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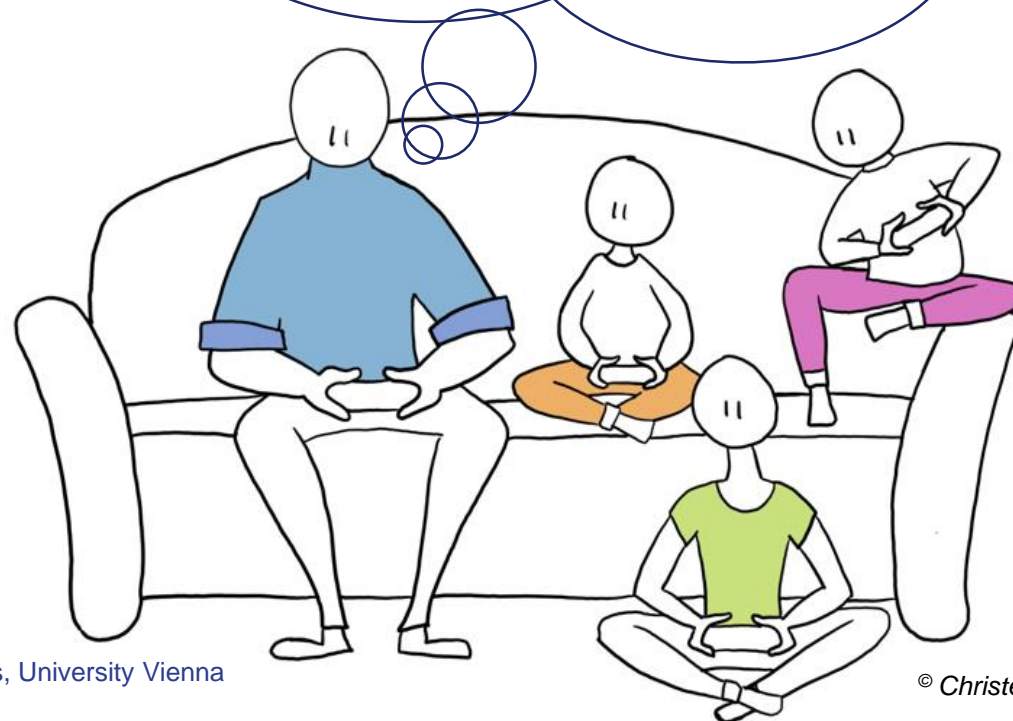
DigiGen WP3

# Technological Transformations and Families

## First Observations

5<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Digital Citizenship Plus Seminar Series #5: Familial Ecosystem and Student Well-being



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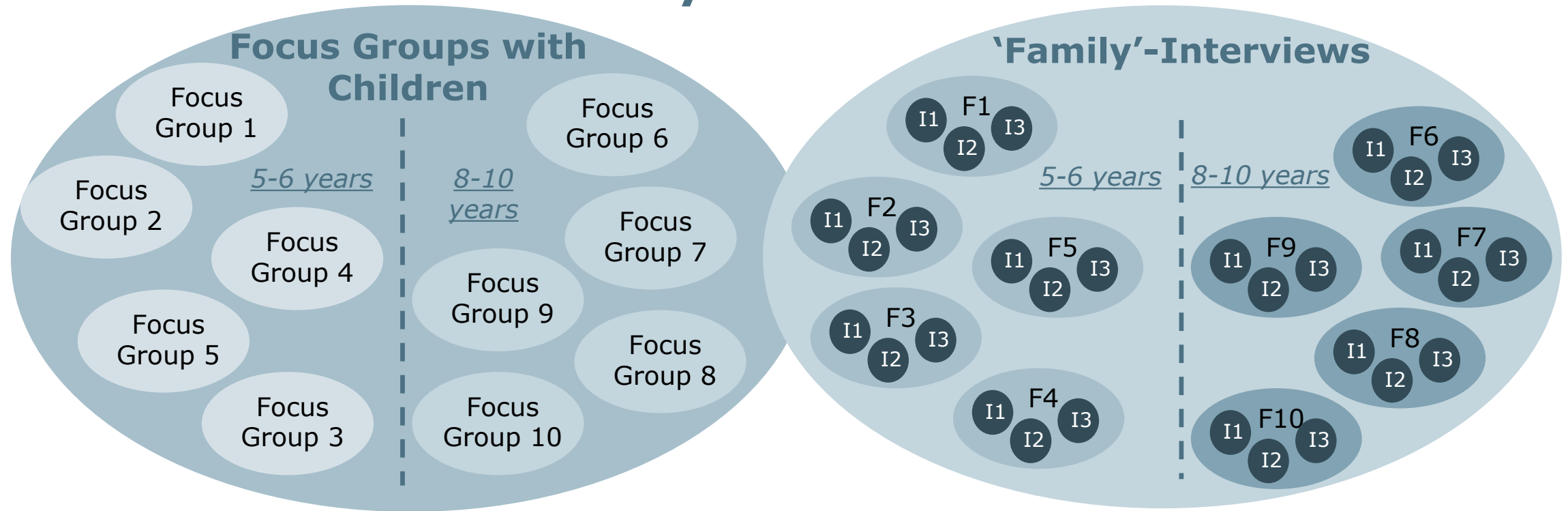
WP Leader: Olaf Kapella, Austrian Institute for Family Studies, University Vienna

Co-Leader: Merike Sisask, University of Tallinn

Countries: Austria (Olaf Kapella & Eva Maria Schmidt), Estonia (Merike Sisask), Norway (Tove Lafton & Halla Bjørk Holmarsdottir), Romania (Maria Roth)

# Basic Design of WP3

## Case Studies (5-6 years and 8-10 years) in Austria, Estonia, Norway and Romania



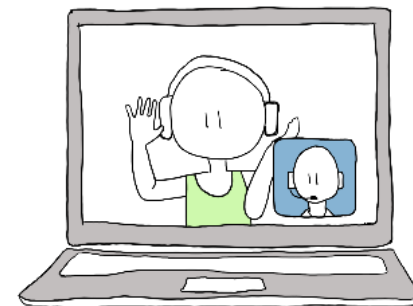
**abstract and implicit collective orientations** (rather than individual experiences) regarding research questions

**individual experiences**, views and family practices regarding research questions – three perspectives (child and two other family members)

# Research Questions of WP3

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- ✓ How is **family life shaped** by technological transformation?
- ✓ How do children **use and subjectively assess** digital technologies in their everyday life?
- ✓ **Harmful vs. beneficial effects** on the family system and on individuals
- ✓ **Diversity** and social inequality regarding digital devices





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# Austria

*Olaf Kapella & Eva-Maria Schmidt*



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- Integration of DT in family life is of **great variance across families**
  - from heavy users and proud families that tend to positively highlight and glorify DT, to neutral and relaxed families that do not make a fuss about DT and are *doing family* also by using DT together, sharing interests
  - to anxious, uncertain, frustrated and highly skeptical families that tend to avoid and demonize DT
- Family practices from oriented towards family member's needs and desires to oriented towards certain timing and restrictive rules

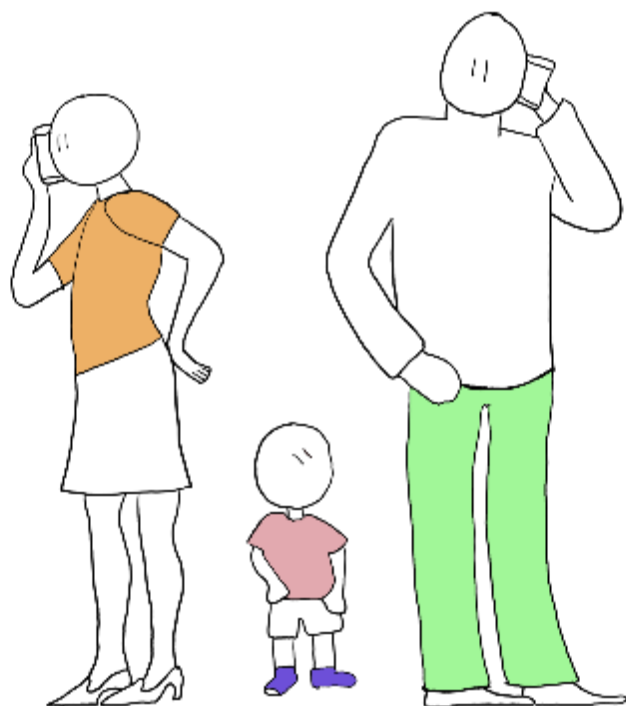
- **Family rules** depend on parents' assessment and educational style
  - from highly restrictive and concrete to vague and rather unpredictable
  - to rather relaxed, desire-oriented and situative
- children's perspective on and knowledge about rules
  - from rather vague and accepted among younger ones to rather understood and negotiated among older ones
  - to ignored and opposed among older ones
- from co-constructed to compliant
- conflicts and challenges
  - rather from parents' perspectives
  - conflicts do not appear in children's accounts (only with siblings), only when taking over parents' role



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# Estonia

*Merike Sisask*



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## **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

- In Estonia, digital technologies (DT) are widely available across families with different socio-economic background and across generations within the families
- DT have important role in families' everyday lives, even if not explicitly stated so during the interviews



## AGREEMENTS AND RULES

### → What about children as active agents?

- Children and parents tend to have agreements about using DT, but the rules are typically created by parents and not always negotiated with children
- Overall, children tend to accept the rules even if not directly negotiated with them
- The main and quite inflexible rule is the time limit rule, which may cause conflicts between children and parents
  - As a reward for good behaviour the time limit rule can be disregarded
  - Breaking the rule can be punished
  - Strict rules provoke cheating

## HARMFUL VS BENEFICIAL EFFECTS

### → High awareness or moral panic?

- Children themselves emphasize that too much time behind the screen is (A) bad for their eyes and brain, and (B) may cause addiction
- The main activities of children while using DT are related to entertainment (games), watching videos and communication with friends
- Doing things together with other family members while using DT is less prominent
- The interpretation of using DT can vary greatly between families:

*„My mom doesn't really let me go [into YouTube]. Well, because she says there are all kinds of **foolish things** on YouTube.“ (Boy, 6y)*

*„Mom says I can't be there very much because there are **very stupid things**. I also think so, because once there was such a **terrible thing** that I don't even want to talk about it.“ (Girl, 8y)*

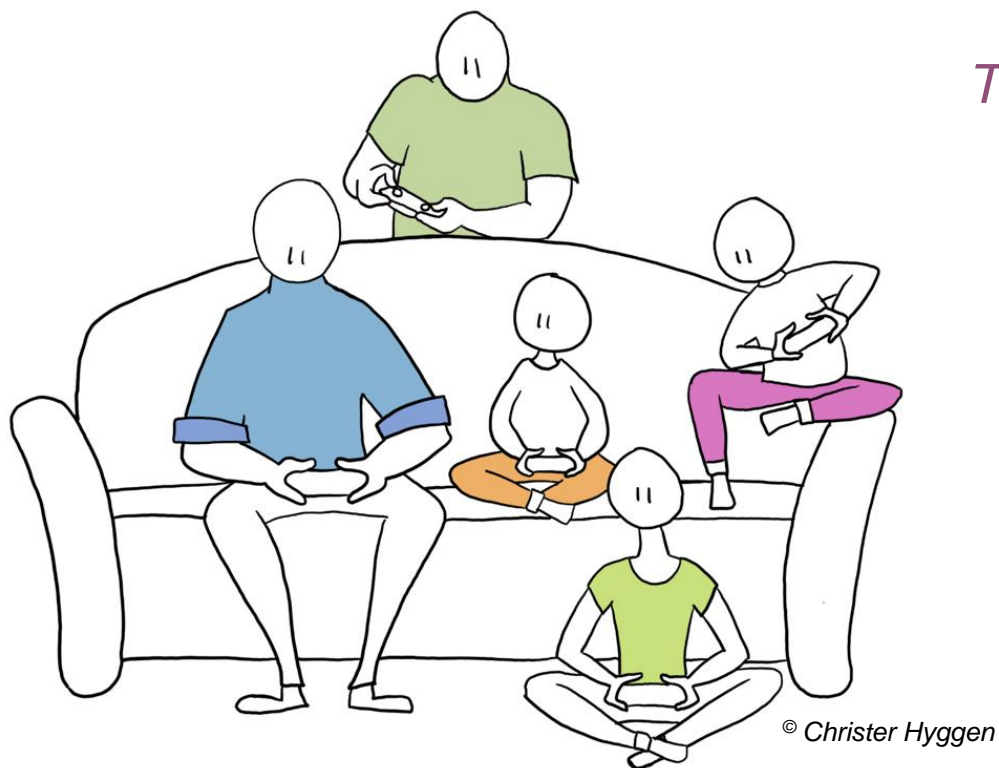
*Well, YouTube I use often, lately we were **learning** with the child through Youtube, because some things such as English language rules can be learned there nicely. We **watch movies together** and so on and so on.“ (Mother, 34y)*



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# Norway

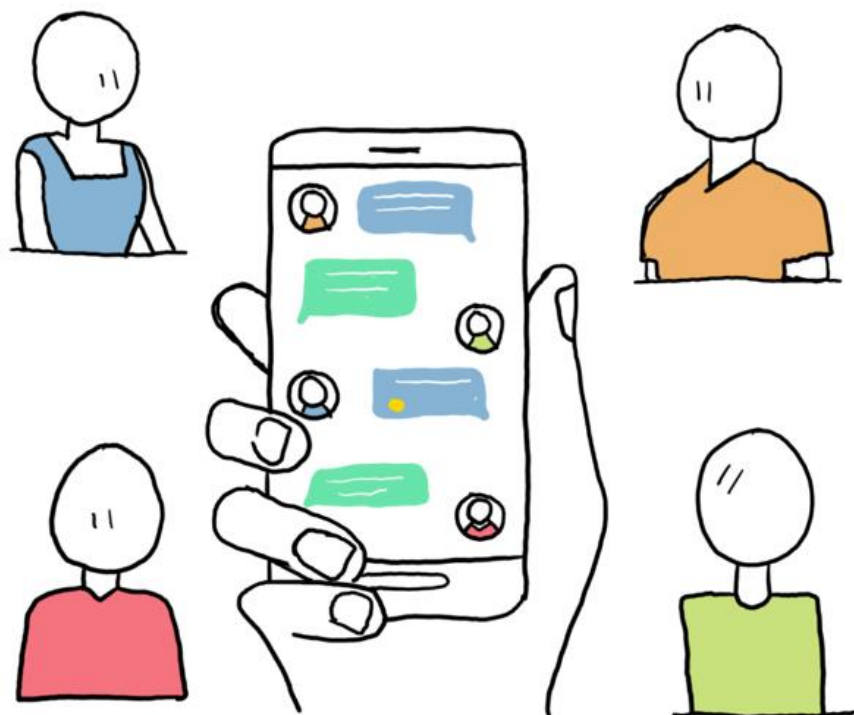
*Tove Lafton & Halla Bjørk Holmarsdottir*



- Is there a change in what “doing family” look like?
- Digital tools
  - ✓ taking part in everyday life, as a tool to organize family activities and to some extent gaming and playing together.
  - ✓ as an individual tool
  - ✓ connecting with peers
- “doing family” at the cabin or on vacation is different



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# Romania

*Maria Roth*

# First Field Observation WP3 Family – **Romania**

## **Context: Romania is polarized, childhoods are multifaceted**

- intense technologic development in the last years
- 23.1% of Romania's children are estimated to be digitally deprived

## **Methodological challenges working with young children/ in impoverished households**

- Not knowing the language, or delayed language development
- Not familiar with the way the researcher looks like, is dressed and speaks
- Not familiar with the technologies shown in the pictures
- Lacking a proper, quiet space where research can take place
- Exploring children's opinions by asking for explanations and letting them take the initiative in conversations is a fruitful approach

## **Benefits of research**

- empowers children in affirming their competences in digital technology
- connection to kind adults, offering a model of respectful group communication
- increases self esteem, especially when a good flow of communication took place
- contributes to reverse internalized stigma of Roma children

# Results Romania



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## Understanding the point of view of the child (standpoint theory):

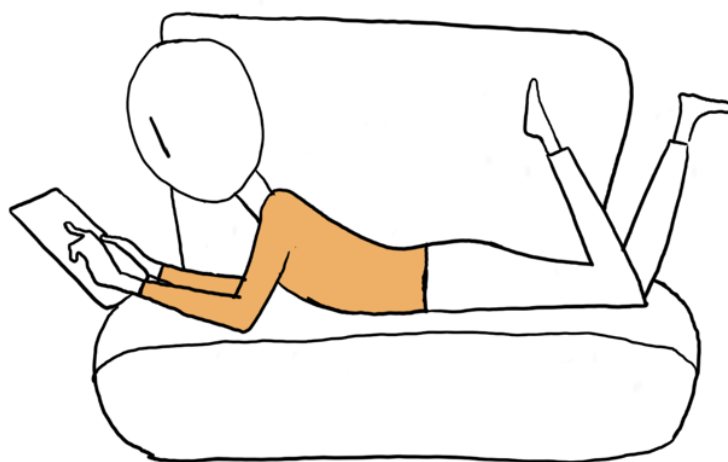
- ❑ The gadgets are **vehicles of solidarity or conflict**: one tablet is used by 2 sisters; one telephone is used by a boy, 9 of age, for school and entertainment, and his stepmother for her needs, while father, is looking for work abroad; Continuous **negotiation for rules, device-time, space/room** for ICT time; this is not easy when there are less devices than family members, and less available rooms;
- ❑ Digital competences of children **are valued and strengthen their positions** in families:
  - girl (9) tutors her sister, aged 7 with homeschooling, a great help for working mother
  - boy (9), who sells the console received from his father, to get money for his family (stepmother and stepbrother), and who shows cartoons from YouTube for smaller stepbrother, becomes a valued family member for mother.



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# Methodological Reflections

*Olaf Kapella & Susanne Vogl*





- Recruitment and research setting during the pandemic
  - Gatekeepers/institutions
  - Places and times
- Showcards
  - Pros and cons
- Moderator/interviewer behaviour with young children
- Group interaction and dynamic in focus groups
- Diversity of opinions and social desirability