

Virtual Exchange to Tackle Wicked Problems: Latin American and European Collaboration on Education for Sustainable Development (VAMOS)

Erasmus+ Priority addressed:

Developing the Higher Education sector within society at large

New technologies in higher education: Support to the modernisation of Higher Education systems through the development of open educational resources, connectivity, the acquisition of digital skills and learning methods and mobilisation of stakeholders including teachers, learners, economic and social partners

Main Objective: To build capacity for innovative international collaboration and joint learning, with a focus on learning spaces for ESD and for virtual exchange courses/projects addressing SDG issues

The project will progress in three steps:

Step 1: How do we learn to work together as a project?

Build capacity for effective virtual collaboration and for co-creation approaches in the project consortium

Step 2: How do we teach sustainability at our universities?

Facilitate an exchange of good practise in the field of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and for creating/upgrading ESD Learning Labs (focus on physical + virtual space, active learning environment, incl. teacher training for virtual teaching)

Step 3: How can we teach sustainability together in joint international/virtual courses?

Virtual collaboration projects with teacher and students from all partner; local/international case studies addressing wicked problems or specific SDG issues identified by partners, e.g. sustainable buildings, tourism, nutrition, food security, entrepreneurship, green campus.

VAMOS consortium

Europe	Brazil	Honduras
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uppsala University (coordinator)• University of Padua• UNICollaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Federal University of Pernambuco• Federal University of Technology of Paraná• Federal University of Pará	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán• Technological University of Honduras• National University of Forestry

Project activities and methodology

The key characteristic of the VAMOS project is that we follow an action learning-inspired approach which is very hands-on and applied in the sense that we take actions together and reflecting open the results

Activities

In total, we will organize 6 face-to-face meetings as well as 2 virtual conference within 2 years.

We will start with a Kick-off Meeting (KOM – Meeting 1, Feb. 2021, San Pedro Sula, Honduras) during which the partners will get to know each other, fine-tune the timeline, discuss management, quality and dissemination and financial questions. Beforehand, all partner will fill in a balanced score card to benchmark their individual expected results and impact, and stakeholders. To establish a collaborative approach from the very beginning, the KOM will also include a training session for co-creation. After the KOM, partners will participate in a virtual training for e-conferences/meetings on the ZOOM platform.

The activities of the three development WPs 2-4 will run in consecutive order, meaning they will build on each other logically.

WP 2 will start in May 2021. Partners will travel to Sweden for Meeting 2 which will have one part in Uppsala (UU main campus) and the second in Visby (UU campus on the island of Gotland). The Uppsala part will include a Knowledge Sharing Workshop during which all partners present and evaluate good-practise examples of ESD. In addition, we will discuss Active Learning Environments and the role of IT-infrastructure for Virtual Exchange. During the second part in Visby, the team of the Swedish International Centre of Education for Sustainable Development (SWEDESD) will capacitate the group with a Transformative Education method to analyses and understand Wicked Problems as an educational development tool in ESD.

As a direct follow-up, we will organize a virtual conference (e-conference 1, Aug. 2021) during which all partners present case studies of local Wicked Problems. The meeting will conclude WP 2 with a specific list of Wicked Problems in five topic cluster identified in the needs analysis (forest, water, food tourism, architecture) which will provide the topics for the pilots developed in WP 3 and tested in WP 4.

During the Uppsala meeting, the consortium will also meet both external evaluators to discuss the external assessment routine.

WP 3 will start in Sept. 2021 with a Virtual Exchange (VE) training and course development workshop (Meeting 3 in Belém, Brazil). Building on WP2, the training workshop facilitated by UNCollaboration will train teachers in WE methods and guide them in co-creating a VE courses on Wicked Problems and Using a blended and experimental learning approach, the course development will continue in the four weeks after the meeting accompanied by mentoring by the UNCollaboration trainers. By the end of December 2021, the teachers will have finished the course context incl. VE methodologies.

Meeting 3 (Belém) will also include a session of the Steering Committee to assess the progress made in project year 1 and to plan projects year 2. By the half-time mark of the project (15 Jan. 2022), Wp 2 will be accomplished completely and WP 3 practically, allowing for a intermediate external evaluation to be included the mid-term report to the EACEA.

WP 4 will run from Jan. to June 2022 during which we will set up the Moodle platform, test the pilots (March/April) and evaluate the experience during a workshop in Padua, Italy (Meeting 4). Based on the evaluation, we will plan for a continuation and transform the pilots into a regular transversal course offered by all partners. During the workshop, UNICollaboration will run a second training with the aim of training the pilot teachers to train colleagues at home in the VE methods.

The focus of the remaining 6 months (July-December 2022) will be dedicated to disseminating the project results and deliverables, with a special attention to connecting the project with other initiatives and the society. In August 2022, we will host a virtual exchange conference (e-conference 2) during which the VAMOS consortium will interact with other CBHE projects (Latin America and other regions) with a focus on Virtual Exchange and ESD. The topic of the e-conference will be "Sustainable Internationalisation in Practice".

In Oct. and Dec. 2022, we will organize one ESD Dialogue Forum each in Honduras and Brazil: Meeting 5 in Tegucigalpa, Honduras; Meeting 6 in Curitiba, Brazil. During these Forums, we will bring the project team to engage senior university management from each partner as well as social and government organisations (e.g. associate partners) to discuss ESD in a more strategic way, stressing in particular the "third mission" of universities when it comes to addressing the particular national SDG goals as well as the global Agenda 2030. The Forums should enable a greater dissemination and exploitation of the project within the consortium and beyond.

Both meetings will also have a consortium-only part: During Meeting 5 (Oct. 2022), we will organize a workshop to discuss and prepare a publication about the project deliverables. Meeting 6 (Dec. 2022) will also be the official final meeting of the project incl. a session of the Steering Committee to assess the achievements of the project, plan a continuation of the partnership on questions of ESD, and to prepare the final report.

Methods

The VAMOS project is built on a combination of very reliable and tested methods and approaches which we combine with a co-creation approach that allows for creativity, experimentation and growth in the partnership. This means we work with the full potential of the whole consortium and avoid situations where a consortium splits into active and passive partners. VAMOS is designed in a way that all partners are engaged at all parts of the project and share the responsibility for the progress.

In WP 2, we work with a combination of knowledge sharing on ESD methods with input from all partners, this allows for peer-feedback and reflection both on an individual and group level. In addition, we will introduce the concept of transformational education as a way to analyse and evaluate current sustainability approaches in higher education. The e-conference on Wicked problems will be the first virtual collaboration activity. It serves to define the topic for the pilots in WP 4 in more detail while allowing the consortium to learn working together virtually with a relatively simple concept of an e-conference before starting the more ambitious VE course development and test.

In WP 3, we rely on the expertise and training of UNICollaboration to capacitate teachers from all partner to co-create a Virtual Exchange course. After some basic training and introduction into VE, the methodology of the course development is experimental learning-by-doing, meaning that the teachers will work together in developing the course content as well as the right combination of virtual exchange elements, e.g. video conferences and collaborative learning on a Moodle platform. During this time, the teachers will be mentored by UNICollaboration according to the specific needs

arising during the co-creation process. The additional train-the-trainer workshop at the end of WP 3 will ensure that the training received and the knowledge gain will be sustainable and can be transferred to other colleagues at home.

In WP 4, partner will test the pilot version of the VE course on Wicked Problems. This means that the project moves from theory into action. This test part is essential for achieve the project objectives since we will only know if the course methodology chosen is useful and productive after testing it with students. The evaluation of the experience of teachers and students will allow for a feedback cycle (Quality assurance) allowing the consortium to improve the VE course, make it more applicable for the needs of the different partner universities.

We can identify 10 results to be expected to be achieve at the end of the project.

1. Increased capacity in co-creation and virtual collaboration methods at partner universities
2. Improved methods for transversal skills in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)
3. Wicked Problems as a concept in ESD problematized and integrated in teaching practice
4. Increased capacity in Virtual Exchange and Virtual teaching skills
5. Continued professional exchange on virtual teaching methods through train-the-trainer collaboration
6. Virtual Exchange course addressing Wicked problems co-created and offered annually by the partner universities
7. Increased participation of students in sustainability issues and ESD
8. Increased focus on student-centred approaches in ESD
9. Continued professional exchange on Education for Sustainable development through an annual e-conference
10. Increased focus on transversal skill development in ESD (virtual collaboration and communication, international group work, inter-cultural skills, language skills)