



VERTEBRALCUE 2° PROJECT EVALUATION SESSION

Ciudad de Mexico, 8th September 2011

Minutes

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The second VertebrALCUE evaluation seminar took place in Mexico D.F. and followed the Project Meeting held in Cocoyoc. Given the reached level of maturity of the project, the PCG decided to extend participation to the session beyond the PCG members.

As from the participants' list, a number of external experts took part in the meeting representing, in particular, UDUAL (Union de Universidades de America Latina y el Caribe), CEPAL (Comision Economica para America Latina y el Caribe de las Naciones Unidas) and the Latin American Chapter of the Erasmus Mundus Alumni Association.

José Maria Ghio (member of the PCG) gave some welcome and opening remarks, together with Celso Garrido, representing the hosting university, UAM-A.

The discussion then started with a presentation of the main features and achievements of the project so far made by Claudio Dondi and Carlos Alvarez Bogantes (PCG members). In particular it was recalled that the Project aims to contribute 1) to the construction of the ALCUE space of Higher Education, 2) to the regional integration of the Latin American higher education systems and 3) to the transformation of the universities from ivory towers into ivory bridges, more orientated to the society as well as to support innovation and internationalization.

In Latin America do exist many initiatives of academic cooperation which, however, contribute to the fragmentation of the higher education system rather than to its integration. The project hence is trying to *vertebrate* it, that is to say to give it some structure. This structure is based on the creation of ALCUE Units within the participating institutions, which, on the one hand, ensures a bottom-up approach, as it makes each partner responsible for activating within its academic as well as social environment. On the other hand, the Units will lead to increasing levels of articulation: local/national/regional and thematic through the thematic networks.

The ALCUE Units and the Thematic Networks are the main factors of articulation of the ALCUE space: the Units are the basic elements which the networks will link together creating a complex web.

The aims, meta-functions and activities of the ALCUE units were illustrated together with a short description of the 7 thematic networks in place (see table below).

ACRÓNIMO	NOMBRE DE LA RED	INSTITUCIONES LÍDERES
RedUE	Vinculación Universidad - Empresa e Innovación	UAM (Celso Garrido: cgncgn@gmail.com) FUEIB (Luis Tudela: lluis.tudela@uib.es)

TINTIES	Aplicación de las TICs como tecnología de gestión y apoyo a la Enseñanza y al Aprendizaje en Educación Superior	SCIENTER (Claudio Dondi cbrecciaroli@scienter.org) UACH (Charlotte Lovengreen clovengr@uach.cl)
EMPLOYAL CUE	Red para la Empleabilidad de los egresados	UCCH (Beatriz Peluffo: bpeluffo@uccentral.cl) UNIBO (Giorgio Alberti: galberti@unibo.edu.ar)
GOBIERNO	Gestión y Gobierno Universitario	ASCUN (Xiomara Zarur: academica@ascun.org.co) UPV (Patricio Montesinos: pmontesi@cfp.upv.es)
DEMOPOL	Gobernanza democrática y políticas públicas en América Latina con visión comparativa de algunas experiencias europeas.	UNIBO (Giorgio Alberti: galberti@unibo.edu.ar) CEBEM (José Blanes: jose.blanes@cebem.org)
PYMESALC UE	Desarrollo local. Redes de Observatorios PYME y mercado de trabajo a nivel nacional, regional y bi-regional	UNIBO (Giorgio Alberti: galberti@unibo.edu.ar), UCCH (Beatriz Peluffo: bpeluffo@uccentral.cl),
MOVILIDAD	Movilidad estudiantil e internacionalización del currículum	UNQ (Nora Dari: noradari@gmail.com)

It was underlined that the main challenges faced by the project at the moment are:

- To enhance horizontal communication and integration among ALCUE units (to this respect a virtual collaboration lab was launched that still remains underexploited).
- To make the thematic networks established sustainable in the long term and able to support bi-regional collaboration.
- To actively involve the increasing number of associated partners willing to establish their own ALCUE units in an integrated way.
- To liaise with other ALFA funded projects (proposing them to contribute to the enhanced bottom-up ALCUE process by encouraging their partner institutions to establish their own ALCUE Units and/or to become members of the VertebrALCUE thematic networks).
- To find a way to collaborate with IESALC in the ENLACE initiative, and all other relevant academic networks, in a constructive and complementary way, in order to set up together the bi-regional ALCUE coordination units that should complement the inter-governmental monitoring group established at the beginning of the ALCUE process.
- To report, in the Green Paper to be drafted by the end of 2011, the strategy to ensure sustainability of regional and bi-regional integration.

It was highlighted that VertebrALCUE is well aware of its support role within the ALCUE process, meaning that the realization of the project and the full achievement of the ALCUE Common are of Higher Education clearly also depends on political decisions that we are

not able to control, nor steer. However, the intent of VertebrALCUE is that of contributing to a structural and key priority by providing support to the academia in getting fully involved in the process.

Claudio Dondi illustrated then the concrete aims of the seminar, i.e.:

- to share with external experts the challenges the project is facing so to get advice on how to proceed;
- to eventually involve them in the effort to create the vertebrating structure of the ALCUE process.

Mr. Ibarra (UDUAL) stated that UDUAL shares the same concerns and aims as VertebrALCUE, stressing the importance of integration at regional level. There is a whole patrimony of relationships and experiences that UDUAL has gained in time that only needs to be transformed into concrete opportunities for new collaborations and initiatives. He then mentioned two specific programmes heading, as whole, in the direction of improving academic quality and capacity and interlink universities in the region. The first one aims at responding to universities' needs, both public and private, in terms of evaluation and accreditation: UDUAL is in fact planning to set a post-graduate course for the training and the accreditation of evaluators. The other line of action aims at mobility, which UDUAL cannot directly fund.

He agreed that a stable structure is needed to guarantee academic integration at regional level and expressed the interest of UDUAL in joining some of the thematic networks of VertebrALCUE such as the one on Governance of the university, Mobility and TICs.

It was also agreed that UDUAL would host the link to the VertebrALCUE website in their homepage and that VertebrALCUE would do the same on its website.

Ms. Marina Martin (Erasmus Mundus Association -EMA) explained that the Association is formed by Students and Alumni belonging to Action 1 - Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses and Joint Doctorates. She explained that the Latin American Chapter, founded in 2007, is organized around themes such as degree recognition, bi-lateral agreements, cooperation with enterprises and promotion of EM programme. In addition there are also study groups on the impact of Erasmus Mundus Program and then she suggested that an interaction would be possible for VertebrALCUE through its thematic networks and ALCUE units, for instance on the study of the problems EM students have to face (also linked to the issue of titles recognition). Also, she proposed that ALCUE units could publish EM calls on their web sites/blogs and suggested that they might participate in the thematic networks on mobility but also university governance and TINTIES.

Mr Padilla (CEPAL) commented that in fact there is some possible ground for cooperation with VertebrALCUE and in particular with the thematic networks of observation of PyMEs and of relationship University-Enterprise given the hybrid nature of CEPAL which stands between academia and think-tank and promotes technological transfer as well as empirical research.

Moreover, with reference to a specific technical cooperation project that CEPAL is running with Central American countries, they have gained some experience in the promotion of regional integration. That project, in fact, that aims at integration among about 30 research centres in the region in the subject of technologies and innovation, has a first stage which aims to build a supra national system, which represents something quite new in those countries. They are hence thinking how to concretely implement it, and running a sort of map of the existing capacities in those countries.

Following this fruitful exchange of views and expressions of interest on possible collaborations, it was jointly concluded that the key challenges to face are twofold: to ensure the success of VertebrALCUE as well as its sustainability. This implies:

- 1) the capacity to create an integration strategy able to act on the horizontal and vertical level;
- 2) the capacity of the project to network and cooperate with existing initiatives and projects in the same field (ranging from other ALFA projects to links to ENLACES and IESALC);
- 3) the capacity of the network to build on the already existing experiences and successful practices of collaboration at regional and bi-regional level.

Three main concrete levels of operation were hence identified, which are for other entities and networks to:

1. join some of the VertebrALCUE Thematic Networks;
2. consider the ALCUE Units network/community as a pool of resource they can use any time they need support in some research efforts, mobilisation and dissemination, given that such a network is very active and not only can itself take initiative for actions, but also implement them;
3. join the VertebrALCUE community in the effort we are making of complementing from below, i.e. from the academic side, the policy that Governments are trying to carry out (top-down), that is of building the ALCUE space.

The three experts accepted to be kept informed on further developments of the project and involved in future consultations as part of the Advisory Board of the project but also partners in some of the thematic networks.

AGENDA

h. 16.00:18.00

- Welcome. José Maria Ghio.
- Introduction to the project achievements to date. Carlos Alvarez Bogantes
- Objectives and organization of the Evaluation Seminar. Claudio Dondi.
- SWOT Analysis of the Project to date
- Focus on opportunities, e.g.:
 - a) Regional coordination as an aim: actors and methods
 - b) Project sustainable spin-offs
 - c) Consolidating the network of ALCUE Units: balance between network enlargement and strengthening the existing AUs
- Next steps
- Conclusions. Claudio Dondi, Carlos Alvarez Bogantes, José Maria Ghio.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	Institution	Role in the session
Claudio Dondi	SCIENTER	PCG member
Cristina Brecciaroli	SCIENTER	PCG member
Stefania Aceto	SCIENTER	PCG member
José Maria Ghio	UNIBO-BA	PCG member
Ivanna Travaini	UNIBO-BA	PCG member
Carlos A. Bogantes	UNA	PCG member
Gabriela V. Rodriguez	UNA	PCG member
Marina Martin Barbosa	EMA-LA	Advisory Board
Antonio Ibarra	UDUAL	External expert
Ramon Padilla	CEPAL	External expert
Gabriel Dima	Politechnica Buchuresti	Associated partner
Norma Rondero	UAM-A	Project member
Deborah Monroy	FLACSO-M	Project member
Celso Garrido	UAM-A	Project member
Vera Solis	UCA	Project member
Edison Spina	FUSP	Project member
Marcel J. Simonette	FUSP	Project member
Norberto Lamarra	UNTREF	Project member
Andrés Ordoñez	UAN	Project member
José Blanes	CEBEM	Project member
Blanca Pesado	FLACSO-A	Project member
Nora Dari	UNQ	Project member