



Teaching flood risk management to secondary school students via the web

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Websites are getting increasingly important as a means to inform different groups in society about a large range of subjects. Especially young people use the internet frequently as a source of knowledge. When asked to develop educational material about flood risk management, we therefore chose to develop a website. Junior Floodsite, part of the larger Floodsite project, is developed for secondary school students around 15 or 16 years old, and their teachers, in all countries in Europe. Websites are common, but not for an audience and purpose like this. We asked a group of teachers and students to advise us and test the material we developed.

Although children this age use the web a lot, this does not mean that anything you put on, will be used. To reach secondary school children about natural hazards such as floods, is not an easy thing. Amongst the masses of fun things to do on the internet, flood risk management will not stand out automatically. For students it had to be interesting, fun and useful. But not every student wants the same thing. Teachers informed us that for them it is important that the material fits seamlessly into the curriculum. They will then more readily employ the material. But in every country the curriculum is different (and even within countries they differ) and we could not make material for each individual country. To tackle these problems we decided to take a dual approach. On the one hand, we made the website flexible and modular with blocks of information and also activities like assignments, a virtual tour in Google Earth and games. Students and teachers can use those parts that they find interesting, fun or useful. On the other hand, we developed sets of structured lessons that teachers can directly put to use in their classrooms. The material on the website is written in English because most European students learn that language in school, but besides that it is also available in Dutch. Translations into other languages is welcomed, because we realise a foreign language can pose a barrier to using the material and learning from it.

In the Floodsite project we have risen to the challenge of making an educational website on flood risk management for teenagers in Europe. This contribution will discuss both the process of development of the website and the first results of the evaluation of the effect the website has on teaching and learning about flood risk management.