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***e*Learning : Designing Tomorrow's Education**

A Mid-Term Report

As requested by the Council Resolution of 13 July 2001

Preface

At the European Council in Lisbon in March 2000, Heads of State set an ambitious target for Europe to become within ten years “*the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*”. They also placed education firmly at the top of the political agenda, calling for education and training systems to be adapted to meet this challenge.

Technology supported learning (e-learning) helps us to answer this request by fostering the integration of ICT in education, as a lever for change and as an opportunity for increased quality, convenience, diversity and effectiveness.

In launching the initiative “**eLearning: Designing Tomorrow’s Education**”, with its corresponding Action plan for 2001-2004, the Commission laid the foundations for concrete and sustainable action, through a set of specific measures. In proposing the **eLearning Programme 2004-2006**, the Commission aims to strengthen this work by focusing attention on Digital literacy, School twinning, and Virtual campuses, whilst reinforcing its monitoring of the eLearning Action Plan.

The measures launched by the Commission will serve to co-ordinate the various e-learning activities of Europe and propel us towards the knowledge-based economy and the vision set in Lisbon.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since the adoption of the *eLearning* Initiative in May 2000 ^[1] and the *eLearning* Action Plan in March 2001 ^[2], interest in technology supported learning (e-learning) has continued to grow. Its use for enhancing quality and improving accessibility to education and training is generally seen as one of the keystones for building the European knowledge society. Indeed, such is the impact on our education and training systems that e-learning is increasingly seen as a catalyst for fundamental change and as tool for achieving European policies on social inclusion, language learning, addressing the skills gap and intercultural dialogue, to mention but a few.

The Council endorsed the importance of ICT for education and training in its resolution of 13 July 2001 ^[3], encouraging the member states “*to continue their efforts concerning the effective integration of ICT in education and training systems, as an important part of the adaptation of the education and training systems*”. This followed the report of the Council and the Commission, entitled “The concrete future objectives of education and training systems” ^[4], which reinforced the importance of ICT in modern education and training systems, confirming that ICT is “*of increasing importance in open learning environments and virtual teaching*”.

In order to establish a legal basis for the work started under the *eLearning* Initiative and to focus Community investment on areas of priority for European policy, the Commission adopted a proposal for an *eLearning* Programme 2004-2006 in December 2002 ^[5]. The programme, which is currently going through co-decision with the Council and Parliament, has been broadly welcomed and the four priorities have been confirmed: *School twinning*, *Virtual campuses*, *Digital literacy* and actions to support ongoing monitoring of the Action Plan.

This Mid-Term Report was requested in the Council Resolution of 13 July 2001 (see above). It refers to work undertaken since the *eLearning* Interim Report ^[6] and focuses, in particular, on achievements under the *eLearning* Initiative. It uses the results of an evaluation that was conducted by an external expert ^[7] to draw some conclusions and identify challenges for further work under the *eLearning* Action Plan and the proposed *eLearning* Programme.

2. THE *eLEARNING* ACTION PLAN

During 2002, the *eLearning* Action Plan continued to serve an important role in helping to co-ordinate European activities concerning the use of ICT in education and training. Most national action plans reference it as a source of guidance and inspiration. So do a range of EU policy documents and initiatives, as e-learning is increasingly seen as a useful tool for achieving better access to lifelong learning and *education for all*. Examples include “eEurope 2005: An information society for all” ^[8], “Adapting e-business policies in a changing environment: The lessons of the Go Digital initiative and the challenges ahead” ^[9], “Building Social and Human Capital in the Knowledge Society” ^[10], “Investing Efficiently in Education and Training: an Imperative for Europe” ^[11], and “Making a European Area of Lifelong learning a Reality” ^[12].

2.1. Priorities

The eLearning Action Plan defines four priority areas for 2002-2004 and experience has shown these to be very relevant to the effective integration of ICT in education and training.

Actions to provide essential *Infrastructures and equipment* have progressed well, with e-learning proving to be one of the success stories of the eEurope 2002 Action Plan ^[13]. The average connectivity of schools to the Internet increased to 93% in Europe and the average number of pupils per PC reduced to 17 ^[14].

The eEurope 2005 Action Plan ^[8] was launched to continue the work of eEurope, promoting the use of broadband communications and services, in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public services. It reinforces and concentrates effort on the three policy priorities of eLearning, eGovernment and eHealth. The plan defines actions to support the re-skilling of the workforce using e-learning and the deployment of virtual campuses. The eLearning Action Plan remains instrumental in achieving these objectives and the proposed eLearning Programme will further strengthen support for these priority areas, with its work on digital literacy and virtual campuses.

As connectivity improves and the availability of equipment increases, so attention has turned to issues of *Quality, content and services*.

The eEurope Action Plan calls for research and piloting actions to support the use of powerful computational networks and infrastructures for collaborative and adaptive learning. The main framework for such research activities, as well as for the creation of a European research area in technology enhanced learning, is the Information Society Technologies (IST) Programme. The IST programme, both through emerging results of 5th Framework Programme projects and through its activities for the 6th Framework Programme ^[22], contributes to the infrastructure for a European research area for new learning environments, including to the development and adoption of standards in support of interoperability of systems, and of learning content.

The 5th Framework Programme action lines on eLearning futures, Self-learning for work, and European Youth in the digital age have funded 15 projects resulting in new models, tools and services supporting learning at school, in the workplace and on the move, i.e. independent of distance, time and pace. The IST priority in the 6th Framework Programme has technologies for learning among its objectives, and as part of the preparatory actions, received 180 Expressions of Interest specifically focussed on technology enhanced learning. These supported technologies for collaborative and experiential learning, as well as personalised access to learning content over broadband networks as research priorities. The first Call for Proposals, published in December 2002, is expected to give rise to projects, both Networks of Excellence and Integrated Projects, that will structure at a European level research into how technologies can support innovation in the learning process.

Four strategic projects were launched under the eLearning Initiative in 2002 to look at the issue of quality from the perspectives of European and regional policy, good practice, pedagogy and standards. They involve practitioners, academia and industry

in attempts to provide practical guidelines to help assure quality and raise its overall level in e-learning.

The lack of good quality e-learning content remains an issue, and discussions have taken place with broadcasters and publishers in order to understand the problems. The eLearning Industry Group (see below) is looking at the market issues and further work is needed in order to understand the implications for intellectual property rights (IPR). It is felt that good quality e-learning content will only become freely available when an appropriate balance is found between the needs of content providers, and those of learners and educational practitioners. Providers need to obtain a suitable return on their investment and ensure protection for their IPR. On the other hand, learners and teachers/trainers need to be able to manipulate, modify and add to purchased content, allowing them freedom to create content which is relevant to the learning context and exchange it with other members in their learning community. Open standards and interoperability are very important in this respect. As are open source and public domain software, which can provide advantages in terms of facilitating exchange, ensuring access for all and balancing commercial interests with those of the citizen. However, the implications for future maintenance and quality assurance need to be considered.

As e-learning content becomes more widely available, there is a greater need to understand how it may be used and its characteristics vis-à-vis other content such as books, films, magazines and newspapers. Users need to be critically aware of new media and feel confident in its use. In this respect, 16 pilot projects were launched under the eLearning Initiative in 2002 to examine the important subject of media literacy and the impact of new technologies.

Whilst it is important to have good connectivity, equipment, content and services, it is not usually sufficient to ensure effective e-learning. Experience has shown that the key factor for success in learning supported by ICT is the guidance and support offered by the teacher, trainer or tutor. And in order to prepare them for the changed environment and their changed role, there has to be **Training at all levels**. Training in basic ICT is clearly necessary, however more important is the continuous development of skills and competencies in new pedagogical practice and innovation in learning. Discussions on the proposed eLearning Programme have shown that this remains a key issue, if not *the* key issue, for most member states. Several projects were launched in 2002 under the eLearning Initiative to support the process of teacher/trainer development, in the context of European networks of practitioners.

The need for training often goes hand in hand with the need for organisational change within the education and training institutions concerned, and future efforts will need to focus more on the human and organisational factors which make e-learning sustainable, effective and economic in the longer-term.

If we are to ensure co-ordination of activities on e-learning, to share experiences and to exploit synergies, then we need effective **European co-operation and networking**. A number of activities have continued under the eLearning Action Plan to bring policy makers and experts together to address the key issues in e-learning (see below). Several of the projects launched under the eLearning Initiative in 2002 focus on building European communities, combining face-to-face meetings with ongoing

virtual discussions. The *eLearning Interservice Group*, the *eLearning National Experts Group* and the *ICT experts group* working on the *Objectives Report* (see below), are several examples of important co-ordination mechanisms which form the backbone of our work under the *eLearning Action Plan*.

The four priorities identified in the *eLearning Action Plan* remain as important and as relevant today as they were when the plan was first drawn up – though the emphasis is changing from infrastructure and connectivity, to services and sustainable change; from pilot projects to full deployment; from prerequisites to practice.

2.2. Co-operation and networking

Co-operation and networking remain central to the Commission's work under the *eLearning Action Plan* to co-ordinate Europe's activities on e-learning.

The *eLearning Interservice Group* brings together representatives of the various Commission services, CEDEFOP, Eurydice and the European Investment Bank (EIB) to discuss issues concerned with e-learning, to review work under the various Commission programmes and initiatives, and to discuss additional actions. As an example, the group recently reviewed the forthcoming *eLearning* call for proposals on peer reviews, networks of collaboration and observatories, with a view to ensuring its relevance across all Community funded activities. The group continues to expand, with the recent addition of a representative of the *eTen Programme* ^[15], and will play an important steering role in the proposed *eLearning Programme*, on the priority concerned with monitoring the *eLearning Action Plan*.

The *eLearning National Experts Group* brings together representatives of the various Member States to share experience on e-learning policy and the tangible results arising from national and regional programmes. This work has been particularly valuable at sharing good practice, tools, documents and studies. The group will be expanding in the near future to include representatives of the new member states.

The *ICT-e co-ordination group*, one of the first three groups working on the *Objectives report*, sets *eLearning* in the wider context of the new European education policy after Lisbon, and provides useful results to guide policy work and to assess progress in accessibility to ICT for education and training at the European level.

In addition to Commission led activities, there are a number of external networks that are worth mentioning as they reinforce our efforts to bring together key players. These include the *European Schoolnet (EUN)* ^[16], the *European Distance Education Network (EDEN)* ^[17], the *Multimedia Education Innovation Network (MENON)* ^[18] and the *European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU)* ^[19].

2.3. Partnerships

One of the strengths of ICT and the Internet is that they facilitate new forms of partnerships between diverse actors, broadening and deepening support for learning. During the period of this report we have seen a marked increase in partnerships: public-public, public-private and private-private.

In several regions in Europe, local authorities are working closely with local industry, schools, universities, community centres and museums to provide innovative

solutions for employment problems, adult re-skilling, SME training and youth education.

Universities are forming strategic partnerships across Europe to respond to the challenges offered by globalisation of higher education and to provide greater choice for students in terms of virtual campuses, increased mobility, exchange programmes, etc.

The Community education and training programmes of Socrates (notably the Minerva action line) ^[20] and Leonardo da Vinci ^[21] continue to support the development of partnerships as a driver for the innovative use of ICT. As do the Structural Funds with their support for the funding and promotion of eEurope and the IST priority of the 6th Framework Programme ^[22] with its recent call for proposals on Networks of Excellence and Integrated Projects.

Several companies involved in e-learning services have decided to form a partnership in the form of the eLearning Industry Group (eLIG) ^[23]. The eLIG is an autonomous group, based upon the 15 companies which worked together in support of the Commission's eLearning Summit in 2001 ^[24]. It now has around 45 members and aims to support the realisation of the summit recommendations through concrete actions based on public-private partnership.

Such has been the interest in public-private partnerships (PPPs) that the European Investment Bank, the eLIG and the Commission, supported by CEDEFOP, held a workshop in November 2002 to explore PPPs and their contribution to e-learning development projects. The report, which is due to be published soon, concluded that the most common definition of PPPs – as a shared risk project based on clear, explicit requirements – is most apt for infrastructure development. Whereas the more flexible, context specific aspects of e-learning practice are better suited to a more flexible arrangement, where the educational practitioner remains responsible for the quality of learning. The workshop is likely to be followed by further actions to examine the increasingly important issue of public-private partnerships.

2.4. Information, experience exchange and good practice

There is a growing need for timely information, both quantitative and qualitative, concerning the use of ICT in education and training. Not only to guide policy makers, but also to support headmasters in schools, rectors in universities and managers in industry with their decisions about e-learning provision.

The launch this year of the eLearning portal by Commissioner Reding at Learntec ^[25] (www.elearningeuropa.info) was a major step forward in the Commission's efforts to support information exchange. The portal provides a single access point to a world of information on e-learning, for the young and the old, the expert and the novice. It is multicultural and multilingual, presenting information from across Europe, at the Community, regional and local level. The portal adds to the valuable information that continues to be provided by the European training village site of CEDEFOP (www.trainingvillage.gr) concerning e-learning for vocational education and training.

The observatory projects launched by the IST programme, the Socrates-Minerva action line and the eLearning Initiative – such as L-change ^[26], eWatch ^[27] and Delos

[28] – also continue to provide vital sources of timely information and analysis. And this will hopefully be strengthened as a result of the 2003 eLearning call for proposals which offers further support for the systematic identification, analysis and dissemination of information regarding the use and impact of e-learning.

The ICT-e Group, led by DG Education and culture, continues to examine the sensitive subject of ICT indicators and benchmarking for policy making. The lack of timely and comparable statistical information and the rapid pace of change are specific difficulties in this field.

A number of final reports have recently been issued by DG Research from projects addressing the socio-economic impact of e-learning, funded under the 4th and 5th Framework Programmes [29]. They conclude that besides access to technology, a number of other factors determine the success or failure of ICT-related educational innovation. Teacher training appears to be a critical factor. Research results suggest that educational innovation involving the use of ICT should not be considered only as a matter of access to technology or only as a matter of implementation. The use of technology in classrooms is found to be socially contextualised, interacting with the institutional and organisational cultures of schools and reflecting elements of the prevailing social relations in and around the context of use. Research demonstrates that educational institutions are social organisations that both influence the ways in which an innovation will be adopted and are influenced by that innovation.

The European e-Skills Forum (eSF) [30] has been established under the leadership of DG Enterprise to institutionalise an open dialog between all relevant stakeholders on the issue of the skills shortage, gap and mismatch of ICT and e-business professionals. It will, in particular, examine the contribution of e-learning as a facilitator to lifelong learning at the work place and to help employees continuously updating their skills..

The ESDIS group (Employment and Social Dimension of the Information Society) [31], under the leadership of DG Employment and Social affairs, is continuing its important work on the issues of employment, social cohesion, accessibility (Council Resolution) and gender, and how e-learning can help overcome the ‘digital divide’ to ensure an inclusive knowledge society. Promotion of e-learning at the workplace and distance e-learning programmes are further identified in its latest report as crucial to foster the positive interactions of social and human capital. Recommendations in the report have lead to a Council Resolution on Social and Human Capital under the Greek Presidency.

2.5. Preparatory actions under the eLearning Initiative

In 2002, further calls for proposals and tenders were issued under the auspices of the eLearning Initiative in order to compliment and reinforce actions already being undertaken under the various Commission programmes and at the member state level.

2.5.1. Calls for proposals

2002 saw the launch of 19 more eLearning projects from the second deadline of the 2001 call for proposals, bringing the number of general pilot projects up to 29. They cover a wide range of activities including ICT for schools, virtual campuses, teacher

and trainer training and e-learning for equality. Details of the individual projects are provided in Annex B.

The evaluators of these proposals had noted that the projects were particularly strong in addressing the pedagogical aspects of using ICT in education and training, and in forming new types of partnerships between the various actors. There was a clear feeling that the Community funding is being used to strengthen the European dimension of the projects and is helping them to get started. This view was later confirmed during an evaluation of the eLearning projects from the first deadline (see next section).

In 2002 the call for proposals focused on media literacy and quality. 180 proposals were received, leading to the funding of 16 media literacy projects and 4 quality projects. The latter reflect a shift in approach from funding general pilot projects to funding larger, more strategic projects which primarily serve to build-upon and support activities already taking place in Europe. In this case, the projects aim to support a dialogue between practitioners, academics and industry on the subject of quality in e-learning, leading to the production of guidelines, frameworks and other tangible forms of support.

2.5.2. Evaluation of initial projects

An evaluation of the first eLearning projects was carried out in September 2002 by an independent expert, Mr Odd Bjørn Ure, under contract for the Commission. His analysis included face-to-face discussions with the project co-ordinators based upon a pre-defined questionnaire. It also included a number of on-site visits to see the projects in situ (refer to Annex C).

The report emphasises the important role that Community funding plays as a catalyst for helping to get innovative projects started. It indicates that participants obtain real benefit from the joint work that they undertake with various partners, reinforcing the argument that e-learning is multidisciplinary in nature.

The eLearning projects can largely be divided into two types: stand-alone pilot projects and network projects. The former are largely self-contained, developing e-learning approaches mainly for the benefit of those involved in the projects. Whereas the latter are mostly concerned with establishing networks of co-operation between actors and are much more open and dependent on their external environment.

Whereas pilot projects are important for stimulating action which is largely in its infancy and experimental in nature, networks would seem to be more appropriate as a subject matures. As e-learning starts to become mainstream, the suggestion is that Community funding should switch from pilot projects to network projects and other actions which support ongoing work. This conclusion has been instrumental in shaping the eLearning 2003 call for proposals which focuses on support actions.

The report also raises the point that systematic promotion, dissemination and exploitation ('valorisation') of pilot project results is essential if they are to act as catalysts for further action. Indeed the participants declared a desire to work more closely together with other projects, not only from eLearning but from other Community, national and regional initiatives. It would appear that there is

considerable scope for strengthening this type of co-operation through networks of collaboration (project ‘clusters’). The Commission has an important role to play, in this respect, both as a trusted, independent facilitator and as a sponsor of supporting actions, such as the recently launched *eLearning* portal and the *eLearning* observatory projects.

As the first *eLearning* projects continue towards their conclusion and the second batch of projects start, further monitoring and evaluation will be necessary to fully understand the true impact of these Community actions. Meanwhile, work must continue under the auspices of the *eLearning* Action Plan to support co-operation and promote the results, along with other Community, national and regional actions.

2.5.3. *Calls for tenders*

2002 saw the launch of three strategic *eLearning* studies, resulting from a call for tenders in 2001:

- Virtual models for European universities
- Financing ICT equipment and use for schools, pupils and teachers
- New learning environments for school education universities
- Cultural institutions as new learning environments

The studies are still at an early stage and the final results will be made public in early 2004.

In addition, a further call for tenders was launched in 2002 for three studies concerned primarily with vocational education and training (VET):

- the e-learning industry and e-learning market in Europe
- the use of ICT for learning and teaching in initial VET
- e-learning in continuing vocational training, particularly e-learning at the workplace, with focus on SMEs

The selection procedure has recently been completed and the studies will be launched by mid-2003, with results due in 2004.

Studies continue to provide an essential source of valuable information for the work under the *eLearning* Action Plan. However, experience has shown that the lead time from issue a call for tenders to launching the studies is rather long. It is consequently hard to launch actions to provide pertinent, timely information using this mechanism. Therefore emphasis is instead being placed on short, targeted reports solicited from practitioners for the *eLearning* portal, or on intense information gathering and analysis by the ongoing *eLearning* Observatory projects.

3. KEY CHALLENGES: TOWARDS AN *eLEARNING* PROGRAMME

Many of the challenges highlighted in the Interim Report are still with us today. Progress has been steady, but sure and there is a general maturing of many of the ideas. New priorities are emerging and the following worth particular mention.

- **Increased co-operation and networking** – with so many activities now taking place in Europe, there is an increasing need for support to bring the actors together, to share experiences, to exploit synergies between projects and to foster the development of best practice.
- **Promotion, Dissemination and exploitation (‘valorisation’) of Community actions** – the Commission has invested and continues to invest considerable sums in European research projects, pilot projects, support actions and studies. More needs to be done to leverage the effect of these catalyst activities, through dissemination of the outcomes and exploitation of the results.
- **Continuous teacher/trainer training** – training remains a key concern for member states and more needs to be done to support the continuous development of essential skills and competencies for e-learning, such as innovative pedagogical practice.
- **Breaking down physical and mental barriers** – e-learning offers real possibilities for improved lifelong learning opportunities, as the boundaries between education, training and adult learning become blurred. And yet many barriers still exist and few innovative solutions have emerged that take real advantage of the possibilities for seamless, lifelong learning.
- **Sustainable development** – the ongoing changes taking place in our education and training systems will only provide long-term benefit if they become sustainable and are supported by appropriate changes to the organisations themselves.
- **Expansion of the European Union** – much progress has been made with infrastructure and connectivity in the existing member states, however the situation is not as well advanced in the countries that about to join the Union. Effort is required to bring them up to speed as soon as possible if we are not to face a digital divide between the old and the new members.
- **Focusing of Community investment** – Community resources are limited and funding needs to be focused on areas of clear priority. The discussions on the proposed *eLearning Programme* have reinforced the central role that schools and universities play and the need for increased teacher development.

4. CONCLUSION

The *eLearning Action Plan* continues to play an important role in guiding European e-learning activities towards policy objectives. It provides an essential point of reference for member states, inspiring the various actors involved and helping to co-ordinate their activities towards a common purpose. This essential role will continue with the advent of the proposed *eLearning Programme*, helping to ensure its place as an important complement to other Community and member state programmes and initiatives.

The *eLearning Initiative* has launched a number of activities to support the work under the *eLearning Action Plan* and the recent evaluation of the first projects has highlighted their positive contribution. This work will continue as the proposed *eLearning Programme* is launched, focusing on developing synergies between the ongoing Community actions of *Socrates-Minerva*, *eEurope 2005*, up-skilling of the workforce, e-accessibility, *eSkills*, etc and the new priorities of digital literacy,

virtual campuses and school twinning via the Internet. In this respect, the Commission is considering updating and extending the eLearning Action Plan to cover the period of 2005-2006, after which e-learning and the general use of ICT will be reconsidered as part of the new generation of Community education and training programmes.

E-learning is starting to become *mainstream* in our education and training systems. Connectivity and equipment are no longer the central issues, as our focus moves to pedagogy, content, quality assurance and standards, teacher/trainer training and continuous development, organisational change and the transformation of education and training processes. Much progress has been made and yet many would admit that the real work is only now beginning. E-learning is coming of age and we are moving from preparation to practice; from e-learning pilots to enhanced, sustainable education and training programmes.

Annexes

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B. eLEARNING INITIATIVE: CALLS FOR TENDERS AND PROPOSALS

The following is a summary of the studies being funded under the eLearning Initiative, following a call for tenders in 2001.

1. Virtual models for European universities
2. Financing ICT equipment and use for schools, pupils and teachers
3. New learning environments for school education universities
4. Cultural institutions as new learning environments

Lots 1 and 3 are being conducted by PLS RAMBØLL Management A/S, lot 2 by K.P.M.G. Consulting AG, and lot 4 by DEDALE S.A.

The following is a summary of the projects being funded under the eLearning Initiative, following a call for proposals.

Call for proposals published in 2001 - first deadline

cEVU – Collaborative European Virtual University

This project is aimed at the development of validated e-learning models and ideas for a European virtual university, based on regional and transnational collaboration between existing European universities.

Co-ordinating organisation: EuroPACE 2000 v.z.w.

Contact person: Jeff van den Branden Jef.vandenbranden@europace.be

Project Web site: http://www.cevu.org/Infos/cevu_course001_eng.htm

DELOS – Developing a European e-learning Observation System

The DELOS Project aims to establish a sustainable Observation System to accompany the e-Learning Action Plan. It focuses on the identification of relevant indicators of ICT in Education and Training, the definition of collaborative strategies for data collection and analysis and the establishment of a solid partnership relation among the players involved.

Co-ordinating organisation: MENON Network EEIG

Contact person: Nikitas Kastis Menon@menon.org

Project Web site: <http://www.education-observatories.net/delos>

ELDA - E-Learning Disability Access

The ELDA project aims to develop a Virtual Community of Electronic Learning for disabled people, allowing them to overcome access barriers and to fully realise the potential of tele-training and tele-communication for this category of student.

Co-ordinating organisation: Institut Municipal d'Educacio de Barcelona

Contact person: Jordi Escoin Homs jescoin@pie.xtec.es

Project Web site: This project does not as yet have a public web site

GENIUS – Generic e-Learning Environments and Paradigms for the New European Information and Communication Technologies Curricula

This project focuses on new curricula content development, based on the ICT Curricula guidelines proposed by the Career Space consortium, the investigation of different innovative instruction/content delivery mechanisms and the development of a pilot European collaborative e-learning environment facilitating a hybrid mode of delivery and incorporating the new pedagogy.

Co-ordinating organisation: The University of Reading

Contact person: Vasil Alexandrov v.n.alexandrov@reading.ac.uk

Project Web site: <http://www.cs-cyb-ee.reading.ac.uk/genius/>

ILAB – A virtual laboratory for collaboration and problem solving for the training of teachers and trainers in e-Learning

The i-Lab project is developing a virtual laboratory for researchers, teachers and trainers involved in the use of Information and Communication Technologies in education and training.

Co-ordinating organisation: Institute of Education, University of Stirling

Contact person: Philip Crompton Philip.crompton@findhorn.stir.ac.uk

Project web site: <http://www.theknownet.com/>

LIVIUS Learning in a Virtual Integrated University

The project's objective is to define and create a new organisational, psycho-pedagogical and didactic model of a European Virtual University through collaboration with a consortium of traditional universities, distance universities and telecommunications companies from many European countries. In doing so, it hopes to supply appropriate answers to the needs identified by the eLearning Action Plan "Defining Tomorrow's Education" for the development in Europe of knowledge virtual networks that use new multimedia technologies and the Internet to enhance learning quality, facilitating the access to resources and services, as well as cooperation and exchange of knowledge and information.

Co-ordinating organisation: NETTUNO

Contact person: Maria Amata Garito Garito@nettuno.stm.it

Project Web site : <http://www.uninettuno.it/Livius/livius.htm>

MENU -- Model for a European Networked University for e-Learning

MENU sets out to create a model for a European Networked (Virtual) University, providing a variety of e-learning opportunities. The model will be based on experiences from previous projects and activities at the partner institutions. It will include an organisational structure, a quality assurance system, examples of joint courses and study programmes across institutional borders, guidelines and a demonstrator of a practical e-learning environment. The demonstrator will focus on ICT-related studies.

Co-ordinating organisation: Hogskolen Stord/Haugesund

Contact person: Harald Haugen harald.haugen@hsh.no

Project Web site: <http://www.hsh.no/menu/>

Network for blind people

This project aims at the setting up of a European multimedia network allowing blind people to access, through adequate equipment, the data bases of all participant libraries and all information presented on the Internet. It intends also to develop curricula for distant learning fitting the requirements of blind people and specific communication channels for them.

Co-ordinating organisation: Sistema delle biblioteche centri culturali, Roma

Contact person: Maurizio Caminito m.caminito@comune.roma.it

Project web site: <http://www.comune.roma.it/cultura/biblioteche/blindnet>

ULEARN -- A European Lifelong Learning System on ICT in Education for Pioneer Teachers

This project aims at creating a stable community of "pioneer teachers" in Europe through a system which supports teachers' lifelong learning, sharing knowledge and cooperation. ULEARN deals with the definition and design of an organisational model for a European virtual system of excellence on ICT in education, the definition of a common European curriculum of ICT skills in education, the implementation of a pilot of the system, the definition of a transferability strategy to extend the pilot to a larger scale and to make the system evolve into a stable structure.

Co-ordinating organisation: Istituto Tecnologie didattiche - CNR

Contact person: Vittorio Midoro Midoro@itd.ge.cnr.it

Project Web site: <http://ulearn.itd.ge.cnr.it/>

3DeL -- 3D Electronic Learning

The aim of this project is giving an e-learning format to two training courses in the field of 3D developed in the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci program. The courses match the training requirements of the technical and audio-visual companies (3D-TECH: architecture and engineering and 3D-AUDI: advertising, film and cartoon).

Co-ordinating organisation: IES La Guineueta

Contact person: Josep Sales Jsales@pie.xtec.es

Project web site: not yet available

Call for proposals published in 2001 - second deadline

ICETEL - Improving Continuing Education and Training through e-learning

The project aims at improving the application of Open & Distance Learning and e-learning in University Continuing Education (UCE) by managers, teachers and trainers through the exchange of expertise and experience. This exchange will take place via the Internet and through face-to-face training sessions. The final product will be a thematic online-guide on the topic of applying eLearning in UCE.

Co-ordinating organisation: Technische Universität Wien

Contact person: Franz Reichl rektorat@ud.tuwien.ac.at

DELPHI - European Observatory of Emergent e-Learning

The disperse nature of the results obtained via EU supported projects makes it difficult to transform results into policy orientation. The activity in DELPHI is an attempt to cluster, synthesise, analyse and thereafter disseminate ICT-based research findings of socio-economic value. Project results are to be drawn from the Programmes Socrates, IST and "Improving the Socio-economic Knowledge Base". The central concerns of DELPHI are: learning/teaching issues; institutional perspectives to the introduction and scalability of innovation in learning contexts; and socio-cultural issues including lifelong learning. DELPHI, through its investigative activity aims at the setting of an Internet-based Observatory on e-Learning Innovation.

Co-ordinating organisation: Universitat de Barcelona

Contact person: Mario Barajas mbarajas@ariadna.d5.es

Project Web site: <http://www.ub.es/euelearning/merlin/projects/DELPHI.htm>

EL4EI - E-Learning for E-Inclusion

This project aims at addressing the digital divide through collecting, assessing and disseminating e-learning experiences and promoting e-inclusion for less-favoured groups. To this purpose, five digital observatories at national level and one at European level will be set up.

Co-ordinating organisation: Tansit Project, S.L.

Contact person: Martin Houghton martin.houghton@planex.co.uk

CREATEL - New e-learning Environment for European SME's Employees

This project aims to define, set up and validate a virtual environment of knowledge management and training aimed to offer European SMEs a virtual meeting place facilitating networking between their technicians and professionals, using e-learning tools to develop a lifelong learning process through knowledge exchange and acquisition.

Co-ordinating organisation: CREA - Confederación Regional de Empresarios de Aragon

Contact person: Carolina Alvarez calvarez@crea.es

Project Web site: <http://www.crea.es/innovacion/inicio.htm>

E.L.I.Fo - E-Learning Intercultural Forum

This project aims to create a virtual transnational and intercultural learning community in order to develop an open distance training system for disadvantaged people participating in social and professional integration programmes and for their trainers and tutors.

Co-ordinating organisation: GEIE - CEMFOP

Contact person: Cédric Guillon X.Bilbault@wanadoo.fr

Project Web site: <http://www.interculture.de>

Cyberschool.europe - Centre for Internet Resources for European School Exchanges

This project aims at creating an Internet Portal, using multimedia resources and multilingual tools of benefit of teaching communities at pre-school and primary school levels in the three partner countries.

Co-ordinating organisation: Ligue Française de l'Enseignement et de l'Education

Contact person: Annie Ysebaert aysebaert@laligue.org

E-RAIL - European Railway Access Interactive Learning

This project aims to improve the accessibility and quality of information and training in the European railways industry, through the development of an internet resource that will serve both the staff and customers of the industry. Staff training, access for the disabled and improvement of safety and quality of service are the principal objectives of this initiative.

Co-ordinating organisation: Union Internationale des Chemins de Fer (UIC)

Contact person: Eric Manusset eric.manusset@sncf.fr

e-MUSE - e-Learning for Museum and School Environments

This project is concerned with the networking of cultural and educational institutions, specifically museums and schools, developing common learning materials and services through sharing their contents and research resources, in order to create and implement a new e-learning environment that demonstrates the potential of e-learning solutions for specific user groups.

Co-ordinating organisation: Academic Research Computer Technology Institute

Contact person: Hadzilacos THANASIS thh@cti.gr

Project Web site: <http://www.e-muse.com.au/>

EUDOXOS - Teaching Science with Robotic Telescope

This project intends to use a remotely controlled telescope and take advantage of the popularity of the subject of Astronomy, in order to develop a framework to teach science to second level school students through a multidisciplinary approach. EUDOXOS aims to use the possibilities the Internet offers in order to transform the classroom into a research laboratory.

Co-ordinating organisation: Institute of Nuclear Physics National Centre for Science Research "DEMOKRITOS"

Contact person: George Fanourakis gfan@inp.demokritos.gr
Project Web site : <http://www3.ellinogermaniki.gr/ep/eudoxos/>

AMME - Advanced Multimedia Contents Management for Education Environments

The AMME project anticipates the important and currently ongoing enhancement of the ICT infrastructure to high speed Internet backbones. The project aims to identify the best methodologies for the organisation and structuring of advanced high quality and useful multimedia contents in educational environments through a centralised asset base validated in a trans-national context.

Co-ordinating organisation: FONDAZIONE IDIS - CITTA DELLA SCIENZA ONLUS

Contact person: Luigi AMODIO amodio@cittadellascienza.it

Co-ordinating organisation: Comune di Reggio Emilia - servizio educazione e Formazione

Contact person: Grazia FILIPPI grazia.filippi@municipio.re.it

LEIPS - Learning about E-Learning Innovation Process in Schools

This project combines the following activities: knowledge generation on best-practice e-learning innovation processes; development and dissemination of video and online multimedia training material, and stimulation of an European online network of stakeholders interested in the understanding, practice and transfer of e-learning innovation processes.

Co-ordinating organisation: CONSORZIO GIOVENTU' DIGITALE

Contact person: Mirta MICHILLI michilli@gioventudigitale.net

e-Ttnet - Training of trainers network for e-learning

This project aims to identify, analyse and benchmark a range of resources available and required the further professional development of teachers and trainers. A Trainers' Learning Environment, including a "Knowledge base" of concepts, practices and tools, validated by the community of Vet professionals at National and Community levels, will be developed.

Co-ordinating organisation: ISFOL - Istituto per lo Sviluppo della Formazione Professionale dei Lavoratori

Contact person: Enrico CECCOTTI isfol.formafor@iol.it

Music Web - New tools and content for music education, using wide-area networks and hypermedia technology

MusicWeb will improve the quality of music education by exploiting music-specific multimedia and distributed network technology.

Co-ordinating organisation: Koninklijk Conservatorium

Contact person: Karst DE JONG karst@koncon.nl

eRNIST- European Research Network for ICT in Schools of Tomorrow

The purpose of eRNIST is to create a network of leading experts and institutions in research and evaluation of ICT in learning and innovative schools, bringing together education inspectors, researchers and practitioners.

Co-ordinating organisation: Ministry of Education and sciences, Sweden-Committee on the European Schoolnet

Contact person: Ulf LUNDIN ulf.Lundin@eun.org

EQUEL- E-quality in e-learning research Laboratory

The overall intention of the project is to establish a dual mode virtual centre and space that will foster European knowledge and understanding of the effects of e-learning practice, theory and philosophy, building a research and practitioner network of experts working in the field.

Co-ordinating organisation: University of Lancaster

Contact person: Vivien HOGDSON v.hogdson@lancaster.ac.uk

ESEN

This project will create a European Small and medium enterprise E-learning Network (ESEN) for the sharing of expertise and best-practice.

Co-ordinating organisation: Henley Management College

Contact person: David BIRCHALL david.birchall@henleymc.ac.uk

Call for proposals published in 2002

Quality Projects

EQO – European Quality Observatory

The European Quality Observatory is an internet-based repository implemented as a portal to promote the use of quality management, quality assurance and quality assessment concepts for eLearning in different communities. The main objective is to provide a central facility enabling developers, managers, administrators, decision-makers and end-users to find an approach that suits their organisation's needs. In particular, national, regional, and local needs and requirements are included in the observatory, resulting in a European Quality Community.

Co-ordinating organisation: University of Essen-Duisburg

Contact person: Jan Pawlowski jan.pawlowski@wi-inf.uni-essen.de

QUAL-E-LEARNING – La qualité de l'eLearning

This project aims to:

- conduct a survey sampling the elearning activity in order to identify "good practices" for assessing training efficiency,
- study the link between the quality of training and main pedagogical and organisational decisions;
- organising on line ODL activities with and without tutors.

Co-ordinating organisation: GIP Formation continue Insertion professionnelle

Contact person: Elisabeth Eschenlor elisabeth.eschenlohr@ac-strasbourg.fr

SEEL – Supporting Excellence in eLearning

SEEL is a consortium dedicated to studying the impact of quality policies in eLearning at local and regional levels in order to measure their influence on local and regional development, and providing recommendations on quality assurance policies to the different stakeholders, and particularly to policy makers.

Co-ordinating organisation: EIFEL

Contact person: Serge Ravet serge.ravet@eife-l.org

SEEQUEL – Sustainable Environment for the Evaluation of Quality in eLearning

This project aims to establish a European eLearning Quality forum that will address the following issues:

- Quality assessment, evaluation and conformance practice
- Cases of "good practice" and design guidelines
- Quality assurance frameworks (with criteria and standards)

Co-ordinating organisation: Menon Network EEIG

Contact person: Nikitas Kastis nikitas.kastis@menon.org

Media Literacy Projects

ALLMEDIA – Alliance for a Media Literate Europe

This project brings together a diverse alliance of schools, universities, companies,

individuals and other formal and non-formal educational organisations, in order to create a pan-European non-profit network organisation that will be a key force in bringing media literacy education to all pupils and students in Europe, their parents, their teachers ...

[Project Description](#) (PDF Format)

Co-ordinating organisation: Karlstads-Hammarö gymnasieförvaltning

Contact person: Urban Karlsson urban.j.karlsson@karlstad.se

Bookworm goes on line – Alliance for a Media Literate Europe

Girls and women with a low level of education and different social from cultural background are targeted. The women are trained in analysing, selecting and evaluating information through setting up and contributing to their own on-line magazine. Working with information and communication tools, the women acquire further key qualifications that increase their chances of employment.

Co-ordinating organisation: IB Bildungszentrum Stuttgart

Contact person: Bettina Loppe Bettina.Loppe@internationaler-bund.de

DIMELI – Dialogical Media Literacy

The chief aim of this project is to experience dialogical learning in the context of media literacy, as well as to foster critical analysis at a European level among people from different backgrounds, and to gather the results in a handbook of good practice.

Co-ordinating organisation: Asociación de alumnos y exalumnos Agora

Contact person: Rodríguez Rodelas ea-verneda@terra.es

EM@C-ONLINE – European Medi@Culture online

This project aims to provide the following online resources for pupils, students, teachers, parents and other interested :

- information on both technical and pedagogical issues relating to use of multimedia in schools
- opportunities to network through an interactive platform
- database of past and present projects

Co-ordinating organisation: Landesmedienzentrum Baden-Württemberg

Contact person: Jörg Schumacher schumacher@lmz-bw.de

HISTOIRES – Virtual Multimedia Stories

Writing collective "virtual novels" through the Internet is an entertaining educational tool for students between the ages 8-18, in order to study foreign languages, media products and new technologies.

Co-ordinating organisation: T3W

Contact person: Monique Pedrillat moniqueft@aol.com

IMAGEDUC

The object of this project is to create an educational Internet site exploring media news and our common iconographic background. It will launch transversal European surveys on image issues, fostering collaboration between research people and artistic and historical patrimonial institutions.

Co-ordinating organisation: Association Groupe l'image

Contact person: Laurent Gervereau laurent.gervereau@imagesmag.net

Project Web site: <http://www.imageduc.net>

IPERFIGURINE – Collecting the World

This project aims to develop an original software to realise didactic paths enabling users to collect multimedia objects in order to fill a personal album. The software will facilitate the realisation of 10 thematic paths dedicated to the topics of development, education, human rights and intercultural communication.

Co-ordinating organisation: Gruppo Volontariato Civile

Contact person: Sebastiana Costa Ceccarelli gvc.Sebastiana.costa@libero.it

LA LANTERNE MAGIQUE – Du concret au virtuel

La Lanterne Magique is a European film club for children aged 6-12. La Lanterne Magique intends to develop an active pedagogy open to all children through its website, in 5 languages, thanks to interactive play and pedagogical tools.

Co-ordinating organisation: KinderKinoProjekte e. V.

Contact person: Anneke Tilmann a.tilmann@kinderkinoprojekte.de

Project Web site: <http://www.lanterne-magique.org>

MEDIA-EDUC

Media-Educ is a project aiming at creating a European on-line observatory of practices and surveys in the field of media education

Co-ordinating organisation: Ministère français de l'Education Nationale - CLEMI

Contact person: Evelyne Bevort e.bevort@clemi.org

MEMOIMAG – Methodologies of Education with Images

This project is an elearning initiative aimed at creating a network of schools enabling young people to access, analyse, produce and evaluate material relating to the new media culture.

Co-ordinating organisation: Confederación Española de Centros de Enseñanza

Contact person: Mariano del Castillo castillo@cece.es

MENTOR

The object of this project is to develop a training module for media education and to facilitate its dissemination in secondary education training centres throughout the Mediterranean Basin.

Co-ordinating organisation: Unesco

Contact person: Lluís Artigas ll.artigas@unesco.org

PEER

This project involves bringing together teenagers from different countries to explore the issue relating to disabilities, and to develop a documentary film and website.

Co-ordinating organisation: Fundación Castillo de Liscar

Contact person: Luis Alberto Lizama Fuentes lizama@telefonica.net

PROJECT M

The aim of Project M is to increase the skills of young people in the fields of media literacy, image education and intercultural dialogue.

Co-ordinating organisation: Engage! InterAct

Contact person: Peter Merry peter@engage.nu

RAPSTRANGE – Re-working Angles of Perception Strangeness

The objective of Rapstrange is to contribute to fight xenophobic tendencies by enhancing dialogue and cooperation with creators of audiovisual and multimedia content targeting young people.

Co-ordinating organisation: Bildungsverbund Neue Bundesländer

Contact person: Birgit Bauer project-group@tpnet.de

RELATE

This project will focus on the production and evaluation of teaching materials concerned with the representation of love, sex and relationships in the media.

Co-ordinating organisation: Institute of Education - University of London

Contact person: David Dennis Buckingham d.buckingham@ioe.ac.uk

Videomakers on line – Network of website for audiovisual coproduction

This project will involve cooperation between three European cities in the creation of a web magazine concerning the audiovisual field (video, fiction, films and cinema, documentary films and advertising). The site will specifically target people aged between 18 to 29.

Co-ordinating organisation: Comune di Bologna

Contact person: Doriana Bortoloni Doriana.Bortolini@comune.bologna.it

C. EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

A contribution to the INTERMEDIATE REPORT on the *e*-learning action plan

This report proposes an evaluation of ten e-learning projects in relation to their work plan and the objectives stated in the first call for proposals of the *e*-learning action plan.

Odd Bjørn Ure

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report is based on answers to a questionnaire, which was used for interviews with project promoters. In addition, a thematic evaluation achieved by comparing e-learning projects was carried out. The entire report leans on the same material: results from the questionnaire, observations from the first concertation meeting for the projects and information provided by the promoters.

Our interviews were carried out at the middle of the contractual project period, which in most cases is 18 months. The selected projects covered all themes addressed in the first call for proposals. Reflecting that the projects have very different partnerships, our analysis also relies on a distinction between networking and stand-alone projects.

FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

Almost unanimously the promoters state that Community funding triggered off their projects. At this stage no promoter signals that ambitions formulated in the work plan have to be scaled down. In average $\frac{1}{4}$ of the project partners are classified as technological partners and about $\frac{1}{5}$ of them come from the non-public sector, mostly associations and foundations.

When asked to identify the critical success criterion, most promoters single out “joint efforts by the partners to develop something useful for each partner as well as for end users”.

e-LEARNING PLATFORMS AND PEDAGOGY

Five (against two) partnerships intend to develop non-proprietary platforms apt for open software. The networking projects are particularly geared towards replacing proprietary platforms, thus alleviating joint work inside the partnership. The promoters tend to conceive e-learning as a combination of new technology and acquired pedagogical experiences from traditional learning. More questionable is their inclination to regard the presence of teachers and trainers in the partnership as almost a guarantee of a sound pedagogical implementation of the project.

OBSTACLES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION

Among the obstacles encountered so far in the thematic development of the projects is the lack of independent expertise for assessment of commercial e-learning platforms. Divergent national systems were mentioned as a hurdle when developing transnational e-learning modules. In many cases the projects rely on a decentralised strategy for accreditation. The step towards spurring accreditation at a European level is also hampered by the delay in transnational recognition in this field (cf. national implementation of the European Credit Transfer Scheme). Finally, the promoters feel that they are too much exposed to the side effects of one partner's breach of contractual obligations.

THE e-LEARNING WEB SITE

For some promoters it is unclear what additional information the Commission will put on the future e-learning site in comparison with what they include on their project web pages. Other promoters regard the Commission web site as a discussion space for broader issues.

THEMATIC EVALUATION

Two networking projects have embarked on development of virtual models of education and training, along the theme outlined in the call for proposals. These projects address virtual *universities*: CEVU (collaborative European Virtual Universities) is an umbrella over five existing networks; while MENU (Model for a European Networked University for e-learning) encompasses two national virtual universities (in Finland and Norway) together with six national partners. The projects are complementary; CEVU aims to develop an online guide for virtual universities whereas MENU will produce a European master degree in ICT.

DELOS (Developing a European eLearning Observation System) aims to create an observatory of e-learning policies, market development, innovative practices and research results. It is a networking project set out to develop e-learning European information services in the form of clusters of indicators for education and training. This is done by pulling together expertise from a large partnership dominated by practical experience.

Two projects contribute to teachers' and trainers' training on use of ICT for learning. U-learn¹ introduces the notion "pioneer teachers" to disseminate e-learning in teaching practise. The project builds on two regional programs in Italy and relies on a country-wise implementation of training courses for teachers. iLAB² concentrates on the production of broad guidelines and recommendations for training of teachers in e-learning and tries to involve all major stakeholders. The projects can mutually support each other and they have taken the first steps towards a future co-operation.

LIVIUS³ and GENIUS⁴ concentrate on the development of new learning environments. They address e-learning leading to specific skills in the field of ICT (GENIUS)

¹ A European Lifelong learning system on ICT in education for pioneer teachers.

² Virtual laboratory for collaborative problem solving for the training of teachers and trainers in e-learning.

³ Learning in a Virtual Integrated University System.

⁴ Generic e-Learning environments and paradigms for the new European ICT curricula.

and computer science and telecommunications (LIVIUS). Both projects rely on labour market analyses of what skills are needed in their respective fields. GENIUS is leaning on a group of enthusiastic and forward-looking ICT companies (cf. Career space) and is already offering weekly online courses. LIVIUS is co-ordinated by a former Italian network of distance teaching universities, surrounded by ICT companies.

When we analyse the project 3DeL as a European laboratory for innovation in e-learning, we take into account its inherent attempt to disseminate 3 dimensional technology (3D) in order to spur innovation in three sectors: architecture, engineering and the audio-visual industry. The project relies on skill needs analyses carried out in these sectors and it involves the partners in the development of courses in four training centres.

The theme e-learning demonstrators for key areas is developed by two projects on e-learning for handicapped people. The promoter of ELDA (E-Learning Disability Access) is concentrating on disorders in motor functions among people in all age groups around Barcelona. "Network for the blind" builds on experiences from public libraries in Rome. Both projects are typical stand-alone or individual projects in the sense as they develop a distinct e-learning approach, without leaning on existing networks. However, the projects are rooted in local or regional experiences.

All in all, no very overlapping projects were approved during the first call for proposals of the *e-learning* action plan, but there is room for increased collaboration between some of them. The frustrations among all promoters due to the late signature of the contract are now overcome and they envisage concluding their work with short delays. One project needs particular attention from the European Commission.

WINDING UP THE ACTION PLAN AND PREPARING FOR THE *e-LEARNING* PROGRAMME

Looking ahead, there is a unanimous interest in exchanging experiences between partners, also with projects outside the realm of DG EAC. Some promoters added that networking of projects is more fruitful than merging projects into larger consortia. In this regard there are large expectations to the arrangement of the second concertation meeting of e-learning projects, scheduled to the spring of 2003.

As the promoters appreciate the possibility of addressing both pedagogical and technological aspects of e-learning in the frame of the action plan, this could be carried over to the new programme which contains the measure "clustering of relevant e-learning projects from the education, training, research and other relevant programmes, and of the Structural Funds in view of effective synergy". When some interviewees praise the small-scale and pedagogical centred approach of the *e-learning* action plan, this is an indication that the ongoing action plan has embarked on something which should be continued in the new e-learning programme.

With a view to avoid problems in launching projects that are "immature" in terms of partnership and contents, mechanisms such as providing funds to exploratory (or feasibility) projects could be considered. Moreover, a selection in two steps (preliminary and full proposals as for pilot projects in Leonardo da Vinci) could have a similar effect.

Given that a final evaluation of the *e*-learning action plan will be done, it is pertinent to suggest that such a work concentrates on the functioning of the complete partnership of e-learning projects. This could be achieved by attending project meetings, telephone interviews with partners and in some cases also in situ visits.

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