... is this a weapon or a tool?
“This publication has been produced with the financial support of the Daphne III Programme of the European Commission. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.”
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INTRODUCTION

Virtual Stages Against Violence - VSAV is a project funded by the European Union through the Daphne III Programme with the aim to contribute to the protection of children, young people and women against all forms of violence and to attain a high level of health protection, well-being and social cohesion.

VSAV project has been a successful collaboration of five partner organisations from different EU countries (Italy, Germany, Austria, Romania).

The project is based on the idea that new technologies, nowadays the main carriers of information, are increasingly accessible to children and young people, but can often be understood as a source of risks (risk of encountering people with false identities, violent representations of reality, etc.), if they are not used properly. It therefore becomes necessary to avoid creating a negative impression of new technologies, and to show, instead, the positive potential they hold. The latter goal can be reached by spreading the correct use of technologies, and it is in this view that the new tools implemented in the VSAV project can become a useful and positive support in the life and growth of children, and in everyday life.

This manual brings together the several activities that have been carried out during the project.

It is aimed at young people, parents, teachers, policy-makers, Ministries of Education in partner countries, school headmasters/headmistresses, local organisations.

We hope that this manual will be a useful tool and a source of inspiration for the development of new initiatives on these issues.
VIRTUAL STAGES AGAINST VIOLENCE

The Main objectives of the project are:

1. Contributing to the reduction of media violence on children and young people.
2. Raising the awareness of children, young people and parents on the negative aspects of media.

Specific objectives of the project are:

1. Clearly identifying habits and behaviours of target groups in using new technologies.
2. Identifying potential risks related to the target groups in order to develop measures to avoid them.
3. Creating educational activities and an interactive game designed to increase young people and children’s understanding of potentially negative impacts of media and new technologies, and offering them the possibility to learn how to avoid them.
4. Introducing children and young people to the role of creators of a play through the use of different media with potentially violent impacts.
5. Indicating the right use and best consumption of media.
6. Creating communication tools in order to reach a large number of final beneficiaries.

Target

Young people (10-16 years old) are the main target group of the project. They are at the same time actors and beneficiaries of the project. VSAV project helps young people to understand how to protect themselves from the risks of new technologies and to experience their positive potential.

Parents are an indirect key target group and by increasing their understanding of new media, they will be able to support and guide their children in using new technologies responsibly.

Educators are involved in an interactive and participative learning process with the support of the pedagogical experts that created a “Toolkit” with instructions and directions to develop and carry out educational activities in classrooms to fight against media violence.
Activities

Several actions have been carried out throughout the project time span, starting from a RESEARCH activity - http://virtualstages.eu/research/ - across the four partner countries, carried out in order to identify Internet uses and behaviours – both in terms of opportunities and risk – of a non-representative sample of European adolescents. Another important sub-objective was to take into consideration the role parents play within the family in supervising/controlling the online activities of their children. Finally, as a complement to this educational framework, a group of teachers also took part in a survey, in order to identify their private and professional Internet uses, as well as their ideas about the introduction of media literacy activities in their classrooms.

In addition to the above mentioned research, the project activities combined different tools in an innovative way, connecting a new media like Online Game and a traditional one like the Theatre, thus enhancing young people’s creative potential. They were the actors and beneficiaries of a creative process to develop an online videogame and a theatre production, with the support of theatre professionals, Internet experts and educators. The purpose of the Online Game, entitled “THE BIG BRAIN”, was to raise young people’s awareness about the risks related to an improper use of new technologies in an amusing way. When starting the game, players are prompted to choose and play among six different game environments that represent different topics related to new technologies and web threats (viruses, spam, false identities, bullies and phishers). (http://virtualstages.eu/bigbrain/). In June 2012, The Big Brain won the Comenius Edumedia Award.

Five THEATER PLAYS have been developed in the partner countries with different directors and casts starting from a common plot. The text uses the myths and legends of classical Greek culture to discuss the dangers of our time. An improper use of new technologies can be considered a modern “Trojan Horse” that deceptively affects human life and social relationships. The plays are available online (http://virtualstages.eu/plays-video/) or can be downloaded in DVD format (http://virtualstages.eu/media/VirtualStages_2012.iso).

Concluding the project, the pedagogical expert Maria Ranieri created a TOOLKIT, entitled “Digital & Media Literacy Education”, an instrument specifically addressed to teachers and educators offering a series of thematic paths and educational activities related to the Internet and to new media to be applied in teaching activities. It is available in four languages (English, German, Italian, Romanian) from http://virtualstages.eu/download/. An online tutorial can be found at http://virtualstages.eu/tutorial/.

The Toolkit was presented to the teachers of the partner countries in the framework of an International Training Course. The activities proposed in the toolkit were tested by the teachers in their classrooms. The results of the project will be presented to the public during an International Conference on Digital and Media Literacy Education that will be held in Palermo in February 2013.
Duration

24 months: from 1st March 2011 to 28th February 2013.

Partners

**APPLICANT:**

CESIE - Centro Studi ed Iniziative Europeo

CESIE – European Centre of Studies and Initiatives – is a non-profit, apolitical, and secular non-governmental organization with member organizations in more than eight European countries. It was established in 2001, inspired by the work and theories of the pacifist Danilo Dolci (1924-1997).

Our status as a European NGO is recognized by the European Commission and we are supported by a Framework Partnership Agreement (FPA) with the DG EAC.

CESIE links local, national and international contexts and is committed to stimulating development and change in cultural, educational and economic spheres through the creation and use of innovative tools and methods.

Our broad experience is demonstrated by the fact that in 2011, over 98 initiatives were carried out with 50 still ongoing.

The organisation is divided into five departments which work together and manage activities in their specific fields: European Cooperation, International Cooperation, Mobility, Socio-cultural Promotion and Vocational Training.

The head office can be found in the city centre of Palermo with other offices in India, Nepal and Senegal.

CESIE coordinates the CESIE Federation which is composed of over 70 organizations throughout the world who share our mission and collaborate with us.

**Objectives:**

- To promote intercultural communication
- To support social inclusion and equal opportunities
- To stimulate progress in vocational training, lifelong education and entrepreneurship development
- To strengthen sustainable development and solidarity at a global level
- To develop networks and links at local, national and international levels
- To sustain international cooperation

[www.cesie.org](http://www.cesie.org)
PARTNER 1:
Palermo University (1806)

Established two centuries ago, the University of Palermo is today a consolidated cultural, scientific and didactic presence throughout central western Sicily. Articulated in 12 faculties and 80 departments, it covers the most important fields of contemporary scientific and technological knowledge. The University – always active in all the cultural and scientific issues of our times – shows a constant open attitude to innovation, research, and dialogue, presents itself as a piece in a mosaic of institutions that are committed to territorial development and as a hub of international relations directed at the spreading of knowledge and at the comparative presentation of cultures.

www.unipa.it

PARTNER 2:
The Thuringian Association of adult education centres

The Thuringian Association of Adult Education (TVV e.V.) is the regional umbrella organisation of the 23 adult education centres (Volkshochschulen) located in the communities or major cities of Thuringia. The TVV e.V. is associated with a wide network of institutions in Thuringia, in Germany and across Europe. We work with regional ministries, adult education organisations all over Germany, schools, the Thuringian teacher training school, social partners, publishers, chambers of commerce, political representatives, etc. As an umbrella organisation we provide a wide range of services for our members, including lobby work. In a broader sense, we aim to promote adult education in general and in political, cultural and professional terms. We are involved in the implementation of lifelong learning by raising awareness among the wider public and by working on the basic conditions for its success. Since 2000 we have been actively involved in projects on a European level such as Learning partnerships, or Multilateral Projects. The TVV e.V.

www.vhs-th.de
die Berater has been founded in 2009 to implement non-profit-oriented, social and charity activities, aimed at integrating disadvantaged groups into society and promoting values like fairness, tolerance and active citizenship. “die Berater” Gemeinnützige GmbH can draw on the human resources of the trainers, coaches and other staff of the company “die Berater” Unternehmensberatungs GmbH, a private company founded in 1998 and active in around 60 locations all over Austria in the following fields:

- Education and training
- Coaching and counselling
- Consultancy
- EU projects

Die Berater offers educational seminars and training courses for individuals, organisations, and enterprises from soft skills to languages and information technologies. Their main aims are to motivate and qualify customers to make full use of their potentials in the economy, at the labour market and in their personal lives. Contents and methodologies, including blended learning, are tailor-made according to the needs of customers. In die Berater's corporate culture, fair play, respect, tolerance and social responsibility are central values.

www.dieberater.com
Save the Children Romania is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation with a public utility, active since 1990 which promotes child rights and child protection in Romania. In 2010, Save the Children has reached 20 years: two decades of ambitions and ideals fulfilled, every single day with hundreds of children included in social programmes and educational centres. Save the Children programmes target all children, paying special attention to those in difficult circumstances – children from disadvantaged communities, children victims of violence, of labour exploitation, of exploitation and negligence, refugee children, children with disabilities, etc. In more than 20 years, over 750,000 children were involved in campaigns and programmes of the organisation. Currently, the organisation operates programmes in 39 cities, has branches in 12 counties and in Bucharest, over 6,000 members and more than 1,800 volunteers, mostly young. In 2010, the number of children enrolled in our programmes and campaigns was 111,000, with 22,800 parents, 12,500 teachers and 1,750 volunteers. Save the Children Romania is a member of Save the Children International, the world’s largest independent organisation that promotes child rights and protection.

www.salvaticopiii.ro

ASSOCIATED PARTNERS

Pedagogische Hochschule Wien: provides the initial education of the future generation of teachers in Vienna and the continuous and further in-service training of all active members of the teaching professions.

MED: Italian association for media education and communication, was born at the behest of a group of academics, media professionals and educators and is an ideal place for liaison and service in dialogue between experts and communication professionals.
1. METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

In order to better implement the various activities foreseen in the VSAV project, we carried out a preliminary survey across the four partner countries: Austria, Germany, Italy and Romania. The main objective was to identify the Internet uses and behaviours - both in terms of opportunities and risks - of a non-representative sample of European adolescents. As an additional important sub-objective, we also analysed, through a survey, the role that parents play within the family in supervising/controlling the online activities of their children. Finally, as a complement to this educational framework, we surveyed the private and professional uses of the Internet of a teachers sample.  

1 - The samples included: 377 adolescents selected according to two main characteristics: the age (14-16 years old) and the time spent on the Internet (at least 2 hours). As for the gender, since the following phase of the project included activities with a videogame, we decided to establish a ratio of 70:30, that is 70 boys and 30 girls per country, as studies indicate that the former are usually much more attracted by videogames than the latter; 528 parents with no particular selection criteria, except that of belonging to the same family of the adolescents’ sample so that we could compare children’s and parents’ behaviours and attitudes; 178 teachers teaching to students of the same age group of the adolescents’ sample. These three samples have been chosen according to a non-probabilistic sampling procedure aiming at a “typological” rather than a statistical representativeness. As such, although no statistical inferences are possible, they can be used to generate descriptive/exploratory comments about the samples and develop new ideas/hypotheses that can be more systematically tested later.
We prepared three different questionnaires, one for each sample. The adolescents’ questionnaire included 4 sections:

- the Internet section brought together data about their Internet uses and behaviours, the type of technological devices employed, the point of access, the contact with other users, etc.;
- the Competence section collected data about their digital competence;
- the Mediation section gathered their opinions/knowledge on the modes of intervention/supervision/control of their parents and teachers;
- the Internet risks section explored their experiences (in terms of the level of involvement, how “bothering” they were, the adolescents’ reaction to them, the kind of help they look for, if any…) with regards to particular areas of interest such as: cyberbullying, sex and pedopornography, meeting with strangers first met on the Internet, contact with dangerous websites, etc.

The questionnaires for parents and teachers were similar: they both included questions about the interviewee’s socio-demographical characteristics and his/her uses of the Internet. They also asked questions about Internet risks and the knowledge the interviewees had about the possible unpleasant experiences their children/students might have had. In order to gather some ideas for future promotional campaigns, we included a final set of questions concerning their opinion about the channels through they get (or wish to get) information on the safer use of the Internet. The questionnaire for parents included a further section on Mediation mirroring the one in the students’ questionnaire so as to compare children and parents’ perceptions.

2. YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE INTERNET

2.1. The profile of the young cybernaut

In general, the adolescents interviewed are active cybernauts. As a matter of fact, our survey shows that 87,3% of them uses the Internet on a daily basis, 7,3% once or twice a week and only 2,7% once or twice a month, or less. With this regard, no particular difference emerged among the involved countries. Almost half of them (42,6%) says they accessed the Internet for the first time when they were between 6 and 10 years old: this percentage decreases to 30% for Austria and raises to 56,6% for Romania. Only 3,8% says they had their first access in a pre-school age. Usually, males are more precocious, although no significant gender differences emerge. On average, in a normal school day adolescents spend between 2.5/3 hours surfing the Internet (Austrians, Germans and Italians: 2/2.5 hours; Romanians: 3.5/4 hours). Time spent on the Internet on a normal
non-school day increases, with some differences between the partner countries: 3.5 for Italians and Austrians, 4 hours for Germans and up to 7 hours for Romanians.

As for the technological devices used for accessing the Internet, some national specificities emerge: Romanians mostly use PCs and mobile phones; Austrians utilise laptops and mobile phones, while Germans and Italians distribute their uses more evenly across the devices listed in the questionnaire. As for other media, television is used by 50% of Romanians and much less by the adolescents from the other partners countries, especially the Germans (11,9%).

As for the places from where adolescents access the Internet, we observe that over 80% of them access it from their bedroom, followed by a friend’s house; Internet cafés are little used (with a minor exception for Romanians), as are other public places (again, with a minor exception from the part of the Romanian interviewees). Significantly, with regards to the role played by schools in the country, 91% of Austrians and 75,7% of Germans say they access the Internet from school, in contrast to 24,2% of Italians and 30,8% of Romanians.

The most frequent activity performed on the Internet is “visiting a social network”: 73,7% of the entire sample does that every day or nearly every day. In addition to this, the three most frequent activities in each country, despite some minor country-to-country differences, are “watching video clips”, “using instant messaging” and “reading/watching the news”. Almost 90% of the total sample has a profile on a social network, with no significant gender differences (95% Italians, 90% Romanians, 83% Austrians and Germans). These profiles have, on average, mostly private settings (Romanians: 40,9% private and 38,6% public; Germans: 52,4% private and 14,3% public; Italians: 63,4% private and 11,8% public; Austrians: 73,5% private and 8,4% public).

Regarding the information published on the social networks profiles, adolescents seem to be quite careful in giving out personal information: 80% publishes photos, last name, the school attended or the age, etc. but a quite lower percentage gives out the address or the telephone number. Romanians are once again the exception: 22,7% of them gives out the address (as compared to 14,7% of Italians, 6% of Austrians and 4,8% of Germans) and 15,9% their phone number (as compared to 11,6% of Italians and 4,8% of Austrians and Germans). A further confirmation of the “openness” of the Romanians comes from the kind of contacts they have on the Internet: 26,7% of them says to have contact with unknown people and 47,7% with unknown people who are friends or family of people they know in person. On the contrary, the majority of respondents from the other three countries shows a preference to make contact with known people whom they first met in person.

In one short section of the questionnaire, we asked the adolescents of the sample to self-evaluate their competence in using the Internet and also to specify what they
are actually able to do (such as, “Change privacy settings on a social networking profile”, “Bookmark a website”, “Compare different websites to decide if information is true”, “Block unwanted adverts or junk mail/spam”, “Delete the record of which sites you have visited”, “Find information on how to use the Internet safely”, etc.). In general, Germans self-perceive themselves as very competent, followed by Italians and Austrians, and finally by the Romanians.

2.2. The role of the parents according to children: collaboration, supervision control or prohibition?

In the section “Mediation” we asked children to tell us what they think that their parents know about their Internet activities. We found that, in their children’s view, German parents are the most informed ones (71%), followed by Romanians (65,9%), Italians (65,7%) and Austrians (54%). We also wanted to survey the ways in which this participation is structured in order to verify whether it is seen as a form of control or a looser supervision and/or collaboration. Italian parents tend to be perceived as more “intrusive”: 54,5% of them does not only speak with the children of what they do on the Internet, but stays nearby when they are online. For 41,4% of them this form of supervision culminates in a genuine sharing of Internet activities (a percentage that in other countries is always below 30%). Austrians parents, on the other hand, are seen as the least “present”.

The parents’ presence can also be perceived as either a support or a sanction. We found that the most supportive parents seem to be the Austrians: 69% of the adolescents say that their parents help them search the web; 57% say their parents advise them on how to surf the web safely and 54% know well what sites are safe or unsafe thanks to their parents’ help. Percentages are lower when this presence is perceived as more “intrusive”, like when parents give advice on how to behave on the Internet. As mentioned above, Italian parents are perceived as the most intrusive: 58% of the young Italians we interviewed says their parents advise them on how to behave with other people met on the Internet, while 50% talks with them about how to behave when something “bothers” them on the Internet. Italian parents appear to be the most controlling or invasive, this is demonstrated by their negative responses to many questions.

2.3. Internet risks

As mentioned, the students’ questionnaire also contained an important part dedicated to Internet risks (such as cyberbullying, meeting online with strangers, visiting unsafe websites, etc.).

As to cyberbullying, it does not seem to be very much experienced by the young respondents of our sample. Meeting/having contact with strangers is generally more
frequent. Visiting “unsafe websites” is a definitely rare activity, especially for Austrians. We also surveyed other kinds of risks that might be “bothering”, such as threats to privacy (the unauthorized or unpleasant use of personal information by others), online frauds involving money loss or viruses that might infect the PC. Our sample seems to be little exposed to online frauds (all percentages are below 6%). The most frequently cited risk is being infected by a virus. As for the threats to privacy, all percentages are below 15%.

Finally, we included a set of questions regarding Internet risks from a psychological point of view, that is we looked at those behaviours that are potentially “pathological” and might develop into some kind of “Internet addiction”. We found that a number of respondents skipped meals or did not sleep enough because of the Internet (percentages range from 22,1 % to 30%). More than 60% of them report they are annoyed when they cannot go online. We also found relevant percentages for the so-called “no-purpose navigation” (with some differences: 80,8% for the Romanians, 65,3% for the Germans, 61% for the Italians and 47% for the Austrians). Fairly widespread is the habit of devoting time to the Internet at the expense of other activities, such as school homework, or time spent with family and friends (percentages range from 45% to 60%). A number of respondents says to have tried without success to spend less time on the Internet (percentages range from 36% to 46%).

3. PARENTS AND THE INTERNET

Generally speaking, parents in our sample seem to use the Internet in quite “adult” ways with little or no use of the Internet according to adolescent-like practices. For example, the daily use of the Internet “for work” is quite frequent across the four partner countries, more so in Austria and Germany and less in Romania and Italy. Indeed, this is evidence of the different level of “digitalisation” at work between mid- and southern European countries. Interestingly, while “playing videogames with other people” is basically never done by over 90% of the parents, Romanians do play occasionally. Also “watching videoclips” is not so frequent, although Italians and Romanians say they do it once or twice a week, followed by Germans and Austrians. “Download of music or films” is a basically never done activity (especially for Germans). Once again, it is the Romanians who do it on a daily or weekly basis.

On the contrary “reading/watching the news” is one of the most practiced activities on a daily basis, firstly among Austrians, followed by Italians, Germans and lastly Romanians. Another interesting evidence regards the use of “electronic mail”. While among Austrians and Germans the percentage of answers given to the “never option” is basically equal to zero, for Italians and especially Romanians it increases respectively to 26,8 % and 24,3%. Almost 80% of Austrian parents and 88% of the German ones make use of emails on a
daily basis, followed by Romanians and Italians (both around 44%).

In particular, if we look at Italy, these findings, as showed by other studies (for example, Censis, 2009), confirm the dichotomy between those who regularly use the Internet and those who do it rarely or never. Hypothetically, Italian parents can be divided into two kinds of users, the “operators” and the “observers”, that is those who use the Internet either for getting information or, more frequently, for work, and those who use the Internet only for getting information and quite less for work.

Totally unpractised by all parents in the sample is the activity of “visiting a chatroom” or a “virtual world”. Although with very low percentages, Romanian parents are those who “use instant messaging” daily or once/twice a week, followed by Austrians, Italians and Germans. Similarly, it is the Romanians who “play games online” daily or once/twice a week more than anyone else in the sample (12.6%). Austrians, Italians and Germans do not go beyond 4%.

As for “making purchases online”, our survey seems to confirm a tendency already emerged in other studies about consumer habits in Europe: online shopping and the use of credit cards is a well-established practice in Northern countries characterized by more differentiated strategies of consumer goods provision. More than half the sample of Italians and Romanians say they never do it (respectively, 51.4% and 69%). Although not on a daily basis, other parents do make online purchases on a monthly basis or so (Austrians 84.3%, Germans 79.7%, Italians 35.6%, Romanians 21.2%).

Another important area we surveyed regards the knowledge that parents have (or think they have) about their children’s online uses and behaviours. Questions mirror what we asked adolescents in their questionnaire so as to verify not only if and how parents have a “direct” control on their children but more importantly if and how this control is somehow negotiated with children. We found that parents usually seem to be aware that their children access the Internet mainly from their own bedroom or from some other shared room of the house; they know they do not access it frequently from school (especially Italians and Romanians); nor from an Internet cafe or public library (for all parents, but again for Romanians and Italians in particular). The fact that German and Austrian parents are well aware that the Internet is used by their children at school shows the different penetration of digital technologies across European school systems as well as the adoption of different models of cultural reproduction.

When asked if they know whether their children access the Internet from a friend’s house, parents give different answers from country to country. Austrians and Italians seem well aware of that (Germans and Romanians follow). Crossing these findings with those collected from the adolescents’ questionnaires, we could say that Austrians and Italians have a more “realistic” knowledge of their children’s habits as compared with Germans and Romanians who seem to be less aware of how frequently adolescents access the
Internet when they are together with their peers.

We also surveyed the production by both parents and their children of certain “discourses” about the Internet. In this case too, some interesting differences emerge from country to country. To “talk with them about what they do on the Internet” is quite usual for Austrian, German and Italian parents, a little less for Romanians. To “sit with them while they use the Internet (watching what they’re doing but not really joining in)” is very common for Austrian parents, much less common for Germans and Romanians, followed by Italians. To “stay nearby when they use the Internet” is typical of Italians and Romanians, a bit less with Germans, a lot less with Austrians. Unlike the educational culture of mid-northern European countries, this is a kind of “indirect” control quite frequent in Italy which deserves further investigation. Other differences emerge with the item “Encourage them to explore the Internet and to learn things on their own”. Once again, it is the Austrians who seem more willing to engage with that, followed by Romanians, and - with similar percentages - Germans and Italians, apparently more diffident towards the Internet. The shared use of the Internet is quite common among Germans, averagely common among Italians and Austrians, much less common among Romanians, something probably due to the different levels of Internet use among adults in these countries. Accordingly, Austrian and German parents are more willing (or maybe more competent) to “help their children with doing or finding things on the Internet”, Italians and Romanians follow. Once again, this is something probably due to a less frequent use of the Internet rather than to different pedagogical strategies. As for the item about “suggesting ways to choose among bad or good website”, “to use the Internet safely”, “to behave with people met on the Internet”, a vast majority of parents gives a positive answer with no relevant differences from country to country: a further evidence, in our opinion, of a general situation of uncertainty and instability in older generations (especially among Romanians and Italians), again most probably due to a lack of digital competence rather than to some kind of disinterest or an excess of apocalyptical visions against the Internet. The same for the last question —“Help/talk to them when something on the Internet bothers them”—where again, despite a general positive answer given by all of the parents, Austrians are at the top of the list and Romanians at the bottom.

Another important area we investigated regards the level of control parents have on their children Internet access. Total permission to use “instant messaging” is generally granted by every parent, with the significant exception of German ones. When it comes to “download photos, videos, music, etc.”, parents become stricter, although with some differences, as usual, between Romanians (80,2%) and the rest (Italians 59,5%, Austrians 58,8%, Germans only 16,9%). Basically all parents give total permission to the “online watching of videoclips”. As for “having a social network profile”, Italians and especially Germans are the strictest ones as compared to Romanians and Austrians. To “give out personal information” is indeed a much more restricted activity by all parents. As for the item regarding “playing online videogames”, we see again a polarization between the
“restrictive” Germans and the “permissive” Romanians.

Another kind of control we surveyed was the one parents do “ex-post”. For example, checking the websites visited by their children is mostly done by Germans, followed by Italians, Austrians and, quite apart, Romanians. Although further analysis is needed, we can, for the time being, conclude, once again, that differences in the forms of parental control are directly linked to the degree of digital competence parents have. Presumably, Italian and Romanian parents do not check their children’s profile on social networks because they do not know how to do it. Instead, Austrian and German parents - who are more competent - are more inclined to control. Therefore, we think that Italians and Romanians are not so much more permissive: they are simply less competent. We also asked parents whether they knew if their children have ever been involved in some particular Internet activities that might be risky, such as meeting with strangers first known online or being exposed to violent, offensive or sexual material. According to most of the parents, children have not been exposed to this kind of risky behaviours, with the partial exception of Romanian and Italian parents.

Finally, in the last part of the questionnaire, we asked parents about their level of agreement with regards to some statements. For example, more than half of the sample agrees a lot or a fair amount with the statement “censorship and limited access are not a feasible nor desirable solution to handle children’s relationship with the Internet”. The remaining does not agree very much or at all. Surprisingly, Romanian parents (and a bit less Italians) seem more inclined to censorship and control, even if this is contradicted in practice, as we have seen from our empirical evidence. A contradiction that requires further analysis and that is maybe due, as said, to a lack of competence and hence a need for control from others.

Over 70% of the parents sampled seems quite confident about their children’s capacity to understand and avoid the risks of Internet. As usual, Italians and Romanians seem a bit less confident, a finding most probably due to the usual lack of competence that tends to develop a feeling of uncertainty and distrust, and above all to an educational approach that tends to consider children either immature and defenceless or, at the opposite, irresponsible and reckless.

Drawing some initial conclusions, we can say that empirical evidence shows that whenever digital competence and a more open attitude towards technological innovation is combined with a relationship with children based on mutual sharing and participation (at least for the age group considered in our study), it is more likely that the use of Internet is seen in “instrumental” terms. In other words, it is less ideologically biased and more oriented to improve the general development of their competences and not simply technical skills. That is what we can say about the German and the Austrian parents, with some exceptions that do require further investigation and analysis. Whenever this
combination does not occur, there is a lower digital competence is combined with a top-down pedagogical approach based on control and protection, as with Romanians and Italians, it is more likely that the Internet appears as something dangerous and risky, hence requiring a stricter control on children’s uses of it.

4. TEACHERS AS “DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS”? 

Although, as we have repeatedly pointed out, our samples have been extracted in a non-probabilistic way so that no statistical inference is possible, we still want to make some comments on the age and gender of the teachers we interviewed, given also that they seem to confirm some trends emerged in other more statistically representative studies, at least as far as Italy is concerned.

Romania and Austria have the largest number of teachers under 40 years old, while Germany, and even more Italy, have the largest number of teachers between 40-50 and over, and hence with more teaching experience. This data may justify some of the considerations we shall make later about the fact that for adults—differently for children—age is still an important variable when it comes to Internet uses. Similarly, as far as gender is concerned, females prevail over males (due to the tendency to the “feminization” of the teaching profession), confirming that gender—just like age—is still a discriminating factor when analysing adult behaviours.

As we have also observed for parents, the teachers we interviewed seem to use the Internet in “adult” ways, albeit with some minor differences from country to country. In all four partner countries, the activities mostly performed are typical of the “digital immigrants”, as Marc Prensky would put it, whereas the ones usually associated with adolescents (Prensky’s “digital natives”) are almost totally ignored, with the partial exception of Romanian teachers.

“Sending and receiving e-mails” is the most frequent activity, followed by “Reading/watching the news”, “Working”, “Visiting a social network profile” and “Watching video clips”. The rest of the activities are decreasingly performed once or twice a week or a month, or even never. “Playing videogames”, for instance, with the usual exception of Romanians, is either never done or done less than once a month. The “Use of instant messaging” goes roughly along the same lines, although it is more evenly distributed among the different countries. So is the case with “Visiting chat-rooms”. One activity that our sample never engages in (not even Romanian parents) is “Spending time in a virtual world”. In sum, it seems that, with the exception of visiting social networks, teachers in our sample use the Internet mostly according to a “push” perspective (for information retrieval, video watching, news reading, etc.). They do not seem digitally sophisticated
enough for “pull” uses such as generating and sharing content on a horizontal, Web-2.0 basis.

As for the Internet activities explicitly performed for work, “Exchange mails” and “Prepare classes, tests, etc.” are the activities that almost 60% of the teachers interviewed do either daily or once/twice a week, with the exception of Italians who engage in that activity on a monthly basis. “Search for teaching resources” is another quite common activity, although mostly distributed once or twice a month. Other activities, such as “Assign homework requiring the use of Internet” and “Use Internet in class” are less frequent. Once again, Italians appear as the most reluctant to adopt these kinds of uses of the Internet, while Austrians and Romanians are the most willing, showing that the age factor, as suggested, may make the difference. Supporting this view, Austrians and Romanians also access the Internet via mobile phones more than the others. “Exchange messages with students via social networks” is the least frequent activity.

As we did with parents, we asked teachers about their level of agreement with certain particular statements about Internet. Generally speaking, all teachers across the four countries showed to be well aware of the Internet potential for improving learning and teaching processes, albeit with some minor differences from country to country. Teachers do not seem to have a very clear-cut opinion about their students’ capacity to understand risks related to the use of the Internet - a possible consequence of the superficial knowledge they have of their students’ attitudes and uses of the Internet. A quite more definite opinion is the one expressed about three other statements: nearly the totality of them regards the Internet as an important source of information and sociality and considers it useful for teaching and learning.
Online educational games play an important role in the social, cultural and school life of young people. As the demands and needs of young people keep changing, they are increasingly seen as learning tools. Today, pupils demand more different forms of interaction with other pupils but also with teachers and the specific learning content. ‘One size fits all’ is no longer an appropriate educational approach for the young people of today. Learning content is more and more customised and there is an increasing need for new paradigms for the learning process in different communities. Educational games constitute one learning community per se. To be able to encounter different challenges, the online educational game “The Big Brain” was developed within the scope of the European project Virtual Stages Against Violence (VSAV). The Big Brain is highly interactive and designed for young people between 10 and 16 years old. The game allows them to play their own roles and accomplish tasks in order to become aware of chances and risks on the Internet. In the online game “The Big Brain” young people learn to share their experience and knowledge in the scope of an online community. The main aspect of the online game is to raise awareness among young people about new technologies, opportunities and hidden risks of the Internet.
2. THE BIG BRAIN –
THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ONLINE GAME

The online game is set in a world where global communication is in the hands of an evil villain called “The Big Brain”. Through the work of his “army” operating all over the world, he has taken control of the net and dominates most of the public media and information systems. He aims to become the only controller of all new technologies. “The Big Brain” exercises control over the Internet and the user wants to depose him and liberate the city. There are six tasks spanning six different locations to be accomplished. There is a game, a quiz and the opportunity to participate in an online discussion with other users. The message centre is a discussion forum with other users. For great accomplished tasks the users can win national and international high scores.

The aim of the game is to stop the evil plan and to defeat “The Big Brain”, fighting against each regiment; the freedom to use the new technologies in an independent and regular way is at stake.

3. THE DEVELOPERS

“The Big Brain” was developed within the scope of the VSAV project. The technical leader was die Berater® from Vienna, Austria and the educational online game was developed with the European partners CESIE, University of Palermo, Thüringer Volkshochschulverband e.V. (TVV e.V.), and Salvati Copii Romania. The Austrian online game developer “Webducation” from Vienna, Austria (see www.webducation.info/web) developed the online game together with the European project team.

THE BIG BRAIN CAN BE PLAYED IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES.

http://vsav.webducation.info/
4. CONTENT AND AIM OF THE GAME – THE 6 SETTINGS

The online game consists of six different locations where young people mostly spend their time. The target group is 10-16 years old. They can choose which location they want to enter, while they are talking and exchanging messages with other players in the message centre. After the completion of the tasks in each location follows a quiz with important questions connected with the risks and opportunities of new technologies and media.

The big brain consists of six different locations.

The player can choose the locations separately and play.

Here one can see the location “school”. The Big Brain is not a very challenging educational game but rather an online game for awareness raising for young people between 10 and 16 years old.

The player is confronted with different locations and challenges
The player can exchange knowledge and experience with other players in the message centre.

After each location, players are expected to answer the questions from the quiz.

The questions are of a very educative nature in connection with risks and chances of the new technologies.

Here one can see the location “arcade”.

The expectation is not set on the difficulty of the online game. Feedback of young people shows that the online game is very user-friendly and easy to play.
Players can learn to network and to communicate in the online community.

The Big Brain is a great community place for young people

Nevertheless,

The Big Brain is designed to entertain and to playfully show young people the correct use of new technologies.

The Big Brain is also motivating for young people because of the high scores

5. RESULTS OF GAME PLAYING

Even though the Big Brain is not a very challenging online game, it is very popular in Austria, Italy, Romania and Germany. The Romanian partner presented it at the Safer Internet day in Bucharest: at the event pupils had the opportunity to play the online game and to participate in the “Big Brain” competition. This is only one example of the dissemination activities of the game. “The Big Brain” can be found on many websites of schools or education institutions that published articles about it in order to encourage young people to play and to become aware of the risks and opportunities of the Internet.

Safer Internet day February 2012 (1/3)
Even though the educational online game seems to be very easy for most of the pupils who already played it, it is a very useful medium for the correct use of new technologies. In
2012 the online game “The Big Brain” received a Comenius EduMedia Seal in the category “Online Games with competence fostering potential” in Berlin, Germany.

The Comenius-EduMedia Award has been awarded every year since 1995 by the die Gesellschaft für Pädagogik und Information e.V., Berlin, Deutschland (Association for Pedagogy and Information e.V., Berlin, Germany) to publishing houses, authors and educational institutions in Europe and worldwide. The awards of the Association for Pedagogy and Information e.V. are the most important German and European awards for exemplary ICT-based education media.

It is an excellent tool for young people between the ages of 10-16 to be able to recognize the opportunities and risks in conjunction with new media and technologies. Educational institutions, schools and youth centres can support it with important questions, widen the quiz provided or discuss with their pupils on the basis of curricular and extracurricular activities. “The Big Brain” offers the opportunity to belong to an online community on a European level. It is definitely an added value for the traditional curriculum. It is a problem-solving tool that encourages young people to talk about the possible risks and to be aware of them. “The Big Brain” has been met with a positive response throughout Europe and it will continue to be available after the project lifetime.
Chapter 3

THEATRE STAGING

1. THE WORKSHOPS IN THE “CENTRO TAU” YOUTH CENTRE: CONNECTION BETWEEN THE VIDEO GAME AND THE THEATRE STORY.

The implementation phase of the online game in youth centres and schools of Palermo, where the youngsters were invited to play the game, was the moment when the artistic director started writing the script for the theatre play.

Many questions needed to be answered: how to develop a theatre play which could be interesting for a teenagers’ audience? What are the best topics to be highlighted on stage? How to maintain a continuous link between the online game and the theatre play? Which style to adopt?...

The one-for-all answer was to cooperate with the main beneficiaries of the project, youngsters aged between 12 and 16 years old, in order to create the script.

The idea took place thanks to “Centro Tau” Youth Centre which operates in a disadvantaged area of Palermo, called “Zisa”.

“Centro Tau” is involved in organising activities for teenagers, especially in the afternoon, in the time that spans from when they finish school to the evening. Its social contribution is extremely relevant in the area because its activities aim at preventing teenagers’ street life or computer addiction.

Therefore, thanks to “Centro Tau” the artistic director was able to select a group of ten teenagers who were willing to contribute in this project. They were involved, together with the artistic director and a Theatre Expert Coordinator, in four theatre workshops that
had three main aims:

- The first one was to use the language of theatre in order to let the youngsters raise awareness about their habits towards technology and the potential risks they could meet through an improper use of the Internet, as well as the precautions they might take to protect themselves.
- The second aim was to come up with possible solutions to the risks mentioned above.
- Thirdly, a reflection on the main topic to be addressed by the theatre script was needed.

The theatre technique used during the workshops is the so called “Theatre of the Oppressed”, a methodology which can be easily adopted with people who have not had any previous experience of developing a theatre performance. The selected group was first asked to play the online game; afterwards they were invited to play theatre games, so as to be able to make a reflection on the risks of an improper use of the Internet and the possible preventions to it.

The main topics raised and deemed important to be adopted in the script were:

- parallel life through social networking
- addiction to the Internet
- online bullying
- viruses
- private information (dark-net)
- how body is affected by the use of technology (health problems due to the bad posture when sitting at the computer desk, change of body language, etc.).

The contribution offered by the teenagers was also extremely useful for the identification of the common slang language used by teenagers in instant messaging and in chat-rooms. The preliminary activities were useful in helping the artistic director to adopt a truthful and actual language in the script.

Moreover, a video was prepared by an expert video-maker to be projected during the performance. In the shooting phase, the youngsters played as walk-ons.
2. FOUR COUNTRIES, FIVE PLAYS

Is it possible to have one common script for five different plays? It has indeed been possible in our case, but in order to better understand how, it is necessary to take a step back in the development of the project.

CESIE was in charge of proposing a main script to the theatre experts involved in the partner countries. They prepared a draft of the script, which was later discussed and updated within a team work composed of the artistic leader, the theatre expert coordinator and one theatre expert per country. The partners in the VSAV project are four, namely CESIE (Italy), Die Berater (Austria), Salvati Copii (Romania), TVV (Germany). However, TVV involved two theatre experts, who developed two different theatre plays in two different cities in Germany.

The final draft of the common script which was adopted by all the theatre experts can be summarised in the following main points:

**SETTING:**

Internet, virtual place, e.g. chat room

**METAPHORS:**

1. **Dagger** = Internet (or metaphor that has be related to the history of Troy)
2. **Horse** = virus (via anything you like: sound, video…)
3. **Troy** = chat room, virtual place

**CHARACTERS:**

1. **Hector**: warrior, fighter, leader, extroverted, intelligent
2. **Penthesilea**: lady, determinate, androgen beauty, intriguing, strong, warm heart
3. **Helena**: foreseer, sensitive, smart, ambivalent
4. **Andromache**: victim, fragile, linkage to future
5. **Achilles**: violent and aggressive as the virus
6. **Annam**: conscious mind of humanity
7. **Recorded voice**
8. **Chorus**: common voice of people
9. **Might add other characters** (e.g. Cassandra and Priamos)
**STORY DEVELOPMENT:**

- Virus: essential change in play = fight for Troy
- End: the virtual character “dies” and they find or they do not find their identity, different solution for different characters

**CONFLICTS- TOPICS:**

- Parallel life through social networking, addiction
- Online bullying
- Viruses
- Private information (dark-net)
- Talking with strangers
- How body is affected by the use of technology (health problems, change of body language..)

**3. SYNOPSIS**

As it has been made evident in the above paragraph, the five plays offered different representations of the same idea: the legends of the past help us to understand and detect nowadays threats. The key to the reading must be found in the inner sense of the metaphors: surfing the net, exchanging information, the risks of fake identities, virtual life, and the most frightful enemy “The Trojan Horse”.

The plays were addressed to young people but also to adults in order to provide them, through the use of myths and metaphors, with the right knowledge to tackle the risks of new technologies and think about their impact on daily life.

A short summary of the different stories follows below:
Users
nuovi media, vecchi errori

CREDITS

SOAD IBRAHIM
ANTON GIULIO PANDOLFO

Co.: FABIO LO VERDE

Direzione artistica: GIULIA GIORDANO
Regia: GIULIA GIORDANO

Set: DAVIDE PANDOLFO
Costumi: DAVIDE PANDOLFO
Luce: DAVIDE PANDOLFO

Sceneggiatura: DANIELE DI LUCA
Musica e aggiustature: VINCENZO BONDO

Regia: ANTON GIULIO PANDOLFO

NUOVO TEATRO MONTEVERGINI

Domenica 11 - Ore 18:30
Dal Lunedì 12 al Sesto - 15 - Ore 10:00

Uscita libera in prevendita via www.ingressi.com

www.virtualstages.eu
USERS- ITALY

Retracing the classical – Greek cultural path and peeking into myths and legends, unexpected lessons were found and ways used to make a reflection about our times, young people and new technologies.

This is how USERS was realised, a play tightening to a forthcoming future whose threshold we imagined to cross. A future where everything already happened in an incredible and irreparable way, as in a déjà vu. Stories of men, of their mortal lives and existence; epic names, such as the Trojan princes and Achilles, the Greek warrior…when knowledge migrated from the sea and over the seas and finally, stories became legends: the Trojan Horse. The audience, “offline voyeurs”, observes characters’ daily lives: “Hector”, “Cassandra’s” brother, and his wife “Andromache”, “Heleno” and “Pentesileas” the Amazon, who got lost in this social network and enormous virtual world, will finally find their lost identities.
ein jugend-theater-projekt
Aktiv im Web – zu welchem Preis?

20.04.2012 – 10:00 Uhr
Festhalle Ilmenau
Podiumsbühne

Koooperation:
Thüringer Volkshochschulverband e.V.
Theatergruppe Regenbogen e.V.
TheaterLeiterTheater AG im KuKo e.V.

http://virtualstages.eu/de/
In this story, Troy is the name of a good secured platform of network activists who are well-known and celebrated for their “Leaks”. Just recently they pulled off a momentous coup by uncovering significant information about a Big Player in the international economic system. But the empire strikes back. Harder. By all available means. Mercilessly. The network security is at stake. The hunters become the hunted. Their data trace puts them in jeopardy. Who are the friends to be trusted, and who is the enemy?

The theatre group of the Regenbogen e.V. Ilmenau and die TheaterLeiterTheater AG developed a theatre play which revolved around the “violence and risk” topic in the Internet.

The audience was invited to attend when the battle for Troy in our modern, based-on-technology time, erupts again: Hacker attacks, fake identities, the misuse of data and cyber bullying.
HYPER-
TROJA
WONDER-
LAND

Premiere am 05. April 2012 im Theaterhaus Jena
HYPERTROJA WONDERLAND- GERMANY

It is a modern myth – modern life changing, shifting gradually into virtual worlds. HYPERTROJA WONDERLAND is the most secure server in the world, it promises what reality has lost: living space, unlimited possibilities, the prospect of veracity. Life in cyberspace is easier, nicer, better, so they say. But as easy as it is to reinvent oneself in a virtual environment, it is as easy to destroy these spaces and identities. Just like its historical counterpart, the ancient Troy, HYPERTROJA WONDERLAND will be destroyed as well. Cassandra cries, her warnings fade away unheard…

The director developed a performance for the progressing metamorphosis of human life into the digital world: development of communication, entertainment, goods, money and emotional currents. The performance follows the structure of the Trojan War, from Helena’s escape from Sparta to the cunning of the Greeks and their unauthorised access to Troy, through a false identity.

HYPERTROJA WONDERLAND is a story about humankind: love and grief, envy and hatred, and the fact that in the digital world humans remain responsible for talking, writing, acting, loving, hating and killing. In the past as well as in the present, we humans are our own enemy.
Ein Theaterstück über die Gefahren und Chancen der Neuen Medien

channel troy

Die super Real-Web-Life-Show!

Termine:
10.03. | 20.00 Uhr
14.03. | 10.00 Uhr
15.03. | 10.00 und 12.00 Uhr
16.03. | 10.00 Uhr
22.03. | 20.00 Uhr
24.03. | 20.00 Uhr

Spielort:
DasWERK, WERKerei.
1160 Wien, Neulerchenfelderstr. 6–8

Karten: Entritt frei
Zählkarten-Reservierung:
channeltroy@gmail.com

Mehr Infos zum Projekt:

Im Rahmen des EU-Projekts "Virtual Stages Against Violence" koordiniert von der "die berater" AG. Finanzieller und organisatorischer Aufbau mit Mitwirkung der Europäischen Union (Daphne III-Programm).
**CHANNEL TROY- AUSTRIA**

The 4 chatters Judith, Naemi, Patrick and Florian have applied to the TV broadcast real-life-web-show Channel Troy as chatter-candidates who can win a special price by being voted (counting “likes” as on Facebook) by the audience (before the beginning of the performance, each spectator is given 2 signs to vote: the Facebook symbols “like” and “dislike”).

The candidates have been chosen out of an enormous amount of applicants via a chat-roulette system. They login and create their own Internet profiles including nicknames referring to the mythology of Troy (Andromache, Penthesilea, Heleno, Hektor).

As they fight for “likes” within their chat-dialogues, each of them is invited to the life-show, where Ruth interviews them to find out information about the real person hidden behind their virtual identity.

At the studio, Gina, the online correspondent, gives short descriptions of the characters to the audience. She is an engaged reporter, who likes to throw light on the variant positive usability of the Internet.

Our characters are involved in a game of being personal and fighting to be a winner at the same time, which makes the TV genre they are active in to be their personal crucial test. There will be different ways of dealing with the real-virtual dichotomy, until Hektor/Florian is invited into the studio and uncovers the TV format as a user, who uses it himself. Later, Penthesilea/Naemi takes hostage someone from the audience, by taking them in the chat-room, in the name of fighting for her rights. This action raises a controversial discussion among the chat-room members. Winners and losers will be revealed when all characters enter the studio premises all together to get into “real” contact with the audience for the first time.
The play Decoded encompasses the mysteries lying in front and behind the computer monitor, and its characters seem to hide many secrets both online and offline. In the play, the heroes in the legend of Troy come to life and enter our contemporary world to share some of their wisdom with us. Because of the situations that unfold comparing the changes generated by the continued development of the digital environment, spectators will understand and discover real threats. Also, the play focuses on marking significant positive aspects of new technologies used in a responsible manner.

Annam is the narrator. He plays a crucial role in communicating with the audience. His words illuminate the audience and offer information necessary to understand the story beyond the actual situation of the characters.

Priam is the king of Troy. Although he does not use social networking sites, he is aware of the potential risks and wants to support the young members of this citadel to reach a high level of awareness.

Yahoo Messenger, Email, Skype, Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, forum, blogs, spyware, viruses are just some of the problems our heroes encounter. Even though some elements might be new for those who did not grow up in this digitalized world, Priam knows that they are nevertheless dangerous.

The other characters appear frequently on social networking sites and in the fascinating world of the Internet, but they always hide behind perfect profiles. The challenge for the public is to discover who and how these characters are in real life… Does the virtual world correspond with reality?
4. CONCLUSION

The mise-en-scene took place in the partner countries between March and December 2012.

Having different minds coming from different cultures to cooperate was not an easy task, but it was in the end successful.

The main challenge was to create a script which could be culturally addressable by all partner countries.

The artistic director and the theatre expert coordinator found in the ancient mythology the answer to this challenge: indeed, mythology is a cultural heritage for the entire humanity, despite the cultural differences. It is a learning tool crossing different generations, not only youngsters but also adults.

The stories consist of metaphorical linkage between the next future where the social network takes place, and the mythological story of the Trojan Horse which represents the crucial episode of the Trojan war between Greeks and Trojans.

Keeping in mind the general guidelines about the main structure of the story and the topics (please, refer to the chapter “Four Countries, Five Plays”), every local theatre expert had the flexibility to create a personal version of the story and to adapt it to their cultural context.

Therefore, every mise-en-scene in each country represented an interesting and innovative bonding element between past and present, ancient heritage and modern issues.

The five Theatre Plays are available online on the project website:

http://virtualstages.eu/plays-video/
Chapter 4

TOOLKIT DIGITAL & MEDIA LITERACY EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

In the majority of the industrialised countries, the Internet has entered into everyday life for many of us: from the purchase of a train ticket to the consultation of a bibliographical catalogue, the Net is becoming an “invisible technology”. Besides, the spreading of the Internet at home and school has generated the rising of a particular group of users – children and teenagers – for whom the domestic and school environments constitute the preferred places where they can be online (Livingstone, 2009).

At the same time, there is an increase in the number of debates, both in the academic and political field, about the role that the educational agencies, from school to family, should play towards the new generations and to their relations with the Internet and the electronic media. With regards to this issue, positions are often juxtaposed, as in the past with other media, for example television and computers. On the one side, we can find views of people defined by Umberto Eco as “apocalyptical” (1964): sceptics of new technologies who think that these tools are negative in themselves, so they concentrate on the risks that young people – seen as vulnerable and passive – are exposed to. An example of this first perspective can be found in the classic volume by Neil Postman (1983), The Disappearance of Childhood, where the author sees television as a medium that is fundamentally irrational with a negative impact on the youngest ones. Yesterday TV, today videogames: according to the technophobic critics, they are responsible for transmitting violent behaviour, by proposing models of negative and socially-undesirable
behaviour that children adopt as a form of imitation. In their view, computers, the Internet and the new social networks would produce de-socialisation phenomena, destroying the normal human relationships, as well as the concept of family. The exposure to inadequate contents becomes more uncontrollable than ever because filters are extremely restricted on the Internet. From this point of view, the Internet brings to extreme consequences that process of “revealing” of the adult world started by television.

On the other side there are the so-called “integrated” media enthusiasts (Eco, 1964): they attribute an inherently positive role to media technologies and the emphasis is moved towards the delay of the educational agencies in catching up with change and adapting themselves to the new demands of the digital era. Young people are seen as pioneers of the new media languages. New mythologies arise, supported by a definitely optimistic vision of the new technologies and their potential in the educational field (Buckingham, 2007). Today, amongst the techno-enthusiasts we find authors such as Marc Prensky (2001 and 2009) and Don Tapscott (1998 and 2009), who claim two main arguments. Firstly, they believe in the rising of a generation provided with new cognitive abilities thanks to the intensive use of digital media. Secondly, they believe that this radical transformation of the cognitive styles and the social practices of the new generations are producing a significant gap between young people and the educational agencies; the latter should radically change to answer new cognitive styles and satisfy new emerging needs.

The Toolkit “Digital and Media Literacy Education” moves from a perspective which goes beyond these two opposite visions. In line with recent developments in the field of Media Education, which is more oriented towards empowerment than protection (Hobbs, 2010; Parola and Ranieri, 2010), and considering recent studies on digital literacy (Calvani et al., 2012; Perez Tornero and Varis, 2010), it is suggested to look at the Internet taking into consideration both risks and opportunities, and to pay attention to the role that education may play to promote a conscious, critical and creative use of the Internet. From this point of view, the toolkit attempts to identify some fundamental areas of interest for education and media, and proposes five units that include a series of activities with related resources and tools, that teachers can use in their classrooms. The aim is to provide teachers and educators with self-directed tools that can be easily employed in everyday teaching.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

If we think about the Internet and digital media in terms of risks and opportunities, many issues catch our attention. In an attempt to summarise the multiple issues at stake, the thematic background we adopted for the toolkit is the framework developed by James et al. (2009) within the GoodPlay Project, which includes the following key issues:
participation, credibility, identity, privacy, authorship and creativity. Let us consider them below in a more analytical way, while outlining both positive and negative implications for each concept.

**Participation**

When we talk about participation, we are talking about the roles that a person can play in a specific community or, more generally, in society, and about the related responsibility that this implies (James et al., 2009). Participation may take different shapes, from discussing in a web forum to creating content in a wiki, from sharing useful resources to using information in every field of life – education, politics, economy, society. Indeed, a lot of benefits can derive from participation: at individual level (development of competences, empowerment, exposure to different points of view), at community level (the richness of different points of view and sharing of information), and at social level (civic involvement and democratic participation). According to Jenkins (2010), engaged in the discourse about digital technologies and participative cultures, the participation in projects that deal with the collaborative construction of knowledge can offer young people the opportunity to develop new abilities for the exercise of full citizenship and even for professional life. For example, the online sharing of a work in progress through a wiki created by the class can contribute to the development of peer critiquing abilities and encourage the adoption of specific roles, thus allowing an increase in consciousness about the responsibilities deriving from them. The communicative tools of the Internet can offer young people opportunities to undertake participative roles with positive implications on the development of their overall abilities (empowerment): a teenager can create and moderate a group of discussion on a film, can contribute to the creation of a group netiquette or help schoolmates with technical difficulties. In addition, the opportunities of participation offered by the Internet can support young people in their political and social action (Bennett, 2007), thus promoting new forms of civic engagement (Pettingill, 2007). However, there are some risks, too. They mainly derive from the possibility of acting or being object of aggressive behaviour. The condition of anonymity allowed by the Internet, as a matter of fact, can lead to phenomena of de-responsibility (Reid, 1995) that are translated into violent language (hate language), trolling, cyber-bullying. For example, amongst the inappropriate and harmful behaviours, it is possible to include actions that go from flaming (that is sending violent and vulgar messages through email, chat or social networks) to the publication of videos on YouTube that show actions of violence done by children to other children. It is thus necessary to educate teenagers in adopting aware and responsible communicative behaviours that respect themselves and others.
Credibility

The development of digital technologies has offered the opportunity to have access to a wide range of information sources and to participate to the exchanges of rich and motivated intellectual experiences. This certainly constitutes one of the main benefits of digital media. However, at the same time, new problems are arising, mainly connected to the credibility and reliability of information sources. As a matter of fact, everybody can publish any kind of information or content on the Internet. Preventative quality controls, offering a warranty about the reliability of information, are missing, as well as common standards about online publication of information which can easily be changed, modified and plagiarised.

In addition, the convergence of information and media channels can influence people’s judgments about credibility, confusing the user at different levels: for example, think about the «levelling effect» (Burbules, 1998), that is the flattening of the information value caused by search engines that present the results of the interrogation on the same page, putting together commercial and non-commercial websites, institutional and private websites. Also, some websites intentionally spread false, incorrect, misleading information, often for ideological or commercial reasons (Mintz, 2002). The phenomenon of Web deception can produce serious consequences for health, for example when information refers to the use of some medicines with the purpose of advertising a certain product. Young people, being «great consumers» of digital information, are the most exposed to the negative consequences of uncertain information found on the Internet, both because their perception of the risk can be inferior compared to that of adults, and because their cognitive and emotional development is less mature. This requires educational actions strongly oriented towards the development of critical thinking.

Identity

Adolescence is a particularly delicate phase of life as far as the theme of identity is concerned. It is the time when the individual, who just came out of childhood, starts thinking about himself or herself and define his or her character. The Internet can offer young people new opportunities to experience their own subjectivity, new scenarios to explore their personal identity, to self-express and get to know themselves (Turkle, 1997). As a matter of fact, the possibility to talk about themselves under conditions of anonymity (or partial anonymity) transforms online places in narrative spaces where teens can explore their own identities “without risks”, work on personal problems or even «act out» their unresolved conflicts (Bradley, 2005). The virtual games enabled by 3D environments, like Second Life, allow teens to experiment new behaviours, and hence to reflect on the difference between the Real self and the Ideal self, putting oneself in somebody’s else shoes.
At the same time, risks can also arise (see, for example, Buckingham, 2008, and the most recent work by Turkle, 2011). In the relationships with other people, the game of identity can easily move towards deceit or induce the adoption of dangerous identities: for example, a person can publish somebody else’s work on his/her website or pretend to be an expert in a community (James et al., 2008). More dangers for the self and, more indirectly, for others can also derive from the fact that the multiplicity of the self experienced online can be turned into fragmentation, self-reflection can be transformed into forms of narcissism and egocentrism, the attention to the positive feedback of the people with whom they are connected can become a sort of addiction from others’ opinion. For this reason, as for the previous key issue, it is important to support the new generations in the process of gaining knowledge of digital media, trying to promote the harmonious development of their own personality.

Privacy

The new communication technologies, from blogs to wikis and social networks, allow to publicly share personal information and this raises new and urgent issues about privacy, safety and sensitive data (James et al., 2008): what does the online management of personal information imply? How much personal information should be considered as acceptable when sharing in the public space of the Internet? Are the teenagers who share their life experience online adopting the adequate measures to protect their identity? And are these measures sufficient? When an accidentally selected person reads the public information published by a teenager on his/her blog or on a Facebook page, who is acting wrong, the curious reader or the unaware teenager? What can be the long-term consequences of the public sharing of personal data for a person?

Even though there are many criticisms, a lot of young people share personal information with ease and without specific measures on websites and social networks that are accessible to a wide public, such as LiveJournal or Facebook.

In addition to the problem of exposing sensitive personal data, identifying personal information for commercial uses also adds up. As a matter of fact, web marketing strategies are based on the possibility of knowing and drawing a precise profile of the user through the tracking of his/her actions and using the users as generators and promoters of advertising contents (Fielder et al., 2007; DCSF, 2009).

For a safe and aware use of the new media, in particular of the Internet, it is thus necessary to help people manage the electronically shared information in a selective and appropriate way.
Authorship and creativity

Instruments for online publishing and sharing are becoming increasingly easy to use. From blogs to wikis, from podcasting to YouTube, they have extended the user’s opportunities to create contents, even in cooperation with other people. The Web 2.0 promotes participation to activities of «co-creation» (Jenkins et al., 2006), thus allowing the passage from a passive use to a proactive production of multimedia contents like music, video, and audio (Floridi and Sanders, 2005). In this case, web users of the recent generation are called «prosumers», that is producers and consumers at the same time. On a conceptual level, the different working modality of the techno-communicative device is contributing to demystify concepts of intellectual authorship and creativity, thus soliciting the user to self-perceive him/herself as potential author-protagonist of a collective project of a wider relevance. New forms of copyright are rising (for example, the Creative Commons licenses), inspired to the principles of sharing and openness of the Open Source movement (Stallman, 2003; Himanen, 2001).

However, new problems are arising, too. The new digital media allows an easy online creation, manipulation, publishing, and sharing of contents (O’Reilly, 2005). Activities such as «cut and paste» are practiced everyday by thousands of teenagers, without any creative transformation. Besides, practices such as illegal file sharing and downloading bring about new issues, that cannot easily be solved unless careful educational actions are taken.

3. THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Overall, the toolkit is based on a learner-centred approach where students are seen as active constructors of their own conceptual understanding, and active meaning-makers interacting with the physical and social world. Inspired by theorists like Dewey, Piaget and Vygotsky, who mainly focused on how students learn, this approach allows students to actively participate in the learning process of the discovery in an autonomous way, though with the guide of the teacher whose work is compared to that of a facilitator.

Great emphasis is placed on involving students in a variety of hands-on activities, while providing them with varied tools, such as task- and learning-conscious methodologies, and encouraging distinctive learning styles. More specifically, in the design of the learning activities the following principles have been mainly followed:

Start from students’ pre-existing knowledge and experiences (Activation): as underlined by Merrill (2001, p. 6), «learning is facilitated when relevant previous experience is activated» which entails that learners should be encouraged «to recall, relate, describe,
or apply knowledge from relevant past experience that can be used as a foundation for the new knowledge.

- Provide students with multiple opportunities to work in a concrete way on the issues dealt with in the toolkit (Practice): learning is indeed improved when learners are engaged in practices that are consistent with the desired goals and in the use of their new knowledge or skill to solve problems (Merrill, 2001).
- Stimulate during and at the end of the activity metacognitive processes through student’s reflection on the activities carried out (Metacognition): since learning can be viewed as a personal growth, students must be also encouraged to use self-regulation and self-evaluation practices to reflect on their own work.

Coherently with this methodological framework, each unit in the toolkit is planned as below:

**Pre-work:** questioning, visual or narrative input, recalling personal experience;

**Work:** different types of activity such as inquiry, analysis, production, construction etc.

**Post-work:** final debriefing with discussion on the learning experience, comparison between initial and final views, ‘what if…’ reasoning

Reflection is also suggested to the teachers by stimulating them to document and analyse their teaching practices. Documenting the educational activities is indeed essential for professional growth and to improve educational practices. It is a starting point to think with detachment about one’s own experience and share with colleagues or experts the outcomes of the activities. In the toolkit a documentation form is provided that should be used by the teachers to monitor the teaching/learning process and to make a final evaluation. It is also suggested to enclose documents such as photos, videos, works from the students and any other type of document that shows what was accomplished during the activities.

**4. THE STRUCTURE**

The toolkit is structured into three main parts. It starts with an overview on the theoretical issues entailed in the analysis of the Internet risks and opportunities, by focusing on the following key concepts: participation, credibility, identity, privacy, authorship/creativity. This introductory section is accompanied by an explanation on how to use the toolkit and how to document the instructional activities.

The main corpus of the toolkit is made up of the five learning units (one per each key concept). Every unit includes an introductory section, where objectives and rationale
are explained, as well as the structure and the prerequisite of the unit; three structured activities, that teachers can choose to use in full or partially; and a section dedicated to assessment and self-evaluation.

As for the activities, they usually contain the following elements:

A) A description of the objectives;

B) A close examination – addressed to the teacher – about a key word/concept;

C) The instructions for the teacher;

D) A section “Materials”, including tools, grids, scenarios that can be directly used by students for the implementation of the activity.

Each unit ends with a section called “Learning on the game, learning through the game”, where a final activity based on the online game “Big Brain” is proposed. Unlike other activities, this one is designed to be directly played by the students, even if it is supported by a brief introduction for the teacher.

Considering the nature of the themes dealt with in the toolkit, the evaluation section mainly offers tools to stimulate self-evaluation from students, aiming at building an individual portfolio that contains both the students’ structured reflections and the teacher’s observations and feedback.

The last section of the toolkit includes a series of resources such as a glossary, a list of references and a sitography.

The guide is also accompanied by a DVD containing the five theatre plays realized by the four project partners of VSAV, based on a common theatre script. The shows, available in national language and subtitled in English, provide an additional cue for teachers, addressing the issue of new technology through the use of metaphors and innovative interpretations of classical tradition. It is recommended to watch the show with the students and consider it as a transversal activity within the five units proposed, to be followed up with additional educational activities freely chosen by the teacher, such as: “Circle time” with the teacher or in working groups; “Theme” to play in classroom or at home on a specific issue addressed; “Role Playing” inspired by one or more parts of the show.
1. INTRODUCTION

One important activity of the VSAV project included the testing of the Toolkit Digital and Media Literacy Education. Before starting the testing activity, a two-day training session was organised in Palermo in early September 2012 addressing the educators who were going to do the testing in the four partner countries. The actual testing took place from October through December 2012.

As agreed during the EU-level meeting of the VSAV team held in early September 2012:

- each partner, at local level, was to test at least two units;
- flexibility was allowed on how to implement the activities, although in case of major changes, these were to be communicated to Partner 1;
- flexibility was also allowed on the hours employed for each activity (the times indicated in toolkit were to be considered only an indication);
- at least two classes (or groups of young people) were to be involved;
- the age should be within the range 12–16 years old;
- no exact number of pupils/young people was fixed.

As known, a good documentation and evaluation of the activities carried out both in formal and informal educational contexts does constitute an essential element for
professional growth and the improvement of any educational process. Documenting and evaluating whatever is being done gives a basis to think with detachment about one’s own experience and share the outcomes achieved with colleagues or experts. Following this general principle, the VSAV team made arrangements with the educators/teachers in order to test the activities included in the toolkit and collect through them all the material (grids, forms, videos, photos, observation notes, etc.) necessary for writing their national testing reports which were then synthesised and reworked here by the University of Palermo.

Three tools were specifically designed for documenting, assessing and evaluating the teaching and learning processes activated during the testing: the first one was to be used by the educators, the second one by the students, the third one by the local leaders.

**A) THE UNIT DOCUMENTATION FORM** – At the end of the activities, educators testing the toolkit units were asked to fill in a documentation form for collecting all important information about what had been done during the testing (see Fig. 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOCUMENTATION FORM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NAME OF THE TEACHER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAME OF THE SCHOOL AND OF THE COUNTRY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE AND TIME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUDENTS’ AGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUMBER OF STUDENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEACHING/LEARNING ACTIVITIES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNING SITUATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUDENTS’ PARTICIPATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAIN CRITICAL POINTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERALL JUDGMENT AND “LESSON LEARNED”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEACHER’S SUGGESTIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER (IF NECESSARY)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTACHMENTS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 – The Unit documentation form
**B) THE SELF-ASSESSMENT GRIDS** – At the end of each activity, students were required to fill in self-assessment grids through which the educators could evaluate (together with other kinds of tools such as participant observation notes, in-class discussions, group and individual work, etc.) whether the objective of the activity had been achieved or not. For an example of these grids see Fig. 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATOR</th>
<th>ANSWERS</th>
<th>TEACHER’S COMMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility and participation (with regard to your individual performance)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I use credible or verified sources?</td>
<td>A) Yes, for example… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B) No, because… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I quote appropriately the sources?</td>
<td>A) Yes, for example… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B) No, because… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did I actively take part in the group’s work?</td>
<td>A) Yes, for example… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B) No, because… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and organization (with regard to the group’s performance)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did we set, share and respect the communication rules?</td>
<td>A) Yes, for example… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B) No, because… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did we set and respect the roles?</td>
<td>A) Yes, for example… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B) No, because… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did we set and respect the schedule?</td>
<td>A) Yes, for example… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B) No, because… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did we set and respect the deadlines?</td>
<td>A) Yes, for example… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B) No, because… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language, writing and genres (with regard to your individual performance)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the text clear and coherent?</td>
<td>A) Yes, for example… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B) No, because… (fill in))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the text written according to the rules of journalistic style?</td>
<td>A) Yes, for example… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B) No, because… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can the text be improved?</td>
<td>A) Yes, for example… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B) No, because… (fill in)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2 – Example of the self-assessment grid (taken from Unit 1, Participation)

**C) THE TESTING PHASE REPORT FORM** – As it has been previously mentioned, at the end of the activities local leaders were requested to collect all material produced during the testing and write a report to hand in to Partner 1. Periodical meetings and interviews with the educators/teachers during their testing activities were also strongly suggested as a way to get additional information to be included in the report. In order to help local leaders produce their report, we provided them with a form offering some guidelines so that the information received could be standardised and made comparable (see Fig. 3).
WP6 TESTING PHASE REPORT FORM

These guidelines are intended to assist the VSAV project partners in the production of the report about the work carried out during the testing phase of the toolkit. The report should be structured in five parts as explained below (about 15/20 pages, appendix not included) and sent by the 30th November 2012.

“TITLE OF THE TOOLKIT UNIT THAT HAS BEEN TESTED”

AUTHOR

PARTNER

DATE

ABSTRACT
(The text of the abstract should be a maximum of 300 words and written in italics, using Arial 10-point. Text is justified. Leave two blank lines after the abstract, then begin the main text)

PART I – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
Please, explain and clarify your choice of working on certain subjects contained in the toolkit rather than others.

PART II – SETTING, CONTEXT AND OBSERVATION PROCEDURES
Please, describe in this section:
☐ Number of students/young people involved
☐ Number of teachers/educators involved
☐ Date of the period and number of hours
☐ Location and equipment
☐ Synthesis of the activities carried out
☐ Synthesis of observation procedures
☐ Any other information helpful to understand the context

PART III – PROCESS ANALYSIS
Please, synthesise teachers'/educators' notes and forms considering the following main questions:
☐ What were the main issues teachers/educators had to face? How did teachers/educators manage them?
☐ What have been the most significant learning situations? Why? Could you describe them or show an example?
☐ How was the participation level of students/young people in the learning activities?
☐ What was the level of interest shown by students/young people towards media?
☐ What was the teacher's/educator's overall feeling about the experience?
☐ Teachers'/educators' suggestions to improve the activity
☐ Any other information helpful to understand the process

PART IV – LEARNING OUTCOMES
Please, synthesise here emerging results from students'/young people's work and perceptions taking into account the different level of evaluation and comparing pre and post-test results. In this section, the main questions to be answered are:
☐ Were students/young people satisfied of the learning experience?
☐ What results did they get in terms of learning?
☐ How were students'/young people's productions?
☐ Were there differences between pre and post-tests?
☐ Any other information helpful to understand learning outcomes

PART V – ANY MODIFICATIONS OPERATED TO THE UNITS DURING THE TESTING PERIOD
2. ANALYSIS

As mentioned, after the two-day training session held in Palermo in early September 2012, educators and teachers from the four partner countries started their testing one month later and finished in December (or earlier). In general, we can say that all requirements for the testing were accomplished, providing us with detailed information about the teaching and learning processes activated during the experimentation phase as well as about the outcomes reached. A wide variety of methods and media productions were implemented during the activities: individual and group work, reflection and critical discussions, oral and written presentations, testing the online game “The Big Brain”, role-playing and simulation, case studies, questionnaires, etc. A synthetic presentation of the testing in each partner country follows.

AUSTRIA

In Austria the testing was carried out by involving groups of students from secondary and vocational schools aged 13 to 17. The groups involved up to 25 students. The units were tested with the contribution of an educator/media expert and teachers from the school. Despite some difficulties in arranging appointments with the schools, this collaboration does prove to be an interesting solution showing the positive outcomes achievable whenever schools open themselves and cooperate with educators and experts coming from outside. If this collaboration is systematically supported and institutionalised, it is reasonable to think that the kind of organizational difficulties mentioned by the Austrian educators could be progressively overcome, as also empirical evidence in literature shows. Although Austrian youth – as all youth in general – are quite familiar with digital media and the Internet, they did find some activities quite challenging as they brought them to new uses and ideas about media technologies.

Two units were tested: Unit 1 Participation and Unit 5 Authorship and Creativity.

Unit 1 aims at improving the students’ capacity to participate in a constructive and conscious way to online communities and virtual networks. The diffusion of new media and web 2.0 tools and platforms gives new opportunities of civic and social participation (e-engagement, e-inclusion, etc.), that require adequate communicative and socio-relational skills (a netiquette): how do you act in these communities? What rules are to be followed? What responsibilities are to be taken? At the same time, the majority of the world population is still excluded from these opportunities, therefore, another aim is that of promoting students’ awareness with regards to the digital divide problem and its multifaceted consequences. Discussions and activities focusing on the issue of the digital divide were very animated and interactive showing the students’ interest in working on
and thinking about something «they usually never think of», as they put it². The most significant learning situation was the creation of the wiki journal: students found it quite challenging and relevant to write documents that were meant to become public³, showing they had started to think about the fact that the Internet can also be used for civic participation and for expressing their own opinion in the digital “public sphere”. The teachers too were very interested in the possibilities offered by a wiki production since they were able to bring their students to think about the importance of checking and quoting properly their sources of information. The students also learned the importance of following certain rules when using the media.

Unit 5 aims at promoting the students’ capacity to properly and creatively use online multimedia content, rather than simply “copying and pasting” it, respecting its copyright. It also aims at developing their knowledge about concepts such as copyright and copyleft and their capacity to understand and take advantage of Creative Commons licences.

No particular changes in the activities and tools included in the toolkit were made, except for the fact that the filling of some of the grids suggested were replaced by in-class discussions between the students and the teachers/educators, both before and after the activities.

**GERMANY**

In Germany the testing was done by two media experts with students from two different schools, as well as with some of the young people attending a youth education centre. Up to 58 young people were involved between 11 and 14 years old. One teacher collaborated too. Although the toolkit is more easily applicable in formal educational contexts, the German partner gave us the opportunity to verify its validity in a more informal educational context. Undoubtedly, the typical informality of this kind of contexts makes it more challenging to involve youth in the structured and quite articulated activities proposed in the toolkit. But that is the whole point of it, so to speak. Because of the familiarity, user-friendliness and intuitiveness with which young people approach the media, it seems even more appropriate to help them develop a more self-reflexive, evaluative and detached attitude towards their daily media practices, more particularly so in informal education contexts where documentation, assessment and evaluation are not so frequently and systematically done, as literature shows.

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² - The activities required students to create a timeline about the development of ICTs from the ’70s on. In particular, they were asked to highlight and compare the most important innovations at global and national level. They also needed to compare the development and diffusion of ICTs in their own countries and in another country chosen amongst the so-called “developing nations”.

³ - The activities required students to produce a wiki journal as an example of “participatory journalism”, a way to increase citizens’ participation in the civic and social life of their own community by using the new emerging forms of e-engagement in the 2.0 social media.
Three Units were tested: Unit 3 Identity, Unit 4 Privacy and Unit 5 Authorship and Creativity. In addition to the activities included in the toolkit, the teachers and media experts carried out some other complementary activities which enriched the experience as a whole.

Given the young age of the students and youth involved (11-14), some of the concepts and activities proved a bit difficult to grasp, but the educators made a good job in adapting some of the exercises so that the students’ motivation and interest could increase. Also some of the written work was replaced by open discussions. Unit 4 about Privacy proved particularly challenging and involving, especially the activity about the collective writing of a Glossary of terms relating to privacy. The Unit aims at increasing the students’ capacity to manage their personal online information so as to protect their safety, being able to evaluate the risks and the opportunities to give it out. It also aims at making students aware about other people’s privacy and the need to respect it. German testers rightly pointed out the fact that it is necessary to involve teachers that already have a sound background in the use of digital media in the classroom. An alternative may be that of having activities carried out by media educators who are not part of the curricular teaching personnel. In some cases, this may even be a priority, like when dealing with highly sensitive problems like cyber mobbing or sexual harassment: students may feel more comfortable to think about and work on this kind of issues with someone different from their usual teacher. Testers also pointed out something that was repeatedly specified during the training session in Palermo: the toolkit is just a guide, adaptations and implementations are to be done in order to increase its methodological cogency and educational validity. Finally, they underlined the importance to take into due account the equipment and the facilities available as well as all sorts of logistic details so that activities may be well planned and carried out.

**ROMANIA**

In Romania the testing was performed by 4 teachers with the collaboration of the two educators who attended the training in Palermo. It involved 98 students, their ages ranging from 12 to 14 years old. As pointed out by other educators, the testing proved to be quite challenging for both teachers and students. Although children may be considered “little media experts” of their own – digital natives – when it comes to issues such as Internet safety, privacy and copyright, they seldom have the capacity and knowledge to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by new media technologies and at the same time to be aware and responsible about their risks and dangers. Therefore, the toolkit, as well as all other activities of the VSAV project (namely, the online game and the theatre) were highly appreciated. An added value of the Romanian testing is given by the fact that

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4 - In particular, some of the evaluation forms were replaced by discussions inspired by the questions included in the forms themselves.
parents were involved in some of the activities.

All units were tested in their entirety. In addition to the activities carried out in the classroom, students were also required to do some work at home, also due to the fact that the computer lab was not so easily and frequently available\(^5\). During the activity about the digital divide (Unit 1), an interesting moment occurred when some students were required to present a brief history of their families’ electronic equipment. Some of them were reluctant to talk about it as they felt it was not so impressive as their classmates’. Indeed, a perfect occasion to make them reflect about their own personal experience of digital divides and how they can in fact be much closer than it is usually thought of. Students also made a very interesting comment about digital divides by saying that they may turn out to be even an opportunity: introducing the latest technology may be easier and require less investment in less developed countries as opposed to replacing old technologies in more developed ones\(^6\). Another challenging activity was the creation of a wiki journal, especially because most of the Romanian students were not so familiar with wiki-based platforms and also because they could experience collaborative work as an editorial team (assigning roles and tasks, defining a layout, meeting the deadlines together, finding and checking information sources, etc.). The “Sharing a netiquette” activity (Unit 1) gave Romanian students the possibility to think about the importance of setting and following certain rules for good and respectful online communication.

Students also played the online game “The Big Brain”, both in the classroom and at home. Although they did not consider the game to be particularly entertaining and interactive (as in fact all the youth did across the partner countries), they did find it quite challenging because it required them to go through some quizzes at the end of the activities. Indeed, in our opinion, this is a proof of the pedagogical validity of the online game considering that these quizzes may trigger very good in-class discussions\(^7\). As one of the students stated, “The Big Brain is not very cool, but I learned a lot by answering the questions. In addition, I enjoyed playing with all my classmates at the same time” (F., 13),

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5 - For example, students were required to work on their presentations, watch a movie like Avatar or access and play the online game.

6 - This was somehow confirmed by the evidence coming from the survey we carried out at the very beginning of the project: Romanian children more frequently use the latest digital devices rather than “old” media such as television or radio.

7 - The issue discussed may be cyber-bullying. For example, after playing and earning score in the location School, the player is required to answer the following question: You see the school’s blog: it is filled with public heavy insults against your friends. What do you do? A) call the police and accuse them of libel, B) Contact immediately the Forum Administrator to ask for the exclusion of participants with wrong behavior, C) Write in the Forum, to reply the insults, insulting too: this is what they deserve! The choice of every option is followed by a message pointing out how appropriate and correct the answer was and whether the score earned increases or decreases because of it. So, for option A the message says: “It’s a good choice because only the authorities are able to find, block and penalize them. If you feel bad because of some hurting behaviours, remember that you could denounce and stop the author”. For option B it says: “It is a good solution because the bullies are out of the forum but they could always reply it in other ways. If you feel bad because of some behaviors, remember that you could denounce and stop the author”. Finally, for option C it says: “The problem is not solved because the bullies are enjoying your responses and you can be accused of becoming a bully too. If you feel bad because of some behaviours, remember that you could denounce and stop the author”.
or another, «I have learned a lot both from what I had done and from what my classmates had to say» (M., 13).

Some very interesting suggestions also came from the Romanian team: working with no more than 15 students at a time; adapting activities and methods to the specific working context; encouraging students to work apart from school hours; involving parents; empowering participants to pass on what they have learned to their schoolmates, siblings and friends. One suggestion is particularly relevant, in our opinion, that is to implement the activities with the same group for several years consecutively. Since media literacy activities are often occasional and are the result of the enthusiasm of a single teacher rather than of a rigorous planning and interdisciplinary work, to implement them with continuity will give them coherence and stability, also allowing a better evaluation of their actual pedagogical impact across the years.

ITALY

In Italy the testing was carried out by two teachers with students from 14 to 16 years old. Two units were tested: Unit 1 Participation and Unit 4 Privacy. Despite the difficulties encountered to complete the activities because of a long period of strikes and school occupation made by the students, both teachers report very good outcomes in terms of students’ motivation, participation and interest in carrying out the activities, and also with regards to the competences acquired. They also point out the fact that the activities allowed them to accomplish the requirements suggested by the EU “Lisbon Strategy” with regards to the key-competences necessary for living in the “knowledge society”. Indeed, activities seemed to them like a good starting point for the development of a more responsible, critical and creative “digital habitus”. Discussions and group work were important for developing relational and communicative competences. Dealing with privacy issues in particular (Unit 4) was a good way to reflect critically about the “opacity” of media and the risks of giving out sensitive personal data. Criticalities emerged occasionally, especially at the very start of the testing, with regards to the technological hardware and software and with the timing of the activities (more hours than expected were needed to carry out all activities). Unit 1 was particularly valuable for the interdisciplinary connections that were made through the activities (History, Geography, Civic Education, etc.). As with the testing in Romania, part of the activities were also carried out as homework. While working on Unit 1, some changes were made, like when the students suggested to use another free web-based software for creating the timeline: Dipity seemed to them easier to use for uploading multimedia files rather than Whenintime, suggested in the toolkit. This episode, as well as the whole activity, was a good occasion for improving their discussion and negotiation skills, but also their capacity to look for online information, and then select and organise it according to a clear plan. They also developed a better understanding of
the “digital divide” concept and the awareness of belonging to a privileged class of people who has an easy access to digital media, both in and outside of school. Interestingly, when at the end of the activities they were asked to think about an alternative life without digital media, they all agreed that in fact “there is no alternative”: a proof of how aware they are that digital media are a fundamental part of their existence. The activity about “Sharing a netiquette” was also quite interesting. In this case too, a significant episode occurred that shows how involving the activities were for the students. At one point the teacher needed to enter the students’ Facebook group. She then discovered, much to her surprise, that they had been discussing – totally unrequested and during non-school hours – the same topics they had worked on in class (pros and cons of online vs. offline communication, the need for a netiquette, the concepts of lurking, spamming, flaming etc.). Indeed, the best demonstration of how interested and competent the students had become through the media literacy education activities.

The final activity – the production of a wiki journal – offered an added totally unpredicted value: it was entirely developed online. Due to some health problems of the teachers, students were requested to interact with one of the teachers via Internet (videoconferencing, e-mails, discussions on Facebook). The use of a free web-based space like Dropbox allowed the class to share and work collectively on the documents. Despite some initial difficulties, students soon learnt how to manage the different roles and tasks assigned, to meet the deadlines, to write collectively the articles to be published on the journal, etc. The teacher simply played the role, as often is the case with media literacy education activities, of a facilitator: she crucially set the scene, orchestrating the framework, so to speak, but then it was the students’ responsibility to actually carry out the activities in the best possible manner according to the planning.

3. CONCLUSION

Two basic inspiring principles guided the VSAV team in both producing and testing the toolkit.

The first was the idea that, in order to include media literacy education in educational contexts (namely schools), as it is widely requested also by EU institutions\(^8\), we need to redefine the ways in which media are usually used. Indeed, it is not a question of simply teaching technical skills (how to use a word processor, make a video, send an e-mail,

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create a webpage or navigate the web) but also of more general cultural-critical-creative competences so that students can grasp the social implications and functions of the media, and interact with them in the most self-reflexive and responsible way. In other words, it is not simply a question of educating with the media (media as teaching aids), but also to the media (media as an object of critical study and creative use). If we do not adopt this broader perspective, we run the risk of promoting a merely instrumental vision that does not require teachers nor students to build a thicker knowledge of the media and the complex relationships people (especially youth) establish with them in their everyday life.

The second one was the idea that media literacy education activities (defined in the terms stated above) should be as much as possible systematically integrated in the usual curriculum (or any other kind of educational planning), either as a single discipline or as a transversal approach to be developed across the curriculum. Either way, they need to be institutionalised, so to speak, so that mid- and long-term outcomes are possible. How to assess and evaluate with rigorous indicators and procedures these kinds of activities and the actual impact they have on students still remains an open field which needs further and deeper research-action.

One final remark, a very important finding of our testing, a finding which confirms a critical element, already well known in literature is that, when it comes to informal education contexts, different and more specifically designed resources, tools, indicators, activities and procedures need to be developed. Our toolkit may still be employed here, but with a good amount of adaptation from educators and social workers. In fact also within schools, the toolkit needs adaptation. As for all textbooks and resources, teachers do know they always have to work considering their specific working context (in terms of students’ needs and possibilities, infrastructural facilities, institutional support from principals and colleagues, etc.). Having this clear in mind, we do believe that our toolkit is a very valuable resource, as all the educators we have met, both during the testing and more in general during the dissemination of it, referred to it as a rigorous and well-designed “textbook” on media literacy education that definitely enriches the field, especially in non-English speaking countries.
Chapter 6

THE DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES

1. COMMON DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES

The dissemination activities were articulated in two modalities:

1. Centralised, with material designed directly by the applicant centre.
2. Localised, with initiatives realised by the partner countries for each activity or the whole project.
3. Each activity was publicised through various channels, both at the time of the start up, during its realisation and in the follow up.

The project made visible all outputs (in both hard copy and digital format) including the research, the online game, the theatre representation and the toolkit for the educators.

The promotion phase of the whole project was the first of the dissemination initiatives. The project was presented on several occasions in the four countries. For each of the presentations, the promotional material was produced (available in the overall documentation of the project) and aimed at achieving specific current targets and potential people interested in the project, in the media education, in the education of adolescents in various institutions, in politics for the regulation and utilisation of new communication technologies. The results of the second phase, the research phase, were disseminated both through activities promoted on recommendation of the applicant centre, and at the local level in the different countries. A very intensive dissemination phase involved the dissemination of the online game “The Big Brain” and the theatre performance in the different countries, carried out both through some face-to-face meetings (mostly in the case of the first one), and through press releases, brochures, posters, fliers, etc..
With regard to the press releases, in particular, a pervasive strategy using both online and offline newspapers was adopted, as well as websites and portals promoting cultural activities in general. Finally, with regards to the Toolkit, the dissemination was carried out first of all through face-to-face meetings organised both in contexts of formal education like school and university, and in contexts of non-formal education like youth clubs and cultural associations. An important dissemination moment was the international final project meeting. One of the planned interventions gave the attending educators the possibility to have a general introduction to the toolkit, as well as a free copy of the toolkit itself. Face-to-face meetings were accompanied by an intensive dissemination activity through the Web on portals, social networks, blogs, etc.

**SOME GENERAL DATA ABOUT DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES AT THE EU LEVEL FOLLOW:**

- 400 youths, 800 parents and 200 teachers involved in the initial survey;
- 5 theatre plays scripted and staged (one per partner country, except for the German partner that developed two of them);
- 28 replicas of the theatre plays;
- almost 3000 people enjoyed the theatre plays;
- almost 1600 youths played the online game;
- hundreds of leaflets, posters, fliers, stickers, etc. were distributed on several kinds of meetings;
- 800 copies of the toolkit distributed to teachers, social workers and media education experts.

**IN PARTICULAR, WITH REGARD TO THE ONLINE COMMUNICATION, WE DECIDED TO CARRY OUT:**

- A differentiated presence on YouTube, both through the creation of a dedicated channel ([http://www.youtube.com/user/virtualstageseu](http://www.youtube.com/user/virtualstageseu)), and through the inclusion of some videos on the applicant’s YouTube channel [http://www.youtube.com/user/cesieofficial](http://www.youtube.com/user/cesieofficial);
- A Facebook group [https://www.facebook.com/VirtualStages](https://www.facebook.com/VirtualStages).

**The project website**

The website content was entirely made available in four languages: Italian, German, Romanian and English. From the homepage it is possible to access four main areas: the Project, the Research, the Online Game, the Theatre and the Toolkit (see Fig. 1). On the homepage, we published a list of links that, in addition to the abovementioned 5 areas, give access to other relevant contents. In order:
1. A brief description of the project **PARTNERS**

2. A **PHOTOGALLERY**

3. A **DOWNLOAD** section where it is possible to download the final report, the survey results and the toolkit.

4. A **VIDEO** section where it is possible to download the full version of the 5 theatre representations produced in the partner countries. Each version is in the original language subtitled in English. From this section, one can also download tutorial videos from the training course about the toolkit that took place in Palermo, at the beginning of September 2012 (http://virtualstages.eu/tutorial/);

5. A list of **LINKS** to websites related to the themes of the VSAV course, of which a brief description of the main contents is also provided. These links are in turn divided between INTERNATIONAL sites (in English) and sites suggested by local partners (in the national languages: German, Romanian, Italian)

6. the **CONTACTS** link lists the partners and the related contact persons.

From the homepage one can also access:

7. the project **Facebook** group;

8. the VSAV videos on **YouTube**;

9. the **EU-Programme Daphne**;

10. the prestigious **Comenius EduMedia Seal for ICT**-based education awarded for the year 2012 to the Austrian online game developer Webducation (www.webeducation.info/web/) who produced, together with the project team, the VSAV online game “The Big Brain”9.

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9 - The Comenius-EduMedia Award has been awarded every year since 1995 by the GesellschaftfürPädagogik und Information e.V., Berlin, Deutschland (Association for Pedagogy and Information e.V., Berlin, Germany) to publishing houses, authors and educational institutions in Europe and worldwide. The Association for Pedagogy and Information e.V. awards are the most important German and European awards for exemplary ICT-based education.
The YouTube Channel

A YouTube channel was developed where a series of videos produced in the framework of the project have been uploaded (see Fig. 2), such as:

11. the trailer of the VSAV online educational game “Big Brain”;
12. the trailers and the “making of” of the theatre plays staged in the partner countries;
13. the special event organised in Bucharest for promoting the VSAV online educational game “Big Brain” on the occasion of Safer Internet Day 2012;
14. the short film produced by the European Commission to raise awareness on cyberbullying on the occasion of the Safer Internet Day 2009.

Some of these videos were also uploaded on CESIE YouTube Channel.

The Facebook Group

As a further dissemination activity regarding online communication, a Facebook group was created (see Fig. 3).
2. Local Dissemination Activities

As far as the single partner countries are concerned, we present here a short synthesis of their local dissemination activities.

**AUSTRIA**

Distribution of information – Information about the various project activities was given to Austrian school principals, teachers and students, youth centres and educational institutions as a whole through both formal and informal means such as presentations, talks, phone conversations, meetings, etc.

Project presentations, dissemination of the online game, the theatre performance and the toolkit – Different presentations of the project were organised, such as a presentation in June 2011 to managers and VET trainers at die Berater Organization (20 persons involved), and a presentation between March and May 2011 and in March 2012 to schools, teachers, school institutions, ministries and MAKAM Research Institute in Vienna. Articles and postings (websites, blogs, newspapers, journals, books etc.) were used to give information about the project using channels, such as:

1. the company website in both German and English, making it accessible to all users ([http://www.dieberater.com/consulting/fit-fuer-europa/laufende-projekte/#c791](http://www.dieberater.com/consulting/fit-fuer-europa/laufende-projekte/#c791) and [http://www.dieberater.eu/international/ongoing-projects/](http://www.dieberater.eu/international/ongoing-projects/));
2. EU-Infothek ([http://www.eu-infothek.com](http://www.eu-infothek.com)) addressing stakeholders, educational organisations, youth centres, school institutions;
3. **VSAV Project-EU blog**([http://www.eublog.dieberater.com](http://www.eublog.dieberater.com)), addressing stakeholders, educational organisations, youth centres, school institutions;

The online game was presented by developer Johannes Schneider at the International Fair Learn Tech 2012 in Germany to stakeholders, educational organisations, youth centres, school institutions. It was also presented by die Berater on several occasions. As for the dissemination of the theatre performance, an information letter was sent to approximately 500 schools, stakeholders and wider public. The toolkit, as well as the entire VSAV project, was disseminated by educator Margareth Larcher-Stamberger to school teachers and students.
GERMANY

Distribution of information– Information about the various project activities was given on several occasions such as an internal project meeting addressing administrative staff and educators, a project workshop with adult education centres addressing ten educators and managers, meetings involving the theatre pedagogue, manager of theatre houses/manager of music school, etc.

Project presentations, dissemination of the online game, the theatre performance and the toolkit – Different presentations of the project were organised such as a pedagogical workshop involving 10 educators/managers. As for the online game, it was presented on TVV website addressing the wider public. It was also presented to several groups of teachers. The two plays produced in Germany (Hypertroja Wonderland and Troy) were disseminated through posters, postcards, an advertisement by a banner on the TVV website, by the creation of a Facebook event, by invitation letters addressed to schools and education institutions, press releases, audio press release, website articles, etc. As for the toolkit, it was disseminated through several training events, such as the TVV Annual Trainers Day 2013 and meetings with schools and youth centres. Other training events are planned to occur by the end of 2013. Like other partner countries, Germany too disseminated the toolkit by posting a news on TVV website and Facebook profile.

ROMANIA

Distribution of information – Information about the various project activities was given during the Safer Internet International Forum addressing teachers, children, teenagers, parents, EU authorities, EU partners included in Safer Internet Programs of 80 EU private and public institutions.

Project presentations, dissemination of the online game, the theatre performance and the toolkit– Different presentations of the project and its activities were organised, such as during the Safer Internet Day 2012 addressing children, teenagers, parents, etc. At the event, live demonstration of the online game “the Big Brain” was given. On the occasion, it was also created a workshop area where children could play the game within a contest. An official launch of the theatre performance (Decoded) was made, addressing children, teenagers, teachers and local authorities. The toolkit was presented to students, teachers, school principals, educators, volunteers. The abovementioned activities were also carried out during the Children’s National Forum (involving 10 national representatives from the public government and 12 schools with the aim of talking about the importance of Internet safety education in schools) as well as during the Safer Internet Summer School (involving Safer Internet Volunteers).
Distribution of information – Information about the various project activities was given on several occasions such as internal project meetings addressing administrative staff at CESIE or faculty meetings at the University of Palermo. Information was also distributed during formal and informal meetings with students, children, educators and teachers in both formal and informal educational contexts. The theatre performances and the toolkit presentations were also regarded as occasions to distribute information material about the project and its activities.

Project presentations, dissemination of the online game, the theatre performance and the toolkit – Presentations of the project were organised on several occasions. Making contacts with schools to administer the survey, at the very beginning of the project, was the first occasion for presenting the project to principals, teachers and students (around 200 people). The project was also presented at the University of Palermo during a seminar with students in March 2012. The Head of the Department “Gaetano Mosca” as well as the Head of the Faculty of Education attended. During the seminar, information material was distributed and the upcoming theatre performance was also announced thanks to the presence of the actors who also acted out a few scenes from the play. A number of press releases and articles announced and commented the play Users. The online game was presented in several educational contexts. In one youth club, in particular, the playwrights involved teenagers in a theatrical activity in order to draw inspiration for their writing of the play. The project, and in particular the toolkit, was presented at the Summer School 2012 of MED (the Italian Association for Media Education) and in several schools. Presentations usually took the form of a training so that teachers could be able to experiment the toolkit with their students. A training session was also organised with educators and social workers from several youth clubs and cultural associations. The toolkit was also posted in a number of websites, Facebook groups and profiles, blogs. A review of it was published on the November 2012 issue of the scientific Journal Media Education- Studi, Ricerche, Buone Pratiche (published by Erickson, Italy). Thanks to an agreement between the University of Palermo and the Ministry of Education for the Sicilian Region, the toolkit will be further experimented by some Sicilian schools during the next school year (2013-2014).
EUROPE AND THE NEW MEDIA CHALLENGE – EU POLICIES FOCUSED ON NEW MEDIA AND MINORS

The “Eurokids Online Study” as well as our VSAV research\(^\text{10}\) shows that the Internet is embedded in the daily life of children and young adults in the whole European Union. According to the Eurokids Study, 49% of the 9 to 16 year-old users in Europe have their own computer at home. Furthermore, 60% use the Internet almost every day. But the computer is not the only device in use. The survey points out that mobile access is growing too. It comes to us as no surprise that today you can get online from almost everywhere at any time.

It would be wrong to assume that the so-called “net-generation” is made up of new media know-it-alls or experts. While “technology offers today’s ‘net-generation’ new opportunities for learning, creating and participating (...) it also brings challenges regarding privacy, Internet safety and media literacy.”\(^\text{11}\) Cyber mobbing, fake profiles, computer viruses, fake news as well as copyright issues or Internet addiction are only some of the risks that minors as well as adults are confronted with in their daily life.

There is no denying it - new media and technologies have a huge impact on our social and professional life. Digital and media literacy are the keywords. Both are needed to keep up with the constant changes and new developments in the new media and technology sector. The competences digital and media literacy encompasses are substantial to a)

\(^{10}\) cf. Chapter 2
\(^{11}\) An EU Strategy for Youth, page 6
protect oneself and others from harm, b) an active part of civic society as well as c) to be on a competitive basis on the European labour market. The European Union has realised the significant influence that new media has on an individual, as well as at a national and European-wide level. Therefore, the EU has launched several programmes to upscale the media and digital competences of its citizens, as well as to protect minors.

The following pages will therefore give a brief overview about EU programmes and certain related projects. This overview is not necessarily exhaustive. We will start by making a brief introduction to clarify the difference between the two major keywords: digital and media literacy.

1. DIGITAL AND MEDIA LITERACY – TWO CONCEPTS IMPORTANT FOR THE EU

Throughout the last decade the European Commission (EC) has been promoting digital and media literacy. Both concepts are quite complex and connected with each other. Also, there are different views about how both concepts are linked. On the one hand, institutions like the European Commission advise to include digital literacy in the concept of media literacy, while on the other hand media literacy is seen to fall under the digital literacy umbrella.

The following is a brief display of the definition of digital and media literacy as it is understood by the European Commission. Such definitions are important for the numerous EU policies and actions:

Within the recommendation on Key Competences for lifelong learning, the so-called “Lisbon Strategy”, Digital literacy has been named as one of the essential competences that every European should have to prosper in a knowledge-based society and economy. According to this Strategy, digital literacy includes the skills needed to achieve digital competences. Accordingly digital competences are recognised as “(...) the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology (IST) for work, leisure and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet.”

According to the European Commission, “Media literacy may be generally defined as the ability to access the media, to understand and to critically evaluate different aspects of the media and media contents and to create communications in a variety of

12 - José Manuel Pérez-Tornero et al., 2010, page 3
13 - cf. media smarts, Canada www.mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy-fundamentals/digital-literacy-fundamentals
14 - 2006/962/EC
contexts. It relates to all media, including television, cinema, video, websites, print media, radio, video games and virtual communities. Furthermore, it relates to all informational and creative contents, i.e. all the various texts, images, sounds and messages that we are being confronted with daily and which are an important part of contemporary culture.”

As mentioned above, the EC advised to include digital literacy in the concept of media literacy as media literacy is not achievable without a basic knowledge of ICT.

2. MEDIA LITERACY RELATED POLICIES AND ACTIONS BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The Recommendation on the protection of minors and human dignity from 2006 stressed “the need to promote media education and media literacy, as the only guarantee of real protection from the challenges of new technologies.” Based on this, the need for teacher trainings concerning media literacy and the inclusion of new media in the classroom is deemed necessary. The protection of children, as well as the promotion of responsible attitudes from all users, was the main aim.

The Recommendation by the European Commission on key competences in lifelong learning and throughout life focuses on media and digital competences. Within this recommendation, the following three skills have been identified as key skills that should be learned: a) digital competence (safe and critical use of technology), b) civic and social competence (tools needed to participate actively and democratically in society), and c) cultural awareness and creative competence (as tool for assessing the creative expression of ideas and emotions in the media).

Also in 2006, the Council of Europe (CE) developed the Recommendation on empowering children in the new environment of information and communications. Its aim was to provide sufficient tools for children and educators in order to use the services and new ICT in the best way possible. Thus the recommendation asked member states to help children acquaint with the new environment of ICT and to provide children with the necessary tools to be able to “create, produce and distribute content and communications.”

Parallel to all the above mentioned recommendations, the EC set up an Expert Group on Media Literacy (EU Media Literacy Expert Group). This group was in charge of analysing and defining the objectives and trends of media literacy, of highlighting and

15 - www.ec.europa.eu/avpolicy/info_centre/a_z/index_en.htm#m
17 - 2006/962/EC
18 - Recommendation on Empowering Children in the New Information and Communications Environment
19 - Recommendation on Empowering Children in the New Information and Communications Environment
promoting good practices at the European level, as well as of proposing actions to follow in promoting media literacy.

It is clear that the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of Europe and other organisations (Europe- and Worldwide) are concerned with and have included in their agendas issues such as quality and safety of usage, awareness of the protection and promotion of the personal rights and dignity in the technological environment of minors, digital as well media literacy. Several programmes to raise awareness, to promote digital and media skills, as well as to carry out research or to develop material for teachers and parents for educational purposes, have been launched in the last years.

Being examples of European programmes and action plans, the “Digital Agenda for Europe” (with its “Safer Internet programme”) and the action program “Children and Violence” will be briefly described below:

**a) European Commission: Digital Agenda for Europe and the Safer Internet Programme**

One of the seven flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy is the so-called “Digital Agenda for Europe”. The objective of this Agenda can be summed up as follows: “to chart a course to maximise the social and economic potential of ICT (...)” 21. It focuses on the Internet, as the primal medium of activities in social life and the economic sector. A successful realisation of the Agenda will stimulate “innovation, economic growth and improvements in daily life”22 for citizens as well as for the economic sector.

A part of the Digital Agenda for Europe is the Safer Internet program (SIP). This programme was created by the European Commission. The aim of SIP is to “promote safe, responsible use of the Internet by children and young people, and protecting them from illegal and harmful content and conduct online.”23 SIP includes several key actions for children online. SIP’s overall aim “is to promote safer use of the Internet and other communication technologies, to educate users – particularly children, parents and carers – (...) and to fight against illegal content and harmful conduct online” (Safer Internet Work Programme 2012). The Safer Internet programme has been running from 2009 and will last until 2013; it is budgeted with €55 millions. Its action lines are listed below:

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20 - Recommendation on Empowering Children in the New Information and Communications Environment  
21 - COM 2010 245 final  
22 - COM 2010 245 final  
23 - www.saferinternet.org
Action line 1

**Ensuring public awareness**

Action line 2

**Fighting against illegal content and tackling harmful conduct online**

Action line 3

**Promoting a safer online environment**

Action line 4

**Establishing a knowledge base**

The SIP is managed by the Directorate General for Information, Society and Media.24 One project funded by the SIP is the Safer Internet Day (see 8.3).

**b) Council of Europe – Action Programme Children and Violence**

The transversal programme “Building a Europe for and with children” was launched by the Council of Europe in 2006.25 Through the programme, the Council of Europe addresses children’s rights through the combination of tools, like monitoring, policy development, co-operation and assistance programmes, as well as education, training and communication. “Children and violence” is an action programme under the framework of “Building a Europe for and with children”. It is based upon four pillars: prevention, prosecution, protection and participation. The action programme understands itself as a campaign against all types of violence against children, in all settings. It aims to: “promote a culture of non-violence and reach a zero level of tolerance.”26 The aforementioned aim shall be reached through awareness raising, education, training and capacity-building. Settings where violence can take place, and where special vigilance is needed to ensure that human rights are protected are the media and the cyberspace.

24 - Cf. www.saferinternet.org
3. OTHER PROJECTS ON MEDIA AND DIGITAL LITERACY

Financed by different actions and programmes, several projects have been carried out in Europe. The following projects represent only a selection.

a) Safer Internet Day (SID)

On 5th February 2013, the Safer Internet Day celebrates its tenth anniversary. Since its start, the Safer Internet Day aimed “to promote safer and more responsible use of online technology and mobile phones, especially amongst children and young people”\(^{27}\) across Europe.

Every year the SID addresses a topic that reflects current online issues. Such topics have been, for example, “Online rights and responsibilities – connect with respect” (2013), “discover the digital world together...safely” (2012) or “virtual lives...it’s more than a game, it’s your life” (2011). In 2004, the first SID took place within the SafeBorders project, funded by the EU. Since then, it became a landmark. Nowadays the event does not only take place in Europe but in more than 90 countries on six continents.

On the website (www.saferinternet.org) of the Safer Internet Day, organisations - like schools, youth centres that are willing to participate or advertise the Safer Internet day, as well as institutions looking for material focused on safer internet and children – can find a collection of various downloadable materials such as:

- Various SID branding resources in the form of logo, banner, flyer;
- short video spot to raise awareness on the theme in a fun and amusing way;
- a video to provide an overview of Safer Internet Day, while also showcasing past campaigns;
- Online posters which list six key rights for students to bear in mind when surfing the Internet;
- Links to 30 Safer Internet Centres that belong to the “insafe” network. These centres produce online safety resources;
- A Guide to YouTube’s educational resources as overview of both new and pre-existing tools, in order to help teachers use YouTube safely in the classroom;

\(^{27}\) www.saferinternet.org
• The eSafety Kit for families: a fun interactive environment for families to work together on understanding online safety issues and risks, developing rules and guidelines together etc.

**b) Through the Wild Web Woods**

“Through the Wild Web Woods” is an online game designed by the Council of Europe under the “Building a Europe for and with children” programme. Its purpose is to help children learn basic Internet safety rules. “The game uses familiar fairy tales to guide children through a maze of potential dangers on the way to the fabulous e-city Komet, while teaching them to protect identity and personal data, participate safely in chat rooms, recognise sites and online games containing harmful content, develop a critical approach towards information found on the Internet, and protect their computers against spam and viruses.”

The game was created for children between 7 and 10 years of age. It is available in more than 20 languages.

A teacher’s guide to the online game complements the purpose of the game. The guide “aims to assist educators in helping children use the Internet safely and responsibly.” The Guide is structured in eight lessons. The educators receive explanations, tips and practical exercises for children on topics such as online identity, learning about children’s rights, privacy and security.

### 4. SOME THOUGHTS AT THE END

Throughout Europe, a lot of activities are carried out to promote digital and media skills, as well as to raise awareness towards risks and chances of new media. Organisations and networks, such as ins@fe and the European Youth Forum, work together to improve existing material or to develop new ideas. Thanks to programmes such as Daphne, Comenius or Grundtvig, educators and educational institutions are able to exchange experiences all over Europe and to work together in projects to create new ideas, learn from each other and push each other forward.

This is also happening on a national level. Media education networks are set up, more and more classrooms in schools get equipped with technology such as projectors, laptops, tablet PCs, Internet etc... It is easy for one to get lost in the jungle of the web, as well as in the jungle of all those great programmes and projects that have been carried out. While working on the VSAV project, the team realised that there are a lot of good and promising projects out there. But unfortunately it is not always easy to find them. Therefore, a database for such projects is recommended. This would make it easier for experts to work together, and for practitioners to find useful material.

Another aspect is the involvement of children and young adults, as they have a different approach to understanding and working with the new media. Their opinion on materials is important. They are the ones that need protection but also who can teach their teachers and the media pedagogues one or two lessons.