



What is a virtual school?

We define a virtual school as a school where pupils learn mainly at a distance over the internet and any activity in a classroom takes no more than around 15% of study time (1 day per week in a full-time school). The pupils are normally based at home (and in special cases, in hospital, in the workplace, travelling or in a custodial institution) but in some cases they may be at a “physical” school – just not the school “at” which they study.

By studying several virtual schools in great detail through case studies, we intend to understand the reasons behind policy-makers’ attitudes towards virtual schools: are they fostering, discouraging or ignoring the whole idea of virtual schools?

VISCED focusses on European countries as well as other relevant countries such as OECD and BRIC nations, and/or those with linguistic, cultural or political links to countries in Europe. Since we focus on countries not dissimilar to many European countries, our ultimate aim is to provide practical evidence to ministries and their policy advisors to help them in their analysis of the potential value of virtual schools in addressing certain societal challenges.

Some of these challenges are universal – such as children in hospital, school phobics, children looked after by institutions (including custodial ones), travelling children and disadvantaged children. Others may be more specific to the country (poor mathematical or foreign language skills).

With the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union



Partners



Contact Us!

- www.virtualschoolsandcolleges.info
- Research wiki: www.virtualschoolsandcolleges.eu
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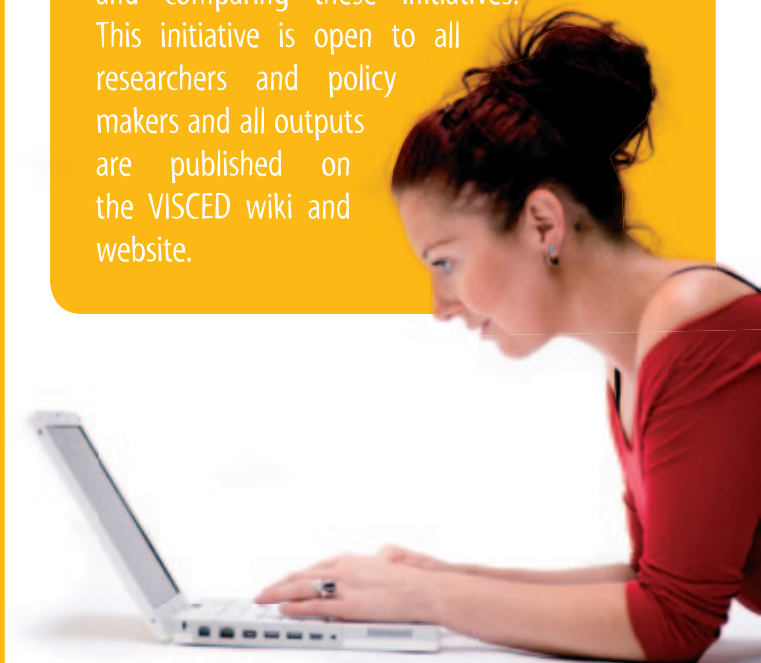
VISCED



A Transnational Appraisal of Virtual School and College Provision

The VISCED Team are working together to identify and understand virtual schools across the world, with a strong focus on Europe.

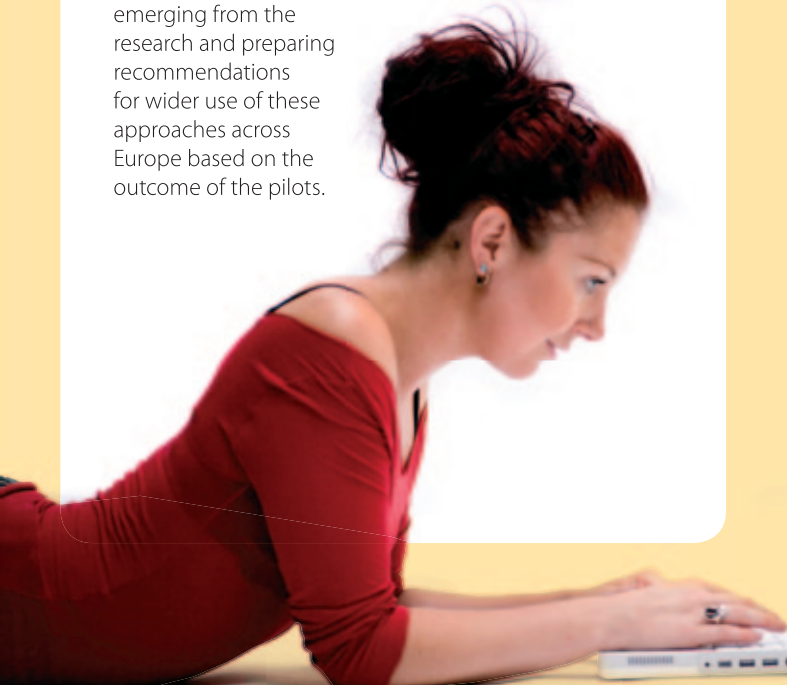
This entails a systematic review at international and national levels including a study into operational examples of fully virtual schools and colleges. The outputs of this work are being analysed and compared to identify relevant parameters and success factors for classifying and comparing these initiatives. This initiative is open to all researchers and policy makers and all outputs are published on the VISCED wiki and website.





Key Activities

- **Field research:** carrying out a thorough investigation into the current status of virtual school and college initiatives all over the world on a country-by-country or regional basis including overviews of the country or region as well as exemplar projects.
- **Analysis and recommendations:** starting from an agreed typology of virtual schools and college services, producing a set of recommendations including recommendations for teacher training and policy makers. This includes the development of a set of case studies.
- **Success factors:** creating a set of critical success factors – those which are vital for success - and a set of key success factors – those which are desirable for success - to cover activities in the area of virtual schools, virtual schooling, notschools, virtual colleges etc.
- **Consultation:** briefing and involving senior stakeholders through an international advisory committee which meets twice a year to provide input to the work of the VISCED project team.
- **Piloting:** testing out innovative ICT-based approaches emerging from the research and preparing recommendations for wider use of these approaches across Europe based on the outcome of the pilots.



Key Outputs

An inventory of virtual schools and colleges worldwide is publicly available on the VISCED research wiki, we invite your contribution: <http://www.virtualschoolsandcolleges.eu>

VISCED reports published so far:

- **Typology of virtual school and college services** which we are using for taxonomy and categorisation of exemplars on the wiki.
- **Interim list of exemplars**, identifying over 50 notable examples worthy of consideration as case studies from over 400 virtual schools across the world including 70 in Europe, 270 in the USA and more than 60 elsewhere.
- **Interim report on country or region reports** available on the wiki.
- **Interim teacher training** recommendations report presenting suggestions for focus areas for teacher training specifically for distance education initiatives, as well as a checklist for evaluation of online course pedagogy designs and strategies.
- **Interim innovative good practice report** for piloting providing analysis and preliminary recommendations for innovative good practice for piloting virtual programmes in schools.
- **Preliminary potential success factors report**, listing a set of potential success factors for schools in terms of a virtual school within a conventional school.

- **Influence maps for EU countries report**, describing the main countries which influence that country's policy for ICT in school/college education – including an indicator of the degree of influence, and an overall indicator of the total amount of influence of all other countries on the country.

These are now available for download at <http://www.virtualschoolsandcolleges.info/project/outcomes>

During 2012 VISCED partners will update and finalise all interim reports and will also finalise:

- **Series of in-depth case studies** chosen from the exemplars identified in the research work.
- **Project handbook**, with chapters on the main project outcomes, including country reports, exemplar institutions, innovative practice, the pilots, critical success factors, policy issues and implications for teacher training.
- **Final piloting report**, providing insight and reflection on the three pilots taking place in schools in Greece, UK and Sweden in 2012.



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You are also very welcome to send us news about developments related to virtual schools and colleges in your region or country!