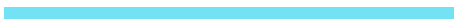


What is Virtual Exchange?



Building virtual exchange capacities
in the Baltic Sea Region
Envision Training – University of Tartu, Estonia
23-24 October 2023





What is Virtual Exchange?

- Pedagogical approach developed over the last 3 decades from experience in the field of language education, educational exchange and study abroad
- Technology-enabled, people-to-people, sustained over a period of time
- Use of media platforms to enable deep, interactive social learning (not simply to deliver content)
- Interactions between students are facilitated to ensure they are meaningful
- Promotes reciprocity and allows for equity and inclusiveness
- Prepares, deepens, and extends physical exchanges, and can fuel new demand for physical mobility



What Virtual Exchange is NOT

Virtual Exchange	Other forms of online learning
Emphasis on people to people, intercultural dialogue and/or collaboration	Emphasis on online access to university course content (video lectures etc.)
Educators/facilitators guide interaction between learners in different locations	Educators provide educational content to learners
Intercultural learning is one of the main educational outcomes <i>in addition to</i> course content	Mastery of course content is main (and sometimes only) educational outcome
Usually includes synchronous video communication with peers in small groups	Communication is predominantly asynchronous



Virtual Mobility vs Virtual Exchange

Virtual mobility “the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to obtain the same benefits as one would have with physical mobility but without the need to travel” (Bijnens, Boussemaere, & Rajagopal, 2006, 20 p. 5) and focuses on the **cooperation of educational institutions as well as the recognition of achievements.**

“**Virtual exchange** [...] is centred on the **interaction and communication** of geographically separated participants (Virtual Exchange Coalition, 2019). Instead of access to educational offers of cross-border universities, the focus is clearly on **exchange, competence building, and interaction in small groups** (European Commission, 2018). Administrators implementing these concepts in higher education are confronted with a variety of organisational, didactic, and administrative challenges.” (Schoop, Clauss & Askbar Safavi, 2020, pp. 19-20)



Different Models of Virtual Exchange

a) Co-Designed

- 2+ professors (and their support staff) adapt parts of their existing courses to host a period of collaboration between students
- training, support and mentoring are recommended

b) Ready-made

- experienced VE providers (e.g. Soliya and Sharing Perspectives Foundation) offer programmes on various topics
- individual students may join, or one of these programmes can be integrated into the curriculum



How can VE be integrated into the curriculum?

1 VE as a preparatory or follow-up activity to physical mobility (blended mobility)	2 VE as an intertwined component of a physical mobility (blended mobility)
<p><i>VE either before/after mobility exchange</i></p> <p>Great for: Offering high quality preparation for physical mobility, and ensuring that students make the most of their stay abroad or reflect on their international experience.</p>	<p><i>VE intertwined with physical mobility into a single educational experience</i></p> <p>Great for: Diversifying the participating student body of a physical mobility, by including students who are unable to travel for longer periods of time.</p>
3 VE as a stand-alone learning activity	4 VE as a component of a course (traditional/online)
<p><i>VE recognised as an individual activity</i></p> <p>Great for: Institutions to introduce VE projects centrally with more limited teaching staff involvement if desired.</p>	<p><i>VE as integral & required part of the course</i></p> <p>Great for: Teaching staff who wish to give their course an international dimension, either by integrating a VE project co-designed by the teachers, or by including a ready-made VE within a single course.</p>

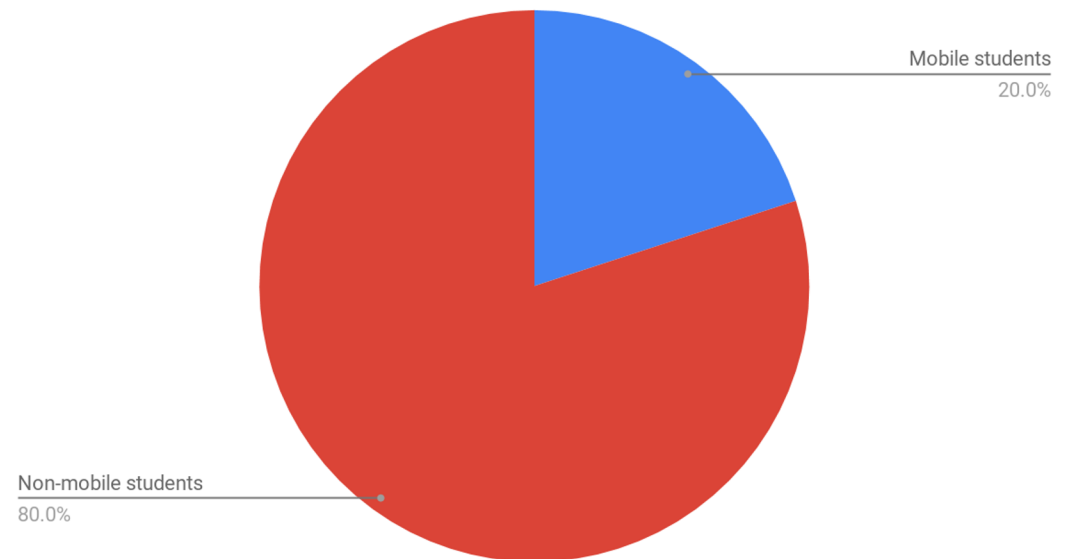


Inclusion

International student mobility is for a minority of students, a “cultural elite”
EC objective for 2020 was to involve 20% student population in a mobility programme.

What about the remaining 80%?

Erasmus mobility targets 2020





SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Can these goals be achieved without transnational, transdisciplinary collaboration ?





Co-Designed VE



Terminology

COIL
Collaborative Online
International
Learning

Telecollaboration

Global Classroom

International
Virtual
Classroom

Global Learning
Experience



Example

Medical Anthropology

SUNY New Paltz (NY, USA)

(1) experience working with people from a different culture

(2) gain experience working in a different medium (potentially producing audio podcasts rather than a traditional research/term paper)

(3) broaden the perspective offered in the course (which focuses principally on examples of social inequality and its impact on health in the United States)

Podcast Production

American University of Cairo (Egypt)

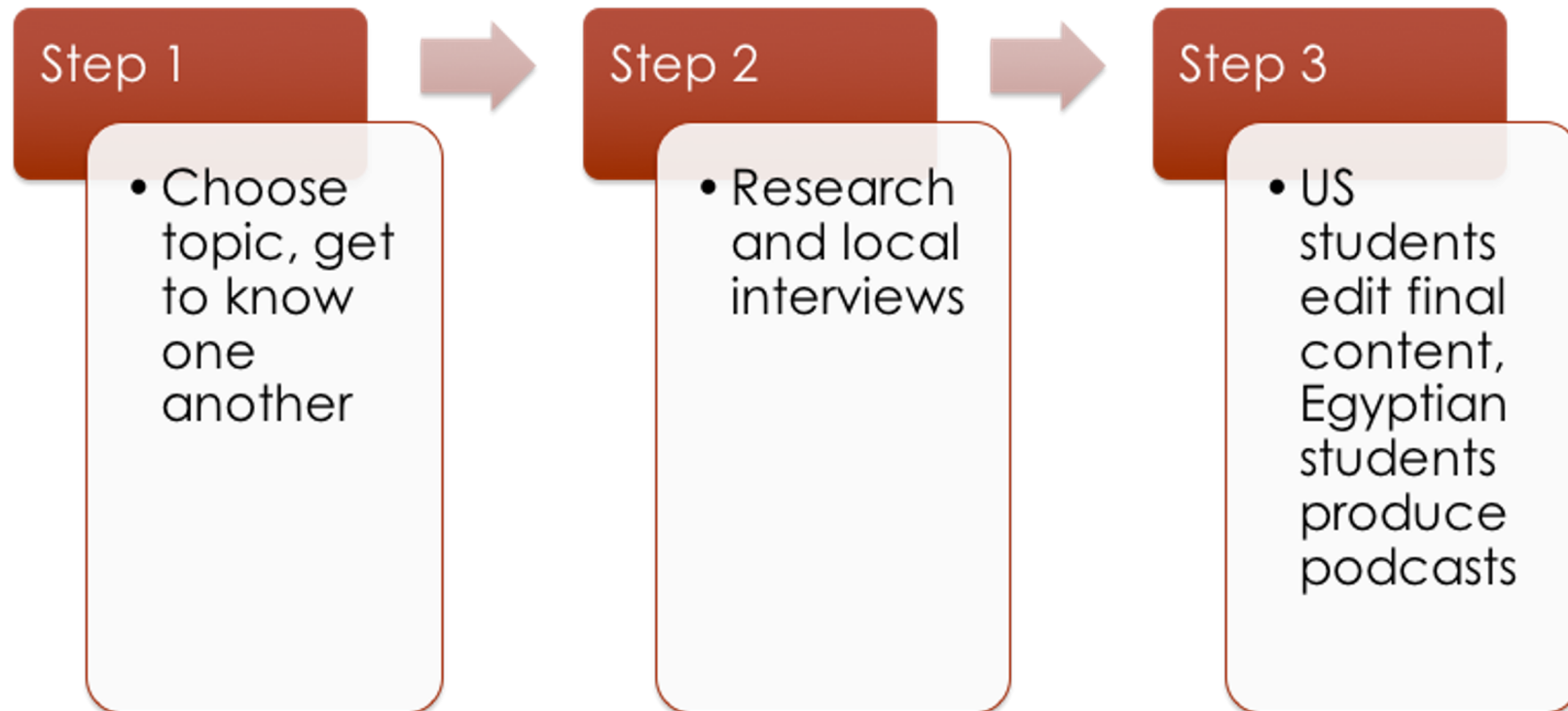
(1) Gain appreciation for research on a topic that they probably won't get to select

(2) work on a collaborative project and develop soft skills

(3) gain an understanding of how the media production process works



Tasks





I think that my cultural background (I am White, middle class, and queer) causes me to steer towards the social justice and human rights-based aspects of the course. I steer towards the topics of reproductive justice, sexual health, and gender-based violence. Interpreting the course content in this manner, it was a bit jolting to realize the extent to which my partner did not interpret the assignment in this manner. A middle ground had to be reached in the content of the project, and that included avoiding discussing Egypt's policy towards homosexuality, and simply focusing on how it treats those with a "homosexual" disease. (POD-US-8, mid-COIL)

As I've mentioned before, the homosexuality part had me concerned at first because this is an unacceptable issue in Egypt. But my partner convinced me to approach it professionally because it's a very important part of our topic, which is AIDS. (POD-EG-10, mid-COIL)



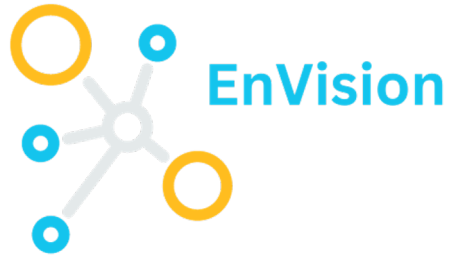
Benefits of Co-Designed VE

Students

- Gain knowledge regarding course content through peer perspectives
- Learn to collaborate online in international teams as well as other soft skills

Teachers

- Add an enriching international component to their course
- Customise a VE to their specific desired learning outcomes
- Learn innovative pedagogical approaches to education
- Strengthen partnerships



Questions?
Thank you!



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