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Tackling sexual harassment

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Tackling digital sexual abuse: Danish experience

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1. Preface

An increasing number of children and young people in Denmark report having their private pictures shared online. Sometimes it is by accident, sometimes by hostile actions from others. Especially young girls seem to be at risk. The growing digital sexual abuse has triggered an ambitious response from the Danish Government: *Stepping Up Initiatives Against Digital Sexual Abuse*,¹ a multi-pronged approach across three ministries to combat the negative spiral. Noting that the problem is far from unique to Denmark, we must prioritise acting against it on a European scale.

1.1 Background

Denmark is often regarded a frontrunner in assimilating digital practices into everyday life. As described in the report *Country Classification: Opportunities, risks, harm and parental mediation*², Denmark is classified as a “frontrunner”-country regarding digital literacy, and shown to have “...more children who are experienced social networkers”. They have taken the internet and its social agenda to heart and are online or at least available almost constantly – via smartphones, tablets and computers. Schoolwork, pastime and especially social activities are all organised and done via or with the help of digital media. This evokes an interesting dual dynamic, as “they encounter more sexual risks online but their parents are more actively involved in guiding their children’s internet use.” This means that the Danish youth is both exposed to numerous online risks, but is also to some degree used to handling these, and can often call on parents for assistance.² As such Denmark’s young internet users can be classified as “Supported Risky Users”.

This behaviour can in turn lead to a digitalisation of other typically “offline” aspects of life, here for instance sexuality: When digitising broad aspects of everyday life, it only makes sense that sexuality – especially in the formative years – follows suit. As the digital social media bears the risk of eternalising momentous forays into sexuality, it also has the risk to be kept and used against the child or young person who did so. One of the most prominent points in case are/seem to be naked pictures. Sent via social media – often via Snapchat with its intended deletion of sent pictures after 10 seconds – they are described by some as a ‘modern day love letter’, a proof of trust and dedication. It is exactly this symbolic act of sharing unique content with an allegedly trustworthy person that makes the sender vulnerable to having these pictures stolen, passed on or used against him or her. Therefore, it is imperative to analyse and understand this trend which seems to cause harm to too

¹ The Government of Denmark: Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Equal Opportunities and Nordic Cooperation. 2017. Retrieved from: <https://rm.coe.int/2-meeting-draft-group-rec-sexism-info-doc-stepping-up-initiatives-agai/168072b9e8>

² As per Country Classification: Opportunities, risks, harm and parental mediation (Helsper, Kalmus, Hasebrink, Sagvari, De Haan), 2013. Drawing on several other studies itself.

many young people in Denmark, and other European countries. The policies and actions further outlined in the present paper are not positioned towards adolescent (digital) sexuality at large, but will instead focus on the malicious and harmful spreading of pictures of underage children and adolescents.

1.2 Research Results

Recently three Danish ministers, Karen Elleman – Minister of Equal Opportunities and Nordic Cooperation, Søren Pape Poulsen – Minister of Justice, and Merete Risager – Minister of Education, introduced a change in policy to counter this negative development under the title *Stepping Up The Initiatives Against Digital Sexual Abuse*. The proposed initiatives include political, social and institutional actions and are aimed as a societal counter to these malevolent actions.

The initiatives are based largely on the national Youth Profile Survey (Ungeprofilundersøgelsen³), which main findings include:

- 53% of the 15-30-year-olds have received nude pictures.
- 17% of boys/men and 20% of girls/women in the age group 15-25 have forwarded or posted a sexual picture or video of themselves.
- 10% of boys/men and 4% of girls/women in the age group 15-25 have forwarded or posted a sexual picture or video of someone else.
- 17% of boys/men and 13% of girls/women in the age group 15-25 have experienced that others have forwarded or posted a sexual picture or video of them.⁴
- 22% of the 15-30-year-olds have no problem forwarding a nude picture of someone they do not know.
- SSP staff (the local collaboration between schools, social service and police) in 30 municipalities have knowledge about local folders containing nude pictures of young girls that are being shared among young people.⁵
- Save the Children Denmark's hotline (www.sletdet.dk – "Delete It") has, since its launch in May 2016, received approx. 300 enquiries. The majority of these enquiries concern how to delete material. Three in four enquires are from girls and the age group 14-17-year-olds accounts for most requests.

Before explaining the proposed and effective policies, it is important to look at the nature of the problem first.

³ SSP-Rådet og Skolesundhed, med støtte fra bl.a. Tryk Fonden. 2016. Retrieved from: <https://www.skolesundhed.dk/Files/CMS/Ungeprofilunders%C3%B8gelsen%202015.pdf>

⁴ It is worth noting, that this number also includes consensual sharing. Also the surprisingly high number could show, that the problem in Denmark is indeed on the rise, and actions must be taken.

⁵ Denmark has 98 municipalities in all. It is estimated (by independent NGO Center for Digital Youth Care), that close to all will have such folders. Many are just not being reported.

1.3 The “how and why” of the problem

The psychology behind digital harassment is not unique, or to be understood in a vacuum from other gender-based violence. The digital media is already part of a show-and-display culture where imagery takes foreground to content. This tendency has led to a notion not only showing yourself, but also others – sometimes in a negative light. Combining this understanding with the adolescent curiosity and sometimes scornful attitude towards the opposite sex, we are tasked with a “classic” problem but in a new digital context. Furthermore, the misunderstanding concerning what is “normal” or “fun” is rampant within the quasi-communicative hubs such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. This point shall be elaborated later in the present chapter. For now it is worth keeping in mind that the confusion as to where and how to get help or file a complaint can have led to a misunderstanding of tacit consent leading some perpetrators to believe that they aren’t hurting the victims, or doing wrong in general. The inability to assertively say no can have been misunderstood as a reluctance to do so. All of these issues must be addressed.

1.3.1 How?

Many of the (in)famous stories about shared pictures or imagery rest upon a scorned ex-boyfriend, or an evil hacker intent of causing harm. As much as malicious intent, also neglect about cyber-safety and careless actions can lead to leaked pictures. Thus we must regard the stereotypical “evil-hacker-attack” to only be one of several ways for pictures to be leaked. A comprehensive list will also include:

- Screenshotting;
- Sent for fun, but then taken out of context;
- Sent by accident;
- Photos taken without the subject knowing so;
- Taken from the victims phone against his or her will;
- Grooming (Building a relationship with the intent of sexual extortion).

The recurring theme of all the ways for the pictures to “get out” is that they are taken out of context. By forcefully or maliciously removing the pictures from the context intended by the victim, this being either private, humorous or momentary, the perpetrators shift the tone and setting of the pictures to something not intended by the original sender. Hereby the control of the pictures is taken away from the original sender and stolen by the perpetrators. It is important to note though, that this forced shift in context can be either done with malicious intent, or just “for fun” and then have unwanted but serious consequences at a later point.

1.3.2 Why?

There can be many reasons as to why children and young people partake in the risky business of exposing themselves in front of a smartphone or webcam, assumingly knowing⁶ the potential consequences. Most commonly, they want to fit in, build character and attract attention.

⁶ If they actually do or do not must be discussed further. See Chapter 6: Questions.

Fitting in

“*But everyone else does it*” is one of the sentences most often uttered by young people, when asked about the risks of sending sexual pictures online. Even if the statistics show that relatively few⁷ have actually sent a nude picture, when asked about how many peers might have done it, the guessed percentage is high, usually ranging from 50% and upwards. This *mass misunderstanding* is a cause for a legitimisation of the pictures wherein they are not only made somewhat safe to make, but can even take on a normative value.

Building Character

As also shown by studies such as *The Youth Profile Survey*, one of the key precursors for having sent naked pictures via social media is, unsurprisingly, age. Sexual endeavours have always been (mis)understood by adolescents as a *rite of passage* into adulthood, and it comes as no surprise that with the rest of life growing digital, so does sexuality and therefore the perceived rite of passage. Sending and receiving naked pictures is seen by some young people as something necessarily done while growing up – or rather *to grow up*.

Social Currency

Being young is often being part of a popularity contest – sometimes unbeknownst to the participants, but always ongoing. Clothes, friends, looks and likes are analysed, scrutinised and constantly weighed by peers and global trends via Facebook, Instagram and other opinion-forming mediums. Sexual readiness is a big factor for popularity especially for young people, and as such the portrayal of this on social media is important. Being willing to send such pictures can attract attention from the opposite sex and function as a social currency. Most young people⁸ simply notice the attention and navigate to and from that.

2. The new Danish policy

The *Stepping Up Initiatives* include a diverse set of actions that range from educating young people, parents and teachers about the risks of sending sensitive content, over preventive measures, to the provision of help/support for victims. In addition, sanctions for perpetrator/those who abuse the pictures are defined/outlined.

2.1 Education

The educational initiatives form a comprehensive and multifaceted approach with informing children, parents and teachers about the actual risks of online social media. They also ascertain the nature of the practice and provide educational material for schools. Some activities are targeted at classroom-education, others at assemblies in schools. Furthermore, several research initiatives are proposed to study the underlying psychological processes concerning the area. One of the initiatives will gather information from several Nordic countries as to understand the different views on sexuality, body and gender from both sexes respectively. Another will gather knowledge about the children and young peoples’ knowledge of the

⁷ 17% boys/men, 20% girls/women for age 15-25, fewer for younger demographic: Youth Profile Survey 2015.

⁸ This is, most young adults sending sexual images, not most young adults in general. As we noted earlier, it is still the minority partaking in sending such pictures.

existing helplines and the young peoples' know-how of the possibilities for help and support in these situations.

The educational initiatives are set not just to teach the factual or statistical prevalence of the problem, but also to start a discussion about the values and ethics in handling one's own and other people's pictures. As Educational Initiative 5 states:

“The digitised society increases the need for digital etiquette. So far, IT competencies at the upper secondary education programmes have primarily focused on the application of digital tools. But as big as the abundance of options is on the Internet, as big is the risk of losing control of your data, your pictures and information about yourself shared when sitting at the computer. New curricula will strengthen the digital etiquette and digital competences in the subjects at the upper secondary education programmes. Focus will i.e. be on ethics, communities, digital identity and the consequences for yourself and others of sharing material on the Internet. (The Danish Ministry of Education)”

In detail the proposed initiatives⁹ are:

- 1) Youth-to-Youth campaign on “good manners”;
- 2) Dialogue films for parents;
- 3) Inspirational material for upper secondary education;
- 4) Inspirational material for teachers at school assemblies;
- 5) Increased focus in secondary education on ethics;
- 6) Establishing a hotline for sexually abusive behaviour;
- 7) Survey of legislation in Nordic countries;
- 8) Information material for young people in Nordic Countries;
- 9) Study of boys' and girls' view on gender, body and sexuality;
- 10) Information initiatives.

2.2 Support

A large part of the impact that the stolen or unwillingly shared pictures can have on the victims is emotional – to feel singled out, ridiculed and helpless to the abuse. Therefore, a support network and several initiatives are part of the proposed package under the *Stepping Up Initiative*.

The support initiatives for victims focus on measuring the extent of abuse in an expansion of the already existing yearly (and mandatory!) well-being measurements schools must take part in. Thus any spikes or onsets in unreported instances should come to light. Even though these surveys are anonymous on a participant level, they will still show if there is a need for further action at a given school.

⁹ Most of the educational initiatives are set to begin or be published by mid to late 2017.

The fear of having to report digital abuse to an actual police officer, and the ensuing questions, can keep some young people from doing so. Therefore, the Danish police are currently developing a digital platform to provide a familiar medium for reports.

Some young people have proclaimed that after suffering digital abuse, when they go to the police, they have been met with either unwillingness or inability to help. Several initiatives focus on improving this process – both in educating police personnel in handling such cases, but also in simplifying the reporting of sexual abuse. In addition, mediating victim/offender-conferences, and offering counselling to victims is offered.

The aforementioned initiatives are part of the broad scope of the *Stepping Up Initiative*. They indicate that this is not a problem solved only by teaching young people to abstain from certain actions, but emphasise that the young people should be able to act freely without repercussions from others. The increased support initiatives, primarily from the Ministry of Justice, show a willingness to tackle the problem as well as to take the young people serious and treat them as young adults rather than children. As will be discussed later, these aims have a positive impact on the implementation of the initiatives as a whole.

In summary, the proposed initiatives are:

- 1) Follow-up and well-being measurements in upper secondary education;
- 2) Increased focus on police handling of cases and complaints;
- 3) Easier access to reporting and filing complaints;
- 4) Focus on victim/offender conferences;
- 5) Victim Counselling.

2.3 Consequence and Punishment

The initiatives based on punishing wrongdoers include both the possibility for higher sentencing as well as allowing schools to take measures. Moreover, recommendations concerning how digital abuse cases should be handled have been issued.

Digital sexual abuse is currently punishable by Section 264d¹⁰, Section 232¹¹, and Section 235¹² of the Danish Criminal Code. Furthermore, a picture showing an identifiable individual will often be covered by the Danish Act on Processing of Personal Data. The *Stepping Up Initiatives* intend to clarify the use of each section

¹⁰ Unlawful forwarding of private pictures concerning another person's private life or pictures of the person in circumstances which can obviously be expected to be withheld from the public. If, for instance, you forward a nude picture of someone else, the offence will usually come under Section 264d of the Danish Criminal Code.

¹¹ Indecent exposure. If the nude picture forwarded is of a sexual or pornographic nature, the offence may be punishable as indecent exposure under Section 232 of the Danish Criminal Code, while at the same time being punishable under Section 264d.

¹² The dissemination and possession of pornographic pictures or videos of persons under the age of 18 (the child pornography provision). If the nude picture forwarded is of a person under the age of 18 and the picture is pornographic, the offence is punishable under Section 235 on child pornography. It is also a punishable offence to possess such a picture without the consent of the person in the picture, even if you do not share the picture with anyone.

to prosecutors and public, as well as to increase the possible jail time, especially for Section 264d which is expected to be quadrupled in severe cases (meaning organised and especially harmful intent).

Currently Section 264d is punishable by fine, or up to 6 months in prison – this is expected to be increased to 2 years later in 2017. Section 235 has a frame of up to 6 years in severe cases, and Section 232 up until 4 years.

It is also emphasised in the initiatives that schools principals face a special task as jurors in scenarios transgressing school- and free-time. By appointing principals with added authority (over situations arising outside of school, but involving students), the sanctions are put into an understandable, or rather relatable, frame for the students.

It is evident and important that the increments in consequences and punishment for transgressors of both related sections of the Danish penal code, as well as of a subjective “good behaviour” codex (judged by school leaders), is viable to face severe sanctions in both schools and courthouses. As it will be shown later, this dual approach is important in reaching and gaining the understanding of children and young people – victims and perpetrators alike.

The proposed initiatives are:

- 1) Clarification of the principals authority;
- 2) Securing evidence;
- 3) Focus on prosecutions and handling of cases;
- 4) Higher sentences.

2.4 Good Practice

From the multifaceted approach in the new Danish policies, the enforcing ministries are aiming at changing both the public perception of the problem as well as the actions applicable to it. With education, support and potential punishment form an integrated /holistic, multi-facetted action plan to end the negative spiral of digital abuse.

By focusing on more than just how to punish after the damage is done, it seems that the goal for all implemented initiatives and efforts is an overall good practice based on educated media users, a forthcoming police force and scared potential perpetrators. It is promising to see such a high focus on teaching both users, law enforcement and parents/teachers about good practice, rather than promote abstinence from technology, as this would be very much against the Danish mind-set and current progress.

2.5 Implementation

As the initiatives were proposed in spring 2017 with most having planned implementation later in the year, it is too soon to evaluate the actual implementation. Touching on the values of the initiatives it is worth noting an overall very positive reception in most Danish media, though with a strong emphasis on the potential quadrupled jail time for breaking section 264d of the Danish criminal code. Possibly

it is being held as a figurehead for the policy as a whole, but this could interfere with the large scale effort in the actual initiatives to educate, support and communicate rather than just punish.

As many of the educational initiatives are based on the target groups actively seeking out the information, it is potentially a threat to the implementation success that they simply might not do so. The increased responsibility for the teachers is coming at a time where most schools are cutting preparation time; such a complex subject would certainly require teachers to not only study and prepare for teaching it, but maybe even be educated themselves. Support for teachers has to be carefully drafted and not to be limited to inspiration, but also to include education for them.

3. Challenges

Already before their implementation later this year, some of the proposed initiatives face several challenges.

3.1 “Not so bad”

An oft cited attitude concerning potential sanctions would be *“It might be illegal... But not really...”* An attitude of some vague possibility that it is not really illegal, just somewhat “wrong”, is seen in many cases where young people, especially boys, share others’, especially girls’, pictures. This understanding of it not being “really” illegal, or at least the thought of an actual jail sentence being outlandish, stems from multiple perspectives, all having to do with human nature.

3.1.1 They can’t understand the law

When engaging with students and pupils in Denmark, it is found that very few of them are aware of the relevant section, and only in a vague sense understand the phrasing of it¹³. It can – and should – be simplified for their understanding. Laws have a very specific and certain language – they must have to function – but the nature of a law easily gets lost in caveats and judicial language. When explaining the applicable laws in the proposed initiatives it is imperative to do so in an understandable language.

3.1.2 They do not think the law applies to them

Understanding a law and understanding if you have broken it or not is not always the same. Children and young people can transgress and claim innocence for two reasons:

“It’s just fun”

By far not all cases of digital abuse start out with a malicious. In many cases it is not intended to ridicule or shame the victims, but just *“kinda got out of hand”*. Many cases cited by SSP¹⁴ end up as digital abuse because somebody sent a picture or notice to a selected few friends “just for fun”, and suddenly it had spiralled out of control. Doing wrong is not only concerned with the intent, but also the action itself – and this needs to be underlined when teaching the new initiatives in schools.

¹³ Centre for Digital Youth Care.

¹⁴ School, Social Workers and Police.

“It shouldn’t be illegal”

Opponents of the initiatives have noted that although it might be illegal to forward other peoples’ private pictures, it should not be so. Some have argued in a technical framing, that if a picture was sent once or twice, it should not matter if it was sent tenfold more. Others claim in lieu of a moral scheme, that because the owner sent it in the first place, he or she must like the picture to be sent on and therefore should not bemoan if the picture is forwarded further. Some argue even from a reciprocal perspective, that they themselves would not mind if someone shared a picture of them, and therefore do not think they should not be allowed to do so.

3.1.3 Anonymity via majority

A common misconception has also proven to be that because it is something they think everyone else also does, they should not be punished for it – or at least probably will not be. Many express a steadfast belief that if they only shared pictures someone else shared with them (not the victim, but a prior “sharer”) then they either will not or should not be sanctioned for doing so. Believing an action is not wrong because everyone else is also doing it is also referred to as *social proofing*.

3.2 Non-judicial sanctions

The trouble of implementing and installing judicial sanctions could be countered by the emphasis of in-school sanctions. Being sent home from school because of digital (sexual) abuse, thus being branded as an “*outcast*” is a much more relatable and “close” punishment for many children than police involvement. The social consequences could also for some far outweigh a fine or a slap on the wrist, in cases where the perpetrator is below the penal age (which in Denmark is 15).

3.3 Shame and Blame

It must be addressed, that in spite of having their pictures shared statistically less than boys, girls are receiving the brunt of the damage in these cases. Be it from the malicious intent of their cases, the severity or the social bias towards respectively boys’ and girls’ sexuality, it is imperative that this gender bias will also be addressed when implementing the ethical educational initiatives.

The gender-based risk of being labelled as “cheap”, “a slut” or the likes thereof can keep many girls from reporting abuse – because they are afraid to have to admit that they send such pictures, moreover, for their peers and parents to find out. If the shame of just being a victim because of ones’ sexual (and completely natural) actions can keep young people from seeking help or support from friends, family and faculty the shame and blame of young sexuality is a problem to prioritise.

As noted in *Teen girls, sexual double standards and ‘sexting’: Gendered value in digital image exchange*¹⁵ there is a general double-standard when it comes to sexual imagery on social media, where boys are typically *consumers* and girls *producers*. This, it is argued, further plays into a dichotomy in the psychological state where girls are taught to be ashamed of being “found out” to partake in this, but with no real repercussions for the boys. This effects the “daily negotiations” between the genders in a way that shifts the power towards the boys, and where girls will out each other to gain an upwards social momentum, at the expenses of

¹⁵ Ringrose, Harvey, Gill and Livingstone, 2013.

the then slut-shamed peer. A general primary research into shame, sexuality and *sexual* negotiations, is in the present paper inspired by *Gender & Power*¹⁶.

4. Evaluation of the new policy

In the short time, since some first initiatives have been active, they have demonstrated some degree of effectiveness. Whereas there is no discernible innovation in increasing punitive ranges, it is commendable and effective that the ministries have included a moral, as well as a practical dimension to the policy.

The sustainability of the values and actions included in the policy will hinge on its implementation – and here it is important to see it in a broader scope than just the potentially quadrupled jail time, that has gotten most of the attention in Danish media.

Dialogue films and information campaigns via YouTube, alongside inspirational material for children and adults play a much larger role in the sustained effects of the policies. As does the strengthening of “digital competencies” through upper secondary education – especially if the focus as mentioned is able to stay on the ethical aspects, and not technical or governmental – even though some teachers might be more comfortable teaching these.

When analysing the Danish approach, it is also important to look at the values behind the measures, rather than the concrete measures themselves. The policy regards children and young people as capable, responsible and assertive agents, and seeks to treat and teach them as such. This brings with it a degree of expected accounting for own actions, but also a power to act as (almost) adults. This is important not to estrange the generation of children and young people living within the framework of the policy.

4.1 Issues

The broad range of information initiatives in the policy lack measureable progress. Several teachers in secondary or higher education have noted, that for them it would be a problem to teach these subjects not only because of own education (or lack thereof – See also 2.5: Implementation) but also lacking knowledge of the level of education the students would have received up until then. The informative focus will function well, but even more so with a transparent curriculum for teachers in primary, as well as secondary education.

Citing teachers and principals as stakeholders in many of the new educational initiatives bears not only the risk of setting teachers outside their professional, as well be their personal, comfort zone. Asking all teachers to take up knowledge on such an intimate subject could be against the wishes of some of them. Although the inclusion of teachers and educational facilities is paramount to the success of the initiatives, it will not come easily.

¹⁶ Connell, R.W., 1987.

5. Assessment

The future will come to show the actual impact of the initiatives, as for now some tentative assessment can already be made.

What are the strong and effective elements?

- **Broad approach** included both education, support and punishment;
- **Ambitious change** of not just actions, but social discourse;
- Large focus by several **media outlets**;
- Policy set in motion by three ministries in a **joint effort**;
- Engaged **parental community** already;
- **Respectful approach** to young people as more than children;
- Initiatives seek to **educate** both parents, teachers and children.

What are the weaknesses and limitations?

- **No concrete outline** of implementations yet;
- **No direct measurement** tool
- Several initiatives are still at an **idea-stage**;
- Changing the ethics of a whole generation can prove **difficult**;
- No dedicated initiative to the **shame/blame-problem**;
- No inclusion of **primary school education**.

The potential effectiveness of the initiatives as a whole is enormous. The broad scope and longitudinal approach, whilst still encompassing all children, parents, and teachers, is ambitious in all - education, support and punishment. The limitations are nevertheless in the implementation and adoption of the initiatives. As these are concerning themselves with education and norms the effectiveness hinges on how they are received by their target audiences. Here a limitation could obviously be that teenagers stereotypically do not care, parents do not have time and teachers cannot afford to adopt new practices or ideas, good as may be.

As some initiatives are yet to be thoroughly outlined, there is still room to include strategies for:

- How to fund teacher education;
- Which classes will teach digital sexual abuse;
- How to get parents interested in the topic;
- How to “resonate” with the younger generation;
- How to stop slut-shaming and victim-blaming in digital abuse cases.

6. Questions

There are several possible questions to consider in not just the Danish scenario, but both in other countries and in international collaborations.

- Should the focus of governmental campaigns be that children and young people should abstain from sending risqué pictures and indulging in such behaviour, or that such pictures should be treated with respect and not forwarded?
- With the large-scale focus on informative campaigns for both students and parents, how do we ensure that the information is received and its severity understood by the recipients?
 - Does the decision of using known Youtubers as spokespersons undermine the message, or at least bias towards their existing fan base?
- Increasing the authority of principals and cementing the responsibility of schools in these situations brings an adherent demand for further education of the staff as they will become de facto first respondents. How do we fund both education and time used for teachers and faculty?
 - How do we ensure that principals will actually use their increased authority, thus instating the school as more than a place of education?
- How do we break down the misunderstandings concerned with social proofing as described in 3.1.3.?
- As there seems to be a bias against the sexuality of especially young females (3.3), how do we address that on a societal scale?
 - Or do we from an institutional perspective choose to differentiate between the actions for young boys and young girls?
- The Danish approach to social, sexual and pedagogical upbringing is largely based on trust, freedom and information rather than protection. This mentality is obvious in the approach outlined in the *Stepping Up* Initiative, but is this model based on children and young people as capable and responsible consumers/agents applicable outside of Denmark?

About

The Centre for Digital Youth Care (CDYC) is a Danish NGO focussing on the digital wellbeing of kids and young adults. CDYC is specialised in educating children, young people, parents and professionals in the movements of online behaviour, as well as the psychological motivations behind it.

CDYC is one of Denmark's leading organisations for online counselling for young people, working with a large network of volunteers. In addition, CDYCs pedagogical consultants educate other organisations in this line of work, while being associated with a variety of national socio-educational initiatives regarding vulnerable children and young people. Counselling children and young people on their use of online

technologies and frightening experiences remains of primary concern to the organisation. CDYC has run helplines and counselled at-risk children and teens since 2004. In 2016 the helpline held near 8,000 counselling sessions with children, young people and professionals, held talks for more than 12.000 people, and had 613,000 unique visitors to its website from 460 towns in Denmark. It has won numerous awards for its work and has been running the Danish helpline in the Safer Internet Programme since 2009.

CDYC is currently running the helplines www.Cyberhus.dk, www.mitassist.dk, and www.netstof.dk

CDYC is rooted in a praxis oriented philosophy where we actively seek to engage and talk with children and young people, rather than reading about them.