



RECOMMENDATIONS

Final EUNITE meeting - Leuven 17 October 2008

The European Universities Network for IT in Education (EUNITE) was set up in 2000 as a strategic alliance of eight universities from different countries in Europe to develop and implement learning technologies in higher education in general, and virtual Erasmus for students and staff in particular. Its mission was to explore the potential of information and communication technologies (ICT) for education, to study its conditions of use, to jointly develop courses and teaching/learning materials as well as tools for collaboration and implementation, and to promote good practice within and outside the universities of the partnership.

In its formal existence of eight years, which build on earlier collaboration of the partners in European networks such as EuroPACE, Coimbra Group, ECIU and EUA, the landscape of higher education dramatically changed in Europe:

- the “Bologna process” was initiated to change organisation and structures;
- regional and international cooperation between institutions was not only intensified for research purposes but also for education (e.g. the overwhelming success of Erasmus) and was/is increasingly leading to mergers;
- the use of ICT (especially web based and internet supported teaching and learning) boomed and supported a shift in educational paradigms (from teaching to learning);
- virtual mobility for students, teachers and staff is getting gradually more and more adopted in European mainstream education (not in the least stimulated by actions and programmes of the European Commission and Parliament, such as Erasmus Mundus).

EUNITE is proud to have contributed – together with other networks – to the ongoing adoption process, but considers its objectives as reached. Although the EUNITE network ceases to exist, the achieved results and developed tools are put to the disposal of higher education through the EuroPACE website, whereas the separate EUNITE partner universities will actively remain contributing to future developments in the collaborative context of other (broader scaled) networks.

Physical mobility is generally accepted as an important component in the evolving shape of a European Higher Education Area. Virtual mobility, however, remains largely under utilised. Our experiences show that it can be an effective and extremely valuable constituent of such European Higher Education Area, which bears appreciation of both students and teachers that worked with it. Based on these findings from EUNITE’s and its member institutions’ own experiences and the EuroPACE EU-funded project outcomes in which EUNITE and its member institutions participated, the EUNITE Steering Committee would like to make a strong plea to the organisers of the 2009 Bologna process summit (the Flemish and French Ministry of Education in Belgium). to promote virtual mobility in the Bologna process.



We strongly suggest that the potential and advantages of virtual mobility should be shown and disseminated for further implementation and exploitation by universities. In particular, every student at master level should be encouraged to attend at least one, and preferably a couple of courses in a virtual mobility environment. Virtual mobility can be used in the preparation and/or follow up of physical mobility and therefore improve the latter's quality in a (cost) effective way. Also students that are not able to go for physical mobility have the opportunity to gain at least one valuable international experience. Excellent tools for the purpose, as developed in EUNITE and other European networks - often with (project) funding of the European Commission itself - are available. Furthermore "Virtual Mobility (VM)" should become an integral part of appropriate EU action lines and funding programmes in addition to physical mobility schemes. A recommendation of the Bologna process summit can help their implementation into large and effective use.

The EUNITE Steering Committee members,

Prof. Matti Pursula, Rector TKK University (Finland), Chairman,
Prof. Dr. A. Bygholm, Aalborg Universitet (Denmark),
Prof. Dr. Chr. Beierle, FernUniversität in Hagen (Germany),
Dr. M. Gea-Megias, Universidad de Granada (Spain),
Prof. Dr. Ir. G. Van der Perre, K.U.Leuven (Belgium),
Dr. S. Brough, University of Strathclyde (Scotland – UK),
Mr. J. Van den Branden, Secretary General.

Leuven, 17 October 2008