

Symposium International Teaching | 19 November 2021

How we Telecollaboratively Designed our VE Project: Process and Implications

Kristina Förster

Chair of School Pedagogy
University of Wuerzburg,
Germany

Begoña Gutiérrez

Department of Modern Philology
University of León,
Spain



Our Plan for Today



1. VE as a pedagogical approach in HE
2. VE Teachers Collaborative Competence
3. Our VE at a Glance
4. Our Telecollaborative Process Step by Step
5. Outlook & Conclusion

Open Discussion / Q&A

Virtual Exchange as a pedagogical approach in HE



- Umbrella term for a field of practice (O'Dowd 2018)
- Related concepts include
 - Collaborative Online Intercultural Learning
 - Telecollaboration
 - Online Intercultural Exchange (EVOLVE 2021)
- form of online/virtual education
- international / transnational
- engagement of learners in intercultural interaction & collaboration
- extended periods of time
- an integrated part of coursework
- supported by educators / facilitators (O'Dowd 2021)



Virtual Exchange as a pedagogical approach in HE



EVALUATE Project (2017-19): Large Scale VE Implementation & Evaluation in Teacher Education:

<https://sites.google.com/unileon.es/evaluate2019/>

EVOLVE Project (2018-20): Mainstreaming of VE in Higher Education:

<https://evolve-erasmus.eu/>

ERASMUS+ Virtual Exchange (2018-20): Integration of different VE approaches as a complement to physical Erasmus+ mobility:

https://europa.eu/youth/erasmusvirtual/objectives_en

VALIANT (2021-2024): Virtual Innovation & support networks in Teacher Education through VE: <https://valiantproject.eu/>

VE Teachers' Collaborative Competence



- VE serves as a form of **experiential learning** not only for the students but also **for their teachers**, for whom adopting this practice is an important learning curve (Nissen & Kurek 2020)
- Teachers running VEs must be prepared to **help their students navigate complex communicative situations** (O'Dowd, Sauro & Spector-Cohen 2020)
- [T]eachers require keenly refined intercultural skills and attitudes in order to be able to **collaborate with their colleagues** and to **coordinate the exchange** in a manner which is beneficial to all parties. (O'Dowd 2015)

Our VE at a Glance

Undergraduate Students
from León (N=24) enrolled in
an **English as a FL course**



Collaborative **development of an action plan / pedagogical concept** around one of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (UN 2015) in **transnational teams**.



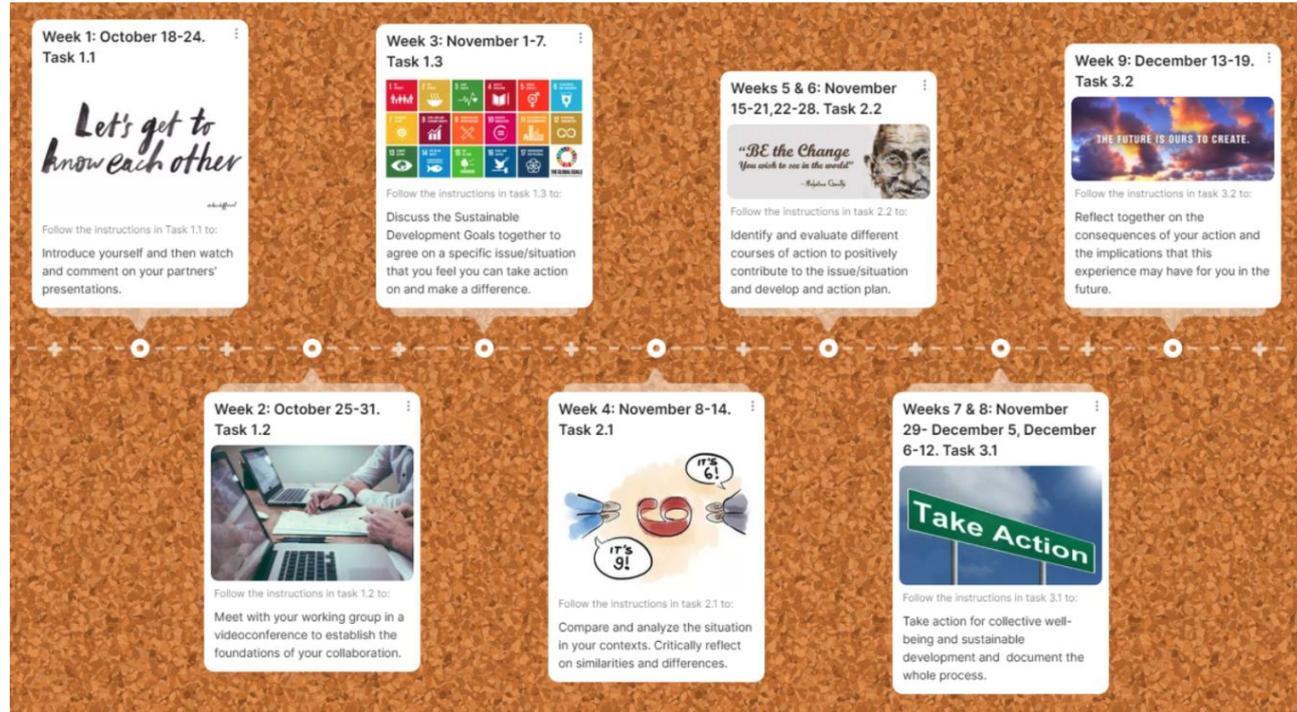
JMU students (N=22)
enrolled in a **teacher
education course**



Our VE at a glance

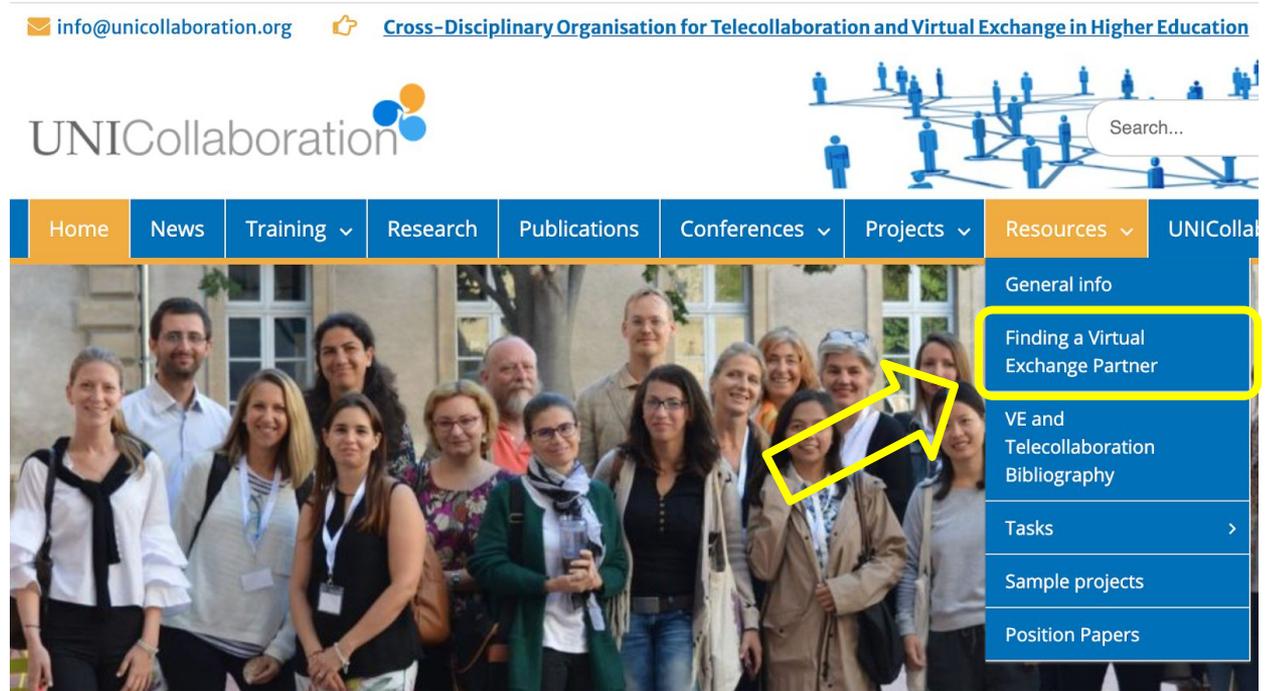
DATES	OCTOBER 18- DECEMBER 19
PARTICIPANTS	24 students of English as a FL  universidad de león & 22 students of initial teacher education  UNIVERSITÄT WÜRZBURG
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA
TECHNOLOGY	 mahara  zoom 
THEMES	GLOBAL AND ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP: THE SDGS
TASKS	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER2. COMPARING AND CONTRASTING GLOBAL ISSUES3. COLLABORATING: CREATING A TELECOLLABORATIVE PRODUCT
ARTEFACTS	GROUP PRODUCTS; PORTFOLIO

Our VE at a Glance



Our Telecollaborative Process Step by Step

The telecollaborative teacher can **use online networks** and his/her own professional contacts to **locate possible partner-teachers** in distant locations (O'Dowd 2015)



The screenshot shows the UNICollaboration website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the email address info@unicollaboration.org and the tagline "Cross-Disciplinary Organisation for Telecollaboration and Virtual Exchange in Higher Education". Below this is the UNICollaboration logo and a search bar. A main navigation menu is visible, with the "Resources" tab selected. A dropdown menu is open under "Resources", and the option "Finding a Virtual Exchange Partner" is highlighted with a yellow box. Other options in the dropdown include "General info", "VE and Telecollaboration Bibliography", "Tasks", "Sample projects", and "Position Papers". The background of the website features a group photo of diverse people.

(UNICollaboration: <https://www.unicollaboration.org/>)

Our Telecollaborative Process Step by Step



The telecollaborative teachers can **negotiate effectively with the partner-teacher** the **structure and organisational technicalities** of the exchange which take into account **both institutional contexts (calendars etc.)** as well as the **needs and interests of both sets of participants** (O'Dowd 2015)

- Finalization of the task-sequence for this VE
- Design of our digital learning environment

Our Telecollaborative Process Step by Step

Kristina Förster 

Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Plenary Group
(Administrator)

Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Team 1
(Administrator)

Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Team 10
(Administrator)

Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Team 2
(Administrator)

Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Team 3
(Administrator)

Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Team 4
(Administrator)

Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Team 5
(Administrator)

Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Plenary Group

About Members Forums Pages and collections Journals Share Report Files Plans

Pages and collections | Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Plenary Group

Search: (Title, description, tags)

Sort by:

+ Add  Copy

Title, description, tags

Last modified

Search

Your weekly tasks an...

Here we'll add new content every Sunday evening. That way your team will always know by the beginning of the new week...



5



Final Project Fair

This collection is currently empty. Towards the end of our Virtual Exchange, however, this is where all teams will sh...

0



Group homepage

The group homepage contains the content that appears on the "About" tab for this group



Our Telecollaborative Process Step by Step

Kristina Förster 

Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Plenary Group
(Administrator)

Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Team 1
(Administrator)

Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Team 10
(Administrator)

Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Team 2
(Administrator)

**Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Team 3
(Administrator)**

Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Team 4
(Administrator)

Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Team 5
(Administrator)

Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Plenary Group

About Members Forums Pages and collections Journals Share Report Files Plans

Pages and collections | Virtual Exchange | SDGs | Plenary Group

Search: (Title, description, tags) Sort by: + Add Copy

Title, description, tags Last modified Search

Your weekly tasks an...

Here we'll add new content every Sunday evening. That way your team will always know by the beginning of the new week...

5  

Final Project Fair

This collection is currently empty. Towards the end of our Virtual Exchange, however, this is where all teams will sh...

0  

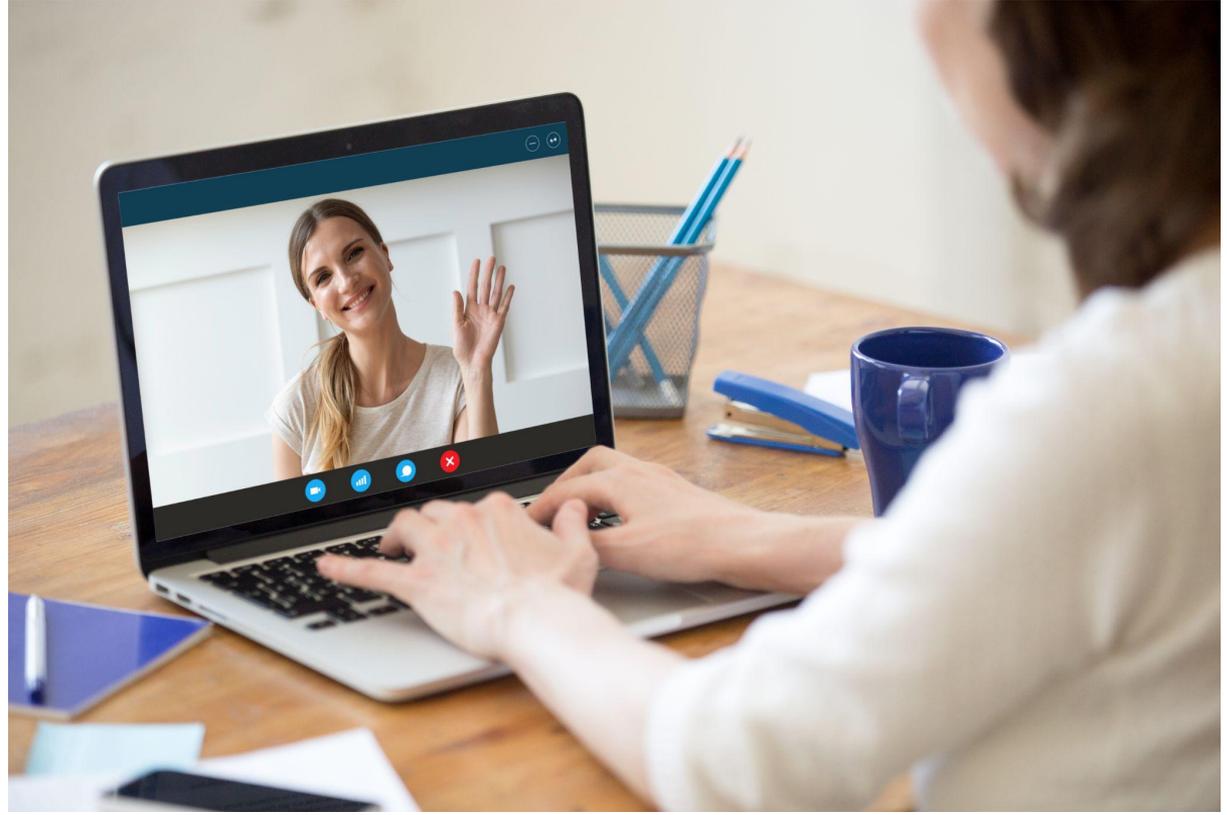
Group homepage

The group homepage contains the content that appears on the "About" tab for this group

Our Telecollaborative Process Step by Step

The telecollaborative teacher can **maintain a good working relationship** with the partner-teacher throughout the exchange, **identifying problems** as they arise (O'Dowd 2015)



Outlook & Conclusion



Based on our experience designing and implementing our telecollaborative project together, there are a number of key aspects that we would recommend VE teachers to keep in mind. These are:

→ Before the VE begins:

- ✓ To **discuss important matters** that will help to get to know each other's contexts and needs better.

→ During the VE:

- ✓ To **go through weekly talking points** that will contribute to the successful progress of the project.



Our recommendations

Before the VE begins, while getting to know your potential partner teacher, you can find useful discussing these aspects in your first meetings:

- ✓ Institutions; Departments
- ✓ Approximate number of students
- ✓ Technologies that can or cannot be used
- ✓ Beginning/end dates of your semester (holidays, exams periods)
- ✓ When and how often you will meet with your groups (timetable)
- ✓ Course objectives, content areas and curricular needs
- ✓ Assessment procedures (tools, percentages)
- ✓ Language(s) used in your course(s) and during the VE
- ✓ Students' profile: age, FL level , intercultural/VE experience, digital literacy skills...
- ✓ Institutional asymmetries and how to face them



Our recommendations

During the VE, going through these talking points on a weekly basis will contribute to the successful progress of the project.

- ✓ Week's classwork about the VE
 - instructions given
 - outcomes observed
- ✓ Weekly task completion
- ✓ Students' participation:
 - in the group tasks
 - in the group interactions
- ✓ Challenges, issues or even conflicts during the online interaction and collaboration mentioned by the students
- ✓ Upcoming holidays, events or exams that may affect the project



REFERENCES

EVOLVE. (2021). *What is Virtual Exchange?* | EVOLVE. What Is Virtual Exchange. Last access 14 November 2021. <https://evolve-erasmus.eu/about-evolve/what-is-virtual-exchange>

Gutiérrez, B.F., Glimäng, M.R., O'Dowd, R., & Sauro, S. (2021). Mentoring handbook for virtual exchange teachers. Strategies to help students achieve successful synchronous and asynchronous online intercultural communication. Stevens Initiative. <https://www.stevensinitiative.org/resource/mentoring-handbook-for-virtual-exchange-teachers/>.

O'Dowd, R. (2021). What do students learn in virtual exchange? A qualitative content analysis of learning outcomes across multiple exchanges. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 109, 101804.F

O'Dowd, R. (2018). From telecollaboration to virtual exchange: State-of-the-art and the role of UNICollaboration in moving forward. *Research-publishing.net*, 1, 1-23.

O'Dowd, R. (2015). The competences of the telecollaborative teacher. *The Language Learning Journal*, 43(2), 194-207.