

eTwinning Cyber Experts: safe use of electronic devices and the Internet from a collaborative perspective with eTwinning

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Today, our role as teachers has had to evolve dramatically. Society's advances, driven by technology, require us to rethink challenges and strategies in the classroom.



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Our young people belong to a generation that has been immersed in the digital age since birth. They use the Internet to search for information, watch films, TV programmes, follow content channels and even study. Their information references are influencers, YouTubers, streamers and casters whom they believe without analysing, comparing or checking the veracity of what they are told.

Schneier (2015) tells us that security is a process, not a product. This idea makes it clear that cybersecurity is not only achieved with technological tools, but with a continuous strategy of education, monitoring and adapting to new threats. According to Cuesta (2023), “all technology must have a purpose, so it is essential to regulate its use and specify clear rules on where and how it can be used, as with all other student-related resources”.

This is why our work as teachers must take on a new perspective. We have a responsibility to guide our students in their learning, not only in academic knowledge, but also in digital security skills that will protect their emotional and cognitive well-being. We must promote the acquisition of digital security and privacy competences, as set out in the area of security and its competences in the *DigCom 2.2* framework (Vuorikari, Kluzer and Punie, 2022), including personal and social values and skills for well-being, cyber coexistence and cybersecurity, equipping them with the resources to prevent risky situations they may face.



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The Threat of Cyberbullying and Other Digital Dangers

Our students are also exposed to other digital risks such as sexting, grooming, phishing, malware and disinformation driven by artificial intelligence (AI). AI also poses the challenge of teaching students to use it ethically and responsibly, and to recognise the potential risks. Thus, educating students on the ethical and safe use of technology is a priority.

To understand the magnitude of the problem, we must consider the statistics presented in the *Report of the Committee of Experts to Develop a Safe Digital Environment for Children and Youth* (2024), which states that:

- According to Save the Children Spain's research, 7 out of 10 children have experienced violence in digital environments, and girls continue to be the most affected.
- Some 16% of adolescents who have been bullied or cyberbullied suffer from major depression, compared to 3% in the unaffected population.

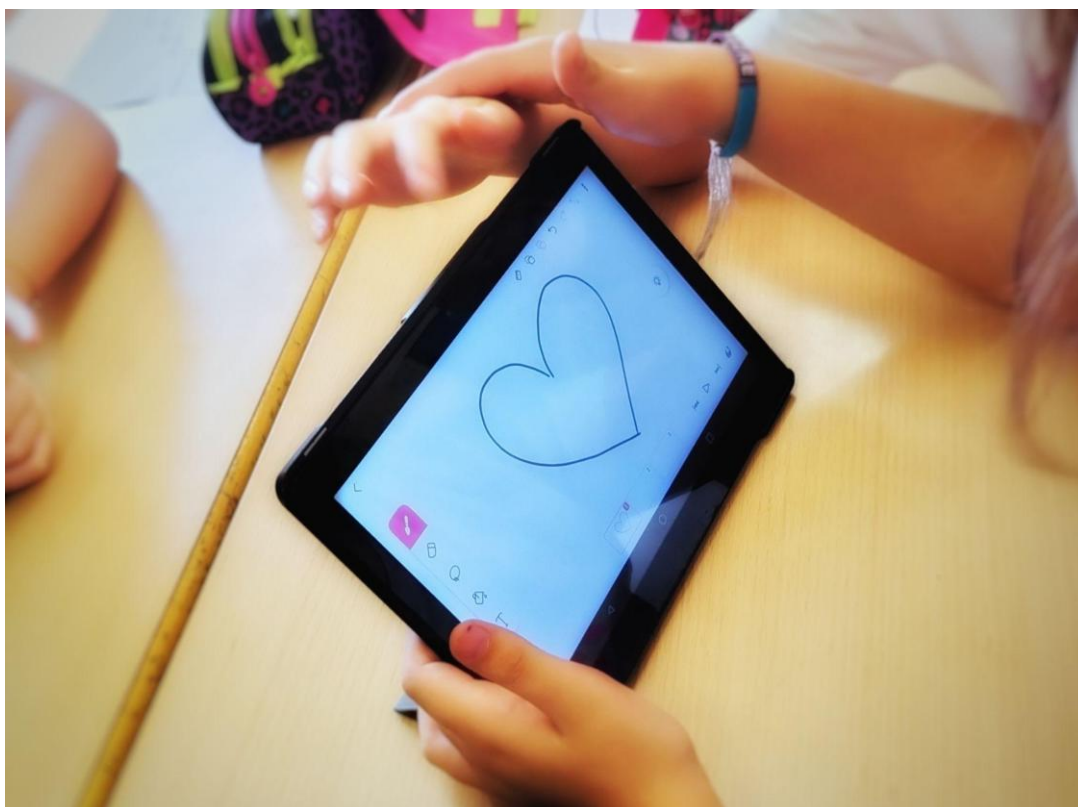
These figures highlight the importance of addressing cybersecurity and cyberbullying from an educational and preventive perspective.

Benefits of eTwinning in Digital Education

By carrying out eTwinning projects, we can raise awareness among our pupils about netiquette, cyberbullying and the responsible use of social media, as set out in its [Code of Conduct](#).

eTwinning provides a safe environment where pupils interact with peers from different countries, fostering respect and cultural diversity. eTwinning can contribute to:

- Raising awareness about digital security: students learn about netiquette and the responsible use of the Internet and social media.
- Teaching innovation: it allows teachers to access innovative resources and methodologies to integrate technology into the classroom in a safe and responsible way.
- Developing critical thinking and digital autonomy: students acquire tools to evaluate information and protect themselves from the abusive use of electronic devices.



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One of the activities we always suggest when starting an eTwinning project is to make clear to all participating pupils the basic rules to follow when using this space, as well as the Internet and the new technologies involved in carrying out the project. Through the Twinspace forums, our students propose, discuss and decide upon the rules to be used in the project regarding the use of the Internet, and they agree to respect them as a fundamental part of successfully carrying out this collaborative work. These proposals refer not only to the safe use of the platform but also to the use of the materials, respecting the authorship and licensing of everything that is shared and published in our Twinspace. Below, we share some reference projects that address this aspect:



Project “[Under the same eTwinning Roof](#)”



Project "[PokeTwinning Friends](#)":

Privacy in eTwinning

Another major risk that all Internet users face is sharing too much personal information, which can make us completely vulnerable to cybercriminals who are adept at collecting and using this information against us. On this premise, another activity that would be useful to implement in an eTwinning project is the creation of avatars that represent the students within the project and with which they can navigate securely without sharing personal data. Teaching and raising awareness about the privacy of their digital identity, even in a secure environment such as eTwinning, is essential for them to be able to extrapolate this to other aspects of their digital lives.

Cyberbullying

Speaking of the great challenges we face, one that worries both schools and families and threatens the peace of mind and well-being of our students is the ease and speed with which bullying has found its way onto social media. On the positive side, there are numerous anti-bullying campaigns in different media and many online resources for working with children that can help. One of the activities we carried out in this regard was to create a large library, in which our students shared experiences or ideas related to this topic, which other schools in Europe gave voice to, illustrated or even acted out, complementing, reinforcing and making accessible those messages against cyberbullying or bad practices on the Internet. You can see this final product: [Collaborative library](#)

Another idea we came up with was the Internet machine. Each school had to build the base of a machine that would only work with the parts that the other schools participating in the project had to send us to add to this device, as the machine would only work with the collaboration of all the schools. The aim of this machine was to transform the negative side of the Internet and the use of social media into a safe, caring and respectful environment in which to surf and enjoy without worries. This [project kit](#) develops this idea. You can also see other kits on [Media Literacy and Disinformation Activities](#).

In addition, we have other external resources that we can use while implementing our eTwinning projects related to the aspects discussed in this article:

- [BIK \(Better Internet for Kids\)](#): A European Commission initiative working towards a safer Internet for children and young people.
- [Safer Internet Day](#): Celebrated across Europe on 25 February with awareness-raising activities.
- [INCIBE \(Instituto Nacional de Ciberseguridad – National Cybersecurity Institute\)](#): Offers workshops conducted in classrooms by “cyber-cooperators”, among other resources.
- [IS4K \(Safe Internet for Kids\)](#): Includes resources and games for teachers, families and students to make the Internet a safe place for children.

In conclusion, the key to safe digital education lies in education and awareness. As teachers, and in collaboration with families, we can guide our students in the responsible use of technology and the prevention of cyberbullying and other risks. By adding eTwinning to the equation, we can build this new digital world in a safe, creative and collaborative way.

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