

## National report for the Netherlands

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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

We have 18 Universities in The Netherlands and 32 Colleges of higher education (academies). Communication studies is taught at the university level, in Amsterdam (UvA and VU), Twente (UT) and Nijmegen (RU) and media studies in Amsterdam (UvA), Rotterdam (EUR), Leiden (RUL) and Utrecht (UU). IT and society and/or New Media studies exist as a part of several other disciplines, most importantly media and communication studies, sociology, social psychology, public administration, economics. It is a scattered field, with some people working full-time on this subject, others combining this with other substantial interests.

### National Data Collected

Statistics Netherlands (CBS) collect national statistics in The Netherlands. Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) includes questions on the internet in their *four annual* services survey and in their *five annual* time budget research. No data are collected on children and the internet. The lowest age within the sample is 12 years although parents are asked about the activities of their children aged 0-11. No data are collected on the Internet by non-Government bodies. Data on children and the internet have been collected since 2005 by an annual monitor "Internet & Youth", run by the IVO (scientific bureau for research, expertise, and consultancy in the field of lifestyle, addiction, and related social developments). The lowest age in their sample is 11 years. This study and the ICTS study (2001, 2005, 2008) conducted by The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) are the two regularly repeated data collection exercises.

### Institutional processes in applying to conduct research

There are no regulations on what one is permitted to research. Academic research proposals are peer reviewed for scientific quality, although there are no systematic checks by ethics committee. The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP) mostly uses internal checking and proposals are checked by the management (Director).

### Pressures to conduct research

Most teachers have equal amounts of time allocated for research and for teaching. Some university employees are directed to research based on grants from the national Science Foundation. Rather than doing research, the pressure is largely to publish.

### Factors influencing the orientation of research

Industrial collaborations are not common, but they do occur and industries approach universities to collaborate. Government ministries also often approach researchers and academics to conduct research. So do research councils, but after the programme 'Maatschappij en Electronische Snelweg (MES) (Society and Electronic Highway, 2000-2007) no new social science programmes specifically directed towards IT&Society have been conducted. Universities only rarely approach industry with suggestions for research. Most researchers are directed towards the Dutch Science Foundation, and to a lesser extent, towards the government

### **National Research Traditions**

In terms of quantitative research, The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, there is the five-yearly TBO data (Time Use Survey), the data from Statistics Netherlands, and the annually collected POLS data (Integrated System of Social Surveys), since 1997. The qualitative tradition is not as prominent as the quantitative one. Studies of the mass media have been conducted since 1975: the five-yearly TBO data (Time Use Survey) by The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, for instance. Studies of the Internet have been conducted since 1990, for instance, the 5-yearly TBO data (Time Use Survey) by The Netherlands Institute for Social Research and since 1998, annually, for instance, the POLS data from Statistics Netherlands)

### **Sources of Funding for Research**

Funding comes from both the Government as well as Research Councils. Commercial companies also fund research, for example KPN. (former national telephone company, now one amongst others and also a internet provider). Another instance is Microsoft.

### **Political initiatives influencing research**

A recent project, the programme 'Maatschappij en elektronische snelweg (MES) (Society and Electronic Highway), 2000-2007, was funded by the government.

The ministry of Economic Affairs is now, and has been for some years, the coordinating ministry for IT-related matters and has produced several documents that led to research. Documents have also been produced by the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. There have not been any legal changes with regard to the internet, or in self regulation agreements among ISPs. There have, however, been initiatives to encourage the use of the internet in schools and also to train teachers.

### **The Influence of media coverage, events and lobbies on research**

Some studies have been influenced by particular events being organised on related issues.

### **Particular debates and concerns about children**

There is a concern about the commercialisation of childhood, for example, a concern pushed by the foundation 'My Child Online'. There is also some Government/media/academic concern about the rights of children and their participation in civic life. There is also a concern around public spaces being dangerous for children.

### **Case Studies**

We participated in field work of the Free University and their target population was high school pupils (13-18 years). What motivated us was the idea that young people can be considered as users and the study of their use might teach us something about how the wider population may use the internet in the near future. One of our key questions had to do with the idea that digital skills have a pivotal position in the access to IT-use, based on previous research. Another was the question of threats and opportunities which was more policy driven. Funding mostly came from the SCP itself, and some from the ministry of Economic Affairs, which coordinates IT policy in the Netherlands and is also responsible for the Awareness Node. Patti Valkenburg received high funding from the Dutch Science Foundation.