

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](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**.



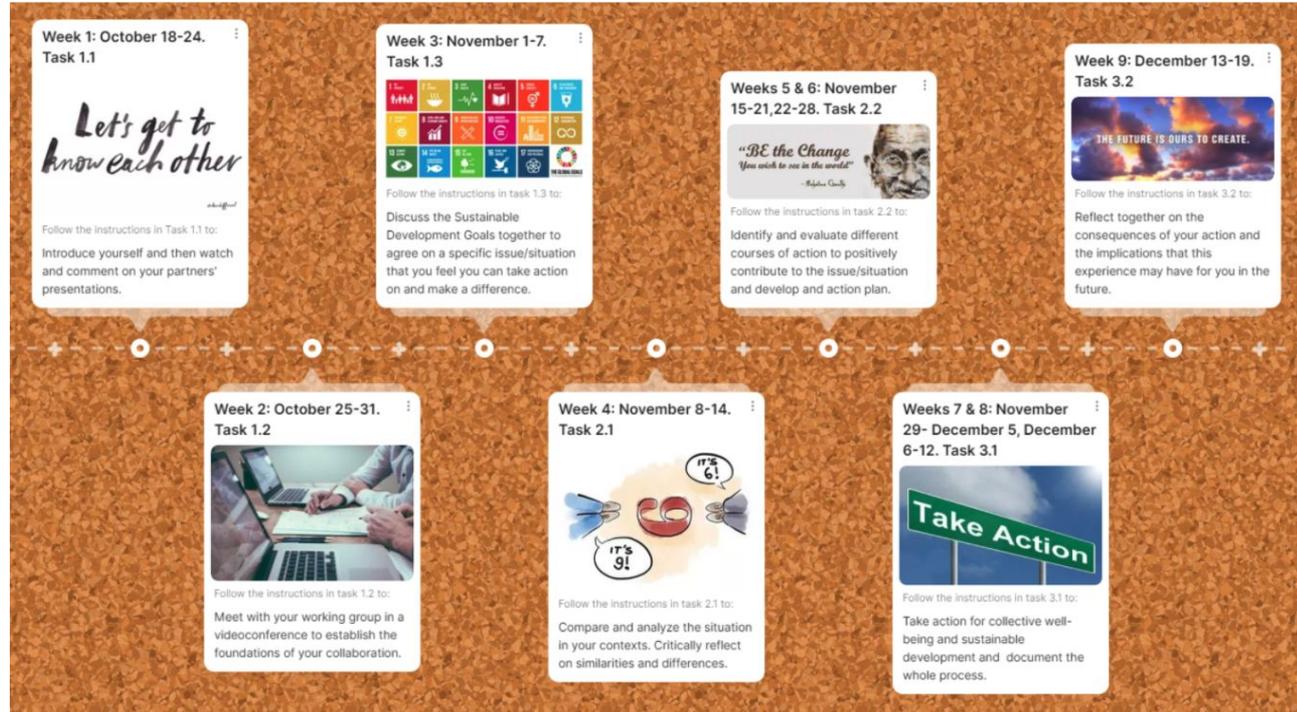
JMU students (N=22)  
enrolled in a **teacher  
education course**



# Our VE at a glance

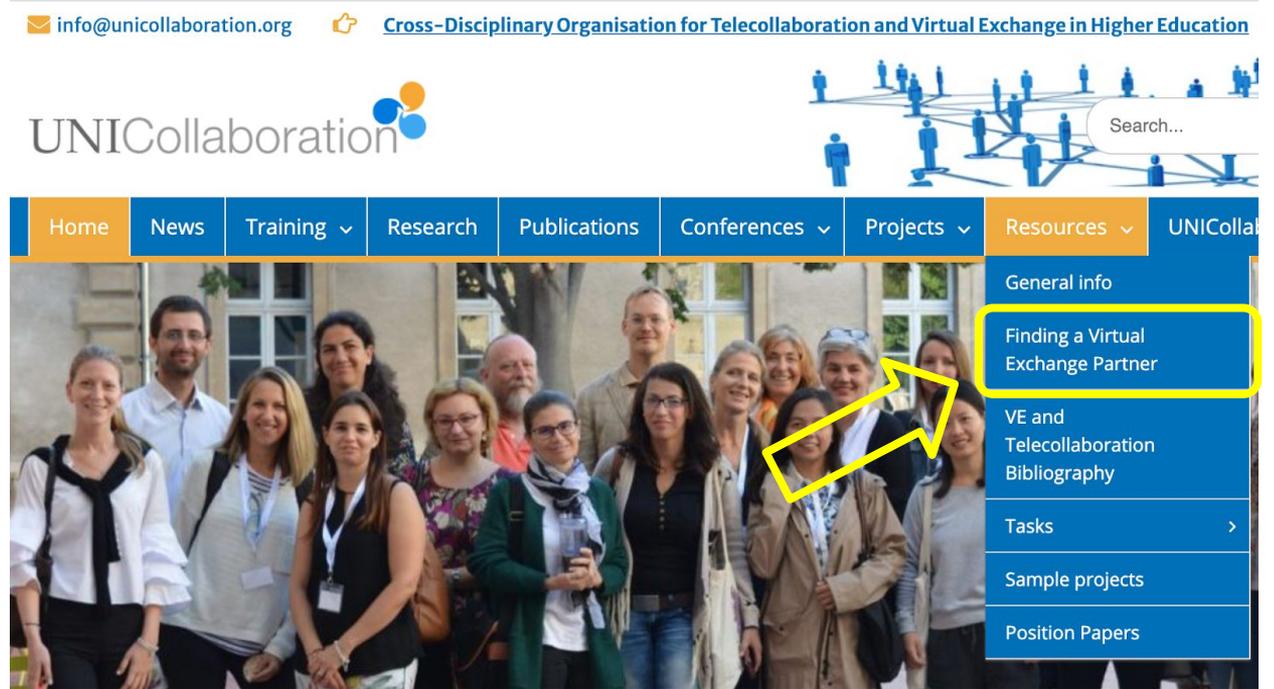
DATES	OCTOBER 18- DECEMBER 19
PARTICIPANTS	24 students of English as a FL  <b>universidad de león</b> & 22 students of initial teacher education  <b>UNIVERSITÄT WÜRZBURG</b>
LANGUAGE	ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA
TECHNOLOGY	 <b>mahara</b>  <b>zoom</b> 
THEMES	GLOBAL AND ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP: <a href="#">THE SDGS</a>
TASKS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER</li><li>2. COMPARING AND CONTRASTING GLOBAL ISSUES</li><li>3. COLLABORATING: CREATING A TELECOLLABORATIVE PRODUCT</li></ol>
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](mailto: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. The main navigation menu includes: Home, News, Training, Research, Publications, Conferences, Projects, Resources, and UNICollaboration. The Resources menu is expanded, showing options: General info, Finding a Virtual Exchange Partner (highlighted with a yellow box), VE and Telecollaboration Bibliography, Tasks, Sample projects, and Position Papers. The background of the website features a group photo of diverse people and a network diagram of people connected by lines.

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

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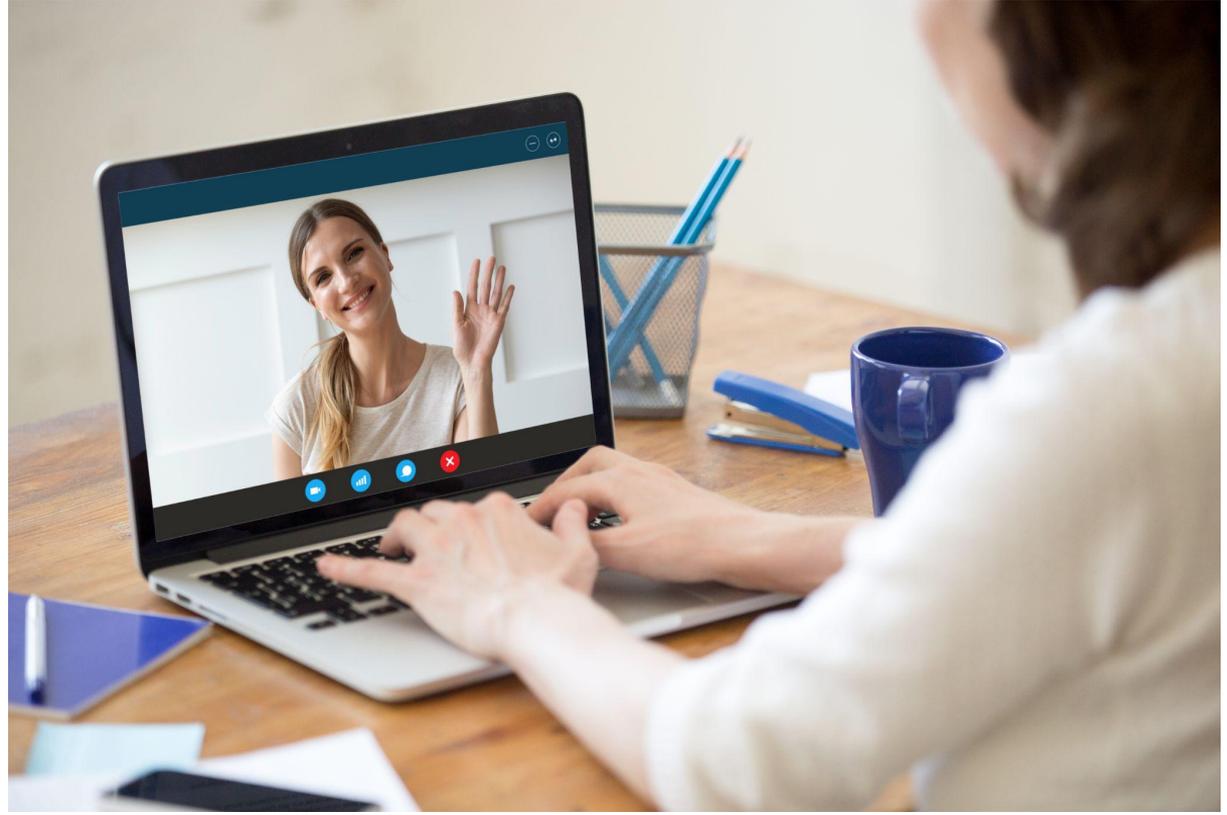
**Group homepage**

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1

# 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



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