

Good practices: Remote schooling / Digital education in the context of the COVID-19 crisis

General Information

Country / Region of nominating institution	Austria
Nominating institution dealing with the good practice	Danube University Krems
Consent for publication (YES / NO)	YES
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Webpage (optional)	

Area of concern

After the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, new and creative approaches in education systems had to be found to deal with the situation. Despite the negative consequences, this led to a variety of innovative educational measures useful also for the future.

In this context, we are looking for best practices in the following areas:

- Equal access to education / disadvantaged groups
- Ensuring learning outcomes
- Teacher education and training
- Digital pedagogical resources and online learning platforms
- Funding processes / innovative solutions

Please tick the level of education and implementation that the good practice deals with in the chart below:

Level/type of education		Level of implementation	
Early childhood education	<input type="checkbox"/>	Institutional	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
School education	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local	<input type="checkbox"/>
Higher education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Regional	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vocational education and training	<input type="checkbox"/>	National	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adult education	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Description of the good practice

Title of the good practice

Digital Learning Settings at Danube University Krems

Short introduction of the situation (who are the recipients/attendees, what means to educate were used, what financial resources were used, etc.) and **the remote schooling / digital education issue** that was dealt with (ca. 100 words)

Danube University Krems is a university for academic continuing education, following for the most part a blended learning approach in order to cater to the needs of mostly part-time students who are on average 40 years old. Prior to COVID-19, the learning setting already included self-paced studying phases with digital materials (videos, links, readers, etc.), asynchronous online learning phases with collaborative elements, and face2face learning on campus. Due to COVID-19, the face2face elements required redesigning for pure distance learning purposes. For this purpose, the university's Service Center for Digital Teaching and Learning implemented appropriate tools and measures for staff, which benefitted both students and lecturers and allowed the semester to take place without interruption. In this context, the university understands the COVID-19 pandemic also as an opportunity for progress in the realm of academic continuing education, financed by the university itself and ensuring learning outcomes.

Measures taken / resolution found / output of the practice (ca. 150 words)

1. Moodle as the main platform

Moodle is the main communication platform between students and lecturers, where students can find all course materials (syllabus, learning outcomes, timelines, etc.) as well as digital learning material in a structured format (including self-assessment formats) and collaborative online learning activities (i.e. moderated discussion forums, virtual group work, etc.). Moodle further facilitates online exams.

2. Online attendance phases via Zoom and BigBlueButton

Synchronous online meetings (Zoom/BigBlueButton), replaced the on-campus attendance, consisting of virtual lectures, virtual group work in breakout rooms, individual assignments, virtual discussions and networking activities. The students' evaluations of the online courses showed a high acceptance for the switch.

3. Info portal (distance learning and good-practice online teaching webinars)

The portal provides on one hand the university's available distance learning tools (Moodle, Zoom, BigBlueButton, H5P, Screencast-Software, etc.) in a compact and structured manner to lecturers. On the other hand, it explains these by ways of visualization. Moreover, the portal lists contacts for queries to the tools or their usage. Finally, a variety of at first live and later recorded good-practice webinars to the topic of online teaching completes the contents of the portal. The portal is available to staff and lecturers of Danube University Krems and explains the use of the tools and allows the users to learn from each other.

4. Complex methods in virtual learning environments

Another measure involves complex learning and purely virtual scenarios such as applying the method "problem based learning". Degree and non-degree courses can use and apply these methods in their curricula.

Challenges encountered during the implementation of the remote schooling / digital education action (ca. 50 words)

In principle, both employees and students encountered the following challenges:

- setting up of working environment at home, including an office space, hardware and software issues
- issues related to labor law such as insurance, working time but also (permanent) availability, etc.

Transferability: How can the good practice be applied to similar situations in different regions/institutions? (ca. 50 words)

Danube University Krems welcomes an online exchange with other institutions. Collaborative project work, i.e. in the context of Erasmus+ projects, can lead to the preparation of the measures' implementation in other institutions.