

THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION: THE ADDED VALUE OF THE EUROPEAN PORTALS AND SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES FOR THE NATIONAL AND THE INSTITUTIONAL INTERNATIONALIZATION STRATEGIES

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Abstract

Internationalization is an *inextricable* dimension of contemporary global, regional, national and institutional higher education policies. The mobility of students, researchers and academic staff as well as the mobility of the knowledge or the knowledge products lie at the centre of such policies. This paper explores the European internationalization policy of higher education vis-à-vis the EU's ICT initiatives and educational programs and various web portals and social media pages such as Tweeter and Facebook provided by European institutions and agencies in order to support national and institutional policies towards mobility and internationalization.

Introduction

Internationalization is a considerable part of the modern higher education (HE) policy agenda at global, regional, national and institutional level. The mobility of students, researchers and academic staff as well as the mobility of the knowledge or the knowledge products lie at the centre of internationalization policies. Mobility requires convergence of the structure of HE systems along with cross-border quality assurance criteria and standards in combination with recognition of diplomas. Internationalization policies also include marketing strategies, enhancement of higher education institutions (HEIs)' attractiveness and reputation, development of cross-border cooperation and academic networks. At institutional level, mobility of programs and knowledge products require sources such as ICTs infrastructure, academic and administrative staff with foreign language and digital skills, the development of distance learning courses as well as the use of web portals to enhance visibility from abroad. All the above-mentioned are dependent by human and financial resources.

Purpose of the Study and Methodology

The main purpose of the study is to record and discuss the usefulness of the various European initiatives and digital tools for the enhancement of the internationalization of European HE. Taking in mind that internationalization is one of the major axis of the Bologna Process and the European HE policy, this paper explores the use of EU's digital initiatives and educational programs

and various web portals and social media pages provided by European institutions and agencies in order to support national and institutional policies towards mobility and internationalization. The portals were chosen after a thorough search in the official website of the European Union (europa.eu) and the social media after contacting the Directorate General Communication of the European Commission. Considering that HEIs face, in several European countries, the lack of information, funding and support by their national agencies the authors will attempt to submit some proposals on how HEIs could exploit these European resources and use them as part of their internationalization strategy.

Internationalization of Higher Education

Internationalization is an *inextricable* dimension of contemporary global, regional, national and institutional HE policies (Altbach & Knight, 2006, IAU, 2003). This has not always been the case. Taking a deep look into the past, it is obvious that the international character of the ancient Greek academies and the medieval universities had been disappeared after the emergence of the nation-states and the establishment of the national universities, which contributed, to the enhancement of nation building. European HEIs operated for several years within their national and regional borders almost isolated from their societies and the rest of the world (EC, 2003, p.22).

Internationalization became an issue of the European discourse from the mid 1980s but in fact it came to the spotlight during the 1990s. Since then the meaning of internationalization became more broaden and blur and its rational was reconsidered several times (de Wit, 2000, 2002, Knight, 2004, Wächter, 2008). At the same time, the term ‘globalization’ has emerged (Scott, 1998, Sadlak, 2001, Enders & Fulton, 2002), causing a lot of confusion between scholars that tried to distinguish between the two terms (Altbach, 2004, Van Vaught *et al.*, 2002).

According to Teichler “internationalization is generally defined as increasing cross-border activities amidst persistence of borders, while ‘globalization’ refers to similar activities concurrent to an erosion of borders” (Teichler, 2009). Teichler stresses that ‘internationalization’ means that national and institutional actors and policies “continue to play a prominent role” while “globalization put the emphasis on market mechanisms and global players” (Teichler, 2008, p.364). However, as the economic importance of HE sector and the demand for higher education rise, national actors need to act as ‘market players’. Moreover, as states are experiencing severe budget shortfalls due to the economic crisis, both governments and institutions have to develop marketing policies and act as hunters for fee-paying international students and new sources of revenue (WTO, 2010, p.6). As Jane Knight (2004, p.5) aptly mentions “internationalization is changing the world of HE, and globalization is changing the world of internationalization”.

The Economics of Internationalization and the European interest

According to the World Bank the ‘brain business’, thus the global spending on higher education, amounted in 2005 up to \$300 billion a year, or 1% of global economic output (Economist, 2005). The expansion rate of international

students has almost doubled between 1995 (1.7million) and 2008 (3.3 millions) [OECD, 2010, p.309]. The major destinations of all foreign students worldwide are the United States (U.S) (19%), followed by the United Kingdom (UK) (10%), Germany (7%), France (7%) and Australia (7%) (ibid, p.314). Australia, Korea, New Zealand and the Russian Federation seem to develop a more proactive marketing internationalization policy (ibid, p.315).

In Europe internationalization policies are usually part of a national governmental strategy- such as Tony Blair' Prime Minister Initiatives in 1999 and 2006 for International Education- and they are usually supported by national agencies. The British Council in UK, DAAD in Germany, CampusFrance in France, Nuffic in the Netherlands are the most active paradigms. In U.S. internationalization policies are in the core of institutional culture. However, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State and EducationUSA, promote U.S higher education around the world and offer support and counseling to accredited HEIs in order to promote their programs.ⁱ The regions targeted by these marketing policies lie in East Asia and the Pacific since students from there accounted for over 33 per cent of all students abroad in 2007, followed by students from Central and Eastern Europe (13 per cent), and South and West Asia (10.4 per cent) (WTO, 2010, p. 10).ⁱⁱ OECD's list for the most important factors of choice of the country and institution abroad includes: the language of instruction; tuition fees and cost of living; academic reputation of particular institutions or programs; immigration policy; the flexibility of programs; geographical, trade or historical links between countries; future employment opportunities; cultural aspirations and government policies to facilitate transfer of credits between home and host institutions (OECD, 2010, pp.315-18). Additionally, an important feature of international education is the increasing international mobility of programs and institutions. Although comparable data do not exist yet (ibid, p.310), some studies show that the vast kind of mobility is observed in Asia and the main providers are institutions from UK, Australia and the United States (WTO ibid, p.15).

The European Commission is more than interested in the 'brain business'. In the new agenda for the modernization of Europe's higher education systems, the Commission stresses that "a specific strategy for the internationalization of higher education will be elaborated" (EC, 2011a, p. 14). Even if the wording of the text is carefully chosen there is a creeping perception of HE as a commodity and the attraction of international students as a mean for new funding opportunities. This view becomes more obvious in the background staff document: the deployment of ICT in order to deliver online programs ('virtual learning mobility') and marketing HE courses internationally is recommended (EC 2011b, p.40); Brazil, Russia, India, China (BRICs) are seen as new competitors into the global market place for HE (ibid, p. 51); the 'market share' on foreign student flows is examined compared with the main Europe's competitors (ibid, p.53). The Commission highlights the fact that EU is a net receiver of foreign students. Moreover, the number of non-EU students has doubled between 2000-8 (from less than 500,000 to almost 1 million) while students from India and China grew six-fold at the same period (ibid,

pp. 51-53). Nevertheless, all surveys indicate that U.S. is the top destination for Chinese students.

The European Framework for Higher Education

The General Agreements on Trade in Services' negotiations which took place within the World Trade Organization during the mid 1990s and the inclusion of the education sector and in particular the enclosure of HE, gave impetus to the creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) through the Bologna Process. The Process established an *international regime* (the term as defined by Krasner 1983, p.2) ⁱⁱⁱ through a voluntary and intergovernmental process where governments, the Commission and other HE stakeholders participate (Asderaki, 2008). ^{iv} This regime regulates HE sector in Europe, manages the internal competition between the national systems by setting certain norms, rules and decision making procedures and faces the global challenges, such as internationalization of European HE.

The Process led to the harmonization of HE structure all over Europe and set common tools, procedures, criteria and standards for Quality Assurance and recognition of diplomas. (Asderaki, 2009). ^v The EHEA regime has been endorsed since the EU Barcelona summit in 2002 as the key element of the Lisbon strategy (2000-10) concerning HE. The Europe 2020 growth strategy, which succeeded the Lisbon strategy, focuses on education, research, innovation and digital society. Thus, the EHEA along with the European Research Area (ERA) ^{vi} became the drivers for the encouragement of interinstitutional synergies; the evolution of the 'knowledge alliances'; the development of joint programs; the promotion of geographical and inter-sectoral mobility of students, academics, researchers and knowledge (the 'fifth freedom'). ^{vii} The Erasmus Programme along with the 7th Framework Programme are the flagships of these policies which mainly promote the European dimension of internationalization (intra-European mobility), while, since the 1990s, the Tempus Programme (Takis/Cards/Meda) and since 2004 the Erasmus Mundus Programme support co-operation and mobility from third countries (external mobility). Moreover, several bilateral programs, run by different Commissions' Directorates, promote internationalization of the European HEIs and contribute to the attraction of international students (i.e. EU-U.S. Atlantis programme, EU-Canada, EU-Australia, EU-India, EDU Link, Asia-Link, EU-Korea Cooperation, EU- Japan, EU-New Zealand). ^{viii} Therefore, the Commission proposes a comprehensive approach through an internationalization strategy for HE along with the implementation of the Erasmus for All Programme (2014-2020) ^{ix} and the Strategic Forum for International Scientific and Technological Cooperation for Research. ^x

The Impact of the Bologna Process and of the European Programs on Internationalization of Higher Education

Internationalization is one of the major axis of the Bologna Process and the European HE policy (Huisman & van der Wende, 2005, Asderaki, 2008, pp.353-361). Bologna Declaration set "the objective of increasing the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education" as well as to "ensure that the European higher education system acquires a world-wide degree of attraction", since "the vitality and efficiency of any civilization

can be measured by the appeal that its culture has for other countries” (Bologna Declaration, 1999). In the following years a working group on the External dimension of the Bologna Process was established in 2005^{xi} in order to elaborate a *Strategy for the EHEA in a Global Setting* (London Communiqué, 2007). The strategy “takes both competitiveness and cooperation into account, identifying guiding principles of the Bologna Process and five core policy areas” such as: a) improving information on the EHEA, b) promoting European higher education to enhance its worldwide attractiveness and competitiveness, c) strengthening cooperation based on partnership, d) intensifying policy dialogue, e) mutual recognition of qualifications.^{xii} A website (www.ehea.info) was created, where apart from the general information and events, the member states can give important information and links for international students. However, this site is not youth-friendly. At the same time a Policy Forum is organized since 2009, where non EHEA ministers are invited in order the relations of EHEA with other regions of the world to be strengthened. Forty delegations of non-EHEA countries will take part in the Third Bologna Policy Forum, which will take place in Bucharest-Romania, April 2012.

Some scholars have already examined how the European and Bologna Process agenda influenced internationalization of higher education at national and institutional level (Kehm & Teichler, 2007, Huisman & Van der Wende, 2005, Teichler, 2009, Asderaki, 2011). It is a common belief that the European programs and Bologna interactions broaden the scope and activities of universities across national borders, enhance transnational university cooperation and networking, contribute in the development of internationalization strategies and, above all, establish a ‘culture of mobility’. The success of the Bologna Process reflected in the fact that Australia tried through the Asian-Pacific Brisbane Communiqué (2006) to establish a similar area with the participation of fifty two countries. Moreover, the Process functions as a model for other regions like Latin America, the Euro-Mediterranean Higher Education and Research Area, the Lusophone Area of Higher Education (Africa), the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Eastern Asia (Japan – Korea – China) region (Cheps, *et al.*, 2008, p. 82). Furthermore, Japan’s Prime Minister Fukuda proposed to elaborate an Asian Erasmus-type program, which would mobilize students and teachers from universities in Japan, China, South Korea and members of the ASEAN countries (Field, 2009, p.1). These facts demonstrate that European HE has attracted the attention worldwide. Europe on the one hand has created an internal HE market; upgraded the profile of HEIs by developing a European ‘brand-name’ and ‘put the bridle’ in the outgoing student flow rate. On the other hand it developed a non-aggressive internationalization policy based in partnership that offers added value to national and institutional policies.

EU’ s Communication and Information Strategy For Higher Education

During the last decade the European Commission has made a significant effort to elaborate a *Communication and Information strategy* that serves both

communication with the European citizens and the promotion of EU abroad (EC, 2012). This strategy along with other initiatives such as *i2010 Initiative* and *digital Europe*, promote *e*-skills and the development of new informative and connecting tools like EU portals, thematic pages, social media web pages and platforms. It also intends to further develop sites especially targeted to young people and other key target audiences. DG Communication Social Media team is in charge of coordinating the Social Media Network and Europe's promotion. The European Commission promotes both intra-European and international educational mobility. Its marketing and communication strategy concerning higher education, which need to be further elaborated, has a two-fold aim: to spread the word about HE programs, student mobility and other activities taking place in the EHEA and ERA both in European and international level as well as to build Europe's brand name abroad.

European Portals and Social Media Pages for Higher Education: From Theory to Practice

The evolution of ICT has changed the way of informing and communicating especially with the young audience. Internet users increase progressively particularly in Asia dominated by online youth in Vietnam, Indonesia, China, Singapore and India,^{xiii} which is the top-aimed group. Thus, the Commission addresses to young people, students and researchers in order to inform them on mobility opportunities in several digital ways, such as social media pages which are mainly focused on research, innovation and digital activities and less on study opportunities. (**Facebook** -Innovation Union, European Institute of Innovation and Technology, Digital Agenda for Europe, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, Erasmus Student Network, Youth on the Move, Social Europe , **Twitter**- CORDIS Europe, CORDIS calls - 7th Framework Programme, European Training Foundation, Social Europe, Digital Agenda for Europe, **Flicker**- Social Europe and **YouTube**- Digital Agenda for Europe) and **blogs** (<http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/>).

The main informational portal for both European and international prospective students is www.studyineurope.eu where someone can find information about thirty two European countries and comparable information about each system. "Promoting Europe as a world education destination" is the central motto of the web page. Information about application procedures, visas policies, grading systems, cost of study and living are also provided. This web page is linked with facebook. Special attention is given to the attraction of doctoral candidates. The doctoral student portal (www.promodoc.eu) has as central motto the phrase 'think doctorate, think Europe, discover why Europe is an excellent choice for your doctorate'. This activity, funded by Erasmus Mundus programme, aims at attracting gifted students especially from Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Canada, and the U.S. The international consortium that implements this project consists of the most active national agencies as CampusFrance, DAAD, Nuffic, the British Council, Eurodoc (The European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers) as well as the American Institute of International Education. Furthermore, EU supports private initiatives such as StudyPortals BV, that is web portals which facilitate courses selection and inform about funding

opportunities (www.studyportals.eu/, www.bachelorsportal.eu/, www.mastersportal.eu, www.phdportal.eu, ScholarshipPortal.eu and www.shortcoursesportal.eu.

All the above-mentioned initiatives mark the inauguration of European HE promotion, nevertheless are far from consisting a coherent internationalization strategy. Such approach requires the creation of a national agencies' network-similar to Eurydice^{xiv} - which could coordinate, plan and implement actions, exchange good practices, produce reports and informative material and organize campaigns for the promotion of the European HE worldwide. This network could be strengthened with the active contribution of HE stakeholders and institutions.

Social Networking in the Service of Internationalization of European Higher Education

The Italian digital strategist Vincenzo Consenza has published^{xv} his new edition of his World Map of Social Networks and not surprisingly Facebook comes out at the top of the list across the world, taking the number one spot in one hundred twenty seven out of the one hundred thirty six countries in the list. With over eight hundred million active users, Facebook is continuing to take the place of local offerings or other international competitors. Europe currently dominates Facebook in number of users at two hundred twenty three millions, followed by Asia at one hundred eighty three millions and North America at one hundred seventy four million.^{xvi} The pool is too large to be neglected. The "pie" is huge and the trends are emerging every year.

More and more EU citizens are active on social networking. Europe seems to have the greatest engagement to social media with thirty eight per cent of minutes spent in social networks while comes second in global visitation to social networking (30,1%) after Asia Pacific.^{xvii} The European Commission therefore uses these platforms to reach out and connect with citizens and stakeholders in addition to the communication which takes place via more traditional channels such as written press, broadcasters and EU publications and websites. Moreover, during the last few years, Social Network Sites (SNS) constitute an integral part of daily communication practices for many students (Vroharidou et al, 2011). Social media tools like youtube, facebook, twitter etc give the opportunity to HEIs to maintain better communication with the already enrolled students and reach thousands of other young people interested in keeping up with news at the HEIs affairs. However, the huge target group of Chinese student are inaccessible, since China's complex web censorship project, referred to as the 'Great Firewall of China'^{xviii}, prevents Chinese from accessing 'Western' social media. Chinese turn to government-approved networks like Youku, Renren and Sina Weibo, which are similar to Facebook and Twitter.^{xix}

Thus, the vast expansion of SNSs leave us no doubt that they could serve as a useful tool for enrollment and marketing policies. This position seems to be fundamental in the EU Communication strategy and explains the increased use of social media by the European Commission the very last years. The most recent example of social media use is the Erasmus 25th anniversary Facebook

competition,^{xx} which takes place under the Youth on the Move initiative, where students have the opportunity to share on line their Erasmus stories and win prizes such as ipad, digital cameras etc.

Therefore, “the question is no longer should we be doing social media, it's are we doing it right?” (Qualmann, 2009). A major issue that should be noted here is the misperception that SNSs *per se* could be considered as *panacea* due to both their popularity and accessibility. On the contrary, the use of social media is not a one-way path to success. It is one of a multiple channels to reach and attract prospective students and it need to be well integrated in a broader promotional strategy built on certain goals and specific target audiences (i.e. young students, adult lifelong learners, professionals). As it is mentioned “social media isn't a “brave new world” – it's a set of new communication and collaboration tools you can apply to what you are already doing to help you do it better” (Higher ED Impact, 2012, p.10). Such wise, they have both supplementary and complementary function. Thus, the fragmented use of SNSs by the European Commission with the absence of a coherent European internationalization strategy offers little if any value both to the ‘European branding’ and the reinforcement of national and institutional policies. Moreover, in order to help identify and avoid potential issues of SNSs misuse or misinterpretation, guidelines should be compiled and correctly channelled to all stakeholders.

Another important issue refers to the handling of different national and institutional interests as well as the cross-cultural environment since Europe consists of different, multilingual and multiple HE systems, traditions and values. Consequently, SNSs and portals could promote European programmes and initiatives, common achievements, joint programmes run by European networks and consortia, but should also include search engines, which give the alternative choices adjusting to various study preferences in different countries. The structure of these web sites should also allow the redirection to national and institutional portals.

A European internationalization strategy and the relevant web tools should support and complement accordingly national initiatives since there are asymmetrical capabilities as far as administrative structures, human resources, funding and ICT infrastructure within the European countries are concerned. Many national agencies and educational organizations already use effectively the added value that the digital promotion initiatives offer in order to enhance attractiveness, reputation and HEIs' visibility. British Council's motto ‘Learn, share, connect worldwide’ as well as Nuffic's motto ‘Linking knowledge worldwide’ are indicative. The national agencies of Germany, UK and Netherlands have well organized and dynamic social media platforms while other agencies of South Europe such as the Greek State Scholarships Foundation and the Italian Agenzia Nazionale LLP lack of social media initiatives. The problem seems to be that in several European countries (especially in South Europe) there is not a coherent strategy about the use of ICT tools in HE neither at national nor at institutional level. For example, the Greek Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs seems to be reluctant in using social media platforms regarding HE in Greece even if

DG EAC strongly recommends the use of such ICT tools during the meetings with the National Agencies of the Erasmus Programme. The fact that YouTube and Facebook are among the top three Internet sites in Greece proves^{xxi} that they could be helpful tools for the internationalization strategy of the Greek HE.

Thus, given the fact that HEIs function as local and international actors, which receive a differentiated support by their national agencies, they should have the opportunity to make use of the European Union's portals and social media in order to enhance their visibility at the European and international level. The International Relations Offices of European HEIs must take initiatives and deploy the European digital tools and resources and use them as part of their internationalization strategy. Likewise, we will be led to a bottom-up internationalization process that will overlap national deficiencies and inertias.

Conclusions/Proposals

The European initiatives concerning the HE promotion through digital tools mark the inauguration of a European attempt, nevertheless are far from consisting a coherent internationalization strategy. The creation of a European network, which will develop a European internationalization strategy and help manage national asymmetries and inertia should be addressed. Moreover, interaction between the European and the institutional level is crucial especially in a critical moment where governments and institutions are facing severe budget shortfalls due to the economic crisis.

Given that HEIs face, in several European countries, the lack of information, funding and support by their national agencies we are going to submit some proposals on how HEIs could deploy the European resources and use them as part of their internationalization strategy.

At institutional level HEIs should:

- **Deploy a coherent strategy by setting up the targets:** EUs ICT tools should be both supplementary and complementary to the internationalization strategy of every European HEI. The targets should be well planned and defined and they should be in line with a national internationalization strategy.
- **Put guidelines as an essential priority:** it is very important for every HEI or National Agency to have special guidelines in order to avoid any misuse of social media and minimize the hazard of misinterpretations.
- **Communicate the relevant European web portals and social media platforms** through the National Agencies to HEIs. The National Agencies should be both the intermediaries and the multipliers of such EU's initiatives.

At the European level:

- i. The European Commission should create a European Portal such as EducationEurope with active partners the relevant stakeholders at

national and institutional level. The portal must be dynamic and user friendly in order to enhance visibility from abroad. Links with social media pages and blogs should be made in order for the portal to be more interactive and attractive to young people. It is of high importance for the success of the portal to contain information both for the incoming and the outgoing to Europe students.

Notes

- i. Education USA is a global network of almost 400 advising centers supported by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State.
- ii. Data based on UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2010). *Global Education Digest. Comparing Education Statistics Across the World* Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Foremost international students originate from China (421,100), India (153,300), the Republic of Korea (105,300), Germany (77,500), Japan (54,500), France (54,000), the United States (50,300), Malaysia (46,500), Canada (43,900) and the Russian Federation (42,900). (WTO 2010, p.11).
- iii. Stephen D. Krasner defines a regime “as a set of explicit or implicit principles, norms, rules, and decision making procedures around which actor expectations converge in a given issue-area.” Krasner, Stephen D. (ed). (1983). *International Regimes*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- iv. At the moment 47 European countries are participating in the European Higher Education Area.
- v. International elements such as the *UNESCO/OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education*” and the Council of Europe/Unesco Recognition Convention (1997) and its four subsidiary texts for the recognition of qualifications are also used.
- vi. The European Research Area was *launched at the Lisbon European Council* in March 2000.
- vii. EU ensures the free circulation of goods, persons, capital, services and knowledge.
- viii. i.e. DG Education and Culture, Enlargement, EuropeAid, Development and Cooperation, External Affairs, etc.
- ix. The Erasmus for All Programme, as proposed by the European Commission, would replace seven existing programmes: Lifelong Learning Programme (Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius and Grundtvig), Youth in Action, and five international cooperation programmes (Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink and the programme for cooperation with industrialised countries). For more information see <http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus-for-all/> Retrieved, February 2, 2012.
- x. See, European Commission (2008). *A Strategic European Framework for International Science and Technology Cooperation*. Brussels, COM (2008) 588 final, 24.09.2008.

- xi. See Bergen Communiqué (2005). The European Higher Education Area -Achieving the Goals, Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Bergen, 19-20 May 2005. The author (Asderaki) participated in the External Dimension Group.
- xii. See “European Higher Education in a Global Setting. A Strategy for the External Dimension of the Bologna Process”. Retrieved, December 22, 2011 from <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/documents/WG R2007/Strategy-for-EHEA-in-global-setting.pdf>
- xiii. Social media for higher education (2011, March) - Trends spotting Research Report. Retrieved February 2, 2012 from <http://www.trendspotting.com>
- xiv. Eurydice consists of thirty-seven national units based in thirty-three countries participating in the EU's Lifelong Learning programme (EU Member States, EFTA countries, Croatia and Turkey). Information retrieved, 20, December 2011 from http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php
- xv. World Map of Social Networks (2011, December). A new edition of my World Map of Social December 28, 2011 from <http://vincos.it/world-map-of-social-networks>
- xvi. Facebook users in the world by geographic regions (2011, December). Retrieved, December 28, 2011 from <http://www.internetworldstats.com/facebook.htm>
- xvii. Social Networking Stats (2011, October): Asia Pacific Has Highest Visitation, Europe Shows Greatest Engagement. Retrieved, December 28, 2011 from <http://therealtimeport.com/2011/10/04/social-networking-stats-asia-pacific-has-highest-visitation-europe-shows-greatest-engagement/>
- xviii. The Golden Shield Project colloquially referred to as the Great Firewall of China is a censorship and surveillance project operated by the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) division of the government of the People's Republic of China. The project was initiated in 1998 and began operations in November 2003.
- xix. Information retrieved (December 12, 2011) from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/06/china-social-media-infographic_n_1125817.html
- xx. http://ec.europa.eu/youthonthemove/news/2012/02120229-facebook-contest_en.htm
- xxi. Top sites in Greece (2011, December). Retrieved, January 2, 2012 from <http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/GR>

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