

A First Introduction to the *WISHEs*-Project – *Web-based Information- and Community-Platform for International Students in Higher Education: Erasmus Complete (WISHEs)*

1. Executive summary

- Aim of the *WISHEs*-Project: To set up *Erasmus Complete* the web-based Information- and Community-Platform for international students in higher education
- Project Proposal to be submitted within: *Erasmus Mundus Action 4 (EMA 4)* Call for Proposals
- Deadline of the *EMA 4* Call for Proposals: 31st of May 2008
- Consortium until today
 - o *University of Paderborn, Germany*
 - o *Ondokuz Mayıs University, Samsun, Turkey*
 - o *Haute École de la Province Liège, Belgium*
 - o *University of Algarve in Faro, Portugal*
 - o *Tomas Bata University in Zlin, Czech Republic*
 - o *Academy of Business in Dąbrowa Górnicza, Poland*
 - o *Saint Petersburg State University of Service and Economy, Russia*
- Scheduled duration of the project: November 2008 until October 2011
- Coordinating Institution: *University of Paderborn, Department of Business Computing, Prof. Dr. Leena Suhl*
- Contact and further details: Michael Steinmann (Michael.Steinmann@wiwi.uni-paderborn.de)

2. Detailed information

Higher education becomes more and more international: Whereas in 2004 2.4 mio students studied abroad, an amount of 7.2 mio international students is expected for the year 2025. [Eurodata] At the same time, the most comprehensive study about international education (ACA-Study) pinpoints that Europe did not reach its potential market share of international students so far. [ACA] This is stated to be partly due to the lack of structured information. Therefore, the measures implemented within the course of the *Lisbon Strategy* since 2000 and the *Bologna Process* since 1999 could not totally unfold their impacts. On the other hand, there are plenty of positive pre-requisites such as the harmonization of the European higher education area. This harmonization becomes more and more perceptible all over Europe as it can for instance be seen in the raise of the Bachelor- and Master-System. However, at the same time competition for high caliber students from all over the world tightens: In order to be able to persist within this competition every single higher education institution needs to increase its visibility as well as to position itself clearly.

Within this context the *WISHEs*-Project is situated which is coordinated by the *University of Paderborn, Germany*. Figure 1 points out which aims the project pursues and what outputs it produces.

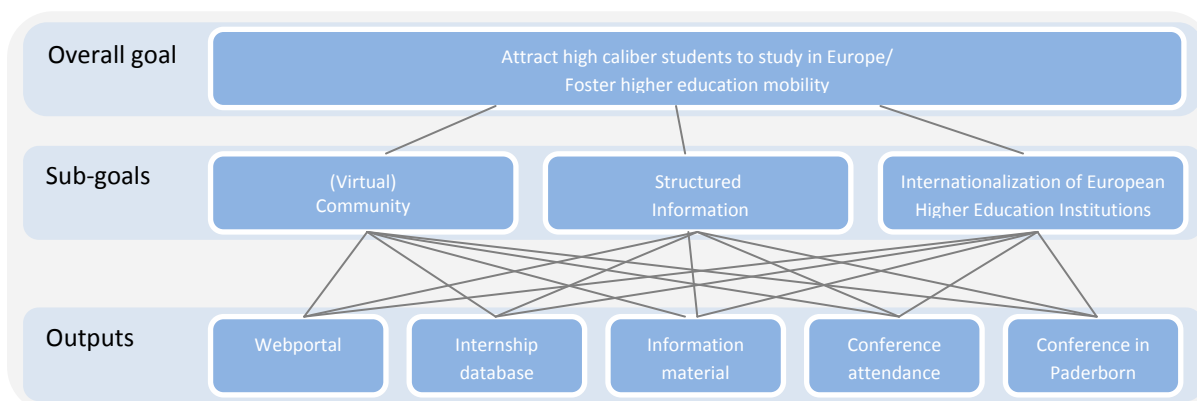


Figure 1: Overall goal, sub-goals and outputs of the *WISHEs*-Project [own Figure]

As it can be seen in figure 1 the *WISHEs*-Project pursues – as an ambitious, innovative and international IT- and social networking project – the overall goal to attract high caliber students to study in Europe as well as to

foster higher education mobility. At its core, the project consists of a centralized – and therefore comparable – presentation of the European higher education institutions tailored to the needs of the international students: The *web-based Information- and Community-Platform Erasmus Complete* which integrates the students' as well as of the institutions' points of view. So to speak, the *WISHes-Project* follows a top-down as well as a bottom-up approach taking the wide influence of the peer-students on the individual choice of higher education institution into consideration – which is so far barely taken heed of [ACA]. Technically, this interactive presentation of the European and selected third country higher education institutions is enabled by innovative means of the *Web 2.0-Standard* creating a virtual community. This community on the one hand supports the social coherence and the knowledge transfer between the international students in the various phases of going abroad – before, during and after the period of time spend abroad. On the other hand this virtual community sets *Erasmus Complete* apart from its competitors as only *Erasmus Complete* offers as a unique selling point (USP) valuable information plus direct contacts towards peer-students.

As a result the higher education institution's presentation within *Erasmus Complete* gains the reputation and credibility which the official website – due to its PR nature – does not contain per se. Therefore, *Erasmus Complete* offers on the one hand new marketing opportunities for the higher education institution enabling them to directly promote themselves to the international students as well as new networking possibilities within the European higher education area. On the other hand it improves the social coherence in Europe and makes it easier for the international students to choose the perfect higher education institution for their semester abroad leading to a better match between students and higher education institution.

The implementation of the *WISHes-Project* is scheduled to last three years and is planned to be financed by public funding: Therefore, the consortium is going to submit a proposal within the *Erasmus Mundus Action 4* Call for Proposals. The major goal of the *Erasmus Mundus Action 4* Programme is to enhance the attractiveness of Europe as a higher education destination which is equivalent to the core intent of the *WISHes-Project*. The geographically well distributed project consortium consists – besides the *University of Paderborn* – so far of the *Tomas Bata University* in Zlín / Czech Republic, the *Academy of Business* in Dąbrowa Górnicza / Poland, the *University of Algarve* in Faro / Portugal, the *Haute École de la Province Liège* / Belgium, the *Ondokuz Mayıs University* in Samsun / Turkey as well as of the *Saint Petersburg State University of Service and Economy* in Saint Petersburg / Russia. At the *University of Paderborn* the *Department of Business Computing*, the *Department of Media Science*, the *International office* and the *Uniconsult*, the Technology- and Knowledge transfer at the *University of Paderborn* are already committed within the *WISHes-Project*.

Additionally, the *web-based Information- and Community-Platform Erasmus Complete* is – due to various presentation – already known and supported by plenty of European higher education institutions and will be presented within the *Erasmus Coordinator Conference 2008 (EraCon 2008)* in Portugal in May 2008 as well as in the *EAIE Conference 2008* of the *European Association for International Education (EAIE)* in September 2008 in Belgium – as only a raise in publicity and a continuous presence within the topic of international education enable the implementation of this ambitious project.

The positive feedback the idea of such a web-based Information and Community-Platform received in the course of various presentations can be seen as a proof for the need of such a platform – expressed not only by the students but also by plenty of institutions. In particular, since the presentation of *Erasmus Complete* within European conferences on international education – in Vilnius / Lithuania (EraCon 2007) as well as in Trondheim / Norway (EAIE 2007) – the numbers of interested institutions are raising. Furthermore, first cooperating partners have been won: The *Erasmus Student Network (ESN)* – which is in direct contact to 150.000 students – for instance is a guarantor for the necessary collegiate activity.

To sum it all up, the *web-based Information- and Community-Platform Erasmus Complete* means for the supporting institutions not only new marketing and networking opportunities, but proves that the presented institutions are at the cutting edge in the field of connecting higher education with information technology. Therefore, the *WISHes-Project* provides a powerful tool to support the internationalization of each higher education institution by raising its visibility and thus increasing its performance.

[ACA] Academic Cooperation Association (ACA): **Perceptions of European higher education in Third Countries**. 2006. Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/acareport.pdf>, last retrieved on 10th January 2008.

[Eurodata] Kelo, M; Teichler, U. and Wächter, B. (eds.): **EURODATA – Student mobility in European higher education**. Lemmens, Bonn, 2006.