

National report for Greece

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Contribution to the European report:

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Universities and Disciplines

There are 22 Higher Education Institutions in Greece, two of which are technical universities (the National Technical University of Athens and the Technical University of Crete), two are universities of economics (Athens University of Economics and Business and the University of Piraeus), and there is an Open University. The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens is the oldest HEI in the country and, together with the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, they are the largest universities in the country (in terms of disciplines, student population and members of staff).

In addition, there are 18 TEI (technical colleges, oriented towards vocational education).

All of the above are public bodies. At this moment there are no private universities in Greece, although there has been a (heated to say the least) public discussion about setting the necessary regulatory framework to accommodate them. Under public demand and pressure from academics and students alike, the conservative government and the leader of the opposition, the socialist PASOK, were forced to step back and abandon any attempts to introduce private higher education in Greece for at least the next five years. There are 44 privately-owned educational institutions (either Greek or annexes of, mainly, British universities in Greece) which, nevertheless, are not universities.

There are a number of media and communication studies departments in Greece, all of which are highly reputable and attract high-performance high school graduates. The field of communication studies in Greece includes the study of the mass media, publicity, marketing, cultural studies and public relations. The discipline started at the beginning of the 80s and took off during the 90s. According to the website of the Department of Communication, Media and Culture of the Panteion University of Athens, the reason for the unprecedented popularity of communication and media studies in Greece was due to the country's accession to the EU. Major and coordinated efforts were needed in order to build up channels of communication both inside and outside the country. This led to the establishment of three University Schools of Communication Studies as well as a number of private colleges and institutes offering journalism studies (not at university level). It is at this time that the industry and the public sector started to use communication programmes for their employees.

The Faculty of Communication and Media Studies at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens was established in 1990 and currently (2008) employs a tenured full time staff of 25; visiting lecturers and other associates make up for another 15 members of staff. Among them, 12 internet and new technologies-related subjects are offered.

The Department of Communication, Media and Culture of the Panteion University was also founded in 1990, and employs 25 full time members of staff and another 7 as visiting lecturers and associates. There are 11 courses which revolve around the internet and new technologies.

The School of Journalism & Mass Communication of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, was set up in 1991. It is staffed by 19 full time academics (among a total of 45). There are about 10 internet and new technologies-oriented subjects offered.

The Department of Cultural Technology and Communication at the University of the Aegean is another relevant academic institution, 30 member-strong, and offering 5 courses on educational technology and new technologies.

There are 15 Departments of Informatics across the country, among which four are specifically on Informatics and Telematics (Harokopio University of Athens); Informatics and Telecommunications (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens); Applied Informatics (University of Macedonia, Economic and Social Sciences) and Informatics and Biomedicine (University of Central Greece).

Additionally, there are other 11 related University Departments spread nationwide in Electrical and Computer Engineering, Computer and Communication Engineering, Computer Science, Technology Management, Technology Education and Digital Systems, and Information and Communications Systems Engineering.

Overall, it can be safely argued that Informatics and New Media as discipline are large in Greece both in terms of academic staff (there are 15 departments with academic teams between 17 and 50 people, and another 5 with teams between 51 and 88 people), and in terms of student intake (there are 6 departments with a first-year intake between 50-80 students; 12 departments with an intake between 105-190 students; and another 5 with a first year intake between 205-260 students).

National Data Collected

- The National Statistical Service of Greece (www.statistics.gr) conducts a three-monthly survey on 'Information and Communication Technologies in households (Τεχνολογίες πληροφόρησης και επικοινωνίας από τα νοικοκυριά)' since 2002 which includes individuals aged between 16-74 years.
- Focus-Bari (www.focus.gr), a market research company, conducts an annual survey every quarter on the identity of internet users in Greece, entitled 'Web Id'. The sample comprises 10.000 individuals aged 13 and above and looks into the user profile and practices of internet use in Greece. Since 2007, Focus Bari has commissioned these surveys by the Observatory for the Greek Information Society.
- The Observatory for the Greek Information Society (www.observatory.gr) conducts a number of surveys and studies, on the 'Profile of Greek Internet Users', though not consistently every year (2007 and 2005). In addition, it has bi-annual reports on broadband diffusion, among other things. It regularly subcontracts research to a number of private companies, such as the above mentioned Focus Bari, Public Issue, MRB Hellas, and VPRC. It also commissions public bodies to do research, such as the National Network for Research and Technology (ΕΔΕΤ) (www.grnet.gr), the e-business forum (www.ebusinessforum.gr) which is a state consultation mechanism between the business and the academic community), universities, the Special Secretariat of Digital Planning (www.infosoc.gr) and ministries. In several cases, a market research company will carry out the requested survey or study on behalf of the public body which has been subcontracted by the Observatory. For example, the National Study on New Technologies and Information Society (Εθνική Έρευνα για τις Νέες Τεχνολογίες και την Κοινωνία της Πληροφορίας) was organized by VPRC (a market research company) in collaboration with National Network for Research and Technology (ΕΔΕΤ) (a public body) between 2001-2006. The continuity of the research was safeguarded by the Observatory – it subcontracted another private company to conduct the survey for 2007, Public Issue (<http://www.publicissue.gr/111/national-research-for-the-new-technologies-2/>). The study examines the penetration of computer, internet and mobile technology and their evolution within the general population, aged 15 and above. Apart from the National Study on New Technologies and Information Society, which takes place consistently since 2001, it is difficult to determine the regularity with which certain types of reports and surveys appear. However, in my view it can be safely argued that the portal of the Observatory for the Greek Information Society offers a wide database that spans

across several Information Society themes, including internet usage, the identity of internet users, e-government, e-business, studies measuring eEurope 2005/i2010 indicators in Greece among individuals, households and enterprises, the spread of new technologies among senior citizens, people with special needs and immigrants and the spread of new technologies at schools. This means that apart from few exceptions, the majority of surveys and studies conducted in Greece are on a piecemeal basis, a snapshot of an IS aspect at a particular point in time, rather than a continuous and consistent study of the development of IS in Greece *across* time. The age sample usually includes teenagers aged 13 or 15 and above, which indicates that children of younger ages are largely absent in the national statistics. It also means that specific research aimed at investigating the relationship of young children and new media is also absent in Greece.

There are a few non-government organisations in Greece that conduct research related to new media. However, even here the collection and analysis of data is largely sporadic and does not involve the collection of national statistics.

For example, the Lambrakis Research Foundation (Ίδρυμα Μελετών Λαμπράκη, www.lrf.gr) has initiated research pilot programmes on the application of new technologies and their impact on learning and the organisation of school education. It has designed and coordinated the largest European project, in the 4th R&D Framework Programme of the European Commission, for school-based, in-service teachers training through the Internet. It generally offers educational and cultural material in digital form, and has become one of the leading experts in the country in using new technological tools and educational software in schools, and in the use of new information technologies in new, "open" forms of education and training in lifelong and distance learning.

Another related example is the Research Academic Computer Technology Institute (RA-CTI) (Ερευνητικό Ακαδημαϊκό - Ινστιτούτο Τεχνολογίας Υπολογιστών, www.cti.gr), a non-profit Private Legal Entity, supervised by the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs. It focuses mainly on applied research on new media, such as Algorithm Analysis and Design, Advanced Parallel Computer Architectures, Networks and Distributed Computing, Software Technology, High Performance Computing, and Educational Technology.

The Hellenic Audiovisual Institute (IOM, www.iom.gr) is a private body which operates under the supervision of the General Secretariat of Communication. This is the national applied research organisation responsible for collecting information on audiovisual activities, with a particular emphasis on radio and television. It has recently completed and presented at the end of May 2008 a survey on 'The creative and safe internet use by young people up to 18 years of age'. The research sample comprised 1500 schoolchildren in secondary education (12-18ys old), 500 teachers and 500 parents.

Similarly, the Institute of Computer Science (ICS) (www.ics.forth.gr) is one of the institutes of the Foundation for Research and Technology - Hellas (FORTH), a major national research centre partly funded by the General Secretariat for Research and Technology of the Hellenic Ministry of Development. The mission of FORTH-ICS is to perform high quality basic and applied research, to promote education and training, and to contribute to the development of the Information Society, at a regional, national, and European level. Research on children and new media, however, is not part of its mission.

Apparently the only non-governmental body which conducts research on internet use is AGB Nielsen Media Research. The e-metrics is an online survey on the Greek internet (<http://e-metrics.gr>) and is conducted regularly since 2004 under the auspices of the Observatory for the Greek IS. It uses a random sample, and as usual with online surveys, respondents are self-selected. Nevertheless, being conducted by a market research company, this is a survey principally interested in internet use for e-commerce purposes. There is no provision about how children and young people use the internet. In fact, young users come into perspective only when the age profile of internet users is examined. Not only that but the questions asked vary over the years (e.g. the 2005 survey asks about blogging whereas the 2004 and 2007 ones do not).

Repeated studies on patterns of use and practices of new technologies in Greece are conducted by the market research company Focus-Bari ('Web-ID'), the Observatory for the Greek Information Society (on broadband diffusion), and the National Statistical Service of Greece ('Survey on the usage of information and communication technologies') 'e-metrics' by AGB Nielsen Media Research is only a partial fit since it varies the weight and kind of the questions asked, and only marginally (or accidentally) has any information about children and the internet.

Institutional processes in applying to conduct research

There are no restrictions on research topics, and no common procedure that all proposals must go through. Perhaps there is such a procedure in the School of Medicine and related disciplines¹, but not within Communication and Media Studies.

Pressures to conduct research

It is expected that academic staff need to have publications apart from their teaching load in order to rise up the academic ladder. However, this is a relatively recent development, since during the eighties and early nineties many academics were 'planted' in various institutions in middle or high ranks without any previous publication record; political networking did the trick. In some cases, the previous generation of academics (who were practically 'handed in' their professorships) now pass judgement on new members of staff. There is no official ranking body or an official ranking procedure of academic publications in Greece, and it is only now that an official evaluation system is being established –faced with disdain by a considerable part of the academic teacher and student community. The result is that there are no fixed rules when it comes to being employed for the first time at a university department, or when it concerns career advancement. Different rules (concerning the number, the linguistic reach, i.e. whether somebody has published in Greek or in English in an international journal; the type of publication, that is if there is a ranking among the various national and international titles relevant to one's discipline) apply in different institutions or in the same institution but under different circumstances.

Although there is no official pressure to cooperate with industry within Greek academia, in reality many academics resort to industry in order to secure funds for research (in terms of sponsorship) since some of the Universities have less funds to spare for research than others. Regional Universities are usually in better financial shape than the two largest and oldest ones, the University of Athens and the Aristotle University. This is due to the fact that the former are new, more flexible and less bureaucratic and have been staffed in a greater proportion than the central ones from Greek academics from abroad. This means that there is a human infrastructure now available, well trained in raising funds either from the EC, the state or the private sector. Sometimes, strong reaction against academic cooperation with industry is raised by left-leaning student unions which fear that this signals the 'selling out' of universities to the market and results in its capitalist commodification. There are very few cases where there is a harmonious relationship between the university and industry as far as student unions are concerned (e.g. the Athens University of Economics and Business). Finally, in all cases where there is collaboration with the industry, those departments and academics who have good personal networking are in a better position to secure funds in relation to those who do not.

Factors influencing the orientation of research

Industry does approach universities sometimes and when it happens, it usually depends on personal networking on either end; people prefer to work with people they already know. Ministries do this as well, and again, this may happen occasionally and it will involve those

¹ For example, at the Department of Dietetics and Nutritional Science of the Harokopio University of Athens, where many doctors teach and attend, there is a Bio-Ethics Committee.

academics who government officials are familiar with (hence personal networking becomes paramount once again).

There is no Research Council in Greece, such as the UK's ESRC. Universities have a Special Research Funds Account (ELKE), the mechanism through which all research programmes are processed. ELKE retains a commission from the budget of all research proposals in the form of overhead costs. Sometimes, ELKE may initiate a pay-back scheme, redirecting the income incurred through commissions from various projects back to the academic community - a means of resource re-distribution whereby interested academics are required to submit small research bids. The amount

of money allocated to each individual depends on how many researchers have submitted bids overall. The relationship between academia and the industry depends on the institution. In some cases (the Economic University of Athens; the Technical University of Athens, etc), there is an established tradition of collaboration between the two. In other cases, it falls upon individual researchers or research laboratories to initiate such contacts and develop research opportunities with the industry. The outcome depends on whether or not industry considers the research proposal to be of any interest (e.g. a collaboration has been drawn between the mobile phone company Vodafone and the Laboratory of New Technologies of the Faculty of Communications and Mass Media, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens). Overall, I would describe the situation in Greece as one where the ties between academia and industry are occasional and piecemeal and depend on personal networking.

National Research Traditions

Quantitative research is taking place in all three disciplines in Greece. Some of it is established in the sense that it involves EC network projects through which academic networking and publications of international standing take place. Some of it involves smaller or larger national projects. However, there also is a substantial proportion of academics who either only publish in Greek (hence the international academic community is never acquainted with their work), or who they rarely publish (most of them belong to the older generation of academics - they are now long established and do not feel they necessarily have to conduct research). On top of that, there sometimes exists great antagonism between related departments instead of a spirit of collaboration, which leads to tensions and personal rivalries. In a country where the percentage of the national budget that goes to higher education has been consistently shrinking over the past few years, and a variety of academic agents claim funds for research, this lack of collaboration is sometimes detrimental to the building and maintaining a research tradition of high standards over the years.

Mass media research in Greece was initiated in 1988 by the market research firm Focus-Bari, which was responsible for the first survey on radio and television on a daily basis in Greece. Academic research on the Greek mass media started off around the mid-nineties.

Interpersonal communication is a much more recent field of academic research, which has not given any fruits as yet either in Greek or in English. The majority of studies that have been published so far (in Greek) are oriented towards the impact of mobile communication on human health rather than its socio-economic impact. The first two mobile phone studies with a socio-economic orientation involved an heavy input from the private sector. The 'socio-economic impact of mobile telephony in Greece' was commissioned by Vodafone to the private college of management and administration ALBA in 2004; the 'wireless generation-Mobile youth' was partly executed by the Athens University of Economics and Business and the Lambrakis Research Foundation in 2005.

Overall, internet-related academic research in Greece started round about 2000. The department of pre-school Education at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and related departments have been researching teacher's attitudes towards ICTs in Greek schools since 2000. Other internet related research in other departments, also started off around 2000. The relationship between children and the internet is generally under-researched. Even research conducted within the Observatory for the Greek Information Society only began in 2000.

Sources of Funding for Research

Since there are no Research Councils in Greece, money for research -no matter how little- comes from the Government. Having said that, there is no specified research budget for social sciences and education (or other, related or non- related, fields for that matter), and even if there was such a budget, it is a well kept secret. To illustrate this further, the itemised state budget for Higher Education does not include a heading for research, while since 2003, the annual state budget for HE in effect *declined* rather than rising. At the same time, there are grants to bid for in various ministries and general secretariats - the problem being that information about them does not abound and those academics who do not have the networking power or appropriate inside information are left out of the loop. Hence, academics are forced by this harsh reality to turn to industry (with not always guaranteed results as personal experience has shown).

There is no commercial research funding culture in Greece, only 'pockets of research' funded by commercial companies. Based on the data provided by the data repository, published research on children and the internet in Greece reveals a funding pattern that verifies the trends and practices sketched in this report. Most of the published research is either funded by the state (in the form of the state budget committed to HE or as research conducted by state agencies) or by the EC. It is worth stating that there is also a (small) proportion of research conducted and funded by the private sector. Overall, the funding pattern, however incomplete, is a further testimony to the fact that research on children and the internet in Greece is largely underdeveloped.

Political initiatives influencing research

Overall, apart from the odd article or conference paper, not much has been happening within Greek academia concerning research projects on the internet and/or the internet and children. Although not related to research projects, and certainly not to project funding, the Operational Programme for the Information Society in Greece targets education and culture within its priority axis. The aim is to adapt the educational system to the digital age and achieve increased use of new technologies in education. This includes the networking of schools, universities and the academic community (including administrative services), teacher and pupil training, and developing digital educational content. The objective is to achieve a very high level of services provided while at the same time trying to create the conditions for easier access to these services through the Internet. The Greek e-school and e-university actions are integrated in the framework of the e-Learning Community policy, which, in its turn, belongs to i2010 strategy and eEurope action; through these the European Union aims at improving the quality and access to European education and training systems through the use of information and communication technologies (<http://www.infosoc.gr/infosoc/en-UK/education/specials/default.htm>).

Other policy steps regarding the promotion of media literacy in the country include actions that aim at distant learning, on-going teacher training, and development of digital content and software for primary and secondary education (http://www.infosoc.gr/infosoc/el-GR/epktp/priority_actions/paideia-politismos/hiddenchannel01/Page2.htm).

Particular debates and concerns about children

There is the occasional newspaper article (in quality dailies and Sunday papers only) that notes the alarming number of television commercials with which young children are continuously bombarded, or comments on the loss of public space for children (i.e. municipal playgrounds). Apart from that, nothing else takes place. Advertising targeting children includes their eating and spending habits, and promotes a consumerist and more 'adult' lifestyle for young children. This is further echoed in the weekly schedules where one of the talent shows currently showing is 'baby dance', a so-you-think-you-can-dance-type-of-show for children.

There has been the odd newspaper article (in a quality newspaper, Kathimerini), written by architects, debating the loss and decline of public space in Athens. This has a knock-on effect on the opportunities children have to play safely outdoors. Having said that, the focus of the article was the deterioration of urban space in Athens rather than the (safe or not) use of public space by young children.