

PILOTS

Professionalisation for learning in technology and science
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D7.2: Webplatform online

Workpackage 7: Webplatform and exploitation

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www.thepilots.eu

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1 Executive Summary

The European PILOTS project (Professionalization for Learning in Technology and Science) is aimed at Europe's community of science explainers. These individuals are brought together in THE Group, a thematic group of members of Ecsite, the European network of science centres and museums. Among the aims of the PILOTS project is both the dissemination of the projects results and materials as well as the support of this wide international professional community.

In order to do this there are some sub goals that must be achieved such as:

- To have a tool for internal exchanges, documents sharing and commune archives
- To disseminate project's ideas and materials
- To offer an innovative tool for the community learning of explainers
- To create a community who will continue after the end of the project

In order to reach these goals a website has been created to support the development of a learning community of European explainers, and to build the project actions with a participative process. It is divided in two main sections: the institutional webpage, open and public (described in D7.1) and the participative web-platform, especially dedicated to the explainers' community, described in this deliverable. The website aims to involve explainers from partner and non-partner institutions, in order to collect their needs (WP3), gather information of best practices, discuss prototypes of actions and materials (WP2,WP4), share ideas and documents, in order to build knowledge in the field of lifelong learning in museums and science centres. On the website are available on-line resources, news, services and forums as well as other interactive tools. The site is linked to the Ecsite and THE Group (Thematic Human Interface and Explainers group) of the Ecsite website, in order to reach all the Ecsite members and audiences.

As a first step, before actually starting to develop the website and web-platform designs a survey of the use of internet among European museum explainers was conducted. The results were then used to shape the structure of the website and web-platform.

2 Internet survey

The number of internet users and the daily amount of hours per person spent on the web are constantly increasing, in Europe and in the rest of the world. At the same time the internet audience is moving very quickly to a more participative use of the web, thanks to social networks such as Facebook, Wikipedia, Youtube and many others. In this panorama a website that, as written in the PILOTS project, is intended to give and gather information from an international community of individuals and institutions and to support the growth and exchanges of this community has to understand properly the dynamics behind the use of internet, especially among the young adults that form the science museum explainers' community.

For these reasons before actually starting to develop both the website and the participative web-platform, a survey among science museum explainers was conducted in order to obtain data on the level of familiarity of these actors with the internet.

2.1 Objective

An online questionnaire was designed in order to obtain quantitative data on the average use of internet, during their working hours and spare time, among the explainers. We wanted to know if the explainers have access to the web in their office/museum, and if they use it in order to gather information useful for their jobs or to keep in touch with people with similar professions.

2.2 Methodology

The ten questions questionnaire (see Annex 1) was available online from the 11th of December 2008 to the 8th of January 2009. The questionnaire was sent to explainers through partners, THE group mailing list and website, and DOTIK mailing list.

Participants remained anonymous, apart from an ID code that was assigned at the beginning of the session by the automatic system. No timing was taken, but the form

had to be completed in a single session. The questionnaire form is replicated at the end of this document.

54 people filled-in the online questionnaire.

2.3 Results

Most people involved in the study used the Internet for at least three hours during the week precedent to the answering session. It is not a large number, but considering their profession (which demands interfacing with a public and not to spend a lot of time in front of a computer screen) it is not so little either.

1. How many minutes did you spend on the net last week (approx.)?			Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 1h			1.9%	1
1h-3h			18.5%	10
3h-6h hours			27.8%	15
More than 6 hours			51.9%	28
			<i>answered question</i>	54
			<i>skipped question</i>	0

Table 1. Amount of time spent on the web the week before answering (answers 54).

The most significant part of the time spent browsing is dedicated to the gathering of the information, mostly using the Google search engine. Downloading is also a very popular activity. Gathering information and downloading could be related actions: first you find the thing that interest you and then you download some multimedia file related to it.

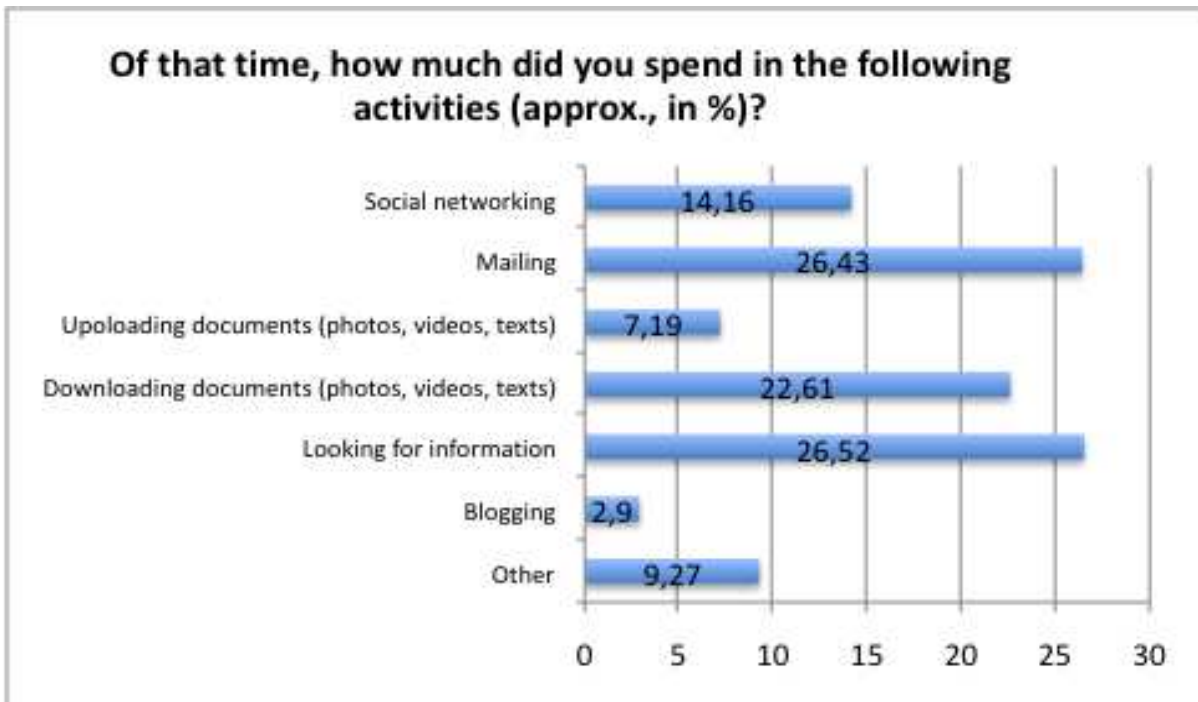


Chart 1. Activities performed on the web

Of course (our everyday experience is the evidence) the study participants had spent a lot of time reading, writing and sending emails (26%).

Looking at the website quoted as useful, it seems that explainers don't frequent very much specialized websites, as the ones usually preferred by science communicators (for example: New Scientist) or dedicated to professional needs of museums staff, such as the websites of the Exploratorium, the CILS – Centre for informal learning, Ecsite, ASTC – Association for science and technology centres, etc. They mostly rely on Wikipedia and Google, possibly also because they are not aware of the existence of specific sites where to find useful information about science, but also their job and activities related to it.

Is there a lack of tutoring from their institution? Are there also language barriers (because most of these sites are in English)? Or they are only looking for quick bits of science knowledge, such as definitions and names? In any case PILOTS website should not only offer useful information for explainers, but also give hints on where to find professional materials and information.

There is a significant use of participative services, confirmed by answers to questions 3, 4 and also 5 (Wikipedia in fact is a social network, even though it depends on how it is used).

Among social sites (question 6) the winner is Youtube, thus showing a big interest in videos. Facebook scores well, too. This was taken in account while designing the PILOTS website: the recommendation is to make it participative and visual, allowing visitors not only to give feedback to the editors of the site, but also to interact in an horizontal manner among themselves. Another suggestion was to let people upload not only texts, but also multimedia files, such as photos (like Flickr), videos (embedded from Youtube), audios etc.

Media experts today stress the need for sociality of web users, and how it happens that spontaneously “tribes” (groups of people with common interests) are formed around social sites. In our case there is already a community (the explainers) that may be interested to interact at various levels, sharing materials, opinions, experiences... Giving them the right platform is maybe useful for the PILOTS mission.

3 The website

Taking in account the results of the internet survey the website was designed and put online for a brief phase of testing. For a period of one month partners were invited to test the website, comment and add suggestions.

The website consists of institutional “the PILOTS” webpage and participatory web tool “The PILOTS hub.”

On the homepage of the website a big graphic button leads to the “PILOTS hub” section. The Pilots hub is a participative tool through which the entire science museum explainers’ community – and more generally the people who gravitate around this profession – can connect and exchange materials and information useful for their jobs. The web-platform is in line with the most up-to-date participative networks, such as Facebook, letting people leave comments, post links, photos, and videos. It was created on a NING platform. NING is an open platform suited to create social networks for restricted communities. The PILOTS hub, just as Facebook creates connections between users through friendship and the use of a personal “wall” page, as well as a collective one.

In the PILOTS hub there are also some special sections, for example the forums, especially designed for the explainers, with practical and theoretical issues related to the job (travel and jobs, useful links, etc.)

That web-platform is closed (a registration is necessary to use all pages and services) but, when inside, it is strongly interactive and participatory.

Registered explainers have the possibility:

- ⇒ To present themselves (and get to know others explainers)
- ⇒ To publish multimedia documents (news, photos, videos, papers, etc.)
- ⇒ To download multimedia documents (news, photos, videos, papers, etc.)

- ⇒ To start general discussions, discussions with individual members, or discussions open to everybody but focused on particular topics
- ⇒ To inform about what is going on in the different institutions.

All registered members are allowed to be active on the platform, but only the project partners are administrators, with the possibility to delete particular files or unable possible disturbers.

3.1 Web-platform structure

Here below a more detailed description of the participatory web-platform.

Sections:

- 1. Home page**
- 2. All members page**
- 3. Users profile page (with personal profile management page)**
- 4. Users personal activity page**
- 5. Forums' page**
- 6. Tips and tricks**
- 7. Travel and jobs**
- 8. Photos collection**
- 9. Videos collection**
- 10. Events**

1. Home page

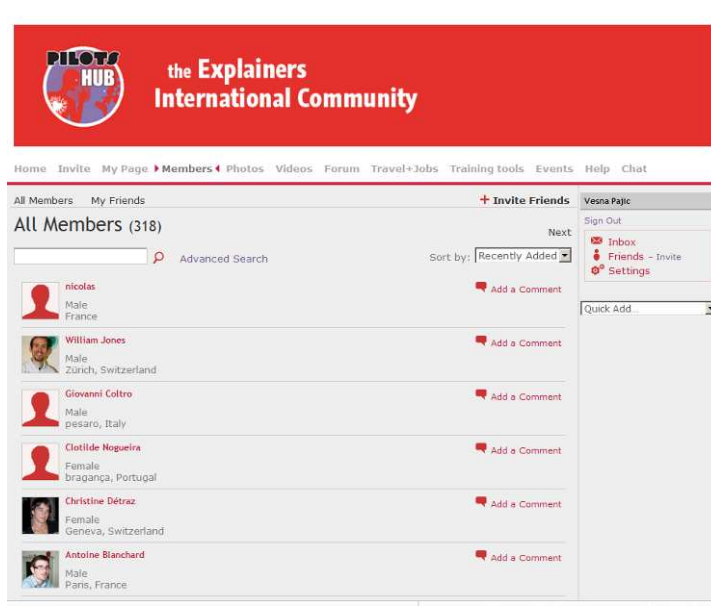
The home is present on all the website sections in evidence on the top of the page; all the sections are reachable from the home: *forums, members, travel/exchanges*, etc.

The home has also all the users' tools: *add a friend, upload photos and videos, update personal profile* etc.

This page shows any latest activity done by all the users (as happens, for example, in Facebook), and the user sees, for example, if new materials are uploaded (photos, videos), a new post has been added to a forum, etc.

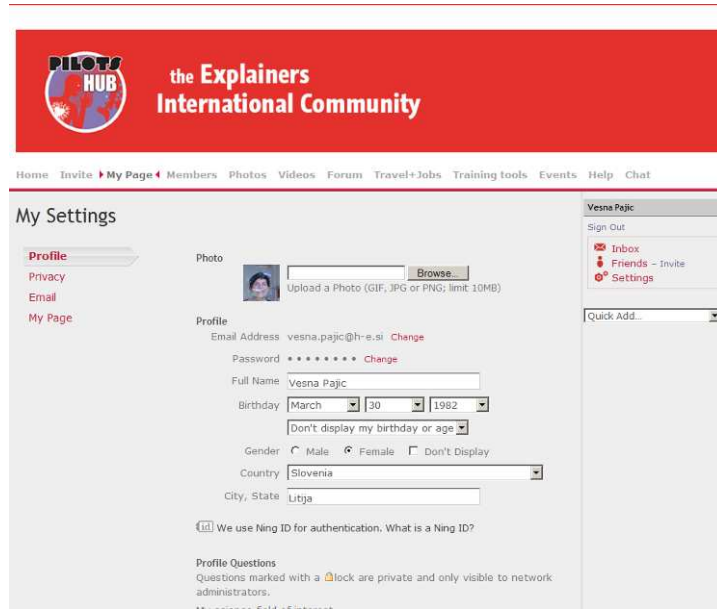
When the user logs in to the platform, he/she either chooses to stay in that home, in order to see what's new, or to go in his/her personal page, or to enter in one of the sections.

2. All members page



In this page users see the list of all the members with photos (or an image, if the member prefers). Clicking on the photo/image, it is possible to access to the public profile of each member. The public profile includes some basic information he/she had to write down when registering: who the person is, where they work, nationality, languages, etc. (see next).

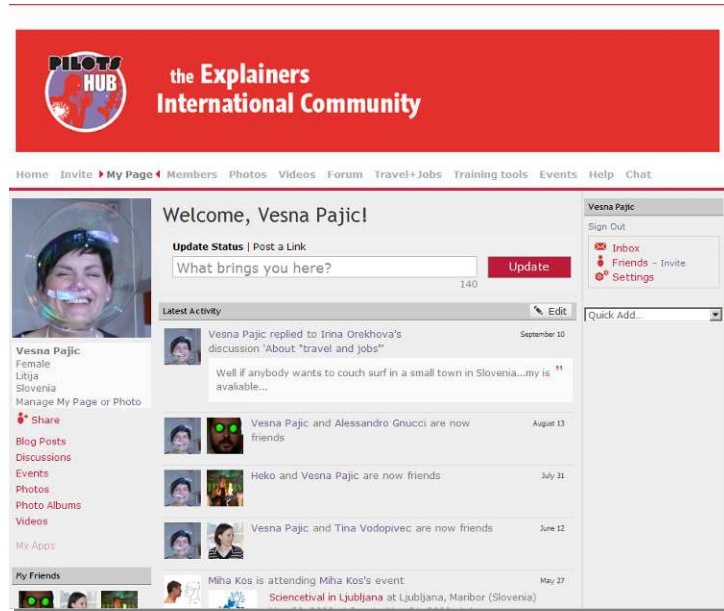
3. User's profile page



Users have their own public profile where they present themselves with different kind of information:

- Personal info (name, date of birth, country)
- Affiliation and work institution
- Studies
- Science field of interest (if any)
- A photo or image (a portrait or an avatar...)
- Hobbies, interests
- A short text to describe themselves...

4. User's personal activity page



Users have a personal page where they can upload multimedia (comments, videos, photos, links etc.) and see everything they have uploaded before on the platform. From these pages the user can also send private or public messages to other users (the latter are then published in the home, and on the receiver's personal page; the private only in the receiver's personal page). If the documents uploaded are of a kind for which a particular section exists (for example: photos), the photos will be automatically present **both** in the personal page and in the photos section.

5. Forums' page

The screenshot shows the 'Explainers International Community' forum interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Invite', 'My Page', 'Members', 'Photos', 'Videos', 'Forum', 'Travel+Jobs', 'Training tools', 'Events', 'Help', and 'Chat'. Below this, a secondary navigation bar includes 'All Discussions', 'My Discussions', and '+ Add a Discussion'. The main content area is titled 'Discussion Forum (10)' and features a search bar and a 'Categories' dropdown menu. The categories listed are:

- Tips And Tricks**: 10 discussions. Description: 'How to involve elderly people in mathematics? Ideas, advises and suggestions for improving explainers' performances.'
- Demos**: 5 discussions. Description: 'Experiments, observations and demonstrations: the alphabet of science shows.'
- Dos And Donts**: 3 discussions. Description: 'What an explainers should not do for any reason or, on the contrary, should always do.'
- Candies**: 5 discussions. Description: 'Which is the best recipe for the bubble soap? In that forum you can exchange the secrets of the explainer work.'
- Links**: 1 discussion. Description: 'Present and share your favourite website.'

 The right sidebar shows the user profile for 'Vesna Pajic' with options for 'Sign Out', 'Inbox', 'Friends - Invite', and 'Settings'. There is also a 'Quick Add...' dropdown menu.

In that page the users can contribute to an existing discussion, or open a new one. This is a traditional forum, with the only difference that people are able to upload videos, photos and audio files. When someone creates a new topic or posts a comment, it will be signalled in the home page (and in the user personal page).

6. Tips and tricks

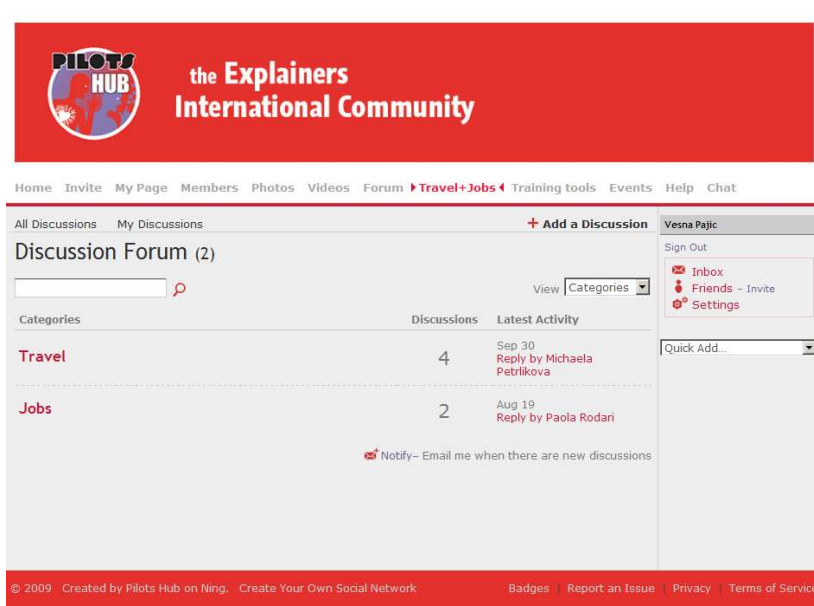
This screenshot shows the 'Tips and Tricks (10)' forum page. The navigation and secondary navigation bars are identical to the previous screenshot. The main content area is titled 'Tips and Tricks (10)' and includes a search bar and a 'Sort by: Latest Activity' dropdown. The discussions listed are:

- Food For Thought: Useful Readings On Science Centres And Science&Society Issues**: 0 replies, Sep 8. Description: 'Which is the impact (social, economical, cultural...) of science centres? A difficult question, focused by many researches around the wor... Started by Paola Rodari'
- VAN DE GRAAF GENERATOR - Please, Help..**: 1 reply, Aug 19. Description: 'Hi everybody, we would like to ask about one of our exhibits in Technmania Science Center (Czech Republic), which is Van de Graaf Generat... Started by Michaela Petrikova'
- Summer Activities**: 2 replies, Jul 29. Description: 'Hey everybody! I would very much like to hear if you organize summer activities for children in your Science Centers. If so what type of ... Started by Lida Amellou'
- OUTREACH PROGRAMS**: 0 replies, Jul 29. Description: 'Hello everybody, Technmania Science Center (Czech Republic) would like to start with outreach programs. So, ...'

 The right sidebar remains the same, showing the user profile for 'Vesna Pajic' and the 'Quick Add...' dropdown.

From this page the users can download programme and training materials from the PILOTS training course.

7. Travel and jobs



The screenshot displays the 'Pilots Hub' website interface. At the top, there is a red header with the 'PILOTS HUB' logo and the text 'the Explainers International Community'. Below the header is a navigation menu with links: Home, Invite, My Page, Members, Photos, Videos, Forum, Travel+Jobs (highlighted), Training tools, Events, Help, and Chat. The main content area is titled 'Discussion Forum (2)' and features a search bar and a 'View' dropdown menu. A table lists two categories: 'Travel' with 4 discussions and 'Jobs' with 2 discussions. The 'Travel' category shows a latest activity on Sep 30 with a reply by Michaela Petrikova. The 'Jobs' category shows a latest activity on Aug 19 with a reply by Paola Rodari. A 'Notify' option is available to email users when there are new discussions. On the right side, there is a user profile for 'Vesna Pajic' with options for Sign Out, Inbox, Friends - Invite, and Settings, along with a 'Quick Add...' dropdown menu. The footer contains copyright information: © 2009 Created by Pilots Hub on Ning. Create Your Own Social Network, and links for Badges, Report an Issue, Privacy, and Terms of Service.

Categories	Discussions	Latest Activity
Travel	4	Sep 30 Reply by Michaela Petrikova
Jobs	2	Aug 19 Reply by Paola Rodari

This can be thought as a black board with post-its on it, with offers and requests for travelling as an explainer around Europe. Any user can add requests and offers so that users can ask for hospitality or offer hospitality.

Any entry is automatically signalled also in the homepage and in the personal page of the user who submitted a post.

8. & 9. Videos and photos

The screenshot shows the 'All Videos' page of the Explainers International Community. The header features the 'PILOTS HUB' logo and the text 'the Explainers International Community'. The navigation bar includes links for Home, Invite, My Page, Members, Photos, Videos (4), Forum, Travel+Jobs, Training tools, Events, Help, and Chat. The main content area is titled 'All Videos (60)' and includes a search bar and a 'Sort by: Latest' dropdown. A grid of video thumbnails is displayed, each with a title, description, and view count. The videos shown are: 'Interesting Liquid' (5 views), 'Frequency And Fire' (4 views), 'Spanfurno' (7 views), 'BIG Event Best Demo Winner 2009' (11 views), and 'Ecsite Annual Conference, 4-6 June 2009, Milan, Italy' (multiple instances). A right-hand sidebar shows the user profile for 'Vesna Pajic' with options for Sign Out, Inbox, Friends - Invite, and Settings, along with a 'Quick Add...' button.


The screenshot shows the 'All Photos' page of the Explainers International Community. The header and navigation bar are identical to the video page. The main content area is titled 'All Photos (491)' and includes a search bar and a 'Sort by: Latest' dropdown. A grid of photo thumbnails is displayed, each with a title and author. The photos shown are: 'Large View' (by Antoine Blanchard), 'Panel 4' (by Antoine Blanchard), 'Panel 2' (by Antoine Blanchard), 'Working With Teens' (by Antoine Blanchard), 'Platypus' (by Antoine Blanchard), 'A L'assaut' (by Christine Débraz), 'Les Enfants Au MEG' (by Christine Débraz), 'Haut Les Masques' (by Christine Débraz), 'Me' (by Francesco Maria Alzeni), and 'DSCF4121' (by Paola Rodari). A right-hand sidebar shows the user profile for 'Vesna Pajic' with options for Sign Out, Inbox, Friends - Invite, and Settings, along with a 'Quick Add...' button.

These are collections of files, uploaded from other sections of the platform than real subsections. They in fact collect any image or video that has been uploaded from personal pages, experiment's section, forums, etc. and shown together.

10. Events

Organized by ISSA | Type: conference
You have not responded.

October 21
Wednesday




Communicate Conference
October 21, 2009 to October 22, 2009 – HP Labs

Now in its sixth year, Communicate is the only conference to focus specifically on improving the standards and effectiveness of communication about conservation and the environment. Communicate del...

Organized by | Type: conference
You have not responded.

November 3
Tuesday




7th International Conference Of Hands On! Europe 2009
November 3, 2009 to November 6, 2009 – Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie (Paris)

From 3rd until 6th November 2009, the 7th International Conference of Hands On! is hosted by La Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie – Paris – La Villette, in partnership with Hands On! Europe. On t...

Organized by la Cité and Hands-on! Europe | Type: congress
You have not responded.

November 22
Sunday



European In Service Training Course For Teachers And Museum Educators
November 22, 2009 to November 29, 2009 – Deutsches Museum

School and science museum: Cooperation for improving teaching, learning and discovery ; this course aims to develop the knowledge and competences relative to science education through the use of mu...

Organized by Smec project | Type: training
You have not responded.

A calendar shows what is going on around the world, with a particular focus on Europe. Users can edit their events and share them with the colleagues.

Annex 1: Ten question questionnaire