Summary of Re.ViCa International Advisory Committee Meeting

Hotel InterContinental, Berlin Germany, Wednesday December 3rd 2008

Introduction

The meeting began with a short overview of the activities of the project since the last meeting in Lisbon as well as a presentation of the agenda and an introduction of everyone taking part. Please see Annex 1 for a list of those who took part in this meeting.

Inventory of Virtual Campuses

This first part of the meeting was taken up by a review of the wiki and the outputs of the Desktop Research phase. The responses during the voting phase were used to start this discussion indicated that members of the IAC considered the inventory as presented on the wiki to be either 'Good' or 'Very Good.

Quite some discussion emerged which is summarised as follows:

Impressions – here is a lot of information available now in the wiki, certain regions like Latin America and China probably deserve more attention. Inventory could be useful but there is a need to push the quality and relevance of the information it contains in order for it to reach its potential as a very valuable resource.

Suggestions – as well as simply giving information, the inventory should also try to provide some conclusions, review and analysis; indicators might be useful in this respect. Also there is a need to more actively take into account cultural aspects. Documents in languages other than English could be usefully included. It is also important to take into account the relative size of countries when considering whether an initiative is worthy of interest or not. Check for consistencies, e.g. programme list should be updated with country reports' initiatives. Importance of having the Critical Success Factors list complete and also of taking into account the degree of independence of the relevant sources - objective data are useful for comparison. It was also suggested that the research community be given a grid or matrix for comparison.

Missing elements - mainly in depth descriptions, categories of information (e.g. glossaries) as well as specific institution or project descriptions.

Categorisation

The responses during the voting phase used to start this discussion indicated that members of the IAC considered the categorisation approach to be 'average' (6 votes) to 'good' (5 votes) but with extreme views (1 very bad, 1 very good).Some discussion followed in which suggestions and comments made by members of the IAC included a suggestion to link the categorisation more to the research activities and go into more depth. It was also

recommended that the research team explain in more detail what the categories mean and should fine tune the categorisation to make the definitions very clear, so that people know what to expect and what to put in, give a framework of reference. (for example: is the VC also for undergraduates, for research, is the researcher dealing with face-to-face education?).

Case Studies Information Collection: Templates

This discussion began with a discussion as to the authenticity of the case studies and the process of validation. IAC members were asked to vote on the value they gave the template used for collecting information in the case study reports and it scored 'Good' to 'very good' (13/16) with no negative responses.

Impressions – questions raised about the rational for selection – this should be addressed and put more coherently. There is a need for a clear overview of where the information comes from: what is the distinction between description and interpretation/analysis? This is necessary for the external user. Now it is difficult to see what is been said by the Re.ViCa researcher and what is said by the institution.

Suggestions – more information on how the processes in the VC are organised: marketing, promotion, etc. This gives a good in depth view on how to succeed. Apply more processing to the Case Studies generally. Engage the institutions in a dialogue about making the information public, offer them the opportunity to engage in – what should be – an independent review. After opening up the wiki, the team should give the institutions a clear rationale why they should participate and to highlight the advantages if they participate. Try to edit the case studies into a more readable format, these could be used to create interesting articles that could be immediately published openly, this would make it much easier to approach others, showing in public well written articles will entice others to participate. Accreditation should become a separate category and highlight who accredits, when, why, what kind of regulation exists? Refer to Polish experience with legislation.

Missing elements – include some information about the methodology of collection of information and who the contact person was for the case study. Information about how the information will be processed/used.

Critical Success Factors

Each of the 30 were voted upon and discussed by the IAC. The following table includes the main conclusions in respect to each and their relative value to the Re.ViCa project.

Title (code) and results of voting	Summary Comments
Quality Assurance (QAS) 75% should be kept, 25% must be kept.	General discussion about this in which the experience in South Africa where a risk register is now used and in Poland was discussed. Some IAC members felt the notion of quality assurance to be too vague to be useful and that quality was difficult to measure.
Security (SEC), 21% Should be removed, 29% No view, 29% Should be kept, 21% Must be kept	Nothing concrete added, tendency to keep.
Student Understanding of System (SUS)	Question raised as to how this could be measured and there was a

13% Should be removed, 20% No view, 27% Should be kept, 40% Must be kept	suggestion that it should be re-written to include e.g. how can students have a good understanding, is VC enabling students to have a good understanding? Keeping a register of students' feedback after each semester is one way to do this.
Student Help Desk (SHD), 13% Should be removed, 13% No view, 33% Should be kept, 40% Must be kept	Questions raised as to definition and the need for re-phasing. Also the point was made that this is linked to organisational issues and was as important as support.
Organisational Learning (OLG) 6% Should be removed, 18% No view, 59% Should be kept, 18% Must be kept	No specific comments.
Usability (USA) 6% Should be removed, 44% No view, 25% Should be kept, 25% Must be kept	Mixed reactions from IAC to this one. Recommendations for more clarification.
Training (TRG) 7% Should be removed, 47% Should be kept, 47% Must be kept	Most IAC members would keep this CSF, no comments.
Staff Recognition and Reward (SRR) 18% Should be removed, 29% No view, 47% Should be kept, 6% Must be kept	Mixed reactions from IAC to this one. Issues raised in relation to the distinctions between research and teaching and the associated rewards for each, possible need to re-phrase? Importance of motivation and giving teachers enough time.
Performance (PER) 6% Should be removed, 33% No view, 56% Should be kept, 6% Must be kept	Issues raised in discussion about the CSF included a discussion about scale, and a recommendation to possibly link this to usability. Discussion about the distinctions between success factors and success criteria, may be worth re-thinking CSFs as being failure factors... as in "a CSF is something without which you would fail."
Employer Engagement (EEN) 24% Should be removed, 35% No view, 35% Should be kept, 6% Must be kept	Mixed reactions from IAC to this. The discussion addressed questions related to the acceptance of eLearning by some employers and also to the fact that the terminology used in this criterion is a bit confusing.
E-Learning Strategy (ELS) 12% Must be removed, 35% Should be kept, 53% Must be kept	Discussion arose as to whether e-learning can properly be considered a strategy at all, particularly as e-learning becomes more and more mainstream. Importance of strategies also discussed as well as the lack of distinction between e-learning and learning. Suggested need to re-visit wording to distinguish between strategic and operational goals also to ensure a common understanding of the term 'strategy'.
Decisions on Projects (DPR) 8% Must be removed, 8% Should be removed, 8% No view, 50% Should be kept, 25% Must be	There was some discussion and anxiety about the wording which some felt to be ambiguous.

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Academic Workload (AWK) 6% Should be removed,6% No view,56% Should be kept,33% Must be kept	No specific comments.
Costs (CNL) 6% Must be removed,6% Should be removed,31% No view,50% Should be kept,6% Must be kept	Issues with the clarity of the terminology and also the need to consider this CSF in VC when it is not applied in traditional universities. Suggested use of terms "time recording, time sheets".
Planning Annually (PLA) 12% Should be removed,24% No view,47% Should be kept,18% Must be kept	Discussion on this CSF covered the fact that planning depends somewhat on government regulations, can be ad hoc and is not always carried out annually.
Organisation (ORG) 25% Should be removed,6% No view,31% Should be kept,38% Must be kept	Discussion revolved around the need to keep the term 'fit for purpose' and the fact that not all institutions have a separate unit.
Technical Support Staff (TSS) 6% Must be removed,6% No view,61% Should be kept,28% Must be kept	Terminology may need to take into account that "nearby" also can be virtual, "feels nearby".
Decisions on Programmes (DPG) 29% No view,59% Should be kept,12% Must be kept	Some concerns were raised as to whether or not this was ambiguous.
Leadership in e-Learning (LEL) 6% Must be removed,6% No view,35% Should be kept,53% Must be kept	Some discussion about the notion of "leadership" and what makes a good leader. Reference to an eLearning leadership project carried out between South Africa and the Netherlands – Herman Van der Merwe offered to send information about this.
Collaboration for e-learning (CFE) 6% Must be removed,24% No view,59% Should be kept,12% Must be kept	Quite some discussion about this CSF – worried it is overly complicated and needs to be re-worded.
Brand management (BMG) 6% Must be removed,22% Should be removed,39% No view,33% Should be kept	Mixed discussion ensued covering several topics; distinction between brand and content, debate about what is meant by 'reasonable'.
Management Style (HYB) 12% Must be removed,35% Should be removed,35% No view,12% Should be kept,6% Must be kept	There was quite some discussion about this CSF with many IAC members suggesting it be dropped. There was some concern that it was in fact two questions in one, asking about style and acceptance. Also the validity of this CSF was questioned.
Reliability (REL) 12% Must be removed,24% No view,24% Should be kept,41% Must be kept	There was some suggestion that this CSF be moved/linked to the usability issue although others argued they are not the same. Some argument that this type of availability is what makes VC different from traditional universities.

Foresight (FOR) 18% Must be removed,6% Should be removed,65% Should be kept,12% Must be kept	Mixed reactions by IAC to this CSF with a tendency to keep, suggestion to delete "development labs" also questions raised as to whether individual institutions need to have this type of capability.
Collaboration Roles (COL) 17% Must be removed,17% Should be removed,28% No view,28% Should be kept,11% Must be kept	Mixed reactions by IAC to this CSF. Part of the question was considered to be ambiguous.
Dissemination Internal (DIN) 7% Should be removed,50% Should be kept,43% Must be kept	
Selling (SEL) 31% Must be removed,12% Should be removed,38% No view,19% Should be kept	This CSF was viewed rather negatively by the IAC with issues raised in relation to the use of the term 'selling' instead of 'promoting' and the general phrasing to the CSF. It was suggested that the difficulties may be related to specific markets and contexts – hence the difficulties.
Market Research (MRE) 17% Must be removed,6% Should be removed,28% No view,39% Should be kept,11% Must be kept	The response from the IAC to this CSF was generally positive although mixed and some questions were raised about the wording.
Student Satisfaction (SAT) 6% Must be removed,6% Should be removed,6% No view,29% Should be kept,53% Must be kept	Questions were raised about the use of the term 'annual' and suggested 'systematic' instead.

General comments

A general comment about the status and work on the list of CSFs also ensued during which the context of how these CSFs will be used was discussed and the importance of distinguishing between institutional success and success of a VC initiative. Also the team were encouraged to distinguish between what would be considered success in management terms as opposed to in review terms. The project team promised to share the CSFs on the wiki to allow further discussion with the IAC.

History of Virtual Campus

During the discussion about the history of the term Virtual Campus, members of the IAC described their first use of the term as well as current manifestations, e.g .UOC and AVU. During this discussion several interesting cultural and other phenomenon arose including the reference to the fact that 'virtual' had somewhat negative connotations in the Francophone world where 'virtual' implies 'not serious'. Members of the IAC promised to send on stories of their first use of the term.

Differences between Virtual Campus in Europe and worldwide

During this final discussion, issues raised included the difficulties related to defining Europe and what kinds of comparisons can be made. Trends related to public/private were discussed and the idea that in Europe several institutions which started as being public are now increasingly private with more and more universities have a choice in Europe in this respect. Definition questions related to public vs. private also emerged as well as hybrid ideas such as 'private non-profit universities'. Trends discussed included the extent to which University professors are civil servants in most EU countries as well as the rapid expansion of universities in developing countries (Africa, but also Brazil, Indonesia, Philippines, Russia, India...). IAC members discussed whether broadly speaking European universities could be seen as being more state sector and somewhat more innovative than their counterparts elsewhere.

Annex 1

Participants list

Title	First Name	Last Name	Institution	Country	Role
Prof.	Paul	Bacsich	Matic Media	United Kingdom	Project member
Mr.	Theo	Bastiaens	FernUni Hagen	Germany	Project member
Mrs.	Widad	Benhabiles	ULP Strasbourg	France	Project member
Mrs.	Helena	Bijnens	AVNet- K.U.Leuven	Belgium	Project member
Mrs.	Annemie	Boonen	ELIG and EuroPACE ivzw	Belgium	International Advisory Committee member
Mrs.	Nikki	Cortoos	ATiT	Belgium	Project member
Dr.	Bakary	Diallo	African Virtual University	Kenya	International Advisory Committee member
Dr.	Claudio	Dondi	SCIENTER	Italy	International Advisory Committee member
Dr.	Tom	Dousma	SURF	The Netherlands	International Advisory Committee member
Mr.	David	Gauckler	ULP Strasbourg	France	Project member
Dr.	Carl	Holmberg	International Council for Open and Distant (ICDE)	Norway	International Advisory Committee member
Mrs.	Anna-Kaarina	Kairamo	TKK Dipoli	Finland	Project member
Dr.	Terence	Karran	Lincoln University	UK	International Advisory Committee member
Prof.	Thierry	Karsenti	Université de Montréal	Canada	International Advisory Committee member
Mr.	Grégory	Lucas	University Of West-Hungary	Hungary	Project member
Mrs.	Ilse	Op de Beeck	AVNet- K.U.Leuven	Belgium	Project member
Prof. Dr.	Morten Flate	Paulsen	NKI Distance Education	Norway	International Advisory Committee member
Prof. Dr.	Francesc	Pedró	Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI)	France	International Advisory Committee member
Dr.	Vitor	Rocio	Universidade Aberta (OUPortugal)	Portugal	International Advisory Committee member
Dr.	Albert	Sangrà	Open University of Catalonia	Spain	International Advisory Committee member
Mrs.	Bieke	Schreurs	EuroPACE	Belgium	Project member
Mr.	Matti	Sinko	TKK Dipoli	Finland	International Advisory Committee member
Dr.	András	Szûcs	Budapest University of Technology and	Hungary	International Advisory Committee member

			Economics		
Mrs.	Ene	Tammeoru	Estonian e-Learning Development Centre	Estonia	International Advisory Committee member
Mr.	Guido	Valentini	UNINETTUNO	Italy	Project member
Prof.	Herman J.	van der Merwe	Tshwane University of Technology	South Africa	International Advisory Committee member
Mr.	Mathy	Vanbuel	ATiT	Belgium	Project member
Mrs.	Martine	Vidal	Centre national d'enseignement à distance (CNED)	France	International Advisory Committee member
Mr.	Wojciech	Zielinski	Academy of Humanities and Economics in Lodz, Polish Virtual University	Poland	International Advisory Committee member