

National report for Germany

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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

There is some debate about the number of universities in Germany. According to the website of the association of universities and other higher education institutions in Germany (Hochschuldirektorenkonferenz), the numbers are:

Type of university	number
Universities	100
Universities of Applied Sciences	119
Colleges of art, music and film	54
Private Colleges	77

<http://www.hochschulkompass.de/> [2008-07-01]

The country has communications as well as media studies. Communication sciences have a close link to journalism sciences and has become an interdisciplinary stream in the social sciences. In contrast, media studies focuses more on film analysis and is positioned within the humanities. These differences are visible at theoretical and methodological levels. Naturally research questions and interests differ as well.

IT and society and New Media are not separate disciplines in Germany. It is possible to study informatics either at the universities or at the universities of Applied Sciences. There is a wide range of specifications in the field of informatics, for instance Media Informatics, Interactive Media or Internet Computing. There are also sections with IT & Society (see <http://www.gi-ev.de>), but it is only a part of the broader degree course Informatics. Informatics is also part of a teaching certificate.¹

National Data Collected

Data on the Internet are collected by the Federal Statistical Office. The main focus is the online access of households.² The Federal Bureau for Information Security (BSI) conducted a study about Internet security in 2004 (sample: 1000 people in Germany from the age of 14).

Data on the Internet and children are not regularly collected by the Government. Generally, the lowest age in the samples is 14 years. From 1997 the public broadcasting stations ARD and ZDF have been publishing the representative ARD/ZDF online study (so called *ARD-ZDF-Onlinestudie*). This annual study gives an overview of Internet use, for instance, about the spread of the Internet, as well as about usage and users. People from 14 to 60 years and

¹ (Source: <http://www.studienwahl.de/index.aspx> | accessed on 2008-05-20)

² [https://www-ec.destatis.de/csp/shop/sfg/bpm.html.cms.cBroker.cls?](https://www-ec.destatis.de/csp/shop/sfg/bpm.html.cms.cBroker.cls?CSPCHD=0010000100003sfpiCt2000000Ex3rp$4jzQBLri4LGLomHQ--&cmspath=struktur,vollanzeige.csp&ID=1021896)
CSPCHD=0010000100003sfpiCt2000000Ex3rp\$4jzQBLri4LGLomHQ--
&cmspath=struktur,vollanzeige.csp&ID=1021896

above are involved in this study. The questionnaires address technical and social improvements like Web 2.0 services³

Another annual study is the (N)Onliner Atlas, which was first conducted in 2001. It is published by Initiative D21, which is a network of institutions, political parties and enterprises. The (N)Onliner Atlas is Germany's biggest Internet study, which collects data about users and non-users of the Internet, with a focus on the digital divide in Germany. People from 14 years and above are interviewed for this study.⁴

Finally, the "Forschungsgruppe Wahlen" (a translation might be "research group for elections") annually collects representative basic data about Internet access and usage (telephone survey, sample: Germans from 18 years). In all these studies mentioned above the lowest age of the sample is 14 years.

The research network "Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest" provides annual empirical data on children's media usage. One study focuses on children between 6 and 12 years (KIM) and the other on adolescents between 12 and 19 years. The first KIM-study was conducted in 1999 and repeated in 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005 and 2006. The JIM-study is an annually repeated study which started in 1998.

The questionnaire in both studies is almost the same, but adapted to media development. Apart from a general overview about the role of the media in children's or teenagers lives, the reports look at recent phenomena like mobile phones, games etc.

Institutional processes in applying to conduct research

According to the German constitution (Art. 5 Abs. 3 Satz 1), arts, research and lessons are free of restrictions. The researcher has the responsibility to preserve this basic right. The existing ethical guidelines consider personal rights (German constitution, Art. 2, Abs. 1), the right to research and the right of the freedom of information.

With regard to studies with/on children, different associations have formulated ethical guidelines and codes of conduct (e.g. The organisation of the German market research institutions and institutions for social research, *ADM Arbeitskreis Deutscher Markt- und Sozialforschungsinstitute e.V.*, *ASI Arbeitsgemeinschaft Sozialwissenschaftlicher Institute e.V.*, *BVM Berufsverband Deutscher Markt- und Sozialforscher e.V.* and the *German Association for Online Research (D.G.O.F.)*, the *German Association for Educational Sciences (DGfE)* and the *German Communication Association (DGPuK)*.

Some general guidelines are:

- Empirical studies require the agreement of the subjects. The participants have to be informed in detail about the objectives and methods.
- In the case of younger children (definitely up to 11 years, optional up to 13 years), the parents have to agree in writing to the investigation. It is essential that the adolescents have the capacity to understand ("Einsichtsfähigkeit") the intention of the investigation and understand what happens with their data.
- If no adult person is present, the adolescents have to be informed in detail about the protection of data privacy.
- Parents should have the opportunity to participate in the interview situation, but they may be asked to allow a private interview with the child.

³ (Source: <http://www.daserste.de/service/studie.asp> | accessed on 13.05.08).

⁴ (Source: <http://www.initiaved21.de/N-ONLINER-Atlanten.310.0.html> | accessed on 13.05.08)

- The wish of the legal agent to see the answers of the child after the interview has to be clarified with the adolescent ex ante.
- For interviews in classrooms, the interviewer needs the permission of the director. The permission of the legal agents depends on the capacity to understand (see above). If data from the legal agents are recorded, the permission of the legal agents is essential. Also, school legislations of the different federal states have to be taken into consideration.
- Apart from the topic, which has to be accepted by the legal agent, the modality of the interview is of most importance. It is impossible to put children in a potentially frightening situation or to provoke a conflict between children and a legal agent.
- Products, which are lawfully forbidden for children (e.g. video games with no appropriate age classification), may not be used/investigated in studies with children.
- As in all investigations, personal information has to remain anonymous and all data have to be kept confidential⁵.

There is no stage that all proposals have to go through. As a basic principle, researchers are free in their decisions (according to the German constitution, Art. 5 Abs. 3 Satz 1). In practice, they only have to inform the president about new projects or proposals. At the university level there is no general procedure, it depends on the conventions of the institutions/departments, though there is a noticeable trend towards more transparency.

Pressures to conduct research

The amount of and relation between teaching and research are regulated individually, but among other factors that can lead to a shift in the remuneration of university employees (in certain Federal States) there are accretive incentives to do and/or acquire research projects and/or funding, because the funds are appointed with regard to the activities.

There is no direct or explicit pressure to cooperate with industry, but due to decreasing public research funding there is an implicit pressure to organise research grants.

Factors influencing the orientation of research

Industry does approach universities at times for research work. Currently, SuperRTL funds a study about the perception and comprehension of online-advertisements that is conducted by Prof. Dr. Stefan Aufenanger (University of Mainz). Collaboration with or on behalf of the industry is a very sensitive topic, but if the independence of the research is warranted, this kind of collaboration might be a financially useful approach. Government ministries provide requests for proposals. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) does not usually offer tendering procedures for research, but it is common to apply there for financial support for one's own studies. (Source: <http://www.bmbf.de/de/6595.php> | accessed on 14.05.08). "The Wissenschaftsrat „ (German Council of Science and Humanities) is an advisory body to the Federal Government and the state (Länder) governments. Its function is to draw up recommendations concerning the development of science, research and the

⁵ Sources:

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft (2006): Ethhik-Kodex der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft (DGfE). [online available: http://dgfe.pleurone.de/ueber/Ethikkodex_DGfE.pdf, version from the 31th May 2006, 2008-05-20]

ADM (2006): Richtlinie für die Befragung von Minderjährigen. [online available: www.adm-ev.de/pdf/R05_D.pdf, 2008-05-20]

university sector as well and to contribute to the safeguarding of the international competitiveness of German science in the national and European science system. These recommendations involve considerations about quantitative and financial effects and they must be in line with the requirements of social, cultural and economic life.

The Wissenschaftsrat issues statements, recommendations and prepares reports that primarily concern the two major fields of science policy, namely

- scientific institutions (universities, universities of applied sciences and non-university research institutions), in particular their structure and performance, development and financing, and
- general questions relating to the system of higher education, selected structural aspects of research and teaching as well as the strategic planning and assessment of specific fields and disciplines." (http://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/engl_start.htm | 21.5.08)

For research funding, the German Research Foundation (DFG) as "the central, self-governing research funding organisation" is very important because it promotes research (in all disciplines) at universities and other publicly financed research institutions in Germany as well as cooperation among researchers. (<http://www.dfg.de/en/index.html>). Topics are proposed by the scientific community and proposals are evaluated through peer review. According to the statutes, the DFG doesn't fund institutions but researchers or research groups. The DFG receives money from the federal (*Bund*) and state (*Länder*) authorities.

National Research Traditions

Quantitative research has a long tradition in Germany and is widespread in all disciplines. In the 1960s, quantitative and qualitative paradigms and methods were discussed intensively ("Positivismusstreit"). Until now, the quantitative paradigm is regarded as the basic paradigm in social sciences as well as in education. In the humanities, qualitative research is dominant.

Qualitative research is well established in special disciplines like educational sciences or media studies. In social sciences, there is still a dominance of quantitative research, but in the last twenty years, qualitative methods have been more and more accepted. This might relate to two developments:

- The rising popularity of theoretical approaches like grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss; Strauss & Corbin) and approaches (Philip Mayrin) that offer instructions for the analysis of qualitative data and makes it more "scientific" (in the sense of structured) in contrast to hermeneutic procedures (e.g. objective hermeneutic from Ulrich Oevermann).
- The parallel development of software for qualitative data analysis like MAXqda or atlas.ti, which facilitates the handling of the data (e.g. retrieval of statements and paragraphs) and extensive analysis process makes it more structured and transparent (even visible) to others.

Mass media research is related to the development of the media landscape. Regular research around viewers started after the Second World War with the official start of the television. Early studies focused on the use and evaluation of TV commercials (see: Scherer 2006).

The investigation of interpersonal communication via mobile phone started at the beginning of the 21st century. Höflich & Rössler (2001) published an article about mobile written communication for email or mobile phone, in which they investigated the relevance of short message services for adolescents.

According to Welker (2007), online research has been institutionalized under "Psychology of the Internet", which gave and/or gives an extensive overview about new communication technology and its relevance for personal identity and relationships and social processes (a revised version was published in 2003).

It has to be mentioned that the term “online research” has two different meanings. In a broad perspective, online research encompassed research about the internet and online phenomena. In a narrow perspective, online research focuses on the development and application of adequate research methods (see: Welker 2007: 19). According to content analysis of the presentation on the GOR-conferences between 1997 and 2006, most of the presentations focused on online methods (52%), 28% focus on the internet as a medium and 20% on internet in general (Welker 2007: 39f.).

In 1996, Bernard Batinić and Andreas Werner founded the German Internet Research List (GIR-L). The next step was the development of the “German Online Research Conference” (GOR) [since 2002 “General Online Research Conference”, which can be regarded as one of the most important conferences about online research (see: Welker 2007: 31).

Another important development was the establishment of the German Association for Online Research [DGOF] in 1998, which focused on the advancement of online research. Online research has gradually broadened in scope and perspective.

Sources of Funding for Research

In Germany, there are several foundations which sponsor projects from different disciplines. One of the most important Foundations is the German Research Foundation (DFG), which funds “research projects in all fields of science and the humanities. This includes support for individual projects and research collaboration, awards for outstanding research achievements, and funding for scientific infrastructure and scientific cooperation” (http://www.dfg.de/en/dfg_profile/mission/index.html). The institutional funding of the DFG is based on resources from the Federal Government and the Federal States. In 2006, the DFG spent 1.411,4 million Euro in research funding (http://www.dfg.de/en/dfg_profile/facts_and_figures/index.html).

There are other kinds of foundations. The largest private, but independent and non-profit science funder and one of the major foundations in Germany is the *Volkswagen Foundation* with a funding volume up to 100 million Euros p.a. (<http://www.volkswagenstiftung.de>). The Foundation develops its own funding initiatives. Currently, they differentiate the four areas “Support of Persons and New Structures”, “International Focus”, “Thematic Impetus” and “Social and Cultural Challenges”.

The first independent Foundation after the Second World War was the *Fritz-Thyssen-Stiftung*, which was founded in 1959. The aim of the Foundation is to support research and scholarship in universities and research institutes and especially the support of young scholars (<http://www.fritz-thyssen-stiftung.de>). The main areas for support are “History, Language and Culture”, “Image and Imagery”, “State, Economy and Society”, “International Relations” and “Medicine and the Natural Sciences”.

Another important non-profit foundation is the *Robert-Bosch-Foundation* (since 1964), which supports projects in its own programmes, but which also provide grants, “enabling third parties to develop and implement interesting projects and initiatives in order to address social challenges.” (<http://www.bosch-stiftung.de>)

Finally, there are several political Foundations, which support research programmes. The condition is that the project fits the political orientation and the aims of the Foundation. Examples are: [Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung](#), [Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung](#), [Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung](#), [Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung](#), [Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung](#), [Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung](#) and [Hans-Böckler-Stiftung](#).

It is difficult to say, if there is a “tradition” of commercial companies funding research on ICTs, but there are several commercial companies – particularly from the media sector. Some instances include:

- Traditional publishers like Ehapa Verlag which conducts the Kids consumer analysis, a study about the media use of children since 1993, but also – especially in recent years – games publisher like e.g. Electronic Arts.

- ISPs like AOL Germany have conducted several studies concerning children and Online media.
- Television Broadcasters (both public and private). Since 2004, Super RTL has annually conducted the study “Kids World”, which provides general data about spare time (and media) activities of children.
- Market research bodies like TNS emnid/infratest conducted several media related studies in cooperation with and/or on behalf of other institutions.

Other studies, e.g. the KIM and JIM study of the Medienpädagogischer Forschungsverbund Südwest, are funded by the resources of the Media Authorities and therefore by the broadcast fee, and also provide general data as fundamental background information for political decisions among other things.

Obviously, there are only a few purely academic studies which are funded by public resources. This might have to do with the changing subject matter of research which does not fit static research programmes.

Political initiatives influencing research

The initiative “Schools go online” ([Schulen ans Netz](#)) had a strong influence on research in Germany. The project started in 1996 and was funded by the *The Federal Ministry of Education and Research* and the *German Telekom AG*.

From 2002 to 2006, *The Federal Ministry of Education and Research* also funded the initiative “Youth online” (*Jugend online*). The aim of the project was to enable access to new media, to improve media literacy and to use the (creative) potential of the new media. One central part of the project was to advance the technical equipment in out-of-school facilities. This “technical offensive” was supported by several companies like Microsoft Deutschland GmbH, Cisco Systems (networking equipment), Cherry (producer of keyboards) Matrix42, ULEAD Systems and Mindjet (software).

With the portal *netzcheckers.de*, the initiative provides a low threshold website for youngster for information, communication and interaction. The initiative “Youth online” ended in June 2006, but the online portal will be continued in context of another governmental initiative, with the sponsorship of the IJAB - International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany (formerly: International Youth Exchange and Visitors’ Service of the Federal Republic of Germany).

The discussion of child-welfare and media violence in Germany is, among other debates, also affected by strong media coverage and the influence of political active persons (researchers and politicians) who demand the prohibition of violent computer games. The German video games ratings board (USK) and other researchers with a less prohibitive perspective were generally criticised in the media for being closely related to the industry.

In October 2006 the Hans-Bredow-Institut was asked by the German Federal Ministry for Families, Seniors, Women and Youths to analyse the system for the protection of young people in Germany. As a consequence of a School-shooting on 20th November 2006 in Emsdetten/Germany, the discussion on violent video games was brought up again.

The most important change in media regulation with regard to children and (online) media was the reformation of the legislation of the Protection of Minors in 2003 (see: Schulz, Held, Dreyer 2008). The Protection of Minors is based on two central laws: *The Protection of Young Persons Act* (Jugendschutzgesetz, JuSchG)⁶ at federal level and the *Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Human Dignity and the Protection of Minors in Broadcasting and in Telemedia* (Jugendmedienschutzstaatsvertrag, JMStV)⁷ at state level.

⁶ <http://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/generator/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Abteilung5/Pdf-Anlagen/juSchGenglisch.property=pdf,bereich=,sprache=de,rwb=true.pdf>.

⁷ http://www.kjm-online.de/public/kjm/index.php?show_1=94,57.

The Protection of Young Persons Act regulate among other general issues those media (contents) which are physically available like books, CDs, DVDs etc. and also the access to movies in cinemas.

The Act differentiates between harmful content and content not suitable for certain age groups. Harmful content is rated by an official administrative authority: the Federal Department for Media Harmful to Young Persons (Bundesprüfstelle für jugendgefährdende Medien, BPjM). Upon request from other institutions the authority puts harmful media (data media and telemedia) on a list (the "index") which results in restrictions on its distribution to minors as well as advertising (restrictions for data media can be found in the federal Act; restrictions for telemedia are subject to states' regulation)." (Schulz, Held, Dreyer 2008: 14) Voluntary self regulatory bodies attend to contents that are not suitable for children, and make adequate ratings. The Voluntary Self-Regulation of the Film Industry (Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle Fernsehen, FSF) is responsible for films and the

Self-Regulation of Entertainment Software (Unterhaltungssoftware Selbstkontrolle, USK) for video games.

The Interstate Treaty on the Protection of Human Dignity and the Protection of Minors in Broadcasting provides the regulatory basis for telemedia and broadcasting services. This law states which contents are forbidden from being broadcast (either in television and online), "i.e. first and foremost content which violates the penalty law (e.g. child pornography or so-called glorification of violence). Second, some content that is illegal in television broadcasts may be legal in telemedia services, if the content is not accessible by minors (e.g. pornography). Service providers may comply with these rules by installing adequate instruments such as an age-verification-system. Third, telemedia service providers have to ensure that content not suitable for certain age groups is provided in a way that children and young persons of the respective age do usually not have access to this content. Providers are able to meet these requirements by observing a time-shade-regulation or by "other means", like access-blocking software. Whoever offers television in more than just one German state is required to name an appointee responsible for the protection of minors. The same goes for the providers of telemedia services which offer their service on a commercial basis; however, small providers are not required to do so." (Schulz, Held, Dreyer 2008: 15)

The responsible bodies for the application of the Interstate Treaty are the State Media Authorities. In connection with the reformation of the Protection of Minors, the Commission for the Protection of Minors in the Media (Kommission für Jugendmedienschutz - KJM) was established as a central regulatory body to ensure the correct application of the Interstate Treaty in cooperation with the State Media Authorities. Regarding Internet services and online content, the KJM gets support by the initiative "jugendschutz.net", which analyse regularly (problematic) web sites.

According to the system of "regulated self-regulation", it has to be mentioned that in 2005, the FSM (Voluntary Self-Monitoring of Multimedia Providers, founded in 1997 by e-commerce alliances and companies dedicated to the protection of the youth and minors) was acknowledged as an institution of voluntary self-monitoring by the KJM.

a) Government initiatives to try to encourage the Internet in schools

In 1996, there was the start of the initiative "Schools go online" (Schulen ans Netz), a project of The Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the German Telekom AG. The objective was to provide all German schools with online access. At the end of 2001, all schools were online. Between 1998 and 2001, the initiative launched different projects for teachers and pupils (e.g. 1998: *Lehrer-Online*; 1999: *LeaNet* for women teacher; 2000: *LizzyNet* for girls; 2001: *lo-net* as a virtual working platform and *Primolo* as a tool for Homepages. Apart from these projects, the initiative develops further activities which combine formal and informal learning processes (even with regard to full-time school concepts). One example is the project *LIFT* (*Lernen – Integrieren – Fördern*, 2005-2007) which supported children and adolescents of migrants.

Current projects are:

BEROOBI – Berufsbilder online neu erleben, which wants to arouse the interest of teenagers for education and vocational fields (e.g. in IT, technik and natural sciences).

BIBER – Bildung, Beratung, Erziehung, an Internet platform for playschool and primary schools (www.bildung-beratung-erziehung.de)

eTwinning – is part of the European programme for the promotion of life long learning. 29 countries join in this project, which supports the exchange and cooperation between schools.

One important initiative was the project *intel® - teaching for the future* which is sponsored by Microsoft. The main target of this project is to teach teachers (of all kind of schools) how to integrate the PC effectively in their lessons. The main part of the project is a lecture (40 h) which consists of 15 modules. Main topics are:

- Integration of new media
- Effective use of new technologies
- Possibilities of cross-disciplinary projects
- Promotion of teamwork
- Evaluation

Regarding the training of teachers in the use of the Internet, one project is the *WebLOTSEN* (means: webpilot), which was funded by the The Federal Ministry of Education and Research between 2002-2007. A mobile team went into schools and conducted free workshops for teachers (to some extend in combination with other projects of the initiative *Schulen ans Netz*, mentioned above). One special topic in 2005 was “the Protection of Minors and security in the Internet”

One of these follow-up initiatives of *Schulen ans Netz* is *IT-Works*, (<http://itworks.schulen-ans-netz.de>) funded by the the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the European social fund and the Deutsche Telekom AG in 2001.

The aim of *Schulen ans Netz* was to provide internet access (hardware) to all schools, the aim of the holistic follow-up project *IT-Works* was to provide adequate software to all schools, to train teachers and system administrators in the use and to evaluate the measures.

IT-Works supervised regional projects like e.g. [MNS+ Modulares Netz für Schulen](#) (Rheinland-Pfalz), [S'cool IT](#) (Hessen) and [sh21 BASIS](#) (Schleswig-Holstein).

Some other services of *IT-Works* are the organisation of IT-Workshops, IT-Support for teachers and a map of ongoing IT-projects in Germany.

Like the projects supervised by *IT-Works* (sh21 BASIS, MNS+, S'cool IT) most training projects for teachers are organised regionally.

Most of all IT-Workshops and -trainings are offered by the local school authorities and private suppliers.

Online Support and information about local IT-Workshops is offered by www.bildungsserver.de, an internet presence, driven by the Conference of German cultural ministers, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the federal states.

In February 2003 there was the start of the awareness initiative “Schau-hin” (“*Open your eyes*”) (<http://www.schau-hin.info>), which was powered by the The Federal Ministry of Family, Seniors, Women and Children, the programme guide “Hör zu”, the public broadcasters ARD and ZDF, Arcor and INTEL. In the last few years, there has been a slight change regarding the supporters of this initiative. The current partners are still the Federal Ministry of Family, Seniors, Women and Children, the public broadcasters ARD and ZDF and Arcor and – as a new partner – the programme guide “TV Spielfilm”. The initiative wants to sensitise parents and educators to the media use of children and provides general information and tips for media education and an safety Internet use. A magazine for parents is part of the initiative as well as TV-Spots and a website. Due to the change of the agency in January 2008, the initiative is currently being relaunched.

The Influence of media coverage, events and lobbies on research

It seems that in the case of Happy Slapping and Cyber Bullying, research was influenced by the media coverage, because this phenomenon was firstly highlighted by the media (by presenting isolated cases from other countries, e.g. Great Britain).

There is no (empirical) evidence of any influence of an NGO lobbying on research. It seems there is no direct influence, but the NGOs have influence on the public and political discourse, which can then catalyse empirical research.

Particular events sometimes do influence research. For instance

- Problematic events like school shootings or rampages heightened the interest in studies about the impact of violent media on the aggression of adolescents.
- Cases of Cyberbullying in schools raised the attention that was followed by studies about violent media content in the internet and on mobile phones.
- Technological developments in general (e.g. videogames or Web 2.0) and in particular (e.g. the success of the social platform *schuelerVZ*) raised interest in questions about the relevance and use of social software by adolescents.
- Political developments (e.g. reformulation of the Law) drew attention to the Protection of Minors and improvement of regulation.

Particular debates and concerns about children

The discussion about the commercialisation of childhood peaked in the nineties of the last century. There were many studies which focused on children and advertising (almost advertising in television). With regard to media phenomena like *Pokémon*, *Digimon*, *Dragonball*, *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings*, the range became broader and global and crossmedia marketing strategies were considered (see Paus-Hasebrink et al. 2004).

Currently, due to online and viral marketing strategies the topic is getting new attention. The Erfurter Netcode, a non-profit organisation which focuses on the quality of websites for children, is one initiative which discusses advertising and marketing-strategies on websites for children and has formulated a position paper.

There are many institutions which promote the rights and participation of children on different levels, e.g. for preschool children, in schools, in extracurricular context etc.

In the current public discourse, it seems that themes like child poverty or social discrimination get the most attention. Programmes and projects regarding the rights of children have been important since the end of the 1990s but the activities are very different in the Federal States.

Since 2000, some experts have perceived a modification in the perception of children that might relate to the educational concept involving a change from a preventive to a more educational approach. In 2004, the UN Commission stated that Germany has not realised the UN-convention for rights of children sufficiently.⁸ Points included:

- Many asylum-seeking children do not go to school and suffer under the unsettled residence permit status.

⁸ The National coalition observes and evaluates the participative activities and especially the realisation of the UN-conventions of the rights of children in Germany (www.national-coalition.de).

- There is no comprehensive policy for children and too many conflicts between Federation, States and communes.
- Children are not yet treated as serious Citizens.
- The UN-convention is unpopular and has no impact on the area of education and/or of politics. In school, the rights of children are hardly considered .
- Children are not well informed about their rights.
- After the second report of the German Federal Government, the UNO praised the proceedings, but criticised the lack of “passion for the rights for children”

See: http://www.wdr.de/radio/home/kinderrechte/kinderrechte_in_deutschland.phtml, published: 2007-09-07)

Regarding the theoretical discourse, some authors make a distinction between different kinds of participation (see: Geiser/de Rijke 2007):

- a) (Long-time) Participation in institutionalised contexts (e.g. organizations, associations, clubs etc.)
- b) Participation in informal groups (e.g. groups environment protection, peace movement, self-help groups etc.)
- c) (Short-time) Articulation of political interests (e.g. election, demonstrations, strike etc.)

Geiser and de Rijke (2007) have analysed the development of these different kinds of participation since 1992. According to them, the participation of adolescents can be described as multifaceted (p. 424); a refusal to participate cannot be observed (although they state a discrepancy between the willingness to act and the actual behaviour).

In the Eurobarometer study 2001, adolescents were asked which institution is the most relevant for participation. According to those results, the educational system, family and friends, organisations for adolescents and governmental initiatives (on relevant areas for participation (Geiser/de Rijke 2007, 432).

Institutions for facilitating participation of young people in Europe (most important answer, in percent)

	EU15	Germany (West)	Germany (East)
Educational system	26	23	24
Family and friends	20	29	18
Organisations for Teenagers	20	16	19
Television	17	6	7
State	8	11	19
Parties	4	3	5
Online communities	3	2	2
Newspapers/magazines	1	0	1
Radio	1	0	0
Do not know	5	8	5

Source: Eurobarometer 55.1 : Young European 2001, quoted from Geiser/de Rijke 2007, 432 (cutout).

Below are some current initiatives and programmes to exemplify different participative projects and initiatives on a governmental and non-governmental level.

Governmental level: (current examples)

“Participation and international youth work” is a central topic of the Ministry for Family, Seniors and Youth (<http://www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/generator/Politikbereiche/Kinder-und->

[Jugend/partizipation.html](#)). The Ministry also launched a website for children (www.kinderministerium.de | “ministry for children”), where young children can find, for example, information about the rights for children. In June 2008, the Ministry organised an event for adolescents “who want to make a difference” (<http://www.du-machst.de>). From 2002-2007, the Commission of the Confederation (Bund-Länder-Kommission) – which is responsible for school development – had a special programme which focused on “Learning and Living Democracy”. The aim of the programme was to raise the participation of adolescents by cultivating democratic structures in schools. The schools had the chance to develop and test own participative approaches. The project was sponsored by the Ministry of Education and Research and the Commission of the Confederation (<http://www.blk-demokratie.de/index.php?id=83>)

Foundations (current examples)

One important player in this context is the Bertelsmann Foundation, which has started the initiative “mitWirkung!” (“withImpact!”) and which wants to force the participation of children and adolescents. In 2007, the Bertelsmann Stiftung published a report about the state of the art and the possibilities of participation for children and adolescents. The summarised results state that there is a lack in participative activities. The authors show participative possibilities on different levels and emphasise the necessity of networking structures.

The Bertelsmann Foundation is also involved in the social marketing campaign “Du bist Deutschland” (“You are Germany”). 30 (media) companies get involved with child-friendliness. The core of the campaign is a two minute spot which is directed to children as “the wonder of Germany”, which have the power to make a difference. (http://dbd.highway.bertelsmann.de/opencms/opencms/Home_noflash.html).

The German Children and Youth Foundation is another important player in this context. “Learning Democracy” is one the central topics of the foundation. One example for a project is *Youth bank* where Adolescents have the opportunity to apply for money for realising projects (www.youthbank.de).

In Germany, there is a discussion about risk for children in public spaces, although the kind of risks changes sometimes. One important risk is e.g. road traffic, which restricts the mobility and the room for children to broaden their experiences. Some initiatives involve the participation of children regarding urban development, but differences between theory and practice are mentioned.

- Sources: „Kinder und Jugendliche und der öffentliche Raum“ von 5000xZukunft: <http://www.5000xzukunft.de/jugend/dossiers/page.php?did=6&pn=0> (5000xZukunft is an initiative of „Aktion Mensch“, the public broadcaster ZDF the Association of Youth and Welfare.)
- Working Committee for new Education (<http://www.aktiv-fuer-kinder.de/index.php?id=1737>), with support from *Wege ins Netz*, *Youth Protection Round Table* and the *Bernard van Leer Foundation*.
- The relevance of public spaces for the development of children is a topic in academic research: <http://www.isb.rwth-aachen.de/projekte/mobikiju.html> or http://www.bsp-aachen.de/docs/projektergebnis_lebenslandschaften_hortkinder.pdf)

Alcohol consumption has become another important risk factor for adolescents that has been discussed in the recent years. A third factor is discussed is conflicts with or the menace by adults or other adolescents in public spaces. The reasons for this might be different opinions about the use of public spaces, conflicts between gangs, damage to property, noise, etc. (for further information see the Initiative „Wir kümmern uns Selbst“ (supported by the German Youth Institut, DJI, and the Ministry of Family, Children, Seniors, Women and Youth, <http://www.wir-kuemmern-uns-selbst.de/>). The initiative “Wir kümmern uns Selbst” is a project in which models of resolution for conflicts in public spheres are tested (the project ends 2009).

Finally, online risks are also treated and discussed in the context of dangerous public spaces (see: „Deutschland sicher im Netz e.V.“ under the patronage of the Federal Ministry of the Interior):

“As in every public space, unpleasant contemporaries provide their wrong-headed ideas online. Thus, children and adolescents are confronted in Chats and Newsgroups more often with pornographically, violent, or politically problematic contents.”

„Wie in jedem öffentlichen Raum, verbreiten unangenehme Zeitgenossen auch im Internet ihr verqueres Gedankengut. So werden Kinder und Jugendliche in Chats (virtuelle "Plaudereien"), Newsgroups (Online-Diskussionsforen) oder auf Webseiten immer öfter mit pornografischen, gewaltverherrlichenden oder politisch fragwürdigen Inhalten konfrontiert.“
<https://www.sicher-im-netz.de/privatnutzer/189.aspx>)

Generally, different publications underline the importance of public space for children (e.g. http://www.agot-nrw.de/upload/Vortrag_Deinet.pdf). The general intention is to think about opportunities, how to make public space more safely for children (e.g. with Streetwork; <http://www.betreten-erlaubt.de/>), not to recommend that children have to stay basically at home.

Case Studies

The Hans Bredow Institute and the University of Salzburg have started a project in 2007, which focuses on adolescents and the Web 2.0 (2008-2009). The Media Authorities spend a part of their budget on research. In general, they chose current and socially relevant topics. In 2007, the LfM provided a call for abstracts about adolescents and Web 2.0, because different social software applications have become more important in adolescent everyday life. While other studies focus on access and usage of the social web in general, the LfM wanted to get more information about the role and function of Web 2.0 in teenagers' everyday life and the usage of different applications (e.g. social network sites, weblogs etc.).

Different institutions and researchers supplied proposals with different accentuations and research questions and the LfM decided which proposal they wanted to fund. The proposal of the Hans Bredow Institute and the University of Salzburg consists on an analysis of different Web 2.0 examples, online surveys, a representative survey and qualitative group discussions and interviews with adolescents. A special weblog offers the opportunity for the Web 2.0 users (and the investigated and interviewed adolescents) to follow the research process and comment on results and observations. The basic idea was to draw a different picture of the relevance of the social web in adolescents' everyday life. The methodological framework (quantitative and qualitative approaches) was provided by the Media Authority. The detailed conception and methods were chosen by the research team. The aim was to combine different approaches and methods (triangulation) in order to validate the results. The age of the sample was a fixed parameter in the call. On the one hand, the aim was to focus on the general role and use of social web by adolescents, on the other hand, the use of social web should be regarded in context of the whole media repertoire.

The project is funded by the Media Authority in North Rhine-Westphalia (LfM), which is a very engaged actor in the field of media and children and/or promotion of media literacy. It has to be mentioned that the Media Authority in Bavaria also started a similar project at the same time concerning the topic of Web 2.0 which is conducted by the JFF – institute for media pedagogy in research and practice.