup>.

#### MOOC on safe use of internet for kids (MOST-VO)

The MOST-VO course is set up a bit differently than other MOOCs. In this course, the teacher gets access to the online classroom, in which he receives the role of the moderator and his group, including a password that allows students to enrol in the group, to which they were assigned. Thus, the teacher is autonomous in conducting the course; he himself decides when to start the course, about the duration of the course and who he wants to include in it. MOST-VO puts the teacher in the role of implementer, while Arnes takes care of the content of the course, the online classroom and technical assistance (Arnes, 2023b).

The course itself and the educational material is specially adapted and prepared for students of the second and third triad of primary schools (age 9-14 approximately). The learning environment includes a fully equipped online classroom with interactive videos, quizzes and other materials. The teacher's role in the implementation is mentoring and guiding the students. It is recommended that the student dedicates 2-3 three hours a week to the course. The student can process all the content in 3 weeks. The course can be carried out as part of regular lessons (classroom lessons or lessons in subjects where teachers develop students' digital competences), extra-curricular "interest activities", afternoon care, however, a students can also work on part of the content at home, together with his parents (Arnes, 2023b).

The learning objectives of the MOST-VO course are the following (Arnes, 2023b):

- Students will learn what online scams and lies are. They will learn to recognize typical scam patterns and examples of fake news.
- Students will learn the basics of online etiquette. They will understand how we "behave" in social media, what constitutes theft of data or resources and how to protect one's own works.
- Students will learn about computer and data protection guidelines. They will understand the importance of passwords and how we take care of them.
- Students will learn about the importance of protecting privacy online and learn ways to protect it.
- Students will learn about the ecological aspect of using modern technology.
- Students will learn to recognize peer-to-peer cyberbullying and how to respond to it properly.
- Students will learn about the problems and consequences of excessive use of new technologies.
- Students will learn to better protect their health from the negative effects of using devices.

The MOST-VO course is available for teachers from the 2018/2019 school year onwards. In this time, 71 independent groups were generated with an approximate intake of 2,500 students<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> This is unofficial statistic that was provided on 1 June 2023 by Mrs. Vreča and Mr. Kušar, expert associates of Arnes.

<sup>3</sup> This is unofficial statistic that was provided on 1 June 2023 by Mrs. Vreča and Mr. Kušar, expert associates of Arnes.

### **3.4. Slovensko izobraževalno omrežje – SIO portal**

The [SIO portal](#) offers various educational activities for educators, mostly on subjects of internet use. With their many free seminars, educators can keep up with the latest trends in digital safety and education. From online and face-to-face seminars, there we can find articles and papers on digital safety and digital trends, as well as lectures on digital safety for educators.

### **3.5. Saferkidsonline**

Though [saferkidsonline](#) is not a Slovenian page, it has excellent support for Slovenian children and their parents. The site is in Slovenian language with available materials in Slovene. Here, parents can download a phone application for parental control, which includes various safety features, such as management and time restrictions of internet use, control over inappropriate online content, location of the child, etc. The schools can also find materials for educating the children about digital safety in the form of manuals in the Slovenian language as well (ESET, 2022).

### **3.6. Project NEON – Safe without violence**

[Project NEON](#) is a continuation of the previous NEON project that aims to promote non-violence among children, this time including digital violence. Its main goal is the prevention of abusive behaviour of children and adolescents towards each other and the prevention of sexual abuse. The project's activities are intended for (pre)adolescents, younger children and their parents, as well as professional workers and institutions of education. The topics that the project addresses are: violence against peers, sexual violence against children and adolescents, protection of the rights to be "safe, strong and free" and respect for the rights of others, online safety, strengthening the supportive social network of peers and adults, safe and unsafe touches, safe and unsafe secrets, strengthening social skills and empathy, etc. The network where the program is already in place includes over 30 elementary schools and 25 kindergartens in Slovenia. There are various materials available on the website both for children (games, posters, leaflets etc.) and for adults (video lectures, recommendations, leaflets, articles etc.). They have yearly training on internet safety as well. All the training they carry out is free of charge, since the program is financed by the Slovenian Ministry of Health (ISA institute, 2022a, 2022b).

## 4. Legislation and regulation

There is no law in Slovenia that would protect users against Internet abusive behaviour specifically. However, there is a European Union-compliant law that, among other standards of protection, covers the rights of users and regulates the security of networks including the rights to communications privacy of its users (Uradni list RS, 2022b). It can serve the users as a basis for seeking justice, should their rights have been trespassed.

In early 2022, a new Act on Promotion of Digital Inclusion (Uradni list RS, 2022a) that aims to upbuild digital competencies of foremost youth was adopted. Some of the objectives of introducing the Act are: strengthening the understanding of digital technologies and their responsible and safe use; enhancing the ability to use digital competences etc.

With Internet usage growing, and various Internet abusive behaviours being more and more prominent on a daily basis, there are a few other options of protection users themselves can use, mostly stemming from various projects' results, but there are state authorities that are actively working in the field such as various Ministries, national institutes and the Information Commissioner's Office. The Information Commissioner's Office offers help in securing personal data, but it also educates users on the formal steps they can take, should they find their rights have been violated (Informacijski pooblaščenec RS, 2022).

### [Guidelines on the use of screens in children and adolescents](#)

Recently, primary paediatricians from the Section for Primary Pediatrics of the Association of Pediatrics, under the auspices of the Medical Chamber of Slovenia, together with experts from other fields, have prepared the first national guidelines on the use of screens in children and adolescents. They were created on the basis of research findings and the consensus of many experts and based on the examples of guidelines from abroad. The document received broad support from various professional organizations. The guidelines are primarily intended for all professionals who work with children and young people in education, health care or other professional services (Medical Chamber of Slovenia, n.d.).

The document includes the following sections: 1) time recommendations for using screens during leisure time in pre-school and school children; 2) healthy (family) screen use habits; 3) recommendations for the use of screens in kindergartens; 4) recommendations for the use of screens in schools; 5) recommendations for the use of screens during online learning; 6) adverse and harmful events related to the use of the Internet; 7) signs of excessive screen use that requires professional help; 8) review of relevant literature.

## 5. Conclusions

As the fifth most digitized country in Europe, Slovenia is facing many challenges that digitization brings. Despite the high level of digitization, research indicates a low level of competence in the use of technologies, which indirectly also indicates a lower level of awareness and the possibility of abuse, even among young people. In general, statistical data for Slovenia indicate that as much as 90 percent of the entire population uses the Internet. Unfortunately, we do not have data on how many preadolescents use social networks in our country. The figure is believed to be very high.

Even though there are obvious advantages of Internet and social media platforms, which have especially come to the front during the COVID pandemic, there are also many negative consequences and a threat of Internet misuse/abuse. One of the consequences of the excessive use of social networks among adolescents is a general addiction to the use of the Internet, which is experienced by around 10% of preadolescents in Slovenia. Dependence on social networks manifests itself in approximately 8% of adolescents. Excessive use of social networks among the preadolescent population can also affect their social relationships in the direction of a higher degree of social withdrawal and loneliness.

During the lockdown period imposed by Corona-19, in the spring of 2020, the European commissions' Joint Research Centre carried out a survey that included 11 European countries, including Slovenia. Among other things, they found out that 17% of children report skipping meals and changing sleep patterns due to the use of technologies, around 30% of minors have already experienced harassment via the Internet, and even more of them have been exposed to hate speech, more than 50% have encountered problematic content such as drug abuse, sexual content, etc.

In Slovenia, there are several good practices or organizations that try to make the public aware of the possible harmful consequences of excessive use of technologies and raise awareness of the safe use of the Internet, we also have a telephone centre to help young people in need and organizations that deal with legal aspects of support and assistance for victims of abuse. Currently, there is no law in Slovenia that would protect users against abusive internet behaviour specifically, however, national guidelines on the use of screens in children and adolescents have recently been adopted.

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# DESK RESEARCH

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This report is part of the Erasmus+ project ASAP – *A Systemic Approach to social media and pre-adolescents through thinking skills education*.

It presents key findings from desk research conducted in Slovenia with students, parents, teachers, and school leaders. The study explores the challenges of digital life in early adolescence and the educational needs of all involved.

For more information, visit [www.socialmediakids.eu](http://www.socialmediakids.eu).



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