HERMMES LEARNING JOURNEYS AND WEBINARS FOR PARENTS

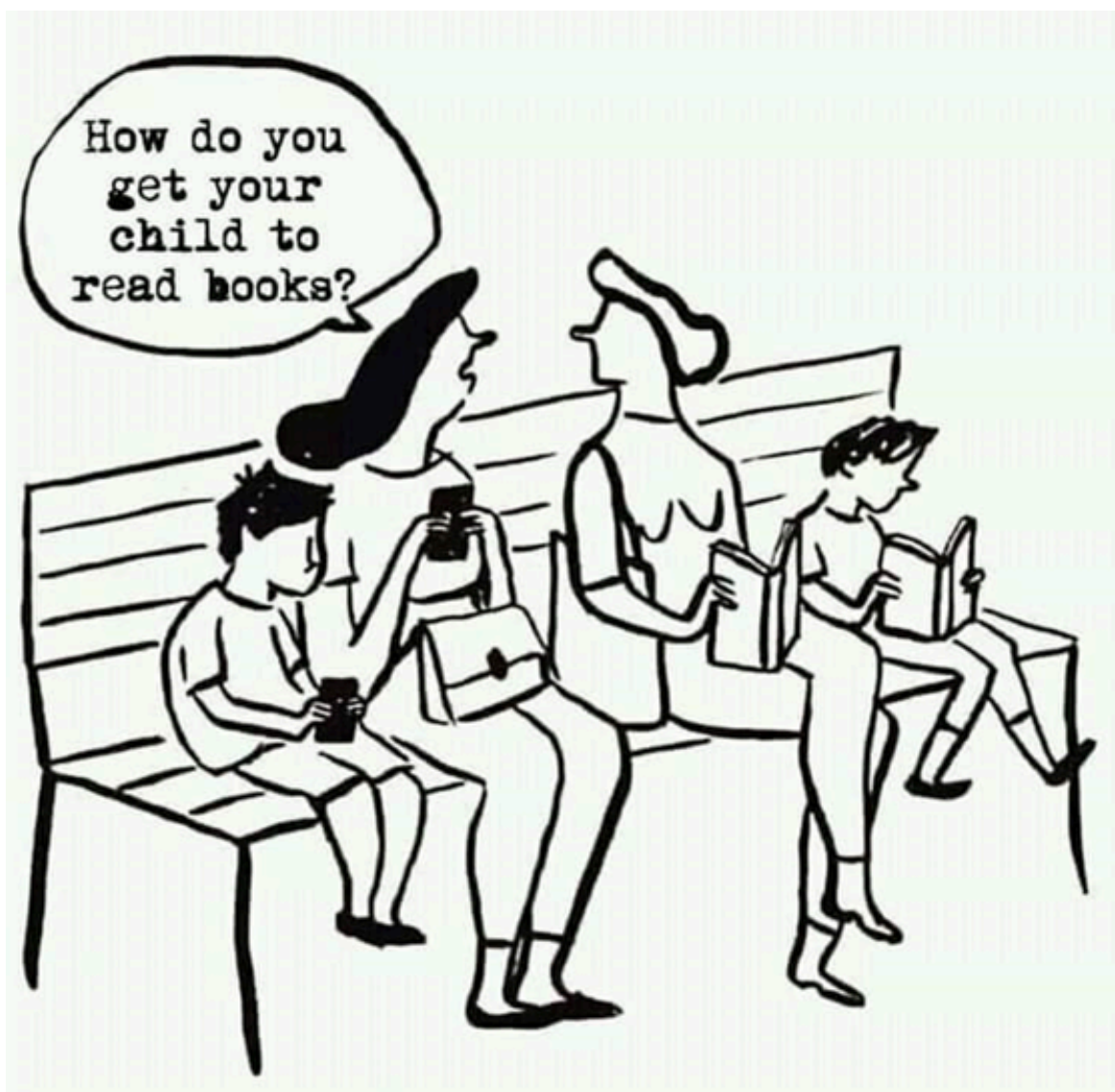# Introduction

Parents[1] are the primary educators of their children. Not only are they chronologically the first but also potentially have the most impact on their children's physical and mental development over many years.

This is also true for media education - digital and non-digital alike - as the cartoon below shows so well:

_____

[1] In the term "parents", all primary caregivers are included.

Whether we like it or not, parents, but also other family members such as grandparents, older siblings or other relevant adults in a child's upbringing, are decisive role models for the children in their care and the old instructional expression: "Do as I say but don't do as I do!" simply doesn't work as children learn a lot more through observation and imitation than from verbal instruction.

It would, however, be too simplistic to assume that children only learn through observation and that if we adults behave in the way we wish them to behave, all will be good and they'll "automatically" adopt positive habits. Therefore, our project offers various possibilities on how parents, guardians, teachers, and all other educators can engage and deepen their understanding of media education in different areas.

All the training opportunities provided within the HERMMES project are based on the material developed and presented on the HERMMES website.

These are:

- The HERMMES approach - background and rationale
- The HERMMES curriculum (explanation and table)
- The HERMMES guidelines
- The HERMMES community and culture guide
- Practice examples for the classroom
- Further reading resources
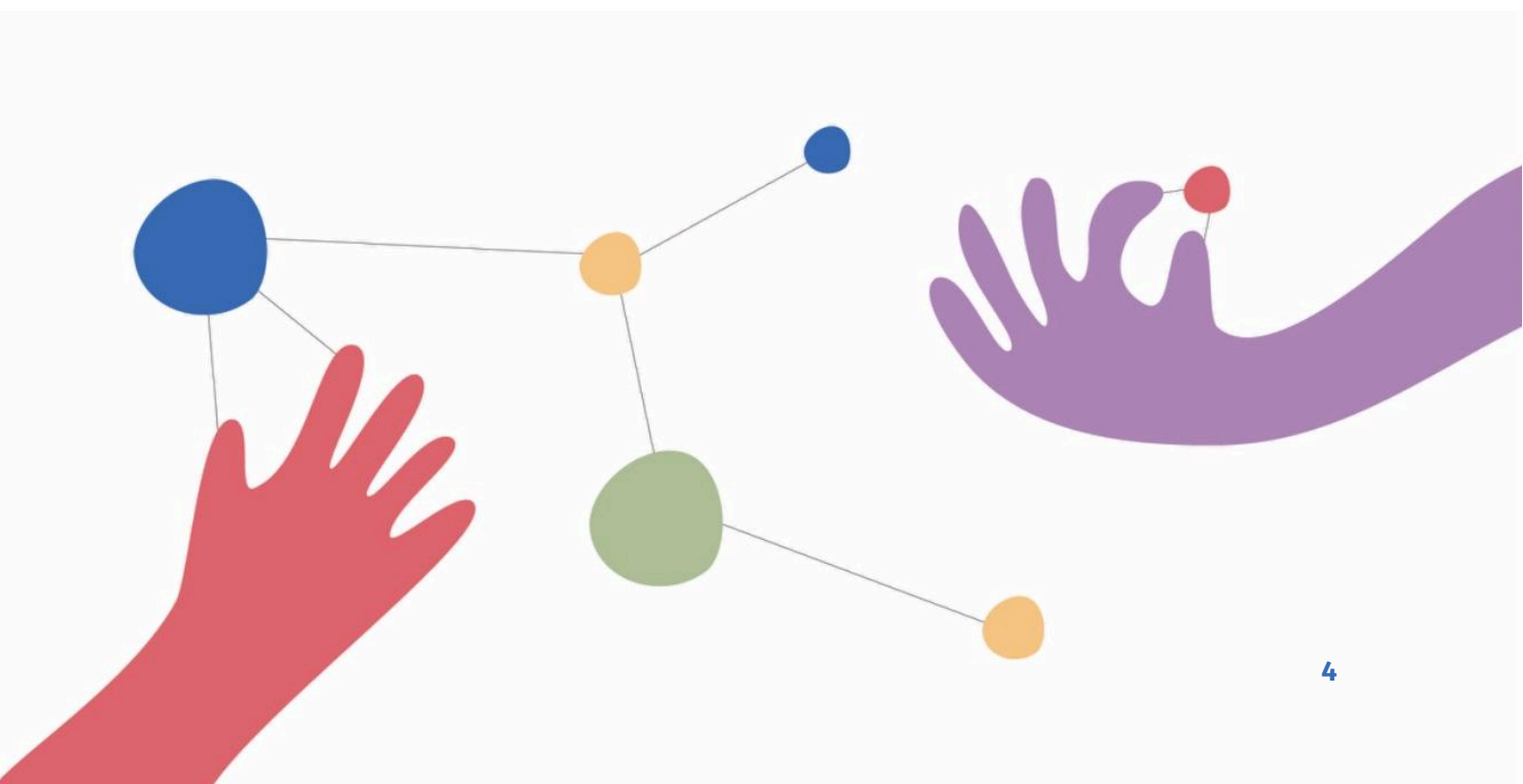
Materials provided for parents online learning within the HERMMES project
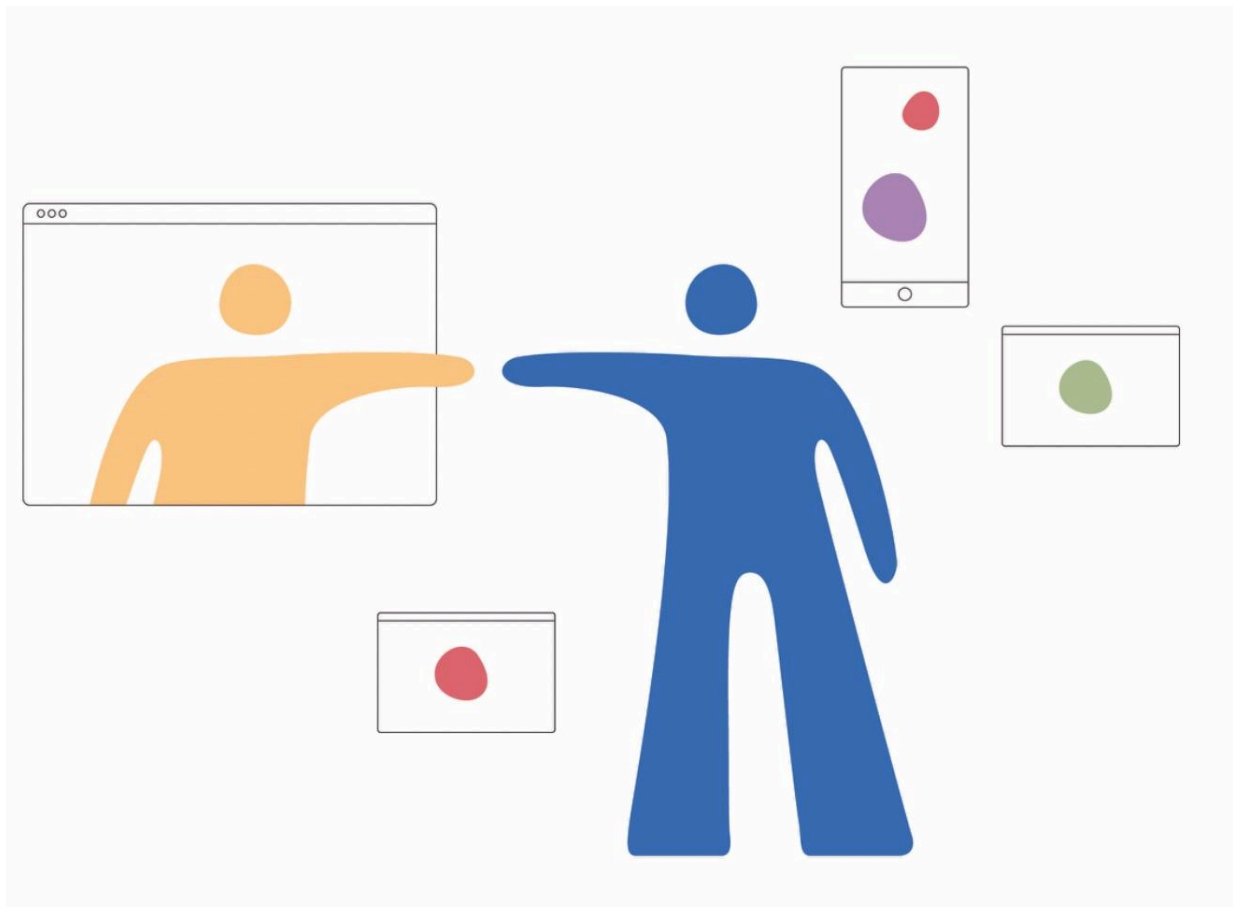
Online learning journeys

Within the HERMMES project, we are offering learning journeys that are designed in such a way that they can be used by teachers as well as by parents who are interested in deepening their understanding of media education and who are motivated to spend some time and energy to experience a transformative learning process which is aiming at changing the participant's practice rather than just delivering knowledge. (For more information about these learning journeys see deliverable 4.1, and the HERMMES website from 1 March 2025).

These self-learning courses are available online and can be followed by the participants in their own time and pace. The materials are evidence-informed, have been tested in online as well as offline settings, and proven to enhance media and digital literacy of the participants.

An ideal way to complete this course is for parents and teachers to participate together. This approach fosters a sense of community and ensures that both groups are aligned in their efforts to support children effectively. Making it part of a series of parents' meetings or workshops can further enhance collaboration and shared understanding, creating a unified framework for media education.

For further ideas on how to build up cooperation within your educational setting, see the HERMMES guidelines.
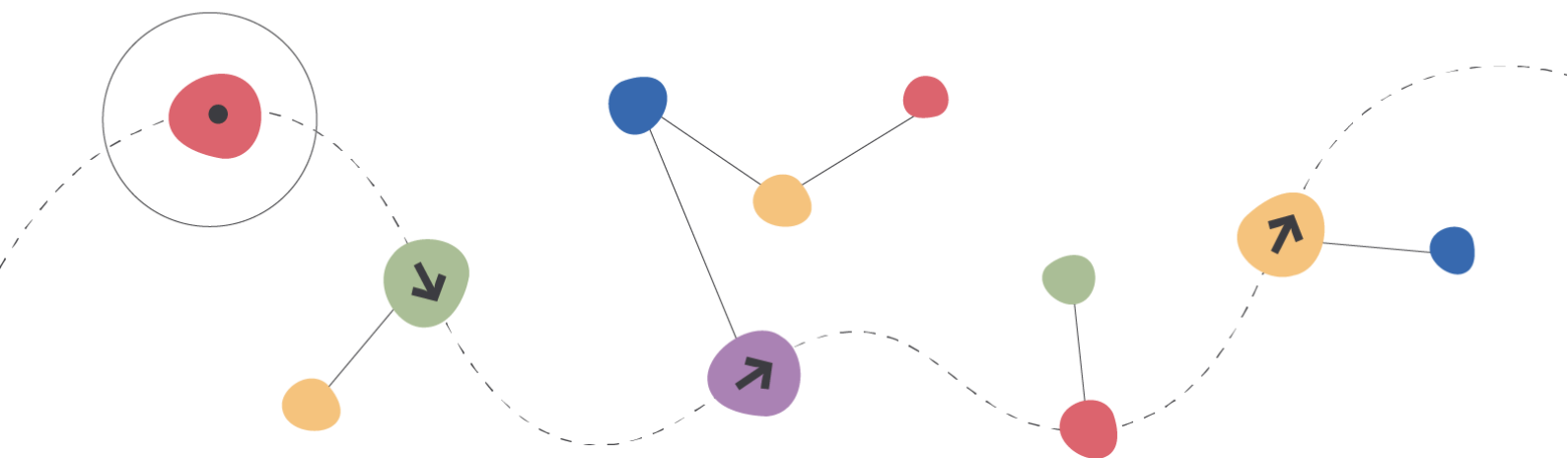
A podcast series

The HERMMES series "Parents for a healthy digital education" offers examples of holistic parental media education. It is a collection of inspiring short stories from parental everyday life which give examples of how parents can engage with their children (of different ages) supporting a healthy, holistic media education in manageable and meaningful ways. Organised by age groups, these examples refer to analogue as well as digital media and will relate to all areas of the HERMMES curriculum. The focus lies on offering things to do - rather than pointing out what not to do - with short explanations.

The podcast series will consist of short episodes (10-15 minutes) with vividly told stories from life, offering, at a low threshold, a wide variety of observations, examples, thoughts on possibilities of how to support and accompany children and teenagers on their path into a digitalised world.

At the moment of writing this document, the production of the stories is in progress and one such example can be found: [Parenting in a digital world](#).

The HERMMES door openers

The scenarios which we call "door openers" (DOs) are little stories about everyday life situations regarding digital media use that were created to start the conversation on a specific topic. These DOs can be used in physical parents' meetings but also in webinars and other online meetings. They will be available on the HERMMES website from 1 March 2025 and cover all age groups and topics that are shown in the HERMMES curriculum.

They consist of the body of the stories which are supposed to be read either individually or, preferably read out during a meeting, before starting a discussion on how the narrative could continue, what possible or probable solutions might exist. The main focus is on what participants would do themselves in such a situation or, if they've already faced it, what they actually did. When everyone has had their say, participants are invited to turn the paper around and discover three possible continuations/solutions to the issue that can now also be discussed either in the group (if it's not too big) or in smaller groups.

You can find an example of a door opener in Annex 1 of this document.

It's important to notice that there are no such things as clear solutions. Even if one might favour one of the solutions over the others, the goal of these examples is to make participants think about what would probably work in their family context or how they could adapt a solution to their possibilities.
At the end of each story there is also a section with suggestions for further reading or additional information that people might want to check.

There will also be a video available on the HERMMES website from 1 March 2025 that shows how to make use of the door openers and another video which explains how you can make your own DOs inspired by a situation that has come up either at school or in a non-formal setting.
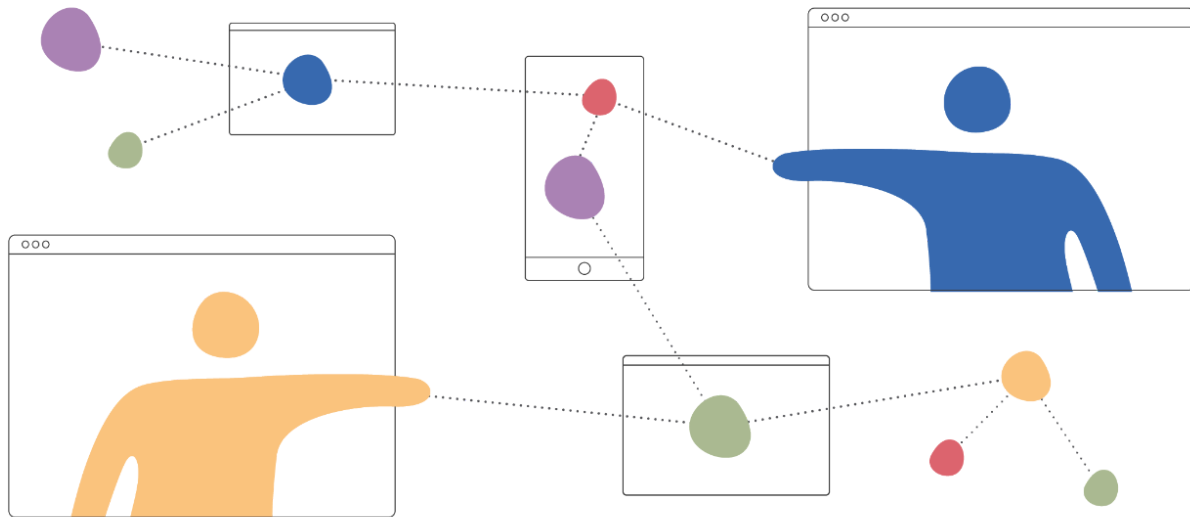
Webinars

Within the HERMMES project, we have already offered webinars to parents and will continue to do so after the lifetime of the project. This has proven to be an efficient way to reach out to parents, guardians, and other family members, especially since the COVID19 pandemic when many people - including those who were very hesitant before - discovered this tool as an effective way to reach out, not least because everyone could follow from their own homes without having to organise someone to look after the children as would be the case for physical meetings.

Another added value of online meetings and webinars is that people can join from anywhere in the world (provided that the timing of such meetings takes into account as many time zones as possible).

By recording webinars and other online meetings and making those recordings available, an even wider public can be reached.

When planning webinars for parents, it is also important to take into account as many cultural differences as possible. E.g., while parents in Portugal are happy and willing to start at nine o'clock in the evening and go on until eleven, this would be absolutely impossible in any of the countries in central or northern Europe. In the North parents would prefer to start around four or five and be done by six or latest six thirty. So the starting time and the length of the event should be adapted to the cultural and social context in which it takes place.

During the try-out webinars within the project, we engaged participants by asking about their most pressing concerns regarding media usage. These insights were thoughtfully incorporated into our course content to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.
These have allowed the development of a template (see Annex 2) for designing interesting, meaningful and interactive webinars for parents.

Concerning the content of the webinars, the participants gave the following input:

- **Critical information and data literacy**

  Participants in our webinars emphasised the need to keep up with and to understand the digital world better than their children. This is crucial for guiding their children safely through the constantly changing digital landscape. Additionally, there is a call for developing critical approaches to content and questioning the purpose of digital tools requested by educators.

- **Well-being, safety and security**

  A significant concern is the increasing use of digital media in schools without adequate digital skills or awareness of potential dangers among the teachers. Parents find it challenging to set strict screen-time rules while working online from home. There is a strong desire to support children and teens in developing self-awareness and self-discipline regarding their screen time and the content they consume. Furthermore, the issues of addiction to social media and video games, as well as the use of reward systems through iPads in schools, were highlighted.

- **Parent cooperation and support**

  Parents expressed the need for a collective agreement or "contract" among parents on handling media at home, especially during visits from friends. They also seek support from other educational agencies and stress the importance of recognising and addressing imbalances in media use before they become too severe.

- **Media use at home**

  Accessibility of digital tools and the necessity of using screen time for work pose challenges for parents trying to set a good example for their children. Negotiating screen-time rules with children and instilling in them a genuine desire to use media for gaining wisdom are ongoing struggles. Participants also seek practical steps to address cases of screen addiction effectively.

The further HERMMES webinars will be based on these needs of the parents.

You can also build your own webinars, in Annex 2 you can find some useful examples, based on the joint experiences of the partners within and outside the project together with the template mentioned above.

Annex 1

Example of a door opener

Basic story

Clara (7): *Yippee, I won a smartphone in a prize contest!*

The seven year old Clara took part in a contest and won the first prize, a brand new smartphone. Clara is thrilled. Her siblings are jealous and want to try the new device. Her parents are not amused. A seven year old, with internet access day and night?

Clara's mother takes the iPhone and comments: *I need to discuss this with your father first.*

Clara is furious and shouts: *That's unfair! It's mine, give it to me!*

She retorts and slams the door.

Don´t turn the page - stop and think about different sequels.

Quite a cliff-hanger and well-known to many, isn't it? What do you think, how could this situation evolve? Before you go on to read about three possible scenarios of what could happen next, please stop and think.

We invite you to take a few minutes to think about:

- What would be the "worst case"?
- What fabulous best solution can you think of?
- What would be a realistic option in between the two?

Afterwards, you can discuss your ideas with a partner. If you have enough time, think about what advantages and disadvantages your scenarios have. Take both perspectives: the child's and caretaker's.

Scenario A

Clara's protest annoys her mum and she gives up. She gives back the smartphone to Clara immediately. All her classmates in the second grade are jealous, they want a smartphone. During the next few weeks, Clara's parents have an unusual amount of free time because Clara spends a lot of time on her phone.

Scenario B

The internet access is deactivated on her new device. Clara signs an agreement about rules for the use of her phone: it stays with her parents from 7 p.m. until after school. She uses it at the utmost one hour per day. If she doesn't stick to the rules, the device is taken away for a whole week.

Scenario C

Clara's father helps her to sell the brand new smartphone online. With the money, Clara and her friends spend a day at the adventure water park. There is still money left. Clara explains: "For three months I can buy ice cream sundaes instead of just one ice cone at the ice cream parlor every Sunday!"
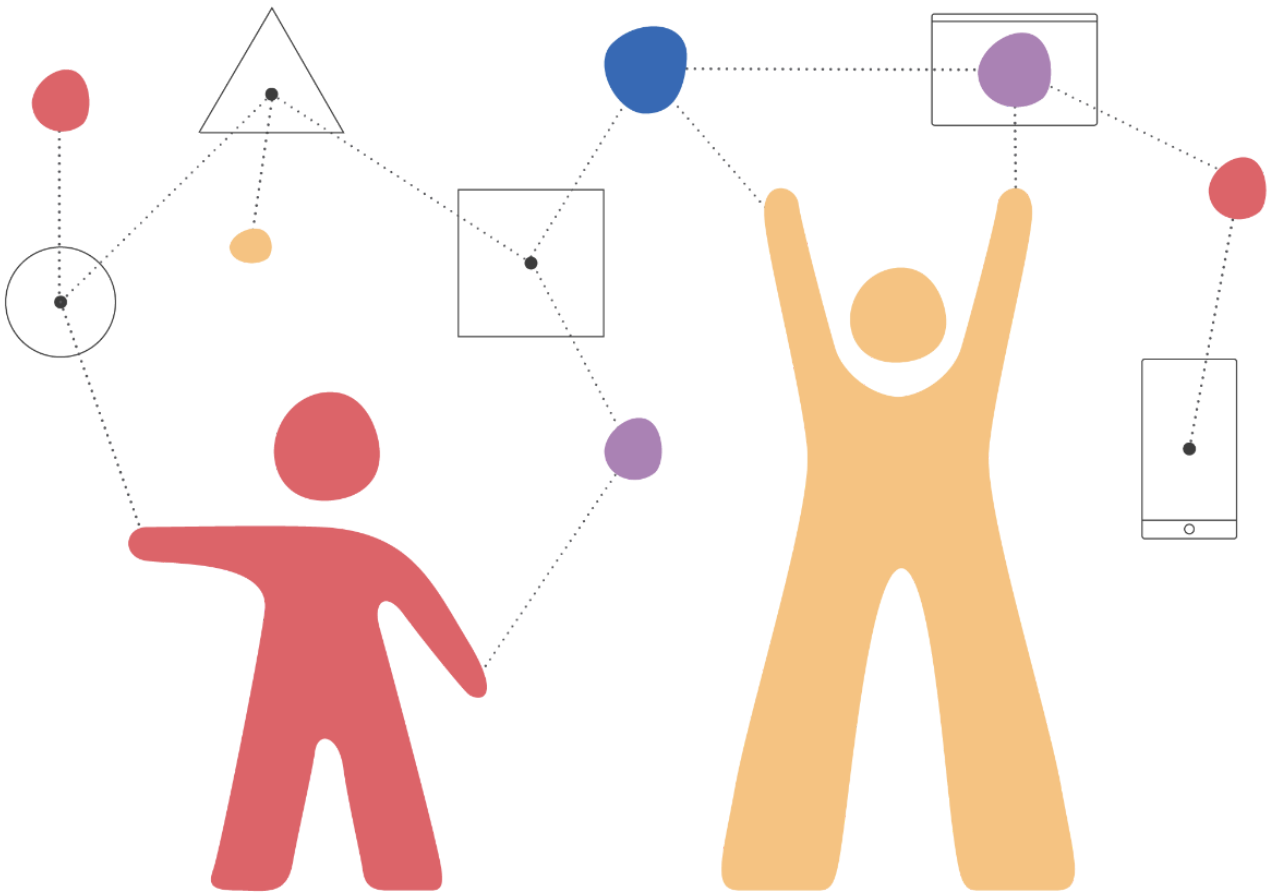
A, B, or C?

Decisions you make during the early years set the tracks for children's digital media habits for years to come.

Further information for parents:

- Wait Until 8th
- Smartphone-free Childhood
- Smarter Start ab 14
- Growing up healthy in a world of digital media, see also here with translations in more than 15 languages

Annex 2

How to build webinars - some useful recommendations

Choosing your topic

Once you have decided that you would like to organise a webinar, you should already have a specific topic in mind that you would like to talk about. In most cases, this will either be related to a current issue in your school, a planned change in the curriculum, or a new development in the field of digitalisation that has just come up. The latter could happen several times during your child's school career as this is an ongoing process and media literacy is therefore "a moving target".

If you haven't chosen the topic yet, browse through the HERMMES website, with a focus on the Community and culture guide, and the age- and topic-specific areas of the curriculum. Here are some further, specific ideas of what might be interesting to discuss (courtesy of one of our partners):

- Family media management

- Building communication and trust between family members

- Children's behavior on social media

- Online privacy

- Cybersecurity

- Cyber-bullying and hate speech

- Internet addiction

- Parental control tools

- Economic, social, and cultural aspects of media

- Role models and stereotypes

- Creating parental solidarity among the families in the class

For all these topics you can find ready-made presentations as well as hand-outs for trainers in English, Bulgarian, French, Greek, Italian, and Polish on the [Media Literacy for Parents](#).

Choosing your chanel

Before you can send out invitations, you also need to choose the platform on which the webinar will be delivered. This will depend on your resources but also on your needs, e.g., which platform can your organisation or the school provide? Do you need translation facilities? Does the platform offer the possibilities of break-out rooms for conversation in smaller groups? Do you want to record the meeting?

Some possible platforms include: [BigBlueButton](#), [Google Meet](#), [Jitsi](#), [MS Teams](#), [ZOOM](#) Translations can be done through [Kudo](#)

Inviting speakers and finding moderators

When choosing your topic, you will also need to reflect on who might be a suitable person for delivering the input that will get you started. This might be a teacher or a parent from your school, but also an external expert. You can take the presentations and hand-outs from the HERMMES material and distribute roles among volunteers in your organisation. You can also start a discussion on a certain topic using one of the door openers that have been developed in the framework of the HERMMES project and that are available on the website.

It is essential that your whole meeting has a capable moderator who can set the intention and make the bridge between the different elements of the webinar.

Invitations and registrations

Once you've decided on a topic, you'll need to choose a suitable date and time that will largely allow for your target group to participate. You need to inform people of the upcoming event on time, at the latest two months before the event.

This can be done in various ways:

- email invitations

- postings on social media

- postings in messaging groups

- posters in the school(s), community centers, or wherever you think that your target group might see them

- written newsletters distributed to the children

- oral announcements at parent evenings in the school or at other meetings

The invitation needs to also include information about the access to the webinar, whether you require registration (link to an eventual registration form), in which language the webinar will be held and whether you offer translation and into which languages (simultaneous or AI driven, verbal or written).

You need to be extremely precise in what you offer in order not to disappoint participants. Do not raise your goals and intentions too high, one webinar can give inspiration but cannot change the whole culture around the topic.

Registrations will allow you to not only have an overview on who would like to attend but also to send information about the access to your webinar only to people who have registered thus avoiding unpleasant intrusion during your event that might occur if you just post the link freely on social media.

In your registration form you should also foresee information regarding the recording or the possibility of taking pictures during the event and ask for participants' consent, usually done with a box to tick next to an explanatory paragraph.

Do not be disappointed if only a small number of the registered participants show up. This is a world-wide tendency: people get enthusiastic about the topic and register, but they are all busy with their work and family life where unexpected events can pop up till the last minute.
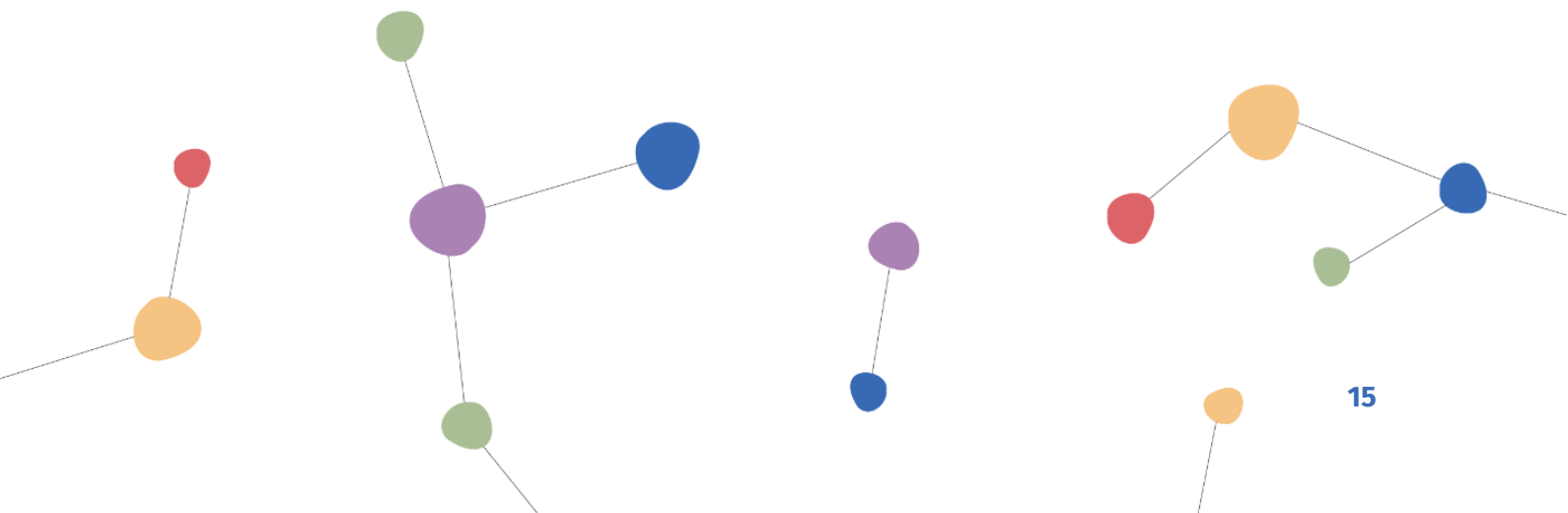
During the event

A suggestion for structuring your event with the different phases and activities can be found in this annex. This is an outcome of webinars that we have had during the full lifetime of the HERMMES project with a wide range of target groups. We also took into account the try-out parents webinars, e.g. those organised during the All Digital Week 2024. Make sure you have a lively dynamic flow during the webinar. Listening to lengthy speeches online (or offline) is sleep-inducing and participants will take much less away with them than when experiencing lively discussions and deepening of the topic.
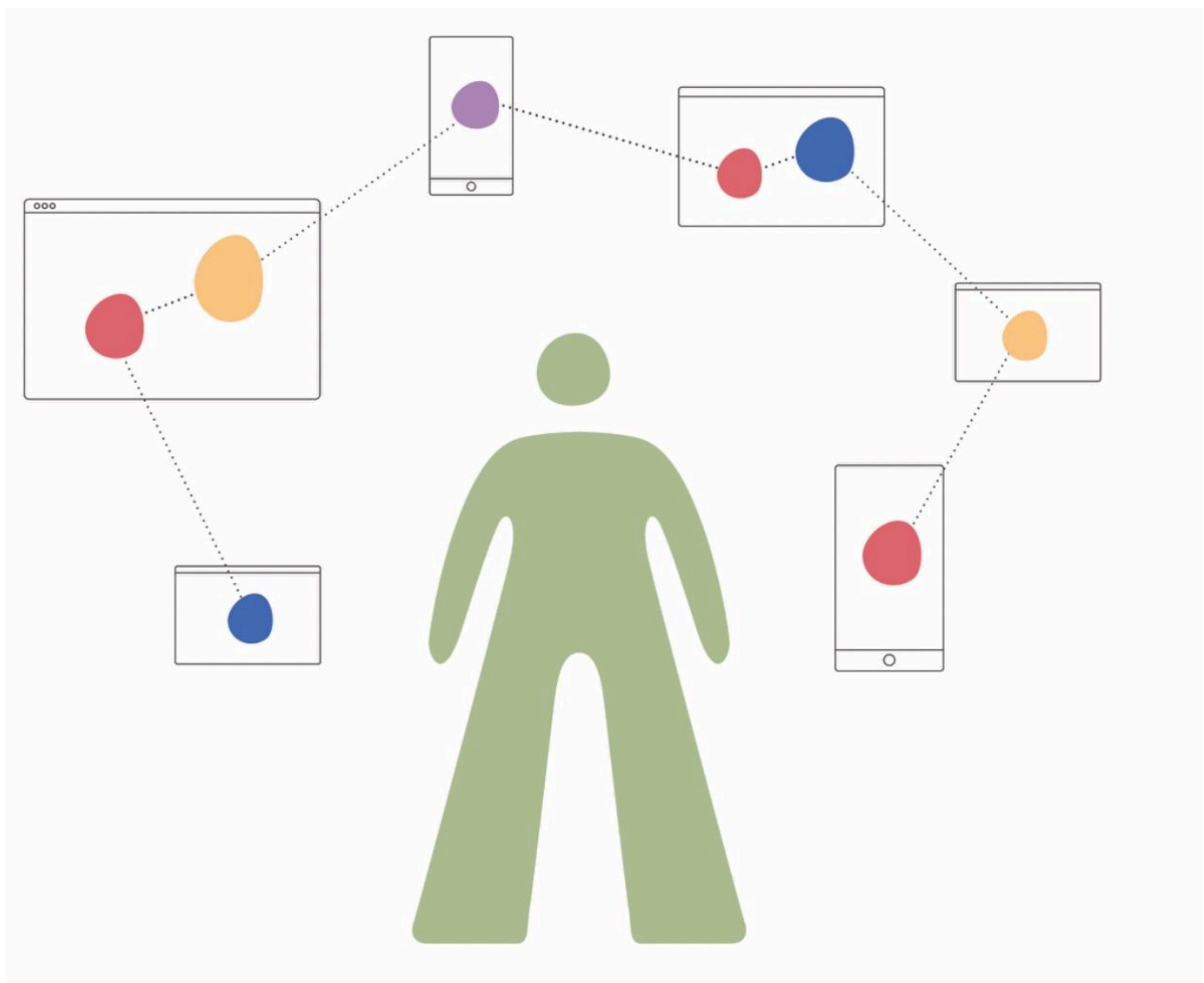
Length of the webinar

Even when having a nice flow of the webinar with lots of interesting elements, people need breaks. If your webinar is longer than 1,5 hour (that is the maximum length you should have in one go), make sure that you give a lengthy break to yourself and the participants taking into the total length of the webinar (e.g., if you plan two hours, stop for 20 minutes after one; if you plan three hours, stop after 1,5 for 30 minutes).

After the event

Once your webinar is finished, think of saving the recording and also the chat. Both will help you to summarise the results of the webinar that you can then not only share with the participants but also with a wider audience in your school community or even beyond on the local, regional, or national level.

You can also publish a recording of (certain elements of) the webinar.

Recording

You may want to add an introductory image to your recording as a kind of "cover" that holds the title of the webinar and maybe some additional information about the organiser(s). If a slide containing this information was shown at the beginning of the meeting it might be perfectly fine to use.

When looking at the recordings of webinars, we noticed that the lively discussion that we enjoyed during the meeting might feel confusing for spectators later on. So if you want to publish the recordings later on, this needs careful editing.

In your thank you email or letter to the participants you could mention the availability of the recording and you can also promote it on the channels used for the invitations to reach a broader audience.

Certificates

There are certain webinars and audiences that might benefit from preparing online certificates. The possibility of issuing a certificate of attendance should already be taken into account when preparing for a webinar.

Some people might have to leave their workplace earlier in order to participate and would request written proof that they've taken part in the webinar, others might need it to show that they are investing in their personal development. Whatever the reason might be, you can send these out after the event together with the link to the recording and/or a summary of the results.

The structure of the webinar

This is a suggestion based on our experience of how to structure your webinar in a table format. You'll need to adapt this to your needs and context. There are almost no time indications so that you will be able to decide for yourself where to allocate more or less time according to your priorities and the available time frame.

1 - Arriving, welcome

OBJECTIVES:

Creating a friendly atmosphere

ACTIVITIES:

Welcome, invite participants to write something in the chat

You could play some background music while people connect, this helps in those awkward first moments when people do not know what to do or say. Turning off the music means the start of the webinar.

2 - Introduction

OBJECTIVES:

Showing expertise and thereby creating trust

ACTIVITIES:

Moderators introduce themselves briefly

3 - Netiquette

OBJECTIVES:

Setting rules, thereby creating a safe space, ensuring security

ACTIVITIES:

Mute the microphone when not speaking, use the camera when possible, chat etiquette etc.

Use the term "mute your microphone" instead of "mute yourself"

4 - Intention (before or after check-in)

OBJECTIVES:

Creating transparency, providing orientation

ACTIVITIES:

Explain in a few words the clear intention and goal of the meeting

5 - Landing

OBJECTIVES:

This creates the feeling of presence in the individual and it connects people

ACTIVITIES:

Breathing, arriving in the space, silence, connecting

You can use different methods for this, a couple of minutes are already enough

6 - Check-in

OBJECTIVES:

Everyone gets the opportunity to be heard briefly, everyone takes notice of each other once. A dialogue space is opened.

ACTIVITIES:

The participants briefly introduce themselves with name, school, subject or with a word/sentence to a question. Depending on the number, everyone writes something in the chat/or the participants are divided into break-out rooms to briefly introduce themselves in pairs or groups of three.

Pay attention to the timing! Clear task, aim at brief interventions, 1 sentence or 1 word – especially when there are many people, it can be easier to do this in break out rooms or to do the check-in in the chat

7 - Artistic activity, depending on the subject

OBJECTIVES:

Deepening the understanding, engaging with the topic in a hands-on way.

ACTIVITIES:

These can be diverse and should relate to your topic.

Do not fear the word "artistic". It can be any little activity that is not uncomfortable for your target group.

8 - Input

OBJECTIVES:

Bringing the focus to the topic, offering latest research results or findings from a survey, etc.

ACTIVITIES:

20-30 minutes talk or presentation

This can be done by an external expert or any other inspiring speaker from the field

9 - Room for questions

OBJECTIVES:

Concise answers where possible or simply collect questions

ACTIVITIES:

Participants can ask questions - either orally or in the chat

Attention: avoid long comments that take the form of additional presentations, ask people to be concise. Do not fear to break off people if necessary

10 - Break-out rooms (pairs or small groups)

OBJECTIVES:

The goal must be clear and explained well:
- space for free dialogue and exchange
- collecting examples
- finding common ground for policy demands etc.

ACTIVITIES:

Space for dialogue - with a specific (!) work assignment.

Important:
- give enough time
- point out that the participants should pay attention
  to equal distribution of speaking time

11 - Harvest / exchange

OBJECTIVES:

Exchange and mutual perception, enabling, saving the results, giving a meaning to the participation

ACTIVITIES:

Bringing the thoughts from the break-out rooms to the plenary. Can be in the form of oral contributions, by writing in the chat, or on an online pinboard.

Attention: longer presentations by individuals should be avoided

12 - Consonance / outlook

OBJECTIVES:

"Closing" of the space, creating a context

ACTIVITIES:

Formulate a conclusion, agree on or announce possible further meetings, indicate whether a recording will be made available and where, inform whether presentations will be made available and where

13 - Check-out

OBJECTIVES:

Everyone is recognised again, perceived again, can contribute something, is valued.

ACTIVITIES:

One word, one sentence, 'what do I take with me, what was important for me, what to do next'

14 - Gratitude

ACTIVITIES:

Thanking everyone for their participation