

European Community -
Safer Internet Programme



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Editorial Don't confuse education and inoculation

The observations of the effects of the experimental Educaunet tools and methods are encouraging, but the amateur sensationalist may not be impressed.

Whatever their age, youth said that the Educaunet training was a positive and enriching experience. In general, they seem more attentive to the risks after having done the educational activities. But the risks they foresee are not the same. For 8-11 year-olds, technical problems occupy first place, followed by pornographic and ideological sites. The inverse is true for 12-18 year-olds.

If they are aware of the fact that they can meet "bad" people on the Net, what they blame the Internet for is the inherent anonymity of this type of communication. According to them, it generates superficial relationships. This same anonymity which is associated with the impossibility of verifying information is a source of error linked to the identity of the people they meet on the Internet.

Another reality appears: that of the infinite number of individual paths taken. Individual interviews with youth give similar answers: one learns by taking action, and by interacting and discussing with peers or adults. But, behind these similarities, lies a young person with his/her own itinerary dependent on a particular socio-economic class, his/her place in the family, his/her personality, personal baggage, intellectual and relational capacities, technical resources and constraints etc.

On top of that, the competencies necessary to be aware of the risks depend on factors that youth establish progressively and in no particular order. Educational tools, therefore, can neither act based on a standard scenario, nor as a vaccine. In other words, there is no *before* and *after* education aimed at risk prevention; there is a process of discovery of the horizons possible through the use of Internet which is modulated by the personality and baggage of each young person.

This makes us distrust, even more so, "one shot" approaches inspired by marketing and events strategies. On the contrary, our observations comfort us as we place our bets on educational structures (schools, families and associations) as relays for education aimed at preventing the risks associated with the use of Internet. Despite the inertia of these structures, they are adaptable and work in the long term. They may not inoculate, but they educate. Plain and simple.

Educaunet is spearheaded by three main groups:



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Calendar

EDUCAUNET was officially launched in April 2001. The principal commitments that await us until September 2002 follow. This tentative calendar will allow you to discover the phases aimed at elaborating the critical environment that we are proposing.

April 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • French support committee meeting
May 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Problematisation Seminar
June 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of 1st Bilingual Electronic Newsletter
June-September 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools conception
October 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of 1st 30 French and Belgian teachers, parents and educators in Brussels • Start of the 1st phase of experimentation in test-groups of youth aged 8-18 years • Belgian support committee meeting • Publication of 2nd Bilingual Electronic Newsletter • French support committee meeting
October - December 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st phase of experimentation in test-group • Continuous follow-up of experimentation keeping in mind its evaluation
December 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation meetings of tools and tested methods (Dec. 12th in Belgium, Dec. 14th in France)
January 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reworking of tools and methods based on results of the first evaluation
February 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of 30 new French and Belgian teachers, parents and educators in Aix-en-Provence • Belgian and French support committee meetings
February - April 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd phase of experimentation in test-groups • Continuous follow-up of experimentations keeping in mind its evaluation
May 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of 3rd Bilingual Electronic Newsletter • Evaluation meetings of tools and tested methods of the 2nd phase (May 3rd in Belgium and May 17th in France)
June-July 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conception of tools and proven methods • Final evaluation development
August 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support committee meeting at the Summer Communication University (Hourtin, France)
September 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of 4th Bilingual Electronic Newsletter • Completion of pedagogical "tool-boxes" • Final reports

Educate instead of protect

Teaching youth how to surf responsibly on the Internet is Educaunet's goal. The programme bets that it can train children and adolescents to be autonomous, critical and accountable, capable of appreciating the riches of this media while at the same time correctly perceiving its dangers – real or assumed.

Everyone knows that the Internet is not without dangers; prejudicial, improper or illicit content, fraudulent practices, concealment or falsification of identities, manipulating behaviour that sneaks in among the undeniable riches of the network and which is not always easy to spot. [Surfing the Internet often means surfing without knowing where you are going or where you will end up.](#) Parents, teachers and educators are worried about this, but is youth necessarily aware of it?

Our countries dream of a society where all risk factors are taken care of and supervised. With the new technologies of communication the answer generally consists of sheltering youth by using filters, black-lists, labels... However, these means of protection risk creating an "air-bag" effect which is even more dangerous: youth believe that they are protected and so become less vigilant. The moment they find themselves on the Internet without protection, or where harmful information has passed through the holes of the Net, they are in a delicate and fragile position. Paradoxically, our desire to protect them makes them inept at identifying pitfalls and at knowing how to deal with them.

Instead of putting up walls to keep risks at a distance, Educaunet decided to accompany and support youth in their discovery and appropriation of the network. The programme relies on media education processes. What's at stake is allowing children and adolescents to understand the originality of this means of communication where one cannot correctly identify the person they are speaking to. Educaunet aims at making them [autonomous and accountable](#) in their Internet practices, and helping them become vigilant and critical.

Going from passive protection to active and responsible commitment in taking risks is the aim of the Educaunet process.

Agiles on the Net

Educaunet has created an ensemble of educational tools. In total 30 activities are being tested in classes, families and associations of 1500 Belgian and French youth aged 8-11, 12-15 and 16-18 years.

How can we help youth become autonomous and responsible learners in light of the risks that they may encounter on the Internet? To support educators in this process Educaunet has put together 30 activities that represent possible scenarios one can encounter on the Internet. These activities can be done in groups followed by group reflection and discussion, by parlour games or even individually directly on the Net. All these possibilities allow students to explore and to better understand this tool of exchange, creation, communication and of information which is Internet.

Families, teachers and associations are the three publics mediating this type of education. Three groups, but above all individuals: experts or beginners, language teacher or street educator; anyone owning even an out-dated computer or having access to a room connected to a network, in contact with 8, 13, or 18 year-olds. Flexible and adaptable activities that come with an educational user guide attempt to answer to the needs of each individual.



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The 4 new Educaunet activity domains

The tools proposed by Educaunet are tested by approximately 60 adults and 1500 youth in both Belgium and France in an educational, social and family framework.

The first comments and suggestions made by our experimenters in November and December of 2001 forced us to rethink the activity domains proposed and to improve a number of our tools. As a result, the domains "Interaction" and "Self-expression" have been regrouped under the more global term "Communication" which better represents the actual uses of youth.

With the fairy tale of *Cl@@ in the land of the Internet*, *Advertising on the Net*, *The deconstruction of rumours*, the evaluation of Internet information sources or role plays on the secured Chat room of Educaunet, the activities are now organized under 4 domains: "Exploration", "Communication", "Inquisition", and "Self-observation".



" Hit-parade "

About 60 educators, teachers and parents chose to test the games and activities they considered the most adapted to their audience and to their professional, associative or family environment. Which activities did youth like the most ? The first assessments provide some enlightenment.



EXPLORATION

On the whole, the experimenters chose activities dedicated to exploring the Internet. In this domain, two games that aim at discovering the Internet and two activities are particularly successful among the youth :



A game of "Race on the Web" for 15-18 year-olds in Hannut (Belgium)

- > The game **Cyberfamilles** (cyberfamilies)(a pack of cards).
- > The game **Course sur la Toile** (Race on the Web) (a board game).
- > Two tales of personal discovery: **Cl@r@ au pays d'Internet** and the manga-like **Maitre de l'Empire** (Clara in the land of the Internet, and Master of the Empire).



Activities based on the fairy tale "Cl@r@ in the land of the Internet" with 8-12 year-olds in Mouscron (Belgium)



COMMUNICATION

The second domain which has been privileged is the set of activities dealing with communication of which the **Tépatoa** game ("You are not who you say you are"), a role play in which one is initiated to the rules of the chat, ranks among the preferred activities with youngsters.



INOUSITION

- > Two versions of the **Dominonet** game (child/youth) which suggests the reading of various websites homepages, proved to be very successful too.
- > The same interest was granted to **Topéflop** ("Cool or uncool") where young users are asked to classify the websites according to their taste while trying to express their emotions.
- > **Signal éthique** ("Make your own classification") is a method for classifying the web sites by taking into account the age of the participants, the risks or the different types of sites.
- > **Déconstruire la rumeur** ("Break down the rumour") is a method of critical identification of the way rumours can spread on the Internet.



SELF-OBSERVATION

- > **Quel internaute suis-je ?** (Which type of surfer am I ?), a quiz-like activity to learn to observe ones own behaviour as a surfer and to be able to classify oneself according to the results of the quiz. This last activity can now be found on-line in the form of an interactive quiz, available on our website www.educaunet.org.



12-15 year-olds discovering "Dominonet" in Hannut (Belgium)

A large number of these activities have been put together in a "cybercarnet" (cybernotebook), which is part of a **Cyberkit** that had a huge success with youth: 1600 copies were published and distributed during the first two experimentation phases.

“Twelve and thirteen year-olds are asking for more !!”

Jacques Estal is a teacher trainer and history and geography teacher in the south of France. He experimented with the Educaunet approach in his junior high school in Istres, with the help of several of his colleagues. He tells us how he managed to communicate his enthusiasm for Educaunet to his students.

Right from the presentation of Educaunet last year, I volunteered to participate in this programme which seemed, to me, interesting on all levels. First of all because it was a project that was going to get new technologies moving and not the other way around, i.e. by putting the tool at the forefront to the detriment of the pedagogical and civic objective; but above all because this project lent itself well to the active and intelligent education of the citizen of tomorrow. To hide from the reality, in this case the dangers linked to the Net, or putting up barriers, will never prevent the student from finding him or herself confronted with these problems. On the contrary, how to grasp them, how to know them, to gauge them, indeed to “tame” them, will allow him or her to react in an appropriate manner when faced with these unavoidable elements.

I “tested” certain Educaunet tools in a grade 7 class (12-13 year-olds) which benefited from an hour per week of an option called “communication”: **Têpatoa** (the hazards of Chat), **Qui est coupable?** (Who is the guilty one?), debate and taking positions in relation to a tragic current event in which emails may have been partly responsible. With the literature teacher the students worked on **Cl@r@**, a modern ‘Alice’ in the land of the Internet; and with the arts teacher, after the presentation of **Photo Language**, we classified the inherent risks of Internet and created banners using pictures and cut-out letters to warn students against these risks.

Student participation was active and enthusiastic; it was necessary, for example, to forbid them to play **Têpatoa** outside of class time. The tools themselves fully played out their role, requiring at times, however, an adaptation in relation the proposed method of use.

A confrontation with reality is indispensable, but we take our hats off to those who conceptualised these tools and who managed to create a complete and diverse palette of products and exercises in a very short period of time. Second tip of the hat in view of the work done by this same team between the end

of the first part of the experimentation, of which I was a part, and the beginning of the second wave of experimentation: adapted tools, new uses, new creations....

A very positive experiment which will most certainly receive a well-deserved welcome next year when it emerges - enriched by final evaluations - from its cocoon to transform into a formidable display of tools to be used against “the bad guys of the Net”!!!

Jacques Estal, high school teacher in Istres



COMMUNICATION

Behind the texts, the images, the messages, there exist individuals. Communicating on the Internet sometimes requires the work of a researcher: knowing how to pick out surfer profiles, how to locate them... The activities in this domain are aimed at making users accountable.

“ Têpatoa ”

This is a role play that takes place in the private framework of a secured Chat. By putting themselves in a real-life situation students undertake a false identity and attempt to unmask that of the others. A game that makes you aware of Chat practices and the volatile character and incertitude of people's identity on the Internet.

“We prepared Chat activities with the Têpatoa game and students aged 12-13 rushed to participate. They really enjoyed the activities and asked for more. With this age group it is necessary to explain the vocabulary (qualifying vocabulary associated with the characters) and to assure oneself that they understand how Chat works. They get a little lost when everyone is chatting and some of them forget to actually type messages, too busy with what they're reading. During the evaluation phase some were able to discover who was hiding behind the false identities. They were very surprised to see that some of them clouded the issues. Objective reached. We are going to redo this activity with a different age group.”

Emmanuelle Ransquin, teacher in Namur

Educating for the purpose of using email

Since 1997, Nicolas Izquierdo has integrated the use of the Internet in the learning framework of his elementary school. In Névache, a village of 300 inhabitants in a valley in the Alps, his students update their Internet site almost daily and are eager and anxious to answer their numerous emails.

When I entered the Educaunet programme, I had a restricted vision of the activity field; I saw it particularly for visiting sites. After discussing with colleagues and parents I realised that educating against the risks of the Internet had to be bigger than that, and had to include the use of email.

I became conscious of this only as I increasingly sorted and selected the emails that I considered my students capable of answering; I was falsifying their knowledge of the Internet: they believed that emails were always trustworthy! This problem became more obvious when my students began to have access to the mailbox without parental supervision; parents who in any case were not competent in the subject matter. I decided, therefore, to forward to them practically all the emails received at the school.

A former student whom we all knew well, the daughter of a gendarme, sent us the following message one day: "Object: PICTURE OF A MISSING GIRL, PLEASE FORWARD, THANK YOU". The fact that this message (see inset) came from a former classmate, the students wanted to forward it to everyone in our address book. I did ask them, however, to verify the sources and they decided to ask for more information from the sender of the message.

"Hello Corinne, thanks for the message. Are you sure that this picture is not a hoax? We haven't forwarded it, we are awaiting your response. Goodbye, Yves CM2 on behalf of the class."

The following day I announced to my students that I had found 'Penny Brown' and that we were going to find her trail on the Internet. We hooked into *hoaxbuster.com* and we found the photo we had received. The students had difficulty understanding that it was a hoax. What? The messages that we get are not all true? But the parents of our classmates wouldn't let them send a false message? Dominique, 9 years old: "I learned that it was a hoax. You shouldn't forward just anything on the Internet." Gilles, 10 years old: "I learned that you have to pay attention to what you receive by Internet. I know that you can get anything and everything on the Internet."

Sharing experiences on the Net

I inform the other members of the Educaunet experimentation network about our activities and a few days later we received news from Belgium. My students were thrilled to learn that another class followed the same procedure as them. Thibault Defosse, high school teacher, tells of his experience:

"The students are at first amazed and want to forward the message to everyone in their address book. They are totally taken by the emotional aspect of the letter and don't think or bother to read between the lines. I suggested to them to reflect and to inquire about this 'Penny Brown' before forwarding the message."



Two students, however, forwarded the message without waiting and then followed it up with a refutation and the hoaxbuster homepage... Student participation was extraordinary. They got into the game right from the beginning and gave everything they had to the research. They put themselves in the shoes of the 'missing' girl whose picture was circulating on the Net and who is being called out to on the streets... Questions about the risks of the Internet appeared. What should you do if you find your picture on the Internet or in an email rumour? The students began to realise that some people on the Net do not always have good intentions."

Thibault adds: "I sent the same message, as a test, to different colleagues at the school who rushed to forward it to all their acquaintances. Which goes to show that most adults don't have critical thinking skill either when it comes to the Internet..."

From here on in at the school in Névrache, we deal regularly with different mails and it has become a game that the students particularly enjoy: the hunt for false research, false viruses, pornographic invitations, the hunt for hoaxes of all kinds...

We haven't yet dealt with the problem of insignificant messages that "send" you to pornographic sites, but Educaunet has only just begun for us. More than a short-term experiment and beyond a few otherwise very interesting games, I believe that it's genuinely a programme which favours conscious awareness, a new educational state of mind.

The awakening of critical thinking skills has been a part of the Official Curriculum in France for a long time. But with the use of the Internet, what seems interesting from the point of view of personality development is that it becomes a basic tool from the social integration of the individual in our society. It really is about citizenship training. Here and now. In this world and beyond. So as not to say Internet.

Nicolas Izquierdo, elementary school teacher
<http://ecole.nevrache.free.fr>

"Deconstruct a rumour"

Dissecting different types of rumours, knowing their place on the Internet and how they work, being able to identify and examine them in a critical way. Two teachers give their testimonials.

 André Brüll, teacher in Liège

"I worked with my students on [Deconstruct a rumour](#). I, myself had an unclear knowledge of Internet rumours and was only vaguely aware that I may be crossing them via my email. I had to go through an awareness and discovery phase myself. Noticeable change: I no longer forward the rumours I receive!"

 Emmanuelle Ransquin, teacher in Namur

"I tested the rumour with 14 year-old students in French class. Beforehand we had studied François Mauriac's novel 'Le Saguoin' in which rumours play a very important role... I photocopied a few rumours from the [hoaxbuster.com](#) website and I left the students confronted with them without giving them any instructions. Varied reactions : 'that's not possible', 'I don't believe it', or 'that's interesting, I've got to read that...':

When I asked them how they reacted when they received these types of mail, certain students explained that when they didn't know the sender they deleted them for fear of viruses, others read them and naively believed what they read, others were more sceptical. I suggested to them to verify the authors of the document, to find proof of what they forwarded and to analyse the contents of the information. They came across the [hoaxbuster](#) site and finally accepted to always verify the source of the document, to avoid giving their true identity in petitions that circulate, and to ensure the validity of contents before forwarding messages. It seems to me that the goal has been reached."

What is a hoax?

Hoax: [hoks] nm, gag

False virus alarms, false chain letters, false promises, false information: *hoaxes* can take on any form.

Above and beyond the simple fact that you get trapped, be aware that *hoaxes* bring with them bigger risks. From entering into your private life to sending you off into directions you wouldn't have expected, the dangers are real enough: disinformation and attack on the person, saturation of the network, false alarms which lead to weariness, and infiltration of real viruses when forwarding messages...

"Teachers' favourites"



EXPLORATION

One of the first risks would be to never have Internet access. The activities of this domain, both fun and pedagogical, are designed to help youth discover "the rules of the game" of the Internet.

"Cl@r@ in the land of the Internet"

A bound and illustrated fairy tale evokes the thrill of discovery and the pleasure of the encounters proposed by the Web all the while dealing with the fears that the Net can provoke for both adults and youth.

"We used Cl@r@ in the land of the Internet with a group of parents of children aged 3-10. We read it aloud and discussed it together. The way in which the fairy tale is introduced is appealing, it goes over the different domains of the Internet and its risks. It gave way for debates among the adults but also between adults and children. It's a reassuring tool for families; even in the way it looks."

*Françoise Fromageau,
representative of the families in Plomeur*



INQUISSION

The activities in this domain are aimed at mastering the tools and forming critical thinking skills: comparing contents, identifying the sources, dissecting web pages... so as to not risk surfing the Net by the seat of your pants!!!

"Dominonet"

Based on the original game of **Dominoes**, Dominonet is aimed at facilitating speed-reading of home pages and at identifying the source of information. It aims at teaching how to pick out the type of site and the author of the contents from first glance: school site, institutional site, business site, personal page....

"Students understand the principle of the game very quickly. When a student places a dominonet he must express, aloud, why he/she has chosen to associate the 2 sites. The other children are now invited to negotiate whether or not they will accept the proposition. This works well enough, but what children see is not necessarily what adults see. Their reading is pretty superficial and restricted to the images, titles or to the general set-up of the page. For example: a search engine page is associated to an information page under the heading 'Information Site' strictly because both pages have a lot of sentences. Some students end up with cards in their hands that should have been quite easy to place. These children are the same ones that don't read as well in the traditional class activities. The game is very well liked and the students manage to bet beyond the competitive aspect to make dominonet a cooperative game."

Philippe Delmotte, teacher in Mouscron

"Race on the Web"

This game allows students to discover what a web page goes through before making it to a computer screen. A board game aimed at better understanding how Internet works (connections, data transfers, causes of breakdowns...)

"Race on the Web is great. It's an innovative and original tool which creates a true dynamic around a board game. We tested it with 13-16 year-old 'experts' and it became a structuring tool; they compared it with what they had already experienced on-line."

Fabrice Casareggio, educator in Lormont

"Make your own classification"

This is a method for establishing a topology of sites according to type, age group or risk; to discover the different types of sites and the risks that one can encounter there.

"With 12 year-old students in an information technology option we have tested out Make your own classification and Test the site activities. For over a month they have been doing research on a specific subject so that they can make a Powerpoint presentation. I asked them to choose one site that they had consulted for their work and to evaluate it according to the Educaunet charts. During the class discussion they brought out the dangers associated with the Internet: validity of the source, the authority of the person creating the site, contents that sometimes have nothing to do with the subject, difficulties in researching... During the next stage, they will assign orange and lemon prizes for the sites in their webographies."

Emmanuelle Ransquin, teacher in Namur



Educaunet experimenters faced with the dangers of the Internet

Two Educaunet methods and tools training sessions brought together adult experimenters in October 2001 and February 2002. These opportunities of privileged exchanges between 60 parents, educators and teachers implicated in the programme allowed for the identification of a set of risks – real or assumed – linked to the use of the Internet by youth.

Some dangers for young users of the Internet

The fears of experimenters, whether they are teachers, educators or parents are focused around 3 types of risks:

At first sight, they are essentially the cognitive risks that are put forward – risks generated to a lack of knowledge of the network :

- ❑ The fear of “drowning” or the harmful dispersion into a thousand different directions in the face of an over abundance of confusing information from sources that are often difficult to identify and validate.
- ❑ The temptation to blindly believe in the myth of an omnipotent Internet which appears as the universal panacea of perfect information, forgetting to take the necessary distance for a critical outlook which is essential for the development of a “multimedia culture”.
- ❑ The illusion of coherence and relevance of results obtained from search engines and other key-word classification systems which sometimes divert the user’s choice of information and embarks them by force into a mercenary or hazardous navigation.

Psycho-affective risks were also brought out: some teachers told of certain students who were afraid of “wasting time” using the Internet in class-time using a media that replaced time that could have been used to teach the more formal subjects, sometimes seen as “more useful” by their parents.

Lastly, experimenters pointed out a set of risks of a socio-cultural, moral and/or legal nature:

- ❑ Preconceived ideas and fantastic representations of a diabolic Internet that comes to us via an educational, family or media culture that is more and more divided because of their level of experience.

- ❑ The risks of disparity in the accompaniment of uses generated by the increased heterogeneous regional and national educational framework, and amplified by the diversity of the family framework.
- ❑ The risk for youth not to be identified as the receivers of a message or as a potential actor of the media, but as a marketing target.
- ❑ Finally, risks linked to illicit or dangerous content of certain sites or e-mails that infiltrate through spamming.

Finally, few dangers of a technical nature, such as viruses for example, were identified as a real threat to young audiences; only the pirating of confidential data seems to be dangerous.



Initially, it appeared necessary to differentiate the dangers in relation to the age-group of the audiences involved (8-11, 12-15, 16-18). Despite this distinction, however, on observation was finally imposed: it would seem that there is very little difference between the risks perceived by the 3 age-groups. The experimenters perceive and identify the same type of dangers regardless of the age of their audiences.



“Think-tank” meeting during the February 2002 conference in Aix-en-Provence

Dangers for adults who accompany youth

All these dangers can equally affect adults who are not well trained in the educational use of this media. But the experimenters underline another type of danger sometimes called "second degree dangers". They are generated by Internet education itself initiated by adults in their professional or familial context.

-  Teachers, educators and parents are therefore anguished by their lack of knowledge or hindsight with regards to this media-anguish that grows exponentially when the public they are training prove to be more educated in the use of the Internet than they are.
-  Teachers also fear having to face problems of legal responsibility – with regards to procedural parents – taking responsibility for exposing youth to the illicit and dangerous sites or messages that they could not control because the security features of the welcome pages of the sites were bypassed by the youth in question.

It's a strength to notice that it is important to reflect on the dangers that the use of Internet by youth can provoke: in fact the more youth and the adults that accompany them manage to identify the potential danger, more so these dangers become thought out and foreseeable risks.

However, we must be aware of the following as well: the decision to educate to Internet with the help of a programme such as Educaunet can induce new risks. By putting oneself into a process of global risk awareness, the methods and tools proposed allow educators to think about and better anticipate these inherent dangers linked to the uses of Internet, regardless of the place (school, home or association) and the contextual framework (documenting oneself and communicating to learn or to have fun).

Remarks made in work groups

"Educators or teachers don't know Internet well enough be it in form or in content and are, therefore, not capable of clearly identifying the dangers..."

"From a cultural point of view, teachers find that culture also serves as a transmitter of dangers because we depend on the culture of the family as well as that of the school. There is a danger when it comes to preconceived ideas that families can have due to their lack of knowledge of the Internet."

"When children do research on the Net, they can be sent off into many different directions and have difficulty sorting and dealing with information. With regards to this same information, students take everything they find on the Internet as 'blessed bread', like a panacea..."

"On the Internet one comes across veiled ideologies that proceed unnoticed. Extreme right-wing sites or secular sites, for example, which aim at not being detected right away. This is something new with regards to the source of data that one is in the habit of using like in documentation and information centres or in school texts. All this data has been sorted, filtered and classified. We are in the habit of sending our students to do research in these centres with the underlying message that everything they find there is valid... An attitude that can no longer be used with the Internet because not everything one finds there is true!"

"The way in which information is thrust upon us on the Internet poses a problem. One should be aware that a kind of diversion takes place when key-word searches are conducted... For example, 'minx' and 'slavery', two quite legitimate words which often come to young people's mind when conducting research, and one finds oneself on sites that have absolutely nothing to do with what was asked..."

Internet: towards civic appropriation

Bernard Benhamou opened "Encounters of the Net" on March 20th 2002 in Paris with a conference with the theme: "The role of the family in the appropriation of the Internet". He exposes the risk of 'televsualisation' of the network and maintains the urgency with which we must train parents about the civic goal of the Internet.

Internet structure is, today, at a crossroads. If we don't watch out for that, the industrial evolution of the Internet could progressively erase the dimensions of exchange. From a structure of exchange we risk moving to a structure of broadcasting. This would transform surfers into television viewers and consumers. Faced with this evolution, training citizens/surfers will be crucial in order to master the new public space which makes up the network. We have to be watchful that the teaching of technologies is not limited solely to mastering the tools but to understanding how information is created and broadcast. In fact, it's the fact that anyone can publish on the Net that constitutes the foundation of a civic appropriation of technologies. These exchanges that one has named "peer to peer" are the origin of the creation and success of the Internet. And it's precisely because they are the opposite of Internet "televsualisation" and "broadcastisation" logic that they can be called into question.

Mobilisation of the families

The effort necessary to better master the technologies as well as true democracy, will depend, first, on the mobilisation of the family. In fact, the family is the societal measuring stick of information. The evaluation of the degree of appropriation of these technologies depends, first, on the use of the Internet in the

home. That is where the habits and the mastering of the flood of information can be developed and above all become the subject of a true "critical appropriation". The family can be brought to play a major role in the appropriation of technologies as well as in the educational benefits their children can expect. One already knows that when a student has access to Internet at home as well as at school, their marks are very different. The support from parents of a higher socio-cultural class is also a determining factor. If drastic measures are not taken in the next couple of years to put into place a form of technological support, these technologies could increase the educational inequities rather than reduce them.

The effort required, therefore, to train citizens and families will be significant. But if we hope to make the Internet the bearer of social innovations and not simply reduced to a shop window only accessible to the technologically educated, we cannot overlook this kind of education. And the real development of on-line tools for citizens will only be possible from the moment the users themselves can grasp them and participate in their evolution.

*Bernard Benhamou, Maître de Conférence
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Les Rencontres du Net (Encounters of the Net)

Organised by the french interdepartmental delegation of the family on the theme "Internet, youth and families", *Encounters of the Net* allowed for the debate on the integration of the Network in the heart of the family structure and that of the school.

Four round table discussions brought together professionals from the associative and educational worlds as well as new technologies specialists. During the discussion of "A more secure Internet", the person in charge of the *Safer Internet Action Plan* made a presentation on European policy related to these subjects.

With this opportunity, the Educaunet team held its first press conference in France where the participants were able to discover the games and activities actually tested.

Is the Educaunet method valid?

How relevant is the Educaunet approach? Does it contribute to any change in the way youth consider the dangers of the Internet? In order to try and find an answer to these questions, a team of researchers is following and analysing the experiments conducted in the school, family and group framework, in France as well as in Belgium.

Thanks to questionnaires, direct observation and interviews conducted among youth and adults, the Educaunet researchers have gathered a huge quantity of data and opinions. All things considered, the educative approach appears to be relevant. The activities really stimulate critical thinking skills and lead to new questioning enabling us to go beyond the classical “good-bad” distinction. The chosen approach – make the youth accountable and aware – seems appealing and fruitful: youth are becoming alert, suspicious and careful of what’s going on around them. They seem to be more conscious of how important it is to see things with a critical eye and appreciate the relevance of the information presented.

Adaptable tools ...

More specifically, the teachers have clearly integrated the activities, adapting them, slightly changing them and designing new versions of the games. In that respect, the undeniable quality of the tools is their high flexibility and adaptability to the uses of Internet. However, it is important to insure that the game aspect of the tools doesn’t undermine their educational objective: a safer use of the Internet. Only with the support of the trained teachers, parents and educators will reaching these educational objectives be guaranteed.

The youth and the teachers are now undoubtedly aware of the process of risk-taking, but without any anxiety. They have been confronted by their own relative ignorance of some elements of the process. In this respect, the training support provided by Educaunet has played a very important role.

As far as the associations are concerned, the educational tool proved to be less adapted than in a school environment. The game aspect, in which the young people were able to sense the underlying educational framework, sometimes caused them to be turned off. This happened most often while doing the activities. The major difficulty encountered by the group leaders was to lead their audience, both very familiar to Internet or not at all, to change their behaviour and their use in a relaxed atmosphere. The Educaunet team must therefore see to it that the integration of the tools by the associative world is made easier.

As far as the parents are concerned, a large number of them who do not have access to or are not familiar with the Internet, are eager for tools and training seminars designed specifically for them.

Moreover, they admit feeling overtaken by the skills displayed by their children. Therefore, instead of trying to “fill this gap”, we have to be as specific as possible with regards to the role they can play while monitoring young people on the Internet, whether this activity takes place individually or with friends. What is at stake here is to help them remain watchful, while keeping a positive opinion of the Internet as a mind-opening experience towards the outside world.

Finally, the parents are able to make a clear distinction between the family environments where playing games or educational activities are part of a tradition and those where the idea of playing to learn would seem foolish or even irrelevant. In numerous families, education lies beneath daily life, without any allocated school work time. This is an obstacle to the dissemination of the suggested activities.

... at the service of 3 audiences

The three experimenter audiences have unanimously underlined how important it was not to focus too much on the negative aspect of the Internet. According to them proposing a list of the risks leads to quite a negative approach to a media that has a lot of potential. This idea should lead us to check if the suggested activities really give the opportunity of going through positive experiences of the Internet.

Finally, the experimenters expressed how satisfied they were to be faced with the opportunity of working together, even though they come from different countries and three different worlds: schools, families and associations. We have to take these three realities into account, but also to think about a way to make it possible for them to establish a dialogue. What really suits the families and the associative world is activities aimed towards discoveries.

As far as the young people are concerned, since it appears that they are aware of the existence of potential dangers linked to Internet use, which everybody, including themselves, can encounter, it would be interesting to check afterwards and without any monitoring, how they use the Internet and how they behave when they are confronted with it.