

## National report for Slovenia

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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

In Slovenia there are 4 universities: the University of Ljubljana, the University of Maribor, the University of Primorska and the University of Nova Gorica. Since there have been some changes in the financing of the universities it is expected there will be a rise of new private universities in the near future.

Media studies exist in Slovenia, in fact they are expanding. Primarily they were mainly in the scope of the Faculty of Social Sciences (University of Ljubljana) and the Faculty of the Humanities Koper (University of Primorska). But they are taught in several independent institutions of higher education: The Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis, Faculty for Media, Faculty of Applied Social Studies, etc.

IT/New Media studies do exist in Slovenia, mostly called Social Informatics or Informatics in the Contemporary Society. The main focus of these studies is observing, measuring, and researching changes in the contemporary – information - society that are caused by development and wide use of new technologies. Primarily they were mainly within the Faculty of Social Sciences (University of Ljubljana), but now they exist in several other independent institutions of higher education: Faculty for Information Studies in Novo Mesto, Faculty for applied Social Studies, etc.

### National Data Collected

The Statistical Office RS (an independent governmental institution) collects national statistics about ICT usage by individuals, in households and in enterprises once a year. This research is conducted in accordance with Eurostat methodology so the data are internationally comparable. Data are also collected for children down to 10 years old. The lowest age of the sample is 10. Data on the Internet have been collected since 1996 on a yearly basis. Another yearly study is the Site visitation study (Moss) from the Slovenian Advertising Chamber (which is an NGO). Studies about ICT usage in education were conducted within the Pedagogical Institute (which is an independent research institute). This study is an international one, called Sites – Information technology in education study (Mednarodna primerjalna analiza uporabe informacijskih tehnologij v šoli). TIMSS – Trends in International Mathematical and Science Studies is repeated every four years, children (4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade) are included in this study. In RIS research the lowest age of the respondents is 12, in the Moss study the lowest age is 10. The IVZ (Institut for Health Protection) conducted a study among 16 years old pupils about addiction with internet in 2001 and again in 2007.

### Institutional processes in applying to conduct research

There are no specific regulations about research on children. There is only a general commitment to ethics in research. There is no common stage that all proposals must go through.

### **Pressures to conduct research**

Since population growth is very slow in Slovenia, there is a notable decrease in the number of children. This represents a problem since the number of students is falling every year at the universities. This is one of the main reasons why university employees are pressured to direct their activities towards research in order to keep their jobs in the future. Government funded or Research Agency funded projects sometimes condition financing by the participation of industry partners in the project's consortium. The general trend (perhaps coming from EU recommendations) is to encourage the cooperation of academics/universities and industry; private and public partnerships. In the Resolution on National Research and Development Programme 2006-2010 this cooperation is mentioned in several sections of the document.

### **Factors influencing the orientation of research**

Collaborations with industry do happen. For example in the case of RIS project (Research of Internet) industry is a very interested collaborator. Ministries themselves or through Research Agencies invite researchers to bid for the money intended for certain research projects. The Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS) also invites researchers before releasing the bid to suggest which fields and themes should and need to be researched. Researchers in the Faculty of Social Sciences are currently trying to raise some money from the industry to conduct a comprehensive study on children's online behavior. Another example is the Faculty of Information Studies in Novo Mesto where the Faculty is entering a partnership with IBM with the intention of conducting collaborative projects.

### **National Research Traditions**

There is an established tradition of quantitative research, mainly in sociology, but also within other social sciences and humanities. However recently, there has been more qualitative research practised. There is a very strong methodological department (Department of Informatics and Methodology) at the Faculty of Social Sciences, and many people from that department collaborate with others outside the Faculty. Mass media studies have been common in Slovenia since the mid 70s, and studies of interpersonal communication since the mid 90s. Internet studies have happened since 1996, when the first studies of Internet usage in Slovenian were conducted by the RIS project within the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ljubljana.

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

Funding usually comes from the Government or research councils and there is no tradition for commercial funding.

### **Political initiatives influencing research**

There have been Government initiatives for introducing internet in schools and for training teachers.

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

The commercialisation of childhood and children's participation in civic life are both areas of discussion in Slovenia. In terms of the safety of public spaces, there are no specific debates, definitely not to the extent of bedroom culture phenomenon.

### **Case Studies**

There was not really any research dedicated just to children and the internet, but a few questions were included here and there. The reason for that was to cover that area because many children in Slovenia have access to the internet. Right now, a large project is being planned about children's use of online technologies. The main reason for that is an absolute lack of data and therefore the inability to see what our children are doing online and not being able to compare the data internationally. In terms of studies that have already been

conducted this included a quantitative survey as it was the common practice in our department. The general population was children aged 10-18. Broad questions were used in order to be able to get an idea of concerns children have about the internet, access and what they usually do online. The new study will be following up Livingstone's study UK Children Go Online, updating the questionnaire on online technologies that have been used lately (social networking sites, mobile use etc). The previous studies were largely Government funded. The new study will mix sponsor funding and hopefully some Government funding as well.