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The UNIVE Project

"Creating network-based e-university model for the small countries in the context of e-learning in Europe"

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UNIVE aims to collect and share the knowledge and experiences of developing a consortium-type e-university. Growing international competition in higher education supported by the development of ICT is a challenge for many universities. Establishing consortia for using better limited intellectual and financial resources is one opportunity to be successful in this situation. In order to provide an e-university model that would be relevant for different European countries, we integrate available e-learning know-how of the previous successful international projects and analyse and integrate existing consortium-type e-university models from Finland (Finnish Virtual University), Sweden (Net University), Scotland (Interactive University), and Estonia (Estonian e-University).

Aims of the Project

Aims of the project are as follows:

- 1) to analyse and implement the outcomes of previous international projects in 6 core e-learning areas (thematic groups of the project);
- 2) to analyse 4 existing models of e-universities and integrate their experience
- 3) to develop a model of a small state e-university;
- 4) to test parts of this model by launching a series of integrated pilot projects
- 5) to make this innovative and integrated type of e-university model available for the wider community.

Thematic Groups

1. Accessibility of Information; Exchange of Study Materials and Courses

Group leaders: **Toomas Liivamägi** (University of Tartu), **Karin Ruul** (Estonian Information Technology Foundation).

The aim of this group is to collect and analyse the experiences in developing courses and learning object databases for university consortia. Technical, legal as well as motivational issues are under discussion.

2. Reaching Different Target Groups

Group leaders: **Duncan Timms** (University of Stirling), **Kaido Kikkas** (Tallinn Pedagogical University).

This group analyses experiences in reaching different target groups via e-learning with special attention to disabled people and people in peripheral regions.

Developing a test course for teaching basic skills that are necessary for effective participation in e-learning is one of the tasks of this group.

3. Staff Training

Group leaders: **Anne Villems** (University of Tartu), **Risto Aikonen** (University of Joensuu).

The third thematic group analyses previous experiences in supporting, motivating, and training academic staff for developing e-courses. Centralised and decentralised models of financial, technical, and pedagogical support, administrative regulations and staff training are under discussion.

4. Quality Assurance

Group leaders: **Tiia Tammaru** (Tallinn Technical University), **Reelyka Läheb** (Tallinn Pedagogical University).

The aim of this group is to analyse experiences regarding quality assurance and assessment in e-learning.

Pedagogical, technical, and content related aspects in quality assurance are analysed with an aim to propose an optimal model for consortium-type e-university.

5. Recognition and Accreditation of the Studies

Group leaders: **Maiki Udam** (Tallinn Technical University), **Catherine Gladh** (Mid Sweden University).

Facilitating student and course exchange within consortium-type e-university, simple and effective system for mutual recognition of studies that takes into account both financial as well as administrative issues is very important. The aim of this group is to develop a model for accreditation of studies for consortium-type e-university analysing current experience in different projects.

6. Thematic Networks

Group leaders: **Mart Laanpere** (Tallinn Pedagogical University), **Risto Aikonen**. (University of Joensuu).

One of the aims for creating consortia of universities is to use better existing intellectual as well as financial resources. This working group analyses ways of interuniversity thematic cooperation for joint staff development in e-learning as well as elaboration of joint e-courses, modules, and curricula.