

Digital learning platforms of European Universities – challenges and solutions

International Spring Forum for Higher Education 2024

Session #11, Thursday 16th May at 13.30

Chair: Sanna Väisänen, JYU

Description of this session

- EUN alliances are expected to carry out large-scale virtual exchanges and allow their students to customise their own flexible curricula, choosing studies from all EUN-universities. To facilitate this, and also other joint EUN activities, functional digital learning environments and platforms need to be set up.
- This session presents examples from three alliances on their digital learning platforms, including also the challenges that they have come across in using these platforms. Typically, the most difficult issues are related to study administration processes and not so much to the technical solutions.
- After three brief presentations, ample time will be devoted to discussions.

Speakers



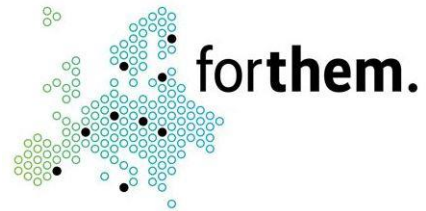
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EUNICE in a nutshell

European **U**niversity of **C**ustomied **E**ducation

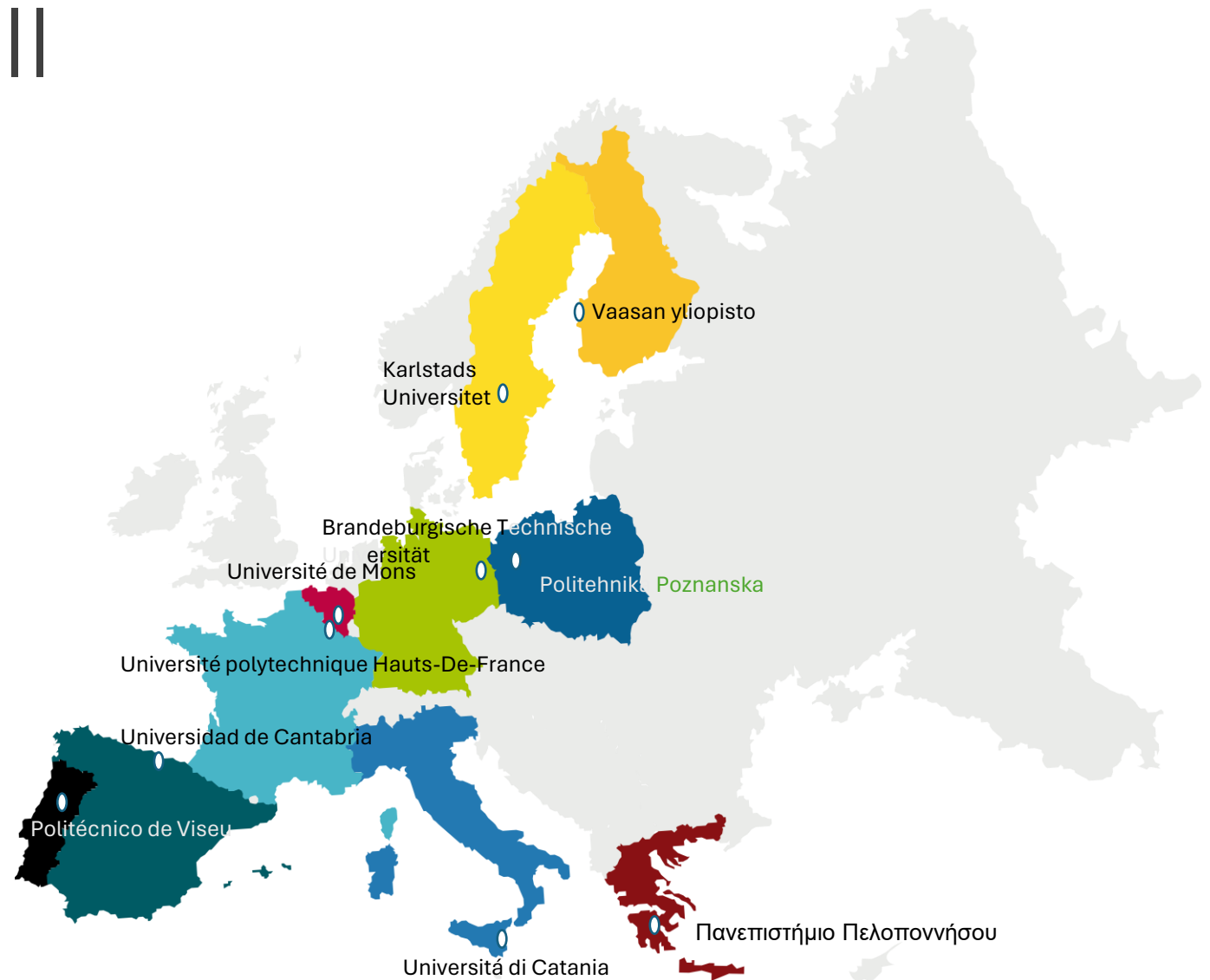
Pilot phase 2020-2023 with 7 members

Continuation phase Nov 2023 → with 10 members

Mid-size regional universities that are strongly engaged with their immediate societal environment

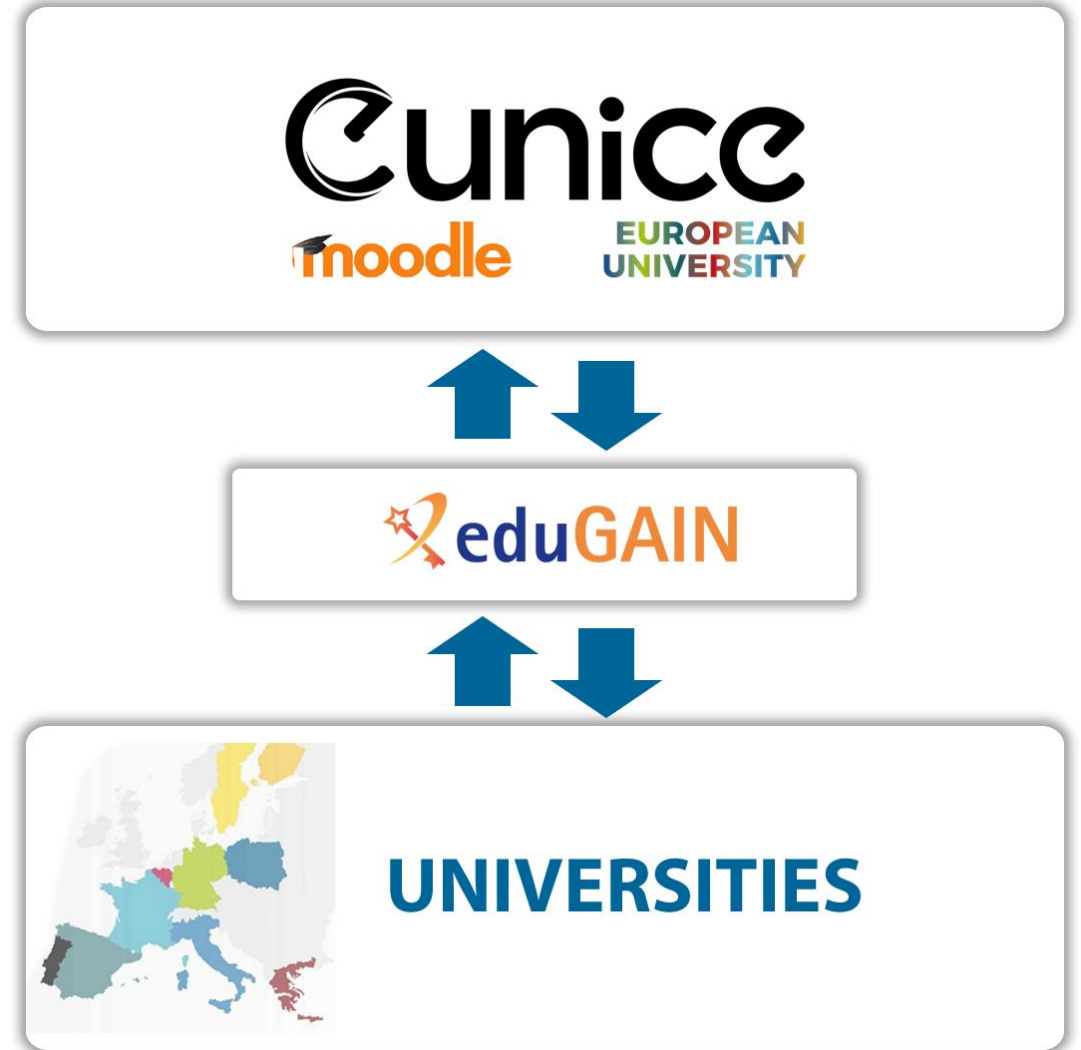
Multi-field / Multi-areas of study

Shared course offer since January 2022



EUNICE LMS

- Moodle was selected as the learning platform for the Eunice project, as it was used by most of the universities in the consortium.
- We chose a centralized LMS, enabling us to manage all studies, achievements, courses, and users in one place.
- The goal is to provide universities with the opportunity to access information from the centralized learning environment through interfaces, which are already built into the Moodle platform.
- A future challenge will be to increase automation, thereby reducing manual work.



EUNICE AUTOMATION

- The goal is to enable data reading and writing through the Moodle REST API.
- Different partners/stakeholders can, if necessary, integrate their information systems to retrieve and modify data through the interface.
- The information is protected from outsiders.
- A challenge in automating the creation and management of courses is the varied practices at different universities, as well as differing baseline requirements and prerequisites for courses.





Pilot phase 2020-2023



Second phase 2023-2027



From 6 partners to 8 in 2023



5 research intensive universities, 2 UAS and 1 technical university



Joint Innovation Ecosystem → Innovation Hubs. All joint education and research based on these topics/challenges



Joint virtual course offering since spring 2022



Ulysseus Joint Digital Platform for collaborative learning, teaching and research

For collaboration
(staff)



SharePoint



For teaching and learning
(staff, students & lifelong learners)



 Ulysseus Videos

BigBlueButton

For research
(staff)



- [Android app](#)
- [iOS app](#)
- [WEB](#)

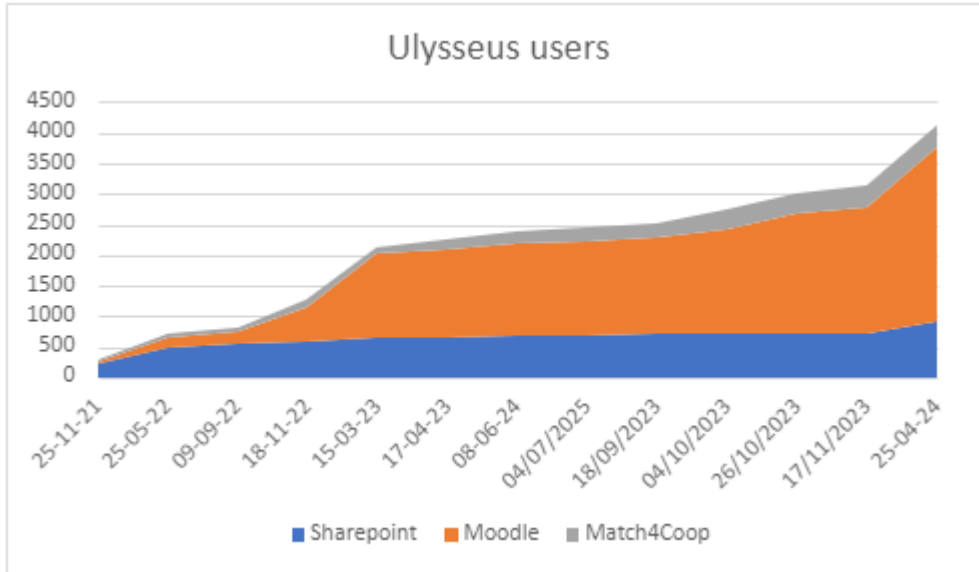
www.ulyssseus.eu

All services are **joint** and **specifically developed** for Ulysseus.

Services accessible through Edugain login. Everyone can use their own university credentials (students and staff). Guest login for MOOCs and open-access courses available.

New partners added without problems to the services.

Ulysseus Digital Platform: Benefits and challenges



Moodle: 2850 users
Sharepoint: 913 users
M4C: 370

Benefits

- Easy access for all
- Good collaboration tools for staff through Sharepoint (intranet) and Teams
- Versatile virtual course offer for students and staff
- Life-long learners
- Ulysseus Moodle offers virtual space also for Ulysseus BIPs
- Good supporting tools for course creation for teachers (e.g video platform, integrated video conference tool in Moodle)
- Easy to connect with other researchers from the alliance

Challenges

- Not all universities recognize the ECTS from joint courses
- Not all universities can award ECTS credits to Ulysseus students
- No common quality criteria for joint courses (in progress)
- Growing number of Moodle users (maintenance of the platform)
- Lack of support for teachers in digital pedagogics
- Student administration is manual
- M4C not commonly used

Pilot phase in Sept 2019 – Oct 2022 with 7 members

Continuation phase from Nov 2022 onwards with 9 members

Activities under 5 missions:

- European Campus – incl. FORTHEM Digital Academy
- Skills and Competences
- Research, Innovation & Transfer
- Labs & Co-creation
- Service to Society



FORTHEM Digital Academy

- 7 partner universities' Moodles connected to each other with an LTI plugin.
- Readiness to integrate also the LMS of the two newest partners who are not using Moodle.
- Offers MOOCs, synchronous courses, team-teaching activities, external resources.
- Students get access through their home university's Moodle.



MOOCs

- Children's rights and participation, 15.01.2024 - 14.06.2024
- Deutschkurs A1-A2
- Didáctica y Organización Socioeducativa
- Europe Forum 2023-2026: Let's speak European!

Synchronous Courses

- Latvian language for beginners
- Multilingual Learning Environments
- Racism in Higher Education
- Survival Finnish 1, Online teaching. FORTHEM 13.02.2024 - 21.03.2024

Team Teaching Activities

- Spring 2024 Fundamentals in Intercultural and Multilingual Communication, Blended teachin...

Other Activities

- [Application] Digital Internship of the FORTHEM Green Sustainability Unit
- Academic Integrity in Higher Education, second edition (apply now!)
- Digital Competence - Resources
- Grundpraktikum Physikalische Chemie

<https://elearning.forthem-alliance.eu/>

Digital academy: benefits and challenges



For students

- + Virtual mobility and internationalization "at home".
- + Possibility to choose courses that are not offered in your own university.
- + Easy access through home university's LMS.
- Degree structures very strict in some universities: no room for "extra" courses
- FORTHEM studies not always recognized in the degree



For teachers

- + Team-teaching possibilities.
- + International co-operation and sharing good practices.
- How to motivate teachers to offer courses (incentives).
- "Bureaucracy": guidelines, "false" quality measures.



Study administration

- No common processes or tools for application and selection to courses with selection criteria -> manual work.
- Registration of credits.
- Recognition of studies.



Technical issues

- + Network of experts sharing good practices.
- Two new partners with different LMS -> need for technical development.
- Lack of common IT strategy.
- More needs and demands than resources.

In progress

- FORTHEM Interoperability Hub
- FORTHEM Digital Identity