



DECriS

Digital Education for Crisis Situations: Times when there is no alternative (DECriS)



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Report on the DECriS Multiplier Event-1 (Barcelona, November 4-5 2021)

Introduction

As a part of DECriS framework a two days Multiplier Event (ME) on the *State-of-the-play on digital education during the Covid-19 crisis* was organized between 4-5 November 2021 at University of Barcelona, Spain. Preparations for the event were carried out by teams from University of Osijek (Croatia) and University of Barcelona. They have written this report summarizing what happened during the event.

However, the main details on the development of the contributions to the event is based upon the closing day reports read at the end of each of the two ME sessions by two external rapporteurs convened by the organizers to have an independent external view of the event: Kornelija Petr Balog (University of Osijek, Croatia) for the development of Day 1 and Stefan Dreisiebner (University of Graz, Austria) for the development of Day 2.

Because of the limitations of the Covid-19 situation, the event was planned under a hybrid model, with few face-to-face participants in Barcelona and most of the registered and invited people to the event attending from abroad via Zoom. Most of the ME video recordings of the sessions are now freely available at the ME reproduction list linked from the project's website: <https://decris.ffos.hr/multiplier-events/e1>
[<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLxHTIX0tYDtPSsspX0yZ460huQa5DKfca>]

Goals and agenda

The multiplier event was organized with several goals:

- To share preliminary empirical findings regarding the first DECriS Intellectual Output-1 (IO-1) conducted under the title "Survey of the state-of-the-play on the use and policy making documents on Open Educational Resources (OER) at European HEIs during the COVID-19 crisis".
- To obtain feedback and to put into context those preliminary findings through insights, testimonials and opinions from teachers, students and educational support staff invited to share their experience on what had happened at European LIS schools and departments during the lockdown period shift to Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT).

- To capture an overview on the use of digital teaching methods and resources during the Covid-19 pandemic different periods, from strict lockdown periods and beyond (what is called nowadays “new provisional normal periods”).
- To discuss on the main challenges experienced by teachers, students and staff during that special period of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) and the level of use of Open Educational Resources (OER) in the context of that emergency response.

To achieve those goals, the organizers planned the following agenda, which unfolded exactly as scheduled in terms of timing and content:

First Day (November, 4th)	
12:30 – 13:45	Lunch
13:45 – 14:00	Opening session / Conxita Amat (Vice-Rector for Teaching Policy, Universitat de Barcelona)
14:00 – 15:00	Introduction to DECriS project / Boris Bosančić, Tatjana Aparac-Jelušić and Anita Papić (University of Osijek)
15:00 – 15:45	Keynote speech: Increasing student appropriation of course content using arts-informed pedagogy. Some reflections on the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown experience / Fidelia Ibekwe (Aix-Marseille Université, France)
15:45 – 16:15	Coffee break
16:15 – 17:30	Testimonials after the pandemic experience / contributions from university teachers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ana Barbaric (University of Zagreb, Croatia) • Martina Dragija Ivanović (University of Zadar, Croatia) • Eva Méndez (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Spain) • Enrique Orduña-Malea (Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain) • Blanca Rodríguez-Bravo (Universidad de León, Spain) • Dora Sales (Universitat Jaume I, Castelló, Spain)
17:30 – 18:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion: Reflections from the teaching trenches / Moderator: Cristóbal Urbano (Universitat de Barcelona) • Day 1 short closing report: Kornelija Petr Balog (University of Osijek)

Second Day (November, 5th)	
9:00 – 9:30	Introduction to DECriS first Intellectual Output (IO-1): Survey Methodology / Kristina Feldvari and Milijana Mičunović (University of Osijek)
9:30 – 10:15	Presentation of IO-1 Results / Milijana Mičunović (University of Osijek) and Sabina Rako (SRCE, Zagreb)
10:15 – 10:45	Discussion about the IO-1 Results / Moderator: Milijana Mičunović (University of Osijek)
10:45 – 11:15	Coffee break
11:15 – 13:00	Round Table: Lessons learned from teaching support services and experts involved in digital education support and resources / contributions from different services and experts

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Albert Basart (Àrea d'Avaluació de la Qualitat, AQU Catalunya, Spain): "Quality assurance and digital education: Maintaning the quality in the new scenario" • Anna Magre (La Factoria Unit, Universitat Pompeu Fabra Library, Spain): "Responding and learning from unexpected situations: La Factoria at the UPF Library in hard times" • Ebba Ossiannilsson (International Council for Open and Distance Education OER Advocacy Committee): "A global outlook: The situation and use of OER during the pandemic COVID-19, and the role of UNESCO OER Recommendation" • Joan-Tomàs Pujolà (Institute for Professional Development- ICE, Universitat de Barcelona): "Teacher training in emergency remote teaching during the lockdown at the UB" • Eleni Boursinou (UNESCO): "The OER UNESCO Recommendation"
13:00 – 13:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final discussion and further steps for DECriS Project / Moderator: Gema Santos (Universitat de Barcelona) • Day 2 short closing report: Stefan Dreisiebner (University of Graz)
13:30 – 14:30	Lunch

Target audience and invited participants

The audience (56 people, depending on different time zones, from several European countries and abroad who joined in online and some 30 people from partner institutions in situ) consisted of a mixture of teachers, researchers, students, advisory experts, information professionals of various fields of expertise and working positions. The fact that the ME was planned in a way that it could be delivered also in a hybrid mode facilitated some guests under Covid-19 travel restrictions to attend online. The invited participants (14) who actively took part in the ME1 were from Spain, France, Croatia, Sweden, Austria and also from an international organization (UNESCO). They presented the situations at their respective universities or organizations and suggested conclusions after each session. Moreover, online and face-to-face participants at the venue joined the event during both days and took part in discussions, especially during an interactive panel where they offered their own views, experience and comments.

Development

Day 1

The multiplier event opening ceremony was chaired by University of Barcelona Vice-Rector for Teaching Policy, who as responsible for the University's response to the crisis, shared a little bit her experience from the point of view of the challenging experiences the academic authorities confront managing the macro issues of the institutional response to the crisis. Later the DECriS Project's coordinators team from University of Osijek (Boris Bosančić, Tatjana Aparac-Jelušić and Anita Papić) delivered a general presentation of the plans for the two years of the project: they presented the DECriS project, its intellectual outputs (realised and planned), as well as all the activities carried out within the project so far and those planned till the end of the project (in the next year and a half). A special emphasis was given to the summer school held in Osijek (Croatia) in September 2021. The school was organised 'in-vivo' and gathered students from

various countries. They shared with the audience the call for the next summer school planned for the summer of 2022 in Hildesheim (Germany).

Keynote speech on “Increasing student appropriation of course content using arts-informed pedagogy – some reflections on the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown experience” was delivered by Fidelia Ibekwe (Aix-Marseille Université). She talked about her experience during the Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) period in the framework of her teaching model inspired by “arts-informed pedagogy”. Fidelia criticized dominant teaching style in France (and abroad) – ‘professor style teaching’ where only the teacher speaks, and students are passive. One of the reasons for such a teaching style – many university teachers are not taught how to teach.

She emphasized the importance of creative teaching styles that will motivate students to actively engage with learning material. Some of those creative teaching styles are related to art-based methods in education (e.g. art oriented pedagogy) which she applied in her teaching (c-Squares and Bauhaus movement inspired projects applied on information and communication theories). This resulted in her successfully engaging her students in her classes. Students stopped being passive listeners and became active and motivated. She also shared her experiences of COVID-19 breakout in 2020 as a teacher in France who was still trying to apply the art oriented pedagogy – but now at a distance and online. And the students came through – they did projects on COVID and on racism and were again very active.

A panel discussion followed Fidelia’s keynote. The panellist consisted of faculty from six different Spanish and Croatian LIS departments that shared their personal thoughts and experiences on ERT and how that experience could be used to better respond to similar emergency situations in the future or for the progressive digital transformation of university education in a context of normality. Those testimonials had similar experiences related to challenges and problems in connection to online classes, but there also were differences among them:

- Ana Barbaric (University of Zagreb) explained that in March and December 2020 Zagreb had two serious earthquakes, which intensified problems for teaching beyond Covid-19 problems. She emphasized that her institution (the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb) has the Centre for E-Learning Support, which was a huge help during lockdown. Ana mentioned that at the beginning they did not have enough servers and virtual classes were problem. Another problem was e-learning resources. She had to make her own teaching materials – challenging because it was very time-consuming. Communication with students during online classes was a problem, as well – students see a teacher, but teacher does not see students. She felt that she did not have control over the teaching process. She expressed a feeling that online classes cannot compare with live classes. Her perception is that during online lectures she lagged behind a little and worked more than she would have if she had regular classes.
- Martina Dragija Ivanović (University of Zadar) was very enthusiastic about online classes at the beginning but soon realized that not all students had equal opportunities to follow classes (digital divide), students had family problems, there were problems with privacy, etc. She points out that her mistake was delivering lessons as if she were in a class, but it turned out that she had very little interaction with students. If she had to do it again – she would prepare a lot of small assignments to force students to engage. She complained that they do not really have any support or assistance for developing online classes or e-learning materials by the University. She believes that there should be an

office at her University to help teachers prepare lessons (technical side – to record video recordings for instance). She emphasized the importance of collaboration across university and across disciplines as crucial for future work.

- Eva Méndez (Universidad Carlos III de Madrid) has expertise in digital education (in MOOCs). She was in Australia during pandemic (was trapped there) and had to teach from there (time zone difference!). She stressed out problems of interaction with students and evaluation of their knowledge. Eva also believed that this was a rewarding experience for her – to see that we are in the digital education times.
- Enrique Orduña-Malea (Universitat Politècnica de València) stressed that he had to change everything in only two days – materials, ways of assessment, etc. He and his colleagues did not have any specific instructions from the University at the beginning which made everything extremely stressful for him and other colleagues. Teachers started sharing best practices for teaching in this setting. Since he teaches at three different schools his additional problem was that all those institutions had a different approaches to teaching during pandemic and he had to adapt, which was very difficult sometimes. The good outcome of the pandemic is, according to him, the change in the way students communicate with professors (improvement!)– they share their assignment via MS Teams platform and all the lessons are recorded. At the end, Enrique emphasized that we all need to change (within the university), but also stressed out the importance of training – both for students and professors.
- Blanca Rodríguez-Bravo (Universidad de León) and her colleagues at her institution have been teaching students using online courses/blended methodology since 2010/2011. Therefore, they were prepared when lockdown happened – they had resources and were familiar with software. However, she mentioned a few challenges: lack of contact with students, students needed more assistance with online learning; during pandemic professors had more work, preparation of lectures for online environment is more time-consuming for teachers. The biggest challenge, however, was how to examine and assess student knowledge. The same as other professors, Blanca worked more than ever as a teacher and missed her formal and informal interaction with students and colleagues. Blanca mentioned the academic library and the fact that the library expanded its collection of e-books during the lockdown. Blanca’s final thought was that lockdown accelerated the digital transition of her university and increased digital literacy.
- Dora Sales (Universitat Jaume I, Castelló) talked about her experience of developing a course on information literacy. It was her first time to teach the whole class online, to huge groups with a lot of students enrolled. At the beginning the teaching was asynchronous. She interacted with students through Google Meet platform and e-mail. She emphasized that that online teaching is primarily about your role as a teacher. It was necessary for her to let students know that she was there for them – as a mentor and facilitator. Course was very demanding and intense, but also very rewarding. She used methods to engage students and motivate their activity. Teaching during pandemic taught her how to use online collaborative learning spaces – she plans to use them in future, even if the classes return to classrooms.

Day 2

The second day of the DECriS multiplier event started with a presentation by Kristina Feldvari and Milijana Mičunović (University of Osijek) on Survey Methodology applied in Intellectual Output 1 (IO-1) of the project. A questionnaire-based exploratory research approach was used – with the aim to the state of the art of Distance Education and OER at European Higher Education institutions in (L)IS, with focus on institutional practices and policies. The questionnaire had three parts (digital education, OER, institutional support provided during Covid-19 pandemic). A special focus was also on identifying the awareness of OER. The first step was an integrative literature review. Questions were first drafted, proofread, re-adjusted and final questionnaire was published with LimeSurvey. It was active from June to September 2020 and aimed at heads of LIS departments. Responses were received from 56 schools/departments from 23 countries.

This was followed by a presentation of the IO-1 Results by Milijana Mičunović (University of Osijek) and Sabina Rako (SRCE, Zagreb). Live teaching sessions were the most common implemented distance education approaches. Blended learning, project-based learning and problem-based learning were the most common strategies. It is noteworthy that online plagiarism detection systems were commonly used and implemented. As most common support measure during Covid-19, students were still able to obtain necessary library materials in 80% of the surveyed (L)IS schools. It is noteworthy that 45% of the departments stated to have an institutional OER repository and in some cases, there is also a national OER repository. However, it is also noteworthy that several participants were not familiar with that information. All (L)IS schools used digital learning materials, while about 50% of them used OER. Almost all of the (L)IS schools implemented new didactics in their teaching, while most of the (L)IS schools were able to use existing systems, tools and practices during the Covid-19 pandemic. Academic libraries had a crucial role during the Covid-19 pandemic either as providers of necessary teaching and learning materials or as providers of virtual information services. Practical support for the teaching staff during Covid-19 came mostly in the form of online training, technical support and provided access to software and digital tools.

This was followed by a discussion about the IO-1 Results (moderated by Milijana Mičunović from University of Osijek). One aspect of this discussion was how peer review of OER should be best conducted. Another issue that was brought up was also the consideration of commitment to OER in tenure assessments.

After a coffee break there was a round table on the topic “Lessons learned from teaching support services and experts involved in digital education support and resources”. There were presentations (20 minutes each):

- Albert Basart (Quality Evaluation Area, AQU Catalunya) talked on Quality assurance and digital education as staff working at the National university quality agency of Catalonia. He stressed the need to work with the agencies to maintaining the quality in the new scenario. This included the presentation of AQU Catalunya services, the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area, and experiences during the Covid-19 crisis. Quality assurance issues were pointed out as major challenge in e-learning.
- Anna Magre (La Factoria unit from Universitat Pompeu Fabra Library in Barcelona) delivered the presentation “Responding and learning from unexpected situations: La Factoria at the UPF Library in hard times.” Digital Transformation at Pompeu Fabra

University Library is especially concerned with cloud technologies, ICT mobility of users and services to users. La Factoria has a technical team and a front office in each library staffed with specialized librarians that can give support. During the Covid-19 crisis additional virtual support lines were set up. Additionally, multiple Webinars were organized, which received high response (almost 200 participants per webinar), FAQs were provided and a website for blended teaching. It concluded, that it is worthwhile to have a flexible and scalable organizational structure that can respond to emergencies. The experience has accelerated the implementation of a new educational framework at the UPF.

- Ebba Ossiannilsson (International Council for Open and Distance Education OER Advocacy Committee) talked on “A global outlook: The situation and use of OER during the pandemic COVID-19, and the role of UNESCO OER Recommendation.” She introduced into the activities of the International Council for Open and Distance Education, the UNESCO OER recommendations and pointed out that the Covid-19 pandemic has interrupted classroom learning for at least 9 out of 10 students worldwide. She pointed out the importance to re-contextualize OER for the own culture and country. She further introduced in initiatives how UNESCO supports OER. She pointed out three lessons: (1) Education actors should nurture resilient mind-sets that value people and process over classroom devices, (2) Educators need new skills and new knowledge to capitalize on new education priorities and means of delivery, (3) Addressing learning gaps now will minimize disruption in students’ educational journey. She closed with an overview of recent research.
- Joan-Tomàs Pujolà (Institute for Professional Development- ICE, Universitat de Barcelona) talked on “Teacher training in emergency remote teaching during the lockdown at the Universitat de Barcelona (UB)”. First, he introduced into the context during the lockdown, second training programs at UB, third emergency remote teaching vs online teaching and learning, fourth lessons learned, and fifth thoughts on “And now what?”. During the lockdown 18 webinars were offered with sessions of up to 250 participants. The experience showed that teachers with previous experience had fewer difficulties, while teachers with a more traditional approach to teaching or used exams as the main assessment procedure had more difficulties. It concluded: (1) Teacher training at the UB in the lockdown was constantly adapting to the teachers’ needs regarding the content and the format of the training. (2) The online teacher training in this crisis has opened up new avenues of exploration. (3) The emergency remote teaching they experienced should help teachers to rethink their teaching methods and explore different formats. The talk concluded with several cases how teaching could turn in the future – from the return to full face to face to more online and hybrid teaching approaches.
- Eleni Boursinou (UNESCO) talked on “The OER UNESCO Recommendation”. She first introduced into the UNESCO OER Recommendations and the action areas. There is a serious lack of resources other than English. Thus, UNESCO supports the translation of English contents. It is too early to report on lessons learned. Currently a portal is under development to bring together people working on policies. Several webinars will be organized that were shortly presented.

This was followed by a final discussion on the further steps for DECriS Project, moderated by Gema Santos (Universitat de Barcelona). Points raised included how DECriS project results could be forwarded and included by UNESCO and issues about the development of OER and online assessment.

Final remarks

The multiplier event was very successful and provided the feedback and the context for the definitive IO-1 report, now available and the DECriS Project website https://decris.ffos.hr/documents/o1/DECriS_IO1_Survey_Report_Edited_Final.pdf. Also most of the ideas and experiences shared were in line with the work on the next IO-2, the new step the project partners were planning at the moment the ME took place. IO-2 will be devoted to “Digital Education appraisal and quality perception by students, teachers and trainers at the partner HEIs during the COVID-19 crisis”, so the links with the developments during ME-1 were very clear.

The ME was a way to put actual context for closing IO-1, based on personal experiences and perceptions: as IO-1 is a work that exploited data from a survey to teachers answering the survey in their capacity as representatives of the schools and departments, feedback obtained for individual actors on their personal capacity was very useful. It was the connection point between IO-1 and IO-2 to gather information for further outputs devoted to study critical success factors for OER and benchmark cases of use.

Barcelona, December 21st 2021