

Xplora gateway relaunch at ECSITE conference

The new version of the Xplora (www.xplora.org) gateway to science education will be launched at the ECSITE conference in Vantaa, Finland, taking place from 10-12 June 2005. The partners of the PENCIL project, contributing to the Xplora portal, will hold a special one day Informal Learning workshop. The PENCIL project is unique in bringing together science education experts from both formal and informal learning, to develop innovative pedagogical approaches and materials to raise pupil's interest, knowledge and motivation for science and scientific careers.

All PENCIL partners feed into Xplora, the European gateway to science education. In addition, members of the NUCLEUS cluster of science education projects – including partners such as CERN, the European Space Agency - are also contributors, while Xplora also has set up content partnerships with other science institutions and organisations. The gateway is aimed at teachers, pupils, scientists, science communicators and science educators.

Key new features in the Xplora gateway include:

- Science education news, information, pedagogical tips, ideas for teachers, simulations and science activities
- Fully searchable standards-based database of digital learning resources for science education
- Tools for creating online communities
- Virtual events – online expert discussions for schools
- Megalab – giving insight into innovative practical science approaches and projects
- Guidance on freely available Open Source tools for science education

Full materials, information and contact details are also provided for: the PENCIL project and its thirteen related pilot projects run by the science centres; and the NUCLEUS projects ESTI, CISCI, SCIENCEDUC and Volvox.

The Xplora gateway is supported by two eminent patrons, Professor B. Mandelbrot, the mathematician who discovered fractals, and Ray Kurzweil, world-leading expert in artificial intelligence.

In addition, a team of teachers supports the Xplora gateway, ensuring pedagogical quality and relevance, while also proposing resources, content and activities. The teacher team is made up of innovative, technically-skilled teachers who represent the forefront of science teaching.

Background to the Xplora portal

European Schoolnet (www.eun.org) – a network of 28 Ministries of Education across Europe - operates the Xplora portal. It is supported by the PENCIL project, which is funded by the European Commission's Directorate General for Research as part of Science and Society. PENCIL involves more than 13 scientific institutions, coordinated by the ECSITE (<http://www.ecsite.net/new/index.asp>) network of science centres. The PENCIL project is part of the wider NUCLEUS framework, a cluster of science education projects including Europe's major research laboratories.

Further information about PENCIL can be found at <http://xplora.eun.org/pencil.htm>, while more details about Nucleus are available at <http://xplora.eun.org/nucleus.htm>.

Important: for the launch of the portal the new URLs for these pages will be –

PENCIL – www.xplora.org/pencil

NUCLEUS – www.xplora.org/nucleus

Contacts:

PENCIL project coordinator and NUCLEUS coordinator – Walter Staveloz, ECSITE
wstaveloz@ecsite.net

Tel. +32 2 649 7383 or +32 473 532 096

Xplora portal manager – Alexa Joyce, European Schoolnet

Alexa.joyce@eun.org

Tel. + 32 2 790 7554 or + 32 485 440 661