

Project status

Over the last 6 months, we in the project team have come to understand how important our concept of micro-collaborations really is. We have therefore put our focus on developing this idea further, explaining it in more detail, and reflecting all its aspects in our project results as well. Some of these ideas and findings we try to make clear again here in this newsletter.

Project Meeting

In March we were able to hold our first physical meeting in Granada. For some participants, this was the first time they had met live. The meeting was an important driver for productive collaboration and the further development of our idea.



At the meeting we also planned the next micro-collaborations and some pilot courses for the coming winter semester.

Pilot cooperation

We launched our first pilot collaboration between the Humboldt University of Berlin and the University of Louvain in the last weeks of April. The micro-collaborations mainly revolve around the use of electronic corpora to analyse syntactic constructions. In four consecutive weeks, Master students from Louvain and Bachelor students from Berlin jointly analysed a selected construction in Dutch, English, German and Croatian. The collaboration was framed by getting-to-know-you activities and joint presentations.

The micro-collaboration was an important experience and showed, among other things, the importance of maintaining flexibility and ensuring the independence of the two interacting seminars.

Where are we now?

The first micro-collaboration kits are now practically ready. The first pilot is currently underway. We are now working on the planning of the next micro-collaboration kits and are focusing here primarily on enabling students to actually encounter each other. We are also working on the creation of the platform.

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Check our website for more detailed descriptions and up-to-date news:

www.dione-edu.eu

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Philipp Wasserscheidt is an academic lead for Humboldt University for the work package 6 of the European University Allicance Circle U., which works on the future of higher education. More Info on the WP and the connected Think and Do Tank can be found here:

www.circle-u.eu/about/organisation/ project-management/erasmus-wp6/





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Who are we?

In this section we will successively introduce all project participants.

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Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (BCS) and Balkan Studies at the University of Oslo. My research



interests lie in Bosnian, Croatian Serbian literature. comparative literature, memory studies, and multilingualism. I teach BCS (language acquisition), literary history of Central Europe and the Balkans. cultural memory in Eastern

Europe, and have also co-taught with my colleague Ljiljana Šarić courses such as cognitive poetics and discourse analysis.

I came to DIONE out of curiosity: to exchange

Christian Voss is a Professor and Head of the Department for South Slavic Studies at Humboldt University in Berlin since 2006, From 2008 until 2016 he was Vice Dean for Research at the Faculty of Philosophy II in Berlin. His research addresses the interface of sociolinguistics, historiography, and anthropology, and focuses on the South Slavic-Greek border region. He has published extensively on issues of sociolinguistics in the Balkans, especially on language decay and revitalization of Slavic varieties in Northern Greece

Since 2016, he is the director of the newly founded Interdisciplinary Center for transnational border research "Crossing Borders".

Marija Mandić is a senior research associate at the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory University of Belgrade. Prior to this she was employed at the Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (2004-2022). Marija was awarded a PhD in linguistics in 2010 from Belgrade University. Faculty of Philology. She received some notable



grants while working on the PhD (CEU Doctoral Support Programme (2008), Mach Ernst (2009)). In the period from 2016 to 2018, she was awarded the postdoctoral fellowship of the Alexander

I am Sarah Hayes, a Professor of Higher Education Policy, based in the Education Observatory Research Centre, in the Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing (FEHW) at University of Wolverhampton, UK. Previously I led taught programmes in Education and Sociology at Aston University. My research interests include linguistic analysis of Higher Education policies and examining society through a postdigital lens. Postdigital analysis focuses on the entanglement and positionality of individuals as they encounter complex interrelationships of the digital, analogue. material, biological and societal in their lives. I have led a broad range of funded research projects, including 2 recent Human Data Interaction projects which examined data and disadvantage through cross-sector, interdisciplinary debate. I have also published in a

I am Stijn Vervaet, an Associate Professor in teaching experience and to collaborate with colleagues from across Europe on topics we have a shared interest in; to explore the possibility of bringing teachers and students of South-Eastern Europe together online, and to learn how we can jointly develop digital tools, ways of online teaching (beyond zoom), and digital mobility that could continue to be used after the project. And if I can improve my own digital skills on the way, all the better!

> For more information on my research and teaching, please visit my institutional webpage:

- www.hf.uio.no/ilos/english/people/aca/stijnv
- [↗] uio.academia.edu/StijnVervaet

Christian Voss is the founder and editor of the book series "Studies on Language and Culture in Central and Eastern Europe" and member of the editorial board of "Balkan Studies Library", ..Mediterranean Language



Review", "Südost-Forschungen" and "Colloquia Humanistica". Since 2012 he is a member of the "Classe di Slavistica" at "Academia Ambrosiana" in Milan, in 2022 he was visiting professor at Ca'Foscari University in Venice.

www.slawistik.hu-berlin.de/de/member/cvoss

von Humboldt Foundation, which she carried out at the Institute for Slavic Studies at the Humboldt University in Berlin. Marija took part as a leader or project participant at many international and national scientific projects, published two monographs and more than 60 scientific papers. Marija is a very experienced field worker, who explored language communities of South East Europe. Her major research interests are in the areas of linguistic anthropology, critical sociolinguistics, ethnolinguistics, multlingualism, critical discourse analysis, ethnicity, nationality, migrations, and social memory.

https://ifdt.bg.ac.rs/index.php/dt_team/mandic-marija

range of international journals and written books. I am a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), have taught in diverse international locations and I am an



Associate Editor for the Springer journal: Postdigital Science and Education.

I am really enjoying our collective work around digital competencies as European partners on the DIONE project. I look forward to how our microcollaborations and shared research interests develop and to us publishing together as a group.

> www.wlv.ac.uk/research/institutes-and-centres/ education-observatory/people/

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Micro-collaboration: The concept

The future of transnational cooperation in teaching

The original motivation for developing the concept of micro-collaborations was to enable international cooperation in teaching despite the prevailing travel restrictions due to the pandemic. A further motivation was to enable and strengthen long-term internationalisation in higher education considering the need to reduce travel in the face of man-made climate change.

In fact, however, the concept offers a number of other highly relevant advantages for university teaching. Therefore, in the following we would like to explain the concept again in detail and show the opportunities that arise from its application.

The core of the concept of microcollaborations is to use overlaps in existing courses to teach them together, or to have students do assignments together.

What are micro-collaborations?

The most important features of this concept are concealed in the two words of its name: they are small or non-intrusive formats that allow students and teachers to actually engage with each other. What does that mean in detail?

"Micro

First of all, it is important to understand the term micro and to take it seriously. Micro collaborations are collaborations in higher education that are either limited in time or have a small impact on the normal day-to-day life of the university.

Short collaborations include, for example, 1 to 5 weeks of teaching collaboration. This means that collaborations only occupy a small portion of the semester time. They are thus never a whole course, but always only parts of existing courses.

Collaborations with low interference refer to interactions that do not take place in class but bring students together outside of the classroom, e.g. in joint projects.

Importantly, both formats do not interfere with everyday university life. In micro-collaborations, which take place in the classroom, both sides use topics or methods that are part of the curriculum regardless of the collaboration. Micro collaborations should also not disrupt the course structure

and the way students actively learn. Tasks for students within the micro-collaborations, such as in student research projects, should also not go beyond the students' normal tasks within the respective courses.

"Collaboration"

The term collaboration, in turn, refers to actual working together and learning together. The goal of micro-cooperation is that students learn together. We are thus moving away from passive internationalisation at home to student-centred, activating internationalisation. Student involvement takes place through joint student activities. It is obvious that courses with research-based learning or learning through research are particularly suitable here. It is important that students actually come into contact with each other through virtual social activities and get to know each other. For teachers, the term collaboration likewise means that no onesided invitations or guest lectures are exchanged, but that active co-teaching is actually carried out and courses are planned and carried out together.

What does DIONE do?

The concept of micro-collaborations, while very simple in principle, is new as such and is therefore subject to challenges, some underlying in the mindset of the teachers and some arising in the actual implementation of micro-collaborations.

- In the DIONE project, we are working to identify the potential challenges and develop solutions. We have listed some of these challenges below.
- We are also developing sample microcollaborations that we have tested and evaluated in pilot courses. We provide colleagues with ready-made microcollaboration kits at the end, where they find all the teaching materials, instructions and support ready assembled. All elements of these kits are OER and can be freely adapted and shared.
- ▲ We are also working on a model for a network platform where like-minded people can look for cooperation partners with whom they can carry out microcollaborations.

Why is the concept useful?

Scalable - In principle, the concept can be applied to collaborations in very different areas. On the one hand, these are different educational levels within universities - whether B.A., M.A. or PhD. At the same time, micro-collaborations can also be carried out with external partners, be it schools, research institutions, companies or other organisations.

Creditable - By consistently linking to a competency framework, everything is already in place for micro-collaborations to be used as building blocks for new, more flexible recognition systems such as microcredentials.

Adaptable - The core of microcollaborations is seamless cooperation. Depending on which overlaps you can build on, very different solutions are possible.

Our platform concept

Our platform has three main elements: a database of all the OER we produce, ready-made micro-collaboration kits and a networking tool for teachers:



Challenges for micro-collaboration

Asynchrony

An important point is the question of whether two (or more) courses between which a micro-collaboration is to be carried out take place at the same time. On the one hand, this can refer to the semester time (when a semester begins and ends), and on the other hand, to the specific time of day and the day of the week on which the course takes place.

Language

A very decisive point is of course the language of instruction and the language of communication between the students. This is even more important if you have the ambition not only to teach in English, but also to implement a living European multilingualism during micro-collaborations.

Getting to know each other

In order for micro-collaborations to really contribute to the development of a common European learning space and a European awareness among students, it is very important that time for real socialisation is included in the collaboration. Solutions are needed for virtual grouping, getting-to-know-you games, extracurricular collaboration and so on.

Fixed curricula

Many universities have fixed curricula that are difficult to change. This is exactly why micro-collaborations are good, because they never affect entire courses, but only short sections of them. Sometimes, however, the courses are structured internally in such a way that collaboration with the desired partner is difficult.

Background knowledge

For successful collaboration, it is of course also important to harmonise the students' background knowledge or to make use of differences in different years or different levels of education. Thematic specialisations can also create differences that need to be included in the planning of microcollaborations.

Communication

Of course, it is also crucial for successful virtual cooperation to find a common communication and cooperation channel. Here you have to decide which learning management systems you want to use and which communication platforms are available for students from all partner universities.

Distance

One challenge is, of course, the distance between the students. Even though Corona has given digitalisation at universities a big boost, the technical requirements are sometimes very different. In addition, micro-collaborations require certain solutions that enable students to really get to know each other and work together.

Group size

Micro-collaborations vary greatly depending on the size of the student groups involved. For larger groups, solutions may be harder to find. Discrepancies in the size of student groups between partner universities are also a challenge.

Creditability

For many teachers and students, the creditability of work and international experience is incredibly important. This requires both administrative ideas and assessment frameworks that are internationally compatible.

Formats of micro-collaboration

Micro-collaborations can be organised in very different formats. Everything depends on how you handle your challenges. Here are just a few possibilities:

En bloc

Four-day co-teaching with live group work. Works well for timely overlapping courses and smaller groups.

Peer guidance

Peer-to-peer teaching or mentoring on a specific topic between different levels. Learning to teach in practice.

Accompaniment

Joint project work by students in small groups for an assignment. Enables intense exchange if the topics match.



Reciprocal peer teaching

Mutual peer-to-peer teaching of differently accentuated seminar groups on similar topics or methods.

Language circle

Rotating discussion circle with several universities for language learners. Only short contact, but many perspectives.

Clasp

Two one-hour collaborations at the beginning and end of the semester. Exciting when you have the same subject and compare your learning outcomes.

Divide and collaborate

Collaboration of only some of the students if group sizes are unequal or topics/methods only partially overlap.