11th International Conference
Children’s Rights in the Digital Age:
Should children be protected from screen exposure?
23 & 24 April 2020
HES-SO Valais, Sierre, Switzerland
(simultaneous interpretation in German, French & English)

Organizers
Centre for Children’s Rights Studies (CIDE), University of Geneva (Valais Campus)
University of Teacher Education (HEP - VS) St-Maurice & Brig
University of Applied Sciences (HES-SO Valais)
International Institute for the Rights of the Child (IDE) Sion
Cantonal Youth Services, Valais

In collaboration with
UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
Swiss Center of Expertise in Human Rights (SCHR)
Screens, or more scientifically digital technologies (TV, Internet, smartphone, video games, social networks, etc.), are today part of the daily life of all generations. Especially in young children, their widespread use induces a different way of approaching life, relating to others, learning, and in communicating. An entire generation has evolved, from early childhood, with new technical means and digital tools. This newly established "identity" is not built "against" that of the previous generation, but rather points to a paradigm shift or culture change, hence a new phenomenon to be considered from a child protection perspective.

For the past twenty years or so, considerable research has revealed both the benefits and risks associated with new technologies and their use by children and adolescents. No wonder parents in particular, but also professionals are struggling to make sense of such scientific findings ... all in all an excellent reason to hold this International conference.

What are the impacts of screens (television, computer, tablet, smartphone) on the development of children and young people? On the one hand, the demonization of screens dominates public discourse. Their excessive use, depending on the age of the child, reduces the time of exposure to other more beneficial stimuli as actual play and socialization. Research indicates that immoderate exposure to screens has negative developmental effects, including on language, attention, sleep, mood, and academic achievement. The American Academy of Pediatrics has also provided guidance regarding the "proper use" of screens, highlighting the need for significant periods of no screen down time.

These recommendations also seem necessary in light of Swiss studies, which show that 16 - 25 year olds are online for approximately four hours a day and feel pressured by applications that reward regular use: one in four says they get nervous or are nervous when disconnected from the Internet! Finally, it should be noted that the development of digital media is accompanied by significant misuse, such as sexting, cyberbullying, and other potentially harmful conducts carrying undeniable physical and mental health risks.

On the other hand, digital tools clearly present a number of benefits. Indeed a joint statement by the French Academy of Sciences, the French Academy of Medicine and the French Academy of Technologies calls for reasoned vigilance over digital technologies, indicating in particular that the risks inherent in digital instruments "should not obscure the fact that, if well used, screens, and the information they generate constitute tools of increased knowledge and provide an undeniable greater awareness of the world".¹ This statement coincides with the Swiss Federal Commission for Children and Young People’s studies², namely that young people (16 - 25 years old) appreciate being in contact with others, obtaining immediate response when searching for information, as well as having fun via the use of digital media.

If young people experience the digital sphere in a positive way, it is essential to remember that "the role of parents, both as models for imitation and for educational authority, remains absolutely paramount in relation to appropriate screen exposure and in the child’s harmonious development. With regard to adolescents, we must also acknowledge the role of teachers in the task of how information is received, processed and used constructively. This position underlines a crucial element: for all users both parents and children in order to have a more positive and safe experience with information and communication technologies, they must benefit from more enhanced and

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comprehensive information about the advantages and risks associated with digital media such as how social networks operate, rules of online conduct, possible misuse or even significant slip ups, etc.

The conference addresses issues at the heart of the children’s rights global agenda, inter alia, freedom of expression, right to privacy, access to information, the child’s right to be heard, and parental responsibility. Indeed, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is engaged in producing General Comment 25 on the Rights of the Child in the Digital Environment and the Committee’s Working Group and experts associated with its drafting will be present in Sierre to report on progress made. For Switzerland, cantonal youth laws emphasize that the responsibility in providing for the care, support and education of the child lies primarily with his or her parents, while indicating that the State should encourage measures to reduce factors endangering children and young people in their physical or mental development. Furthermore, programs are designed to raise awareness and to facilitate training for professionals working with and for children.

Objectives

The conference aims to better understand the impact of screens on children and adolescents; to sensitize professionals to the fact that in this domain children are also the holder of rights and not only potential victims; to recognize pathways which serve to help parents guide their children in this digital universe; to highlight good practices based on knowledge gained from sound scientific research as well as to ensure best practices from other countries; and to identify strategies for evidence-based public policy.

Target audience

This conference welcomes the participation of political decision-makers and professionals working with and for children and young people (teachers, social workers, psychologists, doctors, educational specialists, mediators, representatives of the academic and scientific community and all other professionals working on issues related to childhood, education and digital technology).
Wednesday April 22, 2020
19:00 **Dr Serge Tisseron**, University of Paris VII Denis Diderot, France
*Faut-il protéger les enfants des écrans ? 0 – 6 ans (F)*
(Only in French – no interpretation)
*Free conference - no registration required*

Thursday April 23, 2020
8:30 Welcome and registration of participants at HES-SO Valais in Sierre

9:15 Opening
**Prof. Luciana Vaccaro**, Rector of University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland
**M. Christian Nanchen**, Head, Youth Services, Canton of Valais
**Prof. Philip D. Jaffé**, Center for Children’s Rights Studies, University of Geneva, and UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

1st module **A new social order: The influence of screens on children’s lives**
9:30 Session co-chaired by Ms. Amal Aldoseri, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and Prof. Nicole Langenegger Roux, HES-SO Valais // Wallis

**Dr Serge Tisseron**, University of Paris VII Denis Diderot, France
*Apprivoiser les écrans et grandir (F)*

10:15 Coffee break

10:45 **Prof. Sonia Livingstone**, London School of Economics, Great Britain
*Global Kids Online project (E)*

11:30 **Prof. Amanda Third**, Western Sydney University, Australia
*What do children from all continents tell us about their digital environment? (E)*

12:00 **Ms. Gerison Lansdown**, Independent Child Rights expert, Great Britain
*Freedom of expression and association (E)*

12:30 Discussion
12:45 Lunch
2nd module Rights of the child: Screens, protection and health

14:00 Session chaired by Ms. Cilgia Caratsch, International Institute for the Rights of the Child (IDE) Sion

Ms. Martina Robbiani, Office fédéral des assurances sociales – Berne

Plateforme nationale Jeunes et médias : promouvoir les compétences médiatiques chez les parents et les personnes de référence (F)

14:20 Dr Simon Charles Fluri, Pediatrics Department, Visp Hospital, Valais

Title to be determined

L’avis d’un pédiatre (D)

14:40 Ms. Angélique Wüthrich, Promotion santé Valais/HES-SO Valais

Stratégie pour une éducation numérique responsable (F)

15:00 Dr Rahel Heeg, University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland, Basel

Wie gehen Kinder mit Online – Stress um? (D)

15:20 Discussion

15:45 Coffee break

16:15 Session chaired by Mr Christian Nanchen, Cantonal Youth Services, Valais

Prof. Stacey Steinberg, University of Florida, USA

Growing Up Shared: Balancing Children’s Privacy with Parental Autonomy on Social Media (E)

16:45 Prof. Warren Buckleitner, The College of New Jersey, USA

Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8 (E)

17:15 Discussion

17:30 End
Friday April 24, 2020
3rd module Screens and education

9:00    Session presided by Prof. Zoé Moody, University of Teacher Education (HEP-VS) Valais

Prof. Daphné Bavelier, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, University of Geneva
Capacités cognitives et nouvelles technologies (F)

09:30   Ms. Corinne Ramillon and Ms. Myriam Bouverat, Haute école pédagogique, Valais
Les écrans à l’école et en dehors : bonnes et moins bonnes pratiques (F)

10:00   Discussion

10:30   Coffee break

11:00   Session co-chaired by Prof. Olga Khazova, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and
Prof. Philip D. Jaffé, CIDE, University of Geneva

11:15   Mme Eveline Hipeli, University of Teacher Education, Zurich
Familienleben heute – Einfluss der Neuen Medien auf den Alltag (D)

11:45   Prof. Claire Balleys, University of Applied Sciences – HES-SO, Geneva
Quelle est la place des écrans dans la maison? (F)

12:45   Lunch
4th module Screens usage - Conclusions and Round Table discussion

13:45 Workshop – Former students of the University of Applied Sciences HES-SO Valais: Emilie Rama, Ludivine Monnet and Leyla Fellay

*Réseaux de rencontre pour adolescent.e.s: une nouvelle façon de vivre ensemble? (F)*

14:15 Session chaired by Dr h.c. Jean Zermatten, University of Geneva

Ms. Amal Aldoseri, Prof. Olga Khazova, and Prof. Philip D. Jaffé

*A new United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment on Children’s Rights and the Digital Environment (E)*

14:30 Round table discussion led by Ms. Özlem Lakatos, CIDE, University of Geneva

**Mr. Christophe Darbellay**, Conseiller d’Etat, Valais

**Mr. Jean-François Lovey**, ancien Délégué à la formation, Département de l’économie et de la formation, Canton du Valais

**Prof. Claire Balleys**, University of Applied Sciences – HES-SO, Geneva

**Mr Laurent Sédano**, Soziokultureller Animator und Mitglied der Eidgenössische Kommission für Kinder- und Jugendfragen - EKKJ

**Closing remarks and Synthesis**

Dr h.c. Jean Zermatten, University of Geneva, and Prof. Zoé Moody, University of Teacher Education (HEP-VS)

15:45 End of conference
Useful information

Registration fees: 1 day: CHF 200.- (student CHF 80.-)
2 days: CHF 320.- (student CHF 140.-)
(lunch is organized on site and is included in the registration fee)

Registration online: www.unige.ch/cide/fr/

Contact: Center for Children’s Rights (CIDE)
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Venue of the conference: Aula of the HES-SO Valais, route de la Plaine 2, 3960 Sierre

Steering committee:
Cilgia Caratsch, IDE       Zoé Moody, HEP-VS
Michelle Cottier, UNIGE   Christian Nanchen, Cantonal Youth Services, Valais
Philip D. Jaffé, UNIGE, CIDE  Jean Zermatten, UNIGE, CIDE
Özlem Lakatos, UNIGE, CIDE
Nicole Langenegger Roux, HES-SO Valais // Wallis
By train:
At Sierre station, head south and follow the signs.

By car:
The Plaine Bellevue car park is no longer accessible to the public. Please use the new car park at the station, which is a 10-minute walk away.

Aula
HES-SO Valais
Route de la Plaine 2
3960 Sierre