DIGITAL DIVIDENDS AND DIGITAL DISADVANTAGE:

The experiences and views of children with disabilities in the digital environment

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QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST | CENTRE FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

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Human rights of children that are relevant to the **digital environment**

Participation in decision-making

Best interests as a primary consideration

Education

Play

Non-discrimination

Access to health care

Seek receive and impart information

Safety and protection from harm and sexual exploitation

Privacy

Council of Europe Strategy
for the Rights of the Child
(2016-2021)

An International Children's Rights Priority

Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-21) and new Strategy (2022-2027)

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's next General Comment will be on Children's Rights in the Digital Environment

Learn about your rights in the digital environment

Council of Europe Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment

Presented for children and young people under the age of 18

www.coe.int/children | Building a Europe for and with children

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Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on Guidelines to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child in the digital environment.

New:
- Child-friendly version
- Handbook for policy makers

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A missing perspective

A clear lack of attention to the views of children with disabilities
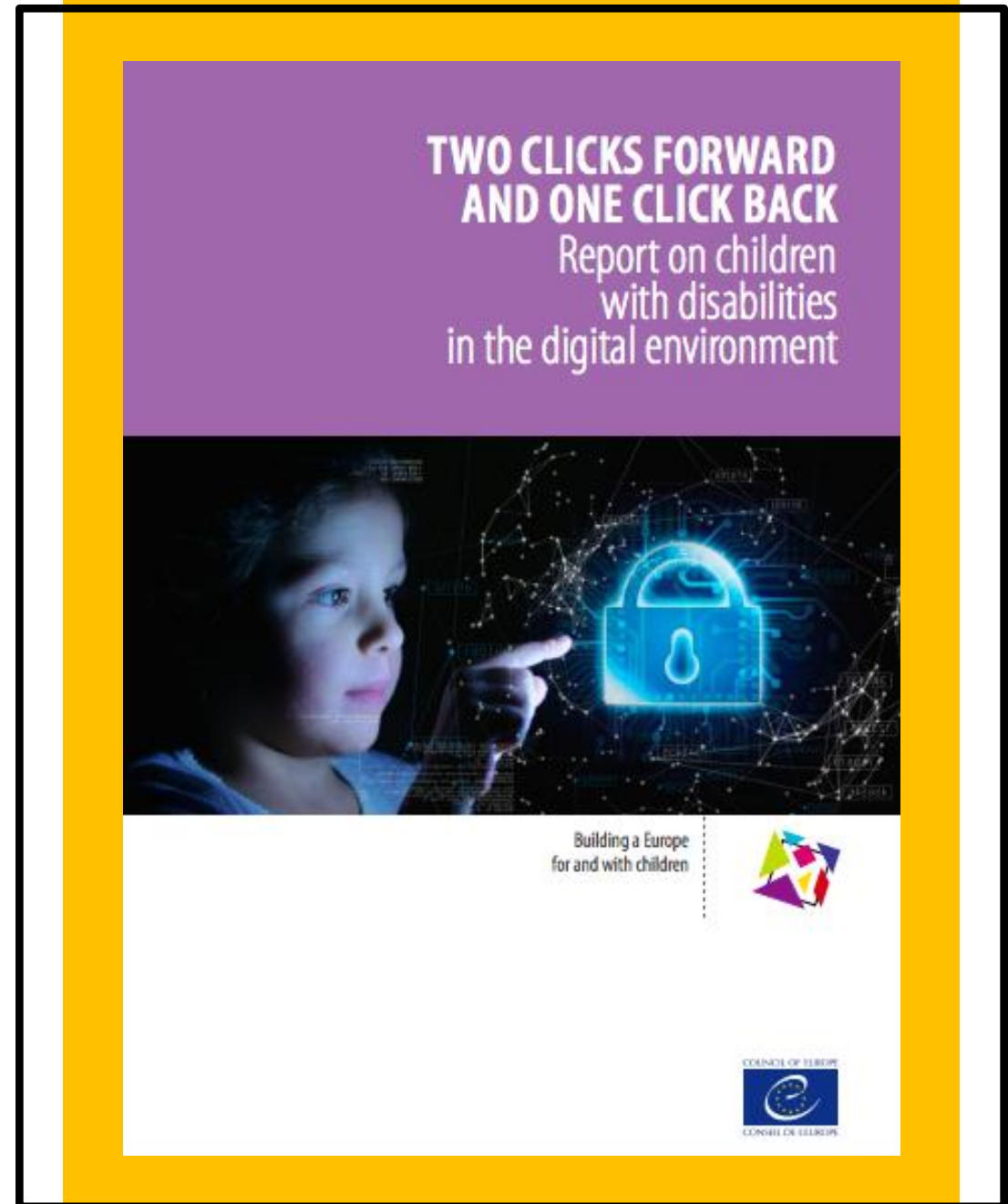
Outline

1. The Study

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TWO CLICKS FORWARD
AND ONE CLICK BACK
Report on children
with disabilities
in the digital environment

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Our research partners

Belgium

Ghent University: Geert Van Hove and Silke Daelman and The Children's Rights Knowledge Centre (KeKi vzw): Sara Lembrechts and Kathy Vlieghe.

Germany

University of Rhein-Main: Rita Richter Nunes, Heidrun Schulze. The focus groups were conducted by Sviatlana Artsiukhova, Walter Christian Grötsch, and Andree Michel and Rita Richter Nunes.

Moldova

Child Rights Information Centre: Viorica Cojocaru, Elia Cernolevschi and Smiljana Frick.

Portugal

University of Minho: Ana Paula Loução Martins, Natália Fernandes and António José Osório.

Turkey

University of Bilgi: Zeynep Kilic, Gozde Durmu.

Children's Rights-Based Methodology
Lundy and McEvoy (2012)

Children's Research Advisory Groups

Eighteen disabled young people in total, age 13-17 (7 M, 11 F)

- Group 1: Children with intellectual impairments-(n=5 - 3M;2F)
- Group 2: Children with hearing impairments - (n=4 -1M;3F)
- Group 3: Children with visual impairments - (n=3 - 2M;1F)
- Group 4: Children with physical impairments - (n=6 -1M;5F)

The participants

TABLE 1 - The children and young people involved in the study

Country	Groups	No.	M	F	Age
UK Advisers	1 – Intellect	5	3	2	13-15
	2 – Hearing	4	1	3	13-17
	3 – Visual	3	2	1	14-15
	4 – Physical	6	1	5	15-16
TOTAL	5	18	7	11	13-16
Belgium	1 – Intellect	8	6	2	15-18
	2 – Physical	7	5	2	14-17
Germany	1 – Mixed	4	4	0	12-15
	2 – Intellect	5	3	2	13-14
Portugal	1 – Hearing	8	7	1	17-18
	2 – Intellect	7	2	5	12-19
	3 – Physical	1	1	0	xxxxx
	4 – Visual	5	5	0	11-14
Moldova	1 – Mixed	8	4	4	13-17
	2 – Mixed	10	6	4	13-17
	3 – Visual	6	1	5	13-15
Turkey	1 – Intellect	5	4	1	xxxxx
	2 – Intellect	5	2	3	13-17
OVERAL TOTAL	17	97	57	40	11-19

2. Children's Experiences

Diversity

Digital Access

('if there was a power cut, the world would end')

Access to the digital environment is resource dependent.

Access for those who speak English is better than for those who cannot.

Digital Dividends
'(I can be myself when messaging. I am really, really funny.')

'On the laptop I have a voice program. I also use this for work and school thing. I can speak over the headset and that writes for me. That's really cool.'

(physical impairment, Germany)

'Regarding the internet, these things, a few years ago it was worse, we can say so... Now there are many more things... There are books, music CDs...'

(visual impairment, Portugal)

'I use Google Maps, because this program is so helpful to find my way. I like the fact that it talks so I don't have trouble reading the screen.'

(intellectual impairment, Belgium)

Digital Disadvantage
('it's so tiring' (re: eye recognition))

'[Photographs to enlarge school worksheets] take lots of storage and I then have to delete a hundred thousand million pictures and it's really annoying.'

(girl, 15, visual impairment, UK)

'In some games that require a high level of responsiveness, I have problems because of the spasticity which is also in my hands.'

(boy, physical impairment, Germany)

Dealing with danger
('we are the safest kids on the planet')

'Without my mother's permission I do not have access to the internet.'

(girl, 15, intellectual impairment, Moldova)

'My parents protect me more compared with my brother'

(hearing impairment, Portugal)

'It is the same ... the same to an adult woman, the same to other adults, children, youths, ... they can't free themselves from the dangers of the internet.'

(boy, visual impairment, Portugal)

'The PCs in the library don't have the programme installed… I have two options: I bring mine from home and put in in the library or I bring my mobile phone. Or, well, I stay there and watch the ships' (Portugese saying meaning 'missing the opportunity')

(boy, visual impairment, Portugal)

Digital Disruption

('Why won't they let us take it home?')

Decision-Making

'Teachers almost never ask our opinion, we have a perspective too you know, and perhaps it would be helpful if somebody really listened to us.'

(physical impairment, Belgium)

3. What do children with disabilities want?

Adults who know how to support them
("She freaks when it is Friday')

'And the experts at school are not always the experts you know, sometimes nobody knows how to solve certain problems with these programmes...'

(physical impairment, Belgium)

'It's important to have equipment in the school cafeteria like the one in McDonalds. Because when I go, it is hard to tell the employees what I want...!'

(hearing impairment, Portugal)

Not to stand out from their peers
('I am odd enough without carrying an Ipad everywhere')

Independence

'You know the light board they have that rolls by with your name. Well it's like red lights on a browny background and is sooo hard to see. If I was there by myself I wouldn't be able to see it myself and I'd be sitting there and miss my appointment...'

(girl, 15, visual impairment, UK)

Involvement
(my most hated words are 'never mind'. I do mind. I mind a lot)

'Establish a law: all the websites in the internet have to be adjusted for visually impaired people. Whoever doesn't do this has to pay a penalty of 500 thousand Euros which could be for learning.'

(visual impairment, Portugal)

3. Involving children with disabilities in decision-making in the digital environment

The Lundy model of child and youth participation

Space

HOW: Provide a safe and inclusive space for children to express their views

- Have children's views been actively sought?
- Was there a safe space in which children can express themselves freely?
- Have steps been taken to ensure that all children can take part?

Voice

HOW: Provide appropriate information and facilitate the expression of children's views

- Have children been given the information they need to form a view?
- Do children know that they do not have to take part?
- Have children been given a range of options as to how they might choose to express themselves?

Audience

HOW: Ensure that children's views are communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen

- Is there a process for communicating children's views?
- Do children know who their views are being communicated to?
- Does that person/body have the power to make decisions?

Influence

**HOW:** Ensure that children's views are taken seriously and acted upon, where appropriate

- Were the children's views considered by those with the power to effect change?
- Are there procedures in place that ensure that the children's views have been taken seriously?
- Have the children and young people been provided with feedback explaining the reasons for decisions taken?

The Lundy Model adapted for the CRPD

Byrne and Lundy 2020
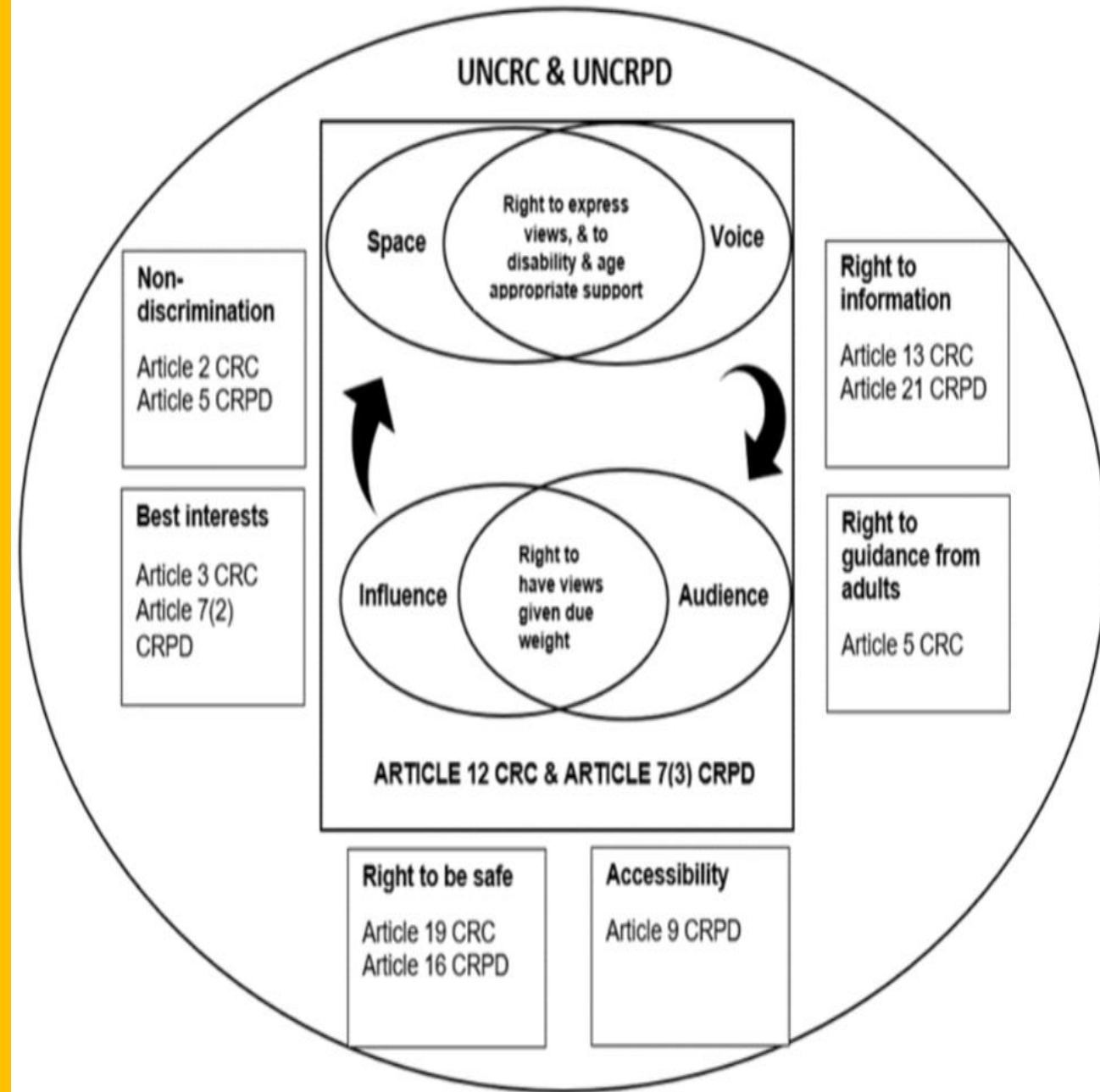
Children's expertise in their own lives

Adults do not understand what it is like to be a child.

Adults with disabilities do not understand what it is like to be a child with a disability.

Children with physical disabilities do not understand what it is like to be a child with an intellectual impairment and vice versa

Girls with disabilities do not have the same experiences of boys with disabilities.

"It's not the gift of adults.
It's the right of the child."

(Lundy 2007)

Dispelling some misunderstanding_s_

1 'Best interests' does not equate to protection from harm.

2 It's in a child's best interest to enjoy all their rights including, for example, their right to seek, receive and impart information.

3 It's in a child's best interests (and their right) not to be discriminated against in the exercise of their other rights.

4 A child had an immediate right to be protected from harm but the response to a perceived danger should not be to deny them the enjoyment another right (e.g. to play) but to make the environment safe.

Conclusion

- **Children with disabilities have a right to be involved in the decisions that affect them.**

- **The views and experiences of rights in the digital environment are diverse and personal.**

- **Only they know understand what it is like to be a child with their disability navigating the digital environment.**

- **If in doubt about how to involve them, start by asking them for advice.**