

# Researching EVE (Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange): Opportunities and Challenges

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## **Abstract**

In 2018 the European Commission launched Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange, a large-scale, 3- year pilot project, complementing the Erasmus mobility programme. The aim is to make international and intercultural experiences more accessible and inclusive by engaging young people from a range of backgrounds in sustained, online intercultural exchange activities. By the end of 2020, 25000 young people will have participated in this ambitious pilot. A research component was built into this project, with a mixed methods approach. Quantitative data is gathered through pre- and post-exchange surveys and looks at perceived intercultural effectiveness, digital competences, communication skills and media literacy (Helm and van der Velden 2019). Interviews and focus groups are also being carried out with participants and facilitators to support the interpretation of quantitative data and also to explore how individuals experience and talk about virtual exchange. This project has presented a great opportunity since much of the research on telecollaboration/virtual exchange to date has focused on individual classrooms and case studies. At the same time researching a project of this scale and with multiple stakeholders inevitably presents several challenges. In this talk I will briefly present the policy background and some of the virtual exchange activities being implemented in this pilot project before focusing on the research approach, findings and challenges from the first two years of implementation.