

This is a short training manual to support teacher trainers participating in the EVALUATE telecollaborative exchanges.

Teacher trainers will find here basic guidelines on running telecollaboration with their students as well as discussion sheets to work through with their partner teacher in either online or face-to-face training contexts.

## A Training Manual on Telecollaboration for Teacher trainers

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## Introduction: Background to the EVALUATE project

The training materials which you will find in this document have been developed as part of the EVALUATE project. EVALUATE is an acronym for *Evaluating and Upscaling Telecollaborative Teacher Education*. This is an Erasmus+ KA3 (EACEA/34/2015) project and the main aim is to carry out a European Policy Experiment. European policy experimentations help to assess the relevance, effectiveness, and potential scalability of innovative policy measures through experimental or semi-experimental approaches.

This project will evaluate the impact of telecollaborative learning on student teachers involved in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in the participating European countries and regions. In this particular context, telecollaboration, also commonly known as virtual exchange, engages student teachers in task-based interaction and collaborative exchange with fellow trainees in geographically distant locations through online communication technologies.

The guiding research question for the study is: “Will participation in telecollaborative exchange contribute to the development of competences which future teachers need to teach, collaborate and innovate effectively in a digitalised and globalised world?”

The specific research questions which we are hoping to answer are the following:

- Will telecollaboration have a positive impact on future teachers’ digital-pedagogical competence?
- Will telecollaboration have a positive impact on future teachers’ intercultural competence?
- Will telecollaboration have a positive impact on future teachers’ foreign language competence<sup>1</sup>?
- How do socio-institutional factors in each of the participating countries shape and affect the impact of telecollaboration in ITE?

The project will study the impact of telecollaboration on approximately 1000 student teachers studying at initial teacher training institutions and universities in Spain, Germany, Hungary and Portugal and other countries across Europe. These students will be taking courses in teaching methodology at their respective institutions.

The aim of this manual is to provide a practical guide for the teacher trainers who are going to set up and run a telecollaborative exchange in their classes in the context of the EVALUATE project. Each section of the manual looks at different aspects of a telecollaborative exchange and provides materials and activities to help teacher trainers prepare with their partner teachers to engage their students in a telecollaborative exchange project. **The manual is in no way intended to be a definitive introduction to telecollaboration.** There are many models and approaches to telecollaboration and readers are encouraged to explore the bibliography at the end of this volume and to visit the UNICollaboration platform ([www.unicollaboration.eu](http://www.unicollaboration.eu)) in order to find out about other alternative approaches to connecting students online together in educational initiatives. The main authors of the document, Andreas Müller-Hartmann and Robert O’Dowd, would like to acknowledge the contributions made by other EVALUATE team members in the authoring and development of these materials, in particular Sarah Guth, Francesca Helm and Tim Lewis. We are grateful to Mirjam Hauck for her contribution on social presence in telecollaboration.

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<sup>1</sup> This question does not apply to exchanges where the native language is being used by both partners

## 1. What is Telecollaboration? Why use it in Teacher Education?

The ability to integrate and exploit online technologies in the classroom has become an essential part of a teacher's skill set in the twenty-first century. Teachers not only need technical competence in order to use online applications and tools, but they also need to know how to exploit these tools in pedagogically informed innovative ways. Online technologies have the potential to be powerful tools for the development of students' intercultural competence, foreign language skills and other transversal skills. But in order for this to happen, it requires teachers to "reap the benefits of new ICT developments and adopt innovative and active pedagogies, based on participatory and project-based methods" (European Council & Commission, 2015, p.5).

Obviously, if teachers are to engage their students in innovative and collaborative approaches to online learning when they become teachers, they first of all need to experience this type of learning themselves during their study programmes. One potentially effective way of helping student-teachers to have first-hand experience of online collaborative approaches to learning and teaching is telecollaboration. Telecollaboration, also referred to as *Virtual Exchange* or *Online Intercultural Exchange*, involves engaging students in task-based interaction and collaborative exchange projects with partner-classes in other locations through online communication technologies under the guidance of their teachers (O'Dowd & Lewis, 2016). In contrast to many forms of online learning which are based on the transfer of information through video lectures etc., telecollaboration is based on student-centred, intercultural and collaborative approaches to learning where knowledge and understanding are constructed through learner interaction and negotiation.

The ability to organise telecollaborative activities enables teachers not only to engage their own students in online intercultural projects but also allows teachers themselves to form part of international communities of practice with other teachers. Nowadays, teachers interested in telecollaboration are supported by networks and communities of practitioners such as [www.etwinning.net](http://www.etwinning.net) and [www.unicollaboration.eu](http://www.unicollaboration.eu), where they can find partners, resources and support for their initiatives.

There is a growing interest in how telecollaboration can be used to train student-teachers to develop their ability to communicate successfully in intercultural contexts and to use technology in innovative ways in their classrooms in the future. An 'experiential modelling approach' (Guichon & Hauck, 2011; Hoven, 2006) offers students the opportunity to take part in online exchanges themselves in order to experience the tools and processes which they will be expected to use in their own classrooms in the future. Simply put, if teacher trainers can engage their students in successful virtual exchange projects, then they will be motivated and inspired to replicate these practices in their own classrooms once they are qualified teachers.

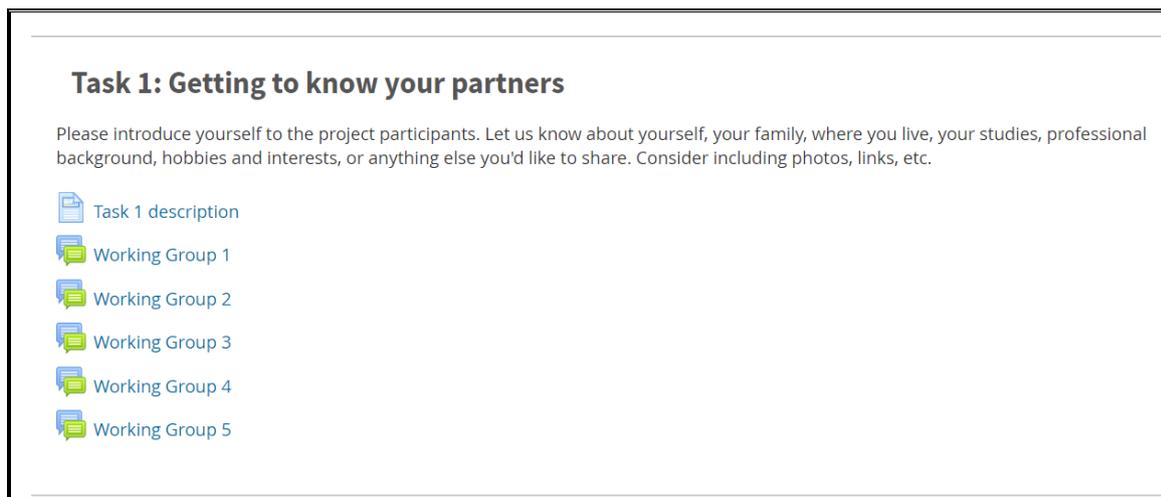
Telecollaboration can be organised and implemented in a wide variety of ways. However, most successful telecollaborative exchanges usually share some common characteristics. These can be summed up as follows:

- A minimum duration of 6-8 weeks which allows for sufficient time to establish working relationships between the students.
- Genuine collaboration between the online partners and not merely the exchange of information.
- The exchange's topics and tasks are related to the students' course syllabus and are relevant to students' learning needs.

- Collaborative tasks gradually increase in intensity and degree of collaboration as the exchange progresses.
- The exchanges are firmly integrated into the students' classes and the teacher plays an important role helping students to prepare for their online interaction and to reflect on their experiences and the outcome.
- Students receive credit or recognition for their participation in the telecollaborative exchange.

A typical telecollaborative exchange in a teacher-training context might work in this way: A teacher-trainer working at a university in Spain is working with a class of 60 future primary school teachers. She establishes contact with a teacher trainer in Germany who is working with a group of 30 future primary school teachers. They both agree to have their students collaborate together for 8 weeks of their winter semester.

The students are divided into 'international working teams' – each group containing 4 Spanish and 2 German students. The teacher trainers agree on a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) such as Canvas (<https://www.canvasvle.co.uk>) or Moodle (<https://moodle.org/>) which serves as the "home" or "hub" for the exchange. In the VLE each international working group is allocated its own forum where students can interact together and share links to documents, blogs etc. A page of a Moodle VLE being used for such a telecollaborative exchange might, for example, look something like this:



**Figure 1: An example of a virtual learning environment organised into international working groups**

Approximately every two to three weeks, teacher trainers introduce a different task to their students which they carry out online with their partners in their international working groups. The first task is a 'getting to know you task' where students have to introduce themselves and their universities to their partners. This is followed by a task which involves comparing aspects of textbooks in both countries and, finally, a third task requires the students to work together with their international partners to create an activity which could be used in a primary classroom in Germany and Spain.

Each week the students use the online forums to communicate with international partners in their working groups in order to complete the tasks. They also use other tools such as *skype* or *Blogger* in order to communicate and collaborate with their partners. Once a week in their local classrooms, the teacher trainers ask them to report on their progress, to discuss challenges they have encountered and what they are doing to overcome them, to present the outcomes of their online

collaboration and possibly to give feedback to their peers. The teacher trainers also regularly follow the conversations in the online forums in order to make sure that students are participating and that there is no inappropriate behaviour. Sometimes, when an interesting discussion takes place online in one of the working groups, the teacher trainers print an excerpt and bring it into the local classroom for discussion with the whole class.

When the exchange ends, both teacher trainers ask their students to submit an essay reflecting on what they have learned from the exchange or to make a class presentation about their findings. Students receive part of their final mark for their participation in the project as well as for their presentation or reflective essay.

### **Discussion and Reflection 1:**

At various stages in this manual we will ask you to think about a number of questions related to your future exchange, such as those below. We would like you to reflect on the questions and provide thoughtful answers. If possible, we would like you to discuss these questions with your partner teacher. You might do this together at a training event, but if this is not possible, you can also use these questions as a basis for online discussions together. You will be provided by your trainers with a Google Doc which will allow you and your partner teacher to add answers to all the questions and tables which appear in this manual. You can answer these questions in English or in any other language you are using to communicate with your partner teacher.

Have you ever participated in a telecollaborative exchange as a student or as a teacher before? If so, how was your experience?

Why are you interested in telecollaboration? What benefits do you think it may have for your students and for yourself as an educator?

At this stage what questions come to your mind about how to set up and run an exchange?

## 2. Getting to Know your Partner Teacher

The first thing that you should keep in mind when planning your telecollaborative exchanges is that this is an exercise in intercultural communication and collaboration for you as well as for your students. Over the coming weeks and months both you and your partner teacher will be required to coordinate a project together for two sets of students working in contexts which are probably culturally and institutionally very different. Like all intercultural collaboration, this will require that each of you brings with you to the exchange a fair share of good will, a readiness to adapt and compromise and an openness to difference. This is crucial as you and your partner teacher are directly and indirectly modelling for your students how they should be interacting and collaborating with each other.

The key to a successful coordination of a telecollaborative exchange is undoubtedly regular communication between the partner teachers. Before your exchange begins, you should find out about who your partner teacher is (see Table 1 below) and exchange plenty of information about the cultural and institutional context which you and your students are working in (see Table 2). Then, as the exchange progresses, you and your partner should be willing to exchange at least one email or have at least one synchronous conversation (e.g. using Skype) per week reporting on how your students are getting on and discussing any problems or questions which have arisen. Experience shows that in online contexts issues that do not get addressed as soon as they appear on the horizon tend to persist rather than disappear again on their own.

*Complete the second column of this chart with your own information. Then, interview your partner teacher and find out his/her answers. What cultural or institutional or personal differences do you notice?*

	You	Your Partner Teacher
Describe your cultural experiences – where have you lived, worked and travelled to during your life?		
Describe your educational background: What did you study?		
What courses do you teach at your institution? What other professional responsibilities do you have apart from teaching?		
What are your research interests?		
When are your teaching hours? When do you arrive and leave your university? What lunch break do you have?		
How comfortable are you communicating online for professional purposes? How often do you check your email on a normal working day? What other online communication tools do you use – e.g. Skype? WhatsApp? (Share your contacts in the tools you use, e.g. your Skype name.) When is the best		

time to write or call you about the exchange?		
What languages do you speak? What level would you say you have in each one?		

**Table 1: Getting to know your partner teacher**

*Complete the second column of this chart with your own information. Then, interview your partner teacher and find out his/her answers. What cultural or institutional or personal differences do you notice? Could any of these differences cause problems or misunderstandings during the exchange?*

	Your Institution	Your Partner Institution
How big is the institution where your class is studying? And what about the faculty/department where you work?		
Approximately how many students do you usually have in your classes?		
Are your classrooms equipped with a computer? Do students have wifi? Do you encourage students to use their laptops or mobiles in your classes?		
When does your semester begin and end? When do exams take place?		
Are there any holiday breaks during the semester of your exchange?		
How often will you meet the class which is participating in the telecollaborative exchange? Do you already have an idea of the timetable? If so, what is it?		
What do you usually do in this course? What are the main course objectives and content areas? What languages are used in the course?		
Describe the students that usually participate in the course: How old are they? What is their level in foreign languages? Do they have any experience in doing projects like this one? How would you describe their level of digital literacy?		
Having compared your institutional cultures, do you foresee any problems or misunderstandings that could arise due to the differences?		

**Table 2: Getting to know your partner teacher's institutional culture**

### 3. Task Sequences for your Telecollaborative Exchange

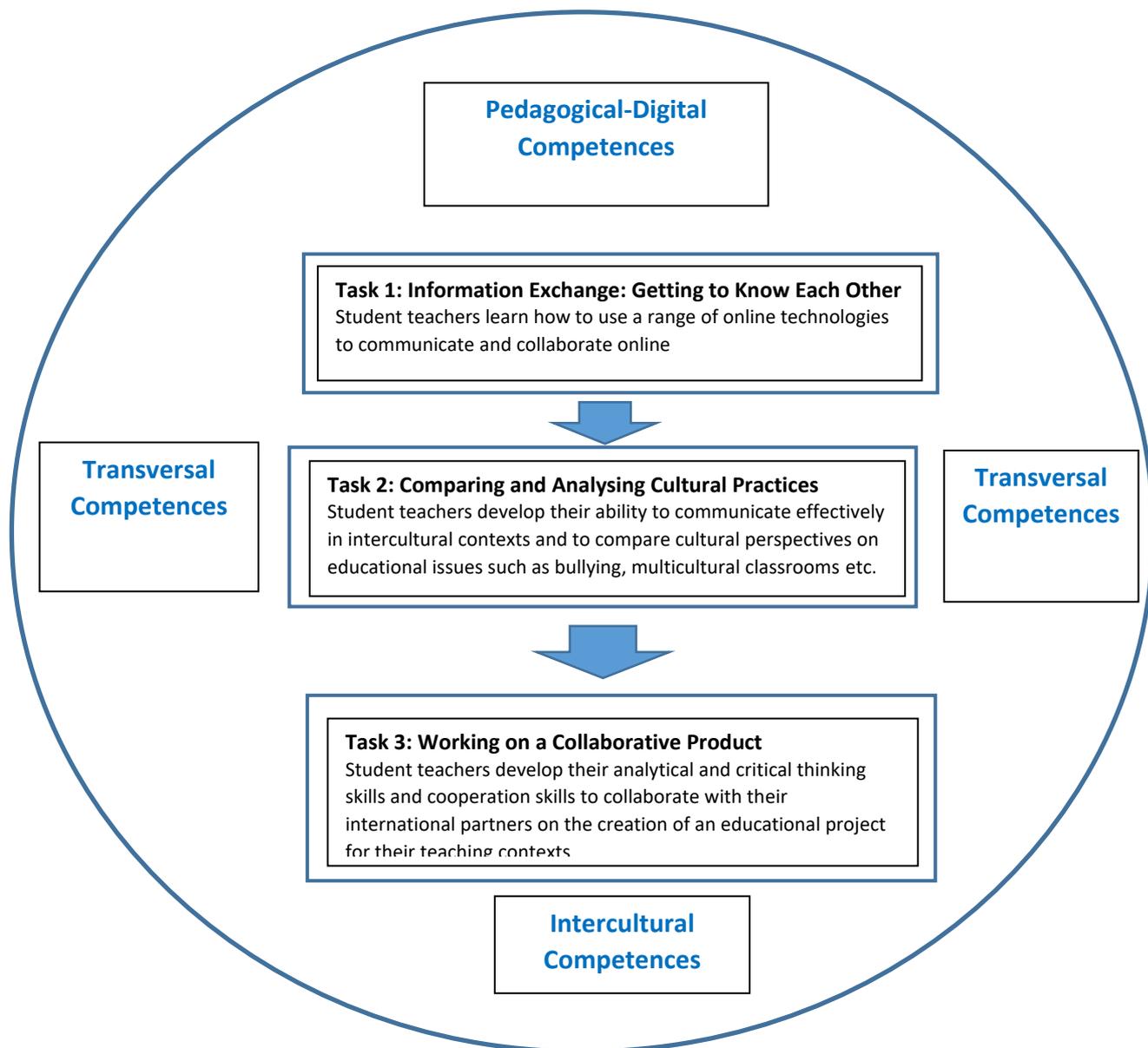
One of the first things which partner teachers have to agree on when planning their telecollaborative exchange is the task sequence their students will carry out. A task sequence is a collection of tasks that are combined and follow on from each other during a virtual exchange project. There are many different types of tasks which have been developed for telecollaborative exchange over the years. For example, you can see an overview of almost 100 tasks for university telecollaboration on the UNICollaboration platform: [http://unicollaboration.eu/index.php?q=tasks\\_list](http://unicollaboration.eu/index.php?q=tasks_list)

However, in the context of the EVALUATE project and, therefore, in this manual we are proposing three different specific task sequences which are based on the *Progressive Exchange Model* which has been widely used in telecollaborative practice and research to date (O'Dowd & Ware, 2006; O'Dowd & Lewis, 2016). The model involves three interrelated task types which move from *Information Exchange* to *Comparing and Analysing Cultural Practices* and finally to *Working on a Collaborative Product*, and in this process students develop transversal skills such as digital literacy and intercultural communicative competence (see figure 2 below).

The first category, *Information Exchange* tasks, involve learners providing their telecollaborative partners with information about their personal biographies, local schools or towns or aspects of their local cultural practices whichever cultural background they come from. It is important to realize that these cultural practices are not necessarily determined by geographical boundaries, such as Spanish or German, but that they represent all kinds of cultural relations in local culture, such as being a supporter of a local football team, pursuing an interest with friends of different national or ethnic backgrounds etc. These tasks function as an introductory activity for two groups of learners who are not yet familiar with each other. Tasks in this category can sometimes be 'monologic' in nature as there is usually little negotiation of meaning (neither cultural nor linguistic) between the partners.

The second task type, *Comparison and Analysis* tasks, require learners not only to exchange information, but also to go a step further and carry out comparisons or critical analyses of cultural products from both cultures (e.g. books, surveys, films, newspaper articles). These tasks generally require learners to provide their partners with explanations of the cultural significance of certain cultural products or practices and then to engage in dialogue in order to establish similarities or differences between the two cultures.

The final task type, *Collaborative Product* tasks, require learners not only to exchange and compare information but also to work together to produce something together. This could involve, for example, the co-authoring of a website or online document, or the co-production of a cultural adaptation of a text.



**Figure 2: The Progressive Exchange Telecollaborative Model for initial teacher education**

For your telecollaborative exchange project, you and your partner teacher can choose from one of the three different task sequences which we propose below, depending on your teaching context and the main objectives of your courses. All three task sequences are based on the Progressive Exchange model, but have different themes in order to suit different teaching contexts and students' interests. The three task sequences are:

- Primary Connections: A Telecollaborative Exchange for Future Primary School Teachers
- Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) Task Design: A Telecollaborative Exchange for Future School Teachers

- European Perspectives on Global Challenges: A Telecollaborative Exchange for Future Secondary School Teachers

***Discussion and Reflection 2:***

***Read through the three task sequences which are provided here. Make some notes on the following questions and compare your answers with those of your partner teacher.***

Which of these task sequences is most suited to your teaching context and content? Why?

At this stage what doubts or questions do you have about how to integrate the task sequence into your course?

Are there any ways which you would like to adapt or supplement the task sequence to make it more relevant to your course and your students' interests?

## 4. What Communication Technologies to use in your Telecollaborative Exchange?

The issue of choosing and using online communication tools is often one of the most stressful for teachers who are organising a telecollaborative exchange for their students. Teachers often feel they are not sufficiently 'tech savvy' when it comes to online tools and that they lack the technical competences and support at their institutions necessary to set up an exchange. However, teachers should also not presume that their students know more than they do just because they were born into the digital age. In fact, research shows that young learners' digital proficiency tends to remain superficial and does not readily transfer across domains (e.g. Selwyn, 2009) and indeed one of the primary aims of telecollaboration is to develop students' digital literacy to communicate and work with others successfully in online intercultural environments. Telecollaborative exchange is an educational experience made up of digital, intercultural and linguistic learning challenges where teachers and students need to work together to achieve successful outcomes.

Some basic steps you can take when approaching the issue of online communication tools are the following:

1. **Choose a virtual home/hub for your exchange:** Agree with your partner teacher on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), which will act as the virtual 'home' or hub for your exchange. This may be a VLE which one of you uses in your institution (for example Moodle) or it may be a free, open-access learning management system such as [www.schoolology.com](http://www.schoolology.com) or <https://www.canvaslms.com/>.

For the purposes of the EVALUATE project, we have chosen a dedicated Moodle platform especially for the exchanges. This will hopefully save your time and will also make life easier for the project team as we try to support the teacher trainers in their exchanges.

To access the EVALUATE Moodle platform where you can find a course reserved for your exchange, you should go to: <http://evaluateprojectmoodle.eu/> and click on the 'courses' link which you will find on the homepage.

When you have created an account, contact the EVALUATE team ([evaluateprojecteu@gmail.com](mailto:evaluateprojecteu@gmail.com)) to let them know and they will assign you a role as teacher and you and your partner teacher can begin to prepare the Moodle course for your exchange.

2. **Organise your virtual home for your telecollaborative exchange:** Once you have set up your virtual home for your exchange, you can then set up different folders or sections for the different tasks which your students will be doing. For example, here is a screenshot of a Telecollaborative Exchange which has different sections for the main telecollaborative tasks as well as for background information and other activities:

**Project Administration Matters**

-  News and announcements
-  Introduction to our project
-  Photos of our Classes

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**Task 1: Getting to know your partners**

Please introduce yourself to the project participants. Let us know about yourself, your family, where you live, your studies, professional background, hobbies and interests, or anything else you'd like to share. Consider including photos, links, etc.

-  Task 1 description
-  Working Group 1
-  Working Group 2
-  Working Group 3
-  Working Group 4
-  Working Group 5

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**Task 2: Comparing survey findings**

**Figure 3: An example of a virtual home for a telecollaborative exchange in a Moodle Platform**

Within each of the sections in the Moodle page, you can then create separate forums for each of your international working groups. For example, here you can see that within the section for task 1 for this exchange, students will find a message forum for each of their international working groups:

**Task 1: Getting to know your partners**

Please introduce yourself to the project participants. Let us know about yourself, your family, where you live, your studies, professional background, hobbies and interests, or anything else you'd like to share. Consider including photos, links, etc.

-  Task 1 description
-  Working Group 1
-  Working Group 2
-  Working Group 3
-  Working Group 4
-  Working Group 5

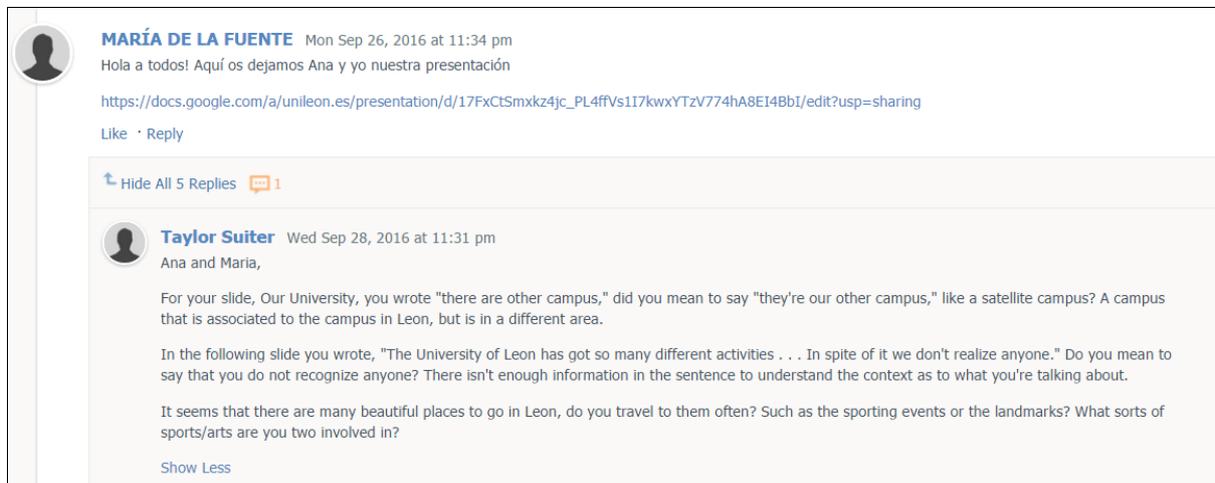
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**Task 2: Comparing survey findings**

Task 2: Discuss the survey findings and collaborate with members of your international working group to create a joint document about the differences and similarities in relation to education in your countries.

**Figure 4: Organising students into international working groups in their VLE**

**3. Identify external tools to use in your exchange:** Many VLEs include various online communication tools which your students can use during their online collaborations. These include asynchronous message forums, but perhaps also text-based chat tools and skype-style videoconferencing. However, your students should not be limited to the tools on the VLE and you should consider giving your students opportunities to use tools such as Skype during the exchange. As future teachers, they should have the opportunity to become familiar with a number of online tools and applications which can be used for communicative and collaborative purposes in education. In the EVALUATE task sequences, we propose giving students hands-on experience using tools such as About.me (<https://about.me/>), Glogster (<http://www.glogster.com/>) and common collaborative tools such as Google Docs and Google Slides. Students can use these to create presentations, texts etc. and then they can leave the links to these online creations in their VLE task forum (you can find tutorials for many online tools at <http://www.teachertrainingvideos.com/>). For example, in an exchange between Spanish and American students, the Spanish students created a Google Slides presentation with an introduction to their university and the American student responds in the forum with feedback on the document:



The screenshot shows a forum thread with two posts. The first post is by **MARÍA DE LA FUENTE**, dated Mon Sep 26, 2016 at 11:34 pm. The text of the post says: "Hola a todos! Aquí os dejamos Ana y yo nuestra presentación" followed by a Google Docs link: [https://docs.google.com/a/unileon.es/presentation/d/17FxCtSmxkz4jc\\_PL4ffVs17kwxYTzV774hA8E14BbI/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/a/unileon.es/presentation/d/17FxCtSmxkz4jc_PL4ffVs17kwxYTzV774hA8E14BbI/edit?usp=sharing). Below the link are "Like" and "Reply" options. The second post is by **Taylor Suiter**, dated Wed Sep 28, 2016 at 11:31 pm. The text of the reply says: "Ana and Maria, For your slide, Our University, you wrote 'there are other campus,' did you mean to say 'they're our other campus,' like a satellite campus? A campus that is associated to the campus in Leon, but is in a different area. In the following slide you wrote, 'The University of Leon has got so many different activities . . . In spite of it we don't realize anyone.' Do you mean to say that you do not recognize anyone? There isn't enough information in the sentence to understand the context as to what you're talking about. It seems that there are many beautiful places to go in Leon, do you travel to them often? Such as the sporting events or the landmarks? What sorts of sports/arts are you two involved in?" Below the text is a "Show Less" link.

**Figure 5: An example of a student linking an external online document into the VLE forum**

**4. Try out the tools yourself:** Before introducing the telecollaborative exchange to your students, you should familiarise themselves with the tools you have agreed to use in the tasks. The best way to do this is to actually go through the steps of creating a text or presentation etc. using the particular online tools in question. This will give you first-hand experience and it will prepare you for some of the questions or problems students might have during the process.

***Discussion and Reflection 3:***

***Make some notes on the following questions and compare your answers with those of your partner teacher.***

Have you ever used the VLE which is proposed for use in the EVALUATE exchanges? Log on to the platform and explore a little. Do you find it relatively easy to navigate?

Make a list of the external tools and applications which were mentioned in the task sequence you plan to use in your telecollaborative exchange. Are there other tools which you would like to integrate into your exchange? Which of these tools have you used before? In which context?

With your partner, try creating a product using one of these tools. Make a note of the steps you made. What problems or questions might students have when they start to use this tool?

## 5. Integrating the Telecollaborative Exchange into your Course

We said at the beginning of this manual that one of the key characteristics of successful telecollaborative exchanges is that they are clearly integrated with the objectives and the classroom activities of your course. If the telecollaborative tasks are related to what students are studying in class, then they will remain motivated and you can add a real-life component to your course content.

Here are some basic steps you can take to integrate your telecollaborative exchange effectively into your classes. Of course, not all of these will be possible in all teaching contexts:

1. **Mention the telecollaborative exchange in your course syllabus** and relate it clearly to how you will be achieving some of your course objectives.
2. **Make sure that you have class time where students can discuss or work on aspects of their exchange under your guidance.** For example, if your telecollaborative task requires students to find out about their international partners' university and hometown, set aside class time so that students can present their findings to the rest of their classmates. Use these presentations as launch pads for discussions about the exchange and what students are learning from their international partners.
3. **Observe the online discussions in the international working groups carefully and if an interesting or sensitive conversation emerges, discuss it in class with your whole group.** You can do this by either copying or printing out the conversation in question, or by simply showing it online in your classroom if you have access to a computer and beamer.

As a general rule, it is advisable to check first with the students involved before sharing their online conversation with the rest of the class. Students should be aware that the interactions in the exchange forums are not private discussions and that they will be read by others. However, before discussing, for example, students' cultural faux pas with the rest of the class, it is fair to explain to them that others can learn from their mistakes. It may also be possible to anonymise the interactions if they are presented in print format or you may discuss them in a relatively generic way as an example of what can happen.

Here is an example of an extract from an online interaction which was printed and turned into a class worksheet. The teacher could use this extract to sensitise students to cultural differences in interactional style and to raise discussion about effective ways of interacting online with international partners:

*Here is a message which a German student has written to her new partner in Ireland. Read the message and think about the following questions:*

How do you find the message? Does the student come across as friendly to you?

If you were the Irish partner, how would you feel if you received this message? How would you respond?

What advice could you give this student about interacting online with international partners?

*Hello, how are you? I study English and history and I want to become a teacher. This term we do some cultural studies concerning Ireland and I very interested in it because I actually do not know much about it.*

*Now I would like to ask you some questions. Do you live in Northern or in Southern Ireland? How many people live in your town? Are you a Catholic or a Protestant? I have heard that regular churchgoing declines more and more in your country-is it true?*

*What are you doing in your free time? Do you often go to pubs? What do you think about Germans? Irish people have the reputation of being very indirect and polite in their speaking style. I have read that there was an enormous economic change in Ireland.*

*How have you or your parents experienced the social and economic change in the past 20 years?*

*That's all for now. I am looking forward to hearing from you!*

4. Instead of choosing interesting extracts from the online interactions, it can also be useful to occasionally **ask students themselves to identify one significant event or message from the exchange and to report that to the rest of the class**. This can lead to fruitful discussions about what students are learning from their online interactions.

5. Perhaps an obvious way to integrate the telecollaborative exchange into your classes is to **allow students class time to actually communicate online with their partners or to prepare their presentations and documents in their local groups**. Especially at the beginning of the exchange, students should have the opportunity to work on their initial messages and contributions in class with you. This will give you the opportunity to quickly iron out any technical problems relating to accessing the VLE or to which forums students should write in etc.

6. A final strategy for linking telecollaboration to the course is related to **assessment**. This will be looked at in more detail in the next section of this manual.

*Discuss the following questions with your partner teacher and compare how you both intend to integrate the exchange into your courses*

	You	Your Partner Teacher
Have you been/Will you be able to mention the telecollaborative exchange in your course syllabus? What have you said about the exchange?		
How much class time do you think you will be able to dedicate to the exchange and its outcomes each week?		
Do you intend to bring your students to a computer lab or to ask them to bring their own devices in order to work on the exchange during class time? If so, how often?		
How do you feel about using extracts from students' interactions and products as the focus of classwork?		
What aspects of the exchange do you feel your students' will need most support with- e.g. issues about technology or team work? Or intercultural communication? How do you think you can help them at these aspects?		

**Table 3: Your approaches to integrating the telecollaborative exchange in your courses**

## 6. Telecollaboration and Assessment

Assessment is one of the most challenging issues in telecollaborative projects. There are two main reasons for this. On the one hand assessment is institutionalized and assessment formats depend very much on the different educational cultures and contexts they grow out of. On the other hand virtual exchanges facilitate a number of competence clusters such as technical, pedagogical, linguistic or intercultural competences, the assessment of which is a complex matter. While there are scales and descriptors for the different competence levels of foreign language skills in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (2001), we do not have such scales for non-linguistic or soft skills, such as sociocultural knowledge or intercultural awareness.

But we can assess aspects of online learning in our telecollaborative project, such as participation in the interaction or contribution to the interaction, i.e. the appropriateness of discourse in the exchanges, the production of new ideas or the way learners relate to earlier messages because in a dialogic exchange this is a central issue.

Before we look at different forms of assessment let us look at institutional requirements in the different contexts.

*Discuss the following questions with your partner teacher and compare how you both intend to assess competence development in your courses*

	You	Your Partner Teacher
What are your institutional assessment requirements?		
What do you usually assess? How do you typically assess students?		
Do you usually use rubrics (i.e. stated criteria) when assessing students? If so, could you share them with your partner?		
Is regular class attendance and participation important when determining a student's grade? If so, how will online participation in this collaboration be evaluated? If it is not mandatory, how do you ensure effective telecollaboration?		
How much in-class (if your class meets face-to-face) or out-of-class group work do your students typically do with fellow students? Is it normal for them to be graded for such group work?		

**Table 4: Approaches to assessment in your institutions**

As pointed out above, assessment in virtual exchanges carries its own challenges. What are your ideas and assumptions at this stage of how you would like to go about assessing your students' work in the virtual exchange? Make some notes in response to the following questions. Then please compare and discuss your answers with those of your partner teacher. If you are working together at a training event, you can discuss these questions face-to-face. If you are working at a distance, you can compare and discuss your answers and ideas online together.

***Discussion and Reflection 4:***

***Make some notes on the following questions and compare your answers with those of your partner teacher.***

What would you assess of your students' online activity?

Do you think of assessing the level of your students' online participation? If so, how would you do this?

Would you assess the students' ability to interact with their partners? If so, how would you go about it?

Have you considered how you might assess the intercultural learning that may take place? If so, what tools/methods might you use?

What role does your students' reflection on their learning process play in your concept of assessment?

It is important to realize that while it is crucial that you know about each other's forms of assessment, you do not have to follow the same format or use the same assessment tools as your partner in a virtual exchange, since institutional contexts and also individual preferences are quite diverse.

A word of caution is necessary about some forms of assessment. While assessing the quantity of participation might seem to be an easy way of evaluation, it has been shown that this approach can be quite problematic because non-participation does not mean that the student is not learning anything. Since telecollaboration is about dialogic exchange, instructors often expect students to react in specific ways when interacting with their partners, for example, by paying attention to the rules of politeness, using appropriate discourse or engaging the partner in a dialogue by asking questions and relating to what the partner has written. While this is a good approach, students need examples of good practice because they might not be aware of these aspects.

Another form of assessment is the use of criteria-based rubrics. An example is the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (2001) in language teaching. According to the CEFR there are different ways of using rubrics. One possibility is to use descriptors as a checklist. This might be an interesting way of assessing single tasks because the instructor can point out to the

students where they have done well and which areas they need to improve on. Here is an assessment grid which O’Dowd (2010: 352) used in one of his virtual exchanges focussing on the creation of a blog which was used for interaction with the American partners.

Categories	Criteria	Score / Grade
Structure and organisation	Your blog design is clear and well-structured and it is evident who are the blog’s authors and who is the intended audience.	0–1–2
	In your blog entries, you organize layout, paragraphing and punctuation in a manner which is consistent and helpful for the reader.	0-1-2
Languages and communication	You can express yourself with clarity and precision, using language flexibly and effectively.	0–1–2
	You consistently maintain a high degree of grammatical accuracy. You rarely make grammatical errors.	0–1–2
	Your spelling is generally accurate and you have no significant vocabulary errors.	0–1–2
Intercultural and sociolinguistic aspects	You use a register of language which is appropriate to a blog format and you use a level of formality which is appropriate for communicating with your audience of partner students in the USA.	0–1–2
	Your blog entries about your home culture take into account the differences and similarities between American and Spanish life and culture.	0–1–2
	Your entries attempt to challenge stereotypes which Americans might have about Spain and Spanish culture.	0–1–2
Online Literacies	You use a variety of multimedia resources effectively in your entries in order to communicate your ideas.	0–1–2
	The blog is easy to read, navigate and respond to.	0–1–2
Final Grade		_/20

As regards more reflective forms of learning there is another assessment format, which might also prove to be more comprehensive when we look at the complex interactions and personal trajectories of competence development in a virtual exchange, i.e. the portfolio. As a reflective instrument the portfolio allows students to chart their learning process over time, selecting and commenting on data from the exchange, such as interaction transcripts with their partners to show how, in specific critical incidents, they reacted and made decisions, highlighting their competence development. We are going to make two suggestions for using a portfolio in virtual exchanges. One is the European Language Portfolio (ELP) which was developed by the Council of Europe (2000) for language teaching, reflecting the aims of the CEFR. It contains a Language Passport which focuses on students’ language development, a Language Biography which helps learners in the planning and assessing of the language learning process, and the Dossier which allows learners to select material from their exchanges to show proof for their learning process.

### ***Online Exchange Portfolio***

What is a Portfolio?

A portfolio is a collection of your work that represents your development as a writer, language user, and intercultural communicator over time. The aim of a portfolio is to show how you have developed and how you have reflected on this process. You should not necessarily place your best work in your portfolio, but the work that most clearly represents your development.

What should your exchange portfolio contain?

Your portfolio should show proof that you have developed as a foreign language and culture learner during your online exchange and that you have also reflected on the learning process. To do that, you should include some of the following things:

1. An example of a post you wrote to your partner where you tried out new vocabulary and/or grammatical structures or ones which you do not usually use. Explain which are the new structures and vocabulary and how you felt about trying out new language.
2. A dialogue which shows a post you wrote which has some mistakes you made in English and then the answer from your partner where he/she corrects you. Explain whether you think your partner corrected you in a useful way or not. What did you learn from the corrections?
3. An example of a message from your partner where you learned new vocabulary or where you noticed how a certain grammatical structure works.
4. An extract which demonstrates something you learned about the foreign culture or where you realised something new about your own culture.
5. If you and your partner had a misunderstanding or disagreement in one of your exchanges, discuss what you learned from this breakdown of communication and how you resolved the situation.
6. Your reflections on what you learned about communicating and working in an online environment.

This ELP format is rather generic allowing learners to reflect on the content from different tools in their interaction with their partners, such as forums or blogs. If you primarily work synchronously in your exchange, you can also ask your students to keep detailed learner diaries, making an entry after each exchange, for example, so that they can use their diaries to provide evidence for their reflections. You can easily adapt the portfolio format to your specific instructional context.

Another portfolio example would be one that focuses more on the pedagogical competences of students in teacher education. The example below was used in an exchange between German and Polish M.A. foreign language teacher education students (primary and secondary school) focusing on the design of tasks (see the second task sequence on the design of intercultural tasks).

## *Portfolio Requirements*

A portfolio demonstrates to you, student teachers, and to me, the course instructor, the efforts, progress, and achievements you have made in the course of a seminar.

The portfolio consists of five parts:

1. After each task phase (there are three; getting to know each other – IC task – weebly task) answer the questions in the reflective online journal.

To help you answer the questions and reflect on your learning process it is helpful to document your development by collecting examples of your thoughts, ideas and reflections during the exchange in some form of personal data collection diary. You can continuously collect data in text form in a data collection tool of your choice, such as Penzu (<http://penzu.com>) or just plain MS Word.

2. Evaluate the collaboration with your team partners

### **2.1 Local working teams: German students**

If you are in a team how did you organize your working process? Positive / negative experiences? Why? What could we change to make your work in a group more effective?

### **2.2 International working teams: German-Polish Teams**

The purpose of including an evaluation of your virtual exchange is two-fold:

- a. It is to find out in what way the exchange with your partners contributed to your professional development.
- b. A reflection of your personal experience with virtual exchanges helps you to identify criteria to consider when you will initiate, support and evaluate virtual exchanges with your prospective classes (learn from our mistakes ☺).

Reflecting on virtual exchanges may refer to:

- your and / or your partners' ICC,
- your target language competence (fluency, correctness, politeness conventions etc.),
- your learner roles (autonomy, co-operation, sensitivity, commitment), the communication channels you prefer and why you prefer them,
- the way you organized the work for the task in your groups (distributing work, dealing with the different phases of a task etc),
- and any other features you consider relevant.

Again try to support your argument with data from your personal data collection diary that you consider relevant and to say why you find them relevant. Make sure that during the exchange you write down your reflections, impressions, and thoughts related to the exchange, to your partner, the use of tools or the communication situation in your diary. Remember: You can both learn from both positive and negative experiences ('critical incidents').

3. Choose one of the tasks that you have designed or worked with in the course of the exchange and explain why you consider it especially well designed. For your argument also refer to the literature we have used in the seminar or other theoretical texts.

4. At the beginning of the seminar you have made suggestions for teaching competences teachers need to be able to help their learners learn the language and become good telecollaborators themselves.

Please evaluate what you have learned during the seminar and to what extent you developed these or other teaching competences. To do so, refer to

- What you have learned while designing telecollaborative tasks with your partners (What did you find easy / difficult to do? What was new to you? What surprised you?). In how far did this seminar contribute to your professional development as an EFL school teacher engaging in telecollaborative projects?
- Comment and give examples.

5. Finally evaluate the quality of the seminar and the role of course organizers
  - Say what you appreciated and suggest what we could change. Say why. Do not formulate unrealistic demands (i.e. stick to the time-frame given).

Your portfolio should be 15-20 pages long.

Considering our learners, we need to make sure that our assessment criteria are transparent from the start. If we expect certain forms of interaction, models of good interaction practice should be shown to the learners because they might not be aware of online discourse or politeness standards. Another important thing we need to be aware of is the general workload of our students in the telecollaborative seminar because virtual exchanges tend to be workload intensive, not the least due to the fact that students are expected to be in regular contact with their international partners. Hence assessment and workload have to be balanced.

Since the EVALUATE project is a research project students will also be asked to generate data by answering questionnaires and reflecting on their learning process. To reduce the overall workload we suggest, therefore, to integrate the mandatory EVALUATE reflective online journal into your assessment or, if you do not have to assess students as is the case in some contexts, into the general workload of the telecollaborative course. The reflective online journal is organized into sets of questions to prompt student reflection before the exchange, after each of the three tasks, and at the end.

Depending on the assessment format you intend or are expected to follow in your institutional context, there are different ways of integrating or using the reflective online journal:

1. If you need some form of essay-like summative assessment at the end of your course, for example, you can use the set of questions at the end of the journal for this.
2. If you have decided to use a portfolio form of assessment, the reflective online journal can become the center piece of the portfolio and depending on your context and goals you can add other aspects, such as some of those suggested above in the Student Teacher Portfolio example.
3. A third option could be a combination of a reflective online journal with the assessment of some of the task products the students have created in the course of the exchange.

Finally, there is the issue of providing appropriate feedback in virtual exchanges, for example to the work produced by groups of students in response to task instructions. . Students can present

their results in the local classroom with their peers and the instructor providing feedback. But often only a few groups can present their findings in a session. Since all the groups will have put in a lot of work a form of written feedback on their products is very much appreciated. If you feel comfortable with your partner teacher's approach to assessment you can split the work on the written feedback.

## 7. Collaborating with your Partner Teacher

Throughout this process, it is important that both you and your partner stay in regular contact and maintain fluid communication. During the planning and design stage you need to be able to count on one another to develop an exchange format that works well in both your contexts, choose tools that all students will feel comfortable working with etc., and during implementation it will be important for you to share information about how the exchange is developing in your local contexts. Always keep in mind that your partner is working in a different cultural and institutional context and that s/he may encounter difficulties or challenges which are different to your own.

As a general rule, you should try to share updates at least once a week, explaining the progress learners have made and what problems or issues might have emerged in their classes. It is also important to keep your partner teacher up to date if your class is falling behind on deadlines or if students are going to be away from class and from the exchange for a certain period of time. Here is a checklist of issues which teacher trainers can use when updating their partner each week:

### Check-list for the Weekly Check-in:

Are your students on time with their current task?

Have any students mentioned to you any potential problems or issues in their online interactions?

Have any students mentioned that their partners aren't participating? If so, what international working group are they in?

Do you have any upcoming holidays or exams which might mean that students do not participate in their forums? When do you expect them to be 'back online'?

Have you used the exchange for any classwork this week? If so, tell your partner teacher briefly what you did and what the outcomes were.

### Table 5: Checking in with your partner teacher

An example of a teacher checking in with their partner teacher can be seen here:

Hi \_\_\_\_\_,

Hope you're doing well. My students have left messages in the task 3 forum asking their peers to comment on what they've written in their google docs.

Can you encourage your students to continue the writing / comment on what they've written / offer corrections? I feel some frustration in some groups as they told me they don't feel like they're getting replies. This is especially true in working groups 2 and 4.

Also, in group 1, I have a student, Marie, who told me that she felt put out because the Spanish students seemed to reply to the others and not to her. Is there any chance you could ask one of the students to reply directly to one of her messages in your class on Friday?

Next Monday is our last class. I'll be doing an oral evaluation with students and getting them to sign the consent forms. I've asked them to try to have their Google Doc essay finished by 9th Dec.

Best,...

In order to establish a sense of trust between partner teachers, many telecollaborators draw up and sign a Telecollaborative Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) before their exchange begins. This outlines what both classes are going to do together and serves as a (non-legally binding) commitment of both partner teachers' intention to carry their side of the collaboration.

An example of a Telecollaborative MoU can be seen below. Discuss with your partner teacher if you want to draw up such a document together and what it should contain.

## **A TELECOLLABORATIVE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

**TEACHER A** and **TEACHER B** from **INSTITUTION A** and **INSTITUTION B**

agree to carry out a telecollaboration/virtual exchange involving the following classes:

**CLASS DETAILS: NAME** and **STUDY PROGRAMME A**

and

**CLASS DETAILS: NAME** and **STUDY PROGRAMME B**

**TEACHER A** and **TEACHER B** agree on the following:

The exchange will last from ..... until .....

Students will do the following tasks:

**ADD PROPOSED TASKS HERE**

And use the following communication tools during the exchange:

**PROPOSED COMMUNICATION TOOLS AND VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

The exchange project will / will not be compulsory

Students at **INSTITUTION A** will spend ... **hours per week on project** and the project **will/will not** be assessed.

Students at **INSTITUTION B** will spend ... **hours per week on project** and the project **will/will not** be assessed.

**TEACHER A** and **TEACHER B** agree to communicate any changes in the programme and commitments to the exchange to one another as soon as they arise. We also agree to commit to the project for its full duration.

Signatures / Date:

(To sign, scan and email to one another)

**Table 6: An example of a telecollaborative memorandum of understanding taken from [www.unicollaboration.eu](http://www.unicollaboration.eu).**

## 8. Language Issues in Telecollaborative Exchange

Language is a key component of any telecollaborative exchange. One of the main reasons why teacher trainers engage their learners in telecollaboration is often to give them an opportunity to practise and develop their foreign language skills in a semi-authentic and motivating context. Many exchanges follow an e-tandem or teletandem model which involves, for example, native speakers of English and Spanish taking turns to communicate together in both languages in order to practise their foreign language skills together.

However, the EVALUATE project is interested in exploring if non-native speakers of English using *English as a Lingua Franca* to communicate online with their peers can improve their communication skills in this language. Lingua Franca telecollaborative exchanges are becoming more and more popular in university education and many argue that this approach produces a more balanced interactive environment than, for example, engaging students in interaction with native speakers. It also reflects more accurately the world where our student-teachers will be collaborating in the future.

Some key principles to keep in mind when using a lingua franca in telecollaborative exchanges include the following:

- Students may need support and feedback on language issues when writing their online contributions - especially at the beginning of exchanges. Encourage students to share drafts of their online messages or documents with you and with their classmates before sending them to their international partners. You can provide feedback not only on grammatical correctness but also on the politeness aspect of students' texts.
- Especially if you are teaching classes where foreign language is a focus of study, you should also find time to discuss the language used by the international partners in their online interactions. Students may need help interpreting what their partners mean in their messages or how they should respond. You might also like to use the texts of the international partners to highlight good use of language or of particular expressions and phrases. (An example of a worksheet which can help students to collect such language is provided in table 7 below.)
- If students find writing in English particularly difficult, you might consider providing examples of good writing which students can use as models for their own contributions to the international working group forums.
- You should be clear from the outset what percentage of students' final score for their telecollaborative exchange will be assigned to grammatical correctness and fluency. Many teachers choose not to evaluate students' English during the telecollaborative interaction itself, but rather assign a percentage of their marks in their final essay or presentation about the exchange to linguistic fluency and accuracy.

Look at the following questions, which were sent by students to their international partners in Lingua Franca exchanges. If these were questions written by your students, would you suggest they rephrase or restructure them in any way before posting them online? Or do you consider them good contributions to an online intercultural dialogue? How do you think their international partners will react to these messages? If possible, discuss your reactions with your partner teacher.

Students' questions in Telecollaborative Exchanges	Your reactions and suggestions for the students
It would be nice if you explained you school system to me in detail, so that I get a short overview over it.	
My teacher really wants us to be able to show that we have learned something about German culture. What is the power distance like in Germany? Can you ask your professors questions at any time or do you have to wait until the end of the class? Are there any groups that have more power than others? Are men and women treated equally? How important is marriage? What are the major religions in Germany?	
What about marriage? You said to me before that you get married next year, we would consider it very young, since no one, I know, gets married so young! Is it normal for you in the States? Or did you just find your dream-boy?	
Now I hope that you can answer me some questions. At first I would like to know something about your campus and its outward appearance. Than I would like you to tell me something about the organization at your university, about your timetable, the beginning of your terms. Tell me something about your social life, about spending your free time and about your hobbies. Do you have enough time for your hobbies or do you have to learn a lot? Is there anything about your university that you can complain of, are there any special problems?	
Now I have a lot of questions for you please write to me back as soon as possible because I have to write an essay about what you will write back to me. How is university life organised? Do you have a well prepared timetable? When do your semesters start? What is the difference between college and university? How does your campus look like (outward appearance)? How old are your buildings? Do you have parties on campus? Do you have a scholarship? Where do you meet your friends during the week? How much do you have to work for university? Do you have a lot leisure time? How do you get to university (by car?)? Do you have to work beside university?	

**Table 7: Students' questions in telecollaborative exchanges**

Now look at the following messages which were sent by students who were taking part in different telecollaborative exchanges using English. If these were messages written by your students, would you suggest they rephrase or restructure them in any way before posting them online? Or do you consider them good contributions to an online intercultural dialogue? How do you think their international partners will react to these messages? Again, if possible, discuss your reactions with your partner teacher.

**Message 1 from a student in England to her international partner in Spain:**

Comparing the English and the Spanish, the Spanish are not afraid to express their feelings, unlike the English are. And that could seem like arrogance to many foreigners. But, this is only because it is part of their culture to protect their privacy in a way which may seem quite closed to others. The majority of the English own the house in which they live. There is a very strong sense of privacy, and owning one's house means more intimacy and privacy. I relate this to the climate which doesn't allow people to stay out on the street or in other public places for a long time. For this reason, people in the street never talk to each other because if they are there, it is because they are doing something in particular. They are not going for a walk in order to pass the time and see if they meet someone they know in order to have a chat.

**Message 2 from a student in Germany to her international partner in Spain:**

For the Germans, being proud of their home country is something very delicate and difficult. Because of our history and the 2nd World War, most people still feel ashamed. But I think that we can't change our history, we can only learn from it. And I think that is what we've done. It was not our generation who killed millions of people, in fact, it was only a small group of radicals who managed to start a war with almost the whole world. I think we should not stop to talk about this topic over and over again, so that nobody will forget what has happened during the Hitler regime.

Nevertheless, hoisting the German flag in front of your house or in your garden is something you might be blamed for. For other nations showing pride is something normal – someone who does so in Germany can easily be called a Nazi. (Only if the German team wins the World Championship in Soccer or in any other competition it is accepted to do so.) ...

**Message 3 from a student in Spain to her international partner in the USA:**

To start telling u the things I dislike of America, I hate its government and the way of life consisting of "everything is ok as long as it produces money". Besides that, I think American people r not open at all and they behave as if they were sort of descendants of God, always trying to despise the rest of the people's cultures.

To end up talking about the bad things of America I will talk about the food, it's horrible 2 eat in McDonald's and places like that! However, concerning America, I love jazz music and its literature. I think it's so gorgeous!!

**Message 4 from a student in Germany to her international partner in Israel:**

... I can understand that the rockets [that were fired at your campus] are very scary and I'm very glad that we in Germany don't have war like you. And I think Israel isn't alone in charge for this conflict. But can you understand the people in Gaza? Is it ok to keep these people there like in prison? And why it isn't possible or why it's so complicated to find a solution for all the people in your region? And why the people especially the young don't do something for the international understanding between these cultures? So it's time so sit together, talk and finish this war. And both parties must grant facilities.

## Looking at Language for Online Interaction

Make a note of the expressions and phrases which your international partners used to do the following in your online forum. Learn some of them and use them in your online writing and in your essays. Keep this list at hand when you work on other forums so you can add new words and expressions:

### 1. Friendly / Polite ways of opening a post:

"I found all the responses from Spain to be very interesting..."

"Thank you so much for ..."

### 2. Phrases and expressions they use to agree with people:

"I agree with many of the points you make..."

### 3. Disagreeing with people:

"I'm not sure I quite agree about ..."

"Do you really think that ..."

"It's interesting that you think X. I've always felt that ..."

### 4. Introducing a new topic:

Have you ever come across ...?

Did you hear/read about ...?

I'm dying to tell you about ...

### 5. Summarising their main idea at the end of the message:

To sum up ...

In a nutshell ...

In conclusion ...

### 6. Referring to what others said:

According to X ...

In Y's view ...

### 7. Asking for more information / opinions about something:

"I also was curious about your second to last paragraph..."

"Could you tell me a little more about ..."

### 8. Vocabulary about \_\_\_\_\_:

Table 8: An example of a worksheet for analyzing and collecting language from online forums

## 9. Overcoming Common Problems in Telecollaboration

Unsurprisingly, when two partner teachers from different cultures and different institutional contexts engage their classes in online collaboration together, many challenges can arise. These can be on a practical level (e.g. problems related to technology or timetabling) but they can also have cultural or linguistic origins.

However, in telecollaborative learning, teachers are encouraged to look at problems and episodes of communication breakdown as potentially rich learning opportunities for their students which can serve as potential ‘jump-off’ points for exploring why members of different cultures interpret behaviour differently and how different cultural perspectives can be reconciled. Intercultural communication in face-to-face contexts and out of the classroom is also often characterised by misunderstandings and the need to deal with different behaviour and beliefs. With this in mind, it is fair to argue that when communication breaks down in telecollaboration, this can be exploited as ‘rich points’ for learning in the classroom. A well-known researcher of telecollaboration, Julie Belz went so far as to argue that “the clash of cultural faultlines in telecollaborative learning communities ...should not be smoothed over or avoided based on the sometimes negative results of a study such as this one; indeed, they should be encouraged (2002: 76)”. Here is a list of common problems which can emerge during a telecollaborative exchange. With your partner, discuss what you would consider to be the best way to deal with each problem and how you might exploit it as a learning opportunity in your classes:

<b>Possible problem or challenge emerging in your Telecollaborative Exchange</b>	<b>How would you and your partner teacher deal with this issue?</b>
A student in one of the international working groups is not participating in the task discussions. His partners are waiting for his contribution in order to complete their task.	
You had asked your students to create a presentation using a particular online tool. However, many of your students are finding it difficult and confusing to use.	
One of your students insists on using, what you consider to be, very informal and often rude language in the international working groups. He insists that this is the way young people communicate together.	
Your students go online regularly and answer any messages from their international partners within a day. However, their partner-class often takes a week to respond. Your students are frustrated by the delays.	
One of your students is complaining because one of her international partners is insisting on talking about religion in the discussion and keeps asking about the partners’ religious beliefs. Your student says she does not feel comfortable talking about this personal issue online.	
You send weekly updates on the exchange to your partner teacher. However, your partner has not responded in over two weeks.	

**Table 9: Dealing with problems or challenges in your telecollaborative exchange**

Finally, the teachers' "social presence" (SP) during the planning phase of a telecollaborative exchange and while the exchange itself is going on, is likely to have a huge impact on its success. Unfortunately, the importance of SP is often under-estimated.

Social presence is about first the teachers and then also the learners' ability to establish a relationship with each other despite barriers of time, distance and technology. In online or virtual teaching and learning contexts like telecollaboration the following tend to be lost:

- immediacy (feeling close)
- salience (being noticed and noticing others; highly dependent on non-verbal clues) and
- real time.

This can happen even in exchanges involving synchronous sessions – depending on the online tool or application that is used for the synchronous meetings. However, SP is not a quality of the technology used, but a quality of the participants involved and depends on the teachers' and learners':

- skills with the technology
- cultural disposition towards a particular communication that is going on
- interpretation of the SP cues projected by others into the online environment.

In asynchronous exchanges in particular, the teachers *can and need to model the sending and receiving of social presence cues* for the students. They also need to discuss with the learners at the outset of an exchange why doing the following during an exchange is important for establishing SP and the overall experience:

- Explicitly recognising partners' contributions ("I really like what you have said about ...").
- Mirroring words and expressions, i.e. using words and expressions your telecollaborative partners have used in your reply to their contribution to a forum.
- Prompting by ending your contribution to a forum thread with an open question or a comment such as "I am interested in finding out what your thoughts on ... are".
- Meta-commenting that is asking for clarification of unclear remarks or of emotional tone and intent, and, if necessary, suggesting changes to the rules of forum contributions (a separate "coffeeshop-type" forum running along the other exchanges can serve as a space for meta-commenting)
- Summarising or "weaving" comments that is grasping in one contribution the pattern found in a number of previous comments. To write weaving comments, the teacher or another learner must go carefully over a discussion, identify the theme(s), and make connections between contributions. In this way you acknowledge several participants and their contributions at the same time. If the learners take on responsibility for weaving the responsibility needs to be shared and time needs to be allocated to learning how to do this.

Trialling these "techniques" in the exchanges among the teachers during the design stage of a telecollaboration is crucial. Only then will it feel natural to model recognising, mirroring, weaving, etc. for the students and draw their attention to the impact of these techniques on establishing SP online.

More useful hints and tips can be found here: <http://webmarginalia.net/pedagogy/moderation-guide/>

## 10. Glossary of Common Terminology

The following is a collection of terms which have either been mentioned in this manual or are related to telecollaboration in teacher education contexts.

**Digital-pedagogical Competence:** The knowledge and skills which a teacher needs to plan, implement, evaluate and develop ICT-based activities in the classroom.

**Digital Literacy:** The set of competences required for full participation in a knowledge society. It includes knowledge, skills, and behaviour involving the effective use of digital devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops and desktop PCs for purposes of communication, expression, collaboration and advocacy.

**English as a Lingua Franca (ELF):** The use of English as a medium of communication between people of different languages.

**Electronic (E-) Portfolio:** An electronic portfolio (also known as an e-portfolio, digital portfolio, or online portfolio) is a collection of electronic evidence assembled and managed by a user, usually on the Web. Such electronic evidence may include input text, electronic files, images, multimedia, blog entries, and hyperlinks.

**Initial Teacher Education (ITE):** Also known as ‘pre-service teacher education’, this refers to courses or degrees of education which students undertake before entering the classroom as a fully responsible teacher.

**Intercultural Competence:** The ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with people of other cultures.

**International Working Group:** In this manual this refers to the small groups of online collaborators which include students from the different participating classes.

**Local Working Group:** In this manual this refers to the small groups of students in your class who are collaborating together on an activity related to their telecollaborative exchange project.

**Student Teacher:** A student who is taking part in an ITE course as part of his/her training to become a qualified teacher.

**Task:** A meaning-centred activity that is based on learners’ communicative needs and related to the real world.

**Task Sequence:** A collection of tasks that that can be combined together during a telecollaborative exchange project.

**Teacher Trainer:** A person who teaches the skills you need to be a teacher in a school.

**Telecollaboration:** A term commonly used in foreign language education to describe an approach to online learning which involves engaging learners in interaction and collaboration with classes in distant locations through online communication technologies under the guidance of teachers or trained facilitators.

**Transversal Skills:** A broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are believed to be critically important to success in today’s world. Generally speaking, these 21st century skills can be applied in all academic subject areas.

Virtual Exchange: A term that is similar to telecollaboration, although it is used in subject areas beyond foreign language education and often carries with it a different set of objectives.

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE): A Web-based platform such as Moodle or Canvas which is used for the digital aspects of courses of study, usually within educational institutions.

## 11. Literature for Further Reading

The following are a collection of publications which have either been mentioned in this manual or are related to telecollaboration in teacher education contexts.

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O'Dowd, R. (Ed.). (2007). *Online intercultural exchange: An introduction for foreign language teachers*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

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O'Dowd, R. & Lewis, T. (eds.) (2016). *Online Intercultural Exchange: policy, pedagogy, practice*. Routledge Studies in Language and Intercultural Communication. London: Routledge.

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The Council of Europe (2016). *Competences for Democratic Culture: Living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. Retrieved from: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806ccc07>

The Council of Europe (2000). *European language portfolio*. Strasbourg. Retrieved from <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portfolio>

#### **Platforms and websites for further reference:**

#### **Platforms for finding telecollaborative partners and resources:**

- UNICollaboration: [www.unicollaboration.eu](http://www.unicollaboration.eu)
- Telecollaboration for Intercultural Language Acquisition (TILA): <http://www.tilaproject.eu/moodle/>
- Cultura: <https://cultura.mit.edu/>
- EPals: <http://www.epals.com/>
- Etwinning: <http://www.etwinning.net/>
- Schools Online: <http://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/>
- IEARN: <https://iearn.org/>

#### **A selection of communication tools for Telecollaborative Exchanges:**

Blogger: <https://www.blogger.com/home>  
Google Drive: [drive.google.com](https://drive.google.com))  
Edmodo: [edmodo.com](https://www.edmodo.com)  
Schoology: <https://www.schoology.com/>  
Skype: [skype.com](https://www.skype.com)  
Vyew: [vyew.com](https://www.vyew.com)  
Wikispaces: [wikispaces.com](https://www.wikispaces.com)  
Google Hangouts: [www.google.com/hangouts](https://www.google.com/hangouts)

## Appendix 1: The EVALUATE Reflective Journal

This is the reflective online journal which students participating in the EVALUATE exchanges will be asked to complete at different stages during their project.

### Entry 1 – Before your virtual exchange

As you know, during the next few weeks you are going to take part in a virtual exchange project with partners in another country. Like you, your virtual partners are studying to become teachers. You are being invited to take part in this exchange because collaborating online with teachers and students in other countries is an important part of a teacher's work in our networked society.

Taking part in a virtual exchange such as this one will give you an opportunity to develop your ability to choose and use online technologies effectively for your teaching and learning. It will also help to improve your intercultural communication skills - i.e. your ability to work and collaborate effectively with members of other cultures and to understand different cultural perspectives and points of view. In some cases, it might also help to improve your ability to communicate with others in a foreign language.

Why write a reflective journal?

It is not sufficient simply to have an experience in order to learn. Without reflecting upon this experience it may quickly be forgotten, or its learning potential lost. Reflective writing gives you the chance to think about what you are doing more deeply and to learn from your experience. Writing your thoughts down makes it easier for you to think about them and make connections between what you are thinking, what you are being taught and what you are doing. At the end of the project, looking back on your journals, your written reflections will help you understand the journey you have gone through and see the progress you have made.

To help guide your reflection, there are some questions or prompts for you to think about. However, you are not obliged to answer all the questions. Simply answer the questions which you feel are most relevant to your learning experience in this virtual exchange project.

**Before you begin the exchange, we'd like you to take some time to reflect on these questions and to tell us your thoughts and ideas.**

1. Can you give a concrete example (a lesson, a series of lessons, or even an entire class/course) of *how* the use of technology has *enhanced teaching or learning* (a situation where you were either a learner or a teacher)? What was the topic and which tools and/or online environments were used?
2. Have you ever used online technologies before to communicate or work with people from other cultures? If so, give a concrete example.
3. How would you describe your cultural background?
4. What do you hope to achieve or learn from this virtual exchange?
5. What are your language learning goals (if any) in taking part in this exchange?

I want to ..	Extremely important	Quite important	Not one of my goals
be able to understand FL speakers better			
speak the FL more fluently			
use FL grammar more accurately			
pronounce the FL accurately			
use a wider range of vocabulary			
feel more confident in using the FL			
be able to interact with FL speakers			
Mention here any other language learning goal you may have:			

### Entry 2 – To be completed at the end of Task 1

1. In your first task you used different technologies - online tools - for communicating and presenting information. What have you learned about selecting technologies that enhance what you teach and how you teach? Use a concrete example to illustrate your answer.
2. What have you learned from your first task about selecting technologies that enhance what students learn and how they learn? Use a concrete example to illustrate your answer.
3. What do you feel you have learnt about your own and your partners' national and educational cultures?
4. Do you think you or your partners have any stereotyped views of each other's cultures? If so, describe them? Have you discussed them or just noticed them? What do you think lies behind these stereotypes?
5. After working together on this first task, what are your initial impressions of your virtual partners?
6. Did you learn or use any new elements of language in completing this task? If so, please list up to 5 aspects/items.

### Entry 3 – To be completed at the end of Task 2

1. Often the way an online tool is being used changes depending on what learners are supposed to do while carrying out the task. What have you learned about the need to adapt online tools to how learners use tasks in your subject area? Give a concrete example to illustrate your answer.
2. How do you feel about the interactions with your virtual partners so far? What are you finding easy or difficult? What steps do you think you could take to improve the interactions?
3. What have you learnt about the topics that you investigated? What cultural differences and similarities did you notice between the way your topic is dealt with in the two contexts?
4. Have you learned anything about your own or your partners' culture that you didn't expect?
5. Did you learn or use any new elements of language in completing this task? If so, please list up to 5 aspects/items.

### Entry 4 – To be completed at the end of Task 3

1. What have you learned so far about how technology influences your teaching approach? Give concrete example to illustrate your answer.
2. How do you feel about working in an intercultural team?
3. Describe any challenges you faced in your group work. What do you think the causes were? How did you try to solve them?
4. Did you learn or use any new elements of language in completing this task? If so, please list up to 5 aspects/items.

### Entry 5 – To be completed at the end of the exchange

Now that your virtual exchange has finished, we'd like you to take some time to reflect on these questions and to tell us your thoughts and ideas:

1. Has this project affected in any way how you will use online tools and environments in your own teaching career in the future?
2. After having collaborated with your partner/s in designing different online tasks, what is the most important thing you feel you have learned about how online tools and environments should be used for teaching? Give a concrete example.
3. Please describe how doing this course collaboratively with international partner(s) impacted your learning experience?
4. Given your online interactions with students from another country, describe any key changes that occurred in how you view the world?
5. If you used a foreign language to communicate in the exchange: How (if at all) has your ability to use a foreign language developed in the course of the exchange? Please tick any aspect you feel has improved.  
Use the last row to indicate any other aspect of your foreign language use that has developed in the course of the exchange

	Much improved	Improved a little	No improvement	Has got worse
Ability to understand				
Fluency in speaking				
Grammatical accuracy				
Accuracy of pronunciation				
Range of vocabulary				
Confidence in using the foreign language				
Ability to interact with foreign language speakers				
Other (please specify):				

6. If your foreign language use has not improved, can you explain why the exchange didn't help you in this way?
7. What was the most important thing you learned from this experience?

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