

EDITORIAL

The project team gathered four different case studies; an **evaluation repository of cross-institutional Virtual Campus** initiatives across Europe, an **operational model of Virtual Mobility in Higher Education** and two online **respectively blended learning courses** were analyzed. To gain a better overview **a table was created to display the essential factors of each case study**. It is now possible to think about how to approach the topic in a more beneficial way and where to continue the research. The SWOT analysis allows us to follow up information about key factors, weaknesses and opportunities of the case studies in an efficient way.

To give the reader a meaningful overview about the case studies that were collected the table included following factors as a describing parameter summarizing the information of the detailed case study.

Project	E-MOVE	IBA/ING	ECODESIGN
Type of project	Operational model of VM Documentation	Course for students	Blended Learning Course Continued education
ECTS	Not applicable	6 ECTS	12 ECTS
Project goal	Identification of critical success factors of virtual mobility and recommendations applications of VM	Design a cooperative and collaborative work environment for students and teachers.	Incorporate all benefits of e-Learning with great content for professionals to stay up-to-date on a new topic.
Main outcome	Provision of a set of guidelines and tools available for developing and integrating a wide variety of VM study schemes.	Ongoing successful course for students run and operated across three universities. Best Practice Example	Example of a course at the top of industry needs implemented, using virtual mobility together with of occasional face-to-face meetings.
Strength	Identification of barrier of VM: legislation and public perception, reluctance in adopting ECTS and the Diploma Supplement, study fees / missing subsidies, language skills, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience with running online courses for students, • content richness for the topic • Institutional support is key factor for the success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great content, learning environment, teaching method and course format. • Excellent feedback from participants and their employers. All advantages of e-Learning were successfully integrated into the course.
Weakness	Further collection of information need to really understand the 3 models of VM and their key factors	Unexplained student absenteeism not yet analyzed in detail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional agreements, credit transfers, legal issues, course fees and language requirement have not been taken into account. • Lack of institutional and financial support for a continuous operation.
Project relevance		Example of institutional cooperation and collaboration for the benefits of students in the form of a successfully running course	The course project can be considered as a failure but is also an example of a high quality course. The reason are administrative shortcomings that go beyond the course content itself and lead to the fact that the course is not being offered any more.

To achieve our objectives (to identify and address the obstacles and constraints in implementing Virtual Mobility and European Qualification Framework in education; to give a balanced view of practical reality; and to provide a model to propose a set of solutions and strategies to overcome abovementioned obstacles) it is still necessary to answer the following question: **how the connection between EQF and virtual mobility can be established in practice and what are the impediments preventing implementation of sustainable operational models?**





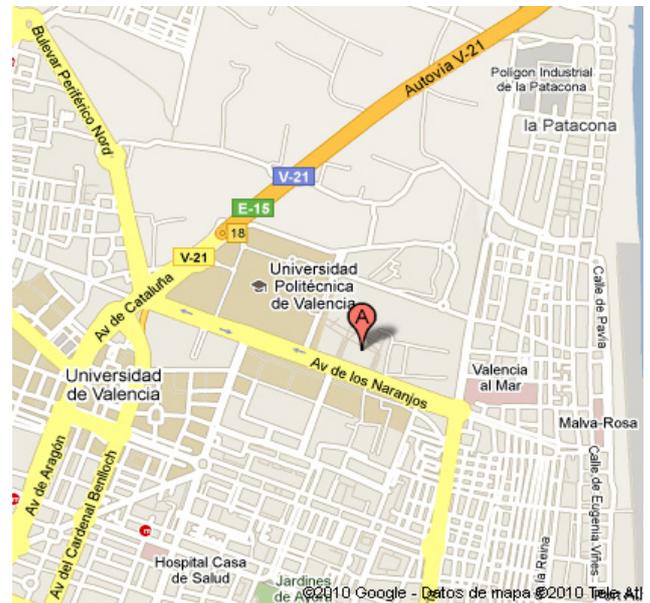
VIRQUAL WORKSHOP IN EDEN CONFERENCE

VIRQUAL: HARMONIZING VIRTUAL MOBILITY AND THE EUROPEAN QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK

WHERE? Universidad Politécnica de Valencia
 Libelan Liaoning centre
 Edificio Nexus 6G
 Camino de Vera s/n
 46022 – Valencia

WHEN? 11th June 2010
 From 11:30h until 13:00h

ORGANIZED BY VIRQUAL NETWORK:
 Universidad do Porto – PT
 Universidad Politécnica de Valencia – ES
 Technische Universität Wien – AT
 Eesti Infotehnoloogia Sihtasutus – EE
 Gábor Dénes Főiskola – HU
 Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi – Sürekli Eğitim Merkezi – TR
 Universidade Aberta – PT
 TecMinho – Associação Universidade-Empresa para o Desenvolvimento – PT
 Verein zur Förderung des Einsatzes Medien in der Aus- u. Weiterbildung –AT



Virqual is a network that proposes to help HE educational and training institutions to achieve Virtual Mobility and to guarantee EQF implementation through ICT and e-learning, aiming at finding specific obstacles in institutions and proposing concrete and innovative solutions. The definition of the terms of how this linkage, between Virtual Mobility and the system of the EQF, will be established, tested and accepted is the main advancement expected from this project.

The project would like to invite and encourage other institutions, projects, networks or initiatives to cooperate with VIRQUAL and contribute to the development of the European common knowledge in this area. For this purpose it has been prepared this **workshop** to be held in the EDEN conference in Valencia. In this case, the project is focused on definition of **Learning Outcomes and EQF levels, Assessment strategies used in e-learning and Using virtual assessment of EQF Learning Outcomes**.

Participants are invited to join actively the workshop contributing to the development of the European common knowledge in this area. The following text generally describes the main topics in each Special Interest Group (SIG).

REMEMBER!!

If you won't be able to participate in the Workshop but still you're interested in being an associated partner or involved in another type of collaboration, please contact us through the e-mail: rfalcao@reit.up.pt and/or visit virqual.up.pt

KEEP IN TOUCH!!

You can contact us using any of the following tools:

- E-mail: rfalcao@reit.up.pt



TOPICS

SIG 1:
Virtual Mobility, ECTS and E-learning

The debate was focused on the following four questions:

- Has the implementation of the EHEA with the European-wide adoption of the ECTS credit system and competence-based curricula effectively helped to foster student mobility so far?
- What are the most important differences of Virtual Mobility in regard to Physical Mobility? Is Virtual Mobility much different? Is it equally rewarding or an inferior kind of student mobility experience? Does Virtual Mobility address the same type of students?
- What are the most important barriers to Virtual Mobility (specific requirements, languages, percentage of face-to-face mandatory sessions in the courses...)?

Are European Higher Education Institutions applying homogenous criteria when calculating the student workload in online and blended learning courses? How has student workload been quantified in online and blended learning courses according to different criteria? What kind of information is available on how ECTS credits have been calculated?

SIG 3:
E-learning & evaluation of learning outcomes of EQF

Learning outcomes can be seen as the hard currency of educational mobility and recognition, as soon as they are explicitly defined and professionally described.

Learning outcomes in combination with adequate assessment procedures can be assumed as one of the main promoters for mobility with respect to both, students and institutions.

But the shift to learning outcomes in the EU currently means a multi-speed development within different countries and institutions. To support the majority of institutions which are in or before the first phase of the change process a twofold strategy is proposed:

- a provision of guidelines and support for writing learning outcomes
- a web-based repository of best practice examples for learning outcomes

Questions concerning acceptance and further development

- Would you use professional guidelines for writing learning outcomes? Why / why not? What is the position of your institution?
- Would you like to contribute to such guidelines? Why / why not? What is the position of your institution?
- Would you adopt intended learning outcomes (ILO) from a Europe-wide repository for your own curriculum design and/or teaching practice? Why / why not? What is the position of your institution?
- Would you like to contribute to a Europe-wide ILO repository? Why / why not? What is the position of your institution?

SIG 2:
Fundamental Research

The project team gathered four different case studies; an evaluation repository of cross-institutional Virtual Campus initiatives across Europe, an operational model of Virtual Mobility in Higher Education and two online blended learning courses. To gain a better overview of the case studies and of the conclusions a table was created to display the essential factors of each case study. It was, therefore, possible to think about how to approach the topics in a more beneficial way and where to continue the research.

The SWOT analysis allowed following up information about the key factors, weaknesses and opportunities of the case studies in an efficient way.

EQF is designed to allow comparability of qualifications and thus, at least in theory, should facilitate and improve mobility. The question is how the connection between EQF and Virtual Mobility can be established in practice and what are the impediments preventing implementation of sustainable operational models.

SIG 4:
E-learning contributions to EQF

During this first year of work, we researched on policies and practices in what concern e-learning and virtual campus in Europe, EQF and NQF current state of implementation and Virtual Mobility guidelines.

The implementation of the European Qualification Framework is a great opportunity to discuss the role of ICT in learning. HE and CE have an important role to play, based on learning innovation, learning at the workplace and university learning (but we need to define it ourselves).

In order to improve our research, the following questions are proposed:

- How can e-learning courses contribute to the acquisition of qualifications in different levels of the EQF?
- Can we acquire all types of qualifications through e-learning?
- Which are the qualifications acquired by e-learning and the characteristics of these qualifications?
- What are the reasons why some qualifications can not be acquired by e-learning?
- What are the best scenarios and strategies for e-learning that can be put in place at the level of EQF, Bologna and Lifelong learning?
- Are the learning outcomes to be related to learning content (curricula) or to activities to be performed by learners in the workplace or both?
- How can the new e-learning strategies using web2.0 and social networks be used within the EQF and NQF plans for implementation?
- How can HE and CE institutions certify Informal online learning (via the access to open educational resources or any other online open tools)?



VIRQUAL- INFO

- **Virqual SIG reports:**

- You can get each SIG report on [clicking here](#)

- **Other projects relating the EQF and Virtual mobility topics:**

- **The Re.ViCa** has been making an inventory and carrying out a systematic review of cross-institutional Virtual Campus initiatives of the past decade within higher education at European, national and regional levels. The main objective of the Re.ViCa project was to identify relevant parameters and success factors for evaluating and comparing Virtual Campuses, based on thorough research and expert input. The Re.ViCa Consortium organizes in-depth discussions with experts in order to incorporate the input of different interest groups. [+ info](#)
- **Move-IT** is a one year project supported by the European Commission under the Erasmus, Lifelong Learning Programme and aims to promote and increase the visibility of (former) projects on blended mobility and e-coaching. They are focusing on virtual support for mobile students and staff before, during and after the exchange. [+ info](#)
- **EURASHE**: A look at the "Level 5, the missing link" Project: The objective of this project is to make a detailed analysis of existing Short Cycle Higher Education (SCHE) in 32 of the Bologna signatory countries. SCHE programmes can be found at L5 of the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and as an intermediate level of the first cycle of the qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area. [+ info](#)
- **Being Mobile**: is a year long European Project promoting the concept of Virtual Mobility amongst universities. These projects have over the years generated important outcomes including guidelines, procedures, pedagogical models, manuals and handbooks. The project outcomes are the Best Practice Manual "European Cooperation through Virtual Mobility", which is a handbook on the subject of Virtual Mobility. It includes short summaries of innovative and model projects or initiatives with a specific focus on replicable outcomes; and a collection of papers, resources, manuals, links and documents can be found in "resources" (About Virtual Mobility) [+ info](#)
- **BENVIC** (Virtual Campus and Virtual Mobility in higher education): this is one of the earliest projects addressing the issue of virtual campuses. In this project the concept of the Virtual Campus is used to describe "a specific format of distance education and on-line learning in which students, teaching staff and even university administrative and technical staff mainly 'meet' or communicate through technical links". A classification was proposed, ranging from virtual class, where teaching and learning is happening in a virtual environment, over virtual campus, which also includes research communication, as well as scientific services to the society at large, to virtual university in which case most, perhaps all of the university working processes are virtualized. [+ info](#)
- **ACTIVE** (AIESAD-EADTU Credit Transfer In Virtual and distance Education): through this project European and Latin American universities have developed a "Virtual Mobility Scheme" which allows students to follow some modules of quality distance learning programs from European Masters courses belonging to NetACTIVE. Furthermore, this system ensures that the credits obtained will be recognized by the university in which they are enrolled. The main objectives of the project ACTIVE are: to increase the visibility of virtual and distance Master's courses and development of a Virtual Mobility Schema. [+ info](#)
- **MOVINTER**: The project aims to contribute to increase cooperation and structural link among Higher Education Institutions of Europe and Latin America through an in-depth exploration of the potential of ICT - and particularly Virtual Mobility - to internationalise curricula and learning experiences. [+ info](#)

- **Some interesting reports concerning the EQF and Virtual Mobility:**

- [The first issue of the EQF Newsletter](#) is published. It aims to reach and inform a broad audience of stakeholders and to encourage and support discussion and debate on the implementation of the European Qualifications Framework at the national and European levels.
- **The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF)** [click here](#)
- **Virtual Mobility: An innovative alternative for physical mobility?** [click here](#)
- **Virtual support for mobile students – What ICT can do to enhances student mobility** [click here](#)

