



Stories of Tomorrow: young students create their Mars missions

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Stories of Tomorrow is a research project, funded by the EU, currently being implemented in schools of several European countries (Finland, France, Germany, Greece and Portugal) and Japan. The goal of the project is to assess how the use of diverse tools and methodologies, such as ICT, storytelling, and Inquiry Based Learning, can influence the interest of young students (5th graders, around 10-11 years old) in science and technology.

For that purpose, they are asked to create e-books using a dedicated platform, incorporating text but also images (still or moving, photos and drawings) and sounds, in which they tell a story about a mission to Mars, and the creation of a human base or colony. The project is currently in the second year of implementation. The first year of implementation has seen the development of more than a hundred e-books.

The space exploration theme works perfectly as a means to promote interdisciplinarity and inquiry-based learning. Both students and educators require assistance in dealing with subjects that are somewhat out of their comfort zones; furthermore, teachers are called upon to collaborate and integrate the subject matters in their classes. For students, there are, right from the start, two major areas where they benefit: working with computers and learning to work in group, dividing tasks and cooperating towards a common goal. They also find an opportunity to express their imagination and creativity, not only through the creation of texts, but by using drawings, comics, movies, 3D tools, and anything else that they can think of – the platform allows for the incorporation of pretty much anything that can assume a digital format. The need to tell a story helps them to feel the need to do research and incorporate in the narrative their own findings and thoughts.

The consortium has created a website (storiesoftomorrow.eu) and has conducted a number of summer schools to gather together the international community of teachers, developers and trainers that are involved in the project. At the national level, each country has conducted its own courses for teachers and a selection of activities for the students, that provide information and ideas for the different episodes that must be present in the stories (on Earth, space, and Mars).

At the end of the project, an international conference will take place, to present results, conclusions and new ideas for the future of education.