



EUNITE

Working Group Virtual Erasmus

Background document



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1 Preface

This document is produced as a background document for the EUNITE Working Group on Virtual Erasmus. It is intended to provide the members of this Working Group with the ideas that were developed by the Steering Committee and Project Management Committee of EUNITE on the topic, thus helping the Working Group to start the discussion.

2 General introduction

EUNITE is a strategic alliance of the University of Aalborg, University of Granada, FernUniversität in Hagen, TKK (Helsinki University of Technology), K.U.Leuven and University of Strathclyde. EUNITE stands for European Universities Network for Information Technology in Education and is aimed at the implementation of e-learning technologies in teaching and learning in higher education within the cooperative network of the participating universities (Virtual Campus).

EUNITE was formally founded by the signing of its Memorandum of Understanding on 20th October 2000 by the Rectors (Principal) of the participating universities. This Memorandum of Understanding highlights three aims of the Virtual Campus:

- exchange of courses and learning materials
- sharing of joint courses
- joint development of programmes and courses.

A very important aspect of the EUNITE strategic alliance is the opportunity for participating universities to make use of each other's courses and course material, specifically through distance learning. This is the reason why the distributed virtual and multi-campus university – the European Virtual Campus – may be regarded as the main endeavour of EUNITE.

For this purpose, a Consortium Agreement was signed on the occasion of the Rectors (Principals) Meeting on 15th June 2004 in Helsinki. This Consortium Agreement settles the Intellectual Property and Copyrights connected to the joint development, sharing and exchange of courses and materials within EUNITE. The basic rule is that within the consortium and while respecting intellectual property rights, partners can use (under certain conditions even adapt to local circumstances) the materials that are jointly produced or offered for the purpose by other partners. In principle this use is free of charge, unless otherwise agreed between partners.

The Programme Management Committee also produced a working document that acts as a Project Management Handbook, which defines very concrete procedures for joint development and for virtual mobility of students and materials. Validation of these procedures is being done through concrete pilots.



3 Virtual Erasmus

3.1 Definition of virtual Erasmus

Virtual Erasmus provides an exchange scheme between universities that enables virtual attendance to courses in another university than the one the student is residing in. Like in the physical Erasmus exchange programme, these courses become an accepted part of the student's degree programme.

Virtual Erasmus can be used for two purposes:

- Taking virtual courses (eventually even full programmes) in a partner university, probably often in preparation or follow-up of a physical Erasmus exchange programme;
- Taking virtual courses in the student's own university, while on physical Erasmus.

Generally, this will only work in the start up phase when Virtual Erasmus students are integrated in the existing physical Erasmus schemes, and when the number of courses and number of students are restricted, to avoid work overload of teachers and tutors. It implies that exams are taken online in the "receiving" university, but supervised by staff of the "sending" university.

Apart of virtual student mobility, attention should also be paid to virtual teacher mobility (e.g. using "distance" teachers for invited lectures; using "distance" tutors for student support of virtual courses). Its organisational, technical and pedagogical aspects as well as the financial implications have still to be studied.

3.2 Creation of a virtual Erasmus space

Elements connected to this creation are:

- Awareness raising (marketing package and bringing together the central Erasmus co-ordinators of the EUNITE partners)
- Creation of a joint directory to inform teachers of course availability and enable them to decide on the suitability of the course for their own students
 - The partner universities provide the courses that they are willing to offer and support in a virtual Erasmus scheme
 - EUNITE is assembling a joint directory
- Creation of a matrix on courses available in each institution and interested universities for taking the courses
 - Creation of an information pack for each course with all necessary information for partner institutions and students to take up the course (see appendix for the course description)
- Convene in each university the existing Erasmus co-ordinators
- On the EUNITE website: information pack and contact information
- Insertion of virtual Erasmus courses in the Institutional contracts

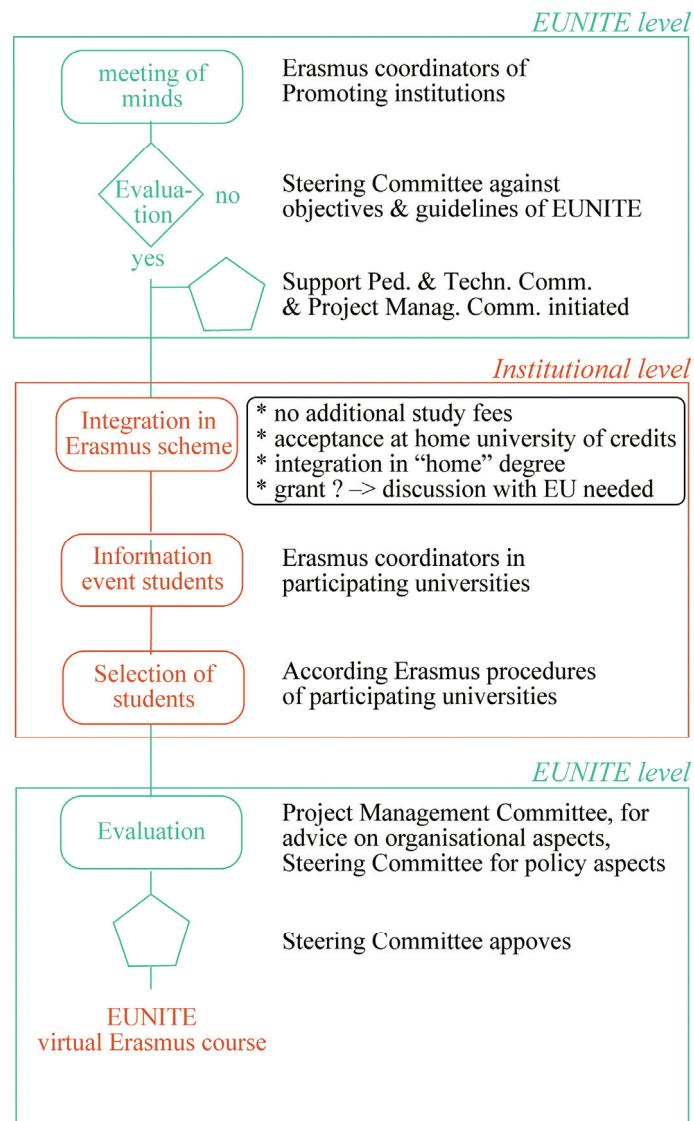
3.3 Running the virtual Erasmus scheme

- *Elements of consideration*
 - Use a Virtual Erasmus Week for marketing



- In a piloting phase, in order to test the market, courses can be offered free within the EUNITE consortium, providing all partners agreed
 - Similar to the physical Erasmus scheme, universities can adapt results to take account of local variations
 - Monitoring and evaluation by the local institution and reported to EUNITE Steering Committee. Evaluation scheme to be developed by the Pedagogical Committee
- *Practical suggestions*
- Each student is encouraged to take at least one virtual course in another institution as part of the master's programme
 - It is suggested that in view of a Ph.D. training, such course(s) could help prospective students to find out whether another institution is suitable for the Ph.D. and would also enhance the candidate's likelihoods attaining a place in the institution

Virtual Erasmus implementation





3.4 European Virtual Campus (EVC)¹

Aspects of Virtual Erasmus have been implemented in EUNITE's EVC. EVC is not only a concept, but it is up and running at a pilot level, with so far 107 students across 7 countries participating in a number of accredited courses.

[follows in the original document the description of the courses that were available at the time of the installation of the Virtual Erasmus Working Group]

3.5 Tools development and implementation

EUNITE has over the last two years developed a set of methodologies and tools for the development and delivery of courses in the EVC.

The following items have been put in place:

- (1) Consortium agreement, already mentioned above, which covers all aspects of copyrights and IPR in respect of all materials offered to EUNITE
- (2) Project Management Committee Working document, also already mentioned, with procedures and processes for the development and delivery of virtual learning material across the EUNITE network, and the support of Virtual Erasmus (cf. Infra)
- (3) Tools for collaboration: EUNITE website with a project support area and virtual Campus (<http://www.eunite-online.org>)
- (4) Virtual Erasmus Week, with participation by European Commission, a yearly returning event to promote and support virtual mobility of students and staff

4 Virtual Erasmus Week

Organising the yearly Virtual Erasmus Week in cooperation with EuroPACE, as prepared by the Virtual Erasmus Working Group.

Concrete agenda items:

- a. Opening event: *videoconference of about 1 hr*
 - with participation of the European Commission
 - Powerpoint Presentation on Virtual Erasmus in mainstream university education
- b. Local activities in conjunction with common activities
 - presentation of EUNITE (*complemented with video clips of witnesses about EUNITE courses of teachers and students*)
 - explanation of what my university is concretely involved in
 - other possible activities: *panel discussion and/or communication (forum) between teachers, students, Erasmus coordinators, International Relations Officers on their views, experiences, expectations*
- c. Training course for teachers: *to be prepared by Project Management Committee*
 - concept and outline of the course
 - participants in the development

¹ The European Virtual Campus is the place where distance learning courses and materials at the EUNITE partner universities can be accessed.



- participants in the course
- d. Training course for students: *to be prepared by Project Management Committee*
 - concept and outline of the course
 - participants in the development
 - participants in the course
- e. Demo courses or/and temporarily opening up running courses to additional students (eventually through special events or discussion topics)
- f. Closing event: evaluation of the week by Steering Committee members and International Relations Officers

5 Virtual Erasmus Working Group: Brief

The Working Group should tackle the following issues:

1. Prepare the Virtual Erasmus Week 2006 in view of the implementation of virtual Erasmus in the mainstream education of the partner universities
2. Contribute to the development of adequate models and procedures for REal Virtual Erasmus courses (REVE project, WP 3 lead by EUNITE), and the setting up of suitable pilots together with other REVE partners.

Concrete activities that can be undertaken are:

1. make the inventory of the procedures to be followed in each partner university at both central level and/or faculty/department/school level to enable virtual Erasmus courses for the following purposes:
 - a. prepare and/or follow-up real Erasmus mobility, e.g.
 - language courses, cultural initiation courses, courses that make the student familiar with the pedagogical approach of studying in the guest university (e.g. problem based learning approach);
 - courses that prepare the content or specific methodology of courses that will be attended during the Erasmus mobility;
 - courses that follow-up the courses that were attended during the Erasmus mobility (as they are a logical/essential extension, and not available in the home university);
 - b. offer students to virtually attend courses in partner universities (e.g. elective courses);
 - c. enable Erasmus students during their Erasmus mobility stay to virtually attend courses in their home universities;
2. Discuss possibilities and obstacles on the way to Virtual Erasmus activities within mainstream education (including models/scenarios and especially the procedures that need to be developed/followed to set up such virtual Erasmus or embed it into the existing Erasmus exchange programme;
3. in collaboration with the Pedagogical Committee, investigate under which conditions such Virtual Erasmus courses can be accredited as part of the student's curriculum (as is the case with courses attended during an Erasmus stay), integrating them as much as possible in the existing Erasmus procedures and agreements. The example of virtual courses in Erasmus Mundus programmes can probably be used as a starting point for the discussion and actions.





Appendix: Course description

1. Title of the subject (descriptive key words)
2. Name and position of the responsible teacher (e-mail), name of the tutor in case there is one.
3. Discipline² (area of knowledge), department responsible for the delivery, degrees where the subject is offered.
4. Academic level: undergraduate (first years/last years), postgraduate (master, PhD) and ECTS credits
5. Specification of the language/s of the course materials and the chances for possible multilingual scenarios in virtual forums.
6. System of evaluation.
7. Clear definition of goals of the course and its calendar.
8. Calendar of tutorials by the virtual teacher.
9. Description of the tasks and kind of exercises the students are expected to fulfil during the course.
10. Basic bibliography.

² Interdisciplinarity can be an interesting asset for the development of joint and comparative courses within a European scope.