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Virtual Exchange as Innovative Practice across Europe: Awareness and Use in Higher Education

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Virtual Exchange as Innovative Practice across Europe Awareness and Use in Higher Education

EVOLVE Project Baseline Study
March 2019

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Evidence-Validated Online Learning through Virtual Exchange

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Executive summary

This report presents the findings of a survey conducted by the Erasmus+ KA3 project EVOLVE (www.evolve-erasmus.eu) on the awareness and use of Virtual Exchange (VE) in Higher Education across Europe, primarily on the basis of data from universities belonging to the Coimbra Group and SGroup university networks.

VE is an educational practice based on sustained, technology-enabled communication and interaction between individuals or groups of learners from geographically separated and/or different cultural backgrounds. This type of online collaborative learning, which can be either in the form of class-to-class exchanges supported by university teachers or in the form of group exchanges facilitated by external exchange providers, is promoted by the EU as a tool for inclusion and to offer more young people an international experience. It also links up with institutional strategies and policies of 'internationalisation at home' and internationalising the curriculum. Finally, it is regarded as a tool to enhance students' employability in terms of transversal skills which employers seek, including foreign language proficiency and intercultural competence, and digital and collaboration skills.

Our study found that VE is not yet widely known as educational practice by key stakeholders in implementation, such as educators, educational supporters, internationalisation officers and policy officers and managers. Policy officers and managers show a slightly higher degree of awareness, but this may partly be due to the fact that they associate VE with virtual mobility or online learning more generally.

VE is not yet used on a large scale by respondents in our sample. The main disciplines where it is implemented and understood are in Education; Arts and Humanities (especially languages); and Social sciences, journalism and information. Implementation, however, is not restricted to these areas and covers most other disciplines distinguished by our study. Support, when it is provided, is normally in the form of technical and pedagogical assistance; institutional recognition and incentives appear to be generally lacking; and data about inclusion at course or curriculum level by allocation of credits, incorporation in course descriptions and reservation of class time are inconclusive due to the small number of participants reporting on this. Finally, VE is not yet widely referenced in strategies and policies for eLearning, professional development and internationalisation, but a group of 10 to 15 universities appear to be moving towards further integration at strategic and policy levels.

Conversely, the potential of VE for educational innovation, skills development and internationalisation are widely acknowledged. More specifically, educators and educational supporters rate VE highly as a tool for teaching and learning innovation, development of intercultural competence, language and digital skills, as well as subscribing to its role in teacher professional development. Overall stakeholders also highly rank its potential for internationalisation, linking it to educational as well as economic benefits.

In response to the alleged benefit of VE as a low-cost solution to internationalisation, we point out that VE is not an activity that bears no cost at all. Learning to use it, running and maintaining it requires structural training and support facilities, for which institutional policies and infrastructures are generally not yet in place. In view of the unique characteristics of each exchange, it is not a tool that is easily standardised as a one-stop solution for all.

It is promising to see that there is substantial interest from each of the stakeholder groups to learn more about VE by participating in training. Training programmes such as those offered

through EVOLVE and Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange respond to this need. Through follow-up studies and interviews in institutions seeking to implement VE, we will try to find out more about factors of success and failure in this promising field of educational innovation and share these with the community at large in future publications.

Introduction

This report is an output of the EVOLVE project¹, an Erasmus+ KA3 Forward-Looking Cooperation Project which aims to mainstream Virtual Exchange (VE) as innovative educational practice in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) across Europe.

It presents the findings of a baseline survey which was carried out in order to understand the current state of the art as regards the awareness of virtual exchange in Higher Education institutions and the extent to which it is implemented across disciplines. The survey was primarily directed at members of the Coimbra Group and SGroup University Networks. These networks are partners in the EVOLVE project. Using the data from this study as input, we will be developing further activities with HEIs from these networks, such as conducting interviews, identifying and documenting good practices and writing policy documents to support further implementation of VE in these institutions.

What is Virtual Exchange?

The first task in EVOLVE was to define what is meant by virtual exchange, and after extensive discussion the consortium agreed on the following definition, which is published on the project website:

Virtual Exchange (VE) is a practice, supported by research, that consists of sustained, technology-enabled, people-to-people education programmes or activities in which constructive communication and interaction takes place between individuals or groups who are geographically separated and/or from different cultural backgrounds, with the support of educators or facilitators. Virtual Exchange combines the deep impact of intercultural dialogue and exchange with the broad reach of digital technology.

(<https://evolve-erasmus.eu/about-evolve/what-is-virtual-exchange/>)

VE aims to allow an increasing number of people to have a meaningful intercultural experience as part of their formal and/or non-formal education. This type of activity may be situated in educational programmes across the curriculum in order to increase mutual understanding, and global citizenship, as well as in informal education projects. Virtual Exchange also fosters the development of what have been recognized as employability skills such as digital competence (the ability to communicate and collaborate effectively online), foreign language competence, communication skills, media literacy and the ability to work in a diverse cultural context.

Virtual Exchange is:

- Sustained: unfolding over time with regular, intensive interaction;
- Technology-enabled: using new media, digital, and/or mobile technologies;

¹ <https://evolve-erasmus.eu>

- Preferably based on regular synchronous or near-synchronous meetings using high social presence media;
- People-to-people: involving inclusive, intercultural collaboration and dialogue, that bridges differences and distances and inspires action with a long term positive impact on relationships;
- Learner-led: following the philosophy of dialogue where participants are the main recipients and the main drivers of knowledge; learning through dialogue means that participants will be seeking mutual understanding and co-creating knowledge, based on their own experiences.
- Facilitated: with the support of trained facilitators and/or educators;
- Educational: Integrated into formal and/or non-formal educational programmes and activities to develop measurable increases in the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that foster pro-social behaviours;
- Structured to foster mutual understanding: covering topics related to identity, empathy, perspective taking, critical reflection, intercultural understanding, and helping participants to engage in constructive conversations in the face of ontological and epistemological differences; a key tenet of VE is that intercultural understanding and awareness are *not* automatic outcomes of contact between different groups/cultures.

The following terms are sometimes taken as synonyms to VE and can overlap with it:

- Telecollaboration in the field of language learning;
- Globally networked learning;
- Collaborative online international learning;
- Online Intercultural Exchange.

The following types of programmes do not fall under VE:

- Simple MOOCS with no sustained interactions between small groups of students;
- Distance learning courses;
- Creating social media groups;
- Unmoderated, unsustained, unstructured programs;
- Virtual mobility which is closer to distance online education: that is 'studying abroad' at another institution without having to go there and making claims to intercultural learning purely through being 'cross-border';
- Programs that lack a sustained pedagogy for interaction, such as programs with only one moment for interaction, like a one-off meeting.

It is an important time for Virtual Exchange as policy makers at institutional, national and transnational levels across the globe are showing an interest in this type of educational activity. The European Commission launched the Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange pilot project in January 2018. It is a project established under a contract with the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), financed by the European Union's budget. In the United States,

an increasing number of universities are developing units or centres which support their staff in the development and implementation of Virtual Exchange projects. The first university to do so was the State University of New York, whose Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Center has become an important reference point for many other universities in the US, but also Europe. The COIL model is increasingly being recognised as a valid way for universities to internationalise their curricula (Rubin and Guth 2016; De Wit, 2016).

Background to the study, relevance and aims

The European Commission is promoting Virtual Exchange as a tool for inclusion, to offer a greater number of young people an international experience through online facilitated dialogue. Virtual exchange is also seen to enhance their employability in terms of 'soft skills', those transversal skills which employers seek, including foreign language and intercultural communication skills and the ability to work in a team².

At the same time universities have come to recognise that student mobility is limited to a small percentage of students. Universities are developing strategies for what is described as 'internationalisation at home', defined as "...the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments" (Beelen & Jones, 2015). This is somewhat related to the notion of 'internationalisation of the curriculum', defined as "the incorporation of international, intercultural and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods and support services of a program of study" (Leask 2015, p. 9). Both of these concepts emphasise the importance of 'internationalising' learning for all university students, not just mobile students and make reference to intercultural learning, incorporation of new viewpoints and global contexts.

In order to support the EVOLVE project's aim of integrating Virtual Exchange into universities' internationalisation and modernisation strategies, it was deemed necessary to gain an understanding of the current state of the art in terms of awareness and understanding of Virtual Exchange as well as levels of implementation and support structures in place. To our knowledge no other study has been carried out specifically regarding Virtual Exchange across disciplines in Higher Education and addressing different stakeholders. There have, however, been studies about telecollaboration, that is a model of Virtual Exchange developed in foreign language education (Guth, Helm & O'Dowd, 2012), and studies on Virtual Mobility, a different concept which is defined as the opportunity for students to take online courses from foreign universities with the recognition of these credits from their own university.³

The specific questions that we ask in this study are:

- What is the current level of awareness of VE with different stakeholders in Higher Education?
- To what extent is Virtual Exchange implemented across disciplines?
- To what extent are the VEs integrated into curricula and what kinds of support are offered?

² https://europa.eu/youth/erasmusvirtual/objectives_en

³ <https://eadtu.eu/home/policy-areas/virtual-mobility/about>

- What is the perceived potential for educational innovation, internationalisation and competence development for students and teachers?
- To what extent is Virtual Exchange supported by university policies and strategies?
- What does 'internationalisation' mean more exactly, related to VE, in the eyes of the different stakeholders?

Stakeholders and methodology

Virtual Exchange is a transversal activity, and brings together areas which in universities are often managed by different offices or structures. VE is about introducing innovative pedagogical practices into Higher Education, the use of technologies in education, the internationalisation of education, as well as specific disciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledges and skills. As such, it potentially involves departments/faculties and teaching staff; centres for professional development; international offices as it is an international activity and can enhance and support both student and staff mobility, joint degree courses, university partnerships; and finally policy makers who can support this type of activity through specific university policies or strategies, including the establishment of centres for global learning.⁴

A short online survey was developed in order to gather baseline data regarding levels of awareness and implementation of Virtual Exchange among universities.

The survey was directed at four different types of stakeholders that were described in the survey as follows:

- Educator (someone who teaches or designs courses);
- Educational supporter (someone who supports educators, for instance, pedagogical advisor, IT staff, etc.);
- Internationalisation officer (someone who facilitates the internationalisation of educational programmes by organising international partnerships and projects, mobility programmes, etc);
- Policy maker / manager (someone involved in strategic planning of educational innovation, internationalisation, etc. / someone responsible for education as programme director, member of (executive) board, etc.).

The stakeholders indicated which role best described their function in the university and the questions were adapted to the type of stakeholder. The survey was made available in English, Italian, Spanish, French and Polish (for a copy of the survey questions in English, see Appendix B).

The survey was announced to potential respondents in the Coimbra and SGroup networks⁵ through emails to university contacts (mainly international liaison officers) and published in the Coimbra Group and SGroup Newsletters in September 2018, with reminders sent in the final

⁴ See for example Coventry University's Centre for Global Learning: <https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/areas-of-research/global-learning/about-us/>

⁵ These two networks are partners in the EVOLVE project. It was felt that university networks which already have strong collaborations between member universities are the ideal candidates for implementing Virtual Exchange.

week of October. A link to the survey was also available on the EVOLVE project website and shared through social media. The survey was available from 30 August 2018 to 1 November 2018.

Respondents

139 respondents completed the survey, 128 of whom consented to have their data used for the study. 95 (74.2%) respondents are from the Coimbra Group network, 22 (17.2%) from the SGroup network and 11 participants (8.6%) do not belong to these networks or did not mention their institution's name (Figure 1).

Respondents by network

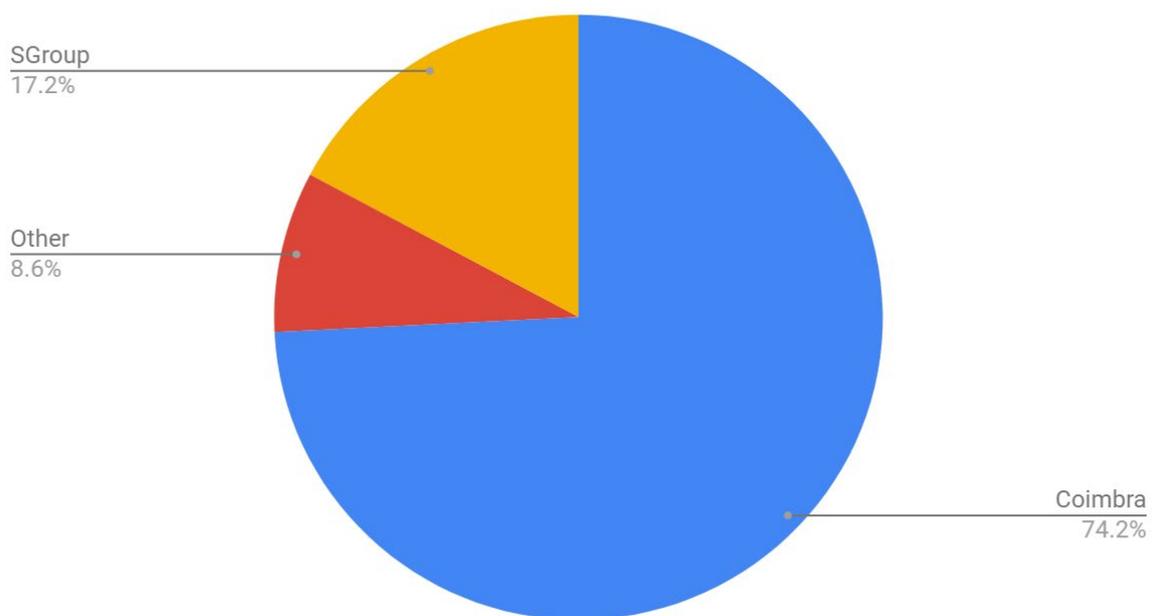


Figure 1: Respondents by network

In total, the 128 responses on which we base this report stem from at least 44 institutions (plus the respondents who did not indicate their institution). Respondents are based in 19 different countries, all of which with the exception of 1 are European (Figure 2)⁶.

In relation to the university networks targeted, the sample represents a fair proportion of the network institutions: 26 of a total of 39 Coimbra Group institutions (66.7%) and 13 of 34 SGroup universities (38.2%) have participated in the study.

⁶ For one respondent only the first affiliation in the Netherlands is included here. She also reported a secondary affiliation in the US, which is not stated in this list.

Respondents by country

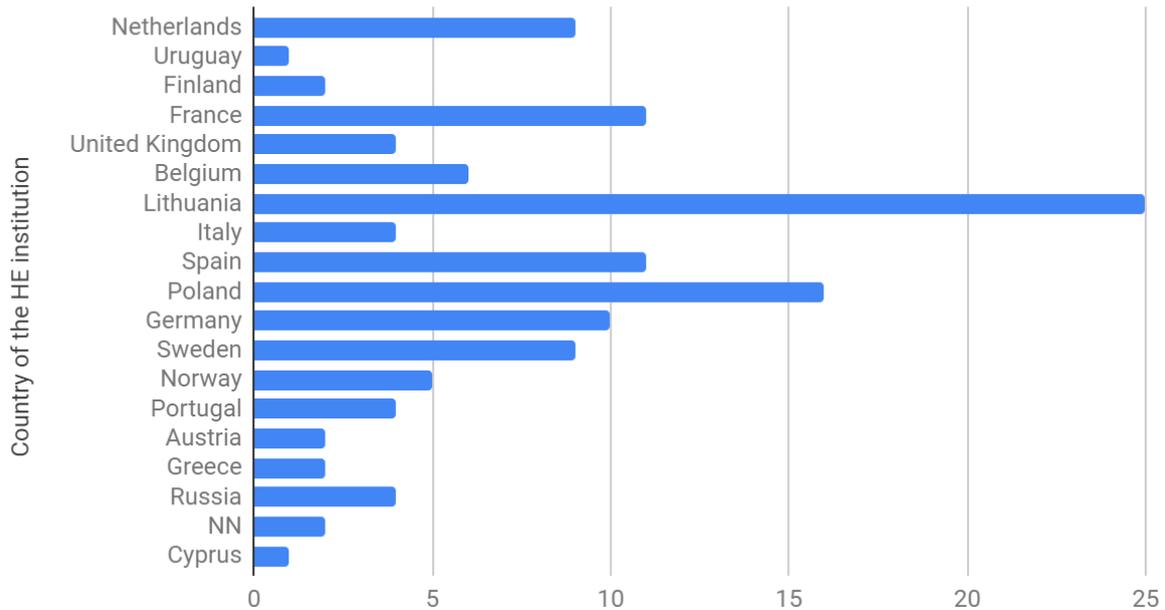


Figure 2: Respondents by country

Although the total number of responses was lower than had been hoped for, a relatively large number of responses was received from some institutions (> 5 Jagiellonian University, Vilnius University, KU Leuven, University of Groningen, University of Poitiers for Coimbra; and Malmö University for SGroup). These institutions will be included in the list of institutions to be contacted later for follow-up studies on awareness, use and support of VE.

The distribution by different types of stakeholders as described above is as follows:

Respondents by role

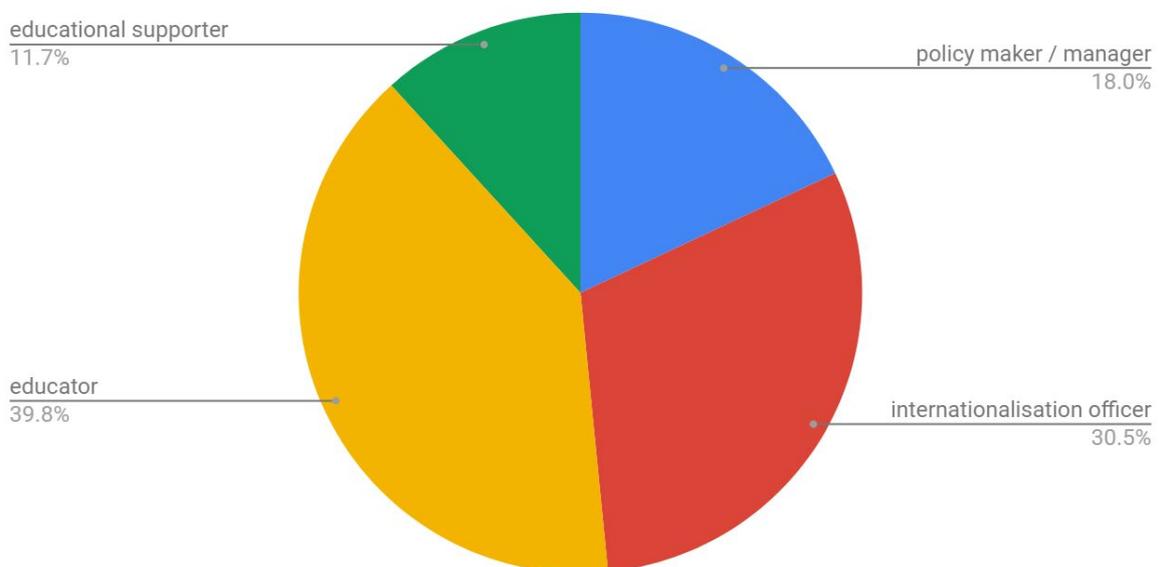


Figure 3: Respondents by role

Educators make up the largest group of respondents (51 or 39.8% of all respondents). The second largest group (39 - 30.5%) are internationalisation officers, followed by policy makers and management (23 - 18.0%) and educational supporters (15 - 11.7%). The distribution by stakeholder for the Coimbra and SGroup groups is similar to the overall representation. The respondent group outside these networks consists of educators and international officers only.

Educators

The educator-respondents range from a cross-section of disciplines, for the charting of which we use the International Standard Classification of Education Codes (ISCED), version 2013.⁷ For ease of reference, we report at the highest ISCED levels here:

| Main discipline | |
|--|-----------|
| 00 Generic Programmes and Qualifications | 2 |
| 01 Education | 2 |
| 02 Arts and Humanities | 13 |
| 03 Social sciences, journalism and information | 10 |
| 04 Business, administration and law | 4 |
| 05 Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics | 11 |
| 06 Information and Communication Technologies | 2 |
| 07 Engineering, manufacturing and construction | 2 |
| 08 Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary | |
| 09 Health and welfare | 5 |
| 10 Services | |
| Total | 51 |

Table 1: Educator-respondents by discipline

The largest number of educators are from Arts and Humanities (13), particularly from languages and language acquisition (9), but we also received a considerable number of responses from educators in Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics (11) and Social sciences, journalism and information (10). Overall, most disciplines were represented by the educator-respondents.

Policy makers and managers

The group identifying as policy makers and managers hold managerial functions rather than advisory functions. Of these, 5 have positions in internationalisation and mobility (Delegate of the Rector for mobility and international programs, Deputy Director - International Relations Directorate, International Partnerships Manager, Head of the International Relations Unit, Head of Go Abroad, Coordinator Internationalization of the University Administration). Another 3 are in charge of educational innovation (Head Educational Development Unit, Vice President Delegate Student Success and Pedagogy, Project manager / Assistant Professor). The other 4 have senior academic functions (Director Graduate Academy, Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Law and Administration, Teaching and Research Staff + Manager, Full Professor).

⁷ <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-fields-of-education-and-training-2013-detailed-field-descriptions-2015-en.pdf>

International officers

Of the international officers, 2 identify themselves as academic staff, while all the other 37 hold administrative staff positions. The additional function descriptions suggest that several of these hold positions as director, manager or head of international offices. There is therefore some overlap between these respondents and the policy and management group above.

Educational supporters

The group of educational supporters also includes staff in senior management functions (Chair Advisory Body on Didactics, Director Careers and Employability, Head of Center for Digital Teaching and Learning). Other respondents in this group indicate that they work at operational levels rather than executive levels.

Awareness of Virtual Exchange in Higher Education

In order to investigate the initial level of awareness of Virtual Exchange in Higher Education, we asked respondents if they were familiar with VE before reading the description of it on the opening page of the survey.

Only 20 respondents reported having a precise idea of what Virtual Exchange is, and 14 had read or talked about it (see Table 2).

| | Educators | Educational supporters | Internationalisation officers | Policy/ management | Total |
|---|------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------|
| No, I had never heard about it | 22 (43.1%) | 5 (33.3%) | 15 (38.5%) | 4 (17.4%) | 46 |
| I had heard about it but I did not really know what it is | 8 (15.7%) | 2 (13.3%) | 6 (15.4%) | 1 (4.3%) | 17 |
| I had heard about it and I had a rough idea what it is | 7 (13.7%) | 4 (26.7%) | 13 (33.3%) | 7 (30.4%) | 31 |
| I had read (e.g. a report..) / discussed about it | 4 (7.8%) | 2 (13.3%) | 1 (2.6%) | 7 (30.4%) | 14 |
| Yes, I had a precise idea what it is | 10 (19.6%) | 2 (13.3%) | 4 (10.3%) | 4 (17.4%) | 20 |
| Total | 51 | 15 | 39 | 23 | 128 |

Table 2: Familiarity with VE by stakeholders

We used a 5-point-Likert-scale to analyse these responses.⁸ The results indicate that there was a generally low level of awareness across all the respondents (average 1.9), and that the

⁸ The 5-point-Likert-scale we used for our analysis corresponds to the following items:

1 = No, I had never heard about it

2 = I had heard about it but I did not really know what it is

3 = I had heard about it and I had a rough idea what it is

4 = I had read (e.g. a report) / discussed about it

5 = Yes, I had a precise idea what it is

majority of respondents had, at best, a rough idea of Virtual Exchange is. International officers appear to be least familiar with VE (1.3).

Managers/policy makers on average rank their level of familiarity with VE higher (2.3) than the other groups of stakeholders (educators, educational supporters, internationalisation officers). Although the difference was not significant,⁹ this higher level of awareness within this group may be due to the fact that the term 'Virtual Exchange' has indeed begun to enter policy documents drafted by the European Commission and information about both the Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange pilot project and the EVOLVE project were disseminated amongst both networks in 2018 through newsletters and activities¹⁰.

Some of the responses to the open questions show, however, that there is a degree of confusion as regards Virtual Exchange and Virtual Mobility - which are regarded as the same by some respondents who make reference to online courses:

“It can be an alternative to face-to-face teaching and hence lead to virtual mobility”

“Possibilité de proposer des enseignements à distance pour des étudiants étrangers (intérêt notamment pour l'enseignement post universitaire)”

[“Opportunity to propose courses at a distance for foreign students (interesting in particular for post-university courses)”]

“Pour l'instant, elle est surtout développée pour l'enseignement des étudiants en soins infirmiers qui sont répartis dans 7 structures. L'éloignement géographique nous a conduit à élaborer un référentiel de cours en ligne.”

[“So far, we put it into place mainly for courses in nursing studies, where students are spread over 7 different structures. It is the geographical distance that has led us to set up a baseline for online courses.”]

“Our faculties try to implement online courses and resources to their curricula.”

The term 'virtual' is also associated with 'virtual education' or 'online education' more generally. It may well be that this confusion of terms has affected respondents' answers to this and other questions in the survey to some extent.

Use of VE across disciplines

We examined the extent of use of VE in Higher Educational Institutions by looking at implementation by educator-respondents as well as implementation reported by the different stakeholders at their institutions.

Implementation by educators

The majority of the 51 educators who answered the survey do not have any experience with VE. 22 (43.1%) had never heard of VE; these were all educators working in disciplines other

⁹ A Kruskal Wallis test shows that this difference is not significant if the level of significance is set at < 0.05 (chi-squared = 7.1252, df = 3, p-value = 0.07).

¹⁰ At the 2018 Coimbra Group General Assembly there was a talk on the Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange project by one of the European Commission policy officers, there was also a talk at a SGroup event in October.

than languages and teacher training. 18 (35.3%) educator-respondents had heard about VE, but had not yet run exchanges and were not planning to do so; 4 others (7.8%) responded that they had no VE experience yet, but were planning to implement it.

Only 7 (13.7%) educators stated that they already put into place one or several VEs (Table 3, Personal use). These respondents came from Education (1), Arts and Humanities (4), Social Sciences, journalism and information (1) and Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics. For 4 of these, it appeared to be well-established practice, since they reported having run several exchanges (4 to 10) over several years (starting from 2009 to 2015 in our sample). These experienced practitioners are from the University of Poitiers, University of Patras, University of Jyväskylä, and Open University NL/University of Colorado respectively. Their respective disciplines are languages, earth sciences, languages and teacher training. For the 3 others it was a new experience. These are all from the University of Groningen.

| <i>Main discipline</i> | Personal use | Reported use |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| 00 Generic Programmes and Qualifications | | 3 |
| 01 Education | 1 | 8 |
| 02 Arts and Humanities | 4 | 11 |
| 03 Social sciences, journalism and information | 1 | 8 |
| 04 Business, administration and law | | 3 |
| 05 Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics | 1 | 4 |
| 06 Information and Communication Technologies | | 3 |
| 07 Engineering, manufacturing and construction | | 3 |
| 08 Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary | | |
| 09 Health and welfare | | 4 |
| 10 Services | | |
| Total | 7 | 47 |

Table 3: Personal use by educators and reported use

Reported use

27 of the 128 respondents state that they know about educators in their institutions who are practising VE. These respondents include stakeholders of each category: 11 managers, 5 educational supporters, 7 educators and 4 internationalisation officers. In view of their representation in our sample, international officers appear to be the group who have least heard about VE as educational practice.

A breakdown by disciplinary areas where VE is implemented according to these respondents is given in Table 3 above (Reported use). These reported data suggest that the application of VE spans a wide range of academic disciplines. Implementation would seem to be most common in Arts and Humanities (reported 11 times), Education (8) and Social Sciences, journalism and information (8).

Managers at the University of Edinburgh and University of Groningen (UG) report between 10 and 50 ongoing exchanges. The University of Bergen, the University of Poitiers and Jan Dlugosz University (Poland) report 5 to 10 exchanges. It is worth pointing out that the two universities with the highest number of reported exchanges have Virtual Exchange strategies or institutional projects in place. The University of Edinburgh in fact is implementing two EC-

funded projects with Virtual Exchange components, and is planning to use Virtual Exchange to support its [Vision 2025](#) strategy, according to which it has committed to provide all students with an international experience. [Edinburgh Global](#) is “keen to build capacity and develop skills in Virtual Exchange and experiential learning to provide new, flexible opportunities for students who cannot go on traditional year-long exchanges abroad”¹¹ At the University of Groningen, ENVOIE (Enabling Virtual Online International Exchange) is a recently launched teaching and learning innovation project aiming to promote VE as university-wide practice.¹²

Integration and support

Integration of VE into the curriculum

Educators who had implemented VE and educational supporters who reported implementation in their institutions were asked if and how VE was integrated in the curriculum. The forms of integration they could choose from are based on Lewis & O’Dowd (2016), which discusses different ways in which VE may be integrated at curriculum and course level:

- Class time is dedicated to the VE (to online interaction and/or reflection, etc.)
- The VE figures in the official course description
- ECTS are allocated to the VE
- The VE is not part of a study program (your students participate in the VE on a voluntary basis)

| | | Class time | Course description | ECTS | Voluntary | Total |
|-----------------------|--|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------|------------------|--------------|
| Educational supporter | | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Educator | | 4 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 13 |
| Total | | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 15 |

Table 4: Integration of VE

7 educators (20%) and 2 educational supporters (15%) provide information on how VE is integrated in the curriculum. 3 respondents report that the VE is not part of a study program. Integration by dedication of class time is mentioned 5 times, followed by incorporation in course descriptions (4 times) and allocation of ECTS credits (3 times). In view of the low response overall and considering that these numbers include data from 3 educator-respondents from a single institution (University of Groningen), we cannot say much in general about the degree of integration at course/curriculum level. However, some institutions are

¹¹<https://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/developing-virtual-exchange-at-the-university-of-edinburgh/>

¹² <https://www.rug.nl/let/organization/diensten-en-voorzieningen/ictol/projecten/envoie/>

beginning to incorporate it in course descriptions, allocate ECTS credits to it and reserve class time for VE activities.

Support and incentives

Respondents were also asked whether their HE institution gives support to staff in order to set up or run VEs. A total of 82 stakeholders responded to this question. The table below ranks the items they could choose (they could choose more than one option) from the most to the least often chosen.

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Help with technical issues | 28 |
| Advice on the pedagogical design of the project | 23 |
| Recognition from peers (innovative teaching approaches are valuable in the eyes of your peers / shown and shared as “good practice”) | 15 |
| None | 15 |
| Training (regular and/or timely training sessions) | 13 |
| Financial support (reduces the number of teaching hours you have to give / you are paid a specific amount / allows you to climb the career ladder faster) | 5 |
| Other | 2 |
| I don't know | 24 |

Table 5: Support and incentives

According to these answers, the main type of active support that is provided is technical help (N=28). It is followed rather closely by advice on the pedagogical design of a VE (N=23). Another type of support is recognition by peers: 15 respondents mention that setting up a VE is valued as an innovative teaching or good practice. 13 stakeholders, stemming from 8 different institutions, state that their universities provide staff training with specific focus on VE. In some cases (N=5), educators who put into place VEs benefit from financial incentives (reduction of teaching time, personal stipends, or career perspectives). On the other hand, 15 stakeholders state that their institution does not give any support, and 24 others do not know about any support.

Strategies and policies

As a final aspect of integration, the two stakeholder groups of policy makers / managers and international officers were asked to which extent VE is included in strategies and policies for eLearning, professional development and internationalisation.

The answers for the largest part fall between “Not at all” and “Uncertain”. So, overall VE is not yet clearly integrated at the level of institutional strategies and policies. Policy makers and managers indicate a little more often than international officers that VE is part of strategies and policies. VE is more frequently associated with eLearning strategies and policies than strategies and policies in the other areas.

| | eLearning | Internationalisation | Professional Development |
|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Not at all | 6 (13.95%) | 7 (16.28%) | 8 (18.60%) |
| Not really | 7 (16.28%) | 12 (27.91%) | 7 (16.28%) |
| Uncertain | 11 (25.58%) | 9 (20.93%) | 16 (37.21%) |
| Yes, a bit/sometimes | 12 (27.91%) | 9 (20.93%) | 8 (18.60%) |
| Yes, absolutely | 7 (16.28%) | 6 (13.95%) | 4 (9.30%) |
| Total | 43 | 43 | 43 |

Table 6: Integration in strategies and policies

25 respondents indicate that VE is not included in eLearning strategies and policies or are uncertain about this; 19 mention that it is included. Institutions where VE is reported to be part of eLearning strategies include University of Edinburgh, Uppsala University, University of Granada, University of Groningen, University of Montpellier, KU Leuven, University of León, University of Würzburg, Jagiellonian University, Saint-Petersburg State University, and University of Bergen. As mentioned above, some care should be taken in interpreting these data since VE appears to be associated with virtual education more generally.

28 respondents from the two stakeholder groups selected “Not at all”, “Not really”, or “Uncertain” about VE in relation to internationalisation, indicating that VE is not yet a well-established element in internationalisation policies or strategies within HE institutions in our survey. By contrast, 15 respondents indicated that it was included. 5 policy makers / managers from the University of Edinburgh, University of Granada, KU Leuven, University of León and University of Groningen state affirmatively that VE is integrated in the internationalisation policies/strategies of their institution. The same is true of an international officer from the Malmö University. Less affirmative (“Yes, a bit/sometimes”) are 4 policy makers / managers and 5 international officers from the University of Uppsala, University of Barcelona, University of Montpellier, University of Groningen, University of Bergen, State University of St Petersburg, and Jagiellonian University.

VE is least often related to strategies and policies on teacher professional development (31 negative or uncertain; 12 affirmative). Policy makers / managers reporting that it is part of strategic and policy initiatives in this area are from University of Edinburgh, University of Granada, University of Bristol, University of Montpellier, KU Leuven, University of Groningen, University of León, University of Poitiers, Jagiellonian University, Jan Dlugosz University and Malmö University.

In summary, integration of VE in strategies and policies in these three areas appears to be low overall. The list of universities which have included VE at the strategic and policy levels is restricted to around 10 to 15 universities represented in our survey. In the section on use of VE above, some of these universities report a substantial number of implementations, while in other cases none are reported yet. These figures would seem to suggest that VE is emerging as a topic in strategies, but that implementation in practice still varies strongly between universities.

Potential for innovation and skills development

Educators and educational supporters were asked to what extent they regard VE as a means of teaching and learning innovation, intercultural competence development, language

development, digital skills development and teacher professional development. The answers were ranked on a 5-point-Likert-scale.¹³

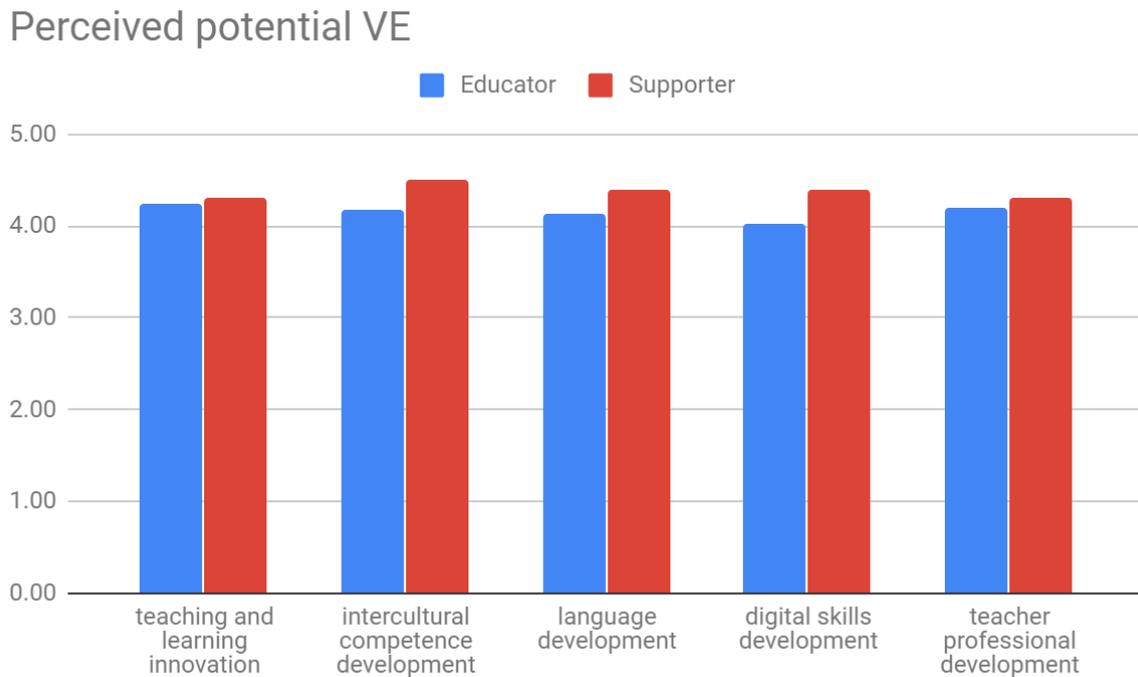


Figure 4: Perceived potential for innovation and competence development

The average score is quite high overall, since it lies consistently between 4.0 and 4.5, for both types of stakeholders. Although educational supporters rank the benefits slightly higher than the educators, these differences are not significant for any of these five questions. On the basis of these responses, we may safely conclude that the pedagogical benefits associated with VE are generally recognised by the educators and educational supporters in our survey. This is further illustrated by comments such as the following:

“mimics real world context for global interactions and workplace”

“For teachers VE offers meaningful opportunities to initiate and experience (intercultural) learning based on constructivistic principles. The virtual, multicultural and interdisciplinary setting calls for constant (self-)interrogation, and negotiation and thus constitutes a third space for teachers and learners alike.”

¹³ The 5-point Likert scale corresponded to the following items:

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Not really
- 3 = Uncertain
- 4 = Yes, a bit/sometimes
- 5 = Yes, absolutely

Potential for internationalisation

All stakeholders were asked to which extent they regard VE as a means of internationalisation. On our 5-point scale, the average varies between 4.0 for international officers to 4.7 for educational supporters. This indicates that in the eyes of all stakeholder groups VE is strongly regarded as a means for internationalisation. However, the distribution of answers and the comments to this question show that perceptions of the added benefits for internationalisation vary considerably between the different stakeholder groups. That is why we conducted additional qualitative analyses of these perceptions (see also Appendix A).

| | Educators | Supporters | International Officers | Policy/ Management | Total |
|----------------------|-------------|------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Not at all | | | | | |
| Not really | 3 (10.34%) | | 1 (4.17%) | 1 (5.26%) | 5 |
| Uncertain | 1 (3.45%) | | 6 (25.00%) | 1 (5.26%) | 8 |
| Yes, a bit/sometimes | 13 (44.83%) | 3 (30.00%) | 9 (37.50%) | 6 (31.58%) | 31 |
| Yes, absolutely | 12 (41.38%) | 7 (70.00%) | 8 (33.33%) | 11 (57.89%) | 38 |
| Total | 29 | 10 | 24 | 19 | 82 |

Table 7: Potential for internationalisation

Overall there was clear support for the view that VE is a means for internationalisation with 31 from 82 selecting “Yes, a bit/sometimes” and 38 “Yes, absolutely”. The group which appears to be least certain of the potential for internationalisation are the international officers, where 6 out of 24 selected “Uncertain” and 1 “Not really”. Likewise, 3 out of 29 educators did not really regard VE as a means for internationalisation and 1 was uncertain.

Some of the respondents show a good understanding of the potential of Virtual Exchange in terms of internationalisation both for faculty members, staff and students:

“It could be a way to offer a more accessible form of international experience for students who can't, or prefer not to go, abroad. It may also be a means for educators to implement internationalisation in the curriculum and as a means of teaching.”

“More international environment and wider cultural awareness of students and staff, wider access to multilingual classrooms, transversal skills and high quality programmes.”

Each group of participants reflects on Virtual Exchange within processes of internationalisation from slightly different perspectives but linked to the concept of internationalisation of the curriculum or at home. For example, an educational supporter understands it as “[a] means for internationalization at home” and from an educator’s perspective: “While our university classrooms are becoming increasingly multicultural, VE potentially expands the possibilities for international exchange within the context of teaching and learning.” One of the internationalisation officers wrote, “It may also be a means for educators to implement internationalisation in the curriculum and as a means of teaching.”

The **acquisition of intercultural competence** is an important dimension that Virtual Exchange is seen to offer for the four groups of stakeholders mentioned in the open responses:

“It increases the opportunity for students to work in an international environment, and for staff to understand different academic cultures and attune their teaching better” (educator).

“Creating room and opportunity for an exchange based on mutual respect and allowing space to learn about intercultural aspects” (educational supporter).

“More international environment and wider cultural awareness of students and staff, wider access to multilingual classrooms, transversal skills and high quality programmes. access to knowledge from other educational centers, cultural exchange” (internationalisation officer).

“Developing intercultural competencies, developing a welcoming atmosphere at the university, deepening the exchange with partner universities, finding opportunities for collaboration” (manager).

The potential of VE in strengthening current partnerships and opening up new spaces for **collaboration** and international exchanges is the most cited topic in the open answers.

“It gives the opportunity for collaborative learning to take place between students across national borders” (educator).

“It could broaden the academic offer for students and at the same time it could create further opportunities of international cooperation at institutional level” (internationalisation officer).

“One big benefit is that we can reduce the traveling time for teachers. It’s possible to keep in contact with students abroad, and collaboration with other universities” (manager).

“Bringing internationalisation to the level of teaching without necessarily requiring a joint programme, degree or partnership.”

Stakeholders refer to the widening and more inclusive potential of Virtual Exchange, at a lower economic - but also environmental - cost than mobility programmes. This response was found above all at the management level.

“It provides a great opportunity to offer easier and wider access to intercultural classes by cutting out travel costs” (educational supporter).

“More students can participate, benefits for the environment, minimum costs for students” (international officer).

“You can achieve high performance and afford many opportunities at a low cost” (manager).

Discussion

To go back to our central questions, we can say that the current **level of awareness of VE is not very high** amongst any of the stakeholder groups who responded to the survey. Those at management/policy level seem to have a slightly higher level of awareness, perhaps because VE is beginning to be mentioned in policy documents and at network events. Nonetheless understanding of the concept is not very clear, and there appears to be some **confusion** between Virtual Exchange and other terms such as virtual mobility.

Some of the educators have a good level of understanding of what Virtual Exchange is, though only a small number (14%) actually had experience of implementation. Of these implementers, some had extensive experience whilst others were novices, in some cases working in an institution where VE had become part of the strategy. Some other stakeholders reported that VE was implemented in their institutions, though not personally by themselves, but again, these were a minority (22%). This suggests that **Virtual Exchange is NOT a common practice in Higher Education institutions**, or that if it is taking place, it is above all at a bottom up level. It is important to point out, however, that the responses we received were somewhat limited in number and may not be fully representative of the universities studied.

The subject disciplines in which VE is implemented and understood are primarily in the ISCED areas of **Education, Arts and Humanities** (especially languages), and **Social sciences, journalism and information**. This is not surprising as it corresponds to what studies have found as regards awareness and understanding the relevance of internationalisation of the curriculum (Kirk et al. 2018). It may also partly be due to the larger representation of educators from those disciplines in our sample, but it is equally reflected in the uses reported by other informants in our study. Importantly however they also mention implementation across other disciplines, suggesting that VE, although not yet implemented on a large scale in academia overall, is already **beginning to be dispersed among the full range of academic disciplines**.

There does **not** appear to be **a great deal of support for educators** implementing Virtual Exchange. When it is mentioned, it is above all technical and pedagogical, but few respondents indicated institutional recognition and support in terms of incentives. Due to the small number of respondents who reported on this, we cannot conclude much yet about the degree of integration at course / curriculum level by inclusion in course descriptions, allocation of credits or class activities dedicated to it.

We cannot say whether (perceived) lack of support is a factor which prevents educators from implementing Virtual Exchange. This is more likely due to **a lack of integrated approaches to VE** which build on a common understanding or vision of VE and seek to propagate and implement it at the levels of education, internationalisation and support. This is reflected by the fact that in general, within the institutions polled, VE is not yet part of institutions' policies and strategies in eLearning, internationalisation and teacher professional development. Around 10 to 15 institutions in our sample would seem to be ahead of other institutions in implementing VE, providing support for it and considering it as a tool at strategic and policy levels. It will be interesting to learn more about successes and failures of implementation at these institutions and possibly others which we did not manage to capture in our survey, to identify best practices and disseminate them in our networks.

One aspect that clearly stands out in our survey is that the **potential of VE for educational innovation and internationalisation is strongly acknowledged** by the majority of participating stakeholders. Educators, educational supporters, internationalisation officers and policy makers and managers all recognise that VE may be a tool for VE for teaching and learning innovation, and the development of intercultural competence, language and digital skills development, as well as a means of professional development for teachers. By the same token, they also regard VE highly as a tool for internationalisation. Both specific affordances for enhancing the educational experience and fostering prerequisite contemporary learning outcomes come to the fore in the comments made by the different groups. Respondents also mention how VE may be linked to ongoing initiatives such as internationalisation at home, achieving more inclusiveness and diversity and promoting excellence in learning and teaching. It may also enhance collaboration not only at the level of students and teachers, but also at the level of institutions as a tool to strengthen existing partnerships or facilitate creating new ones. That it provides a relatively cost-effective, low-level solution not requiring much paperwork is also mentioned several times.

As a word of caution it is important to point out here that Virtual Exchange is **not an activity that bears no cost at all**, for the design and implementation of quality Virtual Exchange places a significant workload on educators who decide to design and implement virtual exchanges. They need considerable training and support from other staff members at their institutions, for which the structures and policies still need to be put largely in place. Large-scale Virtual Exchange programmes, such as the recently started Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange pilot project, are available at no cost at the moment, but to integrate these properly at institutional levels further action is needed, involving strategies which address digitalisation, internationalisation and teacher professional development all at the same time.

VE offers opportunities for international learning on global and social issues that concern the identities of many universities inside and outside the Coimbra and SGroup networks. To sustain this form of learning beyond the level of a small group of enthusiastic educators, VE must be integrated strategically in such a way that the uniqueness of character which is a key feature of any successful exchange does not get lost. If anything, VE is **not a tool that is easily standardised** as a one-stop-for-all solution. There are different formats available for educational institutions to try out. Virtual Exchange providers such as Soliya and Sharing Perspectives Foundation provide facilitated exchanges as a form of outsourcing, whereas class-to-class exchanges are implemented by universities themselves. We believe that in either case teacher training and support are necessary to achieve connections between the teaching they provide and the learning that VE can facilitate through meaningful interactions with learners from different cultural, disciplinary and educational settings.

In fact, there was a **strong interest in further training** from all stakeholders: 41 educators (80.4%), 8 educational supporters (53.3%), 21 international officers (53.9%) and 11 policy makers / managers (47.8%) indicated that they would be interested in receiving training on implementing VE. Clearly, training programmes such as those offered through Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange and EVOLVE are responding to an active interest in learning more about the topic of implementing VE. It should be noted that current offerings are mainly targeting educators, so there is a need to expand and adapt the training for the other stakeholder groups as well.

Conclusion

There is clearly a great deal of work to be done in increasing awareness and understanding of what Virtual Exchange is, how it can be implemented within institutions and above all why - what can and do students and staff learn from Virtual Exchange experiences.

Recently important policy experimentations and pilot projects have been launched by the European Commission which are supporting the implementation of Virtual Exchange, and also contributing to the building of a strong evidence-base regarding the impact of VE.

There are several different models of Virtual Exchange which can be implemented, each of which focuses on different types of learning, and may be suited to different audiences. Within the context of EVOLVE there are opportunities for professional development for educators and support in implementing teacher-led virtual exchanges, and there are also facilitator-led, dialogue-based exchanges which focus on developing students' active listening skills and ability to engage in interactions on issues which may be more.

With this wide range of opportunities available, and limited understanding and experience of VE within most of the European universities that responded to the survey, it is clear that the main aims of the EVOLVE project should be to increase understanding of:

- the models of Virtual Exchange available;
- the potential impact of Virtual Exchange on students and educators;
- how institutions can develop a portfolio of Virtual Exchange to support their 'internationalisation at home' strategies and offer all students an intercultural and international experience;
- how VE should be implemented, integrated in curricula and recognised on an institutional level;
- the type of professional development educators need to implement VE in their classes to internationalise their curricula
- the type of support needed by educators and students.

The first year of EVOLVE was implemented simultaneously with the EU pilot programme Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange. Through close collaboration between representatives of both projects, it has become clear that EVOLVE has a specific role in bringing to the attention of institutions the opportunities for educators to participate in the ongoing Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange training and complementing these with training more specifically directed at the other stakeholders in implementation. The first year has also demonstrated the need for further research **across disciplines** to determine if and how VE can contribute to attaining the anticipated learning outcomes at student and teacher level.

Because it is a relatively unknown activity and there appear to be misconceptions about what VE is all about, we will also continue our dissemination activities about VE, focusing on the institutional levels in particular. Before the end of the project one and a half years from now, we will follow up the baseline study with a replication study in which we will examine the levels of awareness, use and support once more. We will also initiate site visits and interviews with institutions who appear to be pioneers in this field, hoping to learn from them – just as we hope they can learn from our attempts at unravelling this promising field of educational innovation further.

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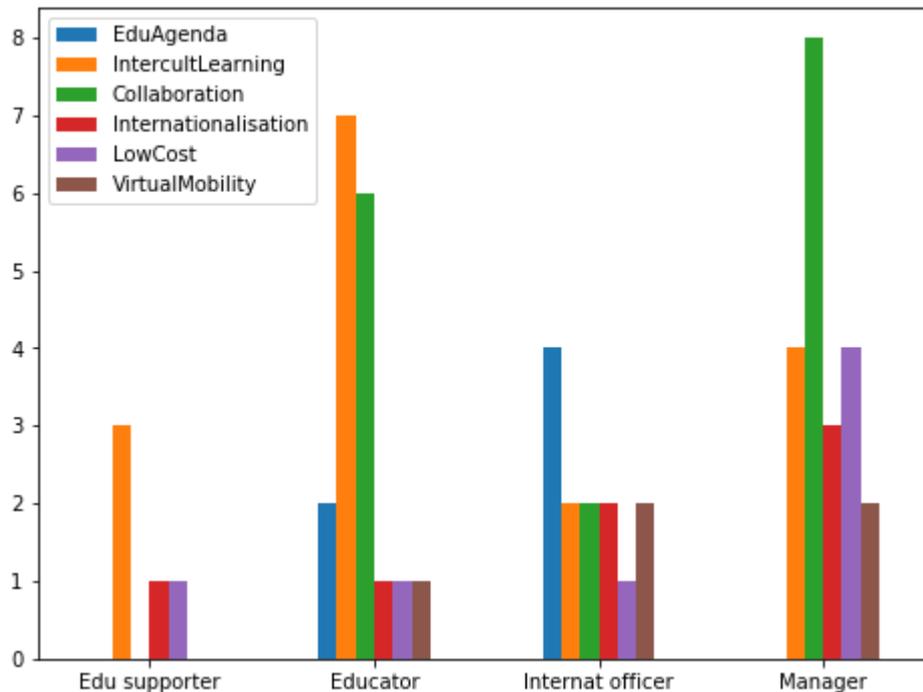


Figure 6: Reported benefits by category

1. Education agendas: Educators and representatives of internationalisation offices reflected on Virtual Exchange in light of universities' strategies already in place: An educator reported that: "ce n'est pas très haut dans l'agenda des différentes commissions de programme." And an internationalisation officer said: "I do not have much experience with organizing of the courses or planning syllabuses. One of my duties is gathering information about the course offered in foreign languages by Jagiellonian University Faculties and Institutes. Therefore, I have some information about the courses and in this moment among the didactic offer there are not many VE initiatives."
2. Intercultural learning: The acquisition of intercultural learning/competence is an important dimension of Virtual Exchange for the four groups interviewed. "It increases the opportunity for students to work in an international environment, and for staff to understand different academic cultures and attune their teaching better" (educator). "Creating room and opportunity for an exchange based on mutual respect and allowing space to learn about intercultural aspects" (educational supporter). "More international environment and wider cultural awareness of students and staff, wider access to multilingual classrooms, transversal skills and high quality programmes.access to knowledge from other educational centers, cultural exchange" (international officer). "Developing intercultural competencies, developing a welcoming atmosphere at the university, deepening the exchange with partner universities, finding opportunities for collaboration" (manager).
3. Collaboration: The potential of VE in strengthening current partnerships and opening up new spaces for collaboration and international exchanges is the most cited topic in the open answers. "It gives the opportunity for collaborative learning to take place between students across national borders" (educator). "It could broaden the academic offer for students and at the same time it could create further opportunities of

international cooperation at institutional level” (international officer). “One big benefit is that we can reduce the traveling time for teachers. It’s possible to keep in contact with students abroad, and collaboration with other universities” (manager).

4. Internationalisation: This category refers to the ways in which each group of participants reflects on Virtual Exchange within processes of internationalisation. An educational supporter understands it as “[a] means for internationalization at home.” From an educator’s perspective, “While our university classrooms are becoming increasingly multicultural, VE potentially expands the possibilities for international exchange within the context of teaching and learning.” For an internationalisation officer, “It may also be a means for educators to implement internationalisation in the curriculum and as a means of teaching.” And a manager, “Bringing internationalisation to the level of teaching without necessarily requiring a joint programme, degree or partnership.”
5. Low cost: Stakeholders refer to the widening and more inclusive potential of Virtual Exchange at low cost. “It provides a great opportunity to offer easier and wider access to intercultural classes by cutting out travel costs” (educational supporter). “More students can participate, benefits for the environment, minimum costs for students” (international officer). “You can achieve high performance and afford many opportunities at a low cost” (manager).
6. Virtual mobility: Some stakeholders refer to Virtual Exchange as a means for virtual mobility or distance education. “It can be an alternative to face-to-face teaching and hence lead to virtual mobility” (international officer). “It provides a powerful vehicle that can reach a wider, more diverse group of students some of whom are unable to access the physical University of Edinburgh environment but can do so virtually” (manager). “Possibilité de proposer des enseignement à distance pour des étudiants étrangers” (international officer).

Appendix B: Baseline study questions (in English)

Home

This questionnaire is part of the Erasmus+ KA3 project, [EVOLVE](#), and focuses on the scope of Virtual Exchange (VE) within Higher Educational institutes in Europe (Coimbra Group and SGroup University Networks).

Even if you are not familiar with Virtual Exchange, your answers to this short survey are very valuable for this project. It will take you 10 minutes (max.) to fill it in.

Do you give consent to the EVOLVE project team to use your answers to this survey for analysing the current awareness of Virtual Exchanges among HEIs?

- Yes
 No

- Evolve will not use your personal information to contact you for any other purpose.
- Evolve will not share your personal data with any third party.
- Evolve will not mention your name in any of its reports or scientific publications based on this survey.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act of 6 January 1978, modified in 2004, and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), you have the right to access and require rectification of the personal information that has been collected about you. If you wish to enforce this right and obtain the information about you, please contact evolve@rug.nl.

What is Virtual Exchange (VE)?

Virtual Exchange is a practice, supported by research, that consists of sustained (i.e. unfolding over time with regular, intensive interaction), technology-enabled, people-to-people education programmes or activities in which constructive communication and interaction takes place between individuals or groups who are geographically separated and/or from different cultural backgrounds, with the support of educators or facilitators.

Virtual Exchange combines the deep impact of intercultural dialogue and exchange with the broad reach of digital technology.

VE is sometimes also called Telecollaboration, Collaborative Online International Learning, or Online Intercultural Exchange.

It does not cover the total range of possible online learning settings. For instance, distance learning courses where all the students are registered in the same Higher Educational institute, or simple MOOCs with no sustained interactions between small groups of students, are not considered as VE.

Identity

Your HE institution

Country of the HE institution

Your name (optional)

Your position (optional)

You are

- an educator (someone who teaches or designs courses)
- an educational supporter (someone who supports educators, for instance, pedagogical advisor, IT staff, etc.)
- an internationalisation officer (someone who facilitates the internationalisation of educational programmes by organising international partnerships and projects, mobility programmes, etc)
- a policy maker / a manager (someone involved in strategic planning of educational innovation, internationalisation, etc. / someone responsible for education as programme director, member of (executive) board, etc.)

(Select the category that most represents your function at your institution)

Survey for educators

Your (main) discipline.

Please be as specific as possible by selecting the lowest level (indented) that applies to you.

Before reading the introductory text to this survey, were you familiar with VE?

- No, I had never heard about it
- I had heard about it but I did not really know what it is
- I had heard about it and I had a rough idea what it is
- I had read (eg. a report..) / discussed about it
- Yes, I had a precise idea what it is

In your eyes, ...

| | Not at all | Not really | Uncertain | Yes, a bit/sometimes | Yes, absolutely |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| is VE a means for internationalisation? | <input type="radio"/> |

Please specify how and why ?

In your eyes, is VE a means for:

| | Not at all | Not really | Uncertain | Yes, a bit/sometimes | Yes, absolutely |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| teaching and learning innovation? | <input type="radio"/> |
| intercultural competence development? | <input type="radio"/> |
| language development? | <input type="radio"/> |
| digital skills development? | <input type="radio"/> |
| teacher professional development? | <input type="radio"/> |

Have you already set up or run a VE?

- Yes
- No
- No, but I am planning to run one

Since when

How many times ?

As far as you know, do other educators within your institution run a VE?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

In which disciplines?

- 01 Education
- 02 Arts and Humanities
- 03 Social sciences, journalism and information
- 04 Business, administration and law
- 05 Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics
- 06 Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)
- 07 Engineering, manufacturing and construction
- 08 Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary
- 09 Health and welfare
- 10 Services
- Other

How many educators ?

Do you get support from your institution that helps you in setting up a VE?

- None
- Training (regular and/or timely training sessions)
- Advice on the pedagogical design of the project
- Help with technical issues
- Financial support (reduces the number of teaching hours you have to give / you are paid a specific amount / allows you to climb the career ladder faster)
- Recognition from peers (innovative teaching approaches are valuable in the eyes of your peers / shown and shared as "good practice")
- I don't know
- Other

What is the status of your VE? (you may choose several answers)

- The VE is not part of a study program (your students participate in the VE on a voluntary basis)
- Class time is dedicated to the VE (to online interaction and/or reflection, etc.)
- The VE figures in the official course description
- ECTS are allocated to the VE

Would you be interested in participating in training in this area? (if yes, please indicate your e-mail-address)

- No
- Yes

Evolve will not use your e-mail-address for other purposes than informing those related to information on the training programme.

Would you be willing to be recontacted in 2 years time ? (If yes, please indicate your name and your e-mail-address)

- No
- Yes

Survey for educational supporters

Your area:

- technical support
- pedagogical support
- professional development
- other

Before reading the introductory text to this survey, were you familiar with VE?

- No, I had never heard about it
- I had heard about it but I did not really know what it is
- I had heard about it and I had a rough idea what it is
- I had read (eg. a report..) / discussed about it
- Yes, I had a precise idea what it is

In your eyes, ...

| | Not at all | Not really | Uncertain | Yes, a bit/sometimes | Yes, absolutely |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| is VE a means for internationalisation? | <input type="radio"/> |

Please specify how and why ?

In your eyes, is VE a means for:

| | Not at all | Not really | Uncertain | Yes, a bit/sometimes | Yes, absolutely |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| teaching and learning innovation? | <input type="radio"/> |
| intercultural competence development? | <input type="radio"/> |
| language development? | <input type="radio"/> |
| digital skills development? | <input type="radio"/> |
| teacher professional development? | <input type="radio"/> |

As far as you know, do educators within your institution run a VE?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

In which disciplines?

- 01 Education
- 02 Arts and Humanities
- 03 Social sciences, journalism and information
- 04 Business, administration and law
- 05 Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics
- 06 Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)
- 07 Engineering, manufacturing and construction
- 08 Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary
- 09 Health and welfare
- 10 Services
- Other

How many educators?

Does your institution give support to staff in order to set up / run a VE?

- None
- Training (regular and/or timely training sessions)
- Advice on the pedagogical design of the project
- Help with technical issues
- Financial support (reduces the number of teaching hours teachers have to give / they are paid a specific amount / allows them to climb the career ladder faster)
- Recognition from peers (innovative teaching approaches are valuable in the eyes of peers / shown and shared as "good practice")
- I don't know
- Other

What is the status of the VEs within your institution? (you may choose several answers)

- The VE is not part of a study program (students participate in the VE on a voluntary basis)
- Class time is dedicated to the VE (to online interaction and/or reflection, etc.)
- The VE figures in the official course description
- ECTS are allocated to the VE
- No answer

Would you be interested in participating in training in this area? (if yes, please indicate your e-mail-address)

- No
- Yes

Evolve will not use your e-mail-address for other purposes than informing those related to information on the training programme.

Would you be willing to be recontacted in 2 years time ? (If yes, please indicate your name and your e-mail-address)

- No
- Yes

Survey for internationalisation officers

You are

- administrative staff
- academic staff

Before reading the introductory text to this survey, were you familiar with VE?

- No, I had never heard about it
- I had heard about it but I did not really know what it is
- I had heard about it and I had a rough idea what it is
- I had read (eg. a report..) / discussed about it
- Yes, I had a precise idea what it is

As far as you know, do educators within your institution run a VE?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

In which disciplines?

- 01 Education
- 02 Arts and Humanities
- 03 Social sciences, journalism and information
- 04 Business, administration and law
- 05 Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics
- 06 Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)
- 07 Engineering, manufacturing and construction
- 08 Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary
- 09 Health and welfare
- 10 Services
- Other

How many educators?

In your eyes, ...

| | Not at all | Not really | Uncertain | Yes, a bit/sometimes | Yes, absolutely |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| is VE a means for internationalisation? | <input type="radio"/> |

Is VE in your institution part of :

| | Not at all | Not really | Uncertain | Yes, a bit/sometimes | Yes, absolutely |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| internationalisation policies/strategies? | <input type="radio"/> |
| professional development? | <input type="radio"/> |
| elearning strategies? | <input type="radio"/> |

Please explain:

In your eyes, what are the benefits and opportunities of VE for the internationalisation of your institution?

Does your institution give support to staff in order to set up / run a VE?

- None
- Training (regular training sessions / timely training sessions)
- Advice on the pedagogical design of the project
- Help with technical issues
- Financial support (reduces the number of teaching hours that teachers have to give / payment / allows to climb the career ladder faster)
- Recognition from peers (promotion of innovative teaching approaches / shown and shared as "good practice")
- I don't know
- Other

Does your institute have a unit/an office/a person explicitly in charge of supporting VE?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Would you be interested in participating in training in this area? (if yes, please indicate your e-mail-address)

- No
- Yes

Evolve will not use your e-mail-address for other purposes than informing those related to information on the training programme.

Would you be willing to be recontacted in 2 years time ? (If yes, please indicate your name and your e-mail-address)

- No
- Yes

Survey for managers / policy makers

Before reading the introductory text to this survey, were you familiar with VE?

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- I had heard about it but I did not really know what it is
- I had heard about it and I had a rough idea what it is
- I had read (eg. a report..) / discussed about it
- Yes, I had a precise idea what it is

As far as you know, do educators within your institution run a VE?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

In which disciplines?

- 01 Education
- 02 Arts and Humanities
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- 10 Services
- Other

How many educators?

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- None
- Training (regular training sessions / timely training sessions)
- Advice on the pedagogical design of the project
- Help with technical issues
- Financial support (reduces the number of teaching hours that teachers have to give / payment / allows to climb the career ladder faster)
- Recognition from peers (promotion of innovative teaching approaches / shown and shared as "good practice")
- I don't know
- Other

Does your institution put into place specific strategies in order to support VE (others than mentioned in the previous question)? If yes, which ones?

- No
- Yes

In your eyes, ...

| | Not at all | Not really | Uncertain | Yes, a bit/sometimes | Yes, absolutely |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| is VE a means for internationalisation? | <input type="radio"/> |

Is VE in your institution part of :

| | Not at all | Not really | Uncertain | Yes, a bit/sometimes | Yes, absolutely |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| internationalisation policies/strategies? | <input type="radio"/> |
| professional development? | <input type="radio"/> |
| elearning strategies? | <input type="radio"/> |

In your eyes, what are the benefits and opportunities of VE for the internationalisation of your institution?

Does your institute have a unit/an office/a person explicitly in charge of supporting VE?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Would you be interested in participating in training in this area? (if yes, please indicate your e-mail-address)

- No
- Yes

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Would you be willing to be recontacted in 2 years time ? (If yes, please indicate your name and your e-mail-address)

- No
- Yes