



FROM VIRCLASS TO VIRTUAL CAMPUS

ANALYSIS OF PARTNER'S SURVEY, MAIL AND PHONE INTERVIEWS

A Work Package 1.1 REPORT

(Adjusted report , partners feedback incorporated) March 2010

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Abstract

The most important result aimed for in this project is that major steps forward will have been made in the realization of an international specialization in social work, which really addresses European issues of social cohesion and intercultural dialogue, these being issues of major importance for professional social workers in Europe. International cooperation between (future) professional social workers is a necessity for this and an international Virtual Campus is an excellent tool to realize this objective, in part because physical international mobility is often problematic. A Virtual Campus then, as an international, multifunctional learning/communicating community, is a major step beyond an international virtual classroom, in which many partners already have some experience through their VIRCLASS cooperation.

The overall project objective is that social work students (future social work professionals) will be more competent to meet the needs of a knowledge based, intercultural, socially cohesive European society, by means of an international bachelor social work specialization realized via a Virtual Campus, an international social work learning community.

This report focuses on one of the main objectives of the project: Integration of an International bachelor Specialization in social work (called IS hereafter), implying realization of a shared/tuned framework for this specialization—Bologna aligned and tuned with relevant national quality standards.

The report outlines the possibilities presented in each of the 12 SW-VirCamp partner institutions to reach this objective. The report is based on an analysis of data from an online questionnaire survey and a series of mail and phone interviews with the representatives of the 12 partners in the SW-VirCamp project.

Data shows that the IS seems to be feasible for most of the universities involved.

- (1) two partner institutions are ready for this in the short term,
- (2) another nine are able to make it possible in the medium and long term but need to overcome different kind of challenges, and
- (3) in one university the IS would be extremely difficult to integrate.

This document concludes by highlighting:

- a) the main challenges for setting up the IS for some of the partner institutions,
- b) the principal actions needed in order to be prepared for the IS, and
- c) a set of points of attention to be further discussed among partners.

1. Introduction.

The objective of this report is to analyze the possibilities for implementation of an International Specialization in Social Work at Bachelor (BA) level in the Social Work BA curriculum of the 12 partner higher educational institutions (HEI) belonging to the Social Work – Virtual Campus (SW-VirCamp) project.

To achieve this objective an online survey (annex I) was sent to partners who were later interviewed by e-mail and phone (see annex II).

All partners kindly answered the questions posed both in the questionnaire and in the interviews.

The model for the IS presented to the partners was this:

Part 1: The first 1.5 years of study, (or 2.5 years if the BA is 4 year) students will study at their home university.

Part 2: After this, students who register for the IS participate in international e-learning courses (30 ECTS credits)

Part 3: Students who have started on the IS continue the next semester with study abroad/placement abroad at one of the partner institutions/countries (30 ECTS credits).

Part 4: Students return to their home university and participate in the national programme. They complete their education by writing their BA thesis (in English) on a comparative international theme in social work.

This report is structured as follows. The First part describes the method used to collect the information from the partner institutions. The Second part presents the main results, organized by topic. The final part presents a brief discussion and some general conclusions and contains recommendations to facilitate the implementation of the IS.

2. Method.

2.1. Respondents¹

Answers to the questionnaire and phone interview were provided by the following representatives of each partner institution:

P1: HØGSKOLEN I BERGEN, NORWAY (HiB)

Knut Erik Simonsen, Head of Department of Social Education and Social Work.

P2: HOGESCHOOL INHOLLAND, HAARLEM, THE NETHERLANDS (INH)

Ingrid Wegman, Programme Director.

Remmelt Veenkamp, International Coordinator of Social Work.

P3: UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID, ESCUELA UNIVERSITARIA DE TRABAJO SOCIAL, SPAIN (UCM)

Manuel Serrano Ruiz-Calderón, Director of the School of Social Work.

P4: HÄLSOHÖGSKOLAN, JÖNKÖPING UNIVERSITET, SWEDEN (HHJ)

Christina Ljungqvist, Head of the Department.

P5: INSTITUTO SUPERIOR MIQUEL TORGA, COIMBRA, PORTUGAL (ISMT)

Eduardo Marques, Assistant Professor.

P6: HOCHSCHULE MANNHEIM, FAKULTÄT FÜR SOZIALWESEN MANNHEIM GERMANY (HSMA)

Ulla Törnig, VirClass/VirCamp Representative.

Jochen Peter, Dean.

P7: SWANSEA UNIVERSITY, WALES, UK (SWANSEA)

Robert Sanders. Senior Lecturer.

P8: HOCHSCHULE MITTWEIDA GERMANY (HSM)

Gudrun Ehlert, Course coordinator.

P9: LIEPAJAS UNIVERSITATE, LATVIA (LPA)

Rita Ukstiņa, Social Pedagogy Programme Director.

P10: HØGSKOLEN I BODØ, NORWAY (HIBO)

Gunn Strand Hutchinson, Head of Social Work Department at the Faculty of social Sciences.

P11: UNIVERSIDAD LUSOFONA DE HUMANIDADES E TECNOLOGIAS, LISBOA, PORTUGAL (ULHT)

Ana Margarida Canhão, Social Work Lecturer.

P12: KATHOLIEKE HOGESCHOOL KEMPEN, BELGIUM (KHKEMPEN)

Jan Agten, International Coordinator of the Social Work Department.

¹ In the following when referring to the specific partner institutions we will be using the Partner number (P1, P2 etc.) and acronyms.

2.2. Electronic survey and phone interview

To collect all relevant data an electronic survey was developed in the period October—December 2008. The survey was sent to all partners in January 2009. A copy of the electronic survey is attached to this report (annex I). The questionnaire consisted of 50 closed and open questions addressing the partner institutions' organizational and educational structure, way of solving practical educative questions, the contents and orientation of their curriculum, the social work specializations they offer to their students and their opinion about possibilities for a future model of International Specialization SW-VirCamp and its economic viability, among others.

It is important to note that some problems arose in the understanding of some of the questions, due to the meaning of the terms “*Specialization*” and “*Practice oriented research*” not being defined in a clear way in the questionnaire. For this reason some results have been difficult to interpret and were not included in the analysis. Nevertheless, the authors of this report consider that this doesn't affect the general conclusions derived from the study.

Since some specific information was difficult to collect via online questionnaire (due the nature of the software), several phone interviews were undertaken with the designated representative of each university. The next questions were sent to the partners some time before by e-mail in the period of March – April 2009:

- 1. Do you have any courses/themes/modules with an international perspective in your social work curriculum programme?**
- 2. If yes please give us information of the content of those programmes, at what time and level they take place, and the number of ECTS credits.**
- 3. Are those programmes presented in English?**
- 4. Is any other part of your curriculum plan taught in English language?**
- 5. Will any of these courses/themes/modules be open for students from abroad?**
- 6. Please give us information of possibilities/places for practical placement for incoming international students at your university.**

3. Results

The Results have been organized in line with the most logical order to analyze how the proposed IS model fits the situation and characteristics of the SW-VirCamp partners. Thus, this section begins with an analysis of those questions that directly addressed the feasibility of the proposed model for each of the universities (3.1). It then continues with the study of those key partners institutional characteristics that seem more relevant to analyze the possibilities they have to implement the different parts of the IS.

3.1. Responses to the proposed IS model: is the proposed IS model possible?

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Regardless of how the specific characteristics of each partner are and how they can favour or hinder the joint implementation of IS, an essential first issue to be addressed is how the partner representatives generally evaluate the possibility of carrying out the proposed IS model (see part 1 above) in the near future.

When partners were directly asked this (Q29), the majority (9 of 12: 75%) responded positively, with only *P9 LPA*, *P7 SWANSEA* and *P4 HHJ* giving a negative answer.

Notwithstanding this mainly positive response, it is important to consider the open comments partners gave (Q30-Q32), for both positive and negative answers. In doing so, three main issues seem to be especially relevant. The first is accreditation. As pointed out by *P8 HSM* and *P9 LPA* a positive accreditation from National Agencies is a necessary condition to integrate the SW-VirCamp courses into the curriculum and also for obtaining official recognition of a BA Specialization. Thus, a number of related administrative problems could appear in this respect. Some of them will be discussed below, but for now it is important to underline that this is a central issue at least for *P7 SWANSEA*. As their representatives reported in the survey:

“The curriculum for British social work is highly specific. It would probably not be possible for individual institutions to vary the requirements for social work education in such a way as to accommodate a large amount of time devoted to international specialization” (P7 SWANSEA-Q30)

Closely related to the above, is the *distinction* pointed out by *P12 KHKEMPEN* between an official or formally recognized specialization that gives entitlement to an official title of Specialist and an optional pathway or itinerary that students can follow during their BA studies.

“1. Organize it as an official option is not easy, but may be possible. 2. Organize it as a specialization for undergraduate students is possible. Students of the second year choose international optional modules. The

number of credits available for optional choice is not yet defined, but it will be in the future” (P12 KHKEMPEN-Q30)

Thus, it is important to point out that *some partners*, (for example, *P3 UCM* and *P4 HHJ*), are not allowed to establish specializations at the Bachelor level, due respectively to the national regulations and the generalist orientation of their studies. This doesn't mean that a different kind of recognition is not possible; a proper solution in this respect needs to be discussed among partners.

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The very small number of students eager or able to join the IS seems to be the third main problem as was underlined by both *P6 HSMA* and *P9 LPA*. In this respect, past experience in VIRCLASS shows how difficult it is to recruit students for the e-learning courses and also how difficult it is to maintain them in the programme. Information given by VIRCLASS students shows that the main reason for these difficulties is that the courses have been either incompletely, or not at all, included in the students ordinary programmes or included in a way that has increased the students workload in a period of time when they were burdened by other courses (Marques, Arias, Larsen and Hole, 2008). In this sense partners have to be conscious that the integration of the VirCamp courses into the ordinary curriculum is a key issue to the success of the IS.

Of course there are other kind of difficulties, and also solutions, that were not explicitly mentioned by the partners when they evaluated their possibilities to implement an IS in their social work programmes. These difficulties were revealed later when they answered the specific questions about their institutions and studies, analyzed in the next paragraphs.

3.2. Academic Organizational & Educational Structure.

3.2.1. Study levels.

Answers from the questionnaire (Q3) show that all partners offer Social Work or related topic studies at the Bachelor Level, and some of them also give their students the opportunity to study a Diploma or to continue Master level (9 partners) and PhD level university studies (2 partners).

Since the IS is meant to be implemented at Bachelor Level, all the partners comply with this necessary prerequisite.

In past partner meetings there have been discussions concerning the appropriate academic level (BA or MA) at which to implement the IS, but since not all partners offer postgraduate studies and, more importantly, due the innovative idea of an IS at the Bachelor level the final decision was taken to develop the strategy for the BA programmes.

3.2.2. BA duration, number of ECTS credits, and hours per ECTS.

Significant differences and potential difficulties establishing a joint IS are revealed the way in which partners organize their studies at the BA level was examined.

As shown in Table 1 partners differ in the number of years over which their BA is delivered, the total amount of ECTS credits, the number of hours students work per ECTS credit, and the total number of working hours in the BA.

Table 1

Years in the BA, ECTS credits in the BA, Hours per ECTS credits, and number of hours in the BA in each of the 12 SW-VirCamp partner institutions

INSTITUTION	years/ BA	ECTS credits/ BA	hours/ECTS credits	Hours in the BA
<i>P4 JÖNKÖPING</i>	3,5	210	35	7350
<i>P2 INHOLLAND</i>	4	240	28	6720
<i>P6 MANNHEIM</i>	3,5	210	30	6300
<i>P3 COMPLUTENSE</i>	4	240	25	6000
<i>P9 LIEPAJAS</i>	4	160	35	5600
<i>P5 MIQUEL TORGA</i>	3,5	210	25	5250
<i>P8 MITTWEIDA</i>	3	180	30	5400
<i>P1 BERGEN</i>	3	180	25	4500
<i>P12 KHKEMPEN</i>	3	180	25	4500
<i>P11 LUSOFONA</i>	3	180	25	4500
<i>P7 SWANSEA</i>	3	180	20	3600
<i>P10 BODØ</i>	3	180	20	3600

50% of the partners offer a 3-year BA, 25% offer a 3,5-year programme, and the remaining 25 % a 4-year BA.

The total amount of ECTS credits the students have to pass to obtain the BA level ranges from 240 ECTS credits at *P2 INH* and *P3 UCM*; 210 ECTS credits at *P4 HHJ*, *P5 ISMT* and *P6 HSMA*; 180 ECTS credits at *P10 HIBO*, *P11 ULHT*, *P7 SWANSEA*, *P12 KHKEMPEN*, *P1 HiB* and *P8 HSM*; and, 160 ECTS in *P9 LPA* which is less than expected in the frame of the Bologna agreement (European Commission, 2004, 2009).

According to the European Commission and the Bologna framework 1 ECTS credits is 25 – 30 hours of work (ECTS, 2004). In the light of this it is also surprising that 4 partners respond that the number of hours per ECTS credit in their institutions are less than 25 (*P7 SWANSEA* and *P10 HIBO*) or more than 30 hours (*P9 LPA* and *P4 HHJ*). For the other partners their figures are 25 hours (6 partners), 28 hours (1 partner) or 30 hours per credit (1 partner).

However, this lack of adjustment to the Bologna framework is less than it might seem at first. In fact, it is easy to see that the 160 ECTS credits at *P9 LPA* can easily equate the 180 ECTS credits of other institutions (e.g.: *P1 HiB*), since 1 ECTS credit in *P9 LPA* represents 35 hours of study which is above the established Bologna framework. The same applies to *P4 HHJ*, whose students work more hours than in a standard 3,5 year BA, since its ECTS credits value more than 30 hours.

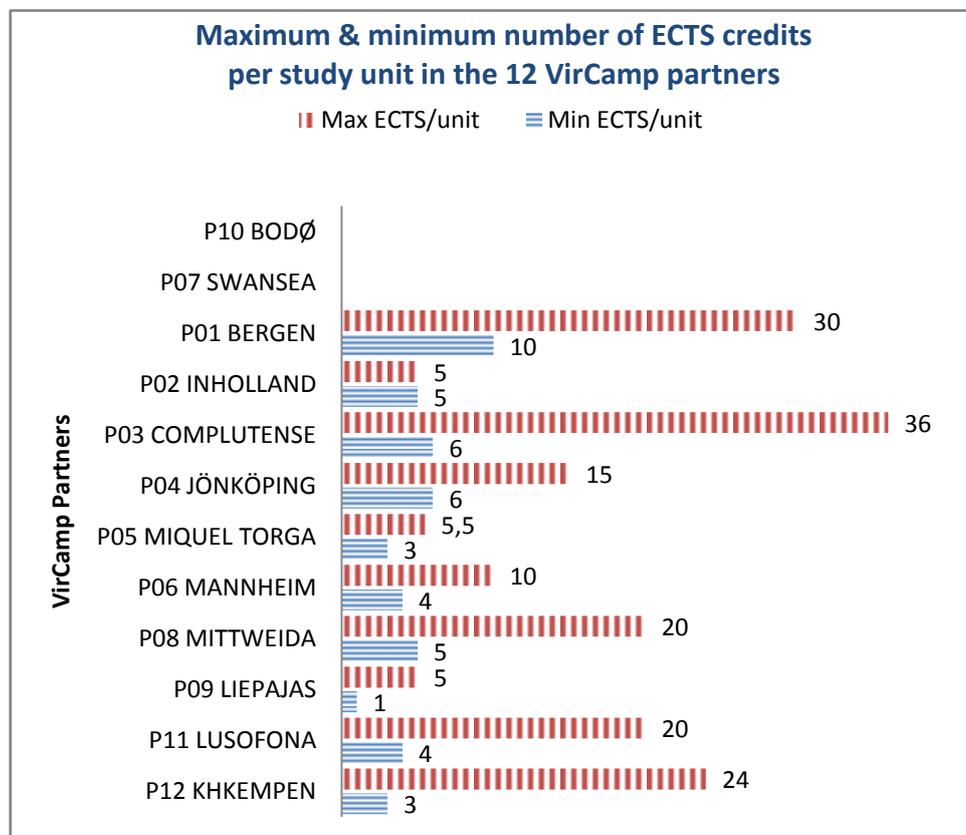
Different is the case of *P10 HIBO* and *P7 SWANSEA*, because the total amount of hours the students work during the BA is less than the minimum of 4500 hours stated by the Bologna framework.

Only one partner (*P8 HSM*) has responded that its curriculum is not competence based.

The 30 ECTS credits e-learning courses which are planned in SW-VirCamp include Module 1 (5 ECTS credits) and Module 2 (10 ECTS credits) courses of VIRCLASS, plus the 15 ECTS credits Community Work module of SW-VirCamp.

This means that the minimum number of credits should not be a hindrance for all the partners to include these modules into their programme

Figure 1



The differences presented above might pose important challenges for implementation of the joint IS. However these do not seem insurmountable as

(1) Partners, as is expected in the coming years (by 2012), will finally accommodate their BA programme to the main principles of the Bologna convergence process (4500 to 7200 hours of students work, 3 to 4 years of study, ranging from 180 to 240 ECTS, and 25 to 30 hours per ECTS credit); and

2) The joint IS will be flexible enough to accommodate the range of variability allowed by Bologna in terms of BA years, hours per credit, etc. So it seems important to discuss with the partners their future plans concerning convergence in Higher Education and the changes needed in the proposed IS model in order to offer this as an option for students in their Social Work curriculum.

3.3. BA Practical Organization.

The future success of the proposed IS will also depend on aspects related to the practical structural organization of the study programmes. These factors seem to be as important as the basic structure of the programme that has been discussed above. When implementing a joint programme one needs to take into account factors like terms, holidays and exam periods, numbers of full- and part-time students, minimum and maximum number of students allowed per course group, etc. These aspects are analyzed in the following paragraph.

3.3.1. Number & duration of terms.

Perhaps with the exception of the number of terms per year, *great variability among partners is observed when practical organization of their curriculum is analyzed.*

All the partners except *P2 INH* organize each of the 3; 3,5 or 4 years of their BA in 2 terms (Table 2). *P2 INH* however divides the year in 4 terms; it is also the university having the smallest number of weeks (10 weeks) per term.

Table 2

Number of terms and duration of terms (weeks) in the 12 VirCamp partners

	Number of terms				Duration of each term (in weeks)			
	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
P1 BERGEN	2	2	2		20	20	20	
P2 INHOLLAND	4	4	4	4	10	10	10	10
P3 COMPLUTENSE	2	2	2	2	16	16	16	16
P4 JÖNKÖPING	2	2	2	1	20	20	20	
P5 MIQUEL TORGA	2	2	2	2				
P6 MANNHEIM	2	2	2	1	15	15	15	15
P7 SWANSEA	2	2	2		11	11	11	
P8 MITTWEIDA	2	2	2		16	16	16	
P9 LIEPAJAS	2	2	2	2	20	20	20	20
P10 BODØ	2	2	2		18	18	18	
P11 LUSOFONA	2	2	2		17	17	17	
P12 KHKEMPEN	2	2	2		15	15	15	

But this relative communality seems to end at this point because the duration of each term at the different universities shows great diversity ranging from the 10 weeks of *P2 INH* to 20 weeks of *P1 HiB*, *P4 HHJ* & *P9 LPA*.

These differences might cause problems in relation to the integration of an IS, but they do not have to. When the implementation of the IS is agreed by the HEI, students may have to adapt their schedule to that of the IS.

3.3.2. Practice Placement.

Diversity in the way of organizing the study programmes is also reflected in the way partners organize the Practice Placement.

Practice Placement differs in terms of the study years in which it is placed but also in the number of ECTS credits and weeks it takes (see Table 3).

Table 3

Organization of the Practice Placement in the 12 SW-VirCamp partners

	Number of weeks				Number of ECTS credits			
	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	4th year
P1 BERGEN	10		13		15		20	
P2 INHOLLAND			40				30	
P3 COMPLUTENSE				32				42
P4 JÖNKÖPING					7,5	7,5	15	
P5 MIQUEL TORGA			15	15			17,5	24,4
P6 MANNHEIM		15				30		
P7 SWANSEA	4	18	18		5	30	30	
P8 MITTWEIDA		20				20		
P9 LIEPAJAS	5	5	8	8	7,5	7,5	7,5	7,5
P10 BODØ	1	20	3			30		
P11 LUSOFONA		30	30			22	35	
P12 KHKEMPEN		22	15			35	24	

There are seven partner institutions with more than one practice period during the social work BA programme. These are P1, P5, P7, P9; P10, P11 and P12. The other institutions have only one practice period.

The number of weeks for the practice periods differs from 1 – 32 . However the main periods for practice in the institutions with more than one period are not less than 8 weeks.

Four institutions start the Practice Placement in the first year —*P1 HiB, P7 SWANSEA, P9 LPA* and *P10 HIBO*. Others concentrate it in the second year— *P6 HSMA* and *P8 HSM*. Two of the institutions arrange the Practice Placement only in the 3rd or 4th year—*P2 INH* and *P3 UCM*..

The number of ECTS credits allocated for practice placements differ from 7.5 ECTS credits (*P9 LPA*) to 65 ECTS credits (*P7 SWANSEA*). The majority of the partner institutions have practice training including from 20-42 ECTS credits.

Since the IS programme is expected to start from the student’s second or third year the partner’s programme before the IS programme starts will not affect the organization of the IS programme. When students are going to have their placement abroad the hosting institution will have to organize the practice period according to the number of ECTS credits the students need to be accredited for in their BA programme at their home institution. In sum, students who join the IS will present different needs in order to have their practical placement officially recognized by their

home universities. In addition host institutions will need to make a specific effort to accommodate the particular needs of the guest students.

3.3.3. Study abroad

An important commonality in the practical organization of the BA is related to the periods in which partners send their students abroad. As Table 4 shows, none of the partners send their students abroad in the first year. Students going abroad do so in the second or third year of their 3-year BA programme (*P1 HiB*, *P10 HIBO* and *P12 KHKEMPEN*), and in the third or fourth year of their 4-year BA .

Special considerations in relation to the students' needs have to be taken when sending students for practice abroad. A quality guide for the IS will have to include criteria for this. At the moment not all partner institutions are sending students abroad neither for practice placements nor study. When joining an IS programme this should be included.

Table 4

Study abroad in 6 of the 12 VirCamp Partners

	<i>1st year</i>	<i>2nd year</i>	<i>3rd year</i>	<i>4th year</i>
<i>P1 BERGEN</i>		X	X	
<i>P2 INHOLLAND</i>		X	X	X
<i>P3 COMPLUTENSE</i>			X	X
<i>P4 JÖNKÖPING</i>			X	X
<i>P10 BODØ</i>		X	X	
<i>P12 KHKEMPEN</i>		X	X	

3.3.4. Final thesis.

The Final Thesis is always presented by the students in last year of the BA (see Table 5). The number of ECTS credits of the BA thesis differs from the 6 ECTS credits at *P12 KHKEMPEN* to the 24,5 ECTS credits at *P5 ISMT*.

The intention with the IS is not to change the whole curriculum in the partners BA programme, but to offer students a possibility to get an extended perspective on international social work. This means that the final thesis in the IS has to be flexible in terms of ECTS credits and adapt to the institutional practice on this. The main change suggested for the IS in relation to this is that students should write their theses from a comparative international perspective about a social work subject, preferably in English or, as a minimum, with an English Summary.

Table 5

Number of ECTS credits and year in which the thesis is presented in the 12 VirCamp Partners

	<i>1st year</i>	<i>2nd year</i>	<i>3rd year</i>	<i>4th year</i>
P1 BERGEN			15	
P2 INHOLLAND				15
P3 COMPLUTENSE				12
P4 JÖNKÖPING			15	
P5 MIQUEL TORGA				24,5
P6 MANNHEIM				12
P7 SWANSEA				
P8 MITTWEIDA			10	
P9 LIEPAJAS				15
P10 BODØ				
P11 LUSOFONA				
P12 KHKEMPEN			6	

3.3.5. Non working weeks in the academic year

Another relevant practical question that has to be considered is related to the different periods of exam in the BA programmes. Exam periods are of course unavoidable and non working weeks due to holidays have to be respected in some sense if an academic programme is to succeed.

In table 6 Christmas and Summer holiday in each institution is presented. Easter holiday is not in the table since this varies year by year and also differs among countries but has to be taken into account in order to have an idea about what are the common weeks of work. At least one or two weeks in March or one or two weeks in April are non-working periods. So, March and April are difficult months in this respect, especially when planning collaborative online work among course participants.

The period from week 41 to 51 doesn't seem to present a problems. Another common working period is from week 12 to 24, but in this case, as noted, the Easter holiday has to be taken into account.

However students who choose to participate in the IS, may find they need to adapt to the structure of this alternative programme.

Table 6

Working and not working weeks at the 12 VirCamp institutions

	<i>P1 BERGEN</i>	<i>P2 INHOLLAND</i>	<i>P3 COMPLUTENSE</i>	<i>P4 JÖNKÖPING</i>	<i>P5 MIQUEL TORGA</i>	<i>P6 MANNHEIM</i>	<i>P7 SWANSEA</i>	<i>P8 MITTWEIDA</i>	<i>P9 LIEPAJAS</i>	<i>P10 BODØ</i>	<i>P11 LUSOFONA</i>	<i>P12 KHKEMPEN</i>
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¹ Non working weeks are those in colour

3.3.6. Number of students

One of the more serious difficulties when organizing a shared International Specialization could be the differences among the partners in terms of the number of students they have, and the minimum and maximum number of students they allow per course. And in this case, these differences are really important.

In Figure 2, it is clear that there can be distinguished 4 types of partner institutions in terms of the number of students. Institutions with

- *small number of students: P9 LPA, P1 HiB;*
- *medium-low number of students: P7 SWANSEA, P8 HSM; P10 HIBO, P5 ISMT, P11 ULHT and P4 HHJ;*
- *medium-high number of students :P12 KHKEMPEN and P6 HSMA;*
- *high number of students :P2 INH and P3 UCM.*

These differences in the number of students raise questions concerning the reciprocity at different levels among partners and about the possibility to have appropriately balanced groups of students.

Also a distinction can be made among institutions that allow part-time students (P2, P7, P8, P9, P10) and those that don't.

Some of the characteristics of part-time students are that they are working whilst studying and they are older than full-time students. For this reason, the proposed IS model should be very attractive for them since courses will be online, but at the same time difficult to follow if the study abroad is a mandatory requirement to pass the IS.

The minimum number of students per group can also cause significant problems for some institutions and for the proposed IS model itself. A figure that can be adequate at campus, let's say 15 students per group, which is the minimum number that some universities set up to approve a course, can be impossible to recruit by most, as past experiences in VIRCLASS have shown. However there is no evidence that recruiting students to the IS will bring the same difficulties as in VIRCLASS, because a better structure and better integration of the IS courses into the BA programmes should make it easier for students to take part.

It might of course be important in the beginning when starting the programme that the partner institutions make exceptions concerning the minimum number of participating students required.

An alternative part of the BA programme like the IS might also recruit specially motivated students, and give added value and prestige to the institutional programmes.

Figure 2

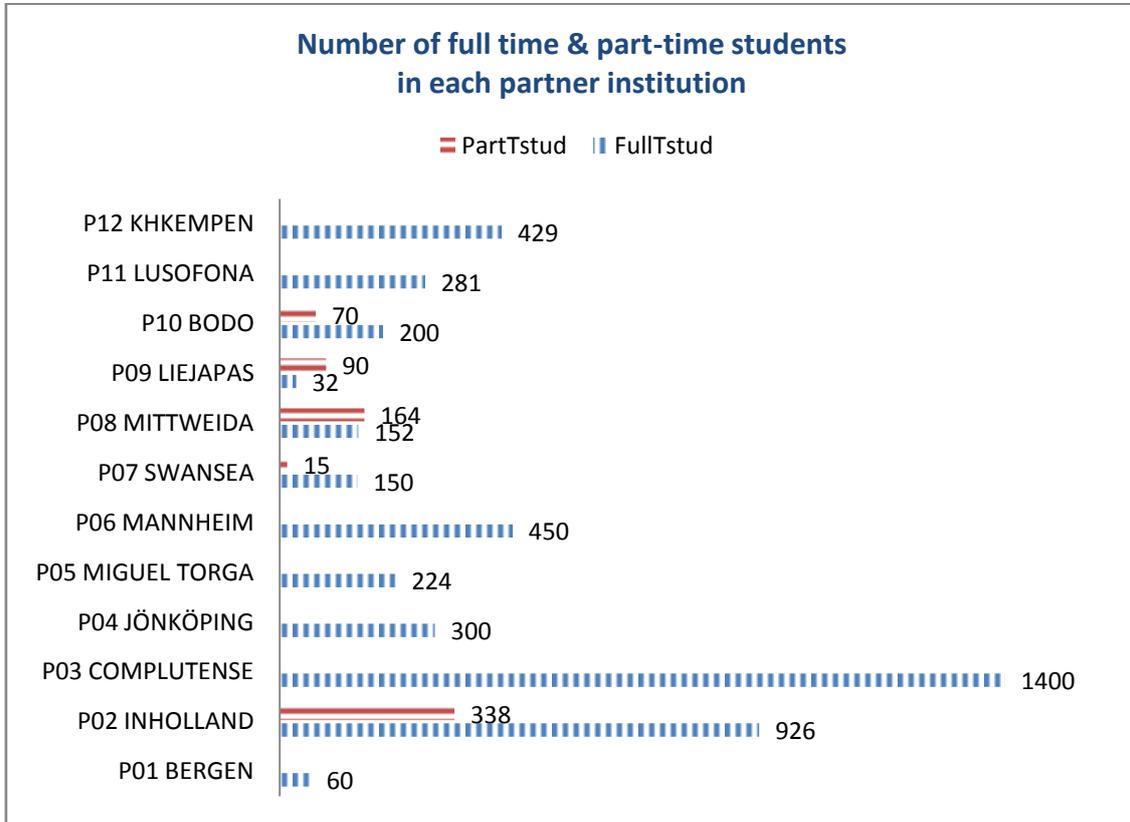
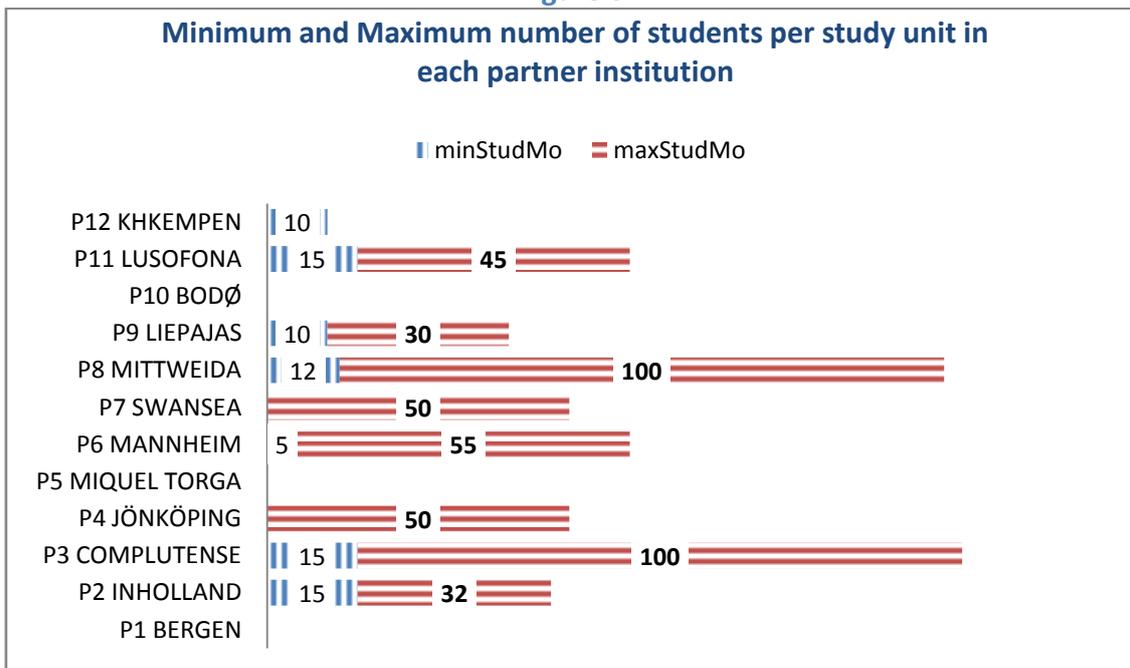


Figure 3



3.4. BA Curriculum contents: community work.

When planning a joint IS or a specific and common itinerary in a BA programme for the SW-VirCamp students, it is necessary to consider the specific courses and contents students take at their own universities. Because of the comparative and international dimension of the SW-VirCamp and VIRCLASS courses, students must have a basic knowledge and understanding of the issues in which they will collaboratively work with colleagues from other countries.

It is clear that if the IS will be offered only to social work BA students, then the knowledge of the basics of the social work theories, methods and practice with different populations have to be presumed. A different scenario is drawn when the courses deal with specific themes that are not given in some of the BA programmes, as for example with the Community Work module planned by the SW-VirCamp project. For this reason it is important to know to what extent the curricula of the partner universities reflects this specific content.

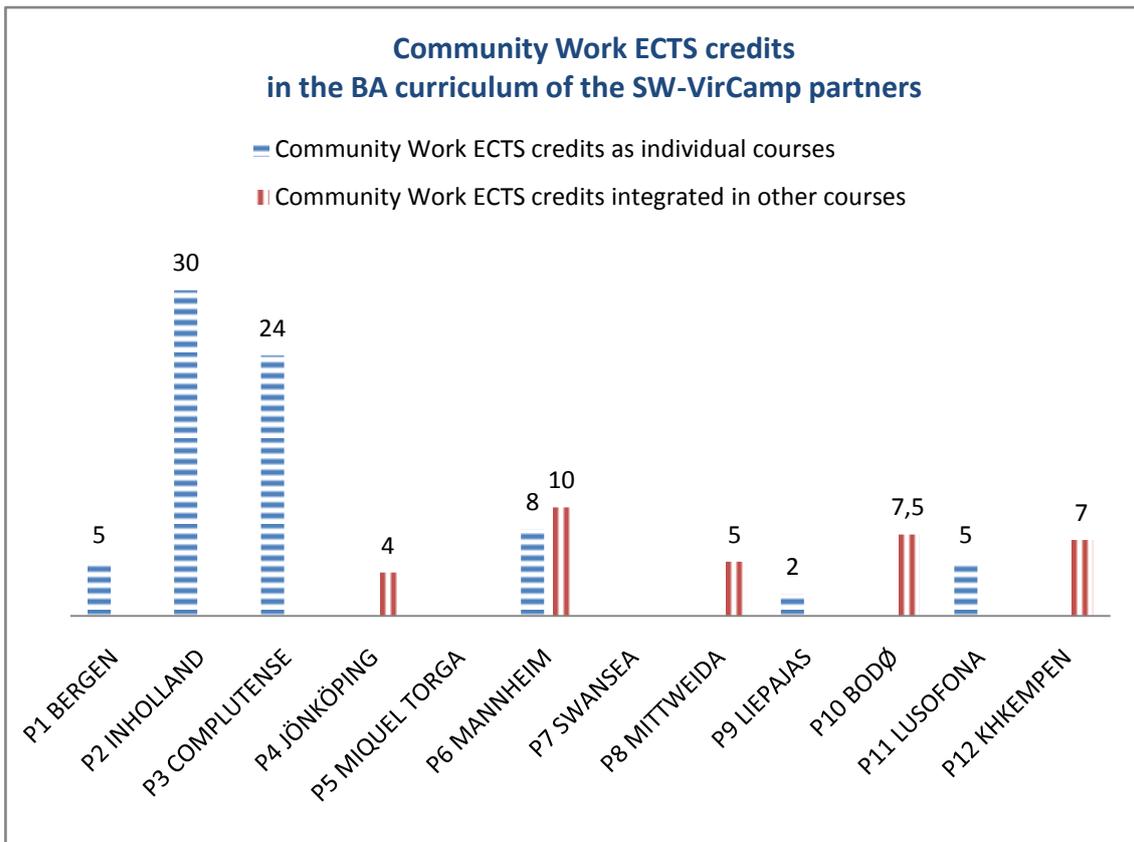
As Figure 4 shows only 2 partners (*P7 SWANSEA* and *P5 ISMT*²) from a total of 12 do not offer community work in their respective curriculum plan. Among the partners who offer community work, some of them do so as separate courses (*P1 HiB*, *P3 UCM*³, *P2 INH*, *P9 LPA* and *P11 ULHT*). Others include the community work content in more broad courses/themes, as is the case of *P8 HSM*, *P12 KHKEMPEN*, *P10 HIBO* and *P4 HHJ*. Finally, *P6 HSMA* offers ECTS credits for community work both in specific courses and integrated into other courses.

The fact that a partner doesn't offer community work or other kind of contents in its curriculum might have both positive and negative impacts. The positive impact could be because SW-VirCamp would then be an attractive and different educative offer for its students. This is the case, for example, in *P5 ISMT*. The negative impact could be that there is no central interest in community work issues or methods in university programme, which can be the case of *P7 SWANSEA*, since social work and community work are seen to be different professions in UK, with separate educational programmes.

² *P5 ISMT* has recently succeeded in including the future SW-VirCamp community work course in its ordinary BA programme.

³ The numbers from *P3 UCM* already include the future SW-VirCamp credits, since this institution has already succeeded in including the future SW-VirCamp community work course in its BA programme.

Figure 4



From Figure 4 we can see that the introduction of a community work course of 15 ECTS credits will increase the number of ECTS credits for this method for nearly all partner institutions.

If partners agree that basic competences in community work are needed in order to allow the students to take the community work SW-VirCamp course, students from those institutions that do not offer such courses might have a problem and a solution will need to be found. Alternatives that can be suggested to address this are either to offer special support to these students about the way community work is practiced in their own country from their home university or by establishing a community work SW-VirCamp course in which no basic competences about community work are requested from the beginning.

3.5. Specializations

In this part of the report we consider those aspects more directly associated with the possibilities to develop the IS proposed model in the partners organizations. First we look into the characteristics of present Specializations being offered by a small number of partners. Secondly, we focus on characteristics of the partner institutions that can favour some of the components of the proposed IS model—if there is an international perspective in their social work curriculum, if they offer courses in English, if those

courses are open to international students, and the characteristics of the placements open to foreign students. This part will end with a short analysis of the economic and ICT conditions of the partners that can favour the implementation of the IS.

3.5.1. Specializations in the curriculum: International and other specializations.

We wanted to know if partner institutions already offer any kind of specialization in their BA programme. If so this might enhance opportunities to implement the proposed IS model in the partner universities. When the results were analyzed only four partners (*P12 KHKEMPEN*, *P2 INH*, *P9 LPA* and *P4 HHJ*) reported that they offer Specializations to their students, and only one of them (*P12 KHKEMPEN*) offered an International Specialization. The number of ECTS credits those Specializations comprise range from 20 to 75 ECTS, they have diverse structures, and they all require specific enrolment criteria (compulsory completion of preliminary courses or compulsory number of obtained ECTS credits).

3.5.2. Partners' characteristics that favour the development of the proposed IS model

As a result of the phone interview with representatives of the partners relevant information concerning the feasibility of the IS model was obtained. A summary of this information can be seen in table 7.

The first rows of this table show that all the partners except the two Portuguese universities have courses/themes/modules with *an* international perspective in their social work curriculum at all the academic Levels. This number is reduced from 10 to 8 institutions when attention is paid only to the BA level, because both *P6 HSMA* and *P10 HIBO* only emphasize this perspective in their Master Degrees.

The range of ECTS credits with an international perspective at the Bachelor Level ranges from the 5 ECTS credits offered by *P8 HSM* to the 75 ECTS credits offered by *P2 INH*.

A majority of the institutions (9 of 12) have social work courses in English, and only *P8 HSM* has courses with an international perspective without offering any content in English.

It is important to underline that all the courses/modules with an international perspective at the partners' universities are open for foreign students.

In the same vein, all 12 partners are able to open practice placements for international students. This mean that one of the elements of the IS model (practice placement abroad) is at least in principle possible. An important consideration here is that those placements could be made in English. In this case, only three institutions (*P10 HIBO*, *P2 INH* and *P1 HiB*) could do this at the moment. For the other 5 universities (*P12*

KHKEMPEN, P4 HHJ, P3 UCM, P7 SWANSEA and P9 LPA) it will be possible but not easy. And for the last 4 (P11 ULHT, P5 ISMT, P8 HSM and P6 HSMA) it is not possible at present. In the last row the specific contents of practice placement offered can be seen.

Table 7

Summary of some partners' traits that can favour the implementation of the IS proposed model

	International perspective in the social work curriculum programme	Number of ECTS credits on international perspective	Academic year in which international perspective contents are offered	International Perspective contents presented in English language	Any other part of the curriculum plan in English	International Perspective contents open for International students	Practice Placement for International students	Kind of practice placements offered for International students	Possibility of practice placements in English
P01 BERGEN	YES	15	2nd	YES	NO	YES	YES	Elderly, youth & Refugees, prison, asylum seekers	YES
P02 INHOLLAND	YES	75	2nd, 3rd, 4th	YES	NO	YES	YES	Only Drugs Addicted Centres & asylum seekers	YES
P03 COMPLUTENSE	YES	36	3rd, 4th	YES	NO	YES	YES	All kind of practices	NOT EASY
P04 JÖNKÖPING	YES	7,5	-	YES	YES	YES	YES	-	NOT EASY
P05 MIQUEL TORGA	NO	0	0	NO	NO	YES	YES	All kind of practices	NO
P06 MANNHEIM	NO	0	0	YES	YES	YES	NO	-	NO
P07 SWANSEA	YES	10	1st	YES	YES	YES	YES	-	NOT EASY
P08 MITTWEIDA	YES	5	3rd	NO	NO	YES	YES	-	NO
P09 LIEPAJAS	YES	13,5	1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th	YES	NO	YES	YES	All kind of practices	NOT EASY
P10 BODØ	NO	0	0	YES	NO	YES	YES	Only with youths & refugees	YES
P11 LUSOFONA	NO	0	0	NO	NO	YES	YES	Social Institutions in community work	NO
P12 KHKEMPEN	YES	62	2nd, 3rd	YES	NO	YES	YES	-	NOT EASY

3.5.3. Partners' organizational conditions for future Specializations

Partners were asked about the minimum number of students needed to start a Specialization. As Figure 3 shows the range in this case is from 5 to 15 students.

The target groups (Q35) for a future SW-VirCamp specialization will be both part-time and full-time students. Of the 7 universities responding to this question 3 partners (*P8 HSM*, *P1 HiB* and *P2 INH*) will offer the Specialization only to full-time students and 4 partners (*P6 HSMA*, *P9 LPA*, *P11 ULHT* and *P10 HIBO*) to both full- and part-time students.

When asking about specific enrolment criteria for an international specialization partners agreed that this was important. Eight partners agreed that English proficiency is an important criterion. Only *P7 SWANSEA*, for understandable reasons, and *P8 HSM*, *P5 ISMT*, and *P4 HHJ* did not refer to English proficiency.

3.5.4. Partners' economic and ICT conditions for future Specializations

The last aspects to be analyzed are those related to the economic viability of the International Specialization and the ICT conditions of the partners.

Let's begin with data related to the economic aspects. The diversity of the agents responsible for the payment of the education in each institution was clear from answers given to Q40 of the questionnaire: students payments (33,3%), State payments (16,70%), Department/School/Faculty budget (33%), and other means (16,70%). It is clear here that the public-private status of the institutions and also the different educative systems in each country make a great difference. It is important to underline here that these differences require the SW-VirCamp consortium to be attentive to the specific characteristics of each institution and to develop a flexible scheme in order to finance the future International Specialization.

It also has been clear that the other means to finance the programme are the Erasmus grants and other types of student grants, as was revealed also from the replies to Q40. And this applies especially to the placement abroad.

What is not clear is how many Euros students have to pay per ECTS credits and the money the partners have available per student or per ECTS credit in order to finance an IS. In this latter aspect, answers to Q42 of the questionnaire were not sufficiently informative and therefore no conclusion can be reached regarding this at the moment. Only 5 partners answered this question and the cost per ECTS credit ranges from the 8 €/ECTS credits of *P12 KHKEMPEN* to the approximately 77€/ECTS credits of *P7 SWANSEA*.

The last aspect to be analyzed is the ICT conditions of the partner institutions. In Table 8 these issues are summarized. The main conclusion here is that most partners (55-75%) think they have enough ICT facilities. It is useful to be aware that the ICT facilities are better for teachers than for students, and that the less resolved issue concerns student access to the necessary computer facilities in the evenings and on the weekends. These are all aspects that are extremely important to ensure the success of a future Specialization with online courses.

Table 8

ICT conditions at the partner institutions

	Are enough	Should be improved	Not answered
Necessary quality of computer facilities (broadband/software/hardware) for staff	75%	16.7%	8,3%
Necessary quality of computer facilities (broadband/software/hardware) for students	66.7%	25%	8,3%
Access to necessary computer in the evening/week-ends for the students	58.3%	33.3%	8,3%
ICT maintenance and servicing staff for helping teachers	75%	16.7%	8,3%
ICT maintenance and servicing staff for helping students	66.7%	25%	8,3%

E-teacher competences (Larsen et al., 2008) are another important factor for a Virtual Campus. Because of the experience with e-learning and teaching arranged by the VIRCLASS consortium and e-pedagogy courses arranged by HiB (Larsen and Hole, 2009) most of the partners have one or more teachers with these competences. The following partner institutions have been involved as e-teachers in the VIRCLASS courses: *P1 HiB, P2 INH, P3 UCM, P4 HHJ, P5 ISMT, P6 HSMA, P7 SWANSEA, P12 KHKEMPEN*. When the Community Work module begins teachers from *P8 HSM and P10 HIBO* will also participate in this. One teacher from *P11 ULHT* has experience from participating in e-learning courses, and *P9 LPA* has one teacher that has experience of tutoring on other e-learning courses. Other staff members are also starting to acquire e-teacher competencies.

Several of the partner institutions have experience of preparing screen lectures and using video conferencing or other online conference tools. These skills have been developed more as a result of the media workshop for partners and later also for the production of virtual learning materials for the Community Work pilot.

All partner institutions are using some sorts of Learning Management Systems (LMS) in their BA programmes.

4. Conclusion: From VIRCLASS to Virtual Campus.

As a result of collaboration in VIRCLASS – The Virtual Classroom for Social Work in Europe, 9 of 12 partners in SW-VirCamp have participated in the development of e-learning courses, curriculum development and virtual learning material, such as screen lectures, audiovisual triggers and a video case study. As a result of the SW-VirCamp project all partners have been involved in the development of a new e-learning course. Through the establishment of the new project, SW-VirCamp, we are aiming for an extension of the Virtual Classroom to a Virtual Campus including not only e-learning courses but also agreements for placement and study abroad and a final BA thesis with an international comparative perspective on social work, preferably written in English or with an English summary. All together this will facilitate students to develop an international profile in their social work BA programme.

In this report we have presented the results from a survey and phone calls to partner institutions within the SW-VirCamp Consortium undertaken during Spring 2009. The report gives an overview of the conditions needing to be addressed in the respective partner institutions before a Virtual Campus including the international specialization (IS) as an option for students can be realized within the partner institution.

The possibilities for realizing an IS were, in general, positive and 75% of the partner institutions responded that the proposed IS model would be possible to apply. Two partner institutions are ready for this in the short term, another nine partners are able to make it possible in the medium and long term but need to overcome different kind of difficulties. One partner institution would have great difficulties integrating the model into the BA programme.

The main obstacles to setting up the IS, and integrating SW-VirCamp courses into their curricula are, for some of the university partners, related to accreditation of the courses by National Agencies (*P8 HSM, P9 LPA, P7 SWANSEA*). Another obstacle is the national regulations in relation to Higher Education in some countries that do not allow partner institutions to implement 'specializations' at a BA level (*P3 UCM and P4 HHJ*). A third obstacle is the low number of students some partners expect to be interested in an International Specialization (*P8 HSM and P9 LPA*).

Experiences from VIRCLASS shows that it is important for students that the international courses can be integrated into the ordinary BA programme and that all the ECTS credits gained from the courses are counted in their Social Work Education.

The proposed IS model suggests that a 30 ECTS credits e-learning course will be integrated into the BA programme as optional courses for students. At the moment

these course includes the two VIRCLASS modules in Comparative Social Work (5 and 10 ECTS credits) and the new Community Work module (15 ECTS credits). These courses will be arranged during the Spring term, for students in their second or third year of study.

To increase the international profile even more we suggest that students joining the e-learning courses also take their practice placement abroad and if possible also include a period of study abroad. All partner institutions have one or two practice periods in the BA programme, albeit of different length and different number of ECTS credits. Partner institutions are not asked to make any changes in the length of their practice period, but to make a commitment to arranging practice placements for incoming students.

Most of the BA programmes end their study programme with a final BA thesis. The number of ECTS credits allocated for this differs among the partner institutions. The suggested IS does not request partner institutions to make any changes in the number of ECTS credits but students who will take the IS will write their final thesis in an international comparative perspective on social work using their experiences from their international studies, practice and contacts with students and teachers from other countries.

The survey data shows that the strength of our Consortium is highly developed competences in ICT, e-teaching and the development of e-learning courses and virtual learning material. The computer facilities are also good, however better access to computers for students in evening and weekends needs to be improved in some of the institutions.

Another strength in our Consortium is the long lasting experience of collaboration among the partner institutions including a common administration of e-learning courses and a financial model, and good experience with collaboration among teachers and staff involved in the project.

Challenges that have to be addressed before realization of the Virtual Campus with and IS.

Due to national regulations on Higher Education in some countries two of the partner institutions are not allowed to implement a “specialization” at a BA level (*P3 UCM and P4 HHJ*). It has to be investigated if this is a question of terminology that cannot be used or if it is the possibility of offering students optional courses that is a national obstacle.

P7 SWANSEA, is not able at all to implement one of the aspects of the presented model. UK universities are not in the position of an autonomously redirecting their curriculum because of National Agency regulations.

For the Consortium to be able to keep P7 SWANSEA as a partner institution in future a suggestion can be to offer an associated partnership. In this way they can offer their students to take part in SW-VirCamp programmes, and in return they offer their services (teaching, tutoring etc) to the SW-VirCamp programme. A solution like this might require legal advice.

The development of the curricula in our VIRCLASS/ SW-VirCamp courses is in line with the Bologna criteria. Some academic partners have still a way to go with their own BA programmes before this is clear. This can cause problems in our cooperation, and has to be solved in the near future by these partners (deadline Bologna is 2012).

The problems faced are: partner without a competence based curriculum (*P8 HSM*), partner with a BA programme less than 180 ECTS credits (*P9 LPA*), partners with different standards of hours per ECTS credits than recommended in the Bologna agreement.

The fact that the length of the BA programme differs among partner institution from 3 to 4 year demands special concern when planning the future arrangement of practice placements/study abroad exchange.

The current situation that *P9 LPA* is represented with the social pedagogy programme and not the social work programme needs to be addressed. We hope this partner will also be able to involve staff and students from the social work programme in the coming year.

A future model for administration and finance of a Virtual Campus will be made and have to take into account the differences in the way the different study programmes are financed today. This is however a specific task for another work package (WP4).

A strategy for monitoring the process towards decisions among partner institutions before the end of this project period will be developed. Partners will be asked to make a plan for their internal strategy towards an implementation of the Virtual Campus. The report will be sent to partners and be a tool for discussion for solutions toward the final goal.

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ANNEX I: ONLINE SURVEY

ANNEX II: PHONE INTERVIEW

ANNEX III: SWOT ANALYSIS