

National report for Bulgaria

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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.

Universities and Disciplines

The system of higher education includes 51 higher educational institutions – universities, specialised higher schools and colleges, 37 public and 14 private. Out of them 12 are categorised as “Humanitarian Universities”, 8 are “Economic universities”, 16 are “Technical and Vocational”, 5 are “Arts Universities”, 4 are “Medical Universities”, 4 are “Military Universities” and 1 is a Sports Academy.

Faculties or Departments at State Universities:

- Faculty of Journalism and Mass Media at the Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridsky” with 3 specialisations for Bachelors and Masters – Journalism, Public Relations, Book Publishing. (Established 1952, all others in the following list - in the period after 1990)
- Department for Journalism and Public Communications at the University for World Economy.
- Department for Journalism (Bachelors) at the Schumen University “Episcopo Konstantin Preslavski”
- Department for Public Relations at the Veliko Tırnovο University “St. St. Kyril and Metody”
- Department for Public Relations at the South-Western University “Neofit Rilsky” in Blagoevgrad

Faculties or Departments at Private Universities

- Department of “Mass Communications” at the New Bulgarian University, Sofia
- Departments of “Public relations” and “Journalism” at the Burgass Free University”
- Departments of “Public relations” and “Journalism” at the Varna Free University

IT exists only as a technical specialisation in the technical universities throughout the country. “Communications” exists as a specialisation in the technical universities, teaching mainly the technical aspects – devices, links, communication channels etc. However, there is a discipline “Informatics” which is taught in the Humanitarian University in the Faculty of Mathematics. It deals mainly with software engineering.

The discipline “New Media” is in the curricula of bachelors and masters (both PR and Journalism) with two separate disciplines at the Faculty for Journalism and Mass Communication at Sofia University. A new specialisation “Online Journalism” is currently under preparation.

National Data Collected

The State Agency for Information Technologies collects data on the internet. The collection is based on Household surveys. The National Statistics Institute conducts annual research on households and persons using the information and communication technologies (they are published for the years 2003-2007 <http://www.nsi.bg/IKT/IKT.htm>).

The surveys of the NSI cover the population above 16 years of age. The State Agency for Child Protection and the Ministry of Education and Science collect some data on children and the Internet. But the data has mainly been collected by NGOs under different projects. It is very scarce and irregular. The lowest age in the sample is 12 years. The National Centre of Study of the Public Opinion (NCIOM) does research on the order of different agencies. The last research

on the topic was carried out in 2006 and it is part of the data repository. It has covered 800 children aged 12-17 years

Institutional processes in applying to conduct research

There are no regulations for projects in the field of journalism and mass communication. Proposals for research projects which are applied for under the university's research programmes are checked generally, and need to be approved by the department.

Pressures to conduct research

University employees have to research in their field in order to progress. They need to prepare publications and participate in scientific conferences. It is a policy of the government, industry and academia to cooperate in the field of development of information and communication technologies and its effect on society.

Factors influencing the orientation of research

It is common for industries to approach universities for collaboration in the field of new technologies. Scientific research in the field of communication and mass media is usually critical of the practices of the media organisations – and there is some talk about commercialisation and the lack of media pluralism. That is one reason for less cooperation. Collaboration with Government ministries happens but it is mainly connected with the implementation of European programmes.

The Faculty for Journalism and Mass Communication at Sofia University organises an annual scientific week in the form of a media festival. 20-25 media organisations present new media products and meet students and professors to exchange views on the media market and the media system in Bulgaria. The week includes a day for a conference on a special topic. In December 2006 the topic was 'Journalists in theory and journalists in practice'. The second, in December 2007 was on 'Media production – Boutique and Mass confection in the media'. The conference in December 2008 is to do with 'Media pluralism and media diversification'. Presenters speak in pairs – professors from the University join hands with a high level representative from leading media organisations.

National Research Traditions

Usually quantitative and qualitative methods are combined and this is the way most research agencies proceed with their research. In Bulgaria there has been a specialisation within the Faculty of Philology named "Radio, TV and Printed media" since 1952, and Internet studies since 1994. In the late sixties an independent Faculty of Journalism was created. After 2003 the specialisation of "New Media" was introduced. A degree in Journalism was offered for the first time in 1952 at Sofia University and it marks the beginning of university education in Journalism in Bulgaria. The Faculty of Journalism was established in 1974. In the period between 1952-1994 200 students graduated from the Faculty, including several hundred foreign students from more than 50 countries; and more than 100 postgraduate students defended their theses, of whom half were overseas students. The 1994/1995 academic year marked the beginning of a new degree course in Public Relations, and 1996/1997 - that of Book Publishing.

Since 1993 the "Alma Mater" University radio is broadcasting its own programme to the capital and its outskirts. The Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication maintains permanent contacts with universities and colleges in Europe and America, with a number of leading scholarly and public foundations in the country and abroad. There is an exchange of lecturers and researchers, of literature and syllabi; joint scientific projects are carried out within UNESCO and TEMPUS. Global aspects of the journalistic profession and its social responsibilities, specialized publications, regional electronic media, satellite educational television, advertising and public relations are fields of study in active co-operation with universities in Plymouth, New York, Oklahoma, Illinois, Iowa, Montpelier, Lille, Strasbourg, Krakow, Leipzig, Munich, Bucharest, Sanct Petersburg and others. The Faculty organizes conferences, symposia and educational programs

for students and young journalists together with Bertelsmann Foundation, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Goethe Institute, the British Council, the BBC, the French Cultural Institute, the Austrian Council for Culture and Education, FIEJ.

Sources of Funding for Research

Most of the funding for research comes from the Research centres at the Universities from both types – state or private. In the last few years commercial companies from the ICT sector are funding education and research.

Political initiatives influencing research

All research has been a response to a political initiative. Changes in media regulations are on-going since there are not only public but also private media institutions. A key problems here are the lack of quality and equality in access. There was an initiative to provide schools with computers and stable internet connection called “e-schools”. The computerisation of schools took place in 2005-2006 but it is not enough in terms of opportunity for regular access of students to the Internet. The speciality taught is called Informatics but it deals mainly with basic computer literacy and not Internet literacy or proficiency. There are initiatives that have been run during weekends for school teachers to get basic computer literacy and Internet literacy, but it did not include all teachers. Students are, with very few exceptions, more literate than their teachers with regard to the Internet.

The Influence of media coverage, events and lobbies on research

Some students in Bulgaria filmed their classmates with mobile phones and posted “sexual pictures” put on the Internet. This led to some preventive measures.

Particular debates and concerns about children

The commercialisation of children is not a very big concern yet. Children are not directly targeted by media here. In 2007-2008 a working group of four Sofia University professors developed a project for a National strategy for Human Rights education in schools. The project has been discussed in the Ministry of Education. The plan of action will include training of teachers, cooperation with the authors of teaching materials for more civil participation of children. Since 2007 the Faculty of Pre-school and Primary School Education at Sofia University have established a new specialisation – a degree course - Media education.