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4. Typology of publics

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CIREM (Spain)

Task 2.2 Set-up of the typology of population and images of science

Deliverable 4. Typology of publics

This task has the aim to provide the way to select the different audience groups to test the science promotion websites concerning the image of science and scientists they provide. This document is a result of co-operation between the partners. The first frame document was prepared by the task leader based on task 2.1, comments at the kick-off meeting, emails of the partners and discussions with the workpackage leader. Each partner had to send comments and suggestions to the first document, which were then considered and incorporated into the final deliverable in agreement with the workpackage leader.

We are conscious that the object of the YOSCIWEB project is to assess the image of science and scientists on web pages and that in doing so we must take into account a balance of views, representing young peoples' initial proximity to or enthusiasm about science. We believe that this balance will be achieved by choosing to work with young people from different backgrounds and by choosing random groups of pupils from each class. In addition, the transcripts of the group interactions will be coded for the "the representation of science" as well as for webpage preference, thus leading to an understanding pupils' positions.

The criteria to select the audience are based on social diversity (i.e. educational level, socio-economic categories, origins, sex...) and they will be adapted to the local circumstances. The theoretical framework behind the selection of criteria has been explained in task 2.1. The number and final characteristics of the focus groups will be defined based on these criteria in Workpackage 3 and will be discussed at the second project meeting. Eight focus groups will be undertaken by each partner.

The target audience of this study consists of young people from 12 to 18 years of age.

Based on the literature analysed in task 2.1 and the discussions and experience of the project partners the following factors will be taken into account for selecting the focus groups for the study:

- Socio-economic status
 - High
 - Low
- Age
 - 12-14 years old
 - 15-18 years old
- Gender
 - Girls
 - Boys

As the socio-economic status can mean a significant difference with regard to both the perception of scienceⁱ and the use of internet,ⁱⁱ this factor is very important for the analysis. It is influenced on the one hand by the family background (economic status, educational level of the parents, supportive or not supportive environment, etc.) and on the other by the type of school the pupil attends. The detailed definition of this factor has resulted in slightly different categories in each partner country after adapting the criteria to the regional specificities.

The partners will adapt the criteria of the socio-economic status to their local circumstances in the following ways:

Bulgaria

The Bulgarian partner is going to rely on established relations with several secondary schools in Sofia and the country. In Bulgaria the teachers are the most reliable and legal source of information and advice concerning the socio-economic status of young people targeted for focus group recruiting. However, they are fully aware that this approach is too susceptible to arbitrary judgements based on secondary attributes of good/poor background and high/low life standard of young people's families and friend circles.

Estonia

In context of Estonia probably the most adequate way of identifying high and low socio-economic status groups will be to approach students of different types of schools situated in different regions in Estonia. Students in Tallinn are more likely to come from relatively more affluent families with higher household income. In the context of the current study it might be wise to select a relatively prestigious science-oriented school as one of the places of conducting focus group interviews. Students with low socio-economic status are more commonly from countryside areas of Estonia, so another school where a focus-group could be conducted could be from a relatively poorer area of Estonia. Socio-economic status of particular students participating in the focus-group can be tested by asking the students e.g. how well off do they feel their family is economically in the context of the whole Estonia.

France

In France, it is quite hard to define whether pupils have a low or high socio-economic status. However, there is a ministerial policy for priority education that allows to target pupils with low socio-economic status:

- the "areas targeted for special help in education" ("zones d'éducation prioritaires" - ZEP) created 1981 where there are primary schools and high schools with additional resources and greater autonomy to cope with school and social difficulties.

- the "success ambition network" ("réseau ambition réussite" - RAR), established in 2007 as a relaunch plan for the priority education policy.

They will use this criteria when selecting the participants of the focus groups, i.e. some of the participants will come from ZEP or RAR schools and some others not.

As an indication, there are 6 RAR schools in Essonne today (out of 254 in France).

Iceland

The socio-economic status in Iceland will be defined by from rural versus urban areas. Studies in Iceland have shown that young people from rural areas usually have much lower test scores on standardized tests. There is also a much lower ratio of people from rural areas who seek higher education, particularly in science.

Netherlands

They would like to specify low and high SES on the basis of 2 questions asked to possible participants:

- highest educational level of each of both parents (if present)

- current profession (job) of each of both parents

If one (or both) of the parents has had an academic/university/scientific-level education and/or a job on that same (academic) level, we would decide to categorize the participant into the "high" SES category.

Spain

In Spain the socio-economic status of the pupils can be quite well identified by the district they live in and by the type of school they attend. There are so-called “concerted” schools (financed by the state and the parents together) and private schools in well-off districts of Barcelona where pupils are mainly of high socio-economic status and the public schools in the suburbs or cities and villages around Barcelona have children of low socio-economic status. The Spanish partner will work with one school in each category.

UK

The UK partner will select two schools, one from an affluent suburb and one from a socially deprived area, and they will create groups of boys and girls within the same age band.

The reason behind using gender-segregated groups is the different perceptions and attitudes girls and boys have regarding science and internet activities.ⁱⁱⁱ Children interact very differently with each other and in single sex groups we can ensure better that each child gets a fair chance to speak.

Consequently, the composition of the 8 focus groups done per partner will be the following:

- Girls - High socio-economic status– Age 1
- Boys - High socio-economic status – Age 1
- Girls – Low socio-economic status– Age 1
- Boys – Low socio-economic status – Age 1
- Girls - High socio-economic status– Age 2
- Boys - High socio-economic status – Age 2
- Girls – Low socio-economic status – Age 2
- Boys – Low socio-economic status – Age 2

Each test group will contain 9 persons.

The sessions with the focus groups will last 2 hours.

ⁱ Osborne, J., Simon, S. and Collins, S. (2003). Attitudes towards science. A review of the literature and its implications. *International journal of science education* 25 (9), 1049 – 1079

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ⁱⁱ Livingstone, S. & Bober, M. (2004) UK Children Go Online: *Surveying the Experiences of Young people and their Parents*. Downloaded on 10/07/2008 from <http://www.children-go-online.net>

ⁱⁱⁱ Steinke, J. (2004). Science in Cyberspace: Science and Engineering World Wide Web Sites for Girls. *Public Understanding of Science*, 13 (1), 7-30

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