

NEWSLETTER

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PRE-PILOT STUDY: COGNITIVE INTERVIEWS RESULTS

Pre-pilot study aimed to test selected questions through cognitive interviews with a sample of 8-year-old children, parents of 8-year-olds, and parents of infants, as part of pre-testing and development of the questionnaire for Europe's first multinational birth cohort study - [Growing up in Digital Europe \(GUIDE\)](#). A convenience sample of 68 children was formed, and children from four European countries participated in the interviews: Croatia (n=20), France (n=18), Finland (n=10) and Ireland (n=20). In the children questionnaire, several well-being domains were tested through cognitive interviewing and were operationalized by 31 items.



The ethical approvals for CIs were provided by national research institutions or related ministries. All participants were informed of the interview process and verbal, written, or digital consent was obtained before conducting the interview. Child and parent interviews were conducted by two interviewers in a quiet private room (Croatia and France) or remotely via the MS Teams or the Zoom online platform (Finland and Ireland). All interviews were audio-recorded. Interviews with children lasted on average 35 minutes, while interviews with parents lasted on average 43.5 minutes. Concurrent verbal probes were used with a combination of scripted and spontaneous probing. All narratives for each

question were collected and organized in the form of standardized protocols. The data was analysed and reported by national research teams and further by cross-national experts.

The cognitive interviews generated useful recommendations for the interview procedure and the content of the questionnaires. The general recommendation for conducting the interviews with children is to create a safe and comfortable environment and to minimize the effects of parents' presence since it interferes with children's unbiased answering. The instructions, questions and given answers should use children-friendly vocabulary and tangible examples, avoid long or complex sentence structure, and negative statements. Using the timeframes in questions should be minimized and if applied it should be defined explicitly. The children understand well and can use 3-point and 5-point Likert-type scales, but the number of different scales in the questionnaire should be limited. The parents understood most of the instructions, questions, timeframes, and proposed response formats without difficulties and in an intended way. Thus, most piloted questions with parents do not need to undergo any changes, or they demand minor refinements to minimise ambiguities or achieve better interview flow. However, the cross-cultural adaptations of several questions' response categories are still needed. Also, some recall difficulties were observed for certain questions where a change from open-ended to close-ended answering format could facilitate the recall process. Finally, it was recommended that some sensitive questions should be moved to the self-completion part of the parental questionnaire.

The cognitive interviews also provided a few general suggestions. Filters should be used whenever possible to minimise participant burden as certain questions do not concern all participants but only certain subgroups. Moreover, the children's and parents' questionnaires should be harmonised to enable data linkage and comparison.

