Virtual Based Research on New Security in Europe

Progress Report Public Part
## Project information

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<th>Project acronym:</th>
<th>NewSecEU</th>
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<td>Project title:</td>
<td>Virtual Based Research on New Security in Europe</td>
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Executive Summary

Virtual Based Research on New Dimensions of Security in Europe (NewSecEU) is a project which serves to contribute to the innovative development of teaching in higher education in a European context. Thus, this report might be particularly interesting for university teachers and students with an interest in international cooperation in teaching and research.

Our project addresses both the issue of closer collaboration between the academy and professionals – contact to the experts is established among others via our project website [www.tu-dresden.de/zis/newseceu](http://www.tu-dresden.de/zis/newseceu) – as well as strongly underlining the important process of Europeanization of universities. We believe that it can serve as an example of successful international cooperation for other institutions and can be the basis for future wider collaboration between the universities.

Since part of the innovative design of this seminar is the idea to bring students together in international research groups with the help of an online learning platform (OPAL: [https://bildungsportal.sachsen.de/opal/dmz/](https://bildungsportal.sachsen.de/opal/dmz/)), this report might also be interesting for designers and developers of online learning platforms.

Making use of an online platform allows for different teaching approaches to stand together and learn from one another. It also enables teachers and students to benefit from individual areas of scientific and technical expertise between the participating universities (see part 4 for details). Additionally, it provides students, researchers and experts with an opportunity to compare and communicate different perspectives on security issues, a policy field traditionally structured along national agendas/perspectives.

In spite of a delay in starting the project due to the slow negotiation of the final funding agreement, NewSecEU has successfully completed the development phase of the project. Since January 2009 the project team has produced a web-based framework for the collaborative study of European security. This has involved the collection of suitable literature, the development of a common structure for the study programme including the application of Web 2.0 tools and assessment patterns and the formulation of appropriate research questions. Considerable progress has also been made in the arrangements for the face-to-face workshops to be held in Dresden in October 2009 and Brussels in 2010 as well as for the final conference to be held in Prague in April 2010. A scheme for the evaluation of the project has been produced and there has already been some dissemination of information about the project to the wider profession in the United Kingdom and Germany. All of these developments have been underpinned by the effective project management processes supported by Frau Ines Schmidt of the European Project Center at TU Dresden and the coordination work carried out by Frau Almut Meyer zu Schwabedissen. The two coordination meetings in Dresden and one in Wroclaw allowed the project team to work through issues already discussed online.

The project now moves to the Implementation stage. Students are being selected and prepared for the kickoff workshop in Dresden. We look forward to trying out our blended model of collaborative learning and learning lessons from the evaluation. We will publish both the results of the security analyses and the pedagogical research in 2010/11. We firmly believe that this will be an immense success.
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1. Project Objectives

The Quest for excellence in science in the modern world is largely based on specialization and cooperation between different types of partners and, thus, acquiring a broad range of knowledge based on interdisciplinary expertise. One consequence of these developments is the need to adapt traditional methods of teaching to a new and evolving educational reality. One means of achieving this is by bringing different specialists with academic and professional background together as well as making students aware of the needs of work in the modern multimedia based e-environment. This approach came along with the decision of the Lisbon European Council in March 2000 to introduce a new mission for the community: to transform Europe into the most competitive and dynamic knowledge based economy in the world.

The NewSecEU (New Security in Europe) project has five main objectives:

**To Serve as an Example of Innovative Virtual Collaboration**
By using Web 2.0 technologies students and professors are able to collaborate on a shared research project, exchanging texts, ideas and data. Students will work asynchronously through the use of tools like blogs, wikis and discussion forums as well as participating in synchronous live chats and video conferences. NewSecEU uses a blended learning approach to support these online discussions with three face-to-face sessions to be held in Dresden, Brussels and Prague.

**To Provide Students with Professional and ICT Skills**
The student participants in NewSecEU are expected to organise their collaborative research themselves, which will require them to develop their skills in organization, teamwork, ICT and intercultural communication. The opportunity to interact with policymakers and security practitioners will provide students with networking and research opportunities that they would not normally get.

**To Create a European Network for Contemporary Security Studies**
By bringing together students, academics and experts from different European Union member states to collaborate in the analysis of the contemporary European security scene, NewSecEU will lay the foundations for a new network of security experts able to bridge the gap between Eastern and Western Europe.

**To Connect Universities and Professionals**
Universities are often stereotyped as “ivory towers” disconnected from the practical world of politics. However, NewSecEU specifically targets interaction between the policymakers and the academic world in order to build a bridge between these two important sites of security analysis.

**To Europeanize Universities**
The NewSecEU project will encourage intensive co-operation in international research teams. This will encourage the development of a stronger understanding of European identity in students and teachers alike. In this way, we will not only overcome national stereotypes but will accelerate the process of Europeanizing our universities through a network of virtual collaborative research. Collaboration
between the partners will provide another model for growing collaboration between European Higher Education institutions.
2. Project Approach

Our web-based research seminar on “New Dimensions of Security in Europe” (NewSecEU) will achieve its aims of strengthening the link between theory and practice in academic security studies, designing a blended research and teaching concept (partly online, partly face-to-face), and bringing together international students to cooperate in sensitive issues of international politics, by means of an internet platform and face-to-face meetings.

The idea is to put together four student groups, one group dealing with one specific dimension of security, each tutored by a researcher from one of the participating universities. In order to ensure exchange between academic cultures not only among the teachers, student groups will follow a specific compilation: two students of each participating university will join a security dimension. Thus, each dimension will be made up of 8 students, from four nationally different universities.

NewSecEU: research teams

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<th>political security</th>
<th>environmental security</th>
<th>military security</th>
<th>societal security</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wroclaw University</td>
<td>Dresden University</td>
<td>Charles University</td>
<td>De Montfort University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>external experts</td>
<td>external experts</td>
<td>in Prague</td>
<td>in Leicester</td>
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<tr>
<td>students</td>
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<td>CZ, DE, PL, UK</td>
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At the beginning students will cover theoretical aspects of security studies, and find out what specific topics they would like to deal with in their policy papers. Teaching will take place on the OPAL learning platform (see picture below), where students will be asked to discuss issues in the forum, write essays, summarise articles etc.
These exercises will lead up to a **poster presentation in Brussels**. Here students **communicate with political practitioners** about their thoughts on contemporary or future security issues in the realm of Europe, taking into account the **different national perspectives**.

Having gained **insight into expert opinion**, students will then be asked to integrate this into their academic analysis. For this purpose the student groups of 8 will split into groups of four within their dimension of security, writing a joint group policy paper.

The policy paper will be discussed among the students of the group on the OPAL platform, where it will also be written and presented in the form of a wiki (an online text document that can be worked on collaboratively on the internet).

Eventually students get to **present their policy paper at a conference on New Dimensions of Security to be held in Prague**. This will allow them to discuss their views with an audience of academics and security practitioners. The policy papers will be published and sent to relevant security institutions in Europe.

Furthermore DMU Leicester will publish a paper reporting on our project, analysing it from a didactic perspective and presenting the results of the evaluation procedure; thereby raising awareness of the project, the sponsors and the results in the scientific community.
3. Project Outcomes & Results

Project management

Partnership agreements were finally signed by all participating institutions during February 2009. This delay was caused mainly by uncertainties concerning the final shape of the project budget. However, even before the signing of the formal agreements, basic rules of communication and cooperation were agreed upon at the first meeting of the project team in Dresden in January 2009. The team decided to use the OPAL platform (see below) not only as the main online teaching and learning tool for the implementation of the project but already during the preparation phase. The team went on to establish specialized folders, forums and wiki-based documents in OPAL through which it coordinates its activities.

At the January 2009 meeting procedures for financial and administrative management of the project were also agreed. In March 2009, team members successfully submitted to the European Project Center at TU Dresden their first internal financial reports; the second set of reports was submitted in August.

Project’s online communication platforms and presentation

After some debate, the project team decided to rely on the OPAL communication platform\(^1\), which they have used successfully in their previous cooperation, to act as a basic online teaching and learning tool. Access was provided by the project’s coordinating partner, Technische Universität Dresden (TUD).

In cooperation with the Media Design Centre (MDC) at TU Dresden, a NewSecEU site was set up in OPAL and designed to allow its use both by the project team during the preparation phase and by the students during the phase of implementation.

Besides the project’s OPAL site which uses a secure login, open only for the tutors and future students of the seminar, the project team agreed on the contents and design of a publicly accessible website at www.tu-dresden.de/zis/newseceu. A website with the more catching address: www.newseceu.eu is currently under construction. The NewSecEU project logo (designed again by the MDC at TU Dresden) was also chosen by the project team and has been promoted in publicly available outputs of the project.

Seminar design

The organization of the NewSecEU seminar – which is to be realized during the 2009/2010 academic year – combines methods of online teaching and learning with face-to-face meetings of the students and tutors, and also contacts to experts active in the relevant fields of research.

The content of the seminar includes four dimensions of European security, each demonstrated on a specific case for which one of the team members is responsible:

\(^1\) Please see https://bildungsportal.sachsen.de/opal/auth/1%3A-1%3A0%3A0%3A0/01_Willkommen/01_Was_ist_OPAL/Einfuehrung_OPAL.html for more details on OPAL.
environmental security (on the case of energy security – TU Dresden), military security (ESDP as an external crisis management tool – Charles University in Prague), political security (European Neighbourhood Policy – University of Wrocław) and societal security (the issue of migration – De Montfort University in Leicester).

During their first meetings, the team members agreed on an overall structure of the seminar which is to be divided into six blocs (26 teaching weeks in total). During each of the blocs (and, indeed, each of the weeks) students, formed into multinational working groups, will perform online tasks that have been assigned to them by each of the tutors within the specific security dimension. For this purpose, the team members have already uploaded into OPAL literature and documents which will be available to the students in an electronic form. They have also prepared an initial questionnaire/test through which the students will be introduced to the seminar before their first face-to-face meeting. Finally, each of the tutors has uploaded into OPAL an initial version of the “storyboard” (i.e. a set of research questions and organizational tasks) which will guide the students through the seminar. At the end of the seminar, students’ working groups are expected to produce a policy paper on a topic within their particular security dimension.

The process of online teaching and learning will be punctuated by three face-to-face meetings: an introductory session in Dresden (October 22-25, 2009), a mid-course workshop in Brussels (January 26-29, 2010) and a final conference in Prague (April 9-11, 2010). During the introductory session in Dresden, students will be introduced to the design, theoretical background and practical features of the whole seminar. Additionally, specific team building activities will provide students with a team spirit to carry them through the following weeks of online cooperation. The workshop in Brussels will serve as a face-to-face evaluation opportunity for the students and will also allow them to meet Brussels-based experts and EU professionals relevant for their specific field of study. Finally, at the conference in Prague, students will be able to present results of their research to a broad audience alongside the experts who will participate.

Two project members (TU Dresden, De Montfort University in Leicester) have already selected students who will participate in the seminar. This process has been delayed in Prague and Wrocław due to a different system of enrolment into classes at the Charles University and the University of Wrocław.

Seminar organization

Members of the project team have not only worked out and started preparing the details of the seminar content but also discussed and made decisions regarding the organization of the specific seminar events. Inquiries have been made into the availability of specific venues at and means of transport to the three aforementioned face-to-face meetings. The meetings in Dresden and Brussels have already been planned and accommodation for the participating students and tutors booked. For the Brussels meeting, project partners from TU Dresden arranged a presentation for the students by officials of the European Commission.

Communication has been started with experts who might participate at the workshop in Brussels. Project partners from the Charles University have also entered into negotiations concerning a free-of-charge lease of a conference hall at the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the final conference in April 2010.
Besides this, members of the project team have also been in contact with national experts who will serve as advisors for the students during the implementation of the seminar.

**Evaluation**

During their final preparatory meeting in Dresden in July 2009, team members were presented and agreed to evaluation procedures developed and presented by partners from De Montfort University in Leicester.
4. Partnerships

The current consortium is based on previous experience of cooperation between partners. Since 2004 Technische Universitat Dresden (TUD), Charles University in Prague and Wroclaw University have been cooperating in a joint course based on a blended learning scheme. After the presentation of the course run by the three universities, called ForPol Online, at the American Political Science Association’s conference on Teaching and Learning in Washington, a new partner, De Montfort University, Leicester (DMU) joined the consortium, strengthening it with its presence.

Due to issues recognized during the previous collaboration and with a strong desire to bring the social sciences closer to real life, 13 external partners were invited to cooperate along with the universities mentioned above. The list comprises experts in security studies from NATO, the Czech Foreign Ministry etc.

The division of work packages is based on previous experiences, expertise and interest of the partners together with the principle of equal participation. Because the TUD has the widest experience in project coordination and has a well developed infrastructure for coordinating such activities (European Project Center), it became the leading partner and takes care of the coordination and management of the project and setting up communications (WP 1), while other partners concentrate on delivering results and contribute to the interim and final reports.

As all of the partners have previous experience in online teaching and cooperation, the creation of an online seminar content/storyboard is highly divided with Wroclaw University (WP2) in the lead. While the knowledge is spread equally, the role of the online platform OPAL, provided to the consortium through TU Dresden, is critical for the development of the Virtual Research Seminar (WP3). It is administered by TU Dresden. All other university partners contribute and consult on the development of the online environment and the external website design. By the same reason the implementation of the Online Research Seminar (WP4) is managed by TUD, while such activities as the selection of students, the supervision of respective security dimensions, contact and coordination with external experts and support in the preparation and realization of the intermediate meeting in Brussels are spread equally among all four universities. The concept of the Conference in Prague is based on longtime cooperation between Charles University and the Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic, therefore the biggest load of work linked to the conference is on the Czech side (WP5). Experience with evaluation at DMU Leicester is unique among partners and therefore the concept and administration of evaluation of the seminar is conducted by this university (WP6) with participation of all partners. Also the publication of the results of evaluation in an academic journal specialized in e-learning will be done by DMU, while the whole work package (WP7) is coordinated by TUD and realized by all partners according to the chosen dimension of security.

The language of communication is English, the most accessible to all partners and widely used in the scientific area of the project (political sciences, e-learning). In order to ensure effective communication, three kinds of communication methods were applied so far: online platform OPAL – the main platform of the teaching process and also tool for effective cooperation among partners, consist of files storage area, archives, discussion forum and wiki, is supported with e-mail communication and regular meetings of the partners in the preparation period on a three months basis. Thus far, three personal meeting of the representatives were
held in the project. All results and archives can be viewed on the OPAL platform and consecutively build up external web page of the project [www.newseceu.eu](http://www.newseceu.eu).

The specific international constellation of NewSecEU will promote identification with EU neighbours, in the sensitive field of security politics. Enabling advanced students to experience and reflect upon different academic and political cultures, while being encouraged to negotiate and formulate a common policy paper and thus a solution for political/cultural difference in an environment that is characterised by the necessity to come to common solutions and find common goals.

Here the special composition of the consortium is particularly challenging and beneficial. Combining Eastern and Western states of the EU, with very different historical backgrounds as well as diverting threat perspectives that are among others geographically induced.

Apart from the afore mentioned external partners and experts, NewSecEU is also planning to cooperate with the city of Dresden, inviting experts to speak publicly in the town hall of Dresden on contemporary issues of security in Europe.
5. Plans for the Future

Implementation of the NewSecEU seminar

The immediate general objective which the project team faces is a successful implementation of the NewSecEU seminar. Its first meeting will start in Dresden on October 22, 2009, but even before that students will be performing tasks online through the OPAL platform. This will require first and foremost:

- recruiting the remaining students for the seminar (at Charles University and University of Wroclaw)
- establishing a reliable working partnership with national experts who will serve as advisors during the seminar
- finalizing the “storyboards” for each of the security dimensions
- preparing lectures and team-building activities for the meeting in Dresden
- arranging travel to the initial meeting in Dresden
- meeting with the selected students at each of the partner universities and providing them with an initial instruction on the seminar

After the meeting in Dresden, students will start a regular online cooperation within the multinational working groups, structured by the storyboard instructions and direct online feedback from the tutors (which will be provided on a regular basis every week). Between the initial meeting in Dresden (October 2009) and the workshop in Brussels (January 2010), students within each of the four dimensions of security should gain enough knowledge in their selected field to be able to present and discuss with the tutors and other experts a coherent view on the questions asked by the storyboards.

Before the workshop in Brussels, following organizational steps need to be undertaken:

- securing travel to and accommodation in Brussels (partly done already)
- organizing meetings with Brussels-based experts (presentation already arranged at the European Commission and communication with some experts started)

Following the meeting in Brussels, students will start working on their policy papers which will then be presented at the final conference in Prague. Besides continuing regular oversight by the tutors, this will require:

- finalizing the lease of a conference hall at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic
- inviting guest speakers
- arranging travel, accommodation and catering for the conference participants
- ensuring the necessary technical equipment for a web-streaming of the conference

After the Prague conference, the project will proceed with its evaluation and dissemination activities and possible follow-up steps.
6. Contribution to EU policies

The NewSecEU project will contribute to several key EU policies, objectives and priorities. These include:

**Lisbon Education and Training Indicators**

NewSecEU encourages *inward and outward mobility of teachers and students within the LLP programme (LIS-H26 and LIS-H27)* through the strictly collaborative nature of its research centre. During the seminar students will travel to three workshop sessions, allowing them to experience the environments of different countries and universities in both Western and Eastern Europe. They will prepare for these workshops through work on the online platform (OPAL), which enables them to experience a degree of virtual mobility. NewSecEU has already enabled staff from the four consortium members to meet for coordination meetings.

**Lisbon Key Competencies**

*Digital Competence (KC4)* Both staff and students in NewSecEU have opportunities to develop their use of Information Society Technologies (IST), both to support high-level critical thinking about issues in contemporary European security, but also to develop effective working networks to produce collaborative research papers. Much of the work preparing and implementing the course has taken place virtually, using Web 2.0 technologies for communication and co-operation.

*Learning to Learn (KC5)* During NewSecEU students will have to refine their core skills in the self-management of learning: time management, autonomy, discipline, perserverence and information management. The project places considerable emphasis on skills of project management and collaborative research as well as encouraging students to reflect on their skills development through reflective exercises and the evaluation process.

*Interpersonal, intercultural and social competences (KC6.1)* The cross-border collaborative working practices encouraged during NewSecEU and the diverse nature of the student bodies at the participating institutions will provide a microcosm of Europe today. Teachers and students will have to develop the communication and negotiation skills necessary to operate effectively in a collaborative international group project as well as a sound understanding of the intercultural dimension of the European Union.

**LLP Horizontal Policies**

A. *Promoting an awareness of the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity within Europe, as well as of the need to combat racism, prejudice and xenophobia*

By encouraging cross-border collaboration in research and teaching, NewSecEU inherently addresses issues of cultural and linguistic diversity. In particular the focus of the research group on societal security focuses on issues of identity in Europe, especially the examination of the role of minorities.
Complementarity with other policies

In order to achieve the European Union’s aim of becoming the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy (*Education and Training 2010 Work Programme*), a fundamental reshaping of Europe’s education and training is required. NewSecEU demonstrates one way in which education might be adapted from a national to a European level through a blended learning approach combining face-to-face and virtual interaction. We also believe that NewSecEU will help students develop those skills in intercultural communication and academic research that will make them more attractive to potential employers.