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Welcome to our third newsletter of 2009 – which we are sending to an extended circle of researchers, academics and others interested in Virtual Campuses.

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**Project news**

**External evaluation of Country Reports**

Throughout February the project partners have been busy with the external evaluation process in order to improve the country reports in the wiki. The idea behind this process is to involve two experts per country (including a member of the IAC\* when possible) to carry out a review of specific country reports. In order to streamline this process, a questionnaire was published online<sup>1</sup> for experts to complete. Project partner, Grégory Lucas from University of West-Hungary, College of Geoinformatics who is leading this process provides an update.



Grégory Lucas

“The evaluation is under process and by the beginning of March we had received 12 evaluations out of the 66 expected for the 33 country reports. The first question of the questionnaire aims to gather information about possible improvements for each section (figure 1). Our plan is to improve the country reports taking into consideration the results of the evaluation.

On average, the information gathered in each section of the country report is good (see figure 2). We will give priority to improving the following sections which are missing important information for 33% of country reports:

- Quality assurance
- Country's HEIs in the information society
- Virtual initiatives in HE
- References

Figure 1: Improvements

3. If you think it is necessary to improve a (certain) section(s), with the following points, please let us know.

	nothing	presentation	increase length	reduce length	grammar	spelling	clarity	accuracy	Response Count
2. Country in a nutshell	66.7% (8)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	25.0% (3)	12
3. Country education policy	33.3% (4)	16.7% (2)	33.3% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (2)	12
4. Country education system	50.0% (6)	8.3% (1)	25.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	12
5. Higher education	41.7% (5)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	25.0% (3)	33.3% (4)	12
6. Higher education reform	33.3% (4)	8.3% (1)	33.3% (4)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	33.3% (4)	12
7. Administration and finance	58.3% (7)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)	12
8. Quality assurance	58.3% (7)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	8.3% (1)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	12
9. Country's HEIs in the information society	66.7% (8)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	25.0% (3)	12
10. Virtual initiatives in HE	25.0% (3)	0.0% (0)	33.3% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	16.7% (2)	58.3% (7)	12
11. References	33.3% (4)	0.0% (0)	50.0% (6)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	25.0% (3)	12

Figure 2: Relevance

4. Please score the information provided for each of the following sections (this question targets the relevance of each section)

	Information is of high quality	Good information	Basic information	Poor information (some information is missing)	Information is missing totally	Rating Average	Response Count
2. Country in a nutshell	16.7% (2)	50.0% (6)	33.3% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.83	12
3. Country education policy	16.7% (2)	41.7% (5)	41.7% (5)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.75	12
4. Country education system	25.0% (3)	33.3% (4)	25.0% (3)	16.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	3.67	12
5. Higher education	16.7% (2)	41.7% (5)	25.0% (3)	16.7% (2)	0.0% (0)	3.58	12
6. Higher education reform	16.7% (2)	41.7% (5)	16.7% (2)	16.7% (2)	8.3% (1)	3.42	12
7. Administration and finance	25.0% (3)	16.7% (2)	50.0% (6)	0.0% (0)	8.3% (1)	3.50	12
8. Quality assurance	8.3% (1)	41.7% (5)	16.7% (2)	33.3% (4)	0.0% (0)	3.25	12
9. Country's HEIs in the information society	16.7% (2)	41.7% (5)	0.0% (0)	33.3% (4)	8.3% (1)	3.25	12
10. Virtual initiatives in HE	8.3% (1)	41.7% (5)	8.3% (1)	33.3% (4)	8.3% (1)	3.08	12
11. References	8.3% (1)	41.7% (5)	16.7% (2)	33.3% (4)	0.0% (0)	3.25	12

\* IAC stands for Re.ViCa's **International Advisory Committee**, a panel of experts who agreed to gather at three Expert Meetings to discuss the progress of the project and advise on the outcomes.



Something that is worth noting from the feedback received so far is that it is more difficult to identify, sort and summarize HEI virtual initiatives in big countries than in smaller ones. Thanks to the support of the participating experts, we are now in a much better position to cover some of the important initiatives that were missing from these reports. The input we have received has also been of great help in organizing virtual initiative in order of relative importance.

Two questions target the usefulness of the country report for the expert's own research and we are particularly happy to see that most evaluators appreciate their local country report and are also very interested in the other country reports (figure 3).

We would like to thank all the experts who have participated in this external evaluation up to now for the very relevant and constructive information they have provided. With their help we will greatly improve the country reports. We would also like to invite members of the IAC who have not yet evaluated their own country report to please do so. We are at your disposal for any questions or remark concerning this external evaluation."

### Evaluated country report and experts to date (18 March '09)

In total 17 experts have evaluated these country reports (multiple evaluations per country report are possible). An asterisk (\*) indicates which experts are members of our International Advisory Committee. Note: country links go to the 13 evaluated country reports on our password-protected wiki.

1. [Canada](#) by Rory McGreal, Associate Vice President Research, [Athabasca University](#), Canada
2. [Denmark](#) by Jørgen Bang, Associate Professor and Christian Dalsgaard, Postdoctoral researcher, [Aarhus University](#), Department of Information and Media Studies, Denmark
3. [Estonia](#) by
  - a. Anne Villems, lecturer, [University of Tartu](#), Estonia
  - b. Peeter Normak, Professor, Director of the Institute of Informatics, [Tallinn University](#), Estonia
- c. Mart Laanpere, researcher, [Tallinn University](#), Estonia
- d. Jaan Kõrgesaar, Head of Department of Higher Education, [Ministry of Education and Research](#), Estonia
4. [France](#) by Martine Vidal\*, chargée de mission - Chief editor Distances et savoirs, [Cned](#), France
5. [Germany](#) by Dr. Burkhard Lehmann, Managing Director, Distance and International Studies Center, [TU Kaiserslautern](#), Germany
6. [Hungary](#) by
  - a. Maria Kocsis Baán, Head of North Hungarian Regional Distance Education Centre / Secretary general of HUEUN, [University of Miskolc](#) / Hungarian e-University Network Association, Hungary
  - b. Andrea Karpati, Professor and Head of Centre, [ELTE University](#), Faculty of Science, Hungary
7. [Ireland](#) by Jim Devine\*, President, [IADT](#), Ireland
8. [Italy](#) by Joost Lowyck, Prof. Dr. emeritus with research tasks, [K.U.Leuven](#), Belgium
9. [Mexico](#) by Terence Karran\*, Senior Academic, [University of Lincoln](#), United Kingdom
10. [New Zealand](#) by Stephen Marshall, Director (Acting), University Teaching Development Centre, [Victoria University of Wellington](#), New Zealand
11. [South Africa](#) by Herman van der Merwe\*, Teaching & Learning with Technology, [Tshwane University of Technology](#), South Africa
12. [Sweden](#) by Per Westman, Project Manager, [Swedish National Agency for Higher Education](#), Sweden
13. [Switzerland](#) by Daniel K. Schneider, Senior Lecturer, TECFA - Faculty of Psychology and Education, [University of Geneva](#), Switzerland



## Meeting with UNIQe to Discuss the Re.ViCa List of Critical Success Factors

One of the key objectives of the Re.ViCa project is to identify relevant critical success factors (CSF) for evaluating and comparing Virtual Campuses, based on thorough research and expert input. Re.ViCa is not the first initiative to work in this area and so we began with a phase of desktop research in order to find out more about what others have done in this area. For an overview and download of the reports and literature we have been working on, see our [publications](#) on our project website.) This work led to the creation of the Re.ViCa long list of 99 CSFs.

### Selection

In spring 2008 during the first International Advisory Committee Meeting that took place at the EDEN Annual Conference in Lisbon, Portugal, members of the IAC worked in teams on this list, reducing it to a list of what we collectively agreed to be the 29 most essential factors.

During the second meeting of the IAC, held at the ONLINE EDUCA BERLIN Conference held in Berlin in December 2008, we invited the 17 member strong IAC Committee to vote on what they considered to be the most important factors on this list.

To strengthen the value of this list of factors, the IAC suggested during the Berlin meeting to present the Critical Success Factors in a more categorised manner, providing examples to clarify the critical success factors, to make a clear research framework with definitions of the critical success factors and to rephrase some factors in order to strengthen their value.

To strengthen the value of the list of CSF the Re.ViCa Partnership decided to compare the list of Re.ViCa factors with former projects who have dealt with Critical Success Factors or Quality Criteria. We began with the [UNIQe](#) project (European University Quality in eLearning), in collaboration with Prof. Claudio Dondi, the project manager of the UNIQe project



Prof. Claudio Dondi, Annemie Boonen and Helena Bijns

and Annemie Boonen and Helena Bijns from EuroPACE who have been involved in this project.

### Project Manager Bieke Schreurs' summary of the meeting:

We organized a 2 hour workshop to compare the UNIQe criteria with the Critical Success Factors to check to make sure the Re.ViCa factors were comprehensive, to compare the terminology used in each and to identify the essential aspects of the Re.ViCa list.



Bieke Schreurs

Following a fruitful discussion, the Re.ViCa team adapted the terminology of several factors and made some important steps towards an improved categorization as well as identifying several new factors. The results will be published on the Re.ViCa website in the near future. We are grateful for the input of the UNIQe team!

## Announcements

### Next IAC Meeting

The next International Advisory Committee meeting will take place during the M-2009 event, the 23rd ICDE World Conference on Open Learning and Distance Education including the 2009 EADTU Annual Conference, to be held on 7-10 June 2009 in Maastricht in the Netherlands. The conference is hosted by Open Universiteit Nederland. For more information see

<http://www.ou.nl/eCache/DEF/80/137.html>

The Re.ViCa project team will be hosting a meeting of IAC members on Sunday 7 June and on Monday 8 June there will be a special reception and launch event to launch the Re.ViCa wiki to the general public.

### Next Partner Meeting

Re.ViCa partners next meeting will take place on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> April in EuroPACE when the wiki will be fully reviewed and

plans will be put in place for the publication of the Re.ViCa handbook.

## Bits and Pieces

### Best Practice Handbook on Virtual Campuses to be published in June



Mark Stansfield **Promoting Best Practice in Virtual Campuses** from the University of West of Scotland and his partners in the Lifelong Learning Programme supported project PBP-VC – Promoting Best Practice in Virtual Campuses will be publishing a book in June which will include a chapter from the Re.ViCa team. This project has also recently published a useful brochure which summarises much of the project's work in this area and which is available from <http://vc.msroot.paisley.ac.uk/>

### University Lifelong Learning Observatory Site Launched

The European Universities Continuing Education Network (EUCEN) has recently launched a new initiative - The Observatory for ULLL (University Lifelong Learning) which will provide information on the major European Policies and three Processes for University Lifelong Learning:



- The Lisbon Process
- The Bologna Process
- The Copenhagen Process

It will also provide information about several important related themes. For more information, visit: <http://www.lifelonglearning-observatory.eu/>

### Detailed Report on Portugal Published

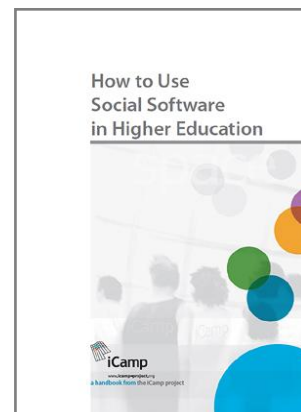
A detailed look at the state of eLearning in Portugal has recently been published by the eUser community which provides several useful sets of statistics and findings. To read the full report, visit <http://www.euser-eu.org/ShowCase.asp?CaseTitleID=605&CaseID=1242&MenuID=109>



### iCamp Project Report on the Use of Social Software in Higher Education

A useful handbook about this increasingly relevant topic was recently published by the iCAMP project as part of their final set of deliverables. Entitled "How to Use Social Software in Higher Education" this handbook can be downloaded from the web-site of the iCamp project at <http://www.icamp.eu/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/icamp-handbook-web.pdf>

Visit the project web site: <http://www.icamp.eu/>



## Reminders

As part of our work in getting to grips with the evolution of the term "Virtual Campus", we are keenly looking for your own experiences or reports of the coinage of Virtual Campus or related terms. We would like to include these (hi)stories in this newsletter and create an elaborate overview on our wiki, which you can find here <http://www.virtualcampuses.eu>. For the moment this wiki is only open for "beta users", so if you would like to have access to the wiki, please contact Nikki Cortoos: [nikki.cortoos@atit.be](mailto:nikki.cortoos@atit.be).

We also have a [Netvibes page](#) to which you can suggest relevant RSS feeds and a [Facebook group](#) which you can join.

Publications and an overview of our International Advisory Committee are published on our project web site <http://revica.europace.org>.

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

### Editorial team

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