

## Integrated Solution to virtual mobility barriers

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## What is about? The Virtual mobility?

**According** to the *elearningeuropa* portal, Virtual Mobility (VM) means: “The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to obtain the same benefits as one would have with physical mobility but without the need to travel”. **European Commission** suggests a broad definition of VM “Virtual mobility for study offers students, as part of their curriculum, access to courses and study schemes from another HEI in a foreign country in order to learn, communicate and participate in collaborative work in an international environment with teachers and fellow students abroad via the new information technologies. VM can be combined with physical mobility period of an appropriate duration”.

**The Green Paper of the Commission of the European Communities** points out the characteristics of VM as a complement to physical mobility as follows:

- the use of the internet and other electronic forms of information and communication is often a catalyst for embarking on a period of physical mobility;
- it (*virtual mobility*) enables young people to prepare for a stay abroad and can create conditions for future physical mobility by facilitating friendships, contacts and social networking, etc., although it's not a substitute for physical mobility;
- provides a means to keep in contact with the host country once the mobility period is over.

## Best practices on Virtual mobility in Europe

**European virtual seminar on sustainable development (EVS)**. EVS, focuses on sustainable development in the context of an enlarging European Union. Multidisciplinary and international compound student groups of 4-6 members work together on a group report and a policy summary for 4 months, representing a 120 study hours. Credit points are given by each institution independently. Students communicate synchronously as well as asynchronously through a forum and a chat on the Internet. This course has been run completely virtually, as there were no physical contact points foreseen in the programme. 16 European universities took part in course.

**International student business game.** The International Student Business Challenge is set up as a game in which student groups create fictitious companies and compete with each other on an economic market. At the local institutions, participants are divided into groups of 4-8 students to make up a virtual company (name, logo, etc.). There are up to 9 companies in a market and the simulation can be done in several markets at a time. The game has a national and an international part. In the first part, teams compete locally in fictional markets in their own institutions. The game is played online through a central website. All supporting course material is also available online to the instructors in all participating institutions. Videoconferencing is also used in this course in several ways.

**Ehlee pilot course.** The “Identities in European History” pilot course (5 ECTS) was held on an Internet-based learning platform WebCT and in local study groups. Each student had two tutors, a local and an international tutor. All this was part of the Ehlee project: eHistory Learning Environment and valuation. The communication was both synchronous and asynchronous and the delivery was both location dependent (the local study groups) and independent (students were free to access the learning platform from wherever they wanted). It was a blended learning activity: there were local student groups and an online learning platform.

## What is the aim and stages of the project?

**The main aim** of the project is to make virtual mobility a mainstream opportunity for all parties involved (teachers, students and institutions). UBIcamp proposes a comprehensive solution that addresses all the barriers and difficulties of virtual mobility nowadays.

Stages of the project:

1. **“Virtual Mobility Practical Framework”** development: quality criteria and standards for different elements which are necessary for implementation of virtual mobility in HEIs: a) Organizational elements (recognition of the teaching/learning experience, institutional agreements, virtual mobility session organization requirements, etc); b) Technological elements (minimum technological standards of learning resources in order to make them re-usable, accessible, etc.); c) Pedagogic/ didactical elements (requirements for didactical preparation of study curriculum for virtual mobility and

assessment methodologies for virtual mobility); d) Cultural elements (learning resources to enhance intercultural exchanges during virtual mobility processes).

**2. Creation of open educational resources** based on the standards defined and linked to several subjects identified by partners. The aim is to achieve maximum reuse of the contents at European level.

**3. Developing training materials** and implementing training sessions in at least 35 Universities in Europe, involving students, teachers, Erasmus officers and administrators. **Raise awareness** of virtual mobility among HEIs. Some workshops and presentation seminars will be organized in order to disseminate the advantages that virtual mobility presents. Also, these events will be used to encourage institutions to participate in virtual mobility activities.

**4. Testing** the “virtual mobility practical framework” through the implementation of Virtual Erasmus Exchanges among those Universities that have been trained and wish to participate. The courses of the exchanges will be recognized by students’ participating universities.

**Dissemination** of project results widely at national and European level and anticipating exploitation activities for multiplying project impact.

## To whom results are directed? How every group can benefit from the project?

**Consortium** is expecting to reach 40 HEIs directly by the project. Our target is to reach directly at least 70 students; 30 teachers; and 10 mobility officers.

**Higher educational establishments (HEI):** participation in virtual mobility will be the perfect scenario for HEIs modernization, as it will provide opportunities for knowledge exchange, capacity-building, transfer of know-how, transversal competences and skills acquisition, etc. for the whole academic community. This will not only benefit at institutional level, but also at individual-professional levels. Management competences, intercultural cooperation and open educational contents, are some of the improved areas that partners (students, teachers, decision-makers, officers) will present through participating in the project. That all lead to competitive educational establishment in European education market.

**Students:** virtual mobility enables European wide exchanges for all those not able to benefit from existing physical international exchange programmes, due to social, economical, organizational or other reasons and can therefore offer the advantages and benefits of real mobility to a wider community. Schedule flexibility is another advantage that virtual mobility offers to their users. Students can choose different modules in various European universities, not leaving the country.

**Teachers:** virtual mobility allows, through e-learning environments, working with a greater number of students and producing a more personalized learning with a higher training variety. Teachers have possibility to improve their skills and be more adaptable in European educational system. Teachers will higher their qualification and will become more competitive and attractive teachers for students.

## Kick off meeting in Oviedo

Oviedo University successfully organized on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of February 2013 the kick-off meeting of the project. The meeting was held at Oviedo University and the host organization, Oviedo University, received positive feedback and evaluation by all participants involved. The meeting provided a great opportunity for all partners to introduce themselves and their organizations, to meet each other and to come in contact. The participants are highly skilled professionals, academics and expert trainers in engineering, IT, management and economics.



## Info on partners

If You find our project interesting and you wish to participate in it, write to us:

Oviedo University (Spain): Aquilino Juan [dirinnovacion@uniovi.es](mailto:dirinnovacion@uniovi.es)

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More about project in <http://www.ubicamp.eu>