YOSCIWEB Newsletter 3

During the last 4 months the YOSCIWEB consortium has been concentrating on describing national landscape of popular scientific websites. We have also been analyzing selected websites in participating countries.

Compiling a description of the national landscape of popular scientific websites has helped us to identify the overall situation of popular scientific websites in participating countries. Please find more information about these issues on *page 2* of this newsletter.

A comprehensive grid of analysis of selected websites has been developed. This grid includes 112 features important for a scientific website, which have been combined into 4 main groups. The grid of features helps us to profile selected popular scientific websites from various countries in a unified manner. More information on that can be found from page 3 of this newsletter.

YOSCIWEB partners have briefly described the national landscape of popular scientific websites and identified a set of websites for further analysis. A comprehensive grid of features of popular scientific websites has been developed in order to conduct in depth profiling of selected websites in participating countries.

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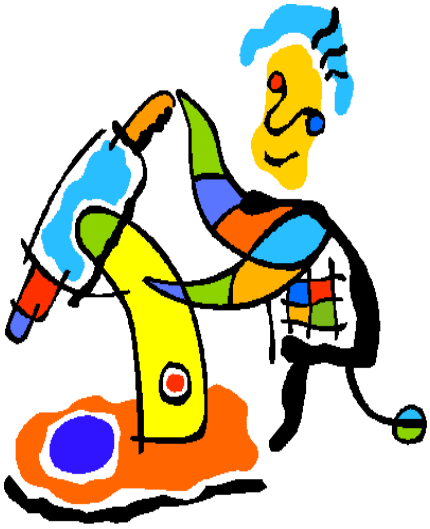

About YOSCIWEB

The YOSCIWEB project aims to analyze how web sites dedicated to the popularization of science build and renew the social representation of science and scientists towards the young people. We intend to offer guidance, innovation, reference and best practices regarding image of science on websites.

More information about the project can be found at: www.yosciweb.eu

YOSCIWEB project has received funding from EU Commission Framework Program 7 and lasts from January 2008 until December 2009

Description of the national popular-scientific website landscape

YOSCIWEB partners have analyzed the landscape of popular scientific websites in the partner countries of YOSCIWEB project.

Popular scientific websites have been selected by following criteria:

- The selected websites are *mainly about science and/or related to science* and scientific subjects, including arts and social sciences as well;
- They are meant to reach a *general or lay audience* rather than scientists, specialists and/or professionals, some of the sites have *a particular focus on youngsters*: users in the age range of 12 to 18 years old;
- They have *content of their own*, both in substance and by their own editing. With a minimum of five web pages we exclude portals in this description;
- Their *providers are located within the country* and these websites are *open* or accessible: no user names and/or passwords are needed.

Because of different sizes of various countries the amount of relevant web-sites per country differs quite substantially – e.g. France has more than 200 and the UK more than 500 websites, which would fall within our selection criteria, whereas Iceland has 6 websites like that. In order to ensure the quality of further analysis our studies are limited to 10 websites per country.

Popular scientific websites from 7 European countries are introduced via a standardized grid featuring both *general characteristics* as well as *special features* of selected partner sites in YOSCIWEB partner countries.

The *general characteristics* include name and internet address of the website, name of the owner and/or sponsor), purpose or objective of the website, scientific discipline(s) addressed in the website, number of web pages, and number of visitors. The *special features* refer to the availability of interactivity and technologically advanced features such as Q&A with scientists and multimedia. Data was mainly gathered via visiting and thoroughly reading the scientific website. If some information (such as for example number of visitors) was not available publicly, then partners tried to collect data by contacting the provider(s) of the website.

A total of 60 websites were described in the framework of the current project. The following table provides a snapshot of the landscape of scientific websites in partner countries as of September 2008.

Country	*Total Population in 2008*	*Nr. of Internet Users in 2008*	*Internet Penetration Rate and Rank*	*(Est.) Total Number of Pop. Sc. Websites*	*Selected PSWs*
Bulgaria	*7.262.675*	*4.000.000*	*55.1 %, nr. 39*	*7*	***7***
Estonia	*1.307.605*	*780,000*	*59.7 %, nr. 33*	*7*	***7***
France	*62.177.676*	*36.153.327*	*58.1 %, nr. 36*	*200*	***10***
Iceland	*304.367*	*258.000*	*84.8 %, nr. 5*	*6*	***6***
Netherlands	*16.645.313*	*15.000.000*	*90.1 %, nr. 2*	*75*	***10***
Spain	*40.491.051*	*25.623.329*	*63.3 %, nr. 29*	*30*	***10***
UK	*60.943.912*	*41.817.847*	*68.6 %, nr. 22*	*500*	***10***

Table 1: Popular science on the internet and internet usage in seven European countries in 2008
Source: http://www.internetworldstats.com/top25.htm

It is important to mention that due to the global nature of internet international popular scientific websites are in some cases likely to be even more popular than national sites (particularly in small countries). A good example of this is relative popularity of Wikipedia in a number of smaller countries.

The majority of the scientific websites in partner countries are owned or sponsored by public institutions. Private initiatives tend to be *web magazines,* where publishers are offering information in addition to their paper magazines. Some are operated by science centres and museums or internet additions to science-related TV-programmes. Some private companies have also initiated science-related web-sites as part of their education and communication strategy.

There are mono disciplinary websites for single domains or topics like physics, philosophy or chemistry or multi disciplinary websites for science in general. A larger amount of science oriented websites are targeted to relatively older young people (16 years +) as opposed to young people 8 to 12 or 12 to 16 years of age.

Most selected science websites have a database with search engine, containing news archives and articles, and, in particular cases, multimedia, graphs, etc. Interactivity is an important feature increasing the appeal of a scientific website to its target group. At least one kind of interactive feature was present on 36 websites out of 60. Most websites in our selection do offer multimedia features, somewhat more in audio and video than in moving graphics.

Grid of analysis for partners' analysis

The goal of Work Package 3 in YOSCIWEB project is to analyze scientific websites in countries involved in YOSCIWEB project more deeply and to determine both positive and negative aspects of these websites.

YOSCIWEB partner from Bulgaria, Democrit, has been leading the development of a comprehensive methodology and a grid of features for conducting analysis of popular scientific websites in participating countries. Initially a set of 171 features was proposed to the YOSCIWEB consortium members. This set was tested by consortium members on a selected website in order to determine most adequate questions.

As a result we formed a grid of 112 features, which included two kinds of scales for judgement (5-point-scale or yes/no depending on the

	USABILITY						
	Navigation		Scale				
49	Ease of navigation[19]	User is able to move around within the website with ease	excellent	highly satisfactory	satisfactory	unsatisfactory	non-existent / N/A
50		The website offers concise grouping of the content material	excellent	highly satisfactory	satisfactory	unsatisfactory	non-existent / N/A
51		Informative labeling of all navigation elements[20]	excellent	highly satisfactory	satisfactory	unsatisfactory	non-existent / N/A
52	Entertaining navigation	It has a **funky** design[21]	excellent	highly satisfactory	satisfactory	unsatisfactory	non-existent / N/A
53	Elements in menu	The number of elements and terms per element does not produce memory overload	excellent	highly satisfactory	satisfactory	unsatisfactory	non-existent / N/A

Figure 1. An excerpt of the grid of features for partners' analysis

type of question) and remarks to give to justify and explain the judgments.

A separate grid, which was introduced in YOSCIWEB Newsletter 2 was used to look at the images of science and scientists (see www.yosciweb.eu/d5.pdf).

The questions will be answered by the project partners with the aim of identifying remarkable and innovative practices among 60 websites, in accordance with a qualitative methodology. In order to maximize convergence of judgements of consortium partners the final grid was once more tested on a selected international website by each partner.

Analysis of popular scientific websites in participating countries was conducted according to grid, which looked at quality of the website in 4 main categories:

- Content
- Visual appeal
- Usability
- Interactivity

More information about particular features and scales can be found on the YOSCIWEB website. Please find the complete grid of features analyzed at www.yosciweb.eu/d8.pdf .

YOSCIWEB future activities

The YOSCIWEB consortium members are currently finalizing in depth analysis of selected popular scientific websites in participating countries. We have outlined the positive and negative aspects of selected popular scientific websites in participating countries. Collecting this information will help us to reveal best practices of introducing science via internet to young people in Europe and will also form the basis of finding out general trends in internet-based science communication in Europe.

We are developing a detailed grid to be used in analyzing selected popular scientific websites by focus-groups of young people.

YOSCIWEB newsletter number 4 will be published and sent to your e-mail already after one month.

YOSCIWEB consortium hopes to provide you with valuable and interesting information regarding images of science and scientists on popular science oriented websites. At the end of our project we will introduce a set of recommendations and best practices regarding science communication over internet.

More information about background of the project and public deliverables of the project can be found at our website: www.yosciweb.eu

YOSCIWEB
Young people and images of science on websites