Vulnerable children and Youth protection measures: a Research framework

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We are engaged in this battle because on the one hand we think that the Internet, the new IT systems open the way of freedom - freedom of expression, freedom of contacts. (...) But at the same time, it can be misused, misused by non democratic government, but it can be also misused by people with bad intention, who try to use this new way of communication to attract vulnerable people and mainly young people.

Mr Henri Malosse, EESC President

In order to empower young people and allow them to benefit from all positive aspects offered by ICTs and the Internet, providing educational tools is essential. The development of a Research base is one of the essential components for the development of appropriate methodologies in the field of education and work with children and Youth on the subject of safer use of the Internet. The establishment of the Research base on the use of ICTs and the Internet by Youth will allow for the identification of the existing and future challenges and will provide a platform to analyze the current and future potential needs. The Research base will first of all permit to create the appropriate National Strategy Development on the protection of children and Youth online and propose directions for better implementation of the developed ITU COP Framework at the national level.

It is important to underline the need to pay particular attention to vulnerable children and Youth often absent from current studies or research analysis, as they are considered difficult to reach due to different reasons that will be outlined below, and focus on the specific research approach to be implemented for the mentioned target group and to be included as a part of the Research base.

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1 European Economic and Social Committee, more details at : http://www.eesc.europa.eu
2 Framework developed under Child online Protection Programme of International Telecommunication Union, please visit: http://www.itu.int/osg/csd/cybersecurity/gca/cop
3 In this Chapter the term of vulnerable is used as defined by paragraph 13 of the Geneva Declaration of Principles: “In building the Information Society, we shall pay particular attention to the special needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups of society, including migrants, internally displaced persons and refugees, unemployed and underprivileged people, minorities and nomadic people. We shall also recognize the special needs of older persons and persons with disabilities.” For more details visit: http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/official/dop.html
The term of vulnerable can have different definitions and be influenced by national/regional specificities and priorities.
Vulnerable children and Youth are often considered to be a target group difficult to approach, however, they represent an important group of Internet users, and if the implementation of statistical research methods for the mentioned group presents difficulties, a specific research framework could be developed taking into account the voice of vulnerable children and Youth, as well as their needs and concerns in order to better protect them online.

It is the idea to develop a specific approach for vulnerable children that led to the fruitful cooperation between the civil society organisation TaC-Together against Cybercrime International and the University of Strasbourg, which resulted in the Initiative of a sociological research survey on the use of ICTs by vulnerable children and Youth. The outcome of the survey, based on the first results of the sociological investigation, is the

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4 See paragraph 74, Child Online Protection Statistical Framework and Indicators, ITU, 2010, p.16. For more details visit: http://www.itu.int/pub/D-IND-COP.01-11-2010
5 For example, the population of the City of Strasbourg consists today of 14% of foreign residents coming from non-European Union countries, and one in three students are from non-EU countries. A number of the foreign residents could be considered to be part of the group of fragile or vulnerable people. For more details visit: http://www.strasbourg.eu/vie-quotidienne/democratienlocale/conseil-residents-etrangers
6 TaC-Together against Cybercrime International is a non-for-profit organisation against cybercrime. The main goal of this organisation is to fight eCrimes at an individual level. The TaC office is based in France. Thanks to our specialised knowledge, our aim is to inform and help all citizens as individuals in all spheres of their lives: in their role as employees in the public and private sectors, in their role as CEOs of companies, in their role as parents, but also during their free time. TaC is an active actor of the Information Society projects and works on the equal participation in the Information society of all citizens, with respect to human rights and fundamental principles. The organisation is an active actor in providing Child online protection measures and works in close cooperation with the French Ministry of Education for the development of awareness raising activities under the French Safer Internet programme (for vulnerable children and Youth). The priority focus of TaC is to work with vulnerable youth, mainly with social and behavior problems including young offenders. The organisation is actively involved in Internet Governance issues, stimulating discussion on the use of ICTs by vulnerable people and initiating the debate on the format of Youth and Teenagers’ IGF (Internet Governance Forum). TaC is a member of the Steering Committee of French Safer Internet programme.

For more details: www.againstcybercrime.org
7 The origins of the University of Strasbourg date back to the early 16th century, when Jean Sturm created an institution where one could study theology, philosophy, medicine and law. A strong intellectual center in Europe during the 17th century, the University then experienced three centuries of bicultural development, being moved back and forth between France and Germany. Over nearly two decades the universities have laid the groundwork for inter-university cooperation, strengthened over time by jointly designed and managed projects. Backed by this experience, the three universities decided to take a further step by uniting their potential for instruction and research within a single university. And thus, on 1 January 2009 the University of Strasbourg was born - a unique and pioneering example of merging universities in France. Solidly anchored in the European Higher Education Area, the University of Strasbourg has around 41,000 students. In this Chapter all mentions to the University of Strasbourg refer to the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Strasbourg. For more details on the University please visit: www.unistra.fr
8 Led in France during autumn-spring 2011/2012 by a research team composed of Dr. Jacqueline Igersheim, Vice-president of the University of Strasbourg, statistician; Ms Yuliya Morenets, Representative of TaC International, Associate Professor; Dr. Emily Trombik, Sociologist; Mr Boyan Tzifkansky, Sociologist and a group of advanced students.
9 Received during the survey led by the research team in France during autumn-spring 2011/2012.
developed Research framework on the use of ICTs by vulnerable children and Youth available for implementation and use in all interested countries.

1. Introduction

The Internet is a great space for communication, socialization and exchange of information. In this regard human rights, freedom of expression, fundamental principles and the rule of law have to be respected online. The Internet is also a space where illegal activities grow constantly. Young people and children are frequent users of ICTs and the Internet; therefore they need to be aware and should be kept informed about online risks and responsibilities. Promoting a common cybersecurity culture is essential in order to prevent online risks, empower children and, thus, permit them to obtain the maximum benefit that the Internet offers.

“Let me start with a story, a personal story. In 1998, I was writing a lot about the Internet because I was young, I heard about the Internet, I heard about computers and because it was new, I started writing about it. And what I realized was that nobody would read it. I would send it to the newspapers, I would send it everywhere, and nobody would read it. But two years later I met a professor in my department who said ‘okay, bring your article, one of your articles, and I gave it to him, and he edited and said, ‘hey, rewrite it again’. And what he did was interesting. He posted this article online and through that article, available on the Internet, my message got out there and I got an ITU fellowship to travel, I mean my first time of leaving from Nigeria, which was a big deal for me at the time. Now why am I telling this story? Because at that time I was socially disadvantaged in terms of education, in terms of employment and other things. But simply because of placing one article on the Internet, everything changed.”

To give the possibility to vulnerable children and Youth to be included in discussions on the Information Society issues and to allow them to be Internet literate and positively benefit from online opportunities, particular attention has to be paid to children that might be considered at risk due to their particular fragilities related to their mental, physical or social conditions, their backgrounds, behavior and needs. It is more difficult to communicate

10 Please note that the presented Research Framework was tested in France during autumn-spring 2011/2012 on a number of vulnerable categories of children, namely young people aged 16-18 years old from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) in France. These areas are known in France as quartiers difficiles/ zones urbaines sensibles, defined by French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies as: “...Sensitive urban zones (ZUS) are infra-urban territories defined by the authorities as being priority targets for urban policy, according to local factors relating to the difficulties that the inhabitants of these territories are experiencing.” For more details visit: http://www.insee.fr/en/methodes/default.asp?page=definitions/zone-urbaine-sensible.htm


12 Mr ’Gbenga Sesan, Executive Director of Paradigm Initiative Nigeria (PIN), during IGF 2011 Workshop 126, for more details visit: http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/component/chronocontact/?chronoformname=Workshops2011View&wspid=126
information, to protect and assist vulnerable children, because a specific approach, taking into account various factors contributing to their vulnerability, is needed. In this regard the daily engagement and professionalism of those who work with them are pivotal.

Vulnerable children tend regularly to be confident online. Very often criminals try to take advantage of their confidence and abuse them online. Recent studies\(^\text{13}\) show that the phenomena of “grooming”\(^\text{14}\) and “cyberbullying”\(^\text{15}\) targeting vulnerable children have become a daily concern for professionals working with them. The development of specific awareness raising strategies and capacity building tools for children and Youth, their parents and professionals at national and regional levels are of great importance, so that the latter can access accurate information on risks, safety measures, assistance for children and parents, and in order to avoid vulnerable children from becoming prey for cybercriminals.

To develop appropriate materials and tools that will effectively raise the awareness of the target group and deliver the understandable message in the format that will reach children and Youth from the target group, their parents and professionals working with them, it is essential to analyze the existing current use of ICTs and the Internet made by vulnerable children and Youth, to learn about their interests and needs and to take their voice into account. To do this, a Research framework on the use of ICTs and Internet by vulnerable children and Youth needs to be implemented.

The analysis of the gathered information will allow developing an awareness raising Strategy for the mentioned group, but also will facilitate the creation of technical and procedural measures as suggested by the ITU COP Framework and will help to assist different societies in the effective implementation of its Stage 1 recommendations and complete the Research base.

2. Global overview

2.1. Why speak about vulnerable children?

Very often vulnerable people are absent from the discussions around the Information Society. This is also true for children that might be considered at risk or more fragile. They are often absent due to the lack of projects and initiatives specifically developed for them, in order to include vulnerable children in the discussions around Information society issues and in particular the safer use of the Internet. Projects and initiatives need to ensure that vulnerable children become active actors in the building process of a safer Information society.

\(^{13}\) As mentioned in the priorities of Safer Internet Programme of European Union 2011. For more details visit: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/sip/index_en.htm

\(^{14}\) Child grooming refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child. In our Chapter it refers to online actions.

\(^{15}\) Cyberbullying is the use of the Internet and related technologies to harm other people, in a deliberate, repeated, and hostile manner.
Due to different factors that contribute to their fragility, vulnerable children often don’t receive, or have difficulties as well as on the accessing to accurate information on the risks and responsibilities online, possibilities of participation and active citizenship engagement on the safe and responsible use of the Internet. The lack of such relevant information reaffirms the need for a specific approach and particular attention to be paid to this group of children.

Today, we need to discuss and to develop specific Strategies on the protection of vulnerable children online, which will allow children and Youth, their parents and professionals to receive appropriate information on risks and responsibilities online in a convenient format and assist them as victims.

It is crucial that the implementation of the mentioned Strategy is done in a multistakeholder format engaging children and Youth themselves, their parents and professionals. The absence of one of the mentioned groups of actors from the implementation round can be crucial and have serious consequences.\(^{17}\)

“...Vulnerable people are a target group that are specifically targeted by offenders. We see that a number of people, vulnerable people did not build up the protection instruments that others do. Vulnerable people are the people who did not build the protection. Therefore the ability to prevent crime is more important than fighting crime. If you can prevent crime, you can stop people from being harmed. So the ability can include legal matters to prevent crime. And if you cannot prevent it, you should at least investigate the crime and make sure that the same offender is not committing further crimes and is a very important aspect when we want to protect vulnerable people.

(...) And the second point I would like to mention is vulnerable people as offenders, because when we look at crime statistics - and I don’t necessarily really believe in crime statistics, but if you look into the crime statistics, it indicates that among the offenders, especially minor offenders that are committing Internet crimes, there is a significant number of vulnerable people themselves that are using this technology. They sometimes don’t actually see what they are doing.

For example, participating in a denial of service attack is rather easy. You download software, you press a button and all of a sudden you’re participating in such an attack. Many of the minors believe that this is cool. They can be part of a group, part of people that change something. However, it is a criminal act. (…)\(^{18}\)"

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16 Starting with the research work on the use of ICTs by vulnerable children and Youth.

17 For example in the Russian Federation, a young boy killed his alcoholic father when he turned off the boy’s computer imitating the same procedure that he experienced in the online game he was playing every day. He was an online games addict and professionals are discussing now if this reaction was due to the online games environment or not. For more details visit: «Пусть говорят», Вне игры, 06 September 2012, on http://www.1tv.ru/pr/pustgovor/vypusk/17834

We can confirm today that children from difficult areas in France that might be considered to be more fragile play online games more often than children from other areas.

18 Prof. Dr. Marco Gercke, University of Cologne, Director of Cybercrime Research Institute, during IGF 2011 Workshop 126, for more details visit: http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/component/chronocontact/?chronoformname=Workshops2011View&wspid=126
To better prevent vulnerable children and Youth from becoming victims of cybercriminals or being involuntary involved in illegal activities online, specific prevention measures need to be introduced. For these prevention measures to be effective, they should be based on the analysis of the use of ICTs and the Internet made by the target group.

Particular attention should be paid to vulnerable children and Youth as they are more fragile with regard to social aspects and needs and due to the external issues and their experience, different social problems and family problems, professional or social integration, the fact that they are more confident and can be easily abused, that the communication of information is more difficult and the assistance is less evident.

2.1.1. Analysis of the addressed problem

Children are a potentially fragile target group. They can be considered as being ‘at risk’ for different reasons. Their fragility could be a factor of their online vulnerability. A specific methodology and a particular approach based on the results of research surveys have to be developed for these categories of children, so that they do not become the prey of cybercriminals and remain trapped due to their vulnerability.

2.1.1.1. Children facing family problems and being victims of violence and / or sexual abuse

This category may need assistance and specific support for better social integration. Children are very active and, at the same time, tend to “open up” online. Cybercriminals can abuse their inclination for confidence and attack them. Various studies\(^\text{19}\) have shown that criminals, primarily perpetrators of grooming, look for this category of children. It’s easier for them to get the trust of traumatized and fragile children, who face family problems and, possibly, have the feeling of not being cherished enough. Those children may try to satisfy their need for care online.

This situation can further traumatize children and incite them either to withdraw into themselves or to become violent, representing therefore an impediment to their social integration.

This is why priority should be given to working with children on the notions of risks and responsibilities on the Internet.

\(^\text{19}\) As mentioned in the priorities of Safer Internet Programme of European Union 2011. For more details visit: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/sip/index_en.htm
2.1.1.2. Children with physical or mental disability

This category can also be very confident and naive online. These children wish to communicate and engage with other young people of their age and may easily open up online. They may also experience difficulties with comprehension of content or the misrepresentation of facts.

2.1.1.3. Children with behavior or emotional problems

Children belonging to this category also seek to exchange and communicate on the web in order to overcome the feeling of being misunderstood, especially by adults. They could be relieved to find people appearing to share their interests and points of view, and confirming their opinion. In this case, risks are once again related to the trust and information shared with strangers. Children can also be brought into criminal actions and schemes against their will and unconsciously fall under the influence of violent groups favourable to racism, xenophobia or extremism.

2.1.1.4. Children that are migrants, travellers, asylum seekers and/or victims of trafficking

Children belonging to this category are often doubly vulnerable: trafficked children, for example, are also migrants or become migrants later. Quite often these children come up against issues of social integration or inclusion, coupled with other impediments, such as financial problems or linguistic difficulties (in case they do not understand and/or speak the host country’s language). It can happen that parents with a migrant background don’t have a good command of the host country language, and often face financial and administrative difficulties at the same time, offer a computer to their children. By that way, they wish to give them the opportunity for a better education and social integration. However, these parents usually do not have any knowledge on computers and are totally unaware of risks related to online use, and of the possible solutions in the event of problems. This category of young people can suffer the consequences of online risks and undergo external and/or internal harassment (i.e. by people they know, such as schoolmates or friends). This kind of situation can entail important consequences in everyday life. There are many examples\(^{20}\) to attest that insulting remarks exchanged on the web, thus neglect of one’s responsibilities in the virtual space, can lead to physical aggression in real life. Similar attitudes may become a \textit{habitus}\(^{21}\) for children and have harmful effects. Children can also be exposed to the risk of being enrolled unintentionally in cybercriminal networks and participate in illegal activities starting online and pursued in real life.

\(^{20}\) As gathered during the survey led by the research team in France during autumn-spring 2011/2012. For more details see \textit{Case study: France} of the present Chapter.

\(^{21}\) As defined by Pierre Bourdieu, French Sociologist.
We have to underline that other categories of vulnerable children and Youth exist. The notion of vulnerability will depend on the perception of society, physical, mental and social conditions, needs and concerns. The perception varies from one country to another, as well as reasons for being considered, as part of a vulnerable group will depend on specificities and the regional situation of the country.

2.2. Need for a specific approach for vulnerable children and Youth

The need for a specific approach and particular attention to be paid to vulnerable children and Youth is underlined by a number of international standards. A specific approach to the work with vulnerable children and Youth needs to be developed in order to prevent them from becoming victims of illegal online activities and to help them become responsible Internet users.

“I gave a good example of the system with ICT of migrant using it. Now I’ll give a bad example. The bad example is traffic of human beings. There was a site in the Internet searching for girls, young girls to be models and to perform- it was said so in a movie- and they would like them to speak Portuguese with a Brazilian accent. So it was directed to the Brazilian girls. Because as you know, Portuguese speak Brazilian but with a different accent. So the advertisement on the Web - it was precisely to Brazilian girls. They were young. We took notice of that because one of the girls escaped one year later or so. The girls were recruited to which is prostitution bars in Spain. They didn't know. They gave all the information by the Internet and they were very nice, and what we saw was very attractive. And for young people like the Brazilian girls in this case, it could be Portuguese that would be Brazilian. It would be easy to understand why the younger generation

21 In Geneva Declaration of principles, par.13, vulnerable groups are defined as follows, even if the definition of vulnerable is not given, and namely: migrants, internally displaced persons and refugees, unemployed and underprivileged people, minorities and nomadic people, older persons and persons with disabilities. For more details, see Geneva Declaration of Principles: http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/official/dop.html
22 For example in Fiji, people and children/Youth living in very small and remote islands, can be considered to be particularly vulnerable due to the geographic situation of their homes. “… In terms of Internet architecture in Fiji, we have global submarine cable coming in and also satellite. They run 5 ISPs in the country. And if you look at the penetration rates, Internet penetration rates: mobile penetration rate, fixed line penetration rate and Internet penetration rate, one of the things you'll find which is common for countries in the Pacific, and Fiji particularly, is a steep rise in mobile. In fact, it surpassed the 100 percent mark. (...) Yes, it brought about communication and, you know, people in remote islands are able to access markets and that sort of thing, but the real challenge that underserved and when I say underserved communities, these are people in remote islands who can't access either the Internet (...)”, during the presentation of Ms Salanieta T. Tamanikaiwaimaro, Group Legal Regulatory Officer, Telecom Fiji Limited, IGF 2011 Workshop 126, for more details visit: http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/component/chronocontact/?chronoformname=Workshops2011View&wspid=126
Or for example in Haiti “ (...) people fleeing from one country to another because of ethnic conflicts, and the second one which looks at people who have been internally displaced because of natural disasters. (...) The first one is the case of Haiti. As we know last year, on the 12th of January, there was a huge earthquake in Haiti. We had something like 2 million persons losing their principal means of shelter, so having to go to refugee camps. We had things like epidemics, etcetera. (...) 2 million who were displaced, they were they became vulnerable. (...)”, during the presentation of Mr Paul Hector, Programme Specialist Section for universal access and preservation, Information Society Division, UNESCO, IGF 2011 Workshop 126, for more details visit: http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/component/chronocontact/?chronoformname=Workshops2011View&wspid=126

believes that everything is true - because they want to be famous. On the sites they are all models and so on. So they gave the answer and all information, and after a while they had an interview, and they took their passports, all their documents and they were sent away to this bar. Thanks to the international cooperation and with the help of the Spanish police, after some investigation the girls were released. However, they stayed for quite a long time being sexually exploited and almost as prisoners. The truth is that these kind of recruitment it is not an exception."  

It is the need to protect the most vulnerable children and Youth, as in the case described above by Ms. Luisa Maia Gonçalves, with Brazilian girls from favelas, that stimulates development of a specific approach and the creation of effective work strategies. It is very important to assist young people in having access to the information on different types of potential risks and responsibilities existing in the virtual world. Children should also be informed about how to appropriately react when facing problems, as well as about the technical, social and human solutions that exist, so that they can deal with psychologically difficult and unpleasant situations. There is also a need to reduce the possibility for such situations to be repeated in the future. This could be avoided by sharing the information on the existing solutions, different experiences and learned lessons.

2.2.1. International Standards

A number of international documents adopted in the field of Information Society pay particular attention to the participation of vulnerable people, among them children and Youth, in the discussions concerning ICTs and the Internet issues, and in the decision making process. Safer and responsible use of the Internet, as well as Child online protection, are important points of the adopted documents.

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24 Ms Luisa Maia Gonçalves, Director of the Department for Criminal Investigation, Surveillance and Intelligence Immigration and Borders Service/Minister of Interior of Portugal, during IGF 2010 Workshop 109, for more details visit: http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/component/chronocontact/?chronoformname=WSProposals2010View&wsid=109
2.2.1.1. WSIS-World Summit on Information Society\textsuperscript{25}

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was held in two phases. The first phase took place in Geneva hosted by the Government of Switzerland from 10 to 12 December 2003, and the second phase took place in Tunis, hosted by the Government of Tunisia, from 16 to 18 November 2005. In the adopted documents during the two phases of WSIS, the need to pay particular attention to vulnerable people is underlined.

**Geneva Declaration of Principles\textsuperscript{26}, 2003**

Ref. to paragraph 13 of the Geneva Declaration of Principles: “In building the Information Society, we shall pay particular attention to the special needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups of society, including migrants, internally displaced persons and refugees, unemployeed and underprivileged people, minorities and nomadic people. We shall also recognize the special needs of older persons and persons with disabilities.”

**Tunis Agenda for the Information Society\textsuperscript{27}, 2005**

Ref. to paragraph 90(n) of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society:

\textsuperscript{25} The UN General Assembly Resolution 56/183 (21 December 2001) endorsed the holding of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in two phases. The first phase took place in Geneva from 10 to 12 December 2003 and the second phase took place in Tunis, from 16 to 18 November 2005.

**Geneva Phase: 10-12 December 2003**

The objective of the first phase was to develop and foster a clear statement of political will and take concrete steps to establish the foundations for an Information Society for all, reflecting all the different interests at stake.

Nearly 50 Heads of state/government and Vice-Presidents, 82 Ministers, and 26 Vice-Ministers from 175 countries as well as high-level representatives from international organizations, the private sector, and civil society attended the Geneva Phase of WSIS and gave political support to the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Geneva Plan of Action that were adopted on 12 December 2003.

**Tunis Phase: 16-18 November 2005**

The objective of the second phase was to put Geneva's Plan of Action into motion as well as to find solutions and reach agreements in the fields of Internet governance, financing mechanisms, and follow-up and implementation of the Geneva and Tunis documents.

Nearly 50 Heads of state/government and Vice-Presidents and 197 Ministers, Vice Ministers and Deputy Ministers from 174 countries as well as high-level representatives from international organizations, private sector, and civil society attended the Tunis Phase of WSIS and gave political support to the Tunis Commitment and Tunis Agenda for the Information Society that were adopted on 18 November 2005.

More information on: http://www.itu.int/wsis

\textsuperscript{26} http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/official/dop.html

\textsuperscript{27} http://www.itu.int/wsis/documents/doc_multi.asp?lang=en&id=2267|0
“... promoting the use of traditional and new media in order to foster universal access to information, culture and knowledge for all people, especially vulnerable populations and populations in developing countries and using, *inter alia*, radio and television as educational and learning tools.”

2.2.1.2. **IGF – Internet Governance Forum 2010/2011**

Its purpose is to support the United Nations Secretary-General in carrying out the mandate from the WSIS with regard to convening a new forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue - the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). The site provides an interactive, collaborative space where all stakeholders can share their views and exchange ideas. Its mandate is based on the paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda.

During the IGF 2010 and 2011, a number of workshops ([IGF 2010 - Workshop 109](http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/component/chronocontact/?chronoformname=WSProposals2010View&wspid=109) [IGF 2011 - Workshop 126](http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/component/chronocontact/?chronoformname=Workshops2011View&wspid=126#report)) were organized on the subject of use of ICTs by vulnerable people for their equal participation in the Information Society and Internet Governance issues. Participants of the mentioned Workshops recommended paying particular attention to security issues and safer use of the Internet, with particular focus on vulnerable children and Youth, who can encounter dangerous situations online.

We have to underline that a number of Legal instruments and Strategies, such as: EU Directive of 13 December 2011 on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography[^30], the Draft African Convention on Cybersecurity[^31], the EU Safer Internet programme[^32], the Council of Europe Stockholm Strategy[^33] and Strategy 2012-2015[^34] and the ITU/EC-HIPSSA-project Model Laws on cybercrime[^35], recommend paying particular attention to safer use of Internet by vulnerable people/children and Youth.

3. **Research Framework**

In order to develop appropriate solutions and define capacity building and awareness raising Strategies on the protection of vulnerable children and Youth online, the University of Strasbourg and TaC International developed the Research framework[^36] with the focus on

[^36]: Please note that the present Research Framework was tested in France on a sample of young people-aged 16-18 from socially difficult areas (the vulnerable group) presenting a number of vulnerabilities and those from
vulnerable children and Youth. The framework allows gathering data on the use of ICTs and the Internet by the target group for further analysis and represents the first step for the empowerment of the mentioned group online.

3.1. Methodology

Vulnerable children and Youth are often identified as a group difficult to reach, that is why it can be quite problematic to collect quantitative data and develop statistical surveys or implement a Statistical framework on this target group. It can be also difficult to introduce socio-economic status indicators or those allowing the identification of whether a child does or does not belong to a group “at risk”, into the representative quantitative sample.

That is why the academic team working on the Research framework, presented here, used a crossed sociological method introducing qualitative and quantitative approaches followed by sociological analysis. This method allows for the receipt and analysis of appropriate data with a smaller sample, and the development of a more personalized approach when working with children and Youth from the target group.

To develop a more comprehensive approach to the problem, theoretical analysis of existing studies and/or practices at national or regional levels need to be conducted before designing the survey. The identification of existing target groups of actors working with vulnerable children and Youth is part of the analysis. The methodology is based on the analysis of the theoretical results gathered during the sociological survey based on a crossed method.

Crossed qualitative and quantitative approach is recommended to be used during the surveys based on multistakeholder targeted groups.

Qualitative approach:
• Semi-directive interviews with the members of the multistakeholder target group
• Possible introduction of participative observations

other areas (the other group). For this, socio-economic and urban areas indicators were introduced in qualitative and qualitative tools.
37 Qualitative researchers may use different approaches to collecting data, such as the grounded theory practice, narratology, storytelling, classical ethnography, or shadowing. Qualitative methods are also loosely present in other methodological approaches, such as action research or actor-network theory. Forms of the data collected can include interviews and group discussions, observation and reflection field notes, various texts, pictures, and other materials.
38 Quantitative research refers to the systematic empirical investigation of social phenomena via statistical, mathematical or computational techniques. Qualitative research asks broad questions and collects word data from participants.
39 It builds its analysis on the results of the qualitative and quantitative survey phases.
40 A semi-structured interview is a method of research used in the social sciences. While a structured interview has a formalized, limited set of questions, a semi-structured interview is flexible, allowing new questions to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the interviewee says. The interviewer in a semi-structured interview generally has a framework of themes to be explored.
41 A participative observation lets you take part in the place, event, or behavior. Participative observations brought important nuances during the test phase of the Framework on the French sample, showing for example that the place where children from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) play online games (identified during qualitative and quantitative phases) is mainly a cybercafé (defined during participative observations).
Quantitative approach:
• Statistical analysis via the development of questionnaires

The questionnaire contains categories of questions related to general use of the Internet, electronic transactions online, data protection and privacy, security, received trainings in the field of safer use of the Internet, freedom of expression and Internet governance.

All questions are formulated in a language and format comprehensible to the target group actors, which is essential in order to gather appropriate data. To ensure the quality of answers/data received, it is recommended that a face to face\(^\text{42}\) style questionnaire be used. This questionnaire allows for nuances to the answers and for the observation of different reactions of the child/young person to the questions asked, so as to enrich the analytical work.

*Face to face* questionnaire, which can be done by advanced students, offer a personalized approach to the child/young person of the target group in the sample, and allows the sample to be smaller than with other sociological/statistical surveys.

We propose to build our methodology on a multistakeholder principle. That is why it is not only the children and Youth from the target group that are part of the survey, but also their friends, parents and professionals working with them.

The multistakeholder principle enables us to work on different aspects of the issue of online risks and responsibilities from different perspectives, with the aim of bringing concrete solutions after the sociological analyses are concluded.

We need to underline the importance of the participation of young professionals and advanced students during the implementation of the survey. Their participation allows for an open dialogue with children and Youth from the target group and offers the benefits of a personalized approach in order to gather important data for further sociological analysis.

### 3.2. Possible implementation

Working with vulnerable children and Youth is difficult. Therefore a personalized approach is required to gather appropriate data necessary for protecting the most fragile actors in society - vulnerable children and Youth.

The implementation of the developed Research Framework needs to be based on the regional/national situation and to take into account elements related to the priorities and specificities of the country during the survey. A national/regional approach is also needed to identify the target group, which can vary in different countries, as the definition of *vulnerable* often depends on cultural, socio-economic and political situation of the country.

\(^{42}\) During a *face to face* questionnaire, an interviewer is physically present to ask the survey questions and assist the respondent in answering them.
That is why the engagement of local teams of researchers, familiar with the national/regional situation and priorities, is crucial in order to use the received survey data for the development of National strategies on the protection of vulnerable children and Youth.

**Suggestions:**

1. Develop and implement the Research Framework on the use of ICTs and Internet by vulnerable children and Youth.

2. Gather and analyze the received data.

3. Develop specific awareness raising and capacity building strategies for vulnerable children, Youth, their parents and professionals working with the target group.
4. Case study: France

The presented Research Framework on the use of ICTs by vulnerable children and Youth was implemented in France during autumn-spring 2011/2012 by a research team composed by three sociologists, a statistician and advanced students.

The survey followed the methodology described above and consisted of two phases: a qualitative research phase and a quantitative one. These were followed by a sociological analysis.

Before the start of the survey the target group sample was identified respecting multistakeholder format and sociological theories.

The survey sample comprised young people aged 16-18 living in difficult areas in France (the vulnerable group), as well as in other areas (the other group). When the selection of the sample was finalised, it consisted of two groups of young people: one from difficult areas, presenting different vulnerabilities (the vulnerable group), and the other from non-difficult areas (the other group). The idea of selecting such a sample was not to stigmatize young people from difficult areas, but to make the analysis of the obtained information more comprehensive. Proposing appropriate solutions and developing awareness raising strategies based on the results of the survey, will help to better assist vulnerable young people in the safer and responsible use of the Internet.

During the survey we had also to verify if there were differences between young people from difficult areas in France (the vulnerable group) and young people from other areas (the other group) using the Internet and ICTs. To distinguish between young persons, from these two groups, both socio-economic indicators and location indicators were used in the quantitative and qualitative tools during the survey.

An analysis of the existing research and studies were made before the design of the above-mentioned survey.

The survey started with a qualitative phase based on semi-directive interviews. Their analysis allowed the team to design a quantitative questionnaire.

The main objective was then to create a general picture of the use of ICTs and Internet by vulnerable young people, mainly concentrated in difficult areas and identify if young people in France from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) and those from other areas (the other group) behave differently when using ICTs and the Internet.

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43 The survey was led by the research team in France during autumn-spring 2011/2012.
44 The research team was composed of Dr. Jacqueline Igersheim, Vice-president of the University of Strasbourg, statistician; Ms Yuliya Morenets, Representative of TaC International, Associate Professor; Dr. Emily Trombik, Sociologist; Mr Boyan Tzifkansky, Sociologist and a group of advanced students.
45 These areas are known in France as quartiers difficiles/ zones urbaines sensibles, defined by French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies as: “...Sensitive urban zones (ZUS) are infra-urban territories defined by the authorities as being priority targets for urban policy, according to local factors relating to the difficulties that the inhabitants of these territories are experiencing. “For more details visit: http://www.insee.fr/en/methodes/default.asp?page=definitions/zone-urbaine-sensible.htm
It was important to conduct qualitative and quantitative phases\textsuperscript{46} of the survey face to face. The idea of a personalised approach, allowed the students to establish a climate of trust between themselves and those interviewed for the survey, and to receive appropriate responses to their questions.

The results were analysed by categories and can be summarized as follows.

4.1. Use/General Perception

A number of questions under this category focused on the knowledge of young people in the field of ICTs and Internet use and the different ways they use today\textsuperscript{47} to connect to the Internet.

1. The final analysis reviews that the majority\textsuperscript{48} of parents of young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) are not always able to assist their children with the information on the safe and responsible use of the Internet because they are not Internet literate themselves.

2. Young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) who haven’t attended ICTs courses represent 21% compared to 10% for those from other areas (the other group). They also less often took a specific course on computer sciences/ safer use of Internet during their secondary or higher education studies, which shows a real weakness and lack of information that can lead to the particular fragility online of the target group.

3. Young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) connect less often every day using a computer, 79% compared to 89% for those from other areas (the other group), presumably because they have less access to a computer because of difficult social/financial conditions, but all of them (the vulnerable group and the other group) connect at least one time per week, which shows that young people have integrated these tools into their usual practice.

4. In fact, young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) will often use their mobile phone to access the Internet, and this tool is more readily available to allow them to communicate with their network of friends.

5. Young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) did not attest during the quantitative phase to significantly more often connect in cybercafés, at least in our sample, but the participative observations conducted in the difficult areas bring nuances to this fact and have shown that young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) go to Internet cafés, especially those who are not studying at the University.

\textsuperscript{46} Using semi-directive interviews and face to face questionnaires.
\textsuperscript{47} At the time of the survey : autumn-spring 2011/2012.
\textsuperscript{48} Of the study sample.
4.2. Use of the Internet

Regarding the use of the Internet, the difference between young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) and those from other areas (the other group) comes with online games bringing also gender differentiation.

1. 55% of young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) play online games (21% of them play every day), compared to 31% (6% of them play every day) of respondents from other areas (the other group).

   We have to remark that girls from difficult (the vulnerable group) areas play online games more often than boys from other areas (the other group).

2. Young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) more often publish their photos on the Internet, 57% compared to 46% for those from other areas (the other group). This raises the issue of privacy and personal data protection.

3. Young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) download music, movies, videos or video games without paying more frequently than those from other areas (the other group). We also observed that in general, boys are involved in this activity. We could suppose that their families could face financial difficulties and the access to the paid material is less affordable for them.

   However, the qualitative interviews show us that this type of practice is common to all young people (the vulnerable group and the other group) in the sample who are aware that they are breaking the law but find these practices to be normal because "everyone does it".

4.3. Use of social networks

A large number of questions introduced in qualitative and quantitative tools concerned the use of social networks on Internet.

1. The analysis shows that young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) use social networks as a tool of communication (89%) and expression (51%), compared to 85% and 43% for young people from other areas (the other group); and less often as a tool for information (25% compared to 37%) and publication (25% compared to 30%) than young people from other areas (the other group).

2. While the difference of the presence on Facebook is not very significant (93% for young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) compared to 84%) young people from other areas (the other group)), the difference is significant for the presence on Twitter (31% for young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable

49 Based on the results of the qualitative phase of the present survey.
3. We introduced a number of questions related to the activities they have when using social networks. Even if it seems there isn’t a big difference between two groups of young people our sample consists of, we still have to note that 36% of young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) play online games using social networks at least one time per week compared to 14% of young people from other areas (the other group).

4. Young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) are also more active in responding to online tests, writing articles or commenting on different products/services.

### 4.4. Safer use of Internet

A number of the survey questions concerned safer use of the Internet and protection measures that young people know and use in order to stay safe online.

1. 60% of young people, in all areas (the vulnerable group and the other group), think that the Internet encourages violent behaviour.

2. We have to specify that 62% of young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) are against the fact that Internet should be regulated by governments compared to 37% of young people from other areas (the other group), which shows a significant difference.

3. Therefore, young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) are more familiar with the organizations fighting for freedom on Internet (62% compared to 37% for young people from other areas (the other group)). There are also 73% of boys from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) who are aware of Anonymous organisation activities.

### 4.5. Responsible use of the Internet

A number of the introduced questions concerned responsible use of the Internet and the perception of responsibilities that young people have concerning their activities online.

1. 29% of young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) admit to having already changed their IP address.

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50 Anonymous is an associated hacktivist group.
2. 50% of boys from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) have already changed their IP address.

3. While young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group), 29%, changed their IP address consciously in order to stay anonymous on the Internet, we presume that they were not aware of the fact that this activity can lead to illegal practices online.

4. 24% of young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) never use their real names/data on social networks (girls or boys). This phenomenon is less spread among young boys and girls from other areas (the other group).

5. 48% of young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) know the password of their ex-boy/girl friend and 40% of them have checked the emails of their ex-boy/girl friend (40% compared to 17.5% for young people from other areas (the other group)).

We have to note that this practice is more frequent for young male participants in the survey from difficult areas (the vulnerable group). They do not really realize that when acting like this, they don’t respect the privacy of others, and find this type of practice to be normal.

The frequent reported practice, which was mainly observed during qualitative phase, is that quite often young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) create a fake account on social networks, where their boy/girl friend has also an account and try to date with the partner online using the fictive profile (using a false name and surname) in order to observe the reaction and behaviour of their boy/girl friend. It is a kind of fidelity test. This action shows that social networks are also used to observe/monitor actions that others (in our case boy/girl friend) have online; it is a kind of virtual surveillance over a partner.

This practice may result from different concepts of gender relations among young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group). They also don’t realize that by such actions they infringe the privacy of others. In addition, this type of virtual surveillance can cause violent behaviour/exchanges online that can lead to physical violence in real life.

4.6. Internet dangers

The young people from the two groups of the sample (the vulnerable group and the other group) have the feeling of being exposed to various dangers on the Internet (from a list of potential dangers that was introduced with qualitative/quantitative tools) in the same proportion.

1. Young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) more frequently run the risk of theft of personal data or scams compared to those from other areas (the other group).

2. A number of responses show that young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) are more suspicious than those from other areas (the other group) when
faced with dangers online. They explain that it is because they lack knowledge in the field of safe use of Internet, and they think they are exposed to online risks.

3. We also note that young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) use their credit card less often to make online purchases (71% compared to 85% for young people from other areas (the other group)) but were more often victims of theft of bank data/information (16% compared to 3% for young people from other areas (the other group)). Girls were more often victims of bank data online theft than boys, which shows a real fragility of girls from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) in the field of safer use of Internet.

Of course the results presented in this paper relate to young people living in France (with the differential data gathered for young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) and those from other areas (the other group)), and it is possible that we would observe other tendencies in other countries, which will present and take into account national specificities and situations.

But we can confirm that in France vulnerable young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group) use Internet mostly to communicate with others and to express themselves, which is shown by more important use of Internet on mobile phones by young people from difficult areas (the vulnerable group). They are also more exposed to different risks/dangers online and on online social networks, which may be explained by the lack of knowledge in the field of safer and responsible use of the Internet. At the same time, as they are fragile and quite often face social issues and problems, the Internet and social networks represent for them a place where they can have fun and can feel the importance of their actions. That is why they use social networks as a kind of social vitrine which makes them more fragile online with regard to online dangers and risks.