



"Technology should be our
servant, not our master"

- Ludovic Tendon -



Intellectual Output 4

TOOLKIT



TOOLKIT

INFORMATION ABOUT OUTPUT

OUTPUT:

IO4: STEPIN POLICY TOOL KIT: SETTING UP THE SUPPORT CENTRES: OUTREACH CAMPAIGN FROM THE LOCAL TO THE NATIONAL LEVEL

ACTIVITY:

IO4-A1: DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOOL KIT

OUTPUT LEADER:

RIC NOVO MESTO

INFORMATION ABOUT OUTPUT

PROJECT:

STEPIN: Supporting Parents to Deal with the Excessive Online Time and Habits of Their Children

ACRONYM:

STEPin

PROJECT WEBSITE:

<https://stepin-project.eu>

PROJECT E-ACADAMY:

COORDINATOR:

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TABLE OF CONTENT

Introduction.....	4
STEPin monitoring report for dealing with internet abusive behaviour (IAB).....	6
National Monitoring Report.....	6
Competence Framework.....	8
STEPin online platform and assessment tool	9
e-Academy	9
e-Library	9
e-Community	9
Mapping Tool.....	10
Mobile app	10
Assessment tool	11
STEPin Parental Educational Pack	13
The STEPin Parental Educational pack is divided into 5 modules:	13
Benefits of Internet Use	13
Risks of Internet Use.....	13
Risk Factors for Problematic Use	13
Parental Skills.....	14
Coping Skills	14
How we built our campaign.....	15
STEPin CAMPAIGN	17
Training activities	19
STEPin inter-generational initiative among parents and young people.....	20
STEPin Motivational strategy.....	21
Get in touch with us!	22

INTRODUCTION

The STEPIn project is all about supporting parents to become role models for their children and motivators for using their time on-line in a sensible and constructive way while promoting the well-being of their children and the healthy lifestyle of their families.

Most parents having school children aged over 10 belong to another less-digital generation themselves, feel powerless to face these dangers, prevent their children's or even their own excessive exposure to the internet, protect them, and deal with potential abusive behaviour. Apart from the above, parents themselves, as adults, face related problems.

For adults (parents), this becomes especially difficult if one considers that 40% of adults in the EU have insufficient digital skills (Eurostat 2018) and even those possessing a real command of digital skills often lack the attitude to put them to full use: only 2% of the digitally competent can demonstrate critical thinking while searching for information online (EU, 2017).

In addressing the above, the project consortium produces a map of the current scene in all countries, and records efforts to deal with Internet Abusing Behaviour/Addiction, as seen in children's and young people's (10-18 years) attitudes while proposing a series of actions:

- targeted upskilling programs for parents/educators,
- delivered in an engaging social learning environment, and
- build around the concept of learner motivation.

Motivational workflows designed around the awarding of badges following the accomplishment of single mode or team challenges will immerse learners in a social learning context to help them achieve their screen reduction goals.

Furthermore, the project goes even further by exploiting the role of parents as AMBASSADORS/ ROLE MODELS catering to the well-being of their children while introducing healthy lifestyles within their families. Motivational activities were organized to encourage parents to reflect on their habits first by reducing their screen time and then to assess, identify, prevent, or deal with their children's on-line behaviour.

7 organisations from the UK, Cyprus, Greece, Germany, Macedonia, Slovenia, and Croatia work together in this challenging project complementing each other in terms of expertise and experience, but with a common **AIM**: *to support parents to be able to identify, prevent or deal with internet abusive behaviours while improving the well-being of their families.*

This aim was achieved through the realization of 4 main Intellectual Outputs produced:

1. STEPIn monitoring report for dealing with internet abusive behaviour and gaming.

It includes mapping of good practices, policies, initiatives, programmes, seminars, etc., at the regional, national, and EU level for dealing with young's people IAB; peer review among partners and comparison with the EU recommendations; survey and analysis of current needs and gaps from the parent's perspective and young people's view; creation of the STEPIn Competence Framework, and setting up of Expert Advisory Group

2. STEPIn cloud-based platform and assessment tool

It includes **e-Academy** of all developed modules, **e-Library** with extra resources and good practices, an **e-Community** where you can ask for advice or discuss the topic, an interactive **Mapping Tool** where all good practices, current initiatives, programmes, and policies are gathered, and an **Assessment tool** a questionnaire with personalized feedbacks and plans based on each user's needs.

3. Parental educational first aid pack for the STEPIn ambassadors: on and offline

It includes blended upskilling pathway programme to educate parents on factors causing IAB addiction and gaming, the harmful consequences, the signs on their children's behaviours; educational material to support the above training; STEPIn AMBASSADORS methodology based on the creation of parent's role as innovators, and STEPIn multi-level and multi-purpose raising awareness campaign for the public.

4. Tool kit for setting up STEPIn support centres: outreach campaign from the local to the national level

It includes the **Toolkit** with all essential guidelines/material to support the setting up, implementation and evaluation of the **STEPIn SUPPORT CENTERS** at the organisational level. **The STEPIn CENTERS** are providing the upskilling programmes to parents, offer the AR-based assessment identification tool and withdrawal plans, and create synergies with experts (clinicians, researchers, teachers, psychologists, etc.) to provide support through the Help Desk (both on and offline), implement the **STEPIn raising awareness campaign** and initiate the STEPIn PARENTS MOVEMENT.

STEPIN MONITORING REPORT FOR DEALING WITH INTERNET ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR (IAB)

Consisting of national monitoring reports about Internet Abusive Behaviour (IAB) from all the projects countries as well as detailed competence frameworks on specific topics regarding IAB, Intellectual Output 1 of the STEPIn project lays the groundwork for the following outputs. In this part of the toolkit, you find a summary of the report’s findings as well as descriptions of the five topics explored in the frameworks.

National Monitoring Report

The report is intended to serve as a summary and a comparison of the individual national monitoring reports of the partner countries Croatia, Germany, Slovenia, North Macedonia, United Kingdom, Greece, and Cyprus, that are part of the European STEPIn project to show the current handling of IAB. Therefore, the results of the partner countries on the topics of national policies, laws, AND regulations as well as CASE STUDIES, scientific studies, and state of the artwork in the fields of internet abusive behaviour, online addiction, gaming, and best practices are presented comparatively to get a European insight on this topic and a status quo.

Two online surveys among parents and adult educators show the relevance of the topic. It is clear among adult educators that there is a large knowledge gap in all countries regarding IAB and how to deal with it.

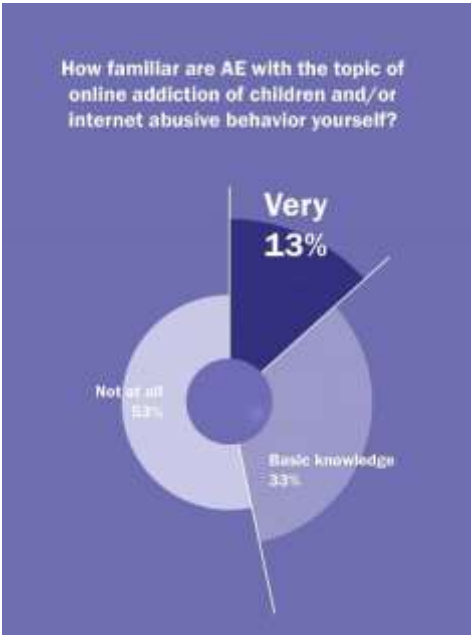


Figure 1: Knowledge of AE in Cyprus

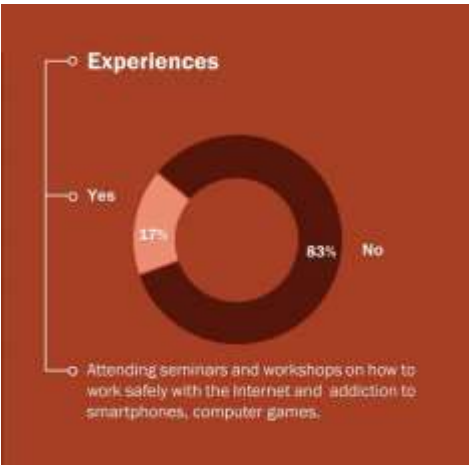


Figure 2: Experiences of AE in Slovenia

Almost all parents and adult educators from all partner countries would like to see better information materials and further training to fill their knowledge gaps. It is interesting to note that it does not matter which country the respondent comes from and whether, for example, legal framework conditions are defined or not. While there are differences in the urgency of the need, improvement is desired by respondents from all countries.

The following section considers the legal framework. In countries like Germany, Cyprus, or Greece, where there are clear legal frameworks or national strategies of the responsible ministries on the topic of IAB, the handling seems to be clearly regulated. Especially governmental programs and initiatives in interaction with NGO's contribute to create a heterogeneous spectrum of offers for children, adolescents, and parents, whereas German legislation has taken the clearest position on the issue of IAB.

In Croatia, Slovenia or North Macedonia, there is no legal framework on the topic of IAB, which leads to the fact that the topic IAB finds little support. The most important social actors here are mostly NGOs and therefore not organized by the state.

A look at the scientific results shows an interesting picture. While little research has been done in Croatia and North Macedonia, the trend of a problem is evident in Cyprus. Greece shows alarming results, whereas German science makes a relevant contribution to research in the field of IAB with various studies.

Nevertheless, best practices can be identified in all countries, some of which are governmental or non-governmental organized and structured. This is in line with the results of the online surveys of adult actors and adult parents of the respective partner countries.

In Greece and Germany, there are various initiatives and organisations that can be regarded as national best practices. In Greece, for example, online seminars and online learning materials are offered to support young internet users.

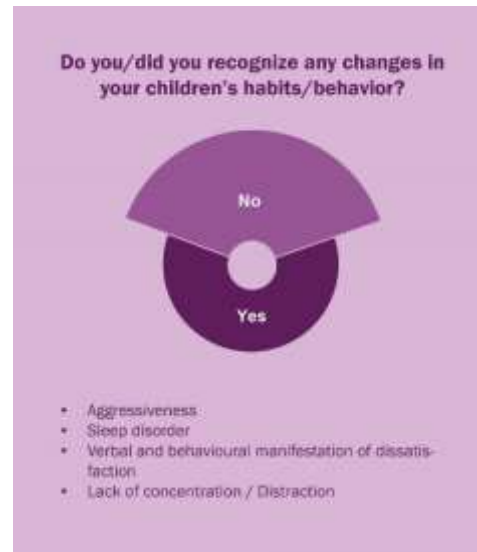


Figure 3: Parents view on their children's behaviour in Greece

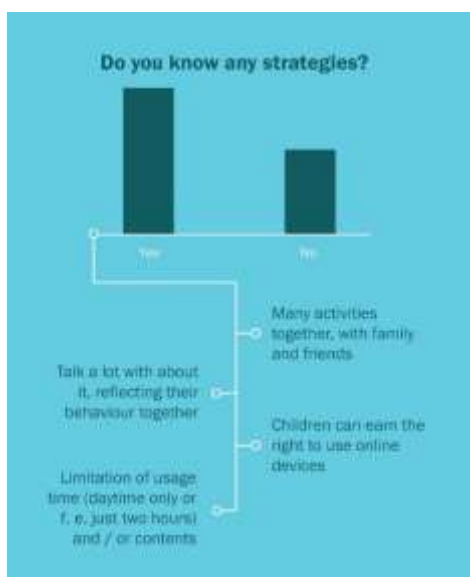


Figure 4: Strategies of parents in Germany

In Germany, best practices can be seen in the government initiative "Ins Netz gehen" ("going online"), which is an initiative of the Federal Center for Health Education (BZH) and focuses on balanced media use among young people.

In Slovenia, Cyprus, and Croatia, there are also many initiatives and offers, workshops that provide advice on internet-related topics, with different focuses.

The summary of the results of the national reports has a very clear picture of the conditions in the respective partner countries and how they deal with the issue of Internet Addictive Behaviour (IAB) among children and adolescents. Thus, a need arises for information and educational opportunities to properly address the issue of IAB.

All national reports and infographics can be found and downloaded on the project website: <https://stepin-project.eu>.

Competence Framework

The Competence Framework of the STEPIn-project is based on the general findings of the National Monitoring Reports. Its aim is to identify central and relevant topics regarding IAB and to map them out focussed on knowledge and useful skills. Following the five main topics are shown and shortly described. They were adapted into modules for the [STEPIn e-Academy](#) including detailed information as well as tips and exercises for parents in IO3.

Benefits of Internet Use

One of the main benefits of the internet is enabling young people to associate with other people through multiple forms of social connection if the importance of boundaries is upheld. The Internet is also giving us opportunities to learn and develop skills and by that, it enables us to explore our own identity. Finally, this module is dealing with the chances of creating creative outlets online and connecting them with one's emotions.

Parental Skills

Oftentimes, parents come across many unexpected situations with their children and may feel concerned that their ability to do well as a parent is not enough. This module helps parents in dealing with IAB. It focuses on the parent-child relationship and gives best practice examples for how to communicate with your child and how to deal with conflicts that may arise.

Risks of Internet Use

In contradiction to the *Benefits of Internet Use* this part of the framework focuses on the risks that may arise by being online. It explains what cybersecurity risks children are exposed to while being online and shows the necessary skills to recognise and deal with different situations. Furthermore, it discusses the implications of IAB on Mental Health and raises awareness of issues like depression or addiction due to being online.

Risk Factors for Problematic Internet Use

This module provides information about the risk factors for problematic Internet use to support parents in detecting signs and symptoms of IAB. These risk factors are divided into three categories: First, problematic internet use and maladaptive behaviour, second, personality traits linked to internet addiction and third, concrete signs for IAB parents can look for like mood swings or tiredness.

Coping skills

The final module focuses on *Coping skills* that are important to be able to deal with everyday life in our digital world. It explains and gives best practices for different strategies and skills like Emotion focussed Coping or Problem focussed coping. It also gives insights into dysfunctional Coping mechanisms and how to detect them.

STEPIN ONLINE PLATFORM AND ASSESSMENT TOOL

The STEPIn online platform functions as a helpdesk for parents and a comprehensive educational pack with learning material for adult educators. Its aim is to provide the necessary knowledge, tools, and teaching resources for dealing effectively with internet addiction and associated risky behaviours through open and interactive up-skilling methodologies and motivational workflows based on an open-badges reward system.

e-Academy

A compilation of 5 teaching modules:

- Risk factors for problematic internet use
- Risk of Internet use
- Parental Skills
- Benefits of Internet Use
- Coping Skills

These modules explain the risks and benefits of internet use, the behavioural and psychological factors affecting children's attitudes, the role of parents in respective outcomes, external factors (such as friends) raising the risks, as well as intervention and prevention measures.

The modules contain easily understandable content and are designed to offer condensed knowledge to the average user. Furthermore, they present useful references and additional open-access multi-media resources (like YouTube videos) that can enhance knowledge and understanding of the theoretical background.

e-Library

A compilation of additional theoretical resources and good practices to help raise awareness of internet use risks, prevention strategies, coping strategies, and so on. This will support parents in finding ways to limit their children's internet use and intervene when detecting risky behaviours (e.g., in gaming, shopping, social media, etc.).

The **e-Library** also contains various other tools and resources that parents and teachers can utilize, like EU Recommendations and Policies, national/regional reports, current initiatives, programmes, training opportunities, etc.

e-Community

A forum for exchanging ideas, posting messages, suggestions, and/or ideas. This functionality will play the role of a helpdesk, where parents, teachers, experts, social workers, and other interested parties will be able to exchange ideas, good practices, guidance, and other ways of supporting the goals of the STEPIn project.

e-Community features:

- Contact Form – To be filled by interested parties with requests or ideas.

- STEPIn Forum – For registered members to exchange any relative content, opinion, suggestion, etc.

Mapping Tool

A practical tool to collect and share good practices, current initiatives, programmes, and policies in partner countries and across Europe. This tool will address the target group of parents, as well as teachers and young people, to help them deal with issues related to Internet Abusive Behaviour (IAB) in a sustainable way.



Figure 5: Mapping Tool: Interactive map of a good practices, current initiatives, programmes, and policies in partner countries and across Europe.

The tool contains an interactive map. Users can choose to filter their results based on the Country of interest, the type of organisation, the target group, etc.

The tool is also a chance for professionals and relevant organisations to promote their best practices, current initiatives, and any other relevant activity.

Mobile app

A database of resources and a parents' guide to IAB.

It contains the same features as the Assessment Tool and allows parents to have always-at-hand solution for identifying and manage/mitigate problematic internet use.

Assessment tool

A tool that will identify, report, and suggest personalized moderation plans based on each user's needs.

The Assessment tool can be used as follows:

How to begin your strategy: If you have [created an account](#) and you are already logged in, press the button "Begin your strategy" which is on the home page Figure 5. Next, on the begin your strategy page answer the questions by pressing the button start (see Figure 6). When you answer all the questions of the tool you will receive feedback based on the answers that you gave.

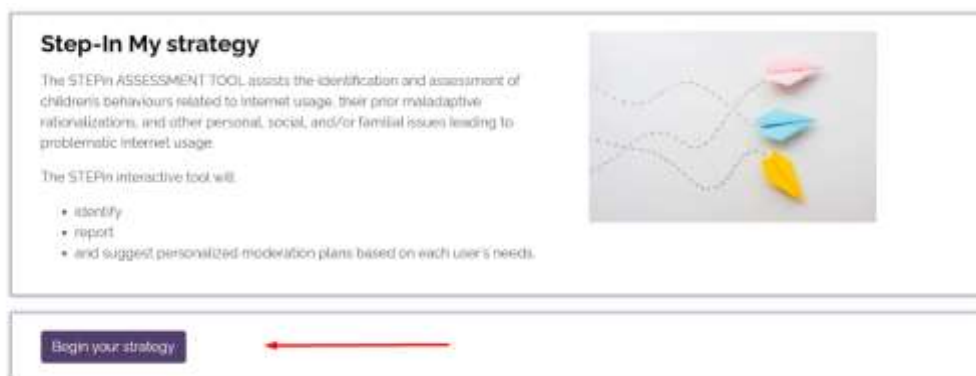


Figure 6: Begin your strategy

Go to your Strategy: If you answer all the questions on the "Begin your strategy" page, you can now see your strategy. In the nav bar press the "My Strategy" item. On the Step-In Strategy page, you can see 5 Action modules and 5 Action Types.

The **Action modules** are the following:

- Risk factors for Problematic use
- Risk of Internet use
- Parental Skills
- Benefits of Internet use
- Coping Skills

The **Action Types** are the following:

- Action that has prerequisites (other actions need to be implemented first) but requires no training.
- A long-term action that can be implemented immediately.
- Quick Win.
- Simple action that can be implemented immediately but requires training.
- Action that has prerequisites and requires training.

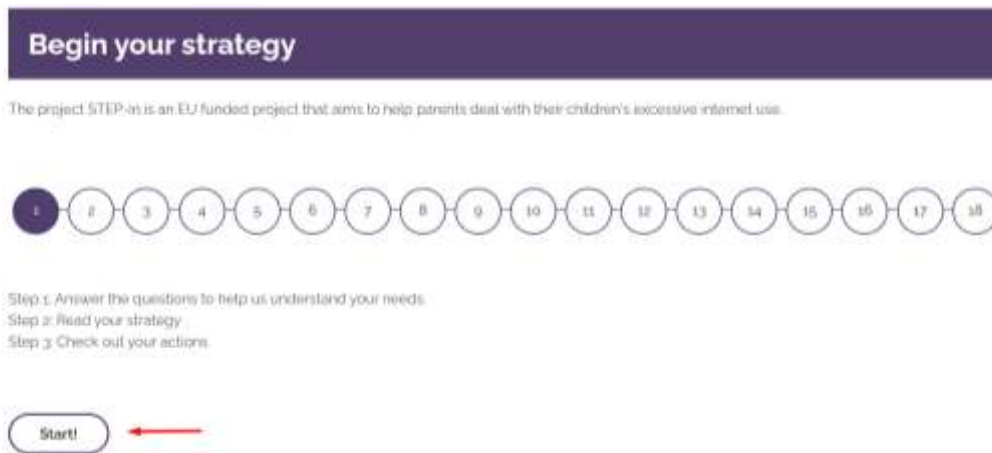


Figure 7: Start the Strategy

Figure 7 illustrates the Step-In Strategy Page. You can use the filters on this page to get the results you want. For example, to see only the Coping Skills module, select the first dropdown of the item “Coping Skills” and then press the “Apply” button.

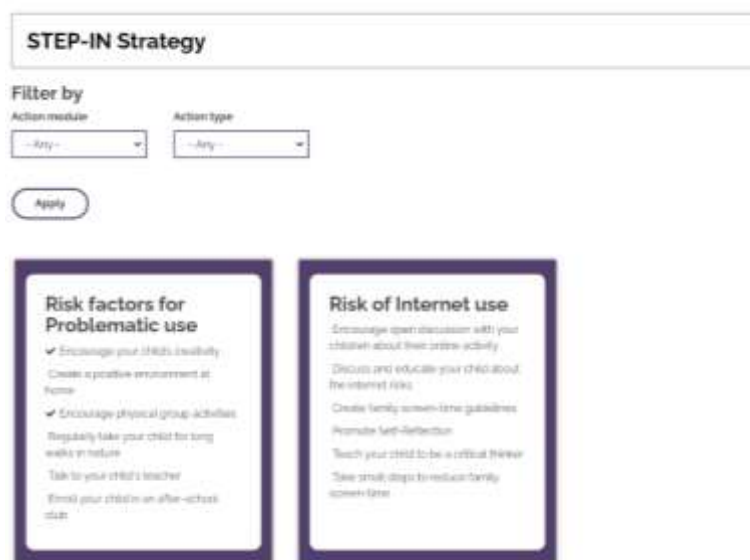


Figure 8: My strategy Page

How to complete Actions in Action Modules: Each of the Action Modules has some Actions. For example, if you complete the Action “Dysfunctional coping styles” of action module “Coping Skills” you can press the button “Click here to mark this action as completed if you have implemented it”. All the completed actions are checked (see Figure 9).

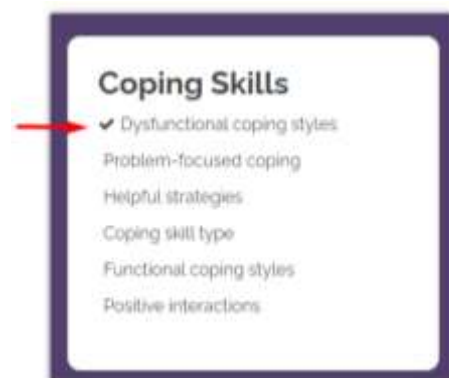


Figure 9: Completed Action

STEPIN PARENTAL EDUCATIONAL PACK

The STEPIN Parental Educational Pack refers to a collection of resources and materials designed for parents, with the aim to support them prevent and deal with internet abusive behaviours, and eventually become role-models for their children (STEPIN Ambassadors).

The materials developed here are in line with the needs of parents identified in all participating countries as part of the IO1 and is also linked to the STEPIN Assessment Tool to support parents deal with the needs identified through the assessment tool.

The STEPIn Parental Educational pack is divided into 5 modules:



Benefits of Internet Use

Internet is a tool, and it is the abuse of this tool that can cause the risks. However, if used correctly can offer many benefits such as socialization, identity exploration, and creativity as explored in [Module 1](#).

Risks of Internet Use

The increasing Internet availability and use among children, has heightened their exposure to various security risks in the cyber space. [This module](#) provides information about the potential risks associated with internet use such as cybersecurity issues, but also potential risks that might impact the mental health and wellbeing of the users.

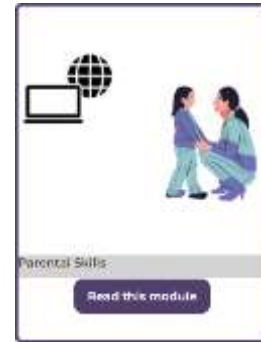


Risk Factors for Problematic Use

There are various risk factors associated to problematic use of the internet. [This module](#) examines the impact of personality, external stressors and peer pressure as potential risk factors.

Parental Skills

This module provides information about two larger skillsets which constitute an important part of the parental skills, are presented: communication skills and conflict resolution skills. Further, active listening skill, as part of communications skills and anger management skills as part of conflict resolution skills are explained. This module is addressed to parents wishing to improve their communication and conflict resolution skills in relationship with their children.



Coping Skills

This module provides information about coping skills and coping strategies that can be used to cope with everyday problems by both parents as well as their children.

You can find all the materials developed on the [STEPin project website](#) and in the [STEPin Academy](#).

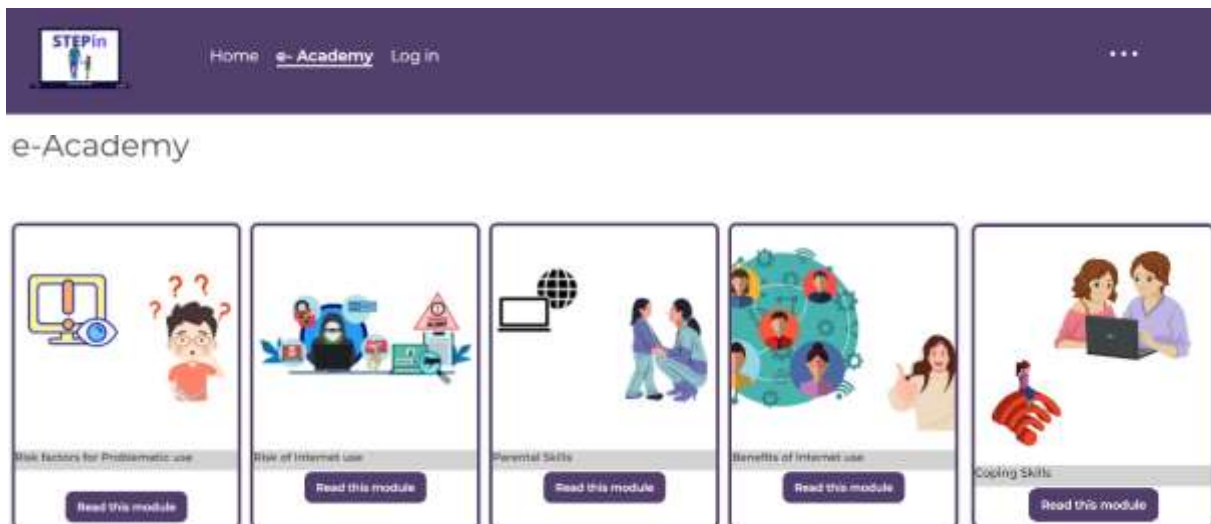


Figure 10: e-Academy Page

In addition to the materials developed, the STEPin Library offers a collection of e-tools/e-resources/good practices to further support parents dealing with problematic internet use of their children.

The STEPin Library can be found here: <http://step-in.erasmusplus.space/library>

How we built our campaign

Today's prevalence of technologies in our everyday life has forced us to follow and adapt to the digital age. Despite our effort to follow-up the digital skills, especially of parents, are often not enough. The role of screens in children's lives is becoming increasingly important and for parents, it is crucial to understand how everything works. They need to spend more time guiding their children towards positive activities, raising their awareness of the dangers, risks, and acceptable activities, and encouraging them to be active outside the digital world.



Figure 11: Become a Role model video is available:

DE | HR | EN | SI | MK | EL

Parents are the first to perceive changes in their children's lives, and the STEPin project is all about supporting parents to **become Role models for their children** and motivators for using their time online in a sensible and constructive way while promoting the well-being of their children and the healthy lifestyle of their families.

What do experts say about excessive screen exposure?

We asked a Lecturer in Psychology at Nottingham Trent University when does acceptable becomes excessive.

Watch the video for tips on **how to recognise** and **avoid** excessive use of the internet, which **signs of addiction** to look for and **where to get help**. Expert advice videos are available with subtitles in all partners' languages (DE, HR, EN, SI, MK, EL).



Figure 12: Video *What do experts say about excessive screen exposure?* Is available on the YouTube channel.



Figure 13: Video *Do you think you spend too much time in front of the screen?* Is available on the YouTube channel.

We also asked a student at Leibniz University Hannover if he thinks that he spends too much time in front of the screen. He said that it was quite shocking to realise that he was spending so much time in front of screens.

Watch the video about his experience, what he wanted to change and where he found the answers.

Follow promotional campaign on the [STEPin YouTube](#) channel to learn more about the topic and tips for the well-being of all.

STEPIN CAMPAIGN

To spread the word about our project, the importance of the topic and where to find help, we organised InfoDAYs for parents, educators, psychologists, youth workers, professionals etc. InfoDAYs were a good opportunity to raise awareness about the project goals and objectives, and for inviting participants to join us in the pilot testing activities. We have also tried to attract participants to take part in the STEPIn upskilling programme for parents / educators to be trained for the implementation of the STEPIn SUPPORT CENTRES and the STEPIn ASSESSMENT TOOL.



Figure 14: InfoDAY in Cyprus organised by Emphasys Centre.



Figure 15: InfoDAY in North Macedonia organised by KMOP Skopje.



Figure 16: InfoDAY in Germany organised by Leibniz University Hannover.

There are no specific rules on how to organise an InfoDAY. Each partner approached it in their own way. You can do it in person or on-line, at an information stand or with a public presentation. The important thing is just to spread the word about the project and its objectives and in this way create synergies with parents, educators, experts, researchers, communities, institutions etc. to share and sustain the project's results even after its completion.



Figure 17: InfoDAY in Croatia organised by PA Step by Step.



Figure 18: InfoDAY in Slovenia organised by RIC Novo mesto.

For the promotion of the project, we used printed documents (leaflets, posters, banners) and for the online promotion we used e-versions of the leaflets, posters, and web banners with links to the [website](#), the [web platform](#) and social networks ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube channel](#)) where we collected all results.

Project leaflet

Leaflet is available on <https://stepin-project.eu> in all partner languages.



Poster

Poster is available on <https://stepin-project.eu> in all partner languages.



Project leaflet with links to results

Leaflet is available on <https://stepin-project.eu> in all partner languages.



Training activities

After all the promotional activities and pilot testing, parents, and educators from four partner countries (Germany, Croatia, Slovenia, and North Macedonia) took part in a training session organised from 17th to 19th January 2023 at the Emphasys Centre in Nicosia, Cyprus.

The participants had the opportunity to learn more about [the results of the STEPIn project](#), in particular:

- Parenting in the digital age
- Risks and challenges of excessive internet/screen use
- Prevention and intervention measures for parents

Guest speaker Elena Odysseos, from EPA - European Parents' Association, presented her expertise and experience on the impact of technology on parents and children. You can find the content of our training on our website.



Figure 19: Group picture of trainees.



Figure 20: Active participation in training.



Figure 21: Guest speaker Elena Odysseos, from EPA - European Parents' Association.

STEPin inter-generational initiative among parents and young people

Initiatives and competitions were organised among parents and their children with an aim to showcase the impact and potential of the STEPin initiative to, not only deal with excessive use of the internet, but most important identify the factors-causes triggering this behavior, and reviewing them to healthy on-line use habits. The idea was to encourage healthy activities for quality time and well-being.

The idea of this activity was exploiting the role of parents as AMBASSADORS/ ROLE MODELS catering to the well-being of their children while introducing healthy lifestyles within their families and preventing internet/screen abusive behaviours and promoting using online time in a sensible and constructive way while promoting the well-being of their children.



Figure 22: Board game for parents and children.



Figure 23: Opportunity to promote digital well-being and practice a healthy lifestyle.



Figure 24: Quiz about healthy screen time, online terminology, and parenting skills.

Participants in all partner countries showed great interest in the topic, they were digging deeper, and reflecting their activity in front of the screens... what they know, what they need to know, and what they need to change. A debate was initiated on the current situation and the measures needed for the future. Activity also offered a good opportunity for parents to bond with their children and discuss about internet abusive behaviours in an engaging way. It turned out that they have a different view of what it is a healthy lifestyle, but they agreed on one thing - people today spend too much time in front of screens.

The children and young people also expressed that they are now more aware of the potential risks and how to promote the ethical use of the Internet to learn and connect with their peers.

STEPIN MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGY

To ensure sustainability, continuity, and further exploitation of the project's results, we have published everything on the website, linked up with different organisations, set up STEPIn Corners and collected and recorded testimonials from participants who have taken on an active role as ROLE MODELS.



Figure 25: Video *Parents' mutual challenges* is available on the YouTube channel.

Our participants in the Cyprus training had an open discussion on IAB-related issues. They talked about what they had learnt, how much the exchange of experiences and knowledge meant to them, what they could change about the guidance of their children and where they would share the information they had received.

Watch the testimonials and find out more about our training and what the participants shared with us after the training.

“ *I think it's important to be a role model but it's also difficult to be one and how can I be a role model for children if I have no self-control in this kind of situation.* ”

- Patrick Bredl, Germany -

“ *Internet is a tool as any other tool and with every tool you must be careful with children. You must teach the child how to use a knife or how to engage in traffic for example, but you don't give a three-year-old to drive a car first they'll have to walk with us holding hands, then they can walk by themselves then later they can ride a bike and when they go 18, they can drive a car. It's step by step in a traffic and I believe something similar could or should be done also with the devices and the internet.* ”



Figure 26: Video *Awareness is a necessary step towards knowledge* is available on the YouTube channel.

- Miha Gorenc, Slovenia -

“We are all facing challenges no matter of country we are coming from no matter of the age of our children we are facing a lot of challenges of digital digitalization, so parts of the training related to some risks of screen time and using the internet, part of the training related to parental skills and how, to improve it and how to be a better parent for our children.”

- Sivija Stanić, Croatia -

“ I loved the first that I was able to communicate with parents and find out that the problems are the same in every country, regardless of that we come from different countries, that our children are at a different age, that we have different social backgrounds, cultural backgrounds, the problems are the same.

- Divna Michova Gavrilova, North Macedonia -

In the end, we realised that the most important thing is to be a good role model. Each of the participants strives to become a role model for their children and beyond, promoting the importance of self-awareness, our own behaviour in front of screens, and how this affects children and people around us.

Get in touch with us!

Explore [our results](#), find answers to your questions, and [get in touch with us](#).

Follow us on the project [Website](#), [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#).