



**Cross-Disciplinary Organisation for Telecollaboration
and Virtual Exchange in Higher Education**

<https://www.unicollaboration.org/>

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Dear colleague,

What a year 2017 has been for our new organisation! We would like to take this opportunity of the end of the year to share with our community what has happened in 2017 and what we are planning for 2018.

Most of all we'd like to thank you for joining us in this endeavor and hope to see more and more of you actively engaged in the organisation's activities in 2018.

- The UNICollaboration Board members

February 2017

The journal **System** published a [special issue on Telecollaboration](#), edited by Tim Lewis, First research officer, with papers on a range of issues such as task design, teacher presence, teacher competences, pragmatic appropriateness, identity and addressivity, learner beliefs and corrective feedback, video-conferencing and multimodal expression.

UNICollaboration's Chair, Robert O'Dowd (University of León, Spain) **launched [EVALUATE](#), a European Policy Experiment project** funded by Erasmus+ Key Action 3 which involves several UNICollaboration members. This experimentation will evaluate the impact of telecollaborative learning on student-teachers involved in Initial Teacher Education in the participating European countries and regions.



Upcoming Events

January 11

Official EVE Launch in Brussels

Early 2018

Launch of *Telecollaboration and Virtual Exchange*: an open-access, online, peer-reviewed journal aimed at practitioners VE.

April 25 to 27

3rd UNICollaboration Conference, Krakow, Poland

**Important
Announcement**

As part of the Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange Initiative, in January and February 2018 UNICollaboration will be recruiting universities, professors and youth organizations to set up TEPs, or Transnational Exchange Projects.

Keep an eye out on our website for the call for proposals!

June 2017

UNICollaboration became an officially registered charity in Spain, hosted by the University of León. Though we launched the idea of organization in Dublin at the 2nd Conference on Telecollaboration and Virtual Exchange held in April 2016, there was a lot of paperwork required to become an official organization. We can now receive membership fees and spend these on furthering our aims as a cross-disciplinary organisation for telecollaboration and virtual exchange.

Carrying on from the organisation's first experience with professional development during the IALIC Conference, Barcelona, 25th November 2016 organized by Training officers Mirjam Hauck and Malgorzata (Gosia) Kurek, UNICollaboration board members Robert O'Dowd, Melinda Dooly and Mirjam Hauck offered keynotes and workshops on virtual exchange at the international conference [Intercultural Communicative Competence: A Competitive Advantage for Global Employability](#), held in Prague from June 20-23.

July 2017

UNICollaboration was included in a [Study on the Feasibility of an Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange \(EVE\)](#) initiative which was prepared for the European Commission by [PPMI](#) and [Demokratie & Dialog Youth Policy Labs](#). It was one of 4 platforms reviewed for virtual exchange in Higher Education, together with Sharing Perspectives Foundation, Soliya and Dorm Room Diplomacy.

UNICollaboration joined a coalition in response to the [European Commission's Call for Tenders for the Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange initiative \(EVE\)](#). Sarah Guth, Vice-chair of UNICollaboration and Francesca Helm (University of Padova) teamed up with [Soliya](#), [Sharing Perspectives Foundation](#), the [Anna Lindh Foundation](#), and [UNIMED](#) in drafting a joint tender.

September 2017

Call for Papers for the [third UNICollaboration Conference](#) to be held in Krakow was published. The conference will be held on April 25-27th 2018. The local organizer is Ana Turula from the Pedagogical University of Krakow. Over 100 submissions have been received and are being reviewed by the scientific committee.

October 2017

The **first [UNICollaboration Research Methods Seminar](#)** is held on 6-7th October, organised by the University of València and the University Politècnica de València (Barry Pennock Speck, Begoña Clavel, Ana Gimeno, Ana Sevilla Pavón) with Tim Lewis and Elke Nissen, the UNICollaboration research officers. Keynotes were held by Pascual Pérez-Paredes, Erika Darics, Regine Hampel and Helen Lee. The seminar was very successful and saw the participation of 22 participants (plus 10 online participants to the keynote presentations).

Sake Jager, (University of Groningen, Netherlands), First communications officer, together with other members was **awarded funding by the European Commission for the EVOLVE: Evidence-**

Validated Online Learning through Virtual Exchange project which will start on 1 January 2018. The project aims “to promote innovation in education and training fields through European cooperation at both policy and practice levels” and “to empower key stakeholders in developing and mainstreaming policy innovation” and focuses specifically on integrating Virtual Exchange in Higher Education institutions at policy and grassroots level.

SOME NUMBERS

1000 members
on our virtual
exchange platform

25
partner classes
added in 2017

400+ Twitter

300+ Facebook

December 2017

UNICollaboration, our Professional Development in particular, was showcased by Mirjam Hauck (Open University) during the [World Café at the Observatory on Borderless Higher Education \(OBHE\) Global Forum](#) on December 11th and 12th 2017 in London.

UNICollaboration is officially a sub-contractor in Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange Initiative as part of the service contract which [Search for Common Ground](#) and the coalition who put together a tender signed with the European Commission. This will be our first major funded project and will lead to some important developments as we develop and promote one of the 4 main activities in EVE: Transnational Exchange Projects (TEPs). We will be seeking universities, professors and youth leaders interested in setting up TEPs for the fall/winter semester 2018. We will provide professional development, mentoring and support to those involved and will be actively participating in evaluation and monitoring in order to guarantee the quality of the activities that make up EVE. We will also be adding a space to our website dedicated to EVE.

International Collaborations

The SUNY COIL Center and UNICollaboration have agreed to share mailing lists, participate in one another’s conferences and collaborate on research.

Soliya have already shared a call for participation offering the possibility for students at European universities and some MENA countries to take part in the Connect Program for free in 2018. This will be advertised later on as part of the EVE initiative, but since deadlines for universities to register to take part will be very tight, we have decided to share this information with you now. Participating students will be awarded EVE badges for their participation in this, and we will be working to have these badges recognised at universities.

First-ever Journal dedicated to Virtual Exchange

Thanks to the hard work of publications officers Breffni O'Rourke and Melinda Dooly and their team of collaborators, UNICollaboration is set to launch **a new, online, open-access journal called *Telecollaboration and Virtual Exchange*** dedicated exclusively to research and practice in the field of virtual exchange. As the Aims and Scope of the journal read:

Telecollaboration and Virtual Exchange is an open-access, online, peer-reviewed journal aimed at practitioners and researchers in the field known variously as telecollaboration, virtual exchange, or online intercultural exchange. It is the official journal of UniCollaboration, the international academic organisation dedicated to supporting and promoting telecollaboration and virtual exchange in higher-level education.

The common element to these various pedagogical practices is structured, teacher-led online collaboration between two or more geographically distant, usually culturally and/or linguistically distinct groups of learners, with a view to promoting various combinations of linguistic, intercultural, and content skills and knowledge, as well as transversal competences such as digital literacies and intercultural teamwork.

Keep an eye out on our website for the first call for papers.

Join us!

Are you interested in these initiatives and projects? Would you like to bring your expertise to our growing community? Go to <https://www.unicollaboration.org/> and click on "Join".

The Board

Based on the statutes of our organisation, there will be elections to renew the board at the Conference in Krakow. Hopefully newcomers will join the team as others move on to other new endeavours. We would, therefore, both like to invite those interested in joining the board to join in the nominations at the Conference and thank the current board for all the hard work they've done to get UNICollaboration up and running.

- Robert O'Dowd, Chair, Universidad de León
- Sarah Guth, Vice-chair, Università degli Studi di Padova
- Tim Lewis, First research officer, Open University
- Elke Nissen, Second research officer, Université Grenoble Alpes
- Breffni O'Rourke, First publications officer, Trinity College Dublin
- Melinda Dooly, Second publications officer, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
- Mirjam Hauck, First training officer, Open University
- Gosia Kurek, Second training officer, Jan Długosz University
- Sake Jager, First communications officer, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen
- Teresa MacKinnon, Second communications officer, University of Warwick