

YOSCIWEB Newsletter 4

The YOSCIWEB consortium has finished an in-depth analysis of the selected websites in participating countries.

The first objective of the in-depth and critical analysis of scientific websites is to evaluate thoroughly selected websites. At the beginning of 2009 YOSCIWEB consortium members selected 60 popular scientific websites, which underwent an in depth analysis by project partners. Please find more information about that in our Newsletter 3.

Now this analysis has been finished and we have compiled an overview of the results, which outlines most significant trends and good practices found in different countries. Most important results of this analysis are presented in this newsletter. See more on page 3.

YOSCIWEB consortium is currently implementing focus group sessions and next task for the partners is to draw conclusions from focus groups of children in order to establish the link between scientific websites and young people.

YOSCIWEB partners have finished in-depth analysis of the selected websites in participating countries and now we are conducting focus groups of children between 12-17 to determine their preferences and suggestions regarding popular scientific websites.

Contents

About YOSCIWEB	<i>Page 1</i>
Implementation of the focus group sessions	<i>Page 2</i>
Analysis of scientific websites by partners	<i>Page 3</i>
Activities of YOSCIWEB partners	<i>Page 4</i>
YOSCIWEB future activities	<i>Page 5</i>



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



Implementation of the focus group sessions

We are currently conducting focus groups of children aged 12-17 years to find out how children understand science and scientists and how they see the national popular scientific websites selected.

Each partner will undertake 8 focus group sessions, each with 9 children. The groups will be distributed into younger age groups (12-14 years) and older groups (15-17 years). In the younger groups there will be three 12 year olds, three thirteen year olds and three fourteen year olds. In the older groups there should be three fifteen year olds, three sixteen year olds, three seventeen year olds.

All 9 children in any group will be of the same gender and of the same socio-economic status (high or low as defined by each partner country).

In the focus group children firstly discuss what is science and what do the scientists do. This helps to relax participants in order to break the ice in the focus group and it also gives a primary overview of perception of children about science. These questions also focus the children's thoughts on the topic of science and scientists.

The second part of conducting focus groups is looking at a selection of three popular scientific web pages that each partner has selected. Children will be divided into 3 groups and each group of three participants will get approximately 20 minutes with each of the websites. The participants will fill in a grid while looking the web pages.

The grid is divided to four topics:

1. What does the website look like?
2. How can you interact with the site?
3. What do you think of the site?
4. What does this website show you about science and scientists?

1. What does the website look like?

Can you easily see what this website is about?	Yes	No
Is this website easy to read?	Yes	No
Is this site is cool to look at?	Yes	No
	Why?	
Are there things that distract you from reading the site properly?	Yes	No

Figure 1. Part of the children's questionnaire.

The final part of the focus group will be closing discussion where children can discuss in group again what they think about scientific websites in general. For example they can discuss which of the websites they liked the best, which of these websites they frequently use and why do they not like some of these web sites.

See more about the implementation of the focus group sessions here:

<http://www.yosciweb.eu/d9.pdf>

Analysis of scientific websites by partners

YOSCIWEB partners have analyzed the scientific websites in the partner countries of YOSCIWEB project and we present some of the results in this newsletter.

Popular scientific websites were analysed by 4 main criteria:

- Content
- Visual appeal
- Usability
- Interactivity

Most important conclusions of analysis of the websites are presented below:

Images of science and scientists

Unquestionably the most remarkable trend confirmed by the partners' in-depth analysis is that in around 25% of the selected popular science websites there is a complete or almost complete lack, of pictorial representations of scientists.

Thus some websites try to give them a consistent place: for example three websites present portraits of people working in scientific research such as scientists and technicians without pictorial representations but with their curriculum and their day to day activities. Two websites organise interviews with scientists and three websites provide the name of the specialist who gave the information.

Content

“The bigger organisations have more sophisticated websites” is the general and most important national conclusion for the UK's panel. In small countries like Estonia the conclusion is that “better financed sites can afford more activity updating and take better advantage of modern technologies to convey the messages about science and scientists”.

The rhetorical question “Where is the science?” is asked by the French partner regarding one website which belong to a famous newsmagazine: they largely promote the last edition of their magazine (without giving the content of the articles) and show a lot of videos, not especially about science subjects but about all subjects that are supposed to attract young people (humour, music, cinema...). This question could be related to every country in which science and science communication are too institutionalised or too commercialised. Websites are display windows for the institutions who want to promote themselves and there is very little science content.



Figure 2. Is this a modern scientist?

Visual appeal

Most of the popular-scientific websites in the panels of Spain, France and the UK are rated as aesthetically very appealing with a good choice of colours and original decorations, plenty of photographs, pictures and graphics. On the other hand this is not the case in Bulgaria where the lack of investment in online science communication is clearly visible precisely through the amateurish graphics design conceptions of the majority of the analysed websites.

Usability

Most of the websites of the samples of Spain, Iceland and France are also professionally executed in terms of ease of navigation, simplicity and efficiency of content organisations. The only insignificant exception in the French panel is a website where the home page is too long due to the fine classification of its highly abundant content. The main user-friendliness flaw of the Spain sample is the lack of “adequate downloading and printing options”.

Interactivity

The majority of the partners reported a low to average level of interactivity of the analysed popular-scientific websites. In France and UK the websites are not very interactive: with few web 2.0 technologies and communication being essentially top/down.

In the Netherlands' sample there is no website that offers the full range of interactivity possibilities. In Spain the popular-scientific websites are also not very interactive except for the option of users to send in feedback or contribute to the website's content.

In Bulgaria and also in Estonia only web forums and options to send feedback are relatively well-developed, but the overall level of interactivity can be considered as low.

In Iceland the interactivity is mostly in the form of question and answer features, which in some cases are very well developed. About half of the websites offer users link sharing and give the option to post

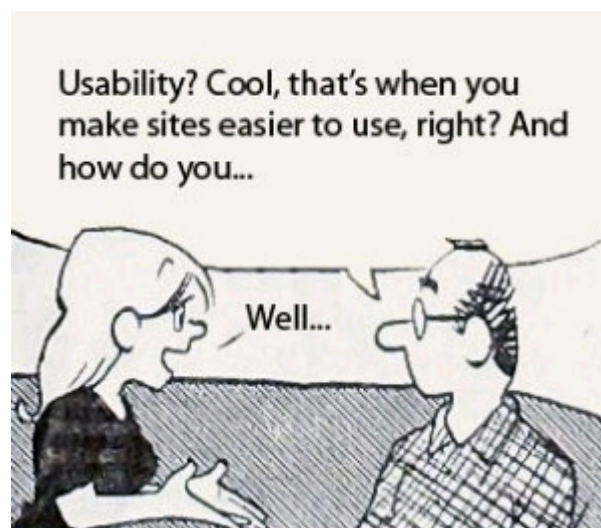


Figure 3. A cartoon about usability.

Activities of YOSCIWEB partners

We would also like to bring to you some interesting activities, which partners of YOSCIWEB are currently undertaking. Conseil général de l'Essonne - CG91 - runs a popular Scientific Website in France, called *Banque des Savoirs*. They have started published an English-language newsletter, which might be of interest also to readers of YOSCIWEB Newsletter.

Some topics of the first Newsletter are:

- [An Ant 's life](#)
- [Teaching Science: not so neutral textbooks...](#)
- [The wild animals of Paris](#)
- [Spiderman... or is it Spidergoat?](#)
- [Philippe Bouveret, sculptures run by nature](#)

See more at:

http://www.yosciweb.eu/NL_Banque_des_savoirs_EN_01.pdf and sign-up in order to receive new Banque des savoirs newsletters!

the material on Facebook. There is a range of interactive features in the Iceland sample but each of the websites only offers a few of them.

See more about the analysis of the scientific websites by the partners:

<http://www.yosciweb.eu/d11.pdf>.

YOSCIWEB future activities

The first task for YOSCIWEB consortium members is finalizing the focus group studies in partner countries. After completing the focus groups our partner in Scotland will conduct analysis of these focus groups. They will analyze the feedback given by children from participating countries and gather ideas from focus groups.

After that YOSCIWEB partners from Iceland, Spain and Scotland will discuss the focus groups studies and will identify trends in different countries in Europe. They will compare views of different age groups on science and scientists in different countries and as a result they will find the best practices of the popular scientific websites.

YOSCIWEB newsletter number 5 will be published and sent to your e-mail in 4 months.

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.

