

National report for Belgium

By Joke Bauwens,

Contribution to the European report:

Stald, G. and Haddon, L. (2008) *Cross-Cultural Contexts of Research: Factors Influencing the Study of Children and the Internet in Europe*. A report for the EC Safer Internet Plus Programme, 2008.

This report is partly based on my own research and knowledge of the Belgian research context, and partly on the report *Mapping Media and Communication Research: Belgium*, by Liina Puustinen & Itur Akdogan, Communication Research Centre, University of Helsinki, Department of Communication, Research Reports 7/2008 (<http://www.valt.helsinki.fi/blogs/crc/en/mapping.htm>)¹.

Universities and Disciplines

Universities in Belgium are divided according to the linguistic regions and the ideological cleavages (catholic versus liberal) of the country. They are further subdivided into regional networks. The small, multilingual (Dutch – French – German) and federal character of Belgium has an influence on the constitution and nature of the Belgian higher educational landscape. There are 15 main universities in Belgium, spread over Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels. In the German speaking part of Belgium there is no university.

Dutch Speaking Community (Flanders)			
College-University Brussels (HUB) (before: Catholic University Brussels)	http://www.hubrussel.be	Vrijheidslaan 17 1080 Koekelberg	
Catholic University Leuven (KUL)	http://www.kuleuven.be	Oude Markt 13 5005 3000 Leuven	
Free University Brussels (VUB)	http://www.vub.ac.be	Pleinlaan 2 1050 Elsene	
University Antwerp (UA)	http://www.ua.ac.be	Prinsstraat 13 2000 Antwerpen	
University Ghent (UG)	http://www.ugent.be	Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 25 9000 Gent	
University Hasselt (+ Transnational University Limburg) (UH)	http://www.uhasselt.be	Agoralaan 3590 Diepenbeek	

¹ Belgium is a federal state with two types of government. The federal state government carries responsibility for the judicial system, social security, nuclear energy, monetary policy, public finances in general, defence, the federal police and the international organisations that have their headquarters in Belgium. The community government of Flanders and Wallonia is responsible for the community's economical and cultural policy matters. The field of education comes under community government. Scientific research is mainly a community matter, although there are some federal institutions that commission and subsidize research projects. Depending on the angle from which the issue of young people and ICT are discussed and researched (e.g. judicial and police-related matters are on a federal level, educational matters are on a community level), federal or community state institutions will produce and provide data, information and reports. Albeit a small country, the complexity of this multilevel government system sometimes makes it difficult to give clear and full explanations under the themes listed below.

French Speaking Community (Wallonia)		
Catholic University Louvain (UCL)	http://www.ucl.ac.be	Place de l'Université 1 1348 Louvain-la-Neuve
Catholic University Mons (FUCAM)	http://www.fucam.ac.be	Chaussée de Binche 151 7000 Mons
Free University Brussels (ULB)	http://www.ulb.ac.be	Avenue Franklin Roosevelt 50 1050 Ixelles
Faculty University Agricultural (Agronomical) Sciences Gembloux (FSAGX)	http://www.fsagx.ac.be	Passage des Déportés 2 5030 Gembloux
Faculty University Saint-Louis (FUSL)	http://www.fusl.ac.be	Bld du Jardin Botanique 43 1000 Bruxelles
Faculty University Notre-Dame de la Paix (FUNDP)	http://www.fundp.ac.be	Rue de Bruxelles 61 5000 Namur
University Liege (ULG)	http://www.ulg.ac.be	Place du Vingt Août 9 4000 Liege
University Mons-Hainaut (UMH)	http://www.umh.ac.be	Place du Parc 20 7000 Mons
Faculty of Engineering Mons (FPMS)	http://www.fpms.ac.be	Rue de Houdain 9 7000 Mons

Catholic University Brussels (now College University Brussel//Hogeschool Universiteit Brussel), Catholic University Leuven (Dutch speaking faculty), Free University Brussels (Dutch-speaking faculty), University Antwerp, University Ghent and University Hasselt (+ Transnational University Limburg in cooperation with University Maastricht in the Netherlands) are situated within the Flemish Community.

Catholic University Louvain (French-speaking faculty), Catholic University Mons, Free University Brussels (French-speaking faculty), Faculty University Agronomical Sciences Gembloux, Faculty University Saint-Louis, Faculty University Notre-Dame de la Paix, University Liege, University Mons-Hainaut and Faculty of Engineering Mons belong to the French Community.

Even though Belgium is largely secular, the network of catholic universities is the strongest. There are two liberal universities in Brussels- the Flemish and French-speaking free universities of Brussels.

With 10 Belgian universities offering a communication bachelors and/or masters, communication/media studies definitely do exist as a discipline in Belgium. Although a relatively young discipline as it only fully established itself in the 1970s, communication studies have built up quite a strong reputation in a short time and are continuously on the rise. Each language community has its own institutions and research traditions.

In Flanders, communication courses are well developed and communication studies in Flanders are internationally famous. Unlike some universities in the French Community where the discipline is often part of the social or political sciences, the Flemish universities recognise communication studies as a strong discipline in its own right. Underlying the strong character of communication studies in the Flemish community is the choice between various orientations offered to students (e.g. Media and Culture, Film Studies, Visual Culture, Information Society, Media and Politics, Journalism). Each university approaches communication studies slightly differently and gives its own specific "meaning" to it. The grand presence of many well established communication research centres and groups within the universities is a clear sign that this discipline, although young, has found its place in the Belgian academic landscape. Flemish communication scholars are oriented mainly to the Anglo-American research traditions (more empirical), and they participate in the international English speaking academic community.

The Flemish community of communication scholars is fairly small, but departments and some colleges (polytechnics) are grouped in loose cooperative networks. The universities of

Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent have a joint association. The University of Leuven heads the association of Catholic universities.

Flemish Community			
	Bachelor	Master	Research
College-University Brussels	X (There was a Bachelors degree in communication studies till 2008-09)	X	
Catholic University Leuven	Bachelors in communication studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - media culture - ICT & communication management - media effects 	Masters in communication studies	School for mass communication research Centre for media culture & communication technology Media centre (composed of training centre for applied communication technology and centre for usability research)
Free University Brussels	Bachelors in communication studies. 3 rd year students choose an orientation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - business communication & marketing - media, politics & citizenship - media & culture - information society & globalisation 	Masters in communication studies	SMIT/IBBT: studies/research on media, information & telecommunication CEMESCO: research centre media & culture studies
University Antwerp	Bachelors in communication studies	Masters in communication studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - visual studies & media culture - political communication - strategic communication 	Research group media, policy & culture Research group political communication Research group strategic communication Research group visual culture & communication Research group language, media & socialisation
University Ghent	Bachelors in communication studies	Masters in communication studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - communication management - film- & television studies - media, society & policy - journalism 	OMC: research centre media and communication Research group media & ICT Working group film- & television studies Centre for journalism studies
University Hasselt (+ Transnational University Limburg)	X	X	

French Community			
	Bachelor	Master	Research
Catholic University Louvain	Bachelors in information and communication	Masters in information and communication choosing one of the following orientations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - information & journalism - media, culture & education - PR & business communication - in depth communication: theoretical and research formation 	GREMS: research group in knowledge mediation (1995) LASCO: laboratory of organisation communication systems analysis (1999) ORM: observatory of media account (1991)
Catholic University Mons	Bachelors in human and social sciences with the possibility of choosing orientation information and communication	X	
Free University Brussels	Bachelors in information and communication	Masters in information and communication Master information and communication studies and technologies	Script writing & analysis Group history & information of the media Médias-TIC: media & information & communication technology studies OME: observatory media in Europe INFODOC: information and documentation science Compstat: informational statistics Theatre LMTD
Faculty University Agricultural (Agronomical) Sciences Gembloux	X	X	
Faculty University Saint-Louis	Bachelors in information and communication	X	
Faculty University Notre-Dame de la Paix	Bachelor (political sciences and) information and communication	X	GRICI: interdisciplinary research group on communication and information
University Liege	Bachelors in information and communication	Masters in information and communication Masters in information and communication studies and technologies	
University Mons-Hainaut	1 st Bachelors in human and social sciences with a 2 nd Bachelors option of information and communication	X	

The communication discipline – especially communication research - is slightly less developed in the French-speaking part of Belgium. The Catholic University Louvain, Catholic University Mons, Free University Brussels, Faculty University Saint-Louis, Faculty University Notre-Dame de la Paix, University Liege and University Mons-Hainaut all offer a bachelor in communication studies. In comparison to the Flemish universities, only 3 (Brussels, Louvain and Liege) universities offer a communication master program. The Walloon scholars draw their influences more from the French research traditions (more theoretical), although they have become more open to Anglo-American research traditions as well.

Generally, the departments that are part of Humanities Faculties have a more philosophical, literary and aesthetic orientation, whereas those located in Social Sciences Faculties are more empirically oriented.

With almost all universities offering an informatics study (bachelors and masters), IT/new media/informatics definitely does exist as a discipline in Belgium. It does however have an almost entirely technological approach, with universities focusing mainly on computer science, computer skills and software development. The courses are computer technology (software & hardware) oriented. Apart from a few courses studying the human and social aspects of computer use offered by universities like University Hasselt, Free University Brussels and Catholic University Leuven, a sociological and/or cultural basis is lacking. The Free University Brussels (VUB) stands out by offering 2nd & 3rd year computer sciences students the possibility of choosing the orientation 'Society and Economy' and specifically paying attention to human and societal factors and interactions. In addition, they also offer 3rd year bachelor communication students the possibility of choosing the orientation 'Information society and Globalisation' focusing on ICT in a social and international context.

Aside from traditional bachelor and master courses, there also is the graduate school in computing sciences, an educational establishment set up by a partnership of 6 universities (UCL, ULB, ULG, FUND, UMH & FPMs) and 3 academies (Academy Louvain, Academy Wallonia-Brussels & Academy Wallonia-Europe) in the French Community.

The presence of many research units within the informatics field underlines the strong establishment of informatics in the academic landscape.

Flemish Community			
	Bachelor	Master	Research
College-University Brussels	X (There is a bachelor Applied informatics on college level)	X	
Catholic University Leuven	Bachelor informatics sciences	Master informatics sciences	DTAI: declarative languages & AI DISTRINET: distributive systems & computer networks SOM: software development methods HMDB: hypermedia & databases GRAPHICS: computer graphics
Free University Brussels	Bachelor computer/informatics sciences 2 nd year students choose an orientation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - software systems - computer systems - society & economy 	Master engineering sciences: computer/informatics sciences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - artificial intelligence - multimedia - software engineering - web- & information systems Master applied informatics	Adaptive Systems Group & Computational Intelligence Group) Artificial Intelligence Laboratory Laboratory for Theoretical Computer Science Programming Technology Lab System and Software Engineering Lab Semantics Technology and Applications Research Laboratory Web & Information Systems Engineering
University Antwerp	Bachelor informatics	Master informatics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - computational sciences - data-information management - software engineering - telecommunications 	Research group formal techniques in software developments Research group success analysis & telecommunication systems Research group developments database systems Research group computational modelling & programming
University Ghent	Bachelor informatics	Master informatics	Research Group applied mathematics and informatics
University Hasselt (+ Transnational University Limburg)	Bachelor informatics, knowledge technology & ICT	Master informatics, knowledge technology & ICT	EDM: expert centre of digital media Research group theoretical informatics

French Community			
	Bachelor	Master	Research
Catholic University Louvain	Bachelor informatics sciences	Master informatics sciences Graduate school in computing sciences.	
Catholic University Mons	X	X	
Free University Brussels		Graduate school in computing sciences.	
Faculty University Agricultural (Agronomical) Sciences Gembloux	X	X	
Faculty University Saint-Louis	X	X	
Faculty University Notre-Dame de la Paix	Bachelor informatics sciences	Master informatics sciences Master informatics & innovation Graduate school in computing sciences.	Research centre in information system engineering
University Liege	Bachelor informatics sciences	Master informatics sciences Graduate school in computing sciences.	
University Mons-Hainaut		Graduate school in computing sciences.	Institute of informatics
Faculty of Engineering Mons	X (Offers informatics courses within its engineering programme.)	X (Offers some informatics courses within its engineering programme.) Graduate school in computing sciences.	

National Data Collected

-The National Institute of Statistics (NIS) (<http://www.statbel.fgov.be/>) - its official name now is DG Statistical and Economical Information, but it is more known as the NIS – is the main official statistical institution in Belgium. It is a division of the Federal Public Service for Economy, SMEs, Self-employed and Energy. The NIS collects, processes and publishes on a regular basis (e.g. annually, every 6 months) statistical and economical information about a large variety of aspects of life (e.g. environment, climate, demography, population, family, health, education, agriculture, industry, tourism, mobility, including communication media, audiovisual media and the Internet. Data on various aspects related to the Internet are provided: Internet penetration in Belgian society, Internet access, infrastructure, Internet users, Internet activities, time spent on the Internet, e-government, e-commerce, Internet in the business world, etc. It collects qualitative and quantitative information from economic and social actors followed by adding a critical evaluation, verification and validation of the information. The collected data, grouped together in tables, are made accessible for the public.

-The Federal Plan Bureau (<http://www.plan.be>) is a public institution that carries out studies concerning economical, social and environmental policy issues, always with a clear view to the future and in a context of sustainable development. Although not a key issue, it also provides some data on the Internet, e.g. the contribution ICTs to economic performance, the economic and social impact of ICTs, connection between ICTs and poverty, the evolution and development of e-government.

-The Federal Computer Crime Unit occasionally carries out research and consequently collects data concerning Internet and computer crime. Data on, for example, Internet paedophiles are collected by the FCCU.

-The Belgian Institute for Postal Services and Telecommunications (BIPT) prepares telecom market monitoring and market analyses (e.g. statistics on broadband access) in Belgium.

For Flanders:

-The Administration Planning and Statistics (APS) (<http://aps.vlaanderen.be>) of the Flemish Community monitors various aspects of Flanders. This research service is the central agency concerning public statistics about the Flemish part of Belgium. In a scientifically and independent way, the APS carries out research concerning demographical, social, societal and macro-economical themes always starting from a relevant policy question/issue. This agency undertakes survey research, carries out strategic management and collects relevant data/statistics about a great variety of themes. It also provides online databases. In that regard the agency fulfils an advisory function and provides information to other policy agencies that have methodological questions concerning statistics and surveys as research methods and in practical research questions. Internet Statistics Flanders is a study carried out as part of the digital action plan of the Flemish Government, called *e-Flanders*, that maps the entire internet population (private and professional internet use) and develops reliable internet data/statistics.

-Also relevant concerning Internet data collection is the "ICT-Monitoring for Flanders (<https://projects.ibbt.be/monit/>)-project, ordered by the Flemish government. Its goal is to develop an instrument capable of collecting Flemish ICT data/statistics in a systematic, precise and reliable way in order to provide a broad monitoring of the Flemish ICT sector and encourage the exchange of information and knowledge between the government and organisations.

-IWT-Vlaanderen (<http://www.iwt.be>) is a institute set up by the government for the promotion of innovation in science and technology in Flanders. Sporadic reports are published that provide relevant data concerning ICT in Flanders.

For Wallonia:

-Agence Wallonne des Télécommunications: le portail des Technologies de l'Information et de la Communication (AWT) (www.awt.be) is a public institution in Wallonia, created in 1999 and attached to the Walloon Ministry of Science, ICT and International relations. Its aims are to promote ICT use and access. AWT carries out research (mostly quantitative) on the use of and access to ICT in the French speaking community of Belgium. It publishes on its website statistics and short reports on different ICT related aspects in Wallonia. On July 3 2008 the results from a survey on the ICT use of Walloon citizens (from 15-years-old on) were made public. All statistics and reports are publicly available on the website of AWT.

For Belgium:

-OIVO-CROC (<http://www.oivo-crioc.org/>) is the research and documentation centre of consumer organisations. It is subsidised by the Federal Government and some European programmes. Its aims are to provide technical assistance to consumer organisations, to promote consumer protection and to empower consumers. In addition, OIVO-CRIOC represents consumers in commissions and working groups at all levels (subnational, national

and European) and carries out studies related to issues dealt within these commissions and groups. Its role in providing answers/information to questions put to it by consumer organisations and the Federal Public Service for Economy, SMEs, Self-employed and Energy is also very important. Considered as vulnerable consumers, minors are given special attention. OIVO-CRIOC carries out research concerning diverse aspects of youth consumption and promotes protection of this group. Making children aware of online consumer risks and educating them is a priority. In partnership with Child Focus, ISPA Belgium (the Belgian Association of Internet Service Providers), the Information and Advisory Centre concerning harmful sects, and the Centre for Equality of Rights and the Combat of Racism, OIVO-CRIOC set up the Safer Internet Project Belgium (<http://www.saferinternet.be>) – as part of the Safer Internet Project Plus of the European Commission - in 2004 to promote smart and safe internet and ICT use. The project deals with issues such as e-commerce, consumer deception, e-privacy, e-marketing, e-gaming and e-gambling. Within the framework of this programme, research is carried out and consequently data are collected (e.g. how children are spending their free time; gaming and youth; access to mobile phones and Internet).

The lowest age of the sample is usually 15-16 or 18.

Statistics that include very young children (toddlers and children in primary school), are collected only by market research bureaus (see below).

-Since 1997, InSites Consulting (<http://www.insites.be>) - an Internet research company that provides marketing consultancy - dominates Internet market research in Belgium. It draws on an online panel of more than 2, 000,000 members spread over 25 countries and building on partnerships with non-commercial partners (universities, academic organizations, innovative platforms, etc.). Of great importance are their Belgian Internet Mappings – conducted every 6 months - reports, which have become a reference for Internet figures (Internet access, users, usage, behaviour, technology, privacy & security) in Belgium. In a broader European context, InSites is also the main engine behind the eScape study (<http://www.escape-reports.com>), which offers an overview of the European Internet landscape and insights into socio-demographic information, Internet attitudes and the behaviour of the European Internet user. In addition to the Internet Mapping reports, InSites has recently launched 2 other kinds of informative data using a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods: Belgian Mobile Mapping and Belgian Media Mapping. On the basis of these data (collected both online and offline), these maps – covering the 15+ population - provide insight into development and trends on the Internet, mobile applications and iDTV adoption in Belgium. This Internet research has the objective of mapping the orientation and the conduct/behaviour of the European (in 14 countries) Internet users. InSites also devotes a good deal of attention to kids and youth within the Internet and other media communication technologies framework. (More on that below.)

-Internet Service Providers Association of Belgium (IPSA) (<http://www.ipsa.be>) is a non-profit organisation created to promote the interests of Internet providers active in the Belgian market and to promote the Internet in Belgium. Its members account for 97% of the Internet connections in Belgium. This association is also active at a regulatory, legislative and technical level on behalf of its members and of the industry in general. IPSA offers a forum for discussions with Government and other organisations of relevance to the Internet Industry. To guarantee high quality, it also creates, promotes and maintains a Code of Conduct for Internet Providers in Belgium. ISPA publishes a quarterly market survey, carried out by Political Intelligence, and an external consultancy on the development of the Belgian Internet market. It promotes the availability of accurate information about the Internet in Belgium. ISPA is also one of the partners of InSites. Within the framework of this partnership, ISPA is the official source of data regarding the number and type of subscriptions for the 'Belgian Internet Mapping Survey'. Thousands of Internet users are questioned in this bi-annual market research about their views and activities with regard to the Internet in Belgium.

-Agoria (<http://www.agoria.be>) is a sector federation that unites companies from the technology industry and represents them. It regularly publishes figures on the conjuncture of

the IT sector. Although there is no specific focus on the Internet itself, some data concerning the IT sector could be of relevance.

-Beltug (<http://www.beltug.be>) is Belgium's largest independent communication technology and services user group that brings together ICT professionals from the public and the private sector. This group regularly publishes data concerning the telecommunications market in Belgium. More than 670 members actively share their knowledge with each other, benefiting from expert reports, workshops, conferences, publications and lobbying. Four main areas of interest are covered: impact on business strategy and plans, application of technology, service management and quality issues, contractual, legal and policy issues.

-DNS (<http://www.dns.be>) is a non-profit organisation set up by ISPA, Agoria and Beltug in 1999 as a .be domain name registration service. Its mission is to regulate and coordinate registration, make the Internet more accessible and encourage Internet use. Domain name registration statistics are published yearly for each month.

-IDC Benelux (<http://www.idc.com/benelux/>) – a division of IDC – is a provider of market intelligence, advisory services and events for the information technology, telecommunication and consumer technology markets that regularly provides data on the Internet in a business related context (for example: IT vertical market spending report).

-InSites Consulting devotes attention specifically to children and young people with its *On Track series* – a continuation and deepening of the Belgian Youth Online study that takes a look at the evolution of new media among the so-called web generation and provides data on kids', teens' and youth's online experiences (<http://www.youthonline.be>). Subdivided into 3 projects, it provides data on what is happening on youngsters screens ("On Screen"), what they are consuming in the playground and what is considered cool there ("On the playground"), and finally how youngsters are influencing spending at home ("On the house"). All reports are available for 3 target groups: kids (6-11), teens (12-17) and young adults (18-24). Building further upon the need for clear information on insight in young people, InSites set up their own Kids, Youth and Trend Knowledge Center "On Sneakers". InSites often employs participatory research techniques where they establish a dialogue with youngsters (via various research techniques) and seek insights into what the near future of media/communication usage will look like. They also address the issue of internet security and privacy in their projects.

In partnership with MTV Networks and Kids2, InSites Consulting set up the ICU event (<http://www.i-see-you.be>) where the "Me, MySpace and I" research was presented. This ethnographic study investigated what the on- and offline life of teenagers (13-17) looks like today and how the development of their identity is influenced by 2.0 and 0.0 media brands. -Insites collects data on 3 age groups: children (6-11), teens (12-17) and young adults (18-24). -The lowest age of the samples concerning research with predominantly data on adults is usually 16 or 18.

-Some of the InSites research projects within their "Kids, Youth and Knowledge Centre" have been followed up over time. In addition, although not specifically focused on children, the Belgian Internet Mapping of InSites (in partnership with ISPA) is carried out every 6 months. -Furthermore, the Internet Statistics within eFlanders and the ICT survey of NIS know a follow up over time.

Institutional processes in applying to conduct research

There are no national nor sub-national regulations about what can and cannot be researched. In Flanders the interuniversity council VLIR (Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad) supervises the teaching and research in the Flemish universities. In a similar way there is a Council of Rectors (vice-chancellors) of the French speaking universities (CREF, Le Conseil des Recteurs des Universités Francophones de Belgique). However, apart from medical-ethical issues (experiments on animals and human beings; genetic manipulation), specific and explicit regulations about what cannot be researched are not stipulated.

We do not know about any one committee that checks all research proposals. This most certainly does not exist on a national level. On a sub-national level (community level) VLIR and CREF (see question a) play a supervising role, but they do not check all research proposals that are designed at the universities. In Flanders and Wallonia, it is the university and the subsidising institution that check the research proposals. Some universities and subsidising institutions are more stringent than others before they approve research proposals. It seems that the strictness of the process and the stages a research proposal must pass before it can be approved, depends on the culture and philosophical orientation (catholic, pluralist, liberal) of the institutions involved.

Each institution has its own tradition, but it is clear that as soon as a research proposal gets financing from the university, department or an external funding organisation, the proposal has to be checked before it can proceed. In the social sciences and humanities, attention is paid mostly to (possible) juridical complications and implications the research proposal might have. In connection to this, several institutions have become especially alert for juridical issues when studying minors.

Pressures to conduct research

In Flanders, a professor's contract usually specifies 40% teaching and 60% research. In order to progress and to get promotion, professors need to do research. Pressure has become greater due to the Bologna reform and the rationalisation plans of the Minister of Education (fewer but larger universities), which both led to a higher competition among the universities and their staffs to excel and therefore to legitimate their continued existence.

Since the Flemish universities are under pressure to seek external funding, pressure to cooperate with industry also has assumed greater proportions. Because universities are encouraged by the Flemish Government to undertake more applied research (that benefit the economy, industry and population in the Flemish community), especially in the Flemish departments of Media and Communication Studies more and more research projects are commissioned, financed or elaborated in close collaboration with the industry. One of the most important developments here has been the creation of the Institute for Broadband Technology (IBBT) in Flanders. This research consortium and funding organisation was established by the Flemish government and plays a significant role in coordinating the research funds of industry-driven projects. Encouraging ICT innovation and stimulating the ICT economy, are the main objectives of IBBT. IBBT brings together companies, authorities and non-profit organisations to join forces on research projects. The emphasis is clearly on applied, business-orientated research on different aspects of broadband technology. Three research groups in Media and Communication studies are involved in IBBT: SMIT at the Free University of Brussels, MICT at the University of Ghent and CUO at the University of Leuven.

In Wallonia some universities have research contracts with private companies (e.g. UCL, ULB), but this kind of research projects are less popular among French speaking academics because they require more administrative work and have tighter deadlines. There is no equivalent to IBBT. Applied research, therefore, is funded much less frequently in Wallonia than in Flanders. A few industry-orientated programmes such as FRIA and FIRST by the Walloon region give grants for PhD research projects.

Factors influencing the orientation of research

Through the IBBT the collaboration and contact between media and communication scholars on the one hand and the IT industry on the other hand, have become everyday in Flanders. In other departments of the social sciences and humanities, the collaboration and contact between academia and industry has also become much closer, but in Media and Communication Studies this is clearly much more the case. The situation in Wallonia is different. There the industry is less inclined to collaborate with academics

There are many examples to give here. The Ministry of Media and the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport in the Flemish Community sometimes ask for certain types of research and invite universities to bid. One recent example was a bid to do research on news magazines for teenagers (from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports). In Flanders these two Government Ministries are the most active in launching calls for research projects related to minors and/or ICT.

The Brussels Government launches every year a call for research that must lead to social, economic and cultural policy recommendations. Every year several topics are listed as top priorities. Researchers are asked to submit research proposals within these topics. A few industry-orientated programmes such as FRIA and FIRST by the Walloon region give grants for PhD research projects.

There are research councils that ask for certain types of research.

-In Belgium, the public funding organisation Federal Science Policy has a research programme called 'Future and Society', which explicitly invites researchers to do research on ICT (see <http://www.belspo.be/ta/>).

-In Flanders, Institute for the Promotion of Innovation by Science and Technology (IWT) is a funding organisation that focuses on stimulating and supporting technological and scientific innovation. ICT is one of the main research themes on which researchers are invited to submit research proposals.

In Flanders, in the context of IBBT this happens regularly (see question f). Also in the context of IWT-proposals (see question h) universities get in touch with the industry (e.g. media industry) to make suggestions for research and to form partnerships.

National Research Traditions

Quantitative research is well-established in Flanders, both within the social sciences as within education. In Flanders, the media and communications departments that are more oriented to social sciences, have a stronger tradition in quantitative research.

In Flanders, there is a well-established tradition of qualitative research. In particular the Media and Communications Departments, rooted in the tradition of humanities and semiotics, have a strong qualitative research tradition. Within social sciences and education, it is the cultural sociologists and (critical) pedagogues who also have a well-established tradition of qualitative research.

In Wallonia, various qualitative approaches to media analysis (journalism, visual culture) are well-established. Compared to Flanders, the focus is more on the qualitative analysis of media content than on media reception and consumption.

After World War I, the Belgian Press Federation incited the universities (at that time the universities were predominantly French speaking) to organise courses in journalism. At first, only the French speaking liberal university in Brussels (Université Libre de Bruxelles) organised lectures on journalism. From the 1930s on, the Catholic Church also devoted itself for the foundation of the Institute for Journalism at the Catholic University of Leuven. The first Departments of Media and Communication Studies were founded after World War II (in 1945 in Brussels; in 1946 in Leuven).

The first studies of the mass media can be found at the UCL/KUL (until 1968 there was only one, predominantly French speaking Catholic University in Leuven; in 1971 the university was split between a French (UCL) and Flemish speaking university (KUL)) and the ULB. At first, the focus was on press and journalism studies. Later on more attention was paid to radio and TV. In Flanders, the institutionalisation of media and communication studies dates back to the 1960s (prof. Fauconnier, prof. Luykx). The first studies on TV and radio date from this period. In Wallonia, research on TV and radio began in the late 1960 (prof. Thoveron, prof. Meunier).

Studies of mediated interpersonal communication are rather scarce and recent. There are only few studies on telephone and mobile phone and, if so, the focus is more on the use than on the communication aspects.

Research on the Internet really took off from 2000 onwards. The first studies on telecommunication and the Internet in particular were carried out at the VUB by the research group SMIT (Studies on Media, Information and Telecommunication; founded in 1990 by prof. Burgelman) in the 1990s. The studies of this research group (directed by prof. Pauwels) mainly focus on different aspects of information society and broadband (e.g. digital culture, business models, policy research, citizenship/consumerism, mobile communication). In Flanders, the PhD thesis of Yves Punie (VUB; 2000) initiated a research tradition of research on the use and meaning of ICT in everyday life. At the University of Antwerp (OSC) the focus is on strategic communication for the information society (e-government, e-work), online risks and e-privacy. At the University of Ghent (MICT) the studies on the Internet are more oriented to legal aspects of ICT, journalism and policy. In Leuven the research concentrates on usability (CUO) and effects of ICT.

In Wallonia it is at the Free University of Brussels and the University of Namur that most of the research on the Internet is carried out. At the ULB the emphasis is on user studies and the effects and social consequences of technological innovations and evolutions. Another central research activity is the development of new technologies and tools to optimise knowledge and information management. In Namur (FUNDP) three research centres, grouped as the Interdisciplinary Research Group in Communication and the Internet, conduct research on Internet-related topics: GRICI (communication and expression on the internet), CRID (judicial matters) and CITA (technology assessment). Especially CITA and CRID have a long-standing tradition of studies of the Internet.

Sources of Funding for Research

In Belgium, the majority of money for research within the social sciences and education generally is from the Government and /or Research Councils. Public funding institutions are separate for the Flemish and Walloon regions. The main sources of research funding in Flanders are universities themselves and public funding institutions. There are fewer research funding organisations in Wallonia. Among the few institutions that finance research in both language groups are the Brussels city government, the Federal Government's funding organisation Belgian Science Policy and the Kind Baudoin Foundation.

For research funding there are two important public research foundations or Research Councils, FWO (Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek) for Flanders and FNRS (Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique) for Wallonia. These foundations organise calls for projects and also finance scholarships for PhD study, post-doctoral posts and senior researcher posts. The universities also have their own research funds and organise internal calls for projects.

The universities receive their annual budget from the state. The majority of this funding is spent on the salaries for the teaching staff. Only a small portion is used for the universities' own research funds. This means that academic scholars are encouraged to find financial means for their research extra muros. External funding has increased over the past ten years.

Universities and colleges are urged to work together in research projects. For this kind of cooperative research projects, the several associations of universities and colleges (e.g. in Brussels (VUB in cooperation with Erasmus Hogeschool), in Leuven (KUL in cooperation with KHL) also organise calls for projects. These projects are primarily intended to increase the research and academic expertise at polytechnics/colleges.

Occasionally the Government also commissions specific policy related research projects within social sciences and education. There is fewer research funding organisations in Wallonia. The major funding source for media and communication research is the FNRS (see above). Research money is sought from general calls for research projects of this funding institution.

There are some small-scale contract research projects financed by public institutions (e.g. UCL prepares for the Conseil Supérieur d'audiovisuel a report on television policy). The Walloon region also grants some research funds in the area of information technologies.

This tradition of commercial funding is relatively non-existent. There are only very few examples of research projects that were only or exclusively funded by commercial companies. Most of the IBBT-research projects, for example, are public-private funded. Likewise, there are only few examples of academics that started working for commercial companies, while at the same time kept on teaching. Both worlds are still relatively separate from each other. Only in Flanders and in the context of IBBT in particular, has the gap between both worlds become less wide, but commercial-academic partnerships in social sciences and education are still less evident than in the other sciences.

In the research departments within media companies (e.g. public service broadcaster) academics that got their PhD at the university or used to teach at the university are often employed.

In Belgium there is no established tradition of charity organisations funding research projects. The overview clearly confirms this.

It seems that the funding of research projects on young people and Internet is relatively proportionally distributed between academic, commercial and government funding. Most of the research projects in the data repository are Flemish and this overview seems to reflect the general tendencies of research funding in the Flemish region: (1) there is more money for research from different sources; (2) research projects often get mixed funding (public/private).

The interest in children and teenagers has been steady in academic research, but in commercial research it has increased. The discovery of children and youth as a particular consumer and media user market (for instance the public broadcaster has discovered the young media users as their audience of the future) explains this pattern.

So far, the Government has only invested a little in research on children and young people. One explanation could be that there is very little clarity about who should be dealing with this issue. Indeed, there is not one particular Ministry that is responsible for this issue. In Flanders for instance, there is the Ministry of Youth and the Ministry of Media (both Ministers do not get along...) and the Ministry of Education... But they do not have joint research programmes. The co-operation between the two communities in Belgium is also non-existent when it comes to children and the Internet. On a Federal level there used to be a State Secretary of Informatisation (2005-2007) who launched some initiatives for a safer Internet. But this position disappeared in 2007. The police and justice systems are also federal, but these departments only fund criminological or judicial studies. So, there is a kind of government vacuum or, perhaps better, a government tangle which prevents the Government from articulating specific research programmes and priorities on children and the Internet.

Political initiatives influencing research

ICT and the Internet are of great importance for the Belgian Government. The significance of information- and communication technologies is recognised as are the various risks and opportunities these present. One of the main points on the Government's agenda is the bridging of the digital gap. In order to include as many as possible in the current information society and get more people hooked up onto "the net", the Minister of work & Informatisation Peter Vanvelthoven set up 3 projects: "Internet-for-All" packages – Easy-e-space projects where free computers are given to institutions and counties in order to provide Internet access (and Internet assistance for all who want to learn) in public places – a rise in the number of public computer rooms. Of great importance are the "Internet-for-all" packages that include a computer with installed software, an anti-virus program, broadband for one year, a computer course of 4 hours and an eID reader at a reasonable price, plus the possibility of it being tax deductible. Specific attention is paid to youth – students – and their parents within an educational context, recognising the importance of ICTs for learning.

The Government has also tried to expand e-government in order to improve the quality of government services and bringing the citizen closer to its government. A strengthened partnership agreement was closed in 2006 between competent federal and regional ministers. Seeing that the county website is the primary virtual government contact point for citizens, the goal is to include these regional partners more and improve their "digital competence". Information meetings are held in order to improve the exchange of information between the various actors. Presentations of various possible applications of e-government take place as well as presentations by FEDICT and CORVE about products (eID, Digiflow, etc.) enabling and facilitating the exchange of information between information systems.

The Internet is an information medium with different faces and has created new ways to propagate and deliver content. On the one hand, it has extended the possibilities of the "pull model" where the content consumer takes initiatives and can access all sorts of information easily. On the other hand, it has introduced the "push model" into the electronic world where the initiative is taken by the content provider and the consumer is bombarded with all sorts of content, including harmful content. Both models are exploited and new ways are constantly being pioneered by content providers with less respect for the consumer. The Belgian Government is aware of the many challenges ICT presents and makes work of tackling them. In order to effectively face ICT-challenges as spam, spyware, virus, phishing, theft of electronic data and privacy, the Federal Government set up a "Discussion Platform for Information Safety" (2005) consisting of 9 federal institutions who have expertise in a certain aspect of ICT and security with the goal of improving the exchange of information and consequently the quality of protection.

The protection of youth in a constantly more open and accessible digital world is a major issue on the political agenda. The Belgian government puts a lot of effort into informing young people and their parents/educators on the dangers of the Internet and providing them with the resources to deal with it. Various information- and communication campaigns have been set up and carried out (see below). In addition, a lot of hard work goes into the creation of a safer Internet environment. One of the projects in this context was the set up of special "safe" chatboxes" only accessible with a eID for children (12-15) to promote "Safer Chatting" (<http://www.saferchat.be>). The goal was to protect youngsters from harmful content and to prevent older less-than-honest people with bad intentions from entering the chat. In partnership with the internet service providers, a completely new chat platform was built that – thanks to the eID – provides accurate and secure information about the age of all present in the chat room. In order to make the "Safer Chat" project more effective, Minister Vanvelthoven presented all children who turn 12 in 2005 with a free eID reader.

Clearly aware of the significance of the "youth & ICT" issue, the Belgian Government also encourages research with the aim of gathering as much accurate information as possible needed to make better informed quality decisions. Within the framework of the "Society and Future" programme of the Federal Science Policy, research centres and groups of the University of Antwerp (OSC), Free University Brussels (SMIT) and Faculty University Notre-Dame de la Paix (CITA & CRID) collaborated to conduct the TIRO – "Teens & ICT: Risks and Opportunities" (<http://www.ua.ac.be/tiro>) – research project concerning the use of information- and communication technology by youth (12-18) and the related risks and opportunities. This is of great importance and underlines the fact that Belgian Government and academics are recognising the significance of the "ICT and Youth" theme. The main objectives of this research project are to provide insight into the new social relationships (both beneficial and harmful) that are formed and shaped by ICTs, to gain insight in the risk factors involved in ICT use in order to develop effective tools to trace and identify these risks and to formulate messages for (self-)protection that will be translated in policy recommendations. The project concentrated on the use of e-mail, websites, blogs, sms, chatboxes, mobile phones and online communities by secondary school students.

In Flanders, viWTA (www.viwtta.be), the Flemish Institute for Scientific and Technology Assessment Research, also plays an important role in providing discussion documents on ICT related topics. This research institute is associated with the Flemish Parliament. It commissions research on scientific and technological topics that have wide public impact. Apart from providing information and knowledge to the representatives in the Flemish

parliament, one of the aims of the viWTA is to contribute in a constructive way to the public debate about science and technology and to allow the voice of the people to be heard in this discussion. Young people and ICTs is one of the issues on which viWTA has published discussion documents and research reports. More particular, there was the report on 'Cyberbullying amongst youngsters in Flanders: executive overview' (2006) and the research on 'Youth and gaming' (2008) that drew attention to the issue of teenagers and ICT. The research on gaming seems to have contributed to a more positive climate in which research projects on the potential and learning opportunities of gaming for young people might become accepted. However, it is too soon to assert this assumption.

Internet security and safety were a clear priority and high on the political agenda of the former Belgian government. In order to inform (young) people and their environment on the dangers of the Internet and to provide them with the necessary tools to overcome these, the Belgian government spend a lot of effort on information- and communication campaigns. In partnership with Agoria and the corporate world, Minister of Work and Informatisation Vanvelthoven launched a campaign concerning safer use of the computer and the Internet in 2005. The goal was not to scare people away from using the computer and the Internet, but to inform them and provide them with simple guidelines to take into account when using the computer. The campaign targeted 7 themes: computer protection, the use of passwords, unknown e-mails, protection of personal data, safe online financial transactions, caution regarding downloading. A free hotline for questions regarding computer protection, information booklets ("How I overcame my computer phobia!"), a home visit from experts giving assistance in protecting the computer, cheaper computer maintenance and media (TV, radio, Internet, press, ...) exposure were part of the campaign.

Specifically targeted to children and youth was the "Suske & Wiske" campaign (2005). The campaign – in partnership with Child Focus - promoted safer surfing and chatting. A "Suske & Wiske" comic book ("The sinister site") focussing on how to use the Internet in a safe and responsible way and a "I will teach you" package intended to encourage kids to inform and educate their parents about safe Internet were part of the campaign. The campaign fits into the Safer Internet Platform. The goal was not only to inform young people in an amusing and effective way, but also their parents and educators.

OIVO-CRIOOC, the Belgian research and documentation centre of consumer organisations (for more information on OIVO-CRIOOC see question 4) also organises, often in partnership with Child Focus, ISPA Belgium, the Information and Advisory Centre concerning Harmful Sects and the Centre for Equality of Rights and the Combat of Racism, awareness raising campaigns. The aims of these awareness campaigns are (1) to inform young people about the risks and dangers of the Internet and how to cope with these risks and dangers, and (2) to provide young people with the necessary tools enabling them to use the Internet in a responsible, smart and safe way.

As part of the "Internet-for-all" project that focused on bridging the digital gap and making (computers and) the Internet more accessible for all, an information- and communication campaign was set up in 2006. The campaign included TV ads, a free information telephone number, information on teletext and www.internetvooriedereen.be concerning the nearest dealerships

For other examples, see: *Mapping Media and Communication Research: Belgium*, by Liina Puustinen & Itur Akdogan, Communication Research Centre, University of Helsinki, Department of Communication, Research Reports 7/2008 (<http://www.valt.helsinki.fi/blogs/crc/en/mapping.htm>).

Creating a safe Internet environment is very important to Belgian Internet Providers. Not only has the IPSA set up a Code of Conduct, they collaborate effectively with projects as Safer Internet Project Belgium, Stop Child Porno, Delete Cyber Hate, Spam Squad

Other noteworthy initiatives are the Stop Child Porno project, Delete Cyber Hate and Spam Squad. Stop Child Porno – an initiative within the framework of the Safer Internet Plus Programme of the European Commission, is a informative site run by Child Focus that serves

as the national and civil hotline to report child abusive images found on the Internet (<http://www.stopchildporno.be>). An initiative of the Centre for Equal Rights and the Combat of Racism, Delete Cyber Hate (<http://www.cyberhate.be>) is the national hotline for reporting illegal speech on the Internet. Spam Squad, an initiative of the Interactive Advertising Bureau, is an informal “think tank” which studies the measurement of spam and investigates possible solutions (<http://www.spamsquad.be>) .

The Influence of media coverage, events and lobbies on research

The media coverage in Belgium on young people and the internet is, as in many countries, focused on extremely worrying stories (paedophiles, cyberbullying, happy slapping...), but this rather alarming media coverage is at the same time countered by media attention for the digital competences and talents of young people. Recently, this more hopeful (although often as much over-simplified as the panic stories) angle in the media coverage on youngster and ICT was focussed on gaming. This seems to have contributed to an overall positive and open attitude towards gaming. There is, however, not a particular example of media coverage to mention that influenced specific studies. At the same time, academics (social scientists and media and communication scholars in particular) often write their research proposals with a close eye and ear to the public debate. So, one could say that media coverage, in general, does influence the research, mostly implicitly and indirectly, but surely it co-constructs the soil where research proposals and projects stand a good chance of being financed and/or carried out.

The NGO Action Innocence has played a crucial part in a research project that was coordinated by prof. Martin Valcke (University of Ghent).

NGOs have had no direct influence on studies, but it is clear that they play an active role in keeping the issue of Internet safety of children and safety awareness of children and parents in the public debate. For instance, the Bond (Flanders)/Ligue des Familles (Wallonia), an organisation of family matters, frequently seeks attention for this issue in their magazines, on their website and in their education initiatives for parents. As such, this NGO keeps the public and political world sensitive for this issue.

There were no particular events that have led to particular studies. Rather, it is the overall media coverage that seems to create a specific climate of concern (cyberbullying), of worries (privacy of our children), but also a climate of hope (e.g. the recent coverage about the educational opportunities of gaming) that seem to encourage specific types of research.

Particular debates and concerns about children

There is a debate/concern about the commercialisation of childhood. In Flanders for instance, there is both on an academic level (e.g. interdisciplinary research project of pedagogues of University of Ghent (B. Vanobbergen) and media scholars of University of Brussels (K. Segers and J. Bauwens)) and on a Government level (e.g. Minister of Consumer Affairs) concern about this issue. Still, in Flanders for instance, the Government is not unequivocal on this issue. The commercial broadcasters are now allowed to advertise spots targeting at children just before and after a child programme.

As regards children's rights, in Flanders there is the so-called Children's Rights Centre, founded in 1998. In Wallonia there is the Observatoire de l'Enfance, de la Jeunesse et de l'Aide à la Jeunesse, founded in 2004. Both organisations contribute to a broader concern of young people's rights and participation in civil life. In Flanders the research centre Child and Society is also devoted to a more participatory approach of children.

There is a concern about the safety of public spaces for children. The disappearance and abduction of children has raised awareness about and a kind of panic also about public spaces being dangerous for children. In Flanders the research centre Child and Society is also devoted to a more constructive approach of the public space-debate. From a more

participatory perspective, this centre tries children's voices and perspectives to be heard in this debate.

Case Studies

The comments below apply to the TIRO-project, a research project that was coordinated and conducted by SMIT Free University of Brussels (under the supervision of J. Bauwens) and in which other research groups of Flemish and Walloon universities participated. This research project was inspired by the public debate about the Internet and children and the perspective of the UK Children Go Online research project.

TIRO was a qualitative-quantitative research (combination of large scale survey and ethnographic approach) because of the theoretical and methodological orientation of the research teams involved. At the VUB we have a long-standing tradition of qualitative user studies and interpretative audience research. For us it was important to get in-depth insight into the life world of young people. In the Antwerp team, researchers were more interested in the broader patterns of use and behaviour. We also believed that specific questions about online risks could be better asked in a research context that guaranteed anonymity.

For practical reasons (it is much harder to sample and recruit young children for studies) and based on figures about Internet use in Belgium, we decided to focus on teenagers, since they were believed to be more intensive users of the Internet and of mobile technologies than younger children.

The questions we asked were influenced by debates, both academic and public. In particular public debates were an important source of inspiration because this project had to be relevant for policy makers in order to get financed.

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