

European Community -
Safer Internet Programme



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Editorial

The primary concern of developed countries is the protection and security of the individual, and justifiably so, adults seek to shelter children and adolescents from dangers. Despite all our precautions we're evolving in the midst of 'dangers' that were neither asked for nor desired but are now either being avoided or confronted head-on.

At the same time, however, we know that the passage into adulthood is a journey where obstacles shape us insofar as they encourage reflection, learning to evaluate and to overcome difficulties. For youth to understand who they are, to develop relationships with others and to find their niche in society, they must learn to identify potential dangers and how to confront them so as to perceive them as risks that they are capable of taking. When it comes down to it, shouldn't feeling safe consist of being able to assess the real risks which surround us and to decide whether or not we want to confront them according to our personal value system, strengths and/or weaknesses?

Philosopher Isabelle Stengers developed the idea of "Risk awareness" as the basis of the **Educaunet** programme. What risks must a child take to become an adult? Aren't the real dangers those which are perceived to be true? Seeing that the Internet suggests another form of learning and of interacting with others, **Educaunet** has undertaken the role of leading the inquiry on this issue.

Instead of building barriers to keep this danger at a safe distance, we feel strongly that youth has a right to venture into cyberspace and to learn to explore it. After all, this will be their world and we know that they will be the protagonists of this novelty. Instead of constructing for them the relationship we want them to develop with the Internet, we prefer to encourage them to follow their own path and know that we are there, ready and willing to accompany and help them on their journey.

Educaunet is spearheaded by three main groups:



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Ensuring Safer Internet Use The European Community Answers

The goal of the project adopted by the European Community of which Educaunet is a part, is to promote a safer use of Internet and to battle against unlawful and detrimental messages.

“Safer Internet”, it’s under this heading that the European Community decided to encourage initiatives destined to make the use of Internet safer. To establish the guidelines of this new project the Commission relied on both the results of a questionnaire addressed to member states and on a study directed at uncovering people’s feelings of insecurity in using the Internet. What was discovered was a high demand for information concerning those insecurity factors and the risks associated with the use of the Internet, in particular when being used by young people.

<http://www.saferinternet.org>

The Commission has decided to include in its programme three types of initiatives:

-  The creation of a safer environment by creating a European network of helplines and by establishing self-discipline devices and a code of behaviour;
-  The clarification of the risk filters and classification systems;
-  The development of an action plan to sensitise parents, teachers and students to the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet.

The primary goal of this third initiative, under which Educaunet finds itself, is the identification of organisations and channels suitable to reaching the target public, to prepare tools and to launch pilot projects.

Education to the Net... Education in Risk Management

First Educaunet event: an introductory seminar which attempted to define the risks linked to the Internet and to determine a new pedagogical direction to be taken in order to deal with these risks.

During the seminar that was held in Louvain-la-Neuve in Belgium on the 21st and 22nd of May 2001, representatives from the media and teaching sectors as well as from parent groups met to define the risks linked to the Internet use and to determine a new pedagogical direction to be taken in order to deal with these risks. Their work was enhanced by the participation of numerous experts including a philosopher, a child psychologist and a psychiatrist/psychoanalyst. Results of studies done in France and in Belgium concerning the way youth uses the Internet and the promotion through the media of the fear of the Internet further enriched the discussion.

What emerged from these debates was an outline of the typology of the risks associated with the Internet. What one realises is that young people are unaware of these risks at first, and that the media only evokes certain types of dangers: pornography, paedophilia, violence, etc. Yet, in addition to these dangers there exist, in all likelihood, other dangers much more present through the everyday use of the Internet: social, emotional, cultural, financial, technical, etc.

After having defined what risk meant and agreeing on its importance, the path was cleared for Educaunet to continue on its original path towards developing tools to educate and assist in the management of risk taking on the Internet. It was a matter of allowing everyone to identify the existing dangers and to work at perceiving them as risks that one chooses to take and therefore benefiting from once overcoming them. What’s at stake is the empowerment of youth so that they are able to evolve from the status of ‘victim’ to status of protagonists fully aware of the risks they are taking. But, “How?”. By focusing on risks that they have already experienced and on how they represent them. Depending on the age groups and on the varying degrees of support they received, these representations will differ.

This joint effort supports the critical approach of media education that does not advocate passivity in the face of the Internet, but active participation in risk taking. This implies, however, that self-reliance in education is the distinctive feature of true learning.

Educaunet

A Critical Approach to the Education of Risk Management Linked to the Use of the Internet

Implementation of safety tools runs the risk of producing what some call the “airbag effect”. The illusion of protection could lead to dwindling vigilance from both school and family environments as well as from the users themselves. Media education, on the other hand, aims at providing users with the necessary competences essential in the critical vigilance of Internet risks.

An original preventative approach

The original approach of **Educaunet** lies in the choice of a methodology centred on the autonomy and accountability of children and adolescents using the Internet. The postulate of this process is that education plays the key role in making the use of the Internet as safe as possible.

This approach further supports the filter mechanisms, security devices and classification systems which in themselves could never guarantee total protection. These tools demand competences and vigilant attitudes from their users that only an educational approach can teach. It's for this reason that the European Commission selected this project within the context of its programme “Safer Internet” for 2001-2002.

A proven operational method

The three founding partners began to work on the **Educaunet** project in April of last year with the aim of becoming the intermediary between French and Belgian parent groups, teachers and educators and the new critical approach of education using the Internet.

The work of **Educaunet** consists of tool and educational process conception, training adults who are to play the role of intermediary, carrying out experiments on 3 different age groups (8-11 year olds, 12-15 year olds and 16-18 year olds), continuous evaluation and analysis of work done so as to optimise the tools and proposed processes and lastly, of heightening public awareness of this critical approach of educating our youth and interested groups in the management of risks linked to the use of Internet.

A strong educational and cultural consistency



Although one may think that everyone around the world uses the Internet in the same way, studies have proven that the way in which the Internet is used depends largely on the cultural context in which one is raised. It is for this reason that **Educaunet** restricted its field of research to Belgium and France which share both the same language and educational methodologies. Having carried out this research with culturally homogeneous groups could allow the application of the same tools and methods to other cultures.

The coherence of this project is also based on the complementarities of the three founding partners whose expertise in the fields of training, publishing and research and development is recognized and highly respected.

Networking partnerships





This project intends to network with a large array of French and Belgian infrastructures including parent associations, press, audiovisual and electronic media, keeping in mind pedagogical trends and working with a group of national and international institutions already working on these issues.

Educaunet Objectives

-  Promote a safer use of the Internet.
-  Experiment and validate innovative educational techniques intended to help citizens develop a more critical approach of the Internet.
-  Help parents and education professionals get a better command of the advantages and risks of the Internet.
-  Produce and publish an integrated package of tools and media to help adults and teachers implement this critical education process.
-  Explore and exploit the complementary nature of existing filters and security tools and new educational strategies promoting autonomous, responsible user behaviour.
-  Imagine joint communication strategies with partner institutions to promote the educational plan of action and tools for a critical use of the Internet.

Learning More about Educaunet

The first electronic issue of the [Educaunet](#) newsletter which will outline the programme, the content and its projects is aimed at all people and organisations which are directly involved:

-  Those in charge of the Internet Action Plan at the European Commission;
-  The project coordinators chosen within the framework of the Internet Action Plan;
-  The accompanying French and Belgian committee support groups: those in charge of family and educational associations, representatives of family related institutions (in France, Délégation d'association interministérielle à la Ville), and journalists working on the development of the Internet citizen;
-  The network of partnerships mobilised on the problematic of the [Educaunet](#) such as teacher-trainers working in media education as well as press, audiovisual and electronic media representatives.

The next issue will be out in October 2001. If you wish to receive it, subscribe directly at our Educaunet website

www.educaunet.org

Programme

Although it is difficult to follow a project in the middle of developmental conception, the following tentative programme has been prepared to give you an idea of the phases that will be elaborated on in detail by [Educaunet](#). It will be updated on our website as well as in our future issues of our electronic newsletter.

May 2001	Introductory seminar
June 2001	Tools conception
July 2001	Tools conception
August 2001	Tools conception
September 2001	Tools conception Committee meetings of support groups in respective countries
November 2001	Teacher, parent and mentor training; international session in Belgium Start of the 1st phase of experimentation in test-groups
October 2001	Development of the 1st phase of experimentation
December 2001	Development of the 1st phase of experimentation Tools and method evaluation based on the previous experiments
January 2002	Tools and method conception validated in the 1st phase of experimentation International meeting of support groups
February 2002	Teacher, parent and educator training; international session in France Start of the 2nd phase of experimentation in test-groups
March 2002	Development of the 2nd phase of experimentation
April 2002	Development of the 2nd phase of experimentation Committee meetings of support groups in respective countries
May 2002	Tools and method evaluation based on the 2nd phase of experimentation Final observations
June 2002	Conception of tools and proven methods
July 2002	Conception of tools and proven methods
August 2002	International committee meeting of support groups Completion of pedagogical 'tool boxes' Dialoguing and distribution of resources
September 2002	Dialoguing and distribution of resources Final reports

www.educaunet.org
Education and Communication is Just a Click Away!

Educaunet will be putting together a collection of tools and aids to accompany parents, teachers, children and adolescents on their journey to the understanding of risk management using the Internet. Being the cornerstone of this multitasked mechanism, the educaunet.org website is currently under construction. However, it is possible to access the website and to find there information, supports and resources concerning the project.

Since the end of June you can find, on line, a “members club” section aimed at providing a place where those interested have the opportunity to dialogue and where we will be able to collectively develop our concepts and construct our tools. It will also provide additional services to again allow those interested to participate in networked panel discussions with experts implicated in Educaunet.

Our two friendly mascots cordially invite you for a guided tour of the operational site which will be up and running in October of this year. They will guide you through experimental educational activities classified into five domains, based on specific age groups or the educational environments in which they will be used.

Mark it down in your agenda: meeting at educaunet.org with our mice mascots to discover, inquire and communicate.

