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Digital Internship Model for Higher Professional Studies

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DISSEMINATION PLAN

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Short Description

This deliverable is produced at the beginning of the project. It presents the dissemination strategy and the foreseen dissemination activities of the project.

Work-based learning is a substantial part of professional education. For a vast majority of study programs in Professional Higher Education Institutions (PHEIs), internship is mandatory for the programme accomplishment, with defined learning outcomes and ECTS-expressed workload. The internship concept is based on a planned period of experience in the workplace aimed at helping students develop particular skills, knowledge or understanding. Limited opportunities for students to physically approach the workplace have strongly affected and delayed the accomplishment of their studies. A clear need for the development of an internship model that will rely on the virtual-remote-digital format in response to the pandemic has been recognized. In addition, digital internship is a powerful tool for the inclusion of students who cannot participate in traditional internships due to financial, geographical reasons, or disabilities etc. The assignment of work-based tasks that can be performed digitally and remotely, with the development of adequate monitoring of student progress, can significantly facilitate student learning outcome achievement.

The goal of this project is to introduce the specific virtual internship model and methodology for VIs with practical workflows and guidelines, which enable quality design of customized and flexible internship programs. In order to enable functioning of VIs, a specialized web software solution will be designed and developed. It will be based on the proposed VI lifecycle model and methodology, and it will connect all parties (students, schools, and companies) within a secure and collaborative web platform. The goal is to provide a more flexible, efficient, personalized, low-cost, and adapted solution for VIs. The achievement of the project goal is envisioned through the orchestrated work of experts who have experience in organizing internship systems between PHEIs and companies and a group of experts who have experience in developing web-based platforms. The testing of the online platform for digital internship will be performed by piloting the internship in each country, as well as by virtual student exchanges between partners with complementary programs.

The expected results of the project include:

- Developed model for digital internship in professional higher education, including learning outcomes and methodology for its implementation
- Created online platform for the organization and management of virtual internships
- Created toolkit/guide for the implementation of virtual internships
- Created online platform for the organization and management of virtual internships
- Improved professional and digital skills of students
- Improved capacities of business enterprises to carry out digital internships
- Created network of educational institutions and business partners involved in conducting virtual internships
- Representatives of the education and business sectors informed on the possibilities for carrying out virtual internships and benefits from them

The model will support the needs of the internship triangle: student-PHEI-world of work. It will allow students to select and approach the digital internship position in the workplace; PHEIs to perform monitoring and validation of student progress, assessment of achieved learning outcomes, knowledge, skills and competences during a digital internship,



support to companies in term of training the internship mentors; and for the companies, it will facilitate the internship implementation, which includes designing of a complete or partial digital internship position, selection and delegation of particular tasks to students, monitoring of student progress and program accomplishment.

The development of a digital internship model, envisioned in this project, targets the PHEIs in emergency situations, but it also increases the responsiveness of PHEIs to the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, that blurred the boundaries between the physical, digital, and biological worlds. Accordingly, it targets students, providing them with more efficient work-based learning. In particular, it will widen the spectrum of internships that will be accessible for the students with difficulties. The digital internship model also targets the world of work, perceived opportunities and challenges of representatives of key stakeholders in the development of digital internships. All partners will benefit from networking by sharing good practices and widening their teaching capacities via the online internship applications. It will strengthen the cooperation within institutions becoming more open for mobility and successful acquisition of innovative projects under the EU schemes in the field of professional education development.

Contributing to the supply of digital education opportunities, the project will impact digital education readiness of project partners, but it is readily transferable to other professional higher education institutions. By adjusting learning requirements to outcomes, this digital internship model can be adopted at other qualification levels, particularly those in dual education.

Executive Summary

The DIMPS dissemination strategy builds upon two complementary channels for the project's objectives, activities and outcomes. The overall idea is to explore at maximum the opportunities of cooperation with existing academics networks and science centers on one hand, and networks of schools and national and local educational authorities on the other.

The consortium composition and the implementation scheme of the project reassure the maximum public participation and awareness. Furthermore, it is expected that each partner individually will have the opportunity to take advantage of the research in the introduced novelties and build on the project's achievements.

The aim of the project's dissemination plan is to create a multi-directional information flow, which will allow partnership and recipients to learn from each other by assimilating and acting on the information acquired. After completion, the project will deliver guidelines for the design of future museum-school collaborations and will present the capabilities that the advanced technologies are offering in bringing the modern pedagogy at schools.

A major dissemination platform will be the world-wide-web. All the generalizable aspects of the applications and services will be made accessible and will be demonstrated to interested user organizations, industry representatives, customer groups, etc.

Furthermore, the participation/collaboration in the consortium of large commercial companies will set the course of action for future exploitation.

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Scope

The main objective of the activities described in this document, is the effective dissemination of the project's deliverables and results. Thus, an effective dissemination of the project's results is safeguarded.

All partners will have active roles in the dissemination from the very beginning of the project, when the dissemination strategy is defined and dissemination plan created. However, as in case of other major project segments, there will be a lead partner nominated to orchestrate the whole process and achieve maximum effectiveness.

The dissemination will be orchestrated by University of West Attica and by the project coordinator, who comes from the applicant organisation, as it is a priority task on the project. UNIWA members are highly experienced in the administration and running various European programmes, and they are specialists in communication and management.

The dissemination coordinator will closely collaborate with coordinators in other partner institutions, or persons appointed by them, in activities carried out according to the calendar of dissemination, made to give a survey of steps to be taken at all levels, institutional, local, regional, national and, finally, transnational to reach targeted audiences and get the widest possible publicity. The involved persons need extensive experience in public event organization, good communication skills, contacts with media, and fluent knowledge of English.



Consequently, it is clear that accent will be put on exploiting scientific, sectoral and business networks of the project partners as external resources for the proper implementation of our dissemination plans, on the one side, and on selecting and engaging qualified partner staff as internal resources, on the other side.

Each partner will allocate material resources for the dissemination within the funding of management and implementation. Furthermore, the applicant organisation will employ intellectual and creative resources of its staff and students from the study programmes of ICT, to produce the visual identity of the project and develop and maintain the website. As it possesses a printing facility, a large portion of printed dissemination materials will be made there.

Target Dissemination Groups

The model will support the needs of the internship triangle: student-PHEI-world of work. It will allow students to select and approach the digital internship position in the workplace; PHEIs to perform monitoring and validation of student progress, assessment of achieved learning outcomes, knowledge, skills and competences during a digital internship, support to companies in term of training the internship mentors; and for the companies, it will facilitate the internship implementation, which includes designing of a complete or partial digital internship position, selection and delegation of particular tasks to students, monitoring of student progress and program accomplishment.

The development of a digital internship model, envisioned in this project, targets the PHEIs in emergency situations, but it also increases the responsiveness of PHEIs to the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, that blurred the boundaries between the physical, digital, and biological worlds. Accordingly, it targets students, providing them with more efficient work-based learning. In particular, it will widen the spectrum of internships that will be accessible for the students with difficulties. The digital internship model also targets the world of work, perceived opportunities and challenges of representatives of key stakeholders in the development of digital internships.

By its essence, this is not a “silent” project that matters only to the partners, since it involves economy sector representatives and internship participants from the very beginning of the project activities. The issues of the digital education readiness in terms of work-based learning in general tangle huge target audiences worldwide. Therefore, the efforts to introduce changes for the better and obtain positive results should be detected outside the partnership.

Dissemination activities at the local level will first target partner institutions. The employees of partner institutions will be informed about the project objectives and planned activities so as to contribute to their realization according to their own interests and capacities. Since the project encompasses diverse types of activities such as the preparation of project documentation, visual identity and website creation, workshops, digital internship definition and development, preparation of tutorials, internship piloting, summarizing of results through paper writing, peer reviewing, and a conference, outside dissemination, management, etc., there is space for the engagement of different types of internal stakeholders. The more individuals are involved, the greater the dissemination impact within the institution and beyond. The proper activation of partners’ own employees throughout the project life cycle steers the dissemination process. The awareness of the project is gradually raised and becomes present in day-to-day activities of the partners.

As direct beneficiaries, students from partner institutions will be informed about the new digital education opportunity and encouraged to take advantage of it. They should be well informed about the objectives of the project and benefits they can obtain from its course activities, in order to get motivated for the action.

One of the main target groups critical for the successful implementation of the project is made of employers from industry that will conduct internship activities. This group will include companies already connected with partner PHEIs through the interinstitutional agreements. They will be involved in project activities at the model piloting stage.



All partners are members of local, regional, national and/or transnational networks, created on educational, sectoral or business bases. The organizations belonging to such networks are a significant target group, as they already share a lot in common with the project partners. Hence, it is natural to disseminate project results within such audiences, at mutual multiplier events like seminars, conferences, workshops, round tables, and other occasions.

The dissemination strategy has been designed (and will evolve during the duration of the project) to reach:

- higher educational institutions
- students
- world of work
- educational policy makers (national agencies, ministries)
- curriculum developers

Dissemination channels

The DIMPS project website <http://www.dimps-erasmus.com>, is one of the main tools for disseminating information about the consortium and the achievements of the project, providing visitors with comprehensive information about its context and objectives. The main DIMPS web site, deployed in English, will be followed by three other web sites managed at local level in each test site that will be in local language to be more accessible on field.

Most significant news from those web sites will be translated into English and reported on the main one. The home page hosts also the links to DIMPS social media accounts. The DIMPS website has also a Public Documents area containing the links to public documents that each visitor can download.

There will be three sub-areas: public deliverables, articles and scientific publications. The website will also be used to involve external stakeholders in the DIMPS activities.

Publicity material and publications will be made available or referenced. External users will thus find downloadable public documents from the project, notices on conferences either hosted by the DIMPS team or where the team will be presenting information on the project, academic papers generated by project team members concerning the project, and other documents that provide valuable insights on what the project is all about to external parties.

The website is developed and updated on a regular basis by WSAAS and has been made operational and accessible to the public since April 2021.

In all four partner countries due attention is paid to professionals from printed and electronic media, journalists and reporters, who make a small but specific target group informing the general public about the project from the local to higher levels.

Dissemination Material and its Use

As a primary tool to facilitate exchange of information, a web based shared collaborative environment has been set up which serves as a project tracking system accessible to all partners, in order that all information/documentation is easily accessible and kept up to date with little effort.

A Google Drive repository for the DIMPS project has been created which gathers all sorts of documents generated during the project lifetime. Google Drive is a file storage and synchronization service which allows users to store files in the cloud, share files, and edit documents, spreadsheets, and presentations with collaborators. Besides being a repository of information, it is a common environment for the day-to-day work enabling several users to edit and upload files without overwriting them (working documents, drafts, templates).

A set of folders has been created and shared among a definite list of representatives from each partner organizations. Requests for access should be addressed to the PC. Documents must be uploaded under their correspondent folder and must be named in a clear way so that everybody can have an idea of what the file is about.

Google Drive supports also revision history, so files accidentally deleted could be recovered from any synced computers or directly from the service web interface. The documents contained in Google Drive are in different formats, but all modifiable.

A set of rules for working cooperatively on these files was proposed and agreed: DIMPS team group use the Word revision tool to track changes to the deliverables that are in place. In case of contemporary changes to the same file, the name of the file will be specified as follows: Number and title of the deliverable + Acronym of the partner organization that reviewed it + REV + day month year (IONr.NAME WSAAS REV 01062021.doc).

To ensure consistency in the DIMPS project when communicating with external stakeholders or interested parties, a set of standard templates for various communications activities has been developed.

These templates include:

- deliverable template - word documents template
- standard PowerPoint presentation template
- standard logos for the project
- attendance sheet template For internal communication the following templates were also developed:
- Timesheet reporting template

They are all available for download in a dedicated Google Drive folder and at web site www.dimps-erasmus.com

Key dissemination activities

The dissemination starts from the very beginning, and will develop as the project progresses. Since the target groups are clarified, the Dissemination plan will be used to reach them all through a variety of dissemination activities.

Key dissemination activities will include:

- **The visual identity and project website** will be created at the beginning and updated during the project life-cycle and sustainability period (5 years). The website will be made in English and partners languages (Serbian, Bulgarian, Greek). The website will be linked with official websites of all partner organisations (expected 250 hits/month, 5 entries monthly)
- The project will be presented to other colleagues and departments and consortium member institutions through **internal dissemination sessions** – at least four internal dissemination sessions (16 session in total)
- **National workshops** that will bring together between 8-15 officials from PHE Institutions, companies and government will be organized to present project outputs to the stakeholders and to receive feedback from them (3 sessions)
- The project will be presented to specific and wider public through e-bulletins and the **social networks**. A Facebook page, a Twitter account and a blog make the project activities and results easy to reach in a less formal manner, and then direct the targeted stakeholders or general audience to the official website.
- **The participation at dissemination events:** info days, seminars, workshops, round tables, education and employment fairs, community events or transnational conferences, organized by the partners or by third parties, are seen as dissemination events regardless of other functions they may have. They are specifically aimed at selected target groups or they should gather a mixed audience, and have the potential of being covered by interviews and reporting.
- **Media appearances** of project team members can precede and/or follow regular national and transnational meetings, which also qualifies such events as dissemination events.
- **Printed publications:** Although the use of electronic material is stressed due to easier access and cheaper production, some printed material is necessary, in particular for dissemination purposes. Flyers, brochures and similar handouts above all, and products already mentioned strengthening the visual identity of the project.
- As a KA2 project Digital internship mode for professional higher education will use the **Erasmus+ Project Results Platform** developed for dissemination purposes by the European Commission for Erasmus+. In this way, an overview of the project, its outcomes, intellectual outputs and other tangible project results will be available to visitors interested in the topic and possible contacts with project partners initiating collaboration. Through the Platform, viewers can approach the project



website, which will be maintained and updated with news relating not only to reflections on the project and its results, but also to new forms of collaboration between old partners. The website will be kept running for the period of five years after the completion of all project activities, and the modality of its functioning is closely explained in the Sustainability section.

The exploitation of the project results is based on the accreditation and further implementation of virtual internships in partner PHEIs. Also, the project results will be closely shared with educational, sectoral or business local, regional, national and/or transnational networks, in order to be exploited by other educational institutions as well.

Together, project dissemination and exploitation activities will:

- increase the digital education readiness of professional higher education institutions in terms of work-based learning
- improve the perception of companies regarding the benefits of engaging apprentices from PHEIs
- raise the awareness of companies of any size regarding the opportunity to establish or join a virtual internship system in order to acquire, train and employ young talents
- share solutions and knowhow with regard to establishing and maintaining digital internships across the region
- engage stakeholders and target groups in the provision of educational services
- develop new partnerships between PHEIs and local economy

There will be no restrictions whatsoever regarding the access to the digital form of materials developed in the project lifetime and their further use in case they are intellectual outputs. On the contrary, all intellectual outputs will be available for free to the widest possible public via the project website, also easily accessible and organized in such a way to ensure visibility and usability of these items grouped in different categories of its e-library.

As for tangible deliverables produced, like reports, plans, and similar documents, apart from the ones made for dissemination purposes, they belong to the documentation intended to be used internally. Hence, they will be made available digitally at any time to all members of the partnership and appointed officials of the national and transnational Erasmus+ bodies during and after the project lifetime as prescribed by the rules of the Erasmus+ programme.

Sustainability of the project DIMPS

Sustainable outcomes and their use include:

- Created digital learning opportunities that will provide flexible, accessible and more inclusive work-based teaching and learning allowing specialist knowledge to cross geographical boundaries;
- Increased digital education readiness of all partners involved
- Acquired knowledge and competence of student participants
- Inter-institutional knowledge transfer and toolkits will ensure sustained efforts towards professional development of educators and teaching staff;
- Improved perception of companies regarding the benefits of engaging apprentices from PHEIs through a virtual internship system as an opportunity to acquire, train and employ young talents

Downloadable materials displayed on the project website or distributed on CDs or other physical carriers are available as open educational resources to all those interested in re-using and/or adapting them through Creative Commons licensing

None of the activities stated herein requires financial support to be carried out after the end of the funding period with the expected 5 years' lifecycle of the platform. Once incorporated into partner institutions regular educational offer, the virtual internship will be subjected to the regular follow-up and impact analysis as the part of the institutional quality control.

The continuity of the project activities and results in the same or similar form depends on the partnership, and we believe the structure of our partnership promises the engagement of all organisations in this direction, evolving gradually through the close collaboration during the project into a developed transnational network.