



VERTEBRALCUE
Estado del arte sobre la cooperación en materia de educación superior
Resumen ejecutivo



Program ALFAIII – Lot 2: Structural Projects

Contract n° DCI-ALA/19.09.01/08/19189/161-449/ALFA III-107

Project Title: VertebrALCUE

Deliverable 1.53 Minutes of the Working Meeting (Buenos Aires, Argentina)

Date: 13th and 14th October 2009

Version: Original

Partner Responsible for deliverable:

Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna (UNIBO) – Rep. in Buenos Aires
– Argentina Scierter – Bologna, Italy; UNA- Costa Rica

VERTEBRALCUE WORKING MEETING Buenos Aires, 13th and 14th October, 2009

Minutes

The third meeting of the VertebrALCUE Project was held in Buenos Aires from the 13th to the 14th October, 2009. All partners of the network were present except the University of Coimbra (see Annex 1: List of Participants).

The meeting took place in a friendly environment and showed a high level of commitment by all partners, who actively participated in the working groups and in the plenary debates. This active participation favoured a dynamic exchange of ideas that revealed the progress made in the consolidation of the network since the last working meeting held in Costa Rica.

This report will follow the points indicated in the meeting's agenda (see Annex 2).

Registration and Welcoming address October 13th, 2009 – 8:30 am

Members of the network met for registration and a welcoming address by the Director of the Università di Bologna a Buenos Aires, Prof. Giorgio Alberti, and the Rector of the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica, Dr. Olman Segura Bonilla.

WP2- State of the Art - Conclusions

Following the indication of the agenda, a draft of the State of the Art Report was presented during the first session (see Annex 3 for a executive summary). This presentation was carried out by José María Ghio, Executive Director of VertebrALCUE; Claudio Dondi, president of Scinter; and José Luis Villena Higuera, of the University of Granada. They stressed that the “prospective diagnosis” should be a useful source of ideas for the future constitution of the ALCUE Units.

Claudio Dondi referred to two recently published documents that, according to him, could be relevant for the project. Firstly, a communication of the European Commission to the European Parliament and to the Council, “The European Union and Latin America: Global Players in Partnership”, which aims at fostering the dialogue between both regions in areas considered to be strategic, such as science and technology, among other areas (see Annex 5). The second document included the Conclusions of the Seminar organised by CELARE: “10 years of Strategic Association ALC-EU: evaluation and prospective analysis”, held in the headquarters of ECLAC in Santiago de Chile on October, 2009 (see Annex 6). Both documents were distributed among all partners.

Finally, they pointed out some difficulties emerged in the elaboration of the templates (which form part of the analysis done in the state of the art report) and offered their help to answer to any doubts or questions.

Following this presentation, members of the network divided into three working groups in order to discuss on the conclusions of the State of the Art Report based on a brief document -circulated among the partners some days before the meeting- containing some preliminary conclusions proposed by the coordinators of the WP2 (see Annex 4). In accordance with the thematic division of this summary, each group focused on one of the following topics:

- Group 1: The ALCUE Space for High Education, coordinated by Claudio Dondi; *rapporteur*: Ana María Castro (Universidad de la República);
- Group 2: High Education integration in Latin America, coordinated by Carlos Álvarez Bogantes (Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica); *rapporteur*: Christina Guerrero (ANUIES);
- Group 3: University – Society relationship, coordinated by Ernesto Villanueva, who was also the *rapporteur*;

After the intense debate that took place in each group, the *rapporteur* presented the main conclusions.

Group 1: The ALCUE Space for High Education

Several points were made on the draft document used as a base for group reflections. It was pointed out that the relationship between Europe and Latin America are considered traditionally “asymmetrical”; differences among countries was underlined: some countries receive a strong influence but others show autonomous agendas, not influenced by external actors. In those cases of asymmetries, it is necessary to understand that asymmetry is not an exclusive characteristic of the relationship with Europe, but with many other external actors (other regions, international organisations, etc.). At the same time, asymmetries are not only observed among regions, but also inside each region and each country. They should not however constitute an obstacle to academic cooperation

Two interacting dimensions should be seen in Europe-Latin American relationship: the academic one and the political one. Some cases of influence of the political dimension in the academic one were mentioned, while it was stated that it was necessary to consolidate the other direction of this interaction: the influence of academia in politics. In this sense, the project “bottom up” approach was considered a step forward to this consolidation.

On the need of promoting both Latin American education integration and Europe-Latin American education integration it was stated that both processes should run in parallel, no one was a condition for the other one.

Finally, it was agreed that references should be made in the conclusions of the State of the Art Report about the existence and current work of ENLACES and to declarations done by CRES (UNESCO, Cartagena, June 2008)¹ and the World Conference on Higher Education and Research (UNESCO, Paris, July 2009)..

Group 2: High Education integration in Latin America

The discussion focused on the heterogeneity of the higher education institutions (HEI) in Latin America and the obstacles they face for carrying out a real integration. It was stated that, in order to understand the existing heterogeneity among them, a definition about “what a HEI is” is more and more needed. This definition should be based on its classical functions: teaching, research and extension activities.

Concerning the question of heterogeneity, it was also stated that comparison with the European Bologna Process is not always correct. In fact, this process was not exactly a process of harmonization (as it is normally understood), but it was mainly a process of transparency on legal frameworks: it gradually increased confidence among European HEI and, in the long run, the quality of the HEIs.

Confidence should be also promoted, in different ways, in the LA region. It has been observed that many internationalization processes are more oriented to other regions than LA. The group stated that this is partly a consequence of the lack of confidence in the quality of LA HEIs, a current obstacle to promote integration.

In this sense, it was pointed out that existing and new networks have a significant potential for the development of effective cooperation spaces and of confidence among HEIs. The group underlined that some experiences show that current cooperation has not been reached by small HEIs and, therefore, constituted also a problem for integration. Also in this case networks could be a potential solution to this problem.

Finally, the question of the sequence was tackled: should Latin America and the Caribbean consolidate their own common space of higher education before the creation of the ALCUE space of higher education? The group concluded that both process should run in parallel, since the ALCUE space does not constitute an obstacle for the development of the integration process in Latin America.

Group 3: University – Society relationship

As a starting point, the group assumed that the social commitment of the university is linked to its main functions: teaching, research and extension. In this sense, conclusions were articulated around four concepts:

- the quality of the HEIs in their functions;

¹ Actually, the complete draft of the State of the Art includes references to CRES.

- the relevance of knowledge dissemination, which should reach more and more people and should constitute one of the main features of the university in the XXIst century;
- the specificity of the service the HEIs offer, which involves human capacities and commitment;
- impact of the HEIs in society, which should be taken into account when analysing dynamics and strategic approach of each institution.

These key concepts influence reflections on the agendas of HEIs, which programmes should be promoted, which kind of cooperation, etc.

The group reflected on budget and financial sustainability matters. In this sense, in addition to the problem of the amount of resources, it was pointed out that the source of the financing should also be taken into account. Since different stakeholders could be interested in activities carried out by HEIs, decisions based on an analysis of all possibilities help to establish the institutions priorities and selection criteria.

In this sense, four main working areas, which could constitute different priorities according to the characteristics of each institution, were identified:

- productive area: while previous demand focussed mainly on professionals from traditional university courses or degrees, present day demand is becoming more and more complex, since stakeholders have evolved over time (big, small, national, international, services or goods-oriented, etc.);
- education system: it demands teacher trainers (“*formador de formadores*”), articulation of the different education levels, the promotion of mobility, and further discussions on contents, etc.;
- public policy: it should be taken into account when articulating programmes, contents, and priorities;
- the whole society and its citizens, which means that attention to different civil society organisations should be paid: trade unions; business associations, etc.

It was also pointed out that societal values should be taken into account because, in fact, they shape the general framework in which universities are working. In this sense, values such as equity, justice, or fight against poverty are horizontal issues that cross all university-society topics.

WP4 ALCUE Units: Elaboration of a Strategic Plan for the ALCUE Units October 13th, 2009 – 3:00 pm

This session aimed at presenting some guidelines for the development of the Action Plans of the ALCUE Units. Norma Rendero López (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana de Azcapotzalco), presented a proposal which included the following categories as well as two examples based on action plans elaborated by Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica and Fundació Universitat - Empresa de las Illes Balears (see Annex 7 and 8, respectively):

- Hierarchical structure
- Functions
- Strategic objectives
- Internal organisation
- Areas of action
- Stakeholders

After this presentation, three different groups were organised in order to discuss the proposal and to propose some amendments to it.

The conclusions of group 1 were presented by Christian Perez Centeno (Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero), who stated that a general agreement was reached on the proposed categories. He suggested to add an additional category that makes reference to the institutional context within which the action plan should be carried out. He also pointed out that some of the members believed that units should establish permanent contacts with the cooperation offices of each institution.

The conclusions of group 2 were presented by Carmen Caleyá (Universidad Simón Bolívar). She said that a general agreement about the proposed categories existed. She suggested that categories such as “hierarchical structure” or “internal organisation” should be changed, because they are not useful for those partners that will not create a new structure for the unit. Instead, a general category was proposed: “definition of the characteristics of the unit”.

She stressed that the general objectives of the ALCUE Units should be in line with the main objectives of the VertebrALCUE project, such as the promotion of the integration in higher education in Latin America; fostering the relationship between university and society; and generating synergies towards a common higher education space between the EU and LA.

In this sense, units should be a space for gathering information about agent’s needs and about responses to those needs in order to disseminate that information. Unit’s work should be organised in thematic areas.

The conclusions of the third group were presented by Beatriz Peluffo (Universidad Central de Chile). She highlighted that legitimizing ALCUE Units in institutions that had already developed International Relations or International Cooperation offices would be a hard process. In this sense, sharing information with internal stakeholders was considered to be very important. At the same time, personal relations were also pointed out as a central element for the creation of the ALCUE Units. However, it was stated that these relationships should be institutionalized in order to go beyond the personal level.

During the second part of this session, Martín Obaya (Universidad de Bologna) presented the logical model that will be used to develop the monitoring plan of the ALCUE Units (see Annex 9). In addition to this basic function, the logic model was presented as a instrument that will facilitate communication with stakeholders. It was

agreed that the partners would not use the logic model at the instead they will start following the next structure:

- Hierarchical structure
- Functions
- Strategic objectives
- Internal organisation
- Areas of action
- Stakeholders

WP3 – ‘Modelling VertebrALCUE’ Development October 14th, 2009 – 9:00 am

Barbara Vetturini, Executive Deputy Director of VertebrALCUE (University of Bologna), pointed out that it was necessary to reflect on how ALCUE Units would be articulated at geographical level (national, regional, bi-regional). She also stated that articulation mechanisms should be developed for thematic networks.

In order to illustrate different experiences of articulation, some partners were invited to present their own experience:

Roberta Maierhofer (University of Graz) described the experience of her university within thematic networks, widely developed in Europe. She considered the definition of patterns to design this kind of networks as a critical factor. She also highlighted the importance of drawing up a plan for interacting with both the political and legislative levels.

In the same way, Carlos Álvarez Bogantes and Beatriz Peluffo (Universidad Central de Chile), presented the experience of the *Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano* (CSUCA), a consolidated network in Central America that is very active in various fields, such as the development of a systems of common credits, mobility programmes, etc. The model about Regional Units, has been developed and implemented by Costa Rica thought CSUCA.

Finally, Cristóbal Cobo (FLACSO México) described the experience of Mexican partners of Vertebralcue when interacting with national stakeholders. Concerning the question of international cooperation, he pointed out that a sense of unease prevailed when they realised that public offices that work with international cooperation had in fact a very low level of efficiency. Consequently, he stated that this shortcoming could be addressed by VertebrALCUE. In this sense, he considered activities of dissemination and communication, as well as the development of international networks of research as critical factors for the efficient articulation of the project at different levels.

Xiomara Zarur Miranda (Asociación Colombiana de Universidades - ASCUN) presented the experience of ASCUN, which, in contrast to most of the partners, is a national network of universities, and not a higher education institution itself. She explained why this particular feature of ASCUN, make it difficult to think about an

ALCUE Unit within ASCUN with same characteristics of the rest of the partners. Therefore, she highlighted the need of reflecting on the distinctive element of the ALCUE Units.

After these presentations, participants divided into three groups in order to discuss the different strategies of articulation of ALCUE Units. After an intense debate held within each group, the *rapporteurs* presented the main conclusions.

Antonio Aparisi Miralles (Universidad Politécnica de Valencia) presented the conclusions of the first group, focused on thematic networks. He pointed out that his group concluded that a methodology aimed at identifying transversal and specific themes should be developed. He will prepare a template to be distributed among partners in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses in different topics, as well as their interests in specific themes. The following transversal topics were proposed:

- employability
- mobility
- credit transfer
- technological innovation
- quality
- regional integration

Some of the proposed specific topics were:

- poverty
- social equality
- governability

From the operational point of view, the work of these networks should start by creating working groups. Claudio Dondi added that these networks would be in a position to search for additional funding in order to support their work.

The second group focused on the articulation at national, regional and bi-regional levels. Beatriz Peluffo referred to the idea of the ALCUE Units as multi-polar centres, which would not necessarily imply the creation of a new institutional structure. One of the objectives of the articulation of the three geographical levels would be to reduce the asymmetries of access to information on cooperation. In this sense, activities of consultancy and networking would be central in order to activate cooperation (even current cooperation agreements that are only formal). Improving the visibility of existing networks (for instance, AUGM, CSUCA, RENAIES) would be a critical factor in order to favour this articulation.

Bernardo Sorj (Centro Edelstein) stated that a central mechanism should be created in order to coordinate information and dissemination activities. Even if some partners considered this would be an important instrument in order to favour the sustainability of the project, Ana Castro suggested that, instead of creating a central mechanism to coordinate information and dissemination activities, the project should privilege the

generation of interaction among partners what would encourage the continuity of this cooperation.

Finally, the third group focused on the articulation of ALCUE Units at national level. In this case, when national coordination structures exist, Units should evaluate the possibility of developing a formal link with them. It was suggested that all partners presented a proposal for the articulation at national level. However it is not mandatory, but voluntary.

WP1- 9 Monitoring Strategy
WP1- C Conclusions and Future Work
October 14th, 2009 – 12:30 pm.

This session was coordinated by José María Ghio and Carlos Álvarez Bogantes, who presented the monitoring strategy, based on a geographic division.

José María Ghio presented the next steps to be followed in order to finish the elaboration of the state of the art and to create the ALCUE Units. In this sense, the activity list containing the main tasks and deadlines until the next working meeting to be held in San Pablo in March 2010 was presented (see annex 10).

WP	What	Who	Expected delivery
WP1	Minutes of the Working meeting	Unibo	7 th November
	Interim Report – consignment of missing documents	All partners	20 th November
	Final Interim Report	Unibo – Granada – Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica - Scienter	31 st January
WP2	Minutes of the work on the state of the art reflections	Ana Castro, Ernesto Villanueva, Cristina Guerrero	23 rd October
	Incorporation of comments and reflections to the state of the art to send to all partners	Unibo – Granada	30 th October
	Final comments of partners	All partners	9 th November
	Final version state of the art	Unibo – Granada	30 th November
WP3	Methodological Framework	Unibo – Granada – Universidad	9 th December

	VertebrALCUE	Nacional de Costa Rica - Scierter	
	Action Plan	Unibo – Granada – Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica - Scierter	9 th December
	Organisation of the On-line survey	Scierter	
WP4	Definition of action plan for ALCUE Units	All partners	20 th November
	Support for the creation of the ALCUE Units	Unibo – Granada – Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica - Scierter	From now on
	Logical Model	All partners	28 th February
WP5	Hypothesis on National ALCUE Units	All partners	30 th November
WP7	Preparation of the template on thematic interests to be sent to partners	UPV FUEIB	
	Filling in the template	All partners	30 th November

WP1- Administrative support
October 14th, 2009 – 12:30 pm.

An administrative meeting was organised in order to support all partners in the preparation of documents and to promote understanding on the main administrative rules.

María Rosa Alfieri and Josefina Sanguinetti, administrative staff of the project, focused their presentation on the explanation of four topics that had shown to be very problematic for many partners:

Per Diem: it should be justified according to the administrative rules that prevail in each institution. Therefore, documents to be sent to the administrative coordination would depend on each institutions way of recording expenditures.

Overhead: expenditures that can be covered by the overhead were detailed.

Tickets: possible documents that should be presented to the coordination were detailed. It was confirmed that airport taxes could be considered as flight expenses. A question was raised on national airfares. She explained that national flights were not foreseen in

the budget of the project, and that to include them would entail a full amendment of the budget. She suggested using overhead resources in those cases.

Human Resources: partners were encouraged to read official guidelines on documents needed, such as contracts, invoices and salary receipts. Documents of all employees or professionals involved in the projects should be consigned, even if they have not a full time dedication to the project. It was stated that a note should be added when an additional explanation is needed.

It was reminded that the last date for the annual budget execution is 9th December 2009. It was also clarified that the last date for the delivery of documents is 15th December 2009.

Advisory Board Meeting October 14th, 2009 – 16:30 pm.

Olman Segura Bonilla (UNA), Claudio Dondi, (Scienter), described the main functions of the advisory board. They explained that the board should help VertebrALCUE with technical assistance and consulting about project activities, as well as helping with the dissemination of its results.

Advisory Board was integrated by Christiane Daem, Secretary General, Centre d'Étude des Relations entre l'Union Européenne et l'Amérique Latine (CERCAL) ; María José Lemaitre, Academic Director of the Centro Interuniversitario de Desarrollo (CINDA) ; she was represented by Elisa Zentendo); Álvaro Maglia, Executive Secretary of the Asociación de Universidades del Grupo de Montevideo (AUGM); and Olman Segura Bonilla, president of the CSUCA and secretary of Macrouiversidades. Other invited personalities, such as Bernardo Kosacoff (CEPAL Argentina); Ramón Torrent (Universidad de Barcelona/OBREAL); Arnaldo Abruzzini (Eurochambres), Francisco Alarcón Alba (CSUCA); Fabio Nascimbeni (MENON) and Daniel Oliveira (BID), apologized for not being able to attend the meeting.

Christiane Dam described the main functions of its institution and the main networks and European projects in which it participated in . She showed interest in VertebrALCUE and in generating new synergies with other networks.

Elisa Zenteno, who spoke on behalf of María José Lemaitre, described the institution – which from 30 years works on universities development- and highlighted the fact that four of the universities of CINDA take also part of VerterbALCUE. She stated that many of the aims and themes of CINDA where in line with those tackled by VertebrALCUE and, therefore, she expected that a future cooperation would be both possible and advisable.

Finally, Olman Segura Bonilla pointed out that the aims of the two networks he represented were perfectly in line with the objectives of VertebrALCUE. In the case of CSUCA, the network aims at boosting international cooperation of member universities, while, in the case of Macrouiversidades, the priority is the promotion of student's mobility.

After the first part of the session, the floor was open to comments and questions. Members of Vertebralcue highlighted the importance of building a strong network. At the same time some topics were considered central:

- innovation (not only scientific and technological, but also organisational and institutional)
- synergies among existing networks
- sustainability of the project
- consideration of public and private universities, evaluation of their levels and their relationships
- curricula harmonization
- social responsibility of universities (their reception of social demands)
- mutual confidence
- political support for the project (especially by authorities of universities)

It should be stated that a representative of an ALFA III project was present (Observatorio ALFA III), Javier Roger Rezzano. He offered his support for the project in order to facilitate synergies with other ALFA projects.

ANNEXES

- Annex 1: List of Participants and Signatures
- Annex 2: Agenda
- Annex 3: Executive Summary of the State of the Art Report
- Annex 4: Draft for Partners Reflection
- Annex 5: EC Communication on EU-ALC
- Annex 6: Conclusions ECLAC Seminar
- Annex 7: Strategic Plan ALCUE Unit in UNA
- Annex 8: Strategic Plan ALCUE Unit in FUEIB
- Annex 9: Logical model
- Annex 10: Activity List