

Project plan

**The Norwegian Agency for Flexible Learning in Higher Education (SOFF)
The Norwegian University Network for Lifelong Learning (NUV)**

PROJECT PRESENTATION

1. Project number:

P07/2004

2. Institution responsible for the project :

Name: **Høgskolen i Bergen (Bergen University College)**
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3. Name of the project:

**The Virtual Classroom of Social Work in Europe "VIRCLASS"
Comparative studies of social work**

4. Project leader:

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5. Professional field:

Health and Social Work

6. Cooperation and project organisation

The VIRCLASS project is being developed in cooperation with 6 universities from different European countries. The following countries and universities participate in the project group: Lithuania, Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas; Spain, Universidad Complutense de Madrid; Italy, Università degli Studi di Parma; Sweden, Jönköping University; Finland, Diaconia Polytechnic, Helsinki; Wales, University of Wales, Swansea. They participate in the VIRCLASS project in view of their particular interest and competence in ICT based teaching. In addition, the local authorities of Parma and Bergen have expressed interest in the project.

The Media Centre in Bergen participates as consultant for the project.

In addition to these participants, other contributors from the work group developing the EUSW-TN (European Social Work Thematic Network) summer school participate in the development of the thematic content of e-learning modules and summer school program, and some will also participate as teachers during the courses.

The management committee for the VIRCLASS project will be composed of participants from the International Office, Bergen University College (HiB), the Media Centre, Bergen University College, the Planning Department, Bergen County Council, Partners from Parma, two participants from the participating institutions in the project group and the project leader.

In addition to the project leader, Assistant Professor Kjell Henriksbø from the Institute of social education and social work, Bergen University College will also participate in the development of the project.

7. Project summary (what the project involves, goals and project initiatives)

The aim of the VIRCLASS project is to develop and launch a new virtual classroom for social work in Europe based on multinational cooperation and to create educational modules that can be utilised by institutions in different countries. A number of European educational institutions contributing to the thematic network EUSW (European Social Work) will contribute subject material, and different institutions will be partially responsible for carrying through the different topics.

Bergen University College (HiB) in cooperation with 6 universities in Lithuania, Italy, Spain, Wales, Sweden and Finland respectively, will be responsible for the project and the development of the net-based side of the educational programme which is considered a forerunner to a summer school arranged by EUSW in Parma July 2005 under the leadership of Università degli Studi di Parma, Italy.

The project leadership is to be accorded to Social Worker education at the Faculty of Health and Social Work with the consultancy services from the Media Centre Bergen University College. In addition, representatives from local authorities in Parma and Bergen are connected to the project.

The target group for the course will be social workers and social work students in Europe who are interested in an international perspective on social work. The course may be taken as an independent study or be integrated as an elective for a bachelor degree in social work, other further educational interests or a master degree depending on the flexibility on course requirements in individual institutions.

The course is based on three modules. Module 1 is an introduction to social work in Europe. Module 2 consists of three main topics where students choose one. Module 3 is the summer school in Parma where topics from module 1 and 2 will be elaborated. All modules cover aspects of social work as a discipline and profession in Europe and provide students with several choices of theme. Completion of modules awards credits. Those completing all modules will be awarded 15 - 20 credits in total (numbers of credits are not decided yet).

The course is to be based on use of the standardised e-learning platform 'It's learning', the use of which Bergen University College has several years experience. Students will work with tasks individually and in groups. Evaluation is on the basis of portfolio evaluation.

In particular, it is the scope and breadth of international cooperation in developing an English language, international module in social work, where a common e-learning platform is used that is groundbreaking work. Such close international cooperation in developing subject material adapted to e-learning within the field of social work has also not been attempted. This will supplement other international cooperation and stimulate new and engaging areas for development in professional work, pedagogy and cooperative research.

8. Credits:

Module 1 awards 3 credits + Module 2 awards 9 credits. Module 3 (summer campus) awards 3 credits. Total numbers of credits are 15. (Number of awarded credits might be extended).

9. Project target group

The target group for the course will be social workers and social work students in Europe who are interested in an international perspective on social work. The course may be taken as an independent study or be integrated as an elective for a bachelor degree in social work, other further educational interests or a master degree depending on the flexibility on course requirements in individual institutions.

10. Course aims (discipline aims)

- The course will provide knowledge of the similarities and differences in social work as a discipline and work in Europe.
- The course will contribute in promoting an international perspective on social work in individual countries and increase understanding for seeing national social circumstances in a global perspective.
- The course will increase communication, cooperation and understanding between students and professionals working with social work as a discipline in Europe and provide possibilities for the exchange of experience-based knowledge.
- The course will aim to further develop understanding of the discipline and the disciplinary framework that can stimulate new ideas for developmental work that will be beneficial to target groups for social help.
- The course will increase and develop cooperation between teaching strengths from different educational institutions in Europe in a common engagement in accomplishing and developing an e-learning based course of study.
- The course will create collaboration in English language teaching material.

11. Student appraisal (examination type and examination development)

Module 1 can be completed as a self-study course or as an e-learning course. Evaluation of student knowledge in Module 1 will take the form of an individually written exercise. In Module 2, evaluation will be based on a portfolio evaluation. The e-learning platform will be utilised for work and handing in papers. In Module 3,

summer campus, evaluation will be an oral group presentation and an individually written paper delivered after the campus period is finished.

12. Course organisation (pedagogical organisation and use of technology)

Pedagogical organisation

Teaching arrangements are based on a constructivist and socio cultural knowledge and learning vision. Given the rapid changes in taking place in today's society, emphasis during the course will be given to inspiring and guiding students to find material themselves and developing knowledge through task solving, problem solving and discussion. The individual topics will be divided into subtopics to provide a natural work progression with the topic. Tasks will be linked to the learning goals of the topics. Examples of concrete situations and experience from own country that elucidate the topic, pictures, short videos and texts that may trigger discussion and give students concrete ideas on situations in different countries will be used.

Two teachers will be responsible for the individual topics. The number of students who enrol will be decisive for the number of teachers to be involved in the subject organisation. Student groups of 6-10 will have one teacher. A minimum of one person from the educational institution in the country with enrolled students will assist with advice and guidance for their national students. This applies to both the subject matter and to the more technical side concerning the use of e-learning technology. Teachers involved in developing the individual topics will also participate in the teaching. Coordination of teaching arrangements will be directed from Bergen University College and also the management of the e-learning platform.

Use of technology/media and teaching aids: An agreement has been made in cooperation with partners in EUSW on the use of "It's Learning" as Learning Management System (LMS). Bergen University College has consented to cover the cost of necessary user licences to carry through the project. This platform provides excellent opportunities to establish and use discussion forums, to participate in task oriented group work and to hand in completed tasks over the net.

The e-learning platform will be used during the planning phase of the educational organisation. In this way the teaching staff will become familiar with the use of the system which is important before taking it into use with students during the course of 2005.

In March 2004 EUSW-TN is to publish a book in English on social work in Europe with contributions from the respective participant countries. The book will also be available in electronic form. Other literature in English will be recommended and in addition, students may use literature in their own language. Technical possibilities permitting, a video conference may be desirable at the beginning of the course so that participants may get to know each other.

13. Evaluation of the project (what is to be evaluated (which problems) and how)

Evaluation will be accessed in line with the stated disciplinary goals for the course. A main goal with trying out ICT in an international project is to see how this can contribute in developing inter-national understanding and insight, and give students a possibility to see social work in their own country in an international perspective. There is a wish to stimulate cooperation and contact between participating students in order to encourage exchange of experience relating to the topics they study. It will be important to evaluate whether and in what way this is successful.

In addition, it will be important to evaluate experience in the use of a common e-learning platform to carry out an international course of study. How must such a platform be adapted in order to make access as easy as possible for students and teachers? What costs are associated with carrying out such a project that is to be repeated over time and what experience may be gained concerning obligations and cooperation between responsible liaising partners? What experience may be gained between teaching personnel who partake in developing and organising the subject material for e-learning and what ripple effects may this cooperation create for other fields of developmental work?

English is the presupposed language for teaching and communication. We are aware that language knowledge and competence is variable and it may well be deemed necessary to develop language aids for the platform. It is hoped that an assessment of these aspects of the project will provide some idea of what is necessary.

The LMS-programme to be used includes a market research tool that will be used in evaluating the project. This tool makes it possible to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Evaluation will be in the form of a questionnaire to students and teachers involved. Sending in the questionnaire can be made an obligatory part of the programme. One person will have time appropriated in order to sum up and analyse the consecutive results.

14. Activities and planned progression if the project

Spring 2004: Preparation phase

Compilation of teaching module contents through international allocation of tasks. Presentation of a complete 15 credit study plan for the Network Conference for EUSW to be held in Hungary in May.

Compilation of announcement material, application forms etc. during spring. Place announcements in periodicals, web-sites, send information material to relevant universities and educational institutions.

Project leader participate in SOFF/NUV Conference in April.

Secure supplementary support funding for the project.

Compile an introduction/demo for the use of the e-learning platform in English.

Autumn 2004: Preparation phase

Arrange a course/seminar/meeting with the aim of improving user competence of the e-learning platform and work with proposals for the pedagogical framing of the net-based course. The seminar for the work group and project group, and perhaps other participants from the cooperating universities in Europe will be held in Bergen at the end of September.

Arrange the first management committee meeting at the same time.

Those teachers involved, who are to be responsible for carrying out the different topics in the two modules compile teaching materials for the e-learning programme.

The different proposals harmonised to the necessary degree.

Application deadline for the course in early October. Student intake clarified in November.

Project group meeting in early December.

Evaluation of cooperation at the end of the project's first year.

Spring 2005: Carry through phase

January – prepare platform before start up. Division of students into inter-national groups.

February – start up Module 1. March – start up Module 2.

15 March report to SOFF.

At the end of April a new cooperative meeting is to be held with the project group in order to plan further.

2nd management committee meeting in the beginning of June. Clarify further work and cooperation.

Module 2 completed in June. Evaluation of students' and teachers' experience of the e-learning based teaching organisation.

Carry through summer school in Parma, Italy 16-31 July.

Evaluation of students' benefit of participating in the whole course compared to those who participated in parts of the course.

Project group meeting in early August

Autumn 2005: Evaluation of proceeding phase

Completion evaluation and reporting – write an article concerning experience with international cooperation on e-learning based modules in the field of social work.

Participate in conferences in order to spread information about such experience (during 2005 and also in 2006).

Clarify further work.

Should the course continue (something, of course we hope is of great interest), new student intake must be conducted and the teaching programmes updated in accordance with evaluation.

Evaluation of the project's international cooperation. 3rd management committee meeting.

Spring 2006: Proceeding phase

Report to SOFF – 15 March

Prospective start up of new course.