

National report for Cyprus

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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

At the moment there are six bodies that are classified as universities in Cyprus. Three of them were colleges up until last year when they were recognised by the Government, upgraded and called universities. At least four of those conduct research. Additionally, in Cyprus there are two other academic institutions that are not called universities but they conduct research as well. Media and communications studies exist in various universities in Cyprus. These disciplines attract a large amount of students every year.

National Data Collected

The Government does not collect any data on the internet and children. The Statistical Service of Cyprus conducts surveys on Internet usage in businesses and households annually (http://www.pio.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/index_gr/index_gr?OpenDocument)

The lowest age of the sample taken by the Cyprus Statistical Service is 16 years old. There is no organisation that collects national statistics on data on the internet. The CNTI is beginning to conduct research on such issues but there are no available data yet. Research in progress includes knowledge and use of the internet, assessment of the knowledge of internet related risks and assessment of knowledge of coping with internet related risks. There is no organisation that collects national statistics on the internet and children. At the CNTI, types of research in progress include level and frequency of internet use among children, type of internet use among children, awareness of internet risks among children and awareness of how to combat internet risks among children.

Institutional processes in applying to conduct research

All research proposals have to be checked for meeting the criteria of each call or journal before being submitted for funding or publication. Universities have their internal research proposals evaluated by at least two external independent reviewers and depending on the mark they receive, some are selected for funding. Universities also apply for funding through the European Union and through the Cyprus Research Promotion Foundation. Bids for external funding also go through an evaluation and the best ones are selected for funding. Research is conducted following the ethical guidelines of either UK or US depending on the research conducted. Specific guidelines about what can and cannot be researched do not exist in any kind of regulation (governmental or institutional).

Pressures to conduct research

There is no pressure on university employees to do research, but they are encouraged to do it, not only because it offers them the chance to advance their career but also because they get benefits such as time release, funding for attending seminars etc. While there is no pressure for cooperation with industries but universities are encouraged to do so.

Factors influencing the orientation of research

Industries collaborate with universities in conducting research and sometimes universities are asked to conduct research on their behalf. This trend has been increasing in the last few years. The Cyprus Research Promotion Foundation opens calls for research once or twice a year, and universities and/or researchers are invited to submit proposals for funded research. Some universities have already established collaborations with industries to which they provide suggestions for research relevant to their domain.

National Research Traditions

Research in Cyprus is developing gradually. Social sciences, education and the humanities have only recently attracted the interest of researchers, especially on issues such as e-learning and the internet. Qualitative research is yet to rise to any significance in Cyprus, but has been increasing in the past few years. The first study conducted in Cyprus on interpersonal communication was in 2004. Studies on the internet took off in 2004. The internet is a fairly new technology adapted in Cyprus that is rising dramatically every year. Ever since 2004 studies on the subject attracted much more attention than in the past.

Sources of Funding for Research

The majority of the money comes from EU projects, the Government and lately from the Research Promotion Foundation. As far as we are aware, scientific research results are made publicly available but are accessible only for other researchers in the field and not for the general public. Commercial companies most often hire research companies to conduct surveys on their behalf, but these are only used for improvement purposes on behalf of the company and are not made available publicly. Up until 2003 most households in Cyprus did not own a computer, let alone use the internet. Local research on the internet started in 2004, when internet usage began rising in Cyprus. Since then, there has been a dramatic increase both in the ownership of computers in households with children, and in the use of online technologies. However, internet usage levels are still considerably low in Cyprus. Up until now the EU has been the main funder for internet related research, but we are expecting things to change now as access and internet usage increase.

Political initiatives influencing research

There have been attempts from the Ministry of Education to encourage the use of internet in schools. Nearly all schools have internet access now.