

WHO?

- » 32 children on the move (aged 14–17, 9 girls and 23 boys) in Greece
- » Facilitators
- » Interpreters
- » 1 note-taker

HOW?

Across six child-centred participatory sessions, children, divided into small groups, engaged in structured and playful activities to create and narrate fictional characters (avatars), using them to explore digital opportunities, online risks and harms—including technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation—protection strategies, and their recommendations for creating safer online environments.

KEY LEARNINGS

AVATARS CREATE A SAFE SPACE FOR DISCUSSING SENSITIVE EXPERIENCES

“She’s like many of us. We want to see the world, but we always miss home.”
(Kitrinos, 17, boy, Egypt).

Avatars created a safe emotional distance, enabling children to explore digital experiences—including challenging ones—while gradually connecting them to their own lives and experiences of being on the move.

DO NOT ASSUME CONCEPTUAL FAMILIARITY

“I don’t know a lot about apps... I don’t own a mobile phone” (Sataez, 14, girl, Iraq)



Children on the move may not always discuss their online experiences or recognise the potential risks. Visual prompts, stories and concrete examples can help facilitators and children co-construct shared understandings of digital safety.

BEYOND TRANSLATION: MULTIMODAL COMMUNICATION ENABLES RICHER PARTICIPATION AND EXPRESSION

“When we speak, the flower becomes alive, not just a drawing.” (Neimar, 17, boy, Sudan)

Providing interpretation is essential. Verbal conversations are important, but facilitators can also adapt children’s writing-based activities into conversations, drawings, and storytelling.



BE OPEN TO ADAPTING YOUR METHODOLOGY IN REAL-TIME. FLEXIBILITY IS AN ETHICAL COMMITMENT

“We skipped... We postponed... We adapted... We continued orally...” (Facilitators’ reflections)

Pay attention to children’s verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as their everyday realities of mobility. Recognise how gender, age, and other intersectional factors impact their participation. Place children at the centre of the process.

HUMOUR CREATES PARTICIPATION AND EMOTIONAL PROTECTION

“We spoke, we laughed, that’s enough.”
(Yasu, 17, boy, Egypt)

Jokes, teasing, and laughter help children build trust, regulate emotions, and approach sensitive topics at their own pace.

RESEARCH CAN ALSO BECOME A CO-LEARNING PROCESS



“We learned how to protect ourselves online.”
(Kochiq, 16, girl, Georgia)

Participatory research generates evidence, but it is also an opportunity to strengthen children’s knowledge, confidence, and digital protection skills.

Although designed to facilitate discussions on digital safety, avatars evolved into a collective space where children reflected on their experiences of mobility, built trust, strengthened peer support and co-created new understandings of online safety.

¹ Based on a participatory research project conducted by ECPAT International and ARSIS (2025–2026), funded by Safe Online. Methodological reflections were analysed from facilitators’ session notes. Read the full report and methodology: [No Wi-Fi Means No Life](#).