



Top International
Managers in Engineering



UNITE!

University Network for
Innovation, Technology
and Engineering

T.I.M.E. Webinar “Virtual Mobility: A Critical Analysis”

20 January 2021

Roberto ZANINO
Vice Rector for European Relations –
Politecnico di Torino, Italy

roberto.zanino@polito.it



POLITECNICO
DI TORINO



UNIVERSITAT POLITÈCNICA
DE CATALUNYA
BARCELONATECH



TECHNISCHE
UNIVERSITÄT
DARMSTADT





Kick-Off



Feb 2019

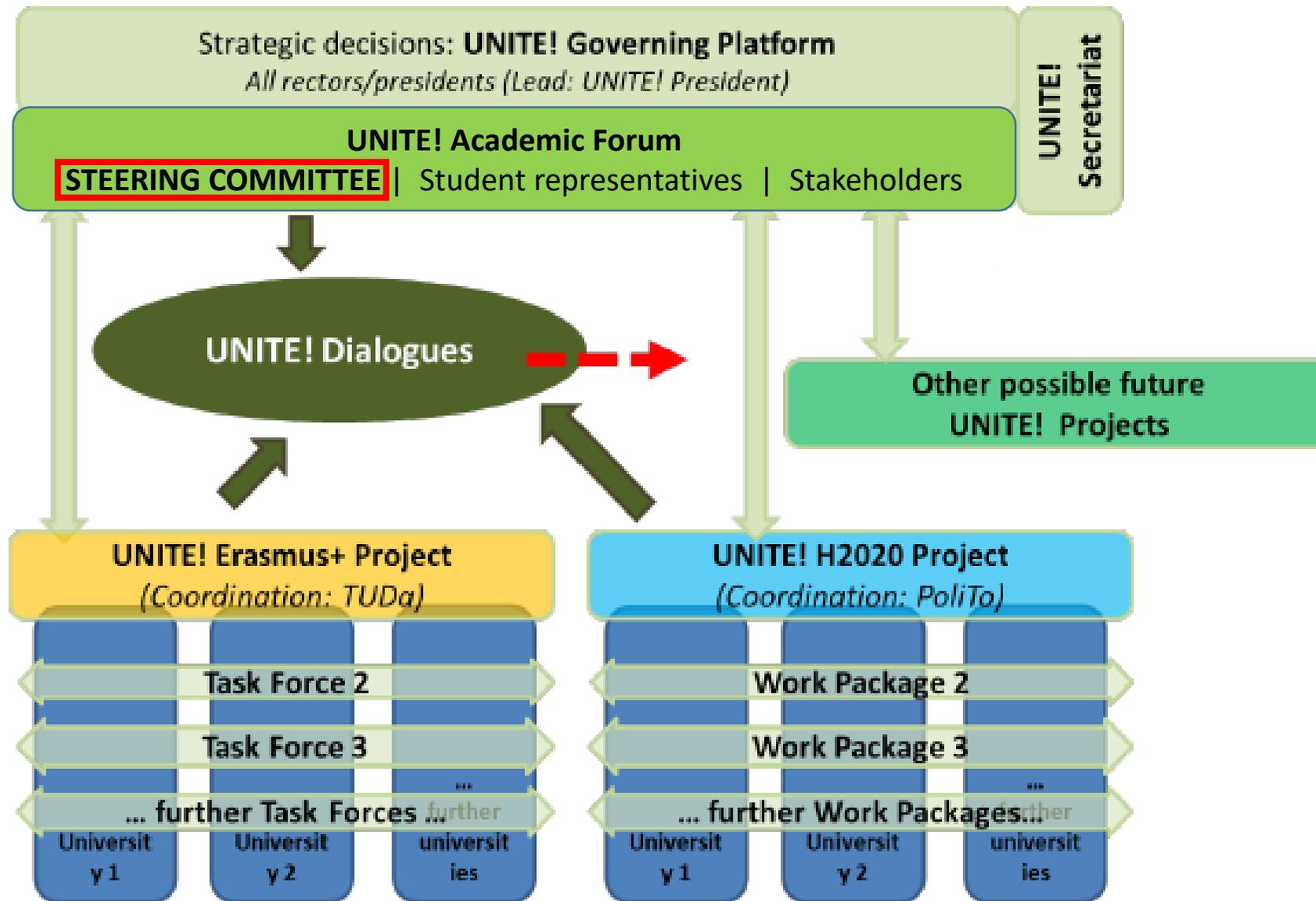
Nov 2019

Jan 2021

End of E+ pilot
(if no extension)
Nov 2022

End of H2020 pilot
Dec 2023





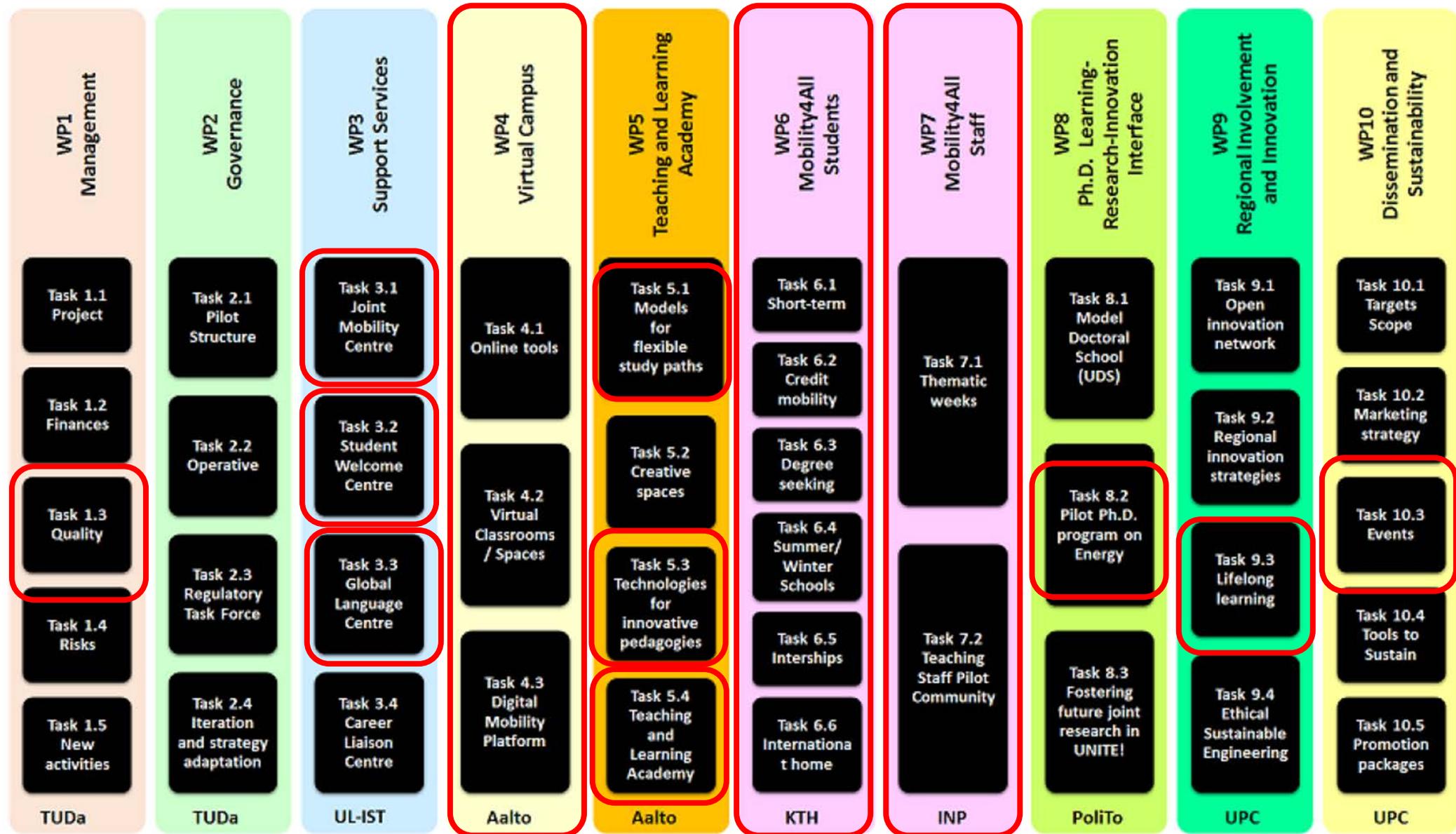
“UNITE! targets to create a bottom-up network of universities across Europe which will enable students to obtain a degree by combining studies in several EU countries”



To this end, we will “actively facilitate physical and virtual mobility of students and staff by sharing, pooling and complementing” our different capabilities



We will draw on the already existing mobility infrastructure to create opportunities for embedded mobility at all levels of education enabling students to develop individualized professional profiles



Erasmus Virtual Exchange was launched in 2018, in the framework of Erasmus+.

Universities can offer Virtual Exchange activities to students as **optional courses** through which they develop **transversal skills** such as intercultural competence, digital literacies and communication skills.

Erasmus Virtual Exchange is based on a **complementary way** with the physical exchange programmes.

The programme aims to **prepare, deepen, and extend physical exchanges**, and, to reach new populations and larger numbers of students.

[https://europa.eu/youth/erasmusvirtual/about-virtual-exchange_en]

The current definition (and implementation) of virtual exchange in UNITE! is (forcedly) different ...

-
- UNITE! Virtual Exchange Credit Program -- Pilot project on Energy 
 - UNITE! virtual short-term programmes (e.g. INSPIRED, ULisses)
 - Virtual courses/summer schools offered to UNITE! partners (e.g. Digital Business Master class by Aalto, Ginsen summer school by Grenoble)
 - Entrepreneurship Education virtual mobility collaboration (← E4T)

- Launched in Summer 2020 as a prompt response to the COVID-19 emergency limitations to physical mobility.
- First example of virtual mobility in the framework of the UNITE! Alliance.
- Open to MSc students of the 7 U! universities, who can select and attend remote courses in the Energy field offered by U! partners, substituting elective courses and gaining credits (up to 15).
- Multilateral agreement signed Dec 2020 →
General MoU for virtual mobility

Fall Semester 2020/21 a.y.**Available courses** (29 in total, 141.5 ECTS):

- Aalto -> 1 course (5 ECTS)
- Grenoble INP -> 7 courses (15 ECTS)
- IST/ULisboa -> 6 courses (34.5 ECTS)
- PoliTo -> 7 courses (50 ECTS)
- TU Darmstadt -> 8 courses (37 ECTS)

Spring Semester 2020/21 a.y.**Available courses** (31 in total, 178.5 ECTS):

- Aalto -> 11 courses (57 ECTS)
- Grenoble INP -> 4 courses (14.5 ECTS)
- KTH -> 4 courses (27 ECTS)
- IST/ULisboa -> 4 courses (24 ECTS)
- PoliTo -> 8 courses (56 ECTS)
- TU Darmstadt -> [only outgoing students]

UPC will join the project in the 2021/22

- **Main innovation: students can attend courses offered by more than one UNITE! university in the same semester, achieving credits, while attending courses at their home institution.**
- About 50+ students were involved in the 1st semester and a similar number is expected in the 2nd
- Next steps: modular extension of the energy pilot to other areas (eg, AI, Architecture); virtual short-term courses, Summer Schools, ...
- LESSONS LEARNED: communication to be improved inter-partner, intra partner/schools, towards students → selection, drop-outs (main reasons: initial difficulties, higher workload and different contents than expected, ...)
- CHALLENGE: Quality
- CHALLENGE: Exams (even at PoliTo, exams not in presence are against the law and can be considered just in emergency situations ...)
- CHALLENGE: Harmonization of procedures ... local rules originally based on physical mobility ...
- CHALLENGE (general): Engagement of faculty and governing bodies
- **Developments from the next academic year onward are a major strategic question currently under discussion**

- Use the international networks of universities (and European university alliances in particular) to connect selected **secondary level education institutions** belonging to their ecosystems, providing their students an opportunity of virtual exchange?

- Can we assume that virtual mobility provides the same competences, the same benefits and learning experience as one would have with physical mobility?
- Virtual is at present (basically) the only mobility available, and should return to be complementary to physical mobility. However ...
- Virtual will also offer a sustainable and inclusive means to access, and provide opportunities to, a much broader population of students/staff (eg, with family responsibilities, disabilities, economic hardships) even in a virus-free future
- The virtual mobility experience will help students and staff to acquire useful skills for their professional and working life in a changing world
- Even though it is difficult to provide a full experience (including general cultural and traditional social aspects), as physical mobility did for the Erasmus generation, UNITE! hopes to make significant contributions, both from the technical and pedagogic points of view, to the development of Virtual initiatives

U

LISBOA

UNIVERSIDADE
DE LISBOA

A!

Aalto University



POLITECNICO
DI TORINO

U

UNITE!

University Network for
Innovation, Technology
and Engineering



UNIVERSITAT POLITÈCNICA
DE CATALUNYA
BARCELONATECH



TECHNISCHE
UNIVERSITÄT
DARMSTADT

