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Welcome to our latest newsletter – which we are sending to an extended circle of researchers, academics and others interested in Virtual Campuses.

To subscribe to this monthly newsletter, please contact nikki.cortoos@atit.be.

Project News

Re.ViCa Work to Continue 2010-2011

Now that the funding provided by the European Commission under the [Lifelong Learning Programme](#) has ceased, the project consortium has signed an agreement to continue the work of Re.ViCa in several ways. This work is led by Ilse op de Beeck from [EuroPACE ivzw](#) who is responsible for the Re.ViCa Secretariat. We asked Ilse to describe what the partners have committed to for the next 2 years.



Ilse Op de Beeck

“The background to the exploitation agreement signed by the Re.ViCa partners at the end of 2009 was our unanimous agreement that the valuable resources, contacts and know-how built up during the project lifetime should remain available to the wider educational community of practitioners and stake-holders. This led the partners to agree to cooperate on several levels to ensure that outputs of the project including the growing virtual campus wiki were maintained and supported.

In practical terms the partners in the project have committed several days per month to do the following:

- Establish a Re.ViCa Secretariat at EuroPACE which will act on behalf of the project partners and coordinate the work of the project team as well as dealing with any general enquiries related to their work.
- Continue to promote and raise awareness of the Re.ViCa results and [wiki](#).
- Publish a bi-monthly [newsletter](#) on topics related to virtual campuses and the use of ICT generally in higher education.
- Collaborate to find ways to further exploit the work of Re.ViCa through the establishment of strategic partnerships with relevant organisations.

The partners who have committed to this work are the [Katholieke Universiteit Leuven](#) and [ATiT](#) in Belgium, [FernUniversität in Hagen](#), Germany, [Université de Strasbourg](#) in France, [Matic Media Ltd.](#) in the UK, [Nyugat-Magyarországi Egyetem](#) in Hungary, [Teknillinen korkeakoulu](#), [Koulutuskeskus Dipoli](#) in Finland and [Università Telematica Internazionale UNINETTUNO](#) in Italy.”

Re.ViCa presented at Learning and Technology World Forum



Held in London from 11-13 January right before the BETT show, the [2010 Forum](#) attracted over 1,000 leaders from 100 countries, including 75 ministers of education. Opened by Prime Minister Gordon Brown, the very high level of political support this event received indicates the importance the United Kingdom places on exporting its know-how and expertise in the technology enhanced learning field.

The Forum provided an interesting mix of highly interactive and engaging sessions along with several thought-provoking key-note presentations including the excellent closing plenary presentation given by Charles Leadbeater. One of the innovation exchange sessions entitled "Critical Success Scheme for Step-Change in E-Learning" featured the work of Re.ViCa, where participants were invited to explore the critical success factors emerging from the work of the project and to debate their applicability in sectors other than higher education. Materials related to this session are available on the Virtual Campus [wiki](#).



News and Recent Developments

Major US University Systems Share Tools and Resources

A recently announced partnership between the Ohio and Minnesota higher education systems may indicate a new direction for reciprocal support among publicly funded state systems in the US. We asked Sara Frank Bristow to find out more about this partnership...



Sara Frank Bristow

“As announced in December 2009, the [Minnesota State Colleges & Universities \(MnSCU\)](#) and the [University System of Ohio](#) – both



consisting of numerous public campuses – have [formally agreed to work together](#) in sharing tools, introductory courses, and implementation strategies to bolster their online student services. The agreement is one of the first of its kind in the nation. North American researchers have begun to examine the formation of statewide and multi-state e-learning consortia across the United States and Canada. See, for example, a recent report on [The Funding of Academic Collaborations](#) (D. Michelau and R. Poulin, WICHE/WCET, 2008), which reviews funding models for consortia which share resources to “leverage expertise and efficiencies” in implementing educational technologies. These invaluable studies often focus on the institutional sharing of online courses or programmes, or centralised activities which directly support course enrolment and delivery.

The student-services-oriented nature of the Ohio-Minnesota partnership sets it apart from many joint initiatives. Moreover, while most US-based alliances span a single state or a focused geographical region, Ohio and Minnesota are in some places over 1,000 miles (1600 km) apart, which makes them surprising candidates for collaboration. The partnership’s groundwork was laid by both systems’ past participation in the voluntary “CENTSS audit”, offered by the [Center for Transforming Student Services](#) (CENTSS). CENTSS helps member colleges and universities benchmark student services to keep online students enrolled and engaged – the role of “traditional” student services on brick-and-mortar campuses.

The Ohio system will provide its “[E 4 ME](#)” course developed by the [Ohio Learning Network](#), a month-long introductory segue course designed to ease first-time adult online learners into the distance-learner experience. The two state systems will also share ePortfolio platforms and other tools designed to help individuals develop and attain education and career goals.

The 34th largest US state by area, Ohio is the seventh most populous with 11.5 million residents. The [Ohio Board of Regents](#) runs the [University System of Ohio](#), which includes 14 public universities, 23 two-year community colleges, and more than 120 adult education centres.

Minnesota is the 12th largest state in the nation (population: 5.2 million). [Minnesota State Colleges & Universities](#) represents 32 institutions, including 25 two-year colleges and seven public universities. Online courses are available through [Minnesota Online](#).”

Task Force Set Up to Promote UK Leadership in Online Learning

A new task force has been launched in the UK in order to help the UK higher education sector maintain and extend its position as a world leader in e-learning. We asked Paul Bacsich to describe the role and expected impact of this new task force which includes [Prof Gilly Salmon](#) of our [International Advisory Committee](#).



Prof Paul Bacsich

“This new online learning task force will make recommendations to the [Higher Education Funding Council for England \(HEFCE\)](#) and other relevant English and UK agencies and institutions to develop excellence in online learning.

The Task Force will begin by looking at four key areas: the current levels of online provision in the UK; the international market for online learning; levels of demand from new and prospective students; and perceptions of online learning in UK universities. It will also look at cost issues. More information is available about the Task Force from the HEFCE [website](#).

Interestingly the Task Force has changed emphasis in some ways since the earlier announcement in June 2009. There is now less explicit emphasis on distance learning, although internal evidence suggests that this is still likely to be one focus. The Re.ViCa [wiki page](#) on the topic gives more details and background, including correlation with [previous UK national initiatives](#) and national initiatives from other countries.

It may be helpful to readers interested in the Task Force to summarise where we believe that the Re.ViCa project can provide relevant information from its own work or from other sources it has identified and categorised.

1. *The current level of online provision in the UK, including the types of institutions and courses where it is available, the proportion of online learning compared to other modes of learning in courses, and investigating what kind of students (for example, full-time, part-time, work-based) can study via online means.* Re.ViCa did not carry out detailed work within specific countries – its focus was European and global – but a small study was done to identify the main distance learning providers in the UK and a [report](#) is on the wiki.
2. *The international market for online learning, focusing on UK HE’s competitors, and considering how the UK may be able to attract a greater number of students.* The Re.ViCa [Handbook](#) and associated [wiki](#) contain a vast amount of information about online learning in HE across the world, including on that delivered nationally and trans-nationally in the English language. Many more countries than commonly believed are now teaching some online courses in English, including several from Europe outside the UK and Ireland.
3. *The level of demand from students – new and potential – for online learning provision in UK higher education institutions (HEIs).* This was not within the scope of Re.ViCa, which by and large focussed on qualitative work and [case studies](#) rather than on quantitative work.
4. *Student perceptions of online learning in UK HE.* The UK Higher Education Academy and the projects and networks it part-funds have been recently in the lead in this area, especially [ELESIG](#) - but key earlier work was done by [JISC](#) and relevant work is being undertaken by [Becta](#) in respect of colleges (note that there is a College Principal on the Task Force).



5. *Costing models for online learning to support HEIs in developing this area of their learning and teaching.* Re.ViCa is aware of the recent [Costs of e-Learning Scoping Exercise](#) work that was commissioned from [Sero](#) by JISC in 2009, and of more recent developments in Wales on a [new Funding Model](#) for e-learning in the college sector.

A key reference in this area is the [paper](#) presented by Paul Bacsich and Bieke Schreurs to the Cambridge International Conference on Open and Distance Learning in [September 2009](#). Among its key conclusions (see page 62 of the collected papers) are:

- We have identified around 170 Programmes [large scale online learning initiatives] in Europe (EEZ), with some 20 more existing as EU projects past or present. In the Rest of the World there are nearly 300. Thus we now have nearly 500 Programmes across the world, though the rate of growth is now slowing since we have trawled every major report available and there are few promising countries left to analyse. There are currently 86 countries with one or more Programmes. The first headline conclusion is that this is considerably more than we expected.
- Of the Programmes, we identify 52 as “national initiatives” – those Programmes where a country (or state within a country) has aimed to take action across the country... Typically most countries have only one national initiative extant at any one time – Hanoi Open University, Swedish Net University, Swiss Virtual Campus, etc. However, a surprising number of countries, including in Europe, have none – or none currently. In contrast, a few countries, especially the UK, seem to have an inexhaustible appetite for national initiatives... Thus there are, in fact, just over 20 different countries with one or more national initiative.
- There has been recent discussion in the project and International Advisory Committee on the topic “Europe is tired of national initiatives”. While this is true at a headline level, especially in the westerly EU, the truth is more complex... they continue towards the east end of the EU (e.g. Bulgaria and Estonia) and just south of the EU (e.g. Egypt).

A fuller treatment of all these issues, and many more including the role of open universities (a key issue for the UK), is in the Re.ViCa [Handbook](#).”

New People in the Re.ViCa Network

Expert for Turkey: Prof Dr Ugur Demiray from Anadolu University in Turkey

Ugur Demiray is Professor of Communication Teaching in the School of Communication Sciences of



Prof Dr Ugur Demiray

[Anadolu University](#), Eskisehir, Turkey.

He holds an undergraduate B.A. in 1981 and also a Ph.D. degree completed at Anadolu University, in May 1986. His research is linked to the distance education applications of Anadolu University, the Ministry of Education and other universities in Turkey. He has extensive experience of publishing an e-journal on distance education internationally under the patronage of Anadolu University for the past 10 years, namely the TOJDE-Turkish Online Journal for Distance Education. TOJDE is a peer-reviewed quarterly e-journal.



He is also an editor, consultant editor and reviewer of more than 15 international journals which deal with distance education and educational technology. Up to now, he has been responsible for around 15 imprints or eBooks dealing with distance education and many articles, which have been published in national and international journals. He is Editor-in-Chief of TOJDE since January 2000 which is available from <http://tojde.anadolu.edu.tr>

Announcements

New country indexes on Re.ViCa wiki

As a result of preparation for the Learning and Technology World Forum, and the completion of the “spine” of country stubs on the Re.ViCa wiki for all 248 countries in the world, ready for future analysis and developments, there is now a set of new country indexes – grouped by internet domain name, by population and by income per capita. The opportunity was also taken to provide more explanation on countries (and former countries) with some useful new categories. For an introduction to this topic see [the new article](#) on the concept of country.

Conference on the Growth of Private and for Profit HE Providers in the UK

Universities UK and Guild HE are holding a conference on “The Growth of Private and for Profit HE Providers in the UK: Competition or Collaboration?” which will be held on Thursday 18th March 2010 at Regent’s College Conference Centre, London, NW1. The Private Higher Education sector is emerging as a growing force and the conference will examine some of the key issues such as quality assurance, regulation and funding. It will also provide an opportunity to consider benefits of collaboration or partnership. For more information visit the conference [website](#).

World Council of Comparative Education Societies Conference (WCCES) in Istanbul 14-18 June

This conference entitled “Bordering, Re-Bordering and New Possibilities in





Education and Society” aims to provide a forum for leading figures from across the world in education and social sciences, politics, civil society, and academia to discuss different perspectives and share studies on recent developments in education and the changing world. Amongst its many topics there are several of particular interest including ‘New Technologies and Accessibility to Learning’ and ‘Privatization and Marketization in Education’. For more information visit the conference [website](#).

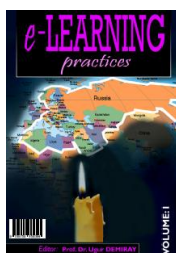


Going Global 4 in London 24-26 March

This fourth annual conference organised by the [British Council](#) examines drivers and motivations for international education, at both national and institutional level. Topics this year include staff and student mobility, global partnerships, global citizens and policy and leadership. For more information visit the conference [website](#).

New Publication Provides Background to E-Learning in 39 Countries

A recently published [eBook](#) entitled "E-Learning Practices" provides terrific insight into the state-of-play of e-learning in a variety of countries where it has not always been easy to gather information in the past, in particular North Africa, Eastern Europe and Central/Western Asia including all countries of the former CIS. Divided over two volumes, this publication is made up of a series of descriptions written by more than 70 authors. The editor of this eBook is Prof Dr Ugur Demiray from [Anadolu University](#) in Turkey.



Bits and Pieces

TeLearn Repository Continues to Grow

TeLearn bringing worldwide visibility to your TEL research. TeLearn is the first international Open Archive in Technology Enhanced Learning and emerged from work supported by the European Commission supported Network of Excellence, [Kaleidoscope](#). TeLearn now hosts more than 1,300 research publications and is a useful resource for people wishing to find out more about research in the technology enhanced learning field. To find out more, visit the TeLearn [site](#).

Tony Bates Recaps 2009

As always, Tony Bates’ blog is a great source of information and inspiration and his end-of-year round-up for 2009 is no exception. While highlighting his ‘highs’ and ‘lows’ Tony raises lots of interesting questions, like why institutions are busying themselves with new tools and technologies while displaying what Tony describes as a ‘total lack of recognition that the current



Dr Tony Bates

formal higher education system is failing’. Visit [Tony’s blog](#) to read more.

UNESCO OER Project Enters New Phase

UNESCO has been a leading light in the Open Educational Resources (OER) discussion in recent years and so it is interesting to note a recent announcement from Susan D’Antoni to the UNESCO OER community in which she announced that the [Hewlett Foundation](#) supported project on Open Educational Resources at UNESCO had drawn to a close in November 2009. Along with highlighting the significant work undertaken by this project including the development of the [OER wiki](#) and the OER Toolkit, Susan announced the creation of a UNESCO Chair on OER as a mechanism to ensure the sustainability of UNESCO’s work in this area. She also announced that [Athabasca University](#), Canada’s Open University, is applying for a UNESCO Chair on OER and that the Hewlett Foundation is providing funding to support the UNESCO OER community through this Chair.



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

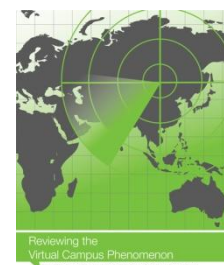
Sloan Report Shows 17% Growth in Online Learning

A recent survey carried out by The Sloan Consortium shows that online enrolment in the US in 2008 rose by nearly 17 percent from a year earlier. The survey, a collaborative effort between the Babson Survey Research Group, the College Board and the Sloan Consortium, used results from more than 2,500 colleges and universities and found that approximately 4.6 million students were enrolled in at least one online course in autumn 2008. For more information about this survey, visit The Sloan Consortium [website](#).

Reminders

Key Outcome Published and Available - The Virtual Campus Handbook

The project handbook “Reviewing the Virtual Campus Phenomenon: The Rise of Large-scale e-Learning Initiatives Worldwide” which provides a comprehensive and useful appraisal of Virtual Campuses worldwide has been published and is available either as a [free download](#) or in print form by contacting the Re.ViCa secretariat at revica@europace.be.



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We look forward to receiving input from you for our next newsletter which will be published in April 2010. This input can be news items, new RSS feeds, relevant papers or publications by you or others.

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