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European Community -
Safer Internet Programme



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Editorial Communicating in fog

During our [Educaunet](#) training seminar, a fruitful debate between the parents, educators and teachers present brought out some new outlooks on the nature of Internet risks. Communicating on the Internet is like communicating in fog.

In ordinary communication the comprehension and interpretation of exchanged messages take place in context: the presence of the person I'm speaking to, the situation we find ourselves in, the reason for our meeting, the nature of my relationship with him/her, having an idea of his/her intentions...

Media communication is already more undifferentiated, more decontextualised and more anonymous. Nevertheless, media offers a consistency that helps to classify it in categories from which their messages are easier to understand.

On the Internet, diversity is even larger still and the risks to delude oneself (or to be a victim) are as well. As one teacher pointed out during the seminar, in the majority of ordinary situations it's the communicative context that determines what can and can't be said, as well as the appropriate manner in which to do it without hurting the person you're speaking to. Yet, the Internet is a place where communication is decontextualised. Each one is in his/her own context, but in contact with that of the other. From then on, what seems admissible to one may be shocking or prejudicial to the other. How can one grasp, without being mistaken, the scope of information when, above and beyond language, culture and conventions, even the communicative context of each partner is profoundly different?

This divergence is worsened when we take into account the reassuring interface of the computer. This machine seems to promise access to the truth, clear communication and successful research. In reality, the surfer advances in the fog. Click after click he/she enters unknown universes where norms are difficult to identify. To educate against Internet risks is to teach youth to navigate successfully through the fog of a universe full of richness but of many changing faces.

Educaunet is spearheaded by three main groups:



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Média Animation asbl (Belgique), centre de ressources en éducation aux médias et au multimédia
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The Five Educaunet activity domains

During its introductory seminar in May 2001 the Educaunet team identified a number of categories of risks linked to Internet use. However, instead of using these categories and proposing an individual tool for each risk, Educaunet decided to conceive its activities according to real situations of Internet use.

The Educaunet activities were conceived under the five following headings: Exploration, Inquisition, Interaction, Self-expression, and Self-observation.



The first domain - **exploration** - is intended for the novice surfer and targets Internet "discovery". The activities proposed are both clear and pedagogical: card games, parlour games, interactive story reading, didactic activities on "What I like and don't like" on the Internet; all that is needed to discover what Internet is about. After all, isn't one of the biggest risks not having access strictly due to ignorance... at the point that one doesn't even attempt to start the game?



Internet is often presented as an opportunity to learn in the sense that it is an immense virtual library, accessible anywhere and which provides any information being looked for at the click of a mouse. **Inquisition** still requires that one knows how to use research tools and how to be critical of documents found on the web. The activities proposed, therefore, are aimed towards these two concerns: mastering the tools and developing critical thinking skills based on assessment of reading criteria. Activities will include content analysis, source identification, web page deconstruction, critiques, site critiques or rumour analysis.



Internet is also a vast network of interpersonal exchanges. Behind the texts, the images, the messages... there are people! Identifying profiles of Internet surfers and the route taken by multimedia creators and users, localising the people you are "speaking" to, playing fictitious roles by hiding behind a virtual identity... just some of the activities found in the **interaction** domain.



Self-expression groups a 4th series of activities which allow us to work on other competences and from there to confront other risks while at the same time throwing oneself into new and passionate discoveries. The activities proposed are centered on creation, taking the floor on the Net, putting products and information on-line, creating multimedia banners, on-line commercial activities... Another facet of this series of activities focuses on evoking all that Internet has to bring to life in order to give the floor to activities based on real life experiences and, when necessary to make them less alarming.



Through the following activities, youth will begin to discover where exactly they find themselves in this new universe called Internet. Progressively they will find themselves reacting in one way or another to what they discover on the Net. They will then be able to answer the question "What type of surfer am I?". This is the main question of the 5th domain **self-observation**. Diverse activities in this domain propose the verbalisation of what one has learned about oneself and others by the way they use the resources of the Net. Tell me what you do on the Net and I will tell you who you are.

In total, **Educaunet** proposes 26 activities aimed at three age groups (8-11, 12-15, 16-18) and at three types of audiences (scholastic, domestic, associative). Its experimentation started at the beginning of October 2001 and will end at Christmas. A second series of experiments will take place in 2002, proven activities and new propositions as a starting block.

Educaunet Training: The Première

During the summer of 2001, the Educaunet team developed its first educational tools. To present to and test these tools with groups of youth, Educaunet invited 30 adults to carry out experiments by Christmas.

Thirty people - 15 French and 15 Belgians - met in Brussels on October 5th and 6th for the first Educaunet training seminar. Among them, primary and secondary teachers, social service educators and parents liaising between [Educaunet](#), their children and other families. In fact, it was our goal to bring together adults in charge of educating in many different contexts and to construct together appropriate educational tools.

The procedure chosen for these two training days was to facilitate the exchanges and give way to true project dynamics. We chose, therefore, to put in place a series of workshops of heterogeneous groups of ten participants (made-up of our three publics) and to regroup regularly for plenary sessions. The participants, who were lead to react to each proposition, appropriated both the tools and the procedure, but also, as we had hoped they would, they enriched the [Educaunet](#) programme and

proposed new ideas to help the evolution of the prototypes that they were presented with.

What follows is just one example of [Educaunet's](#) global approach: instead of imposing completed documents and pre-constructed points of view on the subject of Internet dangers or answers that [Educaunet](#) judges appropriate, we used exchanges, discussions and cooperation to construct the heart of this seminar. Although it is too early to measure the success of this procedure, right from day 2 we noticed small groups forming on one aspect or another of the programme: a Belgian and French teacher; a parent and an elementary school teacher; educators from different regions... Each one seemed to want to launch into the experiment that would encourage youth to grab the tools designed with them in mind and make them their own.

How to evaluate the relevance of Educaunet tools?

Educaunet aims at developing and producing methods and tools for educational training. So that these tools are considered valid they constantly undergo evaluation throughout the programme. The research team at the University of Louvain is working on this task.

[Educaunet](#) methods and educational tools go through a permanent evaluation process. The plan of action put in place by [Educaunet](#) links the two experimentation phases: that of October-December 2001 and that of February - April 2002. The first evaluation phase will allow us to see how the tools were perceived and whether or not their initial objectives had been reached. This in turn will bring appropriate improvements for the continuation of the project. The same procedure will be used in the second phase.

In concrete terms, three stages of evaluation have been put in place:

- ... an initial evaluation by means of a questionnaire distributed to the youth participating in the project (this evaluation will analyse the evolution of their

representations of the dangers of Internet use and so will be distributed both at the beginning and at the end of each experimentation phase),

- ... a second evaluation which will be done by direct observation during the course of the activities,
- ... a final evaluation by means of detailed individual interviews with select youth having participated in the training programme so as to document their impressions, representations, etc.

Because [Educaunet](#) aims at being dynamic, those who conceive the educational tools take part in the evaluation process just as the evaluation team takes part in the conception. The close relationship between these two groups allows for constant readjustment of objectives, tools and training methods.

Living between ignorance and protection

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Before the beginning of the training seminar, all participants knew that they had come to develop tools to prevent Internet risks, but above all, believed that it was possible. Furthermore, it would take place outside the usual context where censorship advocates and laissez-faire zealots find themselves face to face.

For teachers, this context is obviously and naturally pedagogical even if it goes beyond the school walls. *"Where you place the computer in the home,"* whispers Marc Beine, *"is indicative of the relationship that one then establishes with Internet. If it's placed in an open area it becomes a family affair and the fears are shared. If, however, the computer is only the business of the child, that's where there is rupture in the family and where risk sets in."*

Since the arrival of computers, some classes have privileged discussion and analysis of sensitive issues concerning Internet. Outside of school and in the home, however, this same reflection seems volatile: *"In many households,"* confides Nordine El-Hdaoudi, *"parents don't even know what Internet is. Ignorance turns into unwillingness to understand which then leads to the desire to protect oneself, and rightly so, from the harmful effects of Internet by favouring filters."* This belief is less prevalent at school where its role is to provide the framework to avoid what teacher André Brüll calls "destabilising scattering" of students' focus.

A scattering not easily mastered in certain families but the focus of precise objectives in school context: the tool is the same, but as Marc Verniers, another teacher will confide, *"Discomfort on the part of the parents takes immense proportions when having to take a stance in relation to such a variety of uses and access points to information."*

Tentative Calendar

Educaunet was officially launched in April of 2001. Following are the main dates that have been foreseen until September 2002. This tentative calendar will allow you to discover the phases planned to elaborate the critical environment that we are proposing. It is regularly updated on our site: www.educaunet.org

October 2001	Training the first 30 French and Belgian teachers, parents and educators (October 5 th and 6 th , Brussels)
	Support group committee meeting
October - November - December 2001	1 st phase of experimentation in test-groups (8-18 years old) Continuous follow-up of experimentation keeping its evaluation in mind
December 2001	Evaluation meeting of tools and tested methods (Dec. 12, Brussels/ Dec. 14, France)
January 2002	Overhaul of tools and methods according to results of the first evaluation
February 2002	Belgian and French support group meetings
	Training 30 new French and Belgian teachers, parents, and educators (January 31 st - February 1 st , Aix-en Provence)
February - March - April 2002	2 nd phase development of experimentation in test-groups (8-18 years old) Continuous follow-up of experimentation keeping its evaluation in mind
April 2002	Publication of 3 rd Bilingual Electronic Newsletter
April - May 2002	Evaluation meeting of tools and tested methods during 2 nd phase of experimentation (in Belgium and France) Development of final evaluation
June - July 2002	Tool and proven method conception
August 2002	International support group committee meeting in Hourtin (TBA)
September 2002	Completion of pedagogical 'tool-boxes'
	Publication of 4 th Bilingual Electronic Newsletter
	Final reports

Chat access: supervised freedom

Fabrice Casareggio who participates in the Educaunet programme is educator and coordinator of 'Point-Rencontre', a social centre in Lormont, close to Bordeaux. He sees many a youth who come to use the Internet and, in particular, Chat. He shared with us his experiences during the October training session.

At Point-Rencontre in Lormont, the inhabitants come to look for information and documentation on 'youth' Youth and adults cross paths here, in the heart of an inner-city zone, in a district which is all too familiar with economic and social difficulties. Since few of them have a connection at home, this is where they discover the Internet. Very quickly we noticed that the teenagers headed towards the Chat, here called 'tchatche' and the line-ups in front of the computers got longer and longer. Why the infatuation?

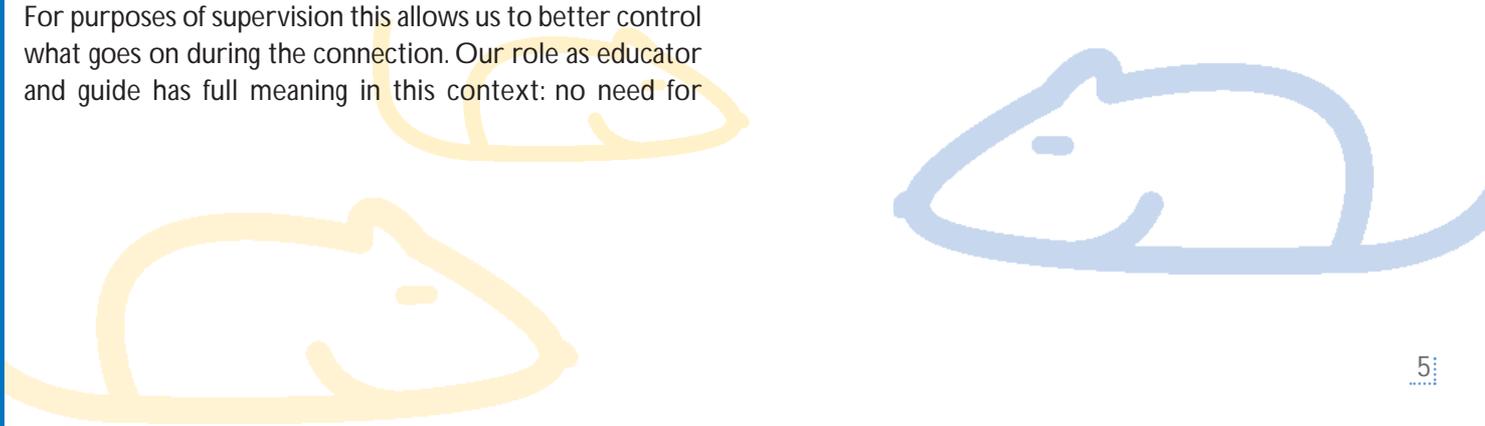
Lets keep from making Chat out to be a threatening forum for youth. This can be a formative aid for a critical, structured and structuring culture which allows youth to grow in the best possible conditions. For us, it's a question of teaching our public to recognise and measure the dangers so as to better deter from them. Medhi, 13 years old, avoided giving his address after a short discussion: *"If I give it to him, he can come and rob me and my parents. He may be a psychopath."* Mathieu, 13 1/2, gave his e-mail address to a fellow surfer (male or female – one cannot know) of whom he didn't know much (fake age...) without thinking of the eventual consequences. Later, as a result of experiencing difficulties understanding the messages and technical instructions to send his picture, Mathieu felt manipulated.

Lets get over the idea that the game could be unhealthy, that the intentions negative, that sexual connotations will encourage visits to porno sites and instead lets develop tools to confront these dangers. To do this, we have put in place a specific access control on Chat. To avoid Chat access from getting out of hand, young chatters only have access to Chat on two out of the ten computers available. For purposes of supervision this allows us to better control what goes on during the connection. Our role as educator and guide has full meaning in this context: no need for

firewall or other software, just education in its fullest sense. Permitting the freedom of Chat access, although supervised, allows us to develop quick relationships with our young public: discussion and communication become more spontaneous, relationships are instituted, the Internet becomes a great mobilisation, group dynamic and educational lever. It also happens that self-control takes place between young users in the language, intonation, and respect for personal and telephone anonymity. Mounir, 14 years old, told us one day that he hadn't given his telephone number to Nicolas also 14 years old, because this chatter was telling fibs and so he ended the conversation.

At Point-Rencontre a Chat session has a time limit. Those who wish to take advantage of Chat to the maximum must respect the rules. Those who don't, sometimes made known to us by fellow surfers 'concealed' or 'protected' behind a supervising educator who guarantees common educational values that are redefined regularly, are temporarily banned. Prevention is one of these rules: my corresponding chatter could be someone I know or not, could have good intentions or bad ones. This is why human contact, in all its forms, is for us the way to develop social links, and to be a go-between for the future and for education.

Fabrice Casareggio, educator
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Lets not give in to panic... nor to impulse

Internet risks are varied. Among the latest anecdotes surfacing by recent news, lets take a look at the movement that an uncountable number of surfers have joined: petitions advocating non-violence. The danger: forging ahead without having taken the time to reflect on the proposed procedure.

Following the bombings in New York, citizen mobilisation has taken place. Their democratic reflex having taken hold, some people have taken the floor in favour of war while others are reminding us that we can choose the path of non-violence. And so petitions started to appear at the office and in multiple copies. Healthy sign of your democratic notoriety: the number of copies received. A colleague told me "Isn't it awful, I only received it 2 times." I can brag that I received it from four different sources. But I know someone who has already received his 10th copy. All this is great... so where's the problem?

In the commotion and the desire to do good, we may have given in too quickly to the mass movement of circulating the said petition. And one knows that the consequences of group actions are not always well thought out.

1st Objection

Massive mailing of the petition to all those in our address book is still often done under CC (carbon copy) and not BC (blind copy). By putting all the addresses on the "To": line or in CC we are inconsiderately giving everyone in our address book everyone else's address. This awkward public advertising does not necessarily please everyone even if the addressees share the same interest in this "good cause".

2nd Objection

The logistics of the procedure don't work. Each petition must be signed by 25 people; each person must circulate the petition to get other signatures; and the 25th person must send it to the White House. But if I'm the 24th person on the list and I send it to 100 people, these 100 people are going to send the same document containing the same first 24 names... which will give 100 times the same 24 names and not 2400 different names.

3rd Objective and by far the most serious

The centralisation of personal information.

The petitions that I received mentioned a central address: noviolence55@hotmail.com. I tried to identify who was hiding behind this free address and in fact, the address was inactive... which leaves the questioner to doubt the real intentions of the original mailing. But lets assume that there was a person behind this address and that this person was collecting the signatures: what are their motives? Because here is this person, owner of a file which, both politically and economically speaking, constitutes a considerable cashing-in potential. Without giving in to paranoia, I think it's better to use other tools to express oneself.

An acquaintance to whom I expressed these objections has since given me a new address; a website that deals specifically with on-line petitions: www.thePetitionSite.com (a private initiative is also accessible at www.911peace.org/petition.php3?lang=fr). On PetitionSite, anonymity is guaranteed (in terms of being posted on the Net) as is respect of ones private life by not communicating personal information of those having signed (that which is impossible to verify). A certain amount of care is still advised, but the risks are markedly reduced. And no mention of your address book will be communicated to your correspondants should you choose to send them the address of the site. Mathematically, the counting up of signatures is correct. Furthermore, if you don't agree with the content of the petition and you would like to make it known, the site proposes a link to an appropriate forum. Here's an undeniable plus which enriches the democratic exchange of ideas and which doesn't allow paper to be the only exchange.

Michel Berhin, Média-Animation

To better understand the way on-line petitions work
www.hoaxbuster.com

“Internet is a reflection of our society, both positive and negative”

Florence Durand-Tornare is one of the founding members of Vecam (www.vecam.org) and one of the spokespeople of the Internet Citizen Movement in France. Member of Educaunet's support group she will share with us her vision of 'citizenship' around the discussions of Internet and youth.

Lets get back to the terms: Internet: danger and/or risk for youth?

I prefer to use a third term: pitfall. It's not because I'm playing with semantics, but simply because pitfalls can be avoided. The other terms give a sense of security and it's important to remember that this is something new. If we take a couple of steps back into the past at the arrival of the electronic networks in France - a less restrictive term than Internet - we will see that it was a idyllic portrait shaped from youth's perspective.

These networks made possible the impossible and notably:

- access to knowledge and the sharing of this knowledge
- the possibility to come together and take action on a global scale as well as having a larger outlook of the world
- anonymity which is unquestionably an advantage for youth.

Only after did the pitfalls and an increase in parent concern appear. An increase in parent concern as they were confronted with the following paradox: a tool that is and must remain a tool induced from changes that are both 'good' and 'bad'. But you have to remember that there are no dangers with the tool. It is and must remain a tool

Can we group these pitfalls?

As far as I'm concerned there are three types of pitfalls:

1st pitfall: it's a tool that must be mastered. Internet offers youth a bonus in comparison to other types of communication such as telephones or faxes. Just a comment on this subject: Internet should not be compared to television which is a passive media because Internet places its user in an active role. It's important that youth learn to master the network quickly and that one teaches them to do so. I would like to add, even if this may sound contradictory, that they are not obliged to use this tool. They could choose to ignore it and it must not be imposed on them.

To master Internet also implies choosing NOT to use it. But one must insist on the fact that it is a special tool that by nature of all its technical possibilities, calls out to be taken action against.

2nd pitfall: it's a free-access tool, physically thanks to public access poing in cyber-cafes, etc., and technologically because the network itself is public. It is, therefore, a reflection of our society both positive and negative and can be a medium of 'dangerous' messages for youth who are looking to go against certain moral values. They must, therefore, take the responsibility of looking for, finding and supporting the values that they will then make their own. True, in comparison with other times, it may be a little early; certain parents and educators wanting to prolong this carefree period... And so there is an obligation of accompaniment that is essential. And the authorities must acknowledge and do something about this risk factor.

3rd pitfall: the difference of appropriation. Youth that is actively accompanied in their learning of Internet would be able to integrate faster into the economic world by obtaining a better access to relationships with businesses, professional training, etc. Youth, however, that is not at all accompanied or incorrectly accompanied, risk being cut off from this world and even socially and/or culturally excluded. Even here one must insist on the necessity of a proactive approach towards these youth so that they do appropriate this technology. Finally, one must take into consideration the fact that this responsibility starts in the family and with it comes a cultural risk that may curb this enthusiasm. Some distrust the machine itself.

One must compensate for these deficiencies, these eventual weaknesses. School is one answer, but it is not the only one. In some countries there are different types of common educational programmes that can step in.





In your opinion, is the Educaunet programme an appropriate answer to avoiding these pitfalls?

Two words stick out in my mind, two tools that seem relevant to me: analysis and critical pedagogy. One starts by being aware of these pitfalls and then either making them out to be nothing at all or over-exaggerating the dangers. In both cases it's a bad idea. **Educaunet** has given itself the tools to avoid this serious pitfall. It's a European project, yet from here on in, crossborder reasoning will be necessary. The relationship to languages must also be touched upon. The tool itself can give us answers, as does on-line translation for example, and to favour a transcultural approach. **Educaunet** implicates a large number of players. To envision Internet for youth it's necessary to bring together numerous partners and make them work together: authorities, technological industries, social services, researchers, academics, the educational world on a large scale, and media who have part of the responsibility of proposing an approach to dealing with a new media.

Interview conducted by Odile Ambry, journalist

Internet dangers Belgian and French press reviews

How does French and Belgian press evoke the "dangers" of Internet? To attempt to answer this question, **Educaunet** analysed five daily and one weekly newspaper between January and March 2001: *La Dernière Heure/Les Sports* and *Le Soir* in Belgium, *Le Monde*, *Le Parisien*, *Libération* and *Le Point* in France.

This press review revealed that the most frequently discussed dangers were those related to the economy and technicalities, and rarely those dealing with the person. The dangers mentioned explicitly are sometimes the opportunity to reflect on their cultural and social implications. One will notice that cognitive and psychological dangers are not mentioned in any of the newspapers studied during the period between January-March 2001.

Educaunet will repeat this study of French and Belgian press at the beginning of 2002 and will attempt to measure the evolution of media treatment of Internet dangers.

"Internet, topic of discussion"

Marie Choquet, research director at INSERM, is a specialist in the field of adolescence. She will share with us her point of view regarding behaviour towards Internet.

I haven't exactly worked on the issue of Internet and youth and so can only offer a personal opinion and possibly a few leads in terms of behaviour.

Internet is a tool and only a tool. As such it can be correctly-used or incorrectly-used by youth and adults alike. As was the case for television in its time, its use must be integrated into daily life - at school and at home in the family. It must be the object of discussion (how to use it?), and of negotiation (how often and under what conditions?). Under no circumstances will an 'authoritarian' position, without dialoguing with those who are directly affected, ie youth, be useful. In this sense, Internet brings together other aspects of daily life: evening get-togethers, going out to bars... This tool only enlarges the scope of culture and communication; it changes nothing in the educational aspect. In democratic societies, all education is based on protection, - especially of its youngest members - on exchanges, and on negotiation. Internet, of course, is no exception.

It is therefore necessary to educate 'educators' (teachers, parents, etc.) so that they do not find themselves too much out of their depths. Youth is more familiar with Internet than are their elders, and this can be a means to show what they are capable of, their savoir-faire and to permit interesting exchanges with adults such as grandparents, etc.

Text taken by Odile Ambry, journalist

The next issue of this newsletter will appear in April of 2002. If you would like to receive it, register directly on the Educaunet website:

www.educaunet.org