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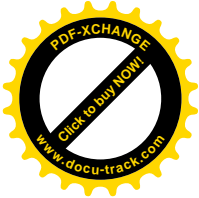
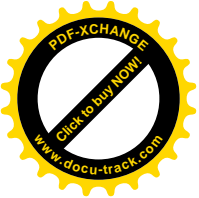
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Evaluation report for eHLEE (2006)

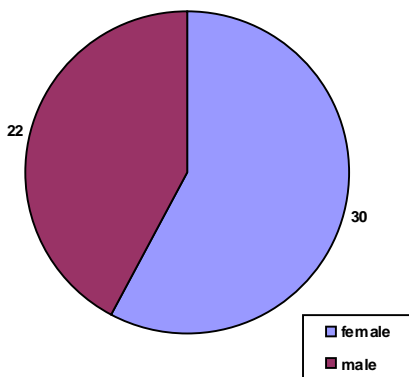
Introduction

First of all we analyzed the questionnaire the students filled in at the beginning of the course then we compared some of the answers to those of the questionnaire at the end. In the second half we took a critical look at the platform and the structure of the course taking into account the results of the questionnaires. Concerning the quotations we cited the answers as written in the questionnaires and therefore we did not correct mistakes.

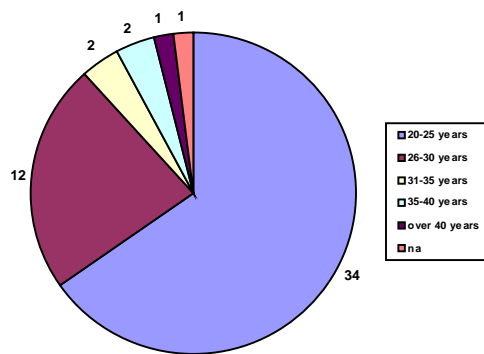
Gender and Age

At the beginning of the course:

sex:



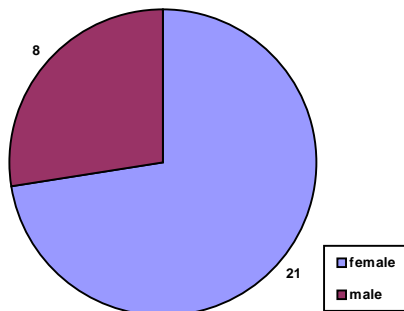
age:



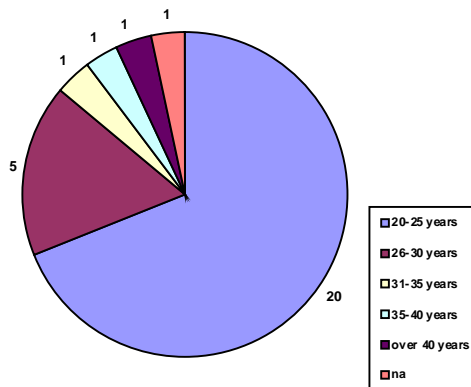
52 students, 30 female and 22 male, sent the questionnaire back to Turku. The majority of them were between 20 and 25 years old, followed by the 26 – 30 years of age (12). Most of them were in their 4th and 5th term, which is the second and third academic year.

At the end of the course:

sex:



age:

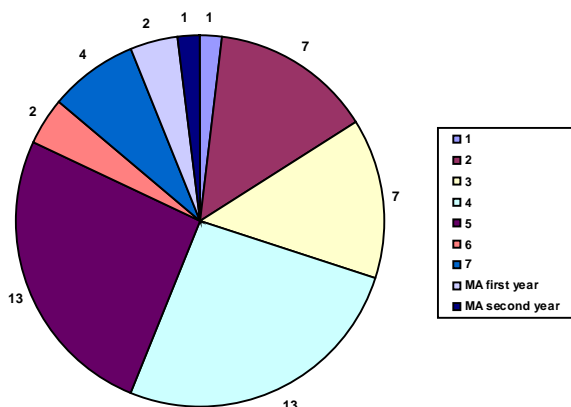


In the end only 29 students, 21 female and 8 male, answered the questionnaire and sent it back to Turku.

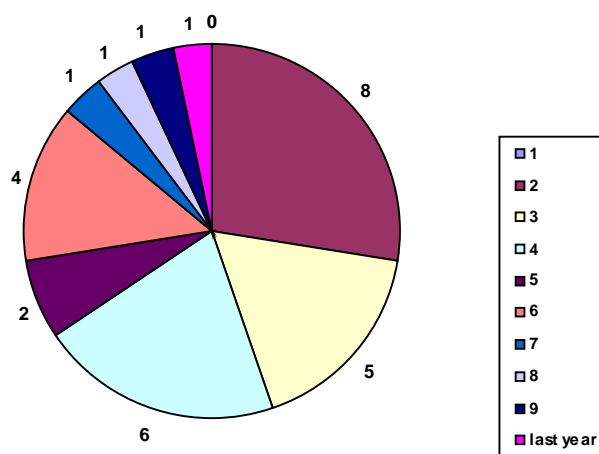
The majority again were the ones between 20 and 25 (20), followed by the students from 26-30 (5).

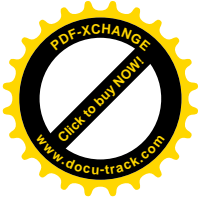
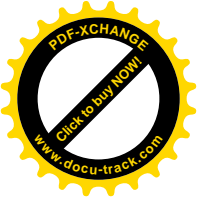
Comparing the academic years it is obvious that the majority of the students who kept on going with the course were at their second and third academic year.

first questionnaire:



second questionnaire:





In General

1. How did you hear about the course?

The answers to the question how they heard about the course were quite similar. The number of students who found the course on the websites of their universities (13) equals the number of those who found it in the university programmes (17). But they are both outnumbered by those who got the information from their tutors, professors or fellow students (20).

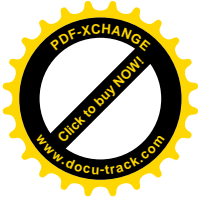
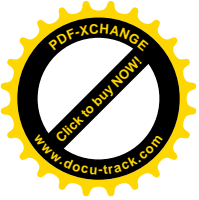
Conclusion:

Although a lot of students use the internet for information the majority gathers information through personal contacts. This means that universities should be encouraged to put more information onto their websites so that the students get used to look at the pages for important and interesting information. The team who organized the course did well in announcing the course on websites as well as personally and locally, to spread the information.

2. What did you think of the enrolment procedure?

Concerning the enrolment procedure most of the students were satisfied (38 – ok), 13 found it easy and only one had difficulties. Their comments supported this in a way.

Only eight students spoke about some minor problems or found it a bit complicated but they all could solve their problems after a while.



Some of them wrote that it took them some time to get accustomed to the page. The majority of 27 students had no difficulties with the enrolment procedure even though they had never attended an online course. Especially the Erasmus students and those who were abroad liked it to enrol online. But also the students from Turku University liked the enrolment procedure because they were already used to it.

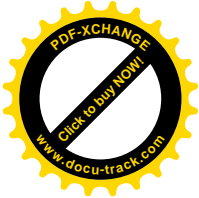
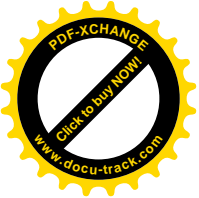
Only one student found the page a bit confusing but nevertheless managed to enrol. Another one suggested having a short description of the thematic groups in phase five, probably to help with the choice of the thematic group.

Conclusion:

In general the students liked to enrol online because it was very convenient especially if they were abroad. They did not face severe difficulties because the enrolment procedure was clearly announced on the webpage. Although it took some time for some of the students to get used to the page they all managed despite minor technical problems. They could also ask the tutors for help which shows that the tutors' roles are very important and that it is not wise to reduce personal tutoring in online courses.

3. Have you ever taken part in an online course?

36 of them have never before taken part in an online course whereas 16 already had some experiences. When they wrote about their experiences they only mentioned problems with technical issues as negative experiences whereas concerning content,



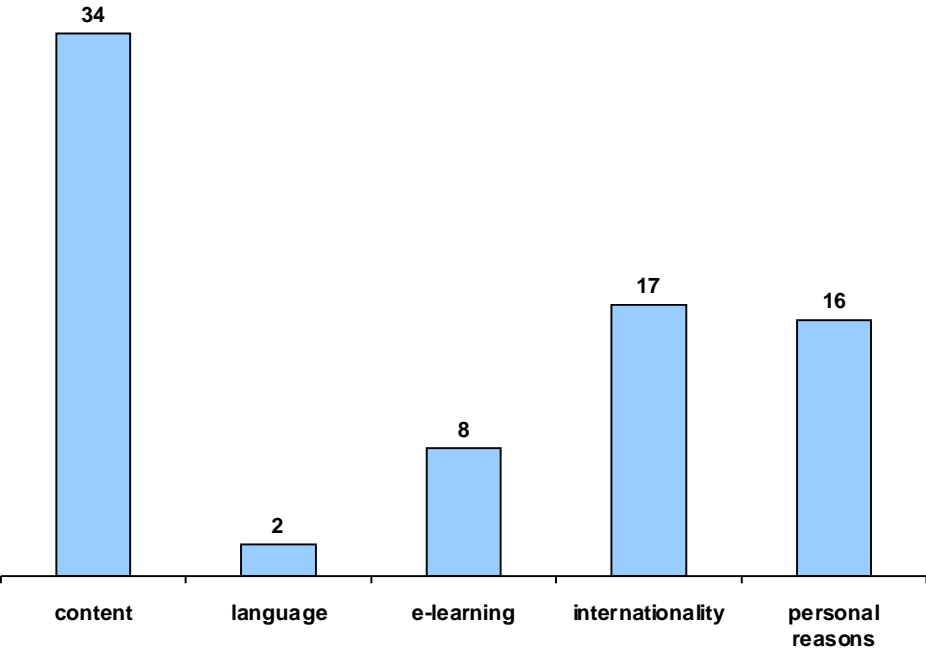
discussions, material and time management a lot of them approved of this way of studying.

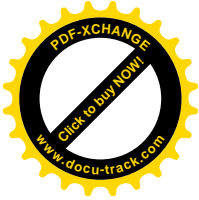
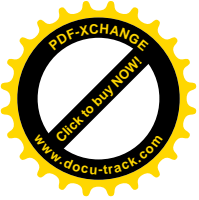
Conclusion:

Those who had taken part in online courses before very much approved of this way of studying for several reasons: One important facet is working together with people from different places they would never meet otherwise. Another one is working independently from place and time, meaning personal time management which is very convenient for working people or parents. This aligns with the experiences from other online courses and arguments found in literature.

4. Why did you register for the course?

The reasons for registering for this course were mainly four:





- most of them were interested in the content (32)
- followed by the aspect of internationality (17)
- then they named e-learning (8)
- two students enrolled because of the hope to improve their language skills.

Concerning the topic some students were interested because they had little knowledge about it and some had already worked on the topic and wanted to improve their knowledge.

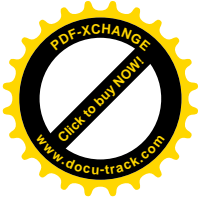
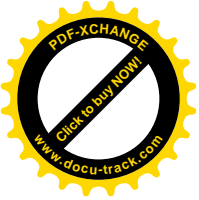
Quite a few students (12) wrote about their personal interest in taking this course. For some of them it was their own background:

"I am not European myself but I live in Europe, and so a lot of concepts of the course are things that I can identify with." And another student wrote: "My father is Italian, my mother Argentinean. I would like to discover what identity is, and if someone can create their own identity with more than one culture inside." "I live near Brussels so everyday I am confronted with the European question."

Some thought about the content and the e-learning issue in respect to their future and hoped to learn something which might help them in their working lives:

"Because I am willing to become a Conference Interpreter, and I think this topic is very useful for my general background."

"I'm interested in the way of e-learning with internet, and as I'm studying as a teacher I really think I will use the experience to develop forms of online-learning with my future pupils."



Another one wants to become a teacher and thought it might be very useful in gathering experience for the future job in a classroom:

“ ..this course would be very interesting for us future teachers ... It gives us a chance to see how students and schools can cooperate with each other over internet. And the topic and purpose of this course is also very interesting!”

Several students hoped to gain something for their further studies:

“ I have a personal interest for the topic... I hope to write my final dissertation about topic” “... it was a good compliment to my exam essay.”

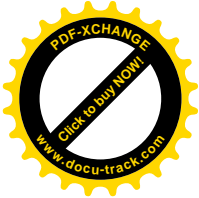
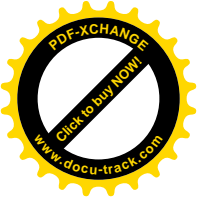
“I thought it might help with my... thesis...”

“to complete my BSRS studies.” “I studied a course called Master in Euroculture before and this online course was a good way to continue with the same subject.”

Working together on an international level:

Another very important reason for taking part in this online course was the international level of this course. Many students mentioned that they liked the idea of working together on an international level and expected an increase in knowledge about identity and cultural knowledge from discussing the topic with students all over Europe.

“I find it very interesting to get in contact with other people from different places all over Europe. I believe that it will be very interesting to see if the perception of identity is different in other countries and how that might reflect on our discussions.”



“I also think that the differences between nations make life more interesting. You wish to learn more about others and by doing this your identity grows stronger.”

“Apart from this the international character of the course appealed to me.”

“Because it is a very interesting and unique offer. ... I like the idea of being in a class course with students from abroad, I like the kind of work that is to be done and I also find a sort of Erasmus ambiance that I was missing...”

“Also, normal courses do not offer the possibility of working on an international level.”

Apart from the content and the internationality of this course, e-learning in itself is an important tool, closely linked with the international aspect. It is viewed – apart from all the other advantages – as the possibility of meeting people from other countries.

“I thought it sounded interesting to participate in a web based course and also to work with students from other countries.”

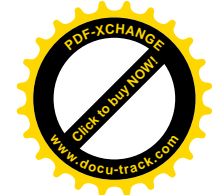
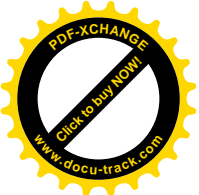
“I am interested in the theme of otherness and studying in an international e-surrounding sounded a lot of fun! So it suited my studies well.”

“Wanted to try out a new innovative thing..”

“And because it is a new experience for me.”

“I am interested in ... and also in learning to use the web in studies.”

“I like online learning.”



Conclusion:

The students registered because they mainly liked the topic/content of the course. They were really interested in European identity and they appreciated the way of online-teaching and working together with students they would never meet otherwise. So working on an international level was really something new to them and they liked the idea so much that this was a decisive factor, too for choosing the course. They were quite sure to learn a lot from the discussions with students from other countries and they were ready to invest a lot of work in the course because they appreciated the internationality which was something they did not have before.

Online-learning only made the international work possible and the students appreciated web based learning for this reason but also for the possibility of choosing time and place to study.

In the end they all stated that their expectations had been fulfilled and they hope to attend another international course.

Comparing Questionnaires

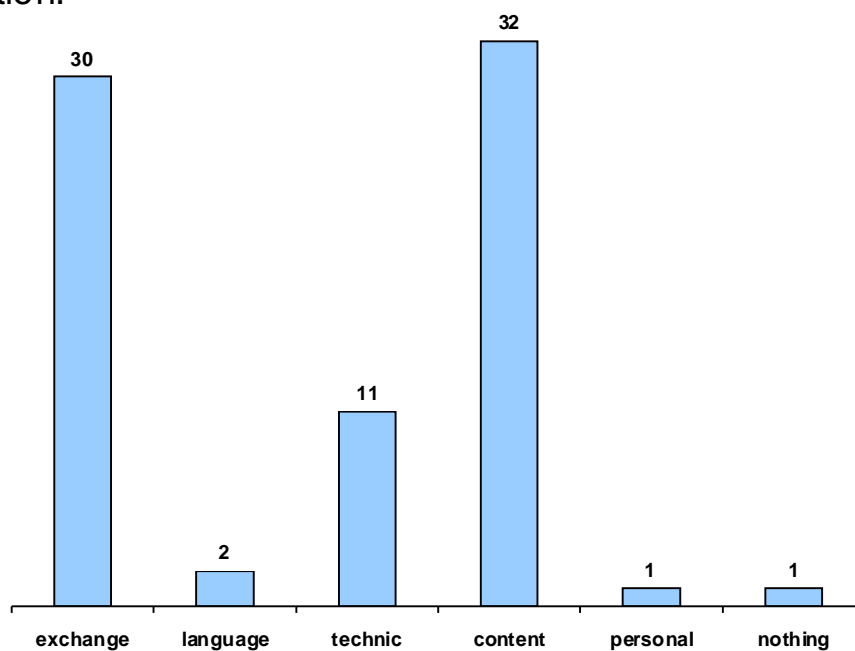
5. What do you expect from this course?

Asked about their expectations of the course the preferences varied from content (32) to exchange (30) to interest in technics. 2 mentioned language again, one said he/she had no expectations at all and another one wanted to collect personal experiences.

Looking at the content, the students expected good material, interesting discussions and international collaboration in order to

enlarge their knowledge about identity in different ways. They also expected to learn some historical methods and to use e-learning for further studies.

As in question 4 nearly all of them expected intercultural exchange to broaden their understanding of the topic of identity. They stressed the fact that they were very keen to know what students from other countries think about concepts of identity which might influence their own perception.



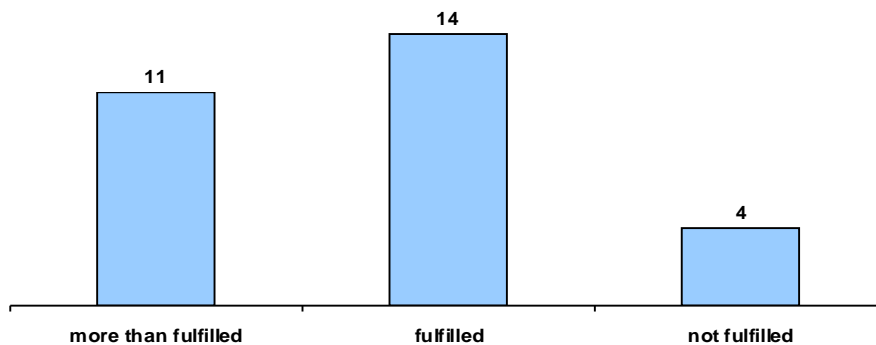
“I would like to become more familiar with European history and European perspectives. Mostly I hope to get something out of the international learning environment because I think all of us students can learn from each other.”

or e.g.:

“To create my own opinion of Identity, to learn a lot about History, and to know different points of views from the rest of the participants.” “my objective is to learn by sharing information among different country people.”

1. question on end-questionnaire

Answering the question about their expectations being fulfilled, 11 answered that they were more than fulfilled, 14 wrote fulfilled and only 4 said their expectations had not been fulfilled.



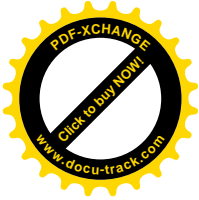
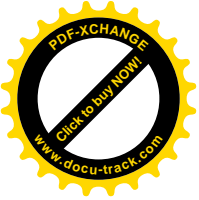
Conclusion:

Regarding the answers of the second questionnaire at the end of the course it can be said that the majority of the students were very satisfied with the course because their expectations had mainly been fulfilled or more than fulfilled. Those who had not been satisfied with the course did not exactly say why but in general it is interesting to see their elaborate expectations and their sophisticated answers at the end as well:

“My expectations have been greatly fulfilled, at first I did not think how much I could learn from this course. In fact, I am surprised because I have learnt from other’s experiences and also from the texts, which I found really interesting.”

“Yes, I have learned a lot about other languages, about other countries and not only in terms of identity, but about history generally speaking.”

“Yes, I have learned a lot about other languages, about other countries and not only in terms of Identity, but about history generally speaking.”



This does not imply that they were not critical but their criticism was well founded and sophisticated, too:

“Only in the migration phase, it would have been nicer to have changed from country and not the whole three weeks about Wales. The local phases I would drop.”

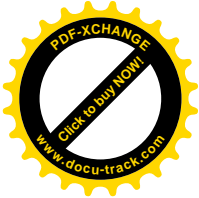
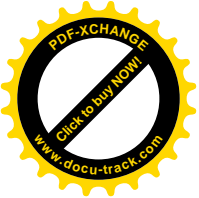
“I don’t regret this experience at all, but I think the way we approached the topic was much too theoretical. So in this context I was a little bit disappointed.”

In general they were very satisfied and ready to work more than in other courses because they appreciated this special offer.

6. Do you already know something about the topic?

Eight students wrote that they were acquainted with the topic which was due to the fact that they had attended some courses before, concerning the issue of identity. They were fourth year students, meaning students in their first year of Master studies or German students in their last year. They clearly wrote what they had done so far, they mentioned authors or theories:

“I think that the topic is good for a work group, and I hope to complete my acquaintances. I have studied by myself something about it, reading Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach (One of my favorite philosophers) and some books of anthropology. Also I have made a examination of anthropology. However this topic is too immense that my present acquaintances are very modest.”



Another one wrote:

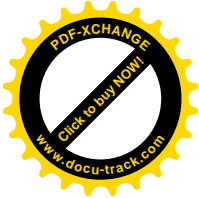
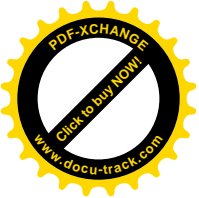
"I know that "identity" is a very old concept in fact at one time I know some things about the concept of identity, because I studied Logic Philosophy at the University. Platone thought that identity is a unit, for Aristotele it is the unit of the substance. Locke thought that after looking at a thing for many times, there is identity, for Hume it is not true, because there is an unit not identity. Leibniz spoke about identity and equality. Frege, Quine and Wittgenstein find fault with this thought. I know in addition something about European identity, because I studied History. This concept is very old: it is a religious aim of Middle ages. Penn, Leibniz, Montesqieu, Kant have utopian ideas. Saint-Simon, Mazzini and Proudhon have more awareness about this topic and after the "First World War" there were more realistic plans."

The ones who wrote that they knew a bit about the concepts of identity stated that they only had some common ideas.

Conclusion:

Those who were already preoccupied with "identity" hoped to learn more about concepts and theories and they all stated that this field is so large that they still could learn something. In the end, when looking at the questionnaire after the course, only one mentioned he or she was not satisfied. This means that even those who had already known quite a lot about identity gained more knowledge or at least a differentiated knowledge about identity.

The ones who had little or no knowledge of the topic were keen on increasing their understanding of it because they felt it important to get acquainted with European identity living in the European Union.



“I can’t say I know much about the topic, but I think it’s very interesting and important to study it. Of special interest in Europe today when cooperation increases in many ways (politic, economy, etc.)”

“Many people in Europe still have problems to see themselves as Europeans. People usually say “I’m in the first way English or Swedish or French”. I think the contents of this course is to define an European identity, which is very difficult I think.”

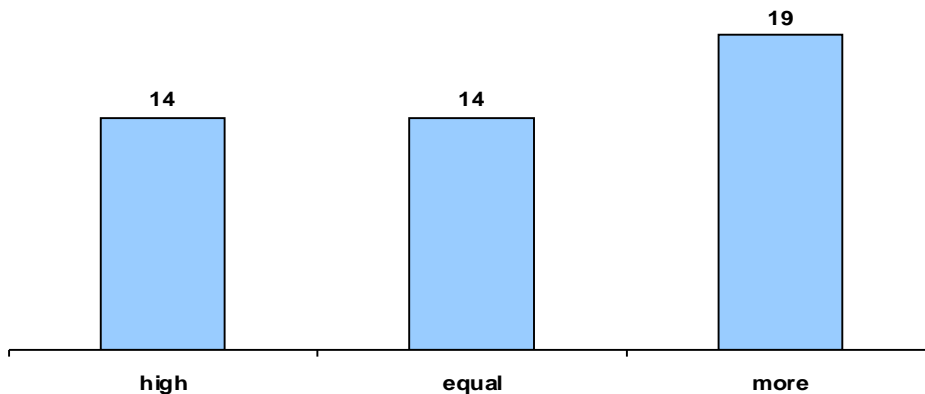
Their perceptions show that they had thought intensely about the issue.

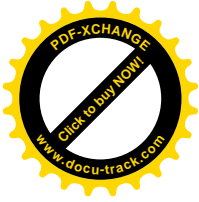
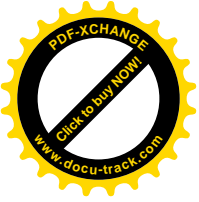
“I assume that this course will examine the themes of race, religion, culture and language in relation to identities.”

“I expect that we will be discussing themes such as identity, and how it develops, as well as individual and collective identities.”

“I assume that we are going to discuss birth or building and relations of identities in different European contexts, like nation states and citizenship, ethnic and religious groups etc. My earlier knowledge on topic(s) is mainly from nationalism-related studies like B. Andersons, or from identity/alterity theories of S. Hall and E. Said. My knowledge is quite superficial.”

This is a hint, too, why most of the students wrote that they had increased their knowledge. As can be seen in the questionnaire at the end when they had to evaluate their gained knowledge:





2. question on end-questionnaire

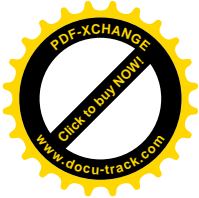
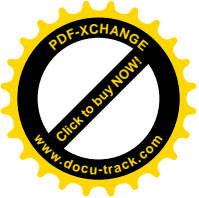
Commenting on their gained knowledge 14 out of the 29 evaluated their increase of knowledge as high, 14 as ok and only one as low.

The learning outcomes of the course can be seen in the course description:

- *“examine, how ideas of identity are created, reinforced and modified in the European history. – study this question through different viewpoints and time periods.*
- *Focus on the gender, language, politics and religion.*
- *examine these questions through different time periods and topics, eg. Roman antiquities in forming classical and contemporary identities, Celtic fringe, Jews in European history,
Swedish national identities, National identity as a cultural construct in 19th century Finland, modern migration.*
- *use key concepts concerning European identity in history.”*

Taking a look at the stated learning outcomes one can say that students had gained more knowledge, sometimes at their own surprise. So in the end the questionnaire helped them to realise their learning outcomes. Because usually one does not reflect a course the same way when there is no evaluation.

In terms of identity many students named that they learned a lot but unfortunately they did not specify their learning outcomes. These two quotations were the most specific ones:



"I learnt a lot of things about identity. Now I know that it is the product of a lot of factors and to analyse it is very difficult. At first I knew the concept of identity of the other students, then I analysed historically it. I studied in particular the link between language and identity and in local group I focused on the Norman Sicily and the Turks and the Mediterranean, showing like the process of forming identity is very complex. At the end I explored the creation of a sense of belonging through language. I have a great knowledge and I know the complexity of identity."

"I gained an in-depth knowledge on identity and what it actually means. I learned more about the EU. I learned about different nation's historical identities."

Others aspects mentioned were:

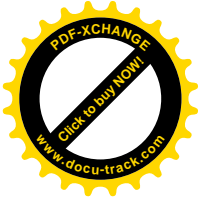
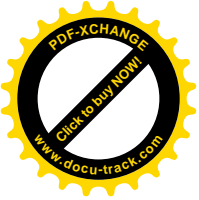
"I have learnt a lot, not only about the Jews (my local presentation) but also about the use of language and the importance of language in building a national identity."

"I think that thanks to this course I have expanded very much my knowledge about identity, Europe and gender and I expanded my horizons debating ideas with students from other countries."

The other comments were vague or mixed up with a lot of aspects which are interesting but which are difficult to specify according to the learning outcomes mentioned in the course description.

One student wrote:

"I learnt a lot, really, from the academic point of view but also from a human point of view. We were a lot, from different countries, and we really had to listen to each other, respect each other's opinions,.. And I also found interesting doing group works, because in Italy we are not used to do it, but we'll probably need it



for our future work. I also like the idea of being curious about the arguments arisen during the course, it was stimulating!”

“I not just gained knowledge in the english language, but also in history (Italian history, Finnish history) as well a lot of authors (Gellner, Hobsbawm, Simon de beauvoir, HErder, etc...) that enriched my life.”

Nearly all the students stressed, more than any other aspect, the increase of knowledge they gained from the discussions on an international level:

“Is suprised that I have learned as musch as I have. Very interesting to have a internartional workingform as this one.”

“the most interesting was to chat with all other people from different countries about concepts, everyone had something different to say.”

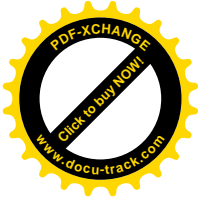
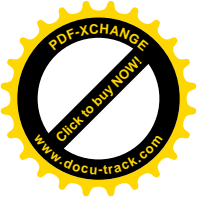
“I found the course very interesting, particularly the opportunity to share opinions with students from different countries. I never worked on these topics before, so I can say that I learned many things, especially thanks to the assigned materials.”

The majority of students were satisfied with the material and theoretical aspects. However they also criticized some points which should be considered in future courses:

“talking about theories ok, we learned quite a lot. but i missed their concrete application. There should have been more practical work, i.e. dealing with concrete examples and less theory “

“my knowledge about facts and cases riced nicly up, but the overview of identity sticks still a bit in the mud.”

“I think this course have given many interesting insights. However - and this is a little bit of criticism - the workload was too high so not all information I would have liked to gain could be managed. Too many texts etc.”



Platform and Course Structure

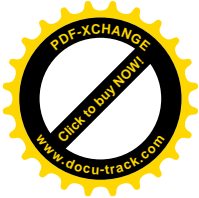
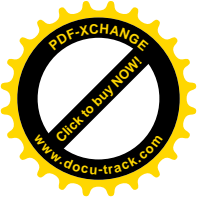
1. Learning outcomes according to course structure and material

It can be stated that the following learning outcomes were fulfilled:

- acquire an understanding of different definitions of the concept of identity in history was dealt with during the whole course
- acquire an in-depth knowledge of a specific topic concerned with identity in history was dealt with in group 3 (local groups)
- obtain insights into additional topics concerned with identity in history beginning of group 5 (international groups)
- acquire an in-depth knowledge of a specific theme related to identity in history in phase 5 (international group)
- obtain insights into additional themes related to identity in history in phase 7 (international group)
- obtain the capability to comprehend and share specific points of view regarding identity in history and to use the communication and knowledge sharing skills that support it.

Throughout the course in the various, intense group discussions in the forums and chat rooms.

The learning outcomes were definitely achieved (material, theoretical aspects), but the assignments could have been more divergent, e.g. using PowerPoint, working with pictures, doing more research themselves in the international groups of the same topic. It would have been interesting to compare the national material. There



should have been more differentiation within the assignments to cover the students' different language skills, technical skills or knowledge.

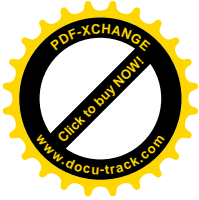
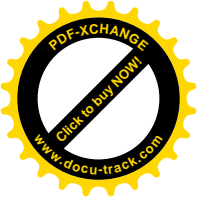
In phase 7 the students were ready to use their knowledge (see vivid discussions) but the time was too short. Our suggestion would be to shorten the other phases, especially the local one, in favour of the international groups and especially the discussions in the last phase. This would emphasize the positive feedback for the students that they actually learned something and can utilize their knowledge.

Although the local groups might have been a bit too long, it is still necessary to have them in order to prepare the students for the international group. Because they could read the material in their native tongues and the tutors knew their student better, concerning material, structure and didactics, a solid foundation for the international groups was laid. So the idea of the local groups should be kept in oncoming courses.

Comparing time and workload the material provided was too much for the time given.

Another aspect that learning outcomes were reached are the answers of question 9 in the end-questionnaire:

Concerning the attitude about European identity 18 told us that their attitude had changed, 2 were not sure and 9 said their attitude had not changed compared to the time before they took the course.



This shows that for most of them the course was very useful because even the ones who said their attitude had not changed admitted that they had gained new aspects and therefore learned something, too.

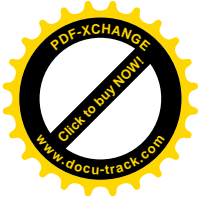
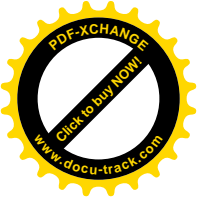
Those students who stated their attitude had changed named several reasons. First of all they mentioned that they got a deeper insight in the topic, that they were more aware of the complexity of the issue and that the course has broadened their minds concerning European identity. They are more aware now, look at the topic in a different way and have learned new aspects.

Although this student wrote that his/her attitude has not changed the statement shows some very good reflections:

“My attitude towards a European identity is not changed, because I think that it is possible. A particular awareness is necessary about identity to forming it. The dialogue with other persons is important and the course was an attempt to speak with other students. We worked together and so we can work together in forming a common identity”

The other one was more positive but both prove that working together with students from all over Europe is much more effective than reading books about identity:

“I've learnt a lot about Europe and Europeans and I'm much more interested in the Union and its development. I've always liked the idea of Europe, but now I feel it closer and concrete. This results also from international cooperation done during the international phases.”



Conclusion:

The course was so well structured, the material was chosen so well and the discussions amongst the students were so fruitful that the learning outcomes were fully reached. Although the workload was too high the students were motivated so much that they worked very hard to keep on going and to fulfil all the tasks and assignments. They realised at the end of the course that their knowledge about the topic of European identity had increased no matter whether they had already known something before or not.

Once again the internationality of this course was stressed to be the most important aspect.

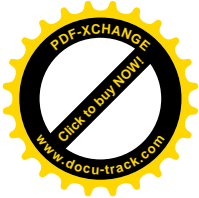
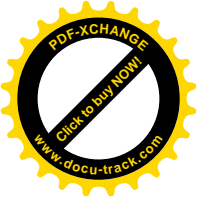
4. question on end-questionnaire

Evaluating the material 14 said it was very good and 15 that it was ok.

5. Evaluation of the assignments:

Nearly the same results can be seen evaluating the assignments: 12 found them very good and 17 ok.

So first of all the students were mostly satisfied with the assignments which they found well planned and well structured in most groups. Quite a few said that the assignments had made them reflect upon the topic intensely.



“The assignments are very good, because the texts are very interesting and to work in group and alone is a new important experience in my cultural formation. In addition analysing the texts, I could have a particular awareness about identity and language in ancient and modern world.”

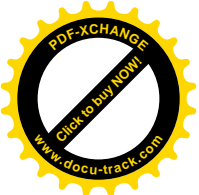
or as another one wrote:

“the assignments gave me the chance (I see it in this way) to elaborate what I studied and try to evaluate and compare my opinion with others. This is usually not what a "study course" offers.”

Criticism referred to the little time the students had for their essays and to the passive attitude of fellow students. Some complained about the huge work load.

2. Assignments & material

Considering the virtual character of the course and the main tool, computer, the material and tasks could have been a bit more focused on the multimedia side. This was done by some (Alcalá, Bologna) but the great majority simply transferred the seminar room, paper, pencil and library into the platform, thus using it only for a better means of communication. A very good example of what could have been done was Bologna.



Suggestions for better assignments:

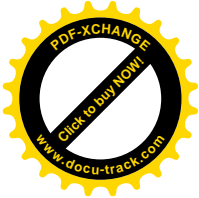
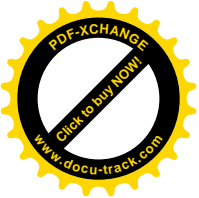
Why not let students make small statements on video. In that way you would also create a more personal atmosphere. Mix the final reports with PowerPoint presentations so you would not lose the scientific value but make it a lot easier for none native speakers to follow the arguments.

Keeping in mind the different language levels the assignments should have been more differentiated, e.g. working with pictures and Photoshop. Let them interpret pictures in a creative way by cutting out important bits and pieces and describe them or by writing an essay on the picture from one of the persons point of view who is on the picture. Or let the students do research on the picture and its background via internet or books and let them introduce their pictures to the other students. Or let them work on a picture together: you can put the picture in a file each student of the group has access to and so each student can put their own research and knowledge in the file and the others complete the interpretation.

Another way of letting the students work in a different way would be not to write essays all the time but newspaper reports for academic magazines, for non-academics, for other students. Let them write dialogues, interviews and role plays.

We very much missed the differentiation in tasks and material apart from Alcalá and Bologna. It was mainly: read the text, write an essay and discuss it in the forum.

The students did not complain much because they are used to this way of studying but they would have been even more enthusiastic if they had more different tasks. This is what one student meant by



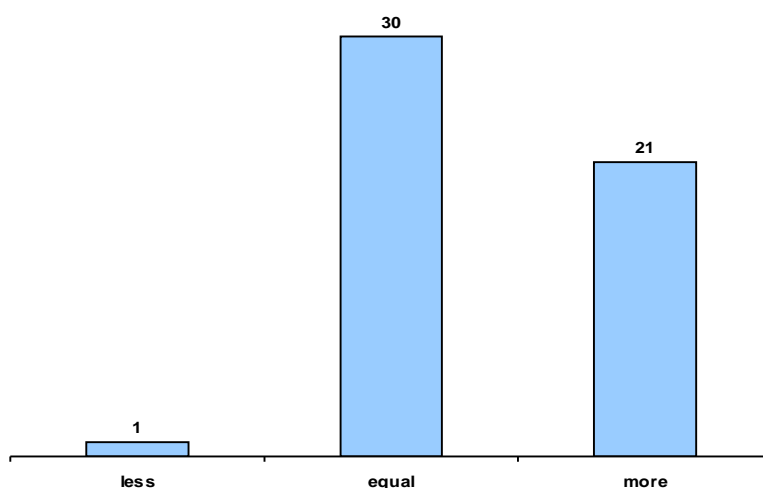
stating: *“there could have been more change”* and *“more practical work”*.

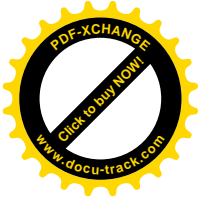
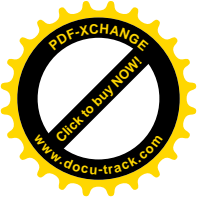
From a learning output view the assignments and materials were well chosen and structured.

In the local groups it would have been better for the students if all had given their introduction and assignments in a common language. So that later in phase five when all the students had to read and analyze the reports from phase three it would have been more transparent to them as to how the individual groups got their results.

7. How would you estimate your work load compared to a normal course?

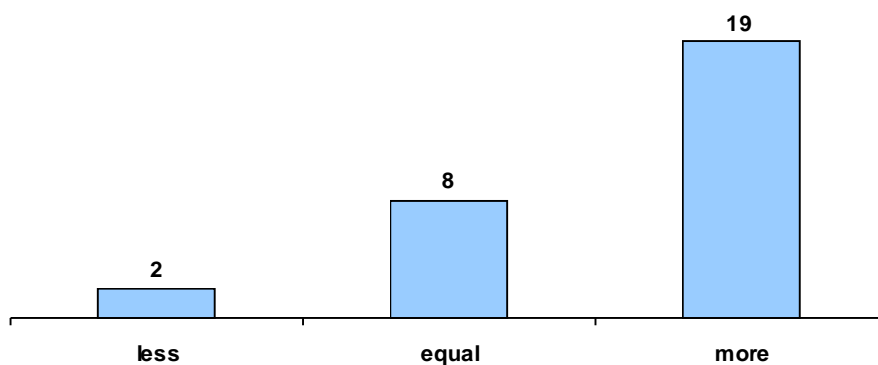
Their estimation of work load compared to a normal course was: 30 estimated an equal workload whereas 21 estimated more work. Only one assumed less work.





3. question on end-questionnaire

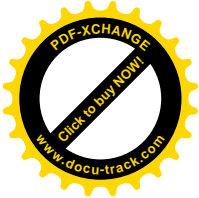
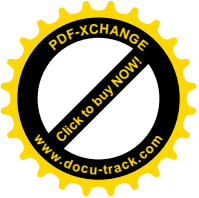
Here an interesting change has taken place: only two answered that the work load had been less whereas the once who had estimated equal in the first questionnaire dropped down to 8 and 19 of the 29 answered that the work load had been more.



Conclusion:

It is a pity that not all 52 from the first group answered the questionnaire but we think the numbers clearly show that the work load of an online-course is definitely higher than of a normal course. But on the other hand the students did not actually complain about the work load because they appreciated the knowledge they gained. They just mentioned that they did not have enough time for the work they were supposed to do:

“well the assignments were ok, the problem is that they requested much time, esp. as the materials were quite long, often difficult to read and understand, and way too theoretical. given the fact that this wasn't the only course one attends this semester it wasn't always easy to cope with everything.”



“I think that assignments I got took very much time. They could be sometimes more specific. This course took very much more time than other courses I had.”

3. Compare workload

In order to compare the workload of the students we picked four participants at random and followed their progress through the course.

All in all it can be said that work was evenly spread throughout the course and the various groups.

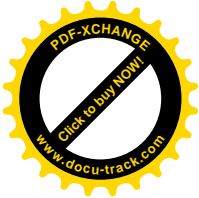
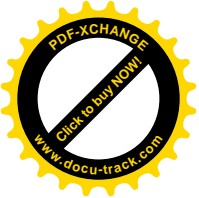
On average the students had to read 220 pages and write 8,25 pages in the local groups. In the international groups they had to read slightly less 151,5 pages while the writing was pretty evenly matched with 8,75 pages. All the discussion forums were taken into account in these numbers.

This might be quite interesting for you. We compared the workloads of four groups in phases 3 and 5 and these are the results:

local groups – reading:

Alcala:	126 pages
Bologna:	around 100 pages
Hannover/Siegen :	around 100 pages
Uppsala:	319 pages

:



local groups – writing

Alcala:	14 pages
Bologna:	8 pages
Hannover/Siegen :	7 pages
Uppsala:	4 pages

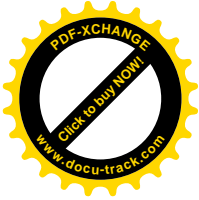
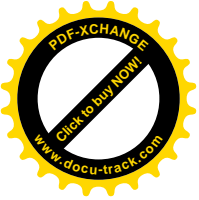
These were the pages each student had to write. In addition there was the essay of 8 pages each group had to write, usually one student put the bits and pieces of his/her fellow students together.

international group – reading

language	94 pages
gender	139 pages
religion and otherness	63 pages
identity	89 pages

international group – writing

language	8 pages
gender	5,5 pages
religion and otherness	6,5 pages
identity	13,5 pages



Apart from that, each student had to read 41 pages in phase 2 and write about 1.5 pages.

8. What would you suppose is a European identity?

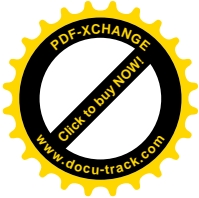
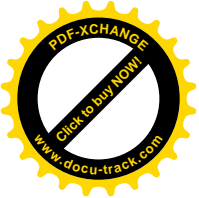
The answers to this question were very pensive and sophisticated. It was quite striking that nearly all students answered the question as if it were “Do you have a European identity”. After stating if they had one or not, they started to think about the reasons and gave a sort of “definition” what European identity could be.

The minority of the students denied having a European identity but they came up with reasons why or why it is difficult to give a clear definition. Probably this question gave rise to many thoughts and other questions for the course that the students were curious to learn more about.

“I would say that I am post- Soviet human and I don't have a European identity. In fact, I had a long dispute with my friend about what is a European identity and it was very hard to define it for both of us. So it would be interesting to know, is there a European identity and how many think that has it.”

“Well, I think it is maybe too early to talk about European identities. In fact, it is difficult because in the European Union we can find different nationalities and cultures. Moreover, culture is a bit left behind because politics and economics are more important subjects. However, I think the European identity is a complex one, I mean, it is not easy to define because of the plurality of Europe.”

Some of them stated that in the end people first feel national and then European.



“A European identity is according to me difficult to define since Europe is too diverse. A Belgian and a Greek will have total different views on culture, lifestyle and workload. However, there are some equalities like the economical point of view, with the Euro, and on a political point of view, with the free trade of goods and people between the Schengen borders. Till last year I studied in an international environment with students from all over Europe and there I discovered that there is still not a real European identity. I consider myself also in the first place as a Belgian, since it is already difficult enough in my country with three languages, and secondly I would say that I am a European. This does not want to say that Europe is not important to me since a European Community is necessary for a strong future against other powers.”

Others who clearly stated they had a European identity also came up with reasons why they had one. Very often these students come from multinational families or have studied abroad meeting a lot of other students from different countries. They seem to be more open minded but nevertheless they try to explain why they feel like that mentioning the critical points as well. They all named the common cultural roots, some referred to Christianity:

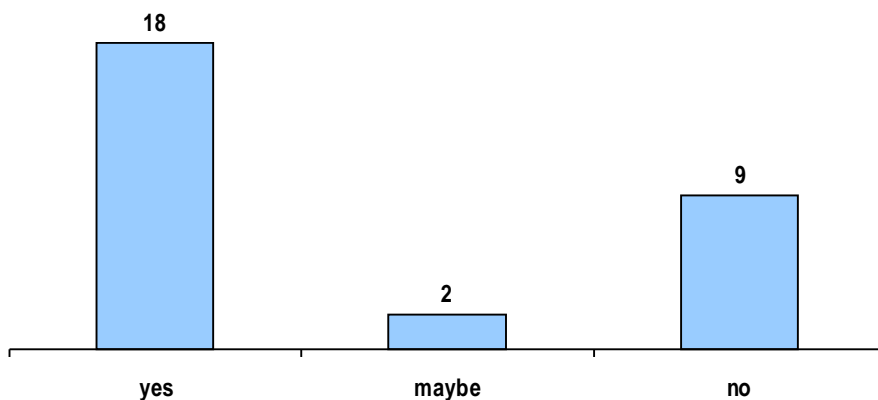
“European identity has to do with a "common" historical background in relation to other continents. In this sense I think I have one. On the other hand Europe seen from southern or from eastern or from northern point of view is indeed very different. In certain respects it might be easier to find common experience with "non-European" neighbours than with fellow Europeans from the other side of Europe. Thus it is no self-evidence to talk about any common identity.”

“Yes, I think that I have a European identity because I believe in the cultural, political and juridical idea of a united Europe. I believe in the idea of a "new territory", to travel, live, learn, to grow up. I believe in a "territory" where different people want to live together and in peace, after centuries of wars; people who

want to respect the difference, to believe in the same basic human rights, to work together, to oppose to the social inequality, and to accept other cultures.”

“I guess, I have a European identity. Europe has a common history, a common art and a common culture. There is this idea of the Europe of the regions, more like a umbrella-system from one political parliament into the regions, but not into the nations. And if you followed the discussion, if turkey is a European nation, there is for sure some identity, what European is / not is.”

When the students were asked if their attitude to European identity has changed they gave the following answers which show that most of them had reflected a lot about the issue and had learned a lot:



9. a) As what do you see yourself compared to France?

(Identity wise)

b) As what do you see yourself compared to China? (Identity wise)

a) The students took a lot of time to answer this question because most of the answers are very sophisticated and detailed. Instead of writing just a single word like the nationality, they felt the need to



explain differences and correspondences between their nation and France. Only 3 students just named their nationality. But they all mentioned their nationality and compared their country to France. So they saw themselves as citizens of their nation.

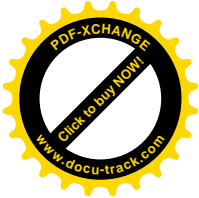
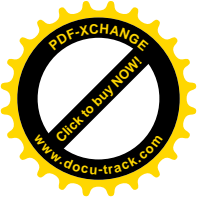
b) Interestingly more students (at least 11) mentioned to feel European compared to China whereas only 4 named their nationality.

“Then I really would say that I feel myself really European. I met some Chinese before and their lifestyle is totally not comparable with that one of Europe. Their history is different, their art is different and their habits are different. So, according to these points I would say that this equal history is an important point to construct a European identity based on symbols, art and habits. No, China is a totally other world for me.”

Here it was the same as with question a) the students wrote long essays but here different from question a) they emphasised/stressed the differences in culture, language, political system and way of living. Some of them complained about the question justifying that they could not answer the question because they did not know anything about China.

6. question on end-questionnaire

What do you think of the communication/collaboration/relationship with your fellow students on the online platform? (29 students answered the questions)



communication	easy: 10/29	ok: 16/29	difficult: 3/29
collaboration	easy: 10/29	ok: 13/29	difficult: 6/29
relationship	very good: 9/29	ok: 15/29	not so good: 5/29

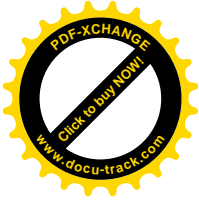
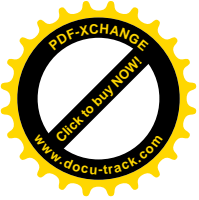
Regarding communication and collaborations the students had different experiences according to their groups but the positive experiences equal the negative ones.

Some were very satisfied because they had good and vivid communication, worked together well and had interesting discussions. Those appreciated the fact that there were different nations in one group:

“I think that the communication, collaboration and relationship are very good, the students and teachers are very friendly and polite.”

“In the groups we can find people from different countries and of different ages, this makes the course really interesting. I think the communication was great and we all wanted to participate and read other’s comments in order to learn more. Some personal experiences of the people in the groups are really interesting and they are real examples of some things we have seen in the assignments.”

But there were other opinions and the reasons mentioned why communication and collaboration did not work so well vary from language problems to problems of discussing topics in groups via chat or discussion forum. Here the students argue that either the groups were too big or the fellow students tried to show off with their academic knowledge and wrote too much.



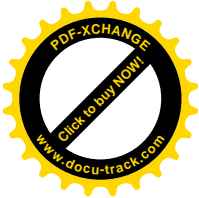
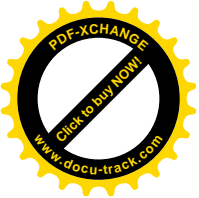
“well the communication wasn't always easy because of the way the discussions were lead. mostly questions were answered directly, without stating a new subject, and thus facing for example 10 or more replies at one time, it was hard to keep track with everything, epecially as some answers were a little bit too long, and new issues were aroused. a little bit irritating. talking about collyboration, this was easy as the fellow students were mostly reliable, and we managed to work together not only on this platform but also with regular e-mails etc. “

“Expecially in phase 3, I found many difficulties in cohordinating my tasks with the ones of my fellow-students. The discussion forum didn't work that well, it was not a real discussion, but a mechanical sending your message, seldom answering the other ones..”

“Sometimes it was really hard to collaborate; we had an appointent in chat and we were only two; we had to discuss and there were only the usual two messages from the usual people; we had to find material and make suggestions which never arrives; there had been also some problems wih some people who said that they couldn't understand english, an didn't like to use it. On the other hand, I found some very interesting companions and we also exchanged some personal emails.”

A possible solution could be to have smaller chat-groups with each group putting the result of the chat in the forum so that the other groups can read it. If more chats were offered – as some students wished – they get used to online discussions and the chats would not be too chaotic.

In order to reduce the masses of posted messages, it is possible that students form teams of two to post one message in the forum. And there should be a restriction to the volume of the messages, e. g. no more than 25 lines or so. Or the students who write longer



texts should at least put a summary on top containing the most important information.

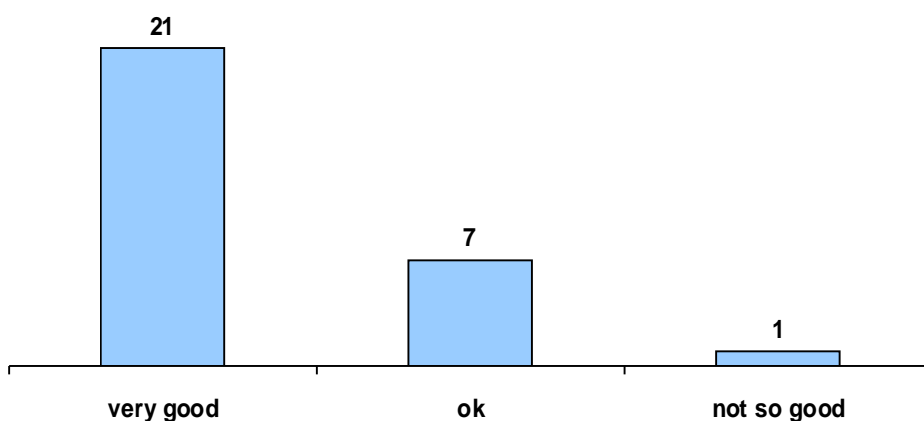
7. question on end-questionnaire

Asking to evaluate the support during the course most of the students were very satisfied. 19 wrote the support was very good, 9 said ok and only 1 was not satisfied.

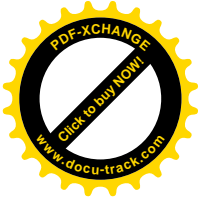
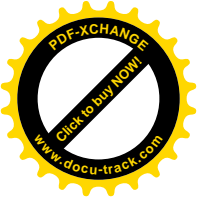
8. question on end-questionnaire

Support from the tutors:

Having been asked about the student-tutor-relationship 21 found it very good (named were Sirkku, Enrica and Vittorio) 7 wrote it was ok and only one found it not so good.



It must be said that all the tutors were highly praised by the students because they were always there, mostly well organized, answered quick, helped immediately, solved technical and personal problems,



were understanding and very very friendly. The students wrote comments like:

“tutors are always present, almost always online. each time i needed assistance i always got support, explanations, comments. thank you!”

“When I was lost , I got immediate response, so that was good”

“The tutors did a great job. Whenever I had questions, or were not able to open the material needed I recieved an answer really fast. Thanks a lot”

“I think that my e-tutor has done a great work and the course plan and assignments were very clear and easy to follow on-line.”

“The student-tutor relationship was excellent. There wasn't any feeling that the tutors were pressuring us, in fact they were very supportive and helpful in keeping us up to date with course information, etc.”

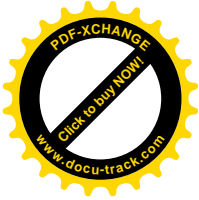
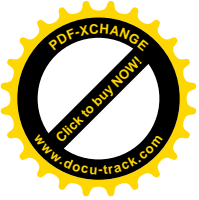
“The student-tutor relationship was very good, in fact there was a particular dialogue and I have not problems.”

There were only some rather minor critics asking for a stronger guidance and that the tutor could not help in phase 3. One complained:

“The tutor took more the back seat, they were not very active in the meaning of making things happen or coaching the students. They were more reactive, if a question occured they supported. He acted more on the individual than on the group. From my studies the role of the tutor should be half social, half as an expert. The outcome would be much higher, when the tutor has this kind of role and understanding.”

Conclusion:

In the end the students felt cared and helped and we are quite sure that the good student-tutor-relationship helped to keep the drop-out-



rate rather low. So we looked at the platform to see how the tutors tried to activate the students:

4. How did the tutors manage to activate the students

At the beginning of the course a mix of mails and messages was used. Later the tutors mainly used the forums to activate and involve the students. One very positive idea was the pictures the students were encouraged to send in of themselves, thus a very personal relationship was created in this rather technical environment.

Chat rooms seemed to have played a minor role in activating the students.

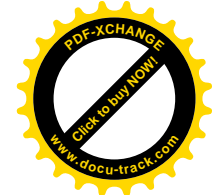
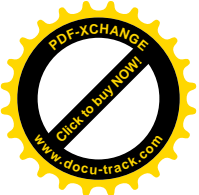
Still the fact remains that the most important factor was the motivation of the students.

The tutors throughout the course were always very welcoming and encouraged the students to participate. They made it very clear that each comment was important for the discussion so that even less active students started to feel a bit more motivated to take part. As a whole they created a very positive and enthusiastic working atmosphere.

In the end students could make suggestions for improvement.

8 students were completely satisfied so that they did not suggest anything. One suggested:

“No other than there should be more of these international courses.”



The rest had some suggestions, mainly concerning less workload (6 students) which means less work for the time they got or more time for the same amount of work.

4 students wanted to have more chats and one had a good suggestion in order to prevent people from dropping out:

“Maybe if people knew at the beginning -before the application-the course calendar, they would apply for the course only being able to participate actively and continuously. Indications about formal structure of reports would be precious and would make the presentations similar each other and organic.”

Conclusion:

In the end it is clear that the course was a huge success thanks to the planners and tutors who did a great job and spent a lot of working hours as can be seen in the tutors questionnaires: They spent between about 200 hours preparing the course and between 100 and 150 hours in tutoring the course.

Especially the internationality of this course helped the students to go on, awakened their interest and gave them the chance to use the computer and the internet where it makes the most sense: communicating with people all over Europe or the world whom you cannot meet otherwise. Such courses should be offered and supported more often at university level because there is a great chance of bringing people together working on a topic and not just chatting on.