



Reviewing (traces of) European Virtual Campuses

Grant agreement number: 2007 – 2608 / 001 – 001

Project number: 133960-LLP-1-2007-1-BE-ERASMUS-EVC

Document title: **Report WP 3 Promotion and Awareness Raising**

Authors: *Sally Reynolds, Nikki Cortoos*

Date of issue: September 2009

Version: 2

Contributors to the document
(incl. quality review):

Contact name: Bieke Schreurs

Organisation: EuroPACE ivzw

Address: Kapeldreef 62, B-3001 Heverlee, Belgium

Telephone: +32 16 32 78 15

Email: bieke.schreurs@europace.be

Number of pages: 6

Abstract:

Confidentiality status: Public



Re.ViCa is co-funded by the European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, Socrates – Minerva: ODL and ICT in EDUCATION. However, the sole responsibility of the information contained in these pages lies with the authors and the Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information

Report WP 3 Promotion and Awareness Raising

Description of work: WP 3 Promotion and Awareness Raising

Description of work: WP 3 Promotion and Awareness Raising

Introduction

The core purpose of this work package was to ensure that the work carried out by the Re.ViCa team in investigating the virtual campus phenomenon was connected in a significant, meaningful and fruitful way to the wider virtual campus community. By virtual campus community, we mean those practitioners, experts and researchers who are currently leading, researching or providing expertise on virtual campuses in different parts of the world, or those who have significantly contributed to this type of investigation in the past.

This work was to be carried out under three broad task headings; the organisation of discussions with decision-makers, the planning and realisation of events at key conferences and the creation of opportunities for dialogues with international experts, respected and well-versed in the topic. In practical terms this work involved the establishment of an International Advisory Committee (IAC) and an on-going means of communication with the members of this committee to capture the input they provided. This communication involved what we termed 'key meetings', bilateral discussions, the creation of a community linked to the wiki and the publication of a newsletter.

In this report each of these steps will be described separately both in terms of their objectives but also the impact each type of communication has had on the overall workings and outcomes of the project.

The role and function of the International Advisory Committee

One of the main objectives of this work package was to gain an outsider's perspective on virtual campuses in Europe and at the same time to gain insight into methods and solutions that have been developed in non-European countries that might be adaptable to Europe. This meant that the committee needed to involve experts from different parts of the world and not just Europe who would be willing to not only contribute their expertise and know-how, but who could also be relied upon to comment on the work being carried out by the Re.ViCa team as well as the research findings emerging from our work in a constructive manner.

The team therefore began the process of selecting and inviting experts to join this committee by creating a long list of potential invitees based on our contacts and knowledge of the sector. A short-list of committee members was then agreed based on availability and interest, geographical spread and type of experience. This committee was initially made up of 25 European and non-European experts, for a complete list of the committee members at the end of the project, see Annex XXXⁱ. They were each invited by the team to join the committee on the basis that they would take part in one or more of the face-to-face meetings planned during the project lifetime and contribute to bilateral and group discussions and that they would eventually contribute to the project outcomes, particularly the wiki and the handbook.

Based on the feedback we received after the meetings and in other discussions, it is clear that those who took part gained considerably from their experience in the IAC and viewed it as a positive experience. For the Re.ViCa team, their input was invaluable and contributed significantly to the outputs of the project. In many cases, IAC members acted as mentors to the project, providing considerable ideas, feedback and suggestions throughout the lifetime of the project, and not only during the face-to-face meetings.

The level of communication varied amongst the IAC, however most maintained some degree of on-going contact with individual members of the Re.ViCa team throughout the project lifetime. This included their contributions to the wiki, their reviews of country reports where many of them acted as external evaluators, their feedback about the case studies, their contributions to the Re.ViCa newsletter and also their contributions to the handbook. In the case of the handbook, members of the IAC were particularly helpful in helping to shape and expand the descriptions of virtual campuses worldwide, taking responsibility for reviewing the specific chapters dealing with their own region to ensure its accuracy

Key Meetings

Three key meetings have taken place during the lifetime of the project with the International Advisory Committee and other experts. These took place in Lisbon in June 2008, Berlin in December 2008 and Maastricht in June 2009. Each meeting was somewhat different and achieved different results, a full report of each is contained in the annexes and the following section provides a description of the objectives of each as well as a description of the impact they had on the overall work of Re.ViCa. Before each meeting when the members of the IAC were invited, they also received the agenda of the meeting and a series of documents related to the objectives of the meeting which they were asked to read before the meeting.

Lisbon 2008

Objective

This first meeting of the International Advisory Committee took place on 11 June in Lisbon right before the annual EDEN conference. It had several specific objectives as well as the more general objective of launching the project amongst the target community, to this end a presentation about Re.ViCa was also given during the main agenda of the EDEN conference.

The specific objectives for this key meeting were to discuss the approach being taken by Re.ViCa to classification of virtual campuses, to test out the countries which the team planned to investigate in a significant way and to discuss how the team were planning to set about benchmarking and the creation of a series of critical success factors related to virtual campuses.

Results

One of the main outcomes from this meeting was that IAC members recommended several specific reports and initiatives which the Re.ViCa team subsequently followed up. These reports included existing reviews of virtual campuses in different parts of the world and related material to do with benchmarking. This had an impact on the overall research being carried out, making sure the team was able to take into account other work in the field. Much of this effort eventually resulted in the extended publications and further reading sections of the wiki and the project handbook as well as direct contact with the researchers in question, several of whom joined the Re.ViCa community later as editors of the wiki and/or subscribers to the newsletter.

The IAC also provided significant input to the discussion about the inventory and the categorisation work that was undertaken. This included making suggestions that were taken up by the research team into specific countries as well as shaping the approach taken to classification and taxonomy.

Furthermore, the discussion on benchmarking and critical success factors was useful in helping the team decide on the approach they would take to this work. The IAC also had an impact on the approach taken by the team towards the development and publication of the wiki. The general approach of first opening the wiki to a closed community of experts, namely the IAC in the latter part of 2008 and then eventually the public in June 2009 stems from discussions that took place during this meeting. Finally the outputs of this meeting and discussions with the IAC members resulted in a more streamlined approach to communication with IAC members between meetings and the organisation of Key Meetings 2 and 3.

Annex XXX contains a full report of this meeting.

Berlin 2008

Objective

This second key meeting of IAC members took place right before Online Educa Berlin on 3 December. The objectives for this meeting were as follows; review the wiki and the outputs of the

desktop research phase including the case studies and the approach to categorisation with the IAC members in order to check the quality and validity of the work thus far, review the benchmarking/CSF work, assess the degree to which the IAC members could contribute to an historical overview of virtual campuses and launch the discussion as to whether virtual campuses in Europe were intrinsically different to those in other parts of the world.

Results

The Re.ViCa team used a handheld voting system during this meeting as a way to gather some concrete information about how the various draft outputs of the team were appreciated by the IAC. The feedback received in relation to the first series of outputs was largely positive although while being positive about the quantity of information available in the inventory, the IAC encouraged the team to now pay more attention to the quality of the information available and made some practical suggestions in this regard, including pointing to specific regions which deserved further effort. They also asked for more analytical material in the form of conclusions, recommendations etc., as well as encouraging the team to try to include documents in languages other than English. Categorisation was also discussed and again, the IAC provided valuable input on how to improve on the approach taken.

The IAC also reviewed the status of the benchmarking/CSF work being done and again while being broadly enthusiastic, each CSF presented resulted in quite some discussion and suggestions on the part of members of the IAC as to how the wording and/or definition of each should be enhanced.

Discussion about the history of virtual campuses amongst IAC helped the team by providing some degree of perspective on how both the term 'virtual campus' is understood and the way in which virtual campuses have emerged in different parts of the world. This discussion led on to the decision to eventually interview members of the IAC and other experts during key meeting 3 in Maastricht as a way to gather content for the historical overview of virtual campuses.

In much the same way, the discussion on real or perceived distinctions between European virtual campuses and those in other parts of the world, provided the research team with a basis for creating a set of hypotheses which in turn were debated in key meeting 3 and which eventually resulted in the analysis on this topic included in the Re.ViCa handbook.

Annex XXX contains a full report of this meeting.

Maastricht 2009

Objective

This third and final face-to-face meeting of the IAC took place during the ICDE/EADTU M Conference held in Maastricht on June 8. One of the objectives of this meeting was to officially launch the virtual campus wiki to the public and extend the community of interest surrounding it to as many relevant people as possible including stakeholder representatives and networks active in relevant fields. A second objective was to address the topic of European vs. non-European Virtual Campuses in order to gather insights and ideas on this topic for the final outputs of the project. Thirdly, the team wanted to validate the 'lessons learned' segment of the work carried out which was to be included in the Re.ViCa handbook. Finally, the team wanted to present the overall outputs of the project to the IAC for their input and recommendations as well as to discuss the ongoing maintenance of the project outcomes in the post-funding phase.

Results

The ICDE-EADTU conference proved to be an excellent opportunity to promote the outcomes of the project generally and several people joined the IAC key meeting as observers in order to find out more about the project and its outcomes, the number of subscribers to the newsletter increased as a result and quite a few people joined the wiki community, contributing and editing content.

The European vs non-European Virtual Campuses topic was addressed during the meeting using a Knowledge Café format in order to get the most out of the discussions taking place. The outputs of the discussions that took place were used in the comparison report on this topic which is included in the Re.ViCa handbook and are many and varied, reflecting the diversity of the opinion expressed to the various hypotheses put forward.

The discussion related to the 'lessons learned' took the form of ranking each of the 'lessons' put forward in terms of their validity and then adapting and changing the descriptions of several in order to better reflect the input of the IAC. Again this output as adapted to take into account the input of the IAC is included in the Re.ViCa handbook.

Finally discussion with the IAC about the overall project and its potential in terms of ongoing sustainability had a direct influence on encouraging the team to agree to sustain several of the outputs including the wiki for a further 2 years after the funding from the EC ceases.

Annex XXX contains a full report of this meeting.

Dialogues with Stakeholders and Network Representatives

From the outset, we have been careful to include people in our outreach work who are directly working with stakeholders through relevant networks. Many of these have been included through the IAC where we have had direct contacts and discussions with senior representatives from OECD, EDEN, ICDE, ELIG, EADTU, Coimbra, ACDE, PanAf Observatory as well as national agencies and expert centres like Scierter in Italy, ABED in Brazil, CNIE in Canada, SURF in the Netherlands and CNED in France who in turn have disseminated the work of Re.ViCa to key stakeholders in their own regions or countries.

The input of these experts to our work has been very significant in that each of the outputs have been disseminated to them in both a draft and final version and the feedback and inputs of these stakeholder experts have in turn influenced our activities in a highly iterative process. Several of the stakeholder representatives who have been involved in complementary work, e.g. the work carried out by the UNIQUe project (represented by Scierter) and E-xcellence project (represented by EADTU) have in turn shared their insights with the Re.ViCa team and contributed through discussions to the Re.ViCa benchmarking/CSF work. Fora like the invitation-only Learning and Technology World Forum held in London in January 2009 and Online Educa Berlin were also used to set up discussions with major networks and thought-leaders in this field.

Community Supporting wiki

The wiki was initially open to members of the IAC only and was eventually launched to the public in June 2009. Since then it has attracted a significant number of visitors as reported elsewhere in this report. In addition to visitors, in typical wiki style, we have been actively growing a community of people who support the wiki by adding valuable content and providing editorial input on existing content. The work to monitor and manage this process is managed through WP3 and to date, there are XXX active members of this community. The Re.ViCa team actively monitors this process and where a new contributor adds relevant content, he/she is then usually contacted with a view to adding him/her to the list of people who receive the newsletter.

Newsletter

In September and October 2008, the Re.ViCa team had begun to send short newsletters to the members of the IAC to summarise the research being carried out and to maintain contact with them. However in Berlin in December 2008, it was decided to expand the brief of this simple newsletter to make it into a communications vehicle that could also be used to build a community of interest around Re.ViCa and to share it with stakeholder and network representatives, as well as the core and extended membership of the International Advisory Committee.

The expanded version of the newsletter was launched in January 2009 and has been published monthly since then, although a joint July/August edition was published in the summer. To date 9 of

these expanded newsletters have been published, two further editions will be published by the end of 2009 and the team plan on continuing to publish these newsletters on a bi-monthly basis in 2010 as part of the planned exploitation activities.

Each newsletter contains the following elements;

- An article based on the research work being carried out by the Re.ViCa team including summaries of sections in the forthcoming Virtual Campus handbook, short sections from the wiki, outputs from discussions with the IAC, etc.,
- An article on a related topic, e.g. articles on accreditation, multilingualism, programmes of interest, etc.,
- A report on the progress of the project which includes summaries of presentations given, growth of interest in the wiki, forthcoming activities, etc.,
- Section giving short introductions to members of the Re.ViCa community, i.e. experts and practitioners who have added material to the wiki or who are members of the IAC or the wider expert community. Each month the newsletter includes at least 3 of these aiming as far as possible to include people from different parts of the world who are researching or publishing in this field
- Announcements of events and news of developments of potential interest to those reading the newsletter.

These newsletters have proven to be very popular and about 400 people now receive them directly. A list of those who receive them is included in Annex XXX. Annex XXX contains all the newsletters published to date.

The impact these newsletters have had has been to extend the reach of the Re.ViCa research work and to create a means by which experts and stakeholders in different parts of the globe come to know one another better as well as the project outcomes. There is clear evidence to suggest that more people now contribute to the Virtual Campus wiki because of the newsletters and at the same time, those contributing the wiki are brought into the community as they are then added to the newsletter mailing list and in some cases also begin to contribute to the newsletters as well.

ⁱ The list contained in this annex now includes 34 names from 23 countries. The list was adapted due to the unavailability of some of the members to attend at least one meeting. Out of the 34 members, all but 6 attended at least one face-to-face meeting. All of those who did not attend contributed in other ways by reviewing country reports, providing contacts, promoting Re.ViCa etc.