



ECOLHE Newsletter – 2nd issue

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ECOLHE PROJECT IO1 "DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN HE: FROM THE EUROPEAN VISION TO THE UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE"

In this first IO, **University Roma Tre** has developed a field research in accordance with the methodology approach of the case study. Main phases were:

1. first of all, to realize a **desk-analysis** of university micro-policies to understand the specific university context;
2. to conduct **in-depth interviews** with three Vice Rectors (Vice-Rector for Teaching, Vice-Rector for the Relations with the Labour Market, Vice-Rector for Innovation and Technology Transfer);
3. to organize three **focus groups**: one with teachers, one with researchers, doctoral students and one with administrative staff;
4. to administer a questionnaire to students.

The aim of the interviews was to collect data on **how digital innovation has an impact on different University organisational levels**: leadership, planning and management, Quality Assurance, ICT resources and infrastructures; teaching-learning level: learning and teaching processes, scientific research activities, technology transfer and service to society; cultural level: ICT culture, hidden curriculum of teachers and academic staff.

The main objective of the focus groups was to collect useful data on:

- ✓ teaching practices and digital innovation;
- ✓ professional development with a focus on digital skills;
- ✓ best practices related to Roma Tre University;
- ✓ opportunities and criticalities in implementation of digital innovation practices.

The research carried out showed as in the initial period of the pandemic, the focus of interest was mainly on teaching, allowing lessons, exams and graduation sessions to continue. The main objective was to guarantee the students' right to education. Teachers, researchers, tutors and administrative staff shared the awareness of the usefulness, of the value of the work that was being done. Subsequently, space was given to creativity, using the numerous tools made available. In this phase, a need of discuss with colleagues and evaluate actions in place was felt.

At the same time, social distancing has increased and it has begun to produce feelings of bad mood, tiredness, melancholy and stress, also due to a massive use of new technologies, not always so accessible for everyone; over the months, the need of contact and relationships in presence strongly emerged. A very interesting element was that pandemic and social distance canceled the fundamental role of informal relations in the organization. Research participants said the pandemic has accelerated the use of digital technologies in all academic activities and e-learning practices, even if Roma Tre was clearly oriented in this direction, having already all the software available.

With reference to future prospects, the research showed a general and shared impression that **we are in a transition phase, which will last beyond the pandemic and the emergency period**; relationships between all actors of different processes and activities of the academic community are even more crucial.

An anthropocentric vision is and will be increasingly important, as the competence to collaborate will be even more strategic. The risk of stagnation is perceived as very strong: alarms concern the risk of not recognizing critical issues as opportunities and, therefore, of not being able to use resources that ICTs and digital world make available in an effective and critical way.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN HE: NATIONAL CASE STUDY- GREECE

In the framework of ECOLHE program, a case study was held, during the previous months. The study includes two parts:

- ✓ The first part presents an **analysis of the literature** on the description of national framework, university micro-policies and best practices.
- ✓ The second part contains the **field research** which includes interviews with decision makers, academic bodies and three focus groups, composed of professors, researchers and PhD students and administrative staff.

The main objectives of the research was the collection of data regarding the digital transformation of the university, the current status of operation and the vision that responders have for the future operation of universities with the adoption of digital tools and modern learning practices. The research tries to capture all the above in three main dimensions, organizational, teaching and cultural. The main results of the interviews of the decision makers reveals that **Greece HEI digital transformation is following the EU guidelines (Digital Transformation Strategy 2020-2025, Digital Education Action Plan 2021- 2027)**. Concerning the Academic bodies' opinion, all interviewers agreed that that integration of digital technologies might have caused some inconvenience at the beginning, but, after a while, teaching and administrative staff adjusted to it. It was also agreed that digital technologies will play a major part in the future.

Professors point of view is that the best way for keeping their skills up to date is self-training and possibly seminars held by universities. They also noticed the more intense use of digital platforms during the pandemic years. PhD students and researchers find the idea of digital transformation attractive, and they focus on the lack of efficient resources and training for the use digital tools in full scale. Drawbacks are bureaucracy and funding and the fact that teaching procedure is not yet well adjusted to distance learning environment.

Administrative staff find that digital transformation reduces paperwork and bureaucracy but there is still work to be done in that field. Field research also includes a questionnaire in order to capture student's opinions. Research was carried out on line and the number of the responders was 115.

Research findings reveal the use of digital tools and modern teaching methods in Patras University, but imply that some improvement is needed in the use of game elements and personalized orientation. Students are overall happy with the experience of their studies in UPAT and they are satisfied with the use of digital tools. Regarding their learning outcome their reaction was positive, while attention should be paid in developing their soft skills and making studies a little more enjoyable. Students performance was not improve significantly in distance learning environment and the exams were not easier according to their opinion..

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN HE: NATIONAL CASE STUDY- FINLAND

ECOLHE development work continues besides challenging situation of covid-19 pandemic. Laurea UAS, Finland continues working towards meeting project objectives. Mainly Onlife manifesto, putting into practice due to the situational demands working online. The first milestone met with offering **online 3-days European Partners Staff Training**.

The successful training offered as reported in the first newsletter. In addition, certificates of completion awarded to successful candidates. In the next stage of the development-work continues by Laurea researchers on 'Digital Technologies in HE: from the European vision to the university governance Finnish Case Study'. The work conducted with following phases:

- ✓ Literature review and state-of-the-art including description of the national framework.
- ✓ Conducting field research work beyond state-of-the-art: Data Collection and Analysis.
- ✓ Reporting results.

The work began with the literature analysis on the description of the national framework. Next, the Data collection phase completed working with HEIs decision makers, academic bodies, and focus groups. The most impactful work carried-out working with students conducting student survey.

The scope of the student survey is impactful- analyse the University digital maturity perceived by students and provide a comparative study. The results are revealing and useful. In the managerial and organizational perspective, Laurea has strategic objectives according the national Digivision 2030 project for digital transformation. Laurea is also participating in the EU innovation projects including ECOLHE, these development works are helping towards reaching the overall goals.

The survey result reveals- overall satisfaction is very high for the students' learning outcome when over **70% students agrees with the six of nine claims in this category**.

The main outcome from the empirical part is that the digitalized working environment has already eased work a lot, but simultaneously numerous new possibilities create high cognitive load for the personnel and the students. In spite of the fact that high number of students are satisfied for their studying in BIT programme due to well-organized and flexible online studies, they report that the quality of the education varies significantly. In the longer run, the situation will become intolerable and

digital transformation starts to drain more resources compare to tangible benefits if the transformation process is not manage properly.

The transformation demands solution with **a clear balance between different pedagogical models and virtual learning without resistance for the change.**

PILOT TRAINING “ENGAGING HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS WITH COLLABORATIVE E-ACTIVITIES”

Digitalization of educational practices stands high on policy agendas at European and national levels. Now more than ever, since the COVID-19 pandemic caused the largest disruption of education in history, having an impact on learners and trainers in all levels and types of education and demanding an abrupt acceleration toward digital learning.

In this context, the ECOLHE project designed and developed an online environment for online teachers in HE, to update emerging digital competences for online and blended learning, with the specific aim of increasing their ability in the use of digital technologies through online collaboration environments in HE. This training initiative, that is currently being piloted in all European university partners of the ECOLHE project, promotes the transformation of HE teachers’ practices by providing an innovative training model that can be replicable to other HE institutions to promote online teaching and key teaching competences in the digital era.

The main learning objectives of the training are:

- ✓ To update emerging digital competencies for online and blended teaching in HE, for increasing teachers’ ability in the use of digital technologies through online collaboration environments in HE;
- ✓ To enable teachers to adopt a gameful design approach in their courses and to incorporate game-based learning tools as part of their classroom activities, in order to enhance the level of motivation and engagement of HE students.

The training is based on a Challenge Based Learning (CBL) methodology. The CBL is understood as a methodology that involves the participants in the definition of a solution to a real and very relevant situation linked to their environment, in this case involves the collaborative design of a learning situation applicable to participants’ teaching practice. Thus, during the seminar a future professional scenario is simulated. Taking into account all of the aspects mentioned, and based on more of 20 years of experience of the Open University of Catalonia (UOC) in online education, the following ten key elements for online teaching are incorporated in the Training design: Student’s active role, Competences, Active and collaborative methodologies, Wide typology of e-activities, Asynchronous and synchronous communication, Resources for teaching and learning, Continuous assessment, Teachers’ role as a guide, Planning and Stable learning environment, and well bounded tools.

The conception of the overall training methodology and the different activities proposed allow participants to activate each of the 10 key elements in a situated and practical way, linked to participants’ environment. Based on the learning by doing perspective, the training involves the

collaborative design, implementation and evaluation of a learning situation directly applicable to participants' teaching practice.

The piloting phase of the training is ongoing and is involving a total of 126 teachers, researchers, PhD students, tutors and academic staff who deal in various ways with the enhancement of digital technologies in HE. During the training a total of 16 e-facilitators, from all the ECOLHE partners, are working collaboratively to monitor the activities and guide the participants providing support, feedback and additional training materials when needed.

PROJECT EVENTS

ERACON2020

In the framework of the ECOLHE project, EAEC conducted various dissemination activities, online and face- to-face, using a variety of different tools and means. Specifically, we disseminated information about the project aims and objectives as well as the project implementation to our network and associates through a dedicated section on the EAEC website.

Furthermore, through the EAEC monthly newsletter and Facebook page, we shared all the latest updates regarding the ECOLHE project.

In addition to the above, EAEC presented the ECOLHE project in the annual Erasmus Congress and Exhibition (ERACON 2021), which EAEC is organizing. The ECOLHE project will also be presented at ERACON 2022, which will take place in Thessaloniki, from 27 th June to 1 st July, 2022.

For more information visit: <https://www.eracon.info/>



For more information, follow us on [ECOLHE Facebook](#) and visit [ECOLHE project website](#).

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