

## **CYBERBULLYING IN THE BENELUX-COUNTRIES: First findings and ways to address the problem**

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### **The Benelux countries: Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg**

The Benelux is a union in Northwestern Europe comprising three neighbouring countries, **Belgium**, the **Netherlands**, and **Luxembourg**. The Benelux union has a total population of about 27,7 million and occupies an area of approximately 74.640 square kilometres (population density of 371/km<sup>2</sup>). Dutch and French are the official languages of the Benelux and its institutions. 22,6 million (82%) live in the Netherlands or the Flemish region of Belgium, where Dutch is the official language. The French-speaking Walloon Region has 3.5 million inhabitants (12,5%), while a majority of the Brussels Capital Region (3,8%; officially bilingual) is also Francophone. Luxembourg (1,7%) is officially trilingual with Luxembourgish (a German dialect) as national language. Combined with the German-speaking community of Belgium, this adds up to an estimated 2% of native German speakers. A treaty establishing the Benelux Economic Union (signed 1958) promotes the free movement of workers, capital, services and goods in the region. The main objectives of a new treaty (2010) are the continuation and enlargement of the political and official cooperation between the three member states within a larger European context. In 1965, also a Benelux Court of Justice was established, which has to guarantee the uniform interpretation of common legal rules. Belgium (10.7 million habitants), the Netherlands (16.5 million habitants) and Luxemburg (0.5 million habitants) are all countries with a parliamentary democratic constitutional monarchy.

### ***Use of ICTs***

In 2007, 67% of the **Belgian** households possessed one or more computers, and 60% had an Internet connection (FOD Economie, 2007). In households with children these figures were

higher, respectively 85 and 78 %. According to the *Teens and ICT: Risks and Opportunities* TIRO-Project (Walrave, Lenaerts, & De Moor, 2008), a survey among 1318 secondary school students in both the Flemish- and the French-speaking community, 96,3% of the young people used the internet. The mean time spent on the Internet was 2 hours per day. The main motives to use the Internet were social contacts (49,8%), relaxation (31,0%) and information (19,2%). Given the prominent place of the Internet in youngsters' social life, it was not surprising that 9 in 10 indicated that they chatted online. They mostly did this in closed chat rooms, such as the ones provided by instant messenger programs. Almost two out of ten youngsters had their own website. Even more teenagers had their own blog (40,7 %) or a profile on a social network site (45,5 %). The number of mobile phone subscriptions per 100 inhabitants was 89 in 2006 (Eurostat, 2006). Mobile phone possession was also high among Belgian teenagers (96%).

**In the Netherlands** more than 95% of the youngsters at the age of 10 to 14 years are online weekly, 90% of the youngsters have access to the internet at home and 43% have access to a computer with internet access in their own bedroom (Duimel & de Haan, 2007; Meerker, Eijnden van der, & Rooy van, 2006). Youngsters use the internet 8 hours a week on average. Boys are more often on the internet than girls, but do not spend more time on the internet (Blauw Research, 2005; Dehue, Bolman & Völlink, 2008). Youngsters who have access to the internet in their own bedroom, use the internet more often to chat via MSN and have more often their own website compared to youngsters who have no internet access in their bedroom (Duimel & de Haan, 2007). They also found that 94% of the youngsters at the age of 13 to 18 years possess a mobile phone. Youngsters use the internet at least weekly for e-mail (83%) just for surfing (76%), gaming (73%) and for downloading music and films (71%).

**In Luxembourg**, 80 % of households disposed in 2007 of at least one personal computer or laptop, and 74,6 % had an internet connection (Statec, 2008). How often do Luxembourgish pupils use internet? 80,7 % of primary school children (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade) use it at home, 13,9 % several times a day and 15,8 % more than one hour a day (Steffgen, 2008). In comparison

secondary school children use it more often at home (95,6 %), 54 % several times a day and 54,1 % more than one hour a day (Bredemus, 2009; Steffgen, 2008; Steffgen, König & Pfetsch, 2009a, see also Bardes, 2009). The number of mobile phone subscriptions per 100 inhabitants was 155 in 2006 (Chambre de Commerce, 2008), and 94,5 % of households possessed at least one mobile phone. About 70,3 % of primary school children own a mobile phone, 29,9 % use it several times a day and 15,8 % more than one hour a day (Steffgen, 2008). The frequency of secondary school children is even higher, 91,8 % own a mobile phone, 80,9 % use it several times a day and 50 % use it more than one hour a day (Bredemus, 2009).

The collaborative cross-national Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study (HBSC; Currie et al., 2008) of 2006 focuses on children aged 11 (primary school), 13, and 15 years (secondary school) and shows differences between Benelux-countries in the frequency of young people's daily electronic media contact with friends. Consistently more girls are using daily electronic contact with friends. For the younger ones, the frequency is the highest in Luxembourg (11-years old girls 22% and boys 13%; 13-years old girls 49% and boys 31%), for the older ones the frequency is the highest in the Netherlands (15 years old girls 59% and boys 46%). All together, in all three countries the youngsters very often have access to internet and use it especially for social contacts. Almost all secondary school children possess a mobile phone.

### ***Educational system***

Education in **Belgium** is regulated and for the larger part financed by one of the three communities (Brusselmans-Dehairs & Valcke, 2007). The school systems are, however, highly comparable. The following stages are distinguished: pre-school (2.5 – 6 years old), primary school (6-12 years old), secondary school (12-18 years old with four main types of education, namely: general, technical, vocational and art education) and higher education (polytechnical/vocational university and university). The schools belong to one of the following three educational “networks”: (a) subsidized public schools owned by and acting

under the authority of the different communities, (b) subsidized public schools (organized by provinces and municipals), or (c) subsidized free schools (mainly organized by an umbrella organization affiliated to the Catholic church). In Flanders, the Pupil Guidance Centres (*CLB*) are assigned to take care of the well-being of pupils their socio-emotional, intellectual and general development. Therefore, these centres give support to pupils, teachers and parents in the areas of learning and studying, the school career, preventive health care and the psychological and social integration of pupils in compulsory education. In the French and German speaking communities, the PMS centres (*Centre Psycho Médical Socio*) fulfil a (quite) similar role.

**In the Netherlands** every child must attend school full time from the first day of school of the month following its fifth birthday. Pupils are admitted to secondary school after leaving primary school at an average age of 12. For admission to secondary education pupils are assessed to establish their suitability. After primary education there are basically two routes: pre-vocational secondary education leading to vocational education and pre-university and senior general education leading to higher education. However, these routes are not closed. It is possible for good students to ascend to a higher level. Children must attend school full time until the end of the school year in which they become 16. All pupils up to the age of 18 are required to continue learning, sometimes combined with work, until they have obtained a basic qualification (Eurydice, 2009).

**In Luxembourg** the school system is highly centralized, and the legislation is strongly based on the principle of free and universal (i.e. compulsory) education. School education comprises 1 year of early childhood education, 2 years of pre-school education, 6 years of primary education and up to 7 years of secondary education. The aim of *early childhood education* targeting children at the age of 3 is to facilitate their socialization and to facilitate the integration of foreign children into Luxembourg's school system. *Pre-school education* is expected to foster the physical, intellectual and social development of the children and to

prepare them for entry into primary school. *Special education* offers parallel courses to pre-school and primary education for children with disabilities. Children attend *secondary school* from the age of 12. The secondary education is separated into 3 main streams: general secondary education, technical secondary, and the so-called preparatory stream. Full *general secondary education* prepares for higher education and university studies. The *technical secondary education* prepares pupils for professional life, but also offers the possibility of taking up higher education. The *preparatory stream* is especially for students with low school performance (Steffgen & Russon, 2003). Specific for Luxembourg schools is a high number of foreign pupils (47,9%) and the use of three languages from the first years at school (Kerger, 2009). Altogether, the educational systems from the three different countries have very similar structures.

### ***Traditional bullying and school violence***

In Flanders the research on bullying started in the 1990's, with large scale surveys from the Central Board for Study and Career Guidance (Vandersmissen & Thys, 1993, cited in Huybregts, Vettenburg, & D'Aes 2003; Vettenburg, 1999) as well as from Stevens and Van Oost (1994). These studies were mostly inspired by the Scandinavian and the Anglo-Saxon work in the field. In the French speaking part of **Belgium**, there is no real tradition in "bullying" research. This phenomenon is often investigated as part of (the broader concept of) school violence. Anti-bullying (or anti-school violence) policies are developed by the Ministries of Education of the different communities, who often provide guidelines and concrete materials for the implementation of an anti-bullying policy in schools (see for instance: Deboutte, 2008). Schools are seen as the first line actors to prevent or tackle the problem, together with parents and students (cfr. the whole school approach). The CLB and PMS, are considered second line help.

In the **Netherlands** more than 16% of the Dutch children between 9 and 11 years reported being bullied on a regular basis and 5.5% reported regular active bullying (Fekkes, Pijpers & Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005). Bob van der Meer (1993, 1996) was in 1970 the first who wrote a number of books on bullying at schools. The first extensive research on bullying in schools was conducted in 1992 by Ton Mooij. He found that 1 in 4 of the primary school children and 1 in 12 of the secondary school children were being bullied at school at a regularly basis (Mooij, 1992, 1994). However, the results of these studies were more or less ignored by the policymakers, teachers and parents. In that time there was no structural attention for bullying and for the consequences of bullying. In 1995 schoolboard-, teacher- and parental organizations developed a national standard antibullying policy for schools and a Bullying Test, a computerized questionnaire on several aspects of bullying (Fekkes, 2005; Limper, 2000). Nowadays, the topic gets much more attention in schools and the media and research results are taken seriously. Several educational training centres (Stichting Omgaan met Pesten; NIGZ) provide training to teach a variety of anti-bullying strategies, and other organizations (GGD; Stichting de Kinderconsument) provide teaching materials. The Bullyweb (Pestweb), part of the General Pedagogical Research centre, is an advisory board for the National Ministry of Culture and Education. This Bullyweb provides information, trainings and teaching materials, and advices teachers, parents and youngsters about how to prevent and stop bullying.

In the last decade the topic violence and bullying in schools has also gained scientific interest in **Luxembourg**. Hence, some reviews have been published on the situation in Luxembourg (Otten & Wirtgen, 2001; Steffgen, 2006; Steffgen 2009; Steffgen & Ewen, 2004; Steffgen & Russon, 2003 as part of the European Connect-project 'Tackling violence in school'). In 1999 a first representative national survey was conducted in Luxembourg schools (Wagener & Petry, 2002; Petry & Henschen, 2004). 19.5 % of the students from primary schools and 14.4 % of the secondary schools indicate that they have been bullied by other students at least 'sometimes, but not every week'. All in all, 9.5 % of secondary school students and 36.7 % of primary

school children indicate that they have been hit at least once by other students. Altogether, the results show that concerning *physical violence* slightly lower levels of violent acts have been observed in primary and especially secondary schools in Luxembourg in comparison to other countries. Concerning *bullying* the situation is different. Compared to international studies acts of bullying other students are slightly more likely in Luxembourg (see also Huberty & Steffgen, 2008; Steffgen & Ewen, 2004; Steffgen & Russon, 2003; Steffgen, 2006).

As yet, however, no clear national guidelines exist, nor has any official anti-violence initiative of the kind conducted in other countries been implemented in Luxembourg. The Ministry of Education supports peer-mediation projects in schools to tackle violence (Nilles, 2007), but all in all Luxembourg schools are largely left on their own approaches to handle the problem (Steffgen, Russon, Kieffer & Worré, 2001; for primary school see also Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle, 2007). Currently, some scientific evaluations of projects and intervention programs to prevent violent behaviour or bullying are under way or have already been carried out (Steffgen, 2009).

*Table 1: Comparison between Benelux-countries and the HBSC-survey average about bullying and violent behaviour (in %; see Currie et al., 2008)*

		11 year old		13 year old		15 year old	
		girls	boys	Girls	boys	girls	boys
Involved in a physical fight at least three times in the last 12 month	BE-FI	4	23	3	12	4	11
	BE-Fr	<b>25</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>25</b>
	NE	4	18	4	15	7	15
	LUX	5	20	6	18	7	16
	HBSC	7	25	7	21	6	17
Been bullied at school at least twice in the past couple of months	BE-FI	11	11	9	9	6	8
	BE-Fr	<b>13</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>22</b>
	NE	9	12	8	10	4	6
	LUX	16	15	13	16	12	11
	HBSC	13	16	13	15	8	11
Have bullied others at school at least twice in the past couple of months	BE-FI	4	8	4	8	6	13
	BE-Fr	<b>8</b>	<b>17</b>	8	15	9	16
	NE	3	11	4	12	5	12
	LUX	7	8	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>
	HBSC	6	12	9	15	7	16

The HBSC-study (Currie et al., 2008) does provide comparable *bullying* data for the Flemish and the French speaking part of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg (see Table 1). The results of this survey, conducted in 2005/2006, show that in the French speaking part of Belgium the prevalence of reported fighting and having been a victim of bullying are the highest. Bullying others is more common in Luxembourg (13 and 15 year old). All in all violent behavior and bullying is consistently less frequently reported in the Netherlands.

## **The cyberbullying problem**

### *Antecedents of the problem*

A search through the **Belgian** Flemish newspaper (and magazine) database *Mediargus* reveals that the first articles about “cyberpesten” (the Dutch translation for “cyberbullying”) appeared in 2001. Since then (until July 2008) more than 500 articles have been written about this topic. These articles describe: 1) concrete incidences of cyberbullying, 2) results of (scientific) studies on cyberbullying, 3) anti-cyberbullying initiatives of politicians, the Ministry of Education, the police, schools, (non-profit) organizations (e.g. Safer Internet, Child Focus...), students (who, for instance, created an anti-bullying game) and film makers (Nic Balthazar’s movie “Ben X”, about an autistic boy who is cyberbullied). An internet search on “cyber(-)harcèlement” - the word that is often used to describe “cyberbullying” phenomena in the French speaking community (although it is not really an equivalent) - reveals that the topic is also well alive there.

The first articles about cyberbullying appeared in the **Dutch** newspapers around 1999 and described cyberbullying incidents, the incidents on children unsafe internet use and the need for safety measures to make internet safer for children at school. First articles on the prevalence of cyberbullying (study of Planet internet; van den Akker, 2005) appeared in the newspapers in 2005.



In **Luxembourg** first articles on cyberbullying were published in 2006. In addition to the description of the phenomenon, topics were also reports of conferences on cyberbullying. In 2008 LuSI (Luxembourg Safer Internet) as the national partner of the Safer Internet network picks out cyberbullying as a central theme for the Safer Internet day and conciensize the Luxembourg public for the topic cyberbullying.

### ***Studies on cyberbullying***

#### ***Findings in Belgium***

The first large-scale survey that explicitly dealt with the topic of cyberbullying in Belgium, was the study of Vandebosch, Van Cleemput, Mortelmans and Walrave (2006; see also Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009). This study was funded by viWTA at the request of the Commission for Culture, Youth, Sport and the Media of the Flemish Government. The researchers conducted a school survey among 2052 primary and secondary school children (age 10-18) in Flanders in 2005. The respondents' experiences with cyberbullying were measured in two ways: 1) by asking respondents directly whether they had been the victim, perpetrator or bystander of bullying via internet or mobile phone during the past three months and 2) by asking the respondents whether or not they had been actively or passively involved in a number of (potentially) hurtful internet or mobile phone activities (such as: 'making threats or insults by email or mobile phone', 'deliberately forwarding a computer virus', 'spreading of gossip by email or mobile phone',.... ) during the past three months.

The measurements used in this study, were also used (in their original or in an adapted version) by two later quantitative studies dealing, respectively, with different kind of internet risks including cyberbullying: the TIRO project (funded by the The Belgian Federal Science Policy Office, and a cooperation between 3 Belgian Universities; Walrave, Lenaerts, & De Moor, 2008), and a study of two master students of the VUB (Free University of Brussels) in cooperation with the non-profit organization "ZIJN – Beweging tegen geweld" (*Movement against violence*; Goberecht, 2008; Leemans, 2008).

The TIRO project (Walrave, Lenaerts, & De Moor, 2008) provides prevalence figures for cyberbullying in Belgium, based on a survey among 1302 secondary school children (age 12-18) in Flanders and the French-speaking Community. When these respondents were asked directly about their experiences with cyberbullying, approximately one-third (34.2%) reported that they had been the target (seldom, sometimes or often) of bullying via internet or mobile phone, while one-fifth (21.2%) admitted having cyberbullied others. These figures are higher than the ones found by Vandebosch et al. (2006) (respectively 11,1 and 18%- although the latter figure should be interpreted with care because of a large amount of (non-at-random) missing values for this question) and the VUB study (respectively 10,3% and 4,9%; see: Goberecht, 2008; Leemans, 2008). Several factors might explain these differences. First of all, sample characteristics: The TIRO sample included students from the French Speaking Community (as indicated by the researchers the cyber bullying problem was significantly more pronounced there than in Flanders) and only focused on secondary education students. Secondly, the direct cyberbullying measurement did not mention a concrete reference period. The VUB study (Goberecht, 2008) included a question about the tools most often used to cyberbully. The findings suggest that most victims had been exposed to bullying when using an Instant Messenger (51%). Other popular means to be cyberbullied were: mobile phones (38.5%) and e-mail (26.0%). Similar results were generated by the questions aimed at cyberbullies (60,4 % of them used Instant Messenger, 29,2% mobile phone, and 22,9% e-mail to cyberbully).

The study of Vandebosch et al. (2006) provides an extensive overview of (Flemish) students' experiences with (potentially) harmful internet and mobile phone practices (e.g. 'making threats or insults by email or mobile phone', 'deliberately forwarding of a computer virus', 'spreading of gossip by email or mobile phone',... ), which are often considered subtypes of cyberbullying in the existing literature. Over the past three months, 61.9 % of youngsters had been victims, 52.5% had been perpetrators, and 76.3% had been bystanders of at least one of

these practices. Observing the differences in prevalence figures generated by the direct and the indirect measurement of cyberbullying, Vandebosch and Van Cleemput (2009) concluded that “measuring youngsters’ experiences with a range of activities presumed to represent forms of cyberbullying, without taking into account the context in which these activities take place and the interpretations of those involved (as transmitter or receiver), is not an adequate method to investigate ‘cyberbullying’. This type of operationalization seems to be over-inclusive and leads to overestimations of the prevalence of cyberbullying.” In their qualitative follow-up-study, Vandebosch and Van Cleemput (2008) provided insights in what youngsters themselves perceived as cyberbullying (and what not).

With regard to the profile of cyberbullies and -victims in Belgium, the following trends have been discovered: (Self-appointed) cyberbullies are more often also the perpetrators of traditional bullying, are more often involved in cyberbullying as victims or bystanders, and tend to have parents who are less involved with their internet activities (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009; Walrave & Heirman, Forthcoming). The most often cited reason to cyberbully someone is “revenge” (Goberecht, 2008). Self-appointed cyberbullying victims, more often report to be the victim of traditional bullying, and are also more often bystander and perpetrator of cyberbullying (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009; Walrave & Heirman, Forthcoming).

The victims also appear to be more dependent on the internet. Victims of cyberbullying experience significantly more stress than other students. They deal with their problem by defending themselves in the “real” world (70,6%), by blocking the offender when using instant messenger programs (67,4%), by asking the bully face-to-face (57,6%) or via the internet (53,4%) to stop, and by ignoring the problem (60,8%). Half of the victims (50,5%) react by cyberbullying back (Vandebosch, Van Cleemput, Mortelmans, & Walrave, 2006).

Boys, older persons, and students with more internet expertise seem more likely to be the perpetrator of different kinds of (potentially) harmful internet and mobile phone practices (some of which can probably be considered “cyberbullying”). Girls, and those who display

more internet related risk behaviours (such as sharing a password with someone), are more often the victim of different kinds of these practices (Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2009; Walrave & Heirman, Forthcoming).

### Findings in The Netherlands

In 2006 two large scale studies on the prevalence and forms of cyberbullying in the Netherlands appeared (Dehue, Bolman & Völlink, 2006; Van den Eijnden, Verhulst, Rooy & Meerkerk, 2006), followed by a third study by Duimel and De Haan (2007). These three studies revealed that among youngsters aged between 10 and 19 years 4% to 16% had cyberbullied others and 3% to 25% had been bullied via the internet or by mobile phone.

The study of Dehue, Bolman and Völlink (2006) was conducted in cooperation with the Municipal Health Departments of the south of Limburg (GGDZL). This study found that almost 16% of the youngsters bullied someone on the internet and 25% were bullied on the internet. The respondents' experiences with cyberbullying were measured by asking for the prevalence of and the methods used in bullying and being bullied, whether other pupils joined in bullying, for the situation in which bullying took place, the reactions to being bullied, communication about bullying, individuals who tried to stop bullying behaviour as well as for the anonymity of the bully and the sex of the victim. Questions were derived from the assessment scales for bullying and being bullied used by a Municipal Health Service in the south of the Netherlands, which are based on translations of the subscales of the Bully/Victim Questionnaire of Olweus (1989).

The medium most frequently used for bullying is MSN (Dehue, Bolman & Völlink, 2008). Of all youngsters aged between 8 and 15 years, 27% have engaged in name-calling at least once and 41% have been called names at least once via MSN. Other forms of cyberbullying also occur, like placing someone's picture on the Internet without permission, hacking, sending MSN bombs or a virus and anonymous threatening mails (TNS NIPOBase, 2006). For children who bully on the traditional as well as on the cyber way, social pressure to bully is stronger for

traditional bullying than for cyberbullying. Victims of both forms of bullying behaviour feel less able to stop cyberbullying than to stop traditional bullying (van Welie, Delhue, & Völlink, 2009).

In 2008 a cross-sectional study on personality characteristics and cyberbullying was conducted among 1033 Dutch-speaking Belgium youngsters and 253 Dutch youngsters of 10 to 16 years old. The results of the study showed that the more youngsters were dominant and narcissistic and less perseverant, the more they cyberbullied. Concerning the victims of cyberbullying, the more inadequate and less dominant youngsters were, the more they were victimized. (Ysebaert, Dehue, & Völlink, 2008). Additional analyses revealed that there were no significant differences between Dutch speaking youngsters in Belgium and the Netherlands concerning the relationship between personality characteristics and involvement in cyberbullying.

A recent study of Dehue, Bolman, Völlink and Pouwelse (2009) investigated the influence of parenting style on cyberbullying. They found that youngsters who perceive their parents' parenting style as authoritative cyberbully less than youngsters who perceive the parenting style as permissive or neglectful. In addition, the results revealed that youngsters who perceived an authoritative parenting style were cyberbullied less than youngsters who perceived a neglectful parenting style.

Parents seem to underestimate their own children's cyberbullying behavior and have insufficient notion of their children as victims of cyberbullying (Dehue et al., 2008; Duimel & de Haan, 2007; Völlink et al, 2009). In the study of Dehue et al. (2008) among 1211 final year pupils of primary schools and first year pupils of secondary schools and their parents it was found that the percentage of parents reporting that their child was not engaged in cyberbullying on the internet or via cell phone was considerably higher (95.2%) than the percentage of children reporting not being engaged in bullying on the internet or via cell phone (84%; Dehue, Bolman & Völlink, 2008). These percentages of parents' estimations are in line with the results of Duimel and De Haan (2007) in a study among 1561 pupils of age between 13 and 18 years

old and their parents. They found that 4% of the parents thought that the children used MSN to cyberbully someone, whereas 12% of their children reported to use MSN to bully. Furthermore, Dehue, Bolman and Völlink (2008) found that in total 88% of the parents were convinced that their child was never bullied on internet or by mobile phone, whereas only 77% of the children reported that they never had been the victim of cyberbullying.

Since most (85.6%) youngsters reported to be at home when engaging in cyberbullying (Dehue, Bolman & Völlink, 2008), parents should have the opportunity to take preventive measures. A recent study of Völlink et al., (submitted) among 800 Dutch families with children between 10 to 15 years old showed that 66% assumed it (very) likely to inform their child about cyberbullying. Informing the child how to prevent cyberbullying was the most popular measure: 72% of the parents reported that it was (very) likely that they would apply this measure. After two weeks, 62% of the parents had talked with their children about the consequences of cyberbullying for the victim, 58% about how to prevent cyberbullying and 63% discussed the meaning of cyberbullying. This study revealed that parents' attitude, social influence and self efficacy concerning preventive measures against cyberbullying are positively related to their intentions to take preventive measures (Völlink et al., submitted).

### Findings in Luxembourg

The first large-scale survey that explicitly dealt with the topic of cyberbullying in Luxembourg was realised in July 2008 (Bredemus, 2009; Steffgen, Pfetsch, König & Bredemus, 2009). In the *secondary school online survey* – 2,070 pupils from 22 of 30 Luxembourg secondary schools participated. The participants were aged 12 to 24 years and 54.5 % of them were females. Besides that two smaller surveys have been conducted: (1) a *primary school survey* realized in March 2008 (407 pupils from six schools; 30 classes; aged 10 to 14 years; 53.8 % of them females) and (2) a *secondary school survey* realized in October 2007 (382 pupils from one school; 18 classes; aged 13 to 25 years; 30.0 % of them females; Steffgen, König & Pfetsch, 2009; Steffgen, Pfetsch, König & Bredemus, 2009). In all three studies a short-

modified German version of the *cyberbullying questionnaire* (30 items, Smith et al., 2008) was used, among other scales. Students indicated on a 6-point ordinal scale (almost daily, several times a week, about once a week, about once in a month, 1-3 times a year, never) how often they had become victims (14 items), actors (14 items), or witnesses (2 items) of traditional bullying or cyberbullying. With two general questions students were asked whether they experienced bullying of any kind, or cyberbullying in particular, in the current school year. Students then reported own victimization or cyberbullying inside and outside of the school, separately for each of six media types (text message, picture/video clip, phone call, email, websites/chat room, or instant messaging). In addition, students reported their gender, age, and overall years in school.

All in all, 3.8 to 4.4 % of the students in the three surveys reported being cyberbullied frequently (categories “almost daily” to “about once in a month”), and in addition 5.8 to 11.3 % only 1-3 times a year during the last school year. 3.9 to 5.0 % reported having bullied others frequently, and another 4.2 to 6 % only 1-3 times a year. While traditional bullying took place more often inside than outside school, cyberbullying was more often experienced outside (28.9 %) than inside school (13.9 %; sample secondary school online survey). Instant messaging was the most common media of cyberbullying (see also Smith et al., 2008). Girls were more likely to become victims of cyberbullying than boys, but not for becoming perpetrators. Boys were more often traditional bullies than girls. About the relationship between traditional and cyberbullying, the studies show that bullies tend to be cyberbullies and victims of bullying tend to become victims of cyberbullying (Steffgen & König, 2009). Further, traditional victims tend to be cyberbullies in all three different samples.

In the context of the role of risk factors of cyberbullying, Steffgen, König, Pfetsch, and Melzer (2009) found that cyberbullies show less empathy for others being victimized than did non-cyberbullies. In addition, only some small gender effects and no effects of media type (Internet versus cell phone) or location of the perpetration (inside versus outside of school) were

observed. Altogether, these findings are in accordance with studies showing a negative relationship between empathy and aggression (Miller & Eisenberg, 1988).

Schools often search for interventions against aggression that seem easy and fast to implement. Banning the use of cell phones in schools could appear as a measure to reduce cyberbullying. This thesis was tested in an intervention study (Steffgen, König & Pfetsch, 2009b). The secondary school survey as a partly randomized sample from one school served as intervention group (measurement point 1; beginning of the school year - 382 students, and measurement point 2; end of the school year - 343 students). As control group a sample from 22 different secondary schools in Luxembourg was included (see secondary school online survey: 950 students). At measurement point 2 there was no difference in age between both groups and no difference in ownership of cell phones, but there was a difference in sex (there were more females in the control group: 54 % vs. 31.8 %). Analyses do not reveal an impact of banning cell phone use on the use of cell phones in total and the frequencies of cyberbullying. The incidences of cyberbullying via text messages, phone calls or picture/video clip do not differ inside and outside of school neither before or after the banning, nor between intervention and control group. A methodological weakness is that the control group could be assessed only one time via an online questionnaire. Nevertheless, banning cell phone use does not seem to be a useful measure against cyberbullying (Steffgen, König & Pfetsch, 2009a; Steffgen, König & Pfetsch, 2009b).

### *Actions against cyberbullying*

As indicated above, the Flemish government in **Belgium** was rather quick to put cyberbullying on the (research and policy) agenda. Based on the growing evidence, the Flemish Minister of Education declared to give special attention to raising the awareness of cyberbullying. This resulted in the development of an information brochure for schools (governors, teachers and ICT coordinators) about online safety “Veilig Online, Tips voor veilig ICT-gebruik op school” that was accompanied by a CD-ROM with course material (for instance with regard to



cyberbullying; 8 Octobre 2007). On the federal level, the Belgian Internet Observatory (an initiative of the Federal Administration Economics), created a report with a status questionis of the current scientific literature with regard to cyberbullying (Walrave, Demoulin, Heirman, & van de Perre, 2009). New in this report was the inclusion of a chapter devoted to the legal consequences of cyberbullying behavior (for youngsters and their parents) in Belgium. The Belgian Internet Observatory also placed information about cyberbullying (aimed at teachers, pupils and parents) online and formulated extensive policy guidelines. The Belgian node of Ins@fe – a European network of awareness centres – created a local version of the “Family e-safety kit” (i.e. “Veilig Internet Gezinspakket”). This guideline is meant for parents and families with children up to 12 years of age. One of the chapters focuses on cyberbullying. The guideline is accompanied by a small workbook that parents and children can use.

**The Netherlands’** national government has established several foundations that are concerned with (cyber)bullying. The Municipal Health Department (GGD) developed teaching materials to prevent cyberbullying (‘Cyberbullying, who cares?’) and the Corporation Child Consumer (Stichting de Kinderconsument) provides lectures throughout the country for teachers and parents on cyberbullying and safe internet use. In March 2006, the foundation for ideal advertising (Stichting Ideële Reclame) started a national campaign against cyberbullying. They developed an information film for television and designed several posters to make people aware of this phenomenon.

Since 2007, especially the Ministry of Economy of **Luxembourg** with the division Cyberworld Awareness and Security Enhancement Structure (CASES) paid attention to cyberbullying. It developed and adopted a training program for teachers and students on the correct use of the Internet and how to handle cyberbullying. An evaluation report on this training program is in preparation. In cooperation with the Ministry of education CASES has also published a textbook for school teachers about safer internet and cyberbullying. Beside CASES, Luxembourg Safer Internet (LuSI; node of Ins@fe) also offers brochures, flyers, posters as well

as workshops and trainings to raise the awareness about internet and mobile phone safety. They also placed information about cyberbullying online and formulated some guidelines. On the initiative of some schools and with support of the Ministry of education, banning the use of cell phones in schools is one major intervention measure in Luxembourg schools. As mentioned above, first research findings prove that this measure does not seem to be useful against cyberbullying (Steffgen, König & Pfetsch, 2009b). Like for traditional bullying, a “whole school approach” to prevent cyberbullying seems more promising (Steffgen, König & Pfetsch, 2009a).

In all three Benelux-countries, a phase of sensitization (by posters, brochures and guidelines for parents, teachers and students) on the topic of cyberbullying was undertaken. Currently, no advanced intervention and prevention measures are being developed and/or implemented.

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