



SOCIAL WORK-VIRCAMP CONSORTIUM

YEAR REPORT 2014-2015

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INTRODUCTION

SW-VirCamp is a consortium of 6 universities and university colleges from 6 European countries at present that specialise in offering online courses in the field of social work.

The SW-VirCamp consortium organises three online courses for Bachelor students in Social Work.

- Social Work in Europe (5 ECTS)
- Comparative Social Work (10 ECTS)
- Community Work from an International Perspective (15 ECTS)

For lecturers, there is a possibility to apply for an E-pedagogy course (10 ECTS) to become a trained e-teacher. Teachers in the SW-VirCamp courses have succeeded this course.

SW-VirCamp will be further developed as a Virtual Campus. To do so, the partners continually apply for grants within the existing possibilities. In September 2015 partners start planning an Erasmus+ project to develop a learning and practice community on e-learning. The aim is to broaden the activities to field partners and research.

In this year report, an overview of the VirCamp activities is presented for the academic year 2014/2015. This covers the activities for the period 21/09/2014 until 20/09/2015.

First the status of the VirCamp is described with a description of the partners. Main part of this report will present the main activity of VirCamp, namely the educational programmes organised the past year. For each module information is given about the course, the students, the evaluation and assessment results. At the end of this part, an overall evaluation is presented with points of attention regarding all the modules. To run the VirCamp courses, human and financial means are necessary. An overview is given about the staff involved, the invested hours in workshare and the account and budget. In addition a brief overview of other activities is presented. We end this year report with the future plans of the consortium.

STATUS OF THE VIRCAMP CONSORTIUM

CONSORTIUM PARTNERS

PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

Thomas More University College - Geel - Belgium (TM)

Bergen University College – Bergen – Norway (HIB)

Inholland University of Applied Sciences – Haarlem – Netherlands (INH)

Complutense University – Madrid – Spain (UCM)

Mannheim University of Applied Sciences – Mannheim – Germany (HSMA)

ASSOCIATED PARTNERS

Lund University – Lund – Sweden (LU)

RESIGNING PARTNERS

Mittweida University of Applied Science – Mittweida – Germany (HSM)

University of Nordland – Bodø– Norway (UIN)

COMMENT

The past year two partners left the consortium. Both struggled to integrate the VirCamp courses in their curriculum. This resulted in just a few students applying for the courses. Both representatives were convinced of the opportunities for students and University being part of this consortium, but couldn't find sufficient support within their organisations.

As mentioned in the former report, the representative of Malawi has passed away in 2013. Different attempts to renew contacts were not successful.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES

During the study year 2014/15, four modules have been organised by the SW-VirCamp Consortium: Module 1, Module 2, Module 3 and the E-pedagogy course.

MODULE 1 SOCIAL WORK IN EUROPE

DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE

This is a 5 ECTS credits course about general social work aspect. Module 1 focuses on basic knowledge about social problems occurring in Europe. The module starts with how to do comparative studies in international social work. Students describe, analyse and compare living conditions and the social problems in different European countries, and how they are met in social work. Students explore commonalities and differences in welfare systems and social policies, and how these may affect social work and social work education, related to one of the following themes they chose to work on: child welfare, elderly care or drug abuse to concretize the context of social work in at least two other countries than their own.

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Table 1 – Amount of students per HEI - Module 1

HEI/YEAR	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
HIB	1	1	0	4	7
TM	4	9	5	7	18
UCM	11	5	2	12	17
HSMA	7	1	3	7	5
INH	12	10	8	7	15
HM ¹	0	0	0	5	1
ISMT ²	7	0	0	0	0
Total	42	26	18	42	63

¹ For the years 2010 until 2012, the German students were not registered separately between HSMA and HM

² ISMT: Until 2010, the University Miguel Torga, Coimbra, Portugal was member of the VirCamp consortium

Like every year, the course started in the beginning of Autumn semester. The 7 weeks course started 22 September 2014 and ended 17 November 2014.

Table 1 gives an overview of students during the past 5 years. This year 63 students took part in this course. Never before the course had so many students. All partners were able to deliver students. Some Universities promote this course as an option for incoming students to complete the ECTS credits for their study abroad. In this course TM had 2 Turkish students and 3 German students and UCM had 2 German students. It was possible to build a strong international group of students. This is a key success factor for 'comparative learning', one of the core learning principles in the course.

In module 1 Jochen Peter (HSMA) has been head teacher. Teachers in this course were: Jurgen Basstanie (TM), Inger Kristin Heggadalsvik HIB), Sinnika Gusset Baehrer (HSMA) and Barbara Wedler (HM). Gudrun Ehlert acted as external assessor.

RESULTS OF THE FINAL ASSIGNMENT

The final assignment in M1 is a combination of tasks done during the course. Of the 63 students who started, 50 students passed the exam and 4 failed for their first chance. 9 students did not submit their exam. The marks given on a scale from A-F (F is failure) were: 2A, 18B, 23C, 3D, 4E, 4F.

4 student took a re-examination. All of them passed: 2D and 2E.

EVALUATION

The first part of this evaluation is based on the survey at the end of the course. The questions in the survey are based on the quality standards, formulated in the quality guide. Students are asked to fill in the online survey at the end of the course. The response on this survey was 44,4% (N=63, n=28).

Students are positive about the learning material: lectures, triggers and readings. They find the feedback helpful (89,3%) and constructive (92,8%). Most of the students would recommend the course to their fellow students (92,8%).

Although in general, students are positive about the learning material, they are more critical to the reading list. They find this demanding and 46,5% do not find the readings inspiring to realise tasks and assignments. Almost 25% of the students find the task instructions not clear.

Teachers also were asked to evaluate the course. They had a discussion in the teacher meeting. Positive this year was that students were divided into groups in the beginning of the course. For the first time, students were asked to make their theme choice before the start of the course. In this way, it was possible to divide the groups at the beginning of the course. This was positive in building up the contact with the students. Especially in the short period this course runs it was not good to re-install the groups after a few weeks. The decision to start with fixed groups from the beginning was a proposal out of the evaluation of the past year.

This year two new teachers entered the course. It was not possible to make duos with a more experienced teacher in the course and a new comer like we did before, due to the amount of students and the available staff. Still it is important to guide new teachers into the course.

To have the course ready in the learning platform turns out to be difficult. After the teacher meeting in June, holidays starts in different time periods for the teachers.

Since a few years now, the course is build up on 3 topics: elderly care, child welfare and drug abuse. It would be good to introduce the themes with a screen lecture. At the moment, the time schedule of teachers does not allow the teachers to make a screen lecture, but the idea can be worked out later.

MODULE 2: COMPARATIVE SOCIAL WORK. SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICES IN SOCIAL WORK

DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE

This module allows students to understand commonalities and differences in terms of how societies marginalise certain groups of people. In what way are social work theories and methods suitable to deal with questions concerning discrimination and oppression. In some places anti-discriminatory practice has come to be seen as integral to good social practice; in other words, one cannot have good social work practice without it. But how far is this reflected in the reality of everyday practice, and to what extent are students given the knowledge and skills they need to practice it? The module demonstrates that discrimination and oppression are not homogenous concepts but focus on different target groups in various ways, and therefore are different in their manifestations in relation to these groups. A range of disadvantaged groups will be considered, but particular emphasis will be put on cultural and ethnic diversity, and racism. The implications of discrimination and oppression of marginalised groups for European social welfare and social work will be considered.

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Table 2 – Amount of students per HEI - Module 2

HEI/YEAR	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
HIB	0	1	0	4	7
TM	0	6	3	5	23
UCM	5	9	2	3	8
HSMA	1	0	1	0	2
INH	2	1	0	0	0
HM	0	0	0	0	0
ISMT ¹	1	0	0	0	0
Total	9	17	6	12	40

¹ ISMT: Until 2010, the University Miguel Torga, Coimbra, Portugal was member of the VirCamp consortium

The course started 10 November 2014, with a duration of 11 weeks until 9 February 2015.

It is clear that the amount of students was extraordinary high this year. A combination of factors in Thomas More created this situation. Positive promotion by students taking this course during the last years and a high amount of students in practice placement abroad that were strongly advised to take this course resulted in this high number of TM students. 1 student of UCM was an incoming student of Germany. It is clear that the high number of TM students created difficulties. The high workload for two teachers made it difficult to give feedback and follow up students in the way it is used to be. The preponderance of TM students made the experience less international than expected.

Fernando de Lucas (UCM) has been head teacher and teacher. Remmelt Veenkamp (INH) was teacher. Gudrun Ehlert (HM), Katrien Vereilst (TM) and Tabitha Wright Nielsen (LU) acted as external assessors.

RESULTS OF THE FINAL ASSIGNMENT

To finish M2, students have to deliver a portfolio exam. Tasks students have been working on during the course are assessed. 38 students passed the exam in the first chance, 2 failed and 2 did not submit their final assignment. The marks given on a scale from A-F (F is fail) were 12A, 9B, 10C, 4D, 1 E and 2F. 3 students had a re-examination. They all passed: 1B, 1C, 1E.

EVALUATION

The first part of this evaluation is based on the survey at the end of the course. The questions in the survey are based on the quality standards, formulated in the quality guide. Students are asked to fill in the online survey at the end of the course. The response on this survey was 47,5% (N=40, n=19).

The amount of students that would recommend the course to fellow students is 78%. This is still a good figure, but usually the score on this item is more than 90% in other courses. The fact that there was less mix of students with different nationalities was disappointing for some students.

Although teachers struggled with the big groups, most of the students found feedback helpful to improve their work (82,3%) and constructive (88,9%). 50% of the respondents don't agree that the reading list motivates them to realise tasks and assignments.

For most of the students, the planning of this course is not congruent with the semester system. This means that the course interrupts with an exam period. This gives problems for students in planning their tasks. Students that took module 1 before, noticed that the structure is quite different than what they are used to.

Out of the evaluation teachers involved in this course and the exchange with teachers in the other modules, the following suggestions for the future are formulated. The students need to be more focused on the readings and it has to be clearer that the readings have to be used in tasks. Students struggle with discerning between descriptive writing and argumentative writing. The use of model answers can be helpful in this. It is important to be present in chat sessions and theme discussions. And the structure must be set up more in line with the other modules.

MODULE 3 COMMUNITY WORK FROM AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE

Module 3 is a 15 ECTS course. The theme of the course is 'Community Work from an international perspective'. Community work is a planned process to mobilize communities to use their own social structures and resources to address their own problems and achieve their own objectives. Community work focuses on participation and fosters empowerment, emancipation and change through collective action. Community work is closely related to work for human rights. The community work process is about people in communities creating opportunities for growth and change. The course focuses on different theories, methods and approaches in community work from an international perspective, and consists of several parts. One part focuses on theories and methods, another part consist of a case-study related to a virtual case. Students make a project plan related to the case, by collaborating and comparing different approaches. The students learn about community work and its historic background and come to understand the risk of manipulation when community work is not worked out from a grass-root level. Students also learn about the advantages and power in approaches carried out from a bottom-up perspective. One of the main aims of the course is that students develop a critical understanding of the wide range of theories and methods of community work, develop the ability to recognize these in current projects and are able to design a project plan of community work, and show which steps and facilities are needed for realizing and managing processes and products.

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

The course started 26 January 2014, with a duration of 18 weeks until 1 June 2015.

Table 3 – Amount of students per HEI - Module 3

HEI/YEAR	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
HIB	0	14	0	3	2
TM	9	12	9	7	8
UCM	10	3	3	18	5
HSMA	3	5	1	6	6
INH	2	3	0	0	3
HHJ ¹	1	0	0	0	0
HM	0	0	0	1	0
UIN	12	14	5	0	0
Total	37	51	18	35	24

¹ In the year 2011 the School of Health Sciences, Jönköping was an associated partner in the VirCamp consortium

As shown in the table the amount of students varies every year. In the first years, the University of Nordland brought in a lot of students, most of them incoming from Russia, Malawi and Canada. In 2014 this was compensated by a large amount of students from UCM. The past year, we had a balance between the different partner institutions. Thomas More has sent 6 incoming students, 3 of them Lithuanian, 2 German students and 1 student from Finland.

Rina Visser (external teacher) has been head teacher. Teachers in this course were Anne Karen Larsen (HIB), Carmen Arenas Carbelido (external teacher), Bieke Dierckx (TM) and Asgeir Solstad (UIN). Gudrun Ehlert (HM) and David Alonso (UCM) acted as external assessors.

RESULTS OF THE FINAL ASSIGNMENT

To finish module 3, students have to deliver a portfolio exam. Tasks students have been working on during the course are assessed. Part of the task is a group task. 22 students passed the exam in the first chance, 1 failed and 1 did not submit their final assignment. The marks given on a scale from A-F (F is fail) were 7A, 3B, 8C, 3D, 1E and 1F. 2 students had a re-examination. One passed the re-exam with an E and 1 student failed again.

EVALUATION

The first part of this evaluation is based on the survey at the end of the course. The questions in the survey are based on the quality standards, formulated in the quality guide. Students are asked to fill in the online survey at the end of the course. The response on this survey was 70,8% (N=24, n=17). Compared with the two other modules, the response is very good.

What strikes immediately is the 100% of students that would recommend the course to fellow students. Regarding the learning material, students are very positive about the case. 76,4% says that feedback is helpful and 82,3% of the respondents thinks that feedback is given in a constructive way. As reported last year, we had to change a big part of the literature. This was a lot of work for teachers and head teacher, because also a lot of task descriptions also need adjustments. As a point of attention in the evaluation of the past year, also a new format for the project plan that students have to make, based on the case, was developed. Regarding the new reading list, 41,2% of the students find this not easy to understand. Nevertheless 88,2% of the students find the reading list inspiring and motivating to realise tasks and assignments. Compared with the other modules, this is a very good score. The changes in the reading list have been successful.

E-PEDAGOGY

DESCRIPTION OF THE COURSE

Lifelong learning is an important objective for the EU educational systems and for labour mobility in Europe. A tool for LLL is e-learning methodology that makes it possible for professionals to increase their knowledge as part time students.

Being an e-teacher demands specific skills and competences in pedagogy related to supervising students on the Internet. One needs an explicit knowledge of how to structure the learning material to make a suitable and inspiring learning environment for e-learning students.

This course promotes and strengthens the participants' skills in teaching, supervising, planning and organising good e-learning courses in a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

The E-pedagogy is organised if needed, especially to increase the amount of teachers that can be involved in the different modules. One of the quality standards is that teachers involved in VirCamp modules have followed the E-pedagogy course. The course is open and free of charge for teachers in the department of Social Work from the partner institutions. Applicants from other departments or outside the consortium pay a fee. This year 5 participants of HIB from other departments joined the course. At the start 6 participants related to the VirCamp consortium applied: 1 TM, 1 HSMA, 1 HIB, 1UIN, 1 UCM, 1 INH. Three students dropped out during the course, because they could not combine this with their regular workload. At the end, 8 students ended the course.

Grete Oline Hole (external teacher) was teacher and head teacher in this course. Wim Wouters (TM) has been teacher. Ingeborg Van Delst acted as external assessor.

Results of the final assignment

One of the main tasks in the final assignment is that participants present a part of an online course on a chosen theme. Besides this, some tasks out of the portfolio have to be send in as final assignment. 7 students passed the exam in the first chance, 1 did not submit his final assignment in time and asked for a delayed exam. The marks given on a scale from A-F (F is fail) were 1A, 5B, 1C.

EVALUATION

At the end of the course, students are asked to contribute in a survey. Only 3 of 8 students respond on the survey. This makes it difficult to draw conclusions. One of the three respondents had other expectations of the course. Regarding the tasks, participants say that they trigger learning, are sufficient and feedback from teachers and peers has been helpful. They also feel themselves more competent as e-teacher. All of them would recommend the course to other teachers.

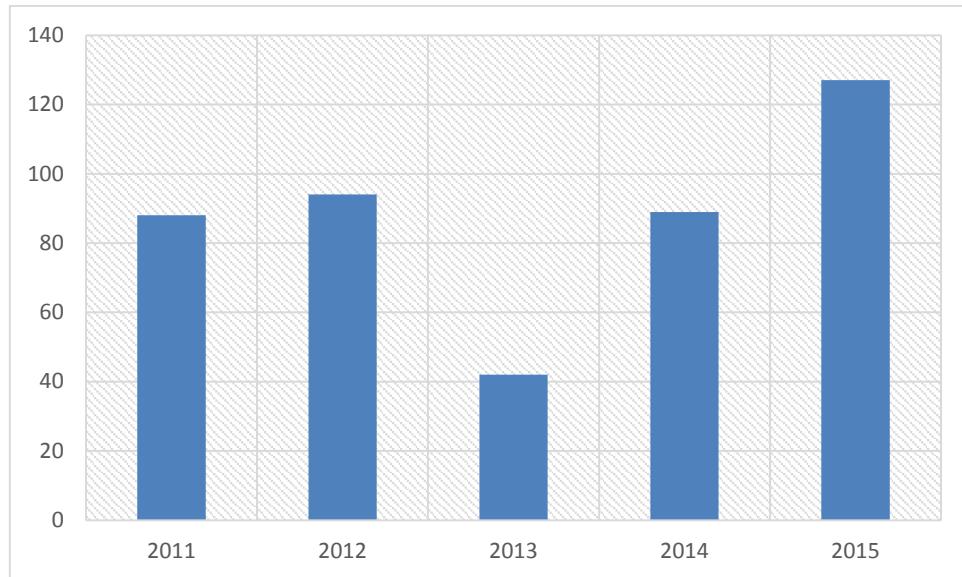
The teachers in the course used for the first time 'hangout' for meetings with students. This was a very positive experience. A remark is that it is not always easy to give feedback to participants that work on a theme not related to the body of knowledge of Social Work. The head teacher looked up specific information to support participants, regarding their specific course topic.

The course is very demanding, especially for the head teacher, to present up to date material in a very evolving theme as e-teaching.

OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE COURSES

STUDENTS

Graphic 1 –Overview of students M1, M2, M3- 2011/2015



As shown in the graphic above the amount of students participating in the VirCamp courses reached the highest number in 2015, although some partners left the consortium during the past years. On the one hand this has to do with a more stable integration of the modules in the curricula. But this doesn't mean that this is a stable situation. HEI constantly are under pressure to evaluate their curriculum, according to the demands of work field and developments in society. This means that each year, the curricula, themes and content of VirCamp courses need to be updated and the VirCamp partners must invest in the development of new material and even new courses. Most HEI struggle with a cut in finances and therefore creativity will be necessary to keep HEI engaged in the VirCamp consortium.

EVALUATION

In the yearly teacher meeting, some general actions were formulated regarding all the VirCamp courses.

The first point of attention is the intake procedure. Drop outs in the beginning of the course demands a lot of time and effort from teachers and head teachers. Partner institutions need to support students in the beginning of the course. Home teachers need to have special attention for students in the first week and the teacher(s) will send a mail if problems arise.

Secondly all partners recognise the problems of students regarding academic writing. Complementary to the lecture on academic writing, tutorials on English writing will be made available. All partner institutions are taking action in their programme to deal with this problem. Within the VirCamp consortium, experiences with specific approach and actions can be exchanged.

From this year on, some changes in the assessment were introduced. Teachers are the internal assessors of their own group of students. In each group, some students are assessed by the external assessor up to half of the total group of students. In this way, the assessment feedback is more related to the feedback students get during the course. The external assessment makes it possible to monitor the expected level in all the groups.

Due the high number of students in module 2, the students were only assessed by the external assessors. In future this must be avoided.

WORKSHARE

Table 4 – Overview workshare

Partners	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
HIB	298,5	275	322,5
UCM	409	391	241,5
TM	311	275	445,5
INHOLLAND	249	223	337,5
Mannheim	222	172,5	291
Nordland	347	77	20
Mittweida	127	161	47
VIA	204	127,5	0
Lund	0	30	35
TOTAL	2167,5	1732	1740

Table 4 gives an overview of workshare in the past years. The principle in the consortium agreement is that there is an equal workshare. This is not always possible. Partners institutions need to have the necessary resources. Teachers need to be qualified as e-teachers and the themes of the courses. Some partners invest year after year above the average. Because of this, the Consortium Management Group decided to work on and discuss another way to determine the fee. This will be one of the topics in the next academic year.

STAFF INVOLVED 2014 - 2015

CONSORTIUM MANAGEMENT GROUP

- Ulla Törnig, HSMA (Chairman)
- Knut Simonsen, HiB
- Tinneke de Wit, INH
- Judith Smit, INH
- Marta Blanco Carrasco, UCM
- Jurgen Basstanie, TM
- Tabitha Wright Nielsen, LU

STEERING COMMITTEE

- Wim Wouters (TM) Consortium Coordinator
- Remmelt Veenkamp (INH) Coordinator of Education
- Anne Karin Larsen (HiB) Coordinator of Webportal
- David Alonso (UCM) Coordinator of Development Research.

TEACHERS AND ASSESSORS

	TEACHERS	EXTERNAL ASSESSORS
M1	Jochen Peter (HSMA) <i>Head teacher</i> Inger Kristin Heggdalsvik (HIB) Sinnika Gusset Baehrer (HSMA) Barbara Wedler (HM) David Alonso (UCM)	Gudrun Ehlert (HM)
M2	Fernando de Lucas (UCM) <i>Head teacher</i> Remmelt Veenkamp (INH)	Gudrun Ehlert (HM) Katrien Verelst (TM) Tabitha Wright Nielsen (LU)
M3	Rina Visser (EXT) <i>Head teacher</i> Anne Karin Larsen (HIB) Carmen Arenas Carbelido (EXT) Bieke Dierckx (TM) Asgeir Solstad (UIN)	Gudrun Ehlert (HSMA) David Alonso (UCM)
E-pedagogy	Grete Oline Hole (EXT) <i>Head teacher</i> Wim Wouters (TM)	Ingeborg Van Delst (EXT)

ACCOUNT

VIRCAMP ACCOUNT 2014-2015			
Revenu		Expenditure	
<i>Booked</i>			
Contributions 2013 - 2014	€ 16 500,00	Travelling Geel - Delft	€ 108,89
E-pedagogy	€ 4 800,00	Visit Dolhuys - Haarlem	€ 188,53
		Staff coordinator	€ 17 600,00
		Webhosting	€ 248,50
		Zoonlog	€ 190,00
		Vitero	€ 3 780,00
		E-pedagogy external evaluator	€ 2 100,00
		M3 Extra cost	€ 4 040,00
<i>Expected</i>			
E-pedagogy	€ 1 200,00	Website	1545,66
Contributions	€ 6 600,00	E-pedagogy external teacher	5413,77
Contribution UIN M3	€ 1 050,00		
TOTAL	€ 30 150,00		€ 35 215,35
RESULT 2015	-€ 5 065,35		
SURPLUS 2014	€ 34 630,73		
TOTAL SURPLUS	€ 29 565,38		

ACTIVITIES

MEETINGS

TEACHER MEETINGS

The yearly teacher meeting took place in Haarlem on 01/06/2015 and 02/06/2015.

In all modules, teacher meet only during the course.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The SW-VirCamp Steering Committee (SC) is an executive committee. The SC monitors the Virtual Campus. Decisions about amendments in budget allocations will be taken by the Steering Committee. From this year on, Ulla Törnig, as chairwoman of the VirCamp consortium takes part in the SC meetings.

Besides the daily care about the courses, the main themes on the agenda were: website, future plans for a European strategic partnership, new model of workshare and fee, redefinition of the roles of steering committee members.

The steering committee met 5 times online: 17/10/2015, 13/11/2015, 18/02/2015, 29/04/2015, 15/09/2015. The yearly meeting took place in Haarlem 03/06/2015.

CONSORTIUM MANAGEMENT GROUP

The CMG Meeting is the General Assembly of the Consortium. In order to take decisions on the overall organisation of the Virtual Campus and its activities.

The CMG met 1 time online: 11/12/2014
The yearly meeting took place in Haarlem 04/06/2015.

DISSEMINATION

PRESENTATIONS AT CONFERENCE

Larsen, Anne Karin

Teaching community development within an international context. EASSW Conference in Milan 29/06/2015 - 0/07/2015, SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION IN EUROPE: TOWARDS 2025, Available online:< <http://vircamp.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Teaching-community-development-within-an-international-context.pdf>>

BOOK CHAPTER

Larsen, A. K. & Hole, G.O. (2015)

Study Abroad from Home: VIRCLASS and SW-VirCamp Promoting International (Ex)change in Social Work in Europe, in Elke Kruse (ed.) *Internationaler Austausch in der Sozialen Arbeit, Entwicklungen - Erfahrungen - Erträge*. Springer VS 2015 ISBN 978-3-531-17319-1.

WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK

The VirCamp website has been restyled by the HIB media center. Main reason was that it was not compatible any more with all devices like tablets and smartphones. The website has a more contemporary 'look and feel' now. Some changes in the structure of the website are planned for the coming year. The aim is to improve the structure and see it from the view of one that has no connection with VirCamp and want to know more.

The VirCamp page is not an active page. Until now it has not much added value for the consortium. Therefore, In the coming year, Facebook updates must appear frequent. This is a point of attention for all the steering committee members.

FUTUR PLANS

SW-VirCamp partners want to prepare a Key Action 2 Erasmus+ project for the 2016 call. Complutence University Madrid will take the lead. The overall goal of the project is to increase knowledge, skills and competences on online social work of students, social workers and managers in social work organisations. To achieve this, a programme will be developed and deployed that enables HEI and social work organisations to be in touch with the most innovative tools and good practices for online social work in Europe and worldwide. It will challenge students, social workers and managers in social work organisations to digitalize the social work practice and contribute on innovation and innovative tools working together with technical experts. In this way processes in social work and social work organisations can be more effective and efficient and meet the needs of users and future workers that want to use the existing and future digital possibilities. At the same time it stimulates entrepreneurship and 'out of the box' thinking. New technology always brings up ethical questions and part of the programme therefore needs to focus on tuning social work values and ethics with new technology.