

YOSCIWEB Newsletter 6

We are happy to invite you to read the last Newsletter of YOSCIWEB project. This newsletter will bring you a just short version of most important outcomes of the YOSCIWEB project.

We will introduce **General Trends and Singular Initiatives**, which we have identified within the panel of 70 popular scientific websites included in our study. Highlights from **Best Practices and Recommendations Guide** will also be presented.

We fully acknowledge that there is a wide variety of different opinions on best ways of communicating science over the internet. Therefore our research has not intended to provide “definitive answers”, but rather a set of suggestions on science communication based on the insight we have gathered.

YOSCIWEB initiative has gathered a lot of valuable information from experts and young people on internet-based ways of introducing science to young people.

This information is available now via a comprehensive **Best Practices and Recommendations Guide**, which includes over 60 pages of information beneficial to webmasters, educators, policy makers and science communicators. The complete guide is available at: www.yosciweb.eu/english_guide.pdf

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FINAL SEMINARS:

YOSCIWEB results will be presented via an interactive seminar in all partner countries:

Bulgaria 16.04 – 11.05, Varna, Plovdiv, Sofia.

Estonia 18.03, Tallinn

France 10.03, Evry

Spain 26.03, Barcelona

The Netherlands
15.04, Amsterdam

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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 the 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 March 2010



Identification of general trends and singular initiatives

The main objective of this step was to analyse the data obtained from expert analysis and focus group analysis and identify the general trends that have emerged. We identified trends regarding the images of science and scientists on popular scientific websites as well as the general trends on presentation of information on the websites and how this presentation is perceived by young people.

In order to achieve this, we statistically analysed the data obtained from the grids of analysis supplied by the partners. In addition to data analysis a set of singular initiatives were identified by project partners.

Information on prevailing **general and national trends of website landscape and internet use, content, visual appeal, usability, interactivity and image of science and scientists** can be found from the analysis.

An attractive set of singular initiatives from popular scientific websites of partner countries is also available in the analysis.

A singular initiative has been defined as something that makes the website stand out compared to other websites and demonstrates a unique and/or clever way of science communication or website design.

What constitutes a good website?

Young people like websites that:

- Are colourful and not bland
- Are visually appealing
- Have informative and interesting pictures rather than too much text
- Have good quality information
- Have easily readable text with a not too difficult vocabulary
- Are relevant to them on a personal or school related basis
- Are not patronising
- Have interactive features
- Provide opportunities for social networking and contact with others
- Have a good search engine and/or a good menu and site map
- Have clear, uncluttered pages
- Do not have distracting elements (adverts or flash)
- Are updated frequently
- Give them active control

Best Practices and Recommendations Guide

This guide summarises the research undertaken in the framework of the YOSCIWEB project. We have outlined some of the best practices of making science and scientific careers more attractive to young people and in communicating scientific information to young people through the internet.

You can also find answers to the Key Research Questions of the YOSCIWEB project from the guide:

1. *How do young people perceive the image of science and scientists?*
2. *How is the image of science and scientists being portrayed on the Internet?*
3. *How could science being made more attractive on the internet for young people?*

In this newsletter we can only bring to you a brief set of main conclusions and recommendations identified throughout the project, so we encourage you to read the whole report from our website www.yosciweb.eu/english_guide.pdf

Main Conclusions

- I. Literature search and our focus group interviews show that negative stereotypical perceptions of science and scientists dominate.
- II. The Internet does not seem to improve this negative stereotypical perception of science and scientists. With a few exceptions, most popular scientific websites (PSWs) among the 60 selected showed the stereotype image of science and male scientists.
- III. The young people did however make very clear what they did and did not like about the 60 selected European popular scientific websites. Based on our interviews and the set of four variables (content, visual appeal, usability and interactivity), we have composed a list of important features as mentioned by the young people from 12 to 17 years old, which is available in the Best Practices and Recommendations Guide (Appendix B).

In short, the Internet does currently not yet provide additional value for young visitors when it comes to science and science careers. The YOSCIWEB project however, also makes clear that PSWs are not the only manner to link young people with science on the Internet.



Recommendations

The YOSCIWEB project has identified a set of recommendations, which help to create a popular scientific website, which would be liked by young people. Below you can find a short summary of these:

- **Show a positive image (both in words and image of science and scientists)** and show that scientists are also just normal people.
- The text on science websites should be **informative** without being too difficult to read or boring. Style of writing should be somewhat **entertaining and clearly to the point**. Images should be used to dress up the text.
- **Identification of websites should be clear**, whether it is in the domain name, title or design. A lot of visitors arrive through search engines and they can leave quickly if they are not sure what the site is about, for whom or what they can expect to find on it.
- **Credibility of information** presented is increased by providing references to hosting institutions, the authors and the editorial board. Visitors should be presented with good information about their background, publications and education.
- Interesting pictures or figures can enhance the appeal of the content and provide a valuable **visual representation** of the subject. Authors on science websites need to write in a factual, accurate and light way, which (young) people understand.

- Content should also be **relevant with regard to age and gender** and make sure this also applies to images and other multimedia, as well as links. Young people's self image is that they know more and understand more than adults think. It is therefore important that content is not too childish.
- For young people, **school-related tasks** are often the motivation for searching scientific information. It is hence important that the content is relevant to these school tasks. Attracting visitors to a website with school-related information can be a good opportunity to entice the visitor to read more about science outside of his or her school needs.
- Websites should be **visually attractive** without being too flashy or crowded. They should have a **clear design and navigation**, be well organised, structured and respect the predominant design principles online. Remember that while young people like colours and images, they prefer neutral but efficient sites over a colourful messy one. Glaring adverts should be avoided as they can distract children and question to the purpose of the website.
- Use of **multimedia is instrumental** in creating a good science website. This can include quizzes, animations, drawings, films, interviews, sound bites as well as regular images or photographs. More advanced multimedia can also be used (e.g. simulations of experiments, and educational games) as a quick and easy way to better understanding of various scientific phenomena.
- There should be **good alternative ways to get the content** on websites, besides visiting the site itself. This can be in form of RSS-feeds, e-mail newsletters, social updates and more. That way, users do not have to go to the site itself; information comes to them. This correlates well with the way young people are using the Internet, as they tend to only look for information and not visit specific websites.
- **Easy navigation is important**, especially when it is kept in mind that young users may get lost more easily than adults. It should be clear and support users in finding the correct information fast. Good navigation aids users in reading and learning about new things, not just things they were looking for in the first place.
- Science websites are recommended to use **more social interactive elements** that can be used to share information on scientific topics, both between young people themselves and between them and the editors of websites. Social networks and interactivity are becoming an increasingly popular use of the Internet and if science websites want to be popular with young people, they should utilise it to the full.

Public policy making: options and advice

Public policy makers such as ministries and local governments in the field of science, science education and school education might develop a list of policy options, with a broader range than just initiating, encouraging and supporting the development of PSWs. We suggest a few options for consideration:

Include popular science in online school curricula

E-learning, online school work and educational programmes will become an increasing part of school and school work. Science or popular science could be an integrated part of these new curricula.

Use social networks for science

Young people are predominantly interested in the social networking aspects of the Internet. This comes as no surprise, as most adults show the same interest on the Internet. Consequently, popular science, news and e-research should be more integrated at Facebook, You tube and the like.

Incorporate search engines and Wikipedia in marketing strategies

Since Google and Wikipedia are the prime Internet sources for home work, popular science should be easy to find via Google and well presented at Wikipedia. As a result, marketing strategies of popular

science websites should focus on a good positioning in the Google database and be well presented with links at Wikipedia.

You can find more ideas and recommendations from our *Best Practices and Recommendations Guide* at www.yosciweb.eu/english_guide.pdf or by participating a final seminar of YOSCIWEB project.

YOSCIWEB seminar near You

YOSCIWEB final seminar will give you a good opportunity to gain in depth knowledge about our findings and to discuss most adequate ways of improving science communication via internet. YOSCIWEB Final Seminars will be held or have already been held in all participating countries of YOSCIWEB.

Please find the schedule of events below:

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|------------------------|--|---|
| Bulgaria | 16.04 18.04 24.04 11.05 | Varna Plovdiv Sofia Sofia |
| Estonia | 18.03 from 13.00 to 17.00 | Tallinn Tallinn University, House "Mare", Senati saal (M-648), Uus-Sadama 5 |
| France | 10.03 from 10.00 to 17.00 | Evry Hôtel du département, salle Michel Comte, 6ème étage. |
| Spain | 26.03. from 12.00 to 13.30 | Barcelona Fundació CIREM, Travessera de les Corts 39-43. |
| The Netherlands | 15.04 | Amsterdam , Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam |
| United Kingdom | 30.11.2009 | Glasgow , Glasgow Science Centre |

You can find more detailed information about locations and schedules of the final events from our homepage at: www.yosciweb.eu



YOSCIWEB Team would like to wish you best success in science communication!