What About Us? Transforming Children's Rights into Practice in the Age of New Media

"The European Children's Rights Unit (ECRU) is delighted to support the specialist stream *'What About Us? Transforming Children's Rights into Practice in the Age of New Media'*. ECRU is committed to the pursuit of interdisciplinary research, knowledge exchange and training in the field of children's rights, particularly in areas that straddle jurisdictional and geographical boundaries. We have a particular expertise in the impact and potential of the European institutions in supporting better laws, policies and processes for children. Children are increasingly exploring and expressing their personal, cultural and legal identities through online media, such that ECRU welcomes wholeheartedly the efforts made by BILETA to provide a platform for open and critical discussion on such issues. We very much hope that this exciting event will, in turn, stimulate opportunities for ongoing collaboration and exchange."

Helen Stalford, Director ECRU

Parents, schools, children's organizations and policymakers continue to frame children and young people's interaction with the Internet and new media in terms of risks. This has a direct bearing on shaping the discourse and strategies regarding children's social media choices, drawing the focus towards questions such as contractual capacity and consent to a range of possible data transactions. Children's rights in theory are therefore parsed through adult oversight mechanisms. The discourse focuses on age verification, "walled gardens", filtering, development of advertising and marketing protocols.

Is online child safety policymaking in need of a re-assessment in terms of the sustainability and efficiency of this agenda? Is the implied paternalism obscuring more creative approaches which emphasise the potential of the technology to be a positive aid to children and young people who need or want to assert or claim their rights?

Or might such a shift in emphasis, in effect, let internet companies off the hook? Might those who advocate a more nuanced and pragmatic approach to child safety issues be criticised for underestimating the risks facing children – predatory advertising and profiling, bullying, access to illegal or inappropriate sites and online sexual solicitation.

Child welfare and health organisations are also increasingly concerned by the mental health and well-being aspects stemming from the growth of advertising of junk food and inappropriate games and lifestyles.

As recent efforts by the EU, FTC, FOSI and UKCHIS demonstrate, a consensual engagement between all stakeholders is critical to addressing the real concerns of individuals and arrest possible misunderstandings, which can significantly reduce the perceived gap between "children's rights in theory" and "children's rights in practice".

As optimism builds around the new generation of Children and Youth embracing the Internet and new media, the Panel aims to provide children organizations, Local Authorities, Schools, scholars and industry with a platform to identify the issues and ways through which policymakers can transform Children's Rights into meaningful practices. Some of the issues to be considered:

What are the complexities of articulating children's rights in age of the Internet?

Is the Internet unique therefore requiring new policy drivers that reflect the demographics of youth?

How should we address issues of contractual capacity, data collection, privacy, data mining and age inappropriate content?

What is the optimal regulatory strategy given the shortcomings of self-regulation? Is media literacy really working or do we need more focussed behavioural changing strategies?

TIMETABLE

Technologies, Innovation & Justice: What About Us? Transforming Children's Rights into Practice in the Age of New Media
Venue: Rendall Building Seminar Room 124

0900-1030
1. J Carr, The internet and children: Still in the foothills with all the big battalions occupying the high ground
2. S Dempsey, R O'Shea Promoting Legal Fairness Through Data Analysis
3. A Garde and E Boyland, The Regulation of Unfair Commercial Practices and Children's Health - A Case Study on the Marketing of Food to Children

1030-1045 Morning Coffee Break

1045-1215
1. J Bryce, Young People and Social Media: Users, Consumers, Commodities?
2. Y Mansour, Children as Mobile Content Consumers
3. J Hornle, Hardcore porn on the internet - the regulators response?
4. A Nair, Protecting children: Internet pornography and regulation

1200-1300 Networking Lunch

1530-1700
Researchers and Presenters Breakout Networking and Collaborative Opportunities

Important: General Comment on Presentations

Powerpoint facilities will be available at the venue. Presentations should be of no more than 15 minutes duration with 10 minutes set aside for responses. Powerpoint and paper submissions can be sent to Ms Rachel Barrett on the dates requested in the registration confirmation letter. Presenters should bring with them a USB memory stick with the presentation.

When preparing Powerpoint submissions, large amounts of text on slides are to be avoided. As you prepare your presentation we encourage you to engage the audience with key points and ideas so that meaningful reflection and dialogue can be undertaken.

We have made available Seminar Room 124 for presenters and delegates to engage in further discussions and brainstorming between 1530 and 1700.