

# Programme

for

## Student Involvement and Student Exchange in the E-CLIC Project

## Introduction:

As written in our application, the element “Student Exchange” is an important part of the whole project E-CLIC. The aim with the student involvement in E-CLIC is to gain access to high quality education, get assessment and assistance to innovation projects, participate in top projects and create a close connection for students to companies and industry.

One of the basic components of WP 2 is to create and manage a program for student involvement and student exchange. The exchange of experiences between students, universities and industry and the virtual and physical exchange of students/talents/ teachers are part of WP 3, 4 and 5. Furthermore, the project teams, working in the eight E-CLIC centres throughout the North Sea Region are to be “formed by students, academic staff and young entrepreneurs”.

Young entrepreneurs can bring in their own business development projects to be worked out by the teams and “this will create an opportunity for students to gain experience in working on real problems in a real-world environment. Most important, “the transnational dimension will be strengthened by exchanging students and employees in addition to collaboration and research on development projects.”

What we have achieved is a platform for student involvement by signing bilateral agreements in the framework of the Erasmus Programme of the European Commission between the participating universities (Boras University, Stavanger University, Groningen University, Hanze University for Applied Sciences, HOWEST, Jade University Wilhelmshaven, Karlstad University).

We have exchanged the information on English taught courses (Master and Bachelor studies) between all the universities mentioned above, to enable students to visit other universities for a complete exchange programme of one or two semesters. But this was in fact not the aim of the E-CLIC student exchange. In E-CLIC students should have the opportunity to work together during shorter periods, collaborate with industries and be in touch with their counterparts in the other countries to work on innovative ideas, turning them into real projects and business models, services or prototypes. The aim of E-CLIC was to create an inspiring international learning environment for students and teachers and to collaborate with companies to bridge the gap between academia and the business world.

One of the lessons learnt in E-CLIC was that this is impossible under the given circumstances – the Bologna treaty has actually not changed a lot for student mobility. The aim is to give greater access to learning or employment opportunities in different countries and encourage greater mobility – for individuals, businesses and other organisations. There are several related initiatives to help make qualifications, experiences and skills better appreciated and easier to recognise throughout the EU But the crucial point are the different academic calendars in the participating countries. As long as these are not congruent, exchange of students and collaboration with their fellow students or companies in another country on a short term base is not feasible. The start dates of a study vary from country to country, e.g. in the Netherlands student can only enrol for 1 September, in Germany they start either in April or in October, in Stavanger the semester starts in January and August. But there is more: holiday seasons vary a lot, as well as the exam periods, or periods for internships. For instance if

students of the University of Stavanger would like to co-operate with their fellow students on a business case at the University of Groningen in May, they wouldn't be able to do so, because the month of May and first week of June is the exam period in Stavanger. A visit in June would not be feasible either, because the Groningen students prepare themselves for their exams then which will take place in the last week of June and first three weeks in July. This is a holiday period in Stavanger.

During the course of E-CLIC partners had to rethink and to redesign this important part of the project completely. We started to create smaller events especially for student participation, or made use of on-going big events like the CEBIT in Hanover to combine this with a student exchange of 3-4 days. Even that was not easy, given the different academic calendars as described above. The new planning had effects on the travel budgets as well as on the way of co-operation between the students. A few examples:

### **Pointed actions:**

The Entrepreneurship Week in Stavanger took place 12-16 October 2009 with student and company involvement. 47 students participated in the entrepreneurship week, 14 of them were students from other partner regions. The students got certain assignments to work on during the week based on the work packages within E-CLIC. The students came up with highly inventive presentations at the end of this week at the University of Stavanger. A similar entrepreneurship week is planned to be held next year. The lesson learned from the week is that the student exchange must work better next time. Students from Groningen have evaluated the student exchange at Stavanger and the result is uploaded on the platform. One conclusion from the report is that the students need to have common tasks to achieve an improved exchange.

The idea with common tasks to achieve an improved exchange was adopted at the CeBIT Trade Fair conference in Hannover 2-6 March 2010. 28 participating students were divided into four international teams to produce films about innovation. The task was to research a field of interest on the CeBIT and find out all about the latest innovations. Then develop, based on these innovations, a new product or business idea that uses as many aspects of the E-CLIC subjects as possible. This was carried out with success and the students came back with brilliant cases, based on new technologies seen at CeBIT. The four teams wrote reports on their findings and these product or business ideas will later be described in Case Studies in E-CLIC's different work packages. The student involvement resulted in the establishment of a communication platform, <http://e-clic-tv.ning.com>, where students can easily connect to each other and discuss their assignments. This will be used for all further student exchange activities.

Collaborations between E-CLIC Värmland, E-CLIC Groningen, E-CLIC Kortrijk and E-CLIC Norfolk concerning exchange of students and teachers have been carried out with success between the Universities. For the Agile project, a teacher from Hanze University Groningen is in contact with a teacher from the partner Karlstad University to collaborate and exchange knowledge about scrum. (The teacher from Karlstad University is an expert on scrum.) In January the teacher from Karlstad University came to Groningen to lead a workshop, which

was very successful. In the student evaluation the workshop scored three 8's and nine 9's (on scale 1-10)! As a follow up, a collaboration project, in which students from both partners will be involved, will be started in September. During the visit of the teacher from Karlstad University a new project was investigated on WP3 about E-Readers. The project will be started as collaboration between Karlstad and Groningen in the middle of 2010. More teacher exchanges are planned between Hanze University and Karlstad University, for instance in the field of testing. The partners will discuss the possibilities for future collaboration and exchange students and teachers.

E-CLIC Hannover intends to design the virtual extension of Planet MID, a place in cyberspace where students and faculty members can meet and cooperate. In order to achieve this goal, several approaches were considered and tested in prototype systems. A group of students designed the virtual extension of the Planet MID on a Second Life island that was acquired. The virtual Planet MID in Second Life was presented on two occasions at public events. There, it was successfully used to attract young people to get interested in studying information management at the University. Several students have been active in the work done so far. The different approaches were executed by advanced students. For the Second Life prototype, a group of fifteen undergraduate students collaborated in a joint design effort. The system has reached a stage of development where other groups can use the Second Life island as a platform for communication. It is planned to make information about this work package available to other E-CLIC partners.

E-CLIC Hannover and E-CLIC Rogaland have met and discussed cooperation with the E-CLIC e-learning WP-project "Web based bachelor degree in nursing" that is run by the University of Stavanger. The delegation from Hannover got an introduction in the application design. Contacts with the Media Lab of the University of Stavanger have been established for a potential collaboration with the University of Applied Science and Arts Hannover.

The E-CLIC Kortrijks incubator The Studios knows how important it is for students to open their minds and widen their borders. E-CLIC gives Howest the opportunity to expose students and staff at Howest to international speakers and students – and ideas. This is essential to the process of becoming entrepreneurial and to thinking more broadly, which is often required when it comes to starting up a creative business. The lesson being that there is more than one way to do things and that we can learn a lot from each other – all over the world. In America, entrepreneurship is so much more advanced and accepted than here in Belgium and in Europe. Why is that? Fear, rigid systems, provincial mentalities, etc... It's good to be able to expose young people to other ideas. Exchange is so important and that's why we at The Studios stay in touch with the international department at Howest to see what opportunities there are abroad for Howest students and for international students that want to study at Howest.

As we have unfortunately seen with E-CLIC so far, it is very complex to set up exchanges no thanks to varying academic calendars, rules, grading systems and also lack of interest by students, even when the opportunities are served to them on silver platters. We all need to keep trying to foster these exchanges but we can't be surprised by the ones that don't work out.

## **Long-term actions:**

The E-CLIC partnership work to establish a transnational exchange and collaboration between Universities in different regions and in diverse fields, both on bachelor and master levels. Agreements have already been set up between some of the University partners for student exchange, and more agreements are in progress. One problem, however, is the differences between countries concerning when semesters start, etc., but for the future the Erasmus agreements may be an important step for the possibility of student exchange between the E-CLIC centres.

Whenever possible we look for a transnational angle in our E-CLIC activities. It is often difficult to travel to use other centres facilities. We therefore try to work transnationally using the modern communications tools available. We have tried using Skype during the project time with mixed results and we are experimenting further with other virtual solutions.

## **Further work:**

The already exciting student involvement and exchange will continue through the project time. The ambition is that student exchange between University partners (Erasmus exchanges or similar) will continue to be a goal, but it is viewed as long term ambition. The successful student exchange in Hannover at CeBIT 2010, where E-CLIC Hannover set up the social network “Ning” for the virtual exchange, will give the students an improved opportunity for communication and planning. The student exchange at CeBIT 2010 is a good example of how meeting in real life can inspire a further virtual exchange, something that is central in the whole E-CLIC project. The work with the communication platform will continue and a similar CeBIT student innovation workshop is planned to be held next year. Also the entrepreneurship week is planned to become a regular event.

The E-CLIC official website will be improved, to inspire students and to improve the students' possibilities to an insight on ongoing case studies and updated news. The use of New Media, as Facebook, Twitter and WordPress give E-CLIC more chance to gain more fans and friends.

Students are and will continue to be involved in the various ongoing/future WP-projects and case studies in the different E-CLIC centres. In those cases where the WP-projects are transnational also a student exchanges takes place, virtually and/or physically. This is a student involvement that is direct or indirect preparing students to become efficient entrepreneurs in the near future.