# Erasmus Intensive Programme: Information and Communication Technology in Supporting the Educational Process

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**Summary**

*This paper describes the Erasmus IP course "Information and communication technology in supporting the educational process (ICT-EE)" organized by the Department of Information Sciences, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, that has taken place from September 10th to September 23rd 2011. In this IP, participants from four universities with a total of 10 teaching staff were involved in the project: University of Zagreb, Croatia (http://www.unizg.hr), Universidade Aberta, Portugal (http://www.uab.pt), Univerza v Ljubljani, Slovenia (http://www.ff.uni-lj.si) and Hacettepe Üniversitesi, Turkey (http://www.hacettepe.edu.tr/english/index.php). The wide range of expertise of the teaching staff gathered around this IP presents a strong multidisciplinary approach whose focus was on strengthening international collaboration, offering different insight to the issues of e-learning as well as bringing together specific and unique expertise that can be applied in any given field of education. The main objective of this course was to give students insight into the problem of teaching and learning in electronic educational environment.*

**Key words:** Erasmus IP, higher education, library, e-learning, information literacy

**Introduction**

Information and communication technology has become essential in teaching and learning process in higher education and research. As the quantity of the available digital content is increasing, students as future employees and users of information institutions need to acquire knowledge which will give them competencies for understanding and development of new user services based on the digital content.

The Erasmus Intensive program[1]: Information and communication technology in supporting the educational process (ICT-EE) as a mode of short program study was seen as a suitable mode of knowledge transfer between students from different partner countries. Program based on the issue of successful utilization of modern information technologies in educational process was seen as a necessary extension to the existing curricula at the partner universities. The main objective of the intensive programme was that of creating multidisciplinary and multilateral networks between teachers and students from partner EU and non-EU higher education institutions which, due to their origins, educational missions and objectives, offer different approaches and context to the topics covered. The wide objective of the IP was to bring together professors and students

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[1] "An Intensive Programme (IP) is a short programme of study which brings together students and teaching staff from higher education institutions of at least three participating countries. It can last from 10 continuous full days to 6 weeks of subject related work." ERASMUS Intensive programmes http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/doc900_en.htm

from EU and non-EU countries to increase their knowledge in educational technology and support. The wide range of expertise of the teaching staff gathered around this IP presents a strong multidisciplinary approach whose focus is on strengthening international collaboration, offering different insight to the issues of e-learning as well as bringing together specific and unique expertise that can be applied in any given field of education. The goal of activities planned was to promote training and research among body of students and encourage international collaboration by which the full potential for European identity, citizenship and employability of adult learners with mobility along with the opportunities for their personal growth will be encouraged. It tried to promote teamwork and citizenship, engaged problem-solving in the specific context (rather than generalized or abstract concepts from a textbook) and gave participants the ability to make connections across the disciplines.

## About the ICTEE – program overview

The course was based on a set of theoretical and practical tools related to cross-disciplinary education and educational procedures, tools and supporting elements facilitating thus the application of students' theoretical and conceptual knowledge on practical examples that can often be found in the educational process. The main objective of this course was to give students insight into the problem of teaching and learning in electronic educational environment. The goal was to provide students with necessary knowledge and skills which will enable them to explore and connect theory with real life problems and challenges by utilizing hands on experience and learning.

Added value of the Erasmus Intensive program (IP) was in unique mix of different aspects of the education in electronic environment covering all the supporting issues like libraries, intellectual property, service learning and technology usage. The program was organized in general direction by which learning outcomes could become applicable in any field offering an interdisciplinary approach that could be utilized in any educational context.

In this IP, participants from four universities with a total of 10 teaching staff were involved in the project. As Universidade Aberta is specialised in distant learning and therefore was chosen to provide input in the aspects of the e-learning which they have most experience with. Specifically, topics covered were: Assessment in e-learning; and Libraries and e-learning. Furthermore, Univerza v Ljubljani, Filozofska fakulteta, Oddelek za bibliotekarstvo, informacijsko znanost in knjigarstvo puts emphasis on psychological and pedagogical role and tasks of librarians, therefore their input was seen in the topic: Psychology and LIS environments. For successful education in the digital age there is a growing need for recognition and understanding of intellectual property rights in the digital age; and development of web-based information literacy packages which were the topics offered by the Hacettepe Üniversitesi. Information literacy has proven to be the key component in successful learning and

247

acting in the digital age; therefore the Univerisity of Zagreb offered the following topics: Quality management in e-learning, E-portfolio, Service e-learning and Speaking in the electronic environment.

The primary target group were students of Master's degree level, although bachelor's or PhD degree students were also accepted. Selection process was done at each partner institution where the best students were chosen. During the application process of the IP all partners agreed on accrediting student participants with the assigned 5 ECTS. The practical exercises have been organized in international subgroups, making it possible for the participants to interact with fellow students from different countries and cultural backgrounds. The IP course activities have consisted of lectures followed by discussions, seminars, working groups, and subject-related excursions. Educational activities were complemented by cultural activities related to the host country heritage as well as IP subject matter. A special focus was on the interactivity, therefore various types of sessions have been offered, involving student in both theoretical and practical aspects of the ICT in educational environment. The technology used in the IP presents a mixture of various types of technology that could be used in education, encompassing different aspects of educational process. Therefore, students have been able to gather insight into the technology currently used at the higher education institutions such as: various web 2.0 tools (Gloggster, Voicecaster, Xtranormal, ScoopIT etc), VOIP, Virtual worlds (Second life), presentational tools (Prezi), Course management systems (Moodle) etc.

Students have produced live posters in their group-work. These have been presented using one of the new media tools which served as discussion points in the closing session at the end of the IP. The virtual learning environment of the IP offered through the Moodle open-source learning platform whose FHSS implementation is called Omega. This enabled students to access learning materials before, during, and after the IP. Selected papers presented by students at the IP were made available to the general public on the project website (http://infoz. ffzg.hr/erasmusip/).

Students were offered to actively participate in lectures presented by professor(s) and by presenting their point of view and examples about topics presented in lectures and in discussions. They will also participate actively in short exercises corresponding to the topics presented in lectures. Direct students' participation in transfer of knowledge will enable higher quality of teaching. By participating in solving real-life problems during lectures, discussions and exercises, students will be able to evaluate the level of knowledge they acquired at the end of the lectures and to compare this level with the objectives set for the topic. At the end of lectures, students were given an evaluation survey for the course which they evaluated as of high quality and necessary in their future work environment still not crucial in their job search.

## Project outcomes

One of the results of the IP is strengthened cooperation between educational European institutions in performing ICT supporting lifelong learning. Program has tried to ensure transfer of ideas and different methodology as well as evaluation criteria of participating countries. New teaching methods for lifelong learning enabled participants to learn how to implement tools and methods in their own personal growth but also in their future professional work either as teachers or professionals involved in lifelong learning or learning organizations.

Learning outcomes of the IP to address the following:

- to know key components of modern education that consists of a well balanced use of new emerging technologies;
- to understand the electronic educational environments'
    - methodological approaches
    - supporting elements and
    - quality management issues
- get insight in key issues and problems.

The outcome was creation of ICT-based content, i.e., producing teaching materials, student reports/theses, multimedia products and so on. Planned activities enabled participants to learn together with fellow students from other European higher education institutions which help them in development of intercultural competence as well as improvement of their foreign language proficiency. We hope that multidisciplinary approach to knowledge development and usage of ICT technologies contributed to transparency and universal understanding of public knowledge, educational paradigm, social communication, media and information literacy, etc. in a global world.

Student work has been evaluated by the teaching staff. By using new media such as Twitter, students were processing and disseminating what they have learned among themselves but also with the general public by creating stream #ICTEE11. Furthermore, close connection among students that has been created with this IP, is seen in their connecting through social network (Facebook) and creation of the group dedicated to and consisting of participants of the course.

## Conclusion

The main task of the ERASMUS IP ICT-EE was to strengthen cooperation between educational European institutions in researching and utilizing ICT and in supporting lifelong learning. The wide range of expertise of the teaching staff gathered around this IP presents a strong multidisciplinary approach whose focus is on strengthening international collaboration, offering different insight to the issues of e-learning as well as bringing together specific and unique expertise that can be applied in any given field of education. The main objective of this course was to give students insight into the field of education in electronic

environment. The IP course activities were a combination of lectures followed by discussions, seminars, working groups, and subject-related and cultural heritage excursions.

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