



**Finnish Virtual University**

Suomen virtuaaliyliopisto - Finlands virtuella universitet

# **The national virtual university initiative, goals and the present situation**

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# Content

1. Finnish Virtual University in a nutshell
2. Experiences
3. New Strategy
4. Co-operation possibilities



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# **Finnish Virtual University in a nutshell**

## FVU in a nutshell

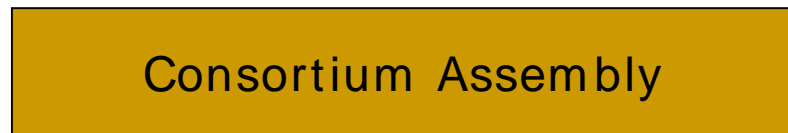
- a consortium of all 21 Finnish universities
- a network of networks
- no legal authority yet
- a co-operative and service organization of the universities
- does not award degrees or qualifications
- operation started in 2001
- 2001 - 2006, the FVU operates as a project organization

# The Organization of the Finnish Virtual University



Each university has an e-Learning support unit as a local entity of FVU

Universities participate in inter-university networks. There are three different types of networks: thematic, service focused or regional networks



FVU strategy and national guide lines are decided at FVU Consortium Assembly. Each university and Ministry of Education are represented.



Steering Group manages national activities between Consortium meetings



Development Unit produces national support services and maintains FVU portal



# Initial Goals of the Finnish Virtual University

- **Develop virtual courses, and their support services**
  - - Thematic networks and local e-learning support centers
  
- **Harmonize universities' information systems**
  - especially learning support systems
  - e.g., electronic transfer of credits and related information between universities
  
- **Enhance the flexible studies**
  - Flexible Study Rights agreement ("JOO" agreement)
  - All universities participating
  
- **Provide shared services for university students, teachers, researchers and administrators**
  - agreements on standards for, e.g., course information and educational material format
  - national database on online courses
  - counselling service for the national Flexible Study Rights scheme (JOOPAS)
  - online student counselling
  - design support for online courses: tools for planning, implementation and evaluation; databases for developing educational material
  - advice on IPR issues

## ... Initial Goals of the FVU

- **increase co-operation among universities and encourage the development of joint study programmes**
  - thematic national networks
  
- **establish the operating models and services developed during the project as permanent parts of the universities' activities**

## Division of labour

Ministry of Education and its working group on  
Developing virtual education  
in universities

- funding
- monitoring

Universities and the FVU  
consortium

- strategy
- initiatives, projects, networks
- content provision

FVU Development Unit

- production and maintenance of services for shared use, free access via FVU portal
- advice, training
- communications, marketing

European Social Fund

- funding

**Ministry of Education 2001 - 2004:  
~9 million EUR per year**

half for the universities' projects  
half for the discipline-specific and  
multidisciplinary networks

**European Social Fund 2001 - 2004:  
1.5 million EUR for the FVU portal**



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# Experiences

## Success stories...

- **FVU consortium agreement:**
  - First ever collective agreement among the Finnish Universities
  
- **Agreement of Flexible Studies in different universities**
  - All universities participating, started September 2004
  - extensive support service launched in 2004
  
- **Truly networked research and development established**
  - 30 active networks' of universities operating
  - regional, service focused and thematic networks

## ... Success stories

### ➤ **Local successes**

- eLearning support units formed in each Finnish university
- the amount of e-Learning rising steadily

### ➤ **eLearning methods throughly accepted**

- permanent organizations formed
- new technology and services developed

## Challenges...

### ➤ **Management model**

- complicated
- responsibilities of different organizations shall be defined in more detail

### ➤ **Financing model**

- Today sole dependancy of MinEDU funding
- 50 % directly to universities, 50 % to university networks

### ➤ **21 different opinions and strategies of parent universities**

- Challenge to manage but also a strength: different views and plenty of ideas collected in each project

## ... Challenges

- **Consolidation of the legal and economic position of the FVU**
  - Legal entity will be formed in 2006
  
- **Technical infrastructure**
  - Today totally different IT systems
  - Common infrastructure will be built on key areas
  
- **Joint quality procedures and criterias**
  - Joint quality criterias will be defined by 2005
  - Extensive quality program for e-learning in 2004-2006



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**Focus on Future**

## Changes in the operational environment

- Funding model will change in 2007
- Flexible studies
- Bologna process
- EU level harmonisation
- Increased emphasis on cost-efficiency
- Average duration of university studies considered to long

## New strategy for FVU

- **New structure for the FVU**
  - Permanent organizations
  - Compatible with the changes in the operational environment
  
- **Focus will be changed**
  - from the development of eLearning...
  - ... to the more extent utilization of eLearning
  
- **Covers the years 2005-2010**

## Strategic objectives

- Enhancement of flexible studies and development of support systems for flexible studies
- Enhancement of co-operation among e-learning courses and course material
- Wide-spread usage of FVU ICT training and support services
- Integration of FVU to the European Higher Education Area
- Organization, working methods, financing and management model support the needs of networked operation

## **New Mission for FVU**

**The Finnish Virtual University (FVU) is a network organisation for co-operation among Finnish universities**

**The FVU promotes the development, productisation and distribution of network-based educational and research services for shared use and provision by universities in national and international contexts**

**The FVU bases its development work on state-of-the-art research**



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# Co-operation Possibilities

## Co-operation Possibilities

- Change of good practises
- Change of e-learning tools
- Quality co-operation, common quality criterias
- Co-operation among standardization
- Technological co-operation
- Course material co-operation
- Common courses
- Joint degrees

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