

Project	EGRACONS – European GRading CONversion System – Practical Approach to Improving ECTS Implementation in Europe 2012-3211_527554-LLP-1-2012-1-BE-ERASMUS-ESMO
Funding Scheme	Lifelong Learning Programme, Erasmus Multilateral Actions 1/10/2012-30/9/2015
Contracting Authority	European Commission
Action	Mobility strategies and removal of barriers to mobility in higher education
Duration	36 months
More info	http://egracons.eu or valere.meus@ugent.be
Consortium partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ghent University – BE (NL) (Coordinator) • UNICA Network - BE • Santander Group Association - ES • University of Liège – BE (FR) • Sapienza University of Rome – IT • University of Rouen – FR • University of León – ES • Vilnius University - LT • Gothenburg University - SE • Essex University – UK • University of Lausanne – CH • Justus Liebig University of Giessen – DE • Inholland University of Applied Sciences - NL • University of Warsaw – PL
Associated Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Göttingen – DE • University of Groningen – NL • Malmö University – SE • Rennes 1 – FR • Rennes 2 - FR • Norwegian University of Science and Technology - NO • Erasmus Student Network - BE • Agence de Mutualisation des Universités – FR
Management team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Santander Group • UNICA Network • Ghent University • Sapienza University of Rome • University of León • University of Rouen

<i>Beneficiaries</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universities • Students • National Agencies • Other stakeholders
<i>Priorities</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the implementation mechanisms of ECTS at European universities • Better identification of the main critical factors influencing the use of the ECTS grading tables and their conversion from and to national/institutional systems through the sampling of a group of European students and comparing grading systems • Promoting mobility flows in Higher Education institutions and their commitment to recognize periods of studies based on transparent and clear criteria. • Exploring more flexible learning study paths for students participating in mobility programmes across Europe through an improved understanding of the conversion mechanisms and assuring their fair representation on the diploma supplements. • Matching the needs of students, academic and administrative staff through awareness raising campaign about the advantages and mechanisms of ECTS implementation. • Removing obstacles to mobility by working out a concrete and common methodology to convert marks from one grading system to another
<i>Objective</i>	<p>The aim of the this proposal is to work out a comprehensible, transparent and easy to use methodology for grade conversion according to the ECTS system, leading to an improved implementation of the ECTS grading tables proposed in the Users' guide recommended by the European Commission (2009).</p> <p>A consortium of Universities from Belgium (NL and FR), France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and UK, supported by two European Universities' Networks, i.e. the Santander Group and UNICA have committed themselves to carrying out analyses of existing grading cultures in their respective countries and compare them with existing practices on a European scale with the aim to arrive at agreed procedures regarding the level of aggregation, automatic conversion and distribution percentage with respect to corresponding statistical data provided by individual universities. They also will set up a practical webbased tool that will enable users to to the conversion automatically.</p> <p>The partners strongly believe that a conversion system as proposed here will be a strong tool for harmonisation within Europe and will ultimately lead to a more transparent grading culture.</p>
<i>Description</i>	<p>In 2009 the European Commission published a new ECTS Users' guide in which the ECTS grading table was proposed to replace the older grading scale (A B C D E grades for students with at least a pass mark, with a percentage distribution of 10/25/30/25/10). In this document, however, there are no details on the modalities of how to arrive at a practical implementation, which entails the risks that no uniform implementation is imminent.</p> <p>The ECTS grading table is explained in the ECTS Users' Guide: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ects/guide_en.pdf.</p> <p>A number of universities from the Santander Group and UNICA Network, jointly representing almost 80 higher education institutions from 34 countries, and other interested parties have joined forces in a workgroup that wants to arrive at a common European approach to ECTS grading tables implementation.</p> <p>The essence of the grading table is to determine how often the same mark is</p>

	<p>given statistically during a number of consecutive years of study within a certain (aggregated) group of students (most likely students of the same degree, but it could also be the whole university). In doing so an overview in the form of a distribution curve or distribution list with percentage ranges per mark is obtained. Only marks that lead to full credits are taken into account.</p> <p>This allows a more straightforward comparison of two grading systems. When a student goes abroad, for each original (pass) mark abroad a percentage is calculated that expresses how often the mark is given within the reference student population (aggregated data). The conversion to the local grade is done by means of that percentage: it is determined which home university mark most closely corresponds in percentage terms to that of the home student reference group and what the range is of that percentage at the home university.</p> <p>If the system is used correctly and coherently, not only different marking systems but also grading cultures are bridged within the European education area and even beyond.</p>
<p><i>Activities</i></p>	<p>In order to arrive at a completely reliable system of conversion a number of clear arrangements have to be analysed.</p> <p>1. Stocktaking</p> <p>The marking system in every country/region/institution or even faculty needs to be mapped and explained clearly and in detail, and the range of pass marks used has to be made explicit and explained. Special Country Reports will be collected describing the marking system and grading culture at the national and institutional levels. This will allow us to define the aggregation levels and codes of student results both at home and abroad.</p> <p>2. Template design and development</p> <p>By means of an electronic web application, grading tables from various countries will be collected and processed. In order to work out details of a reliable common conversion system special templates will be developed to collect statistical data, to analyse them and to identify corresponding algorithms. Different templates will be used for the description of the marking systems and for the data upload.</p> <p>The conversion web tool should make it possible for users to fill in a mark for a given course awarded at a host university, link it to the agreed corresponding level of aggregation of the home university and have an automatic conversion and distribution percentage with respect to the corresponding statistical data at the home university.</p> <p>Each partner will undertake to try and find a consensus among all the higher education institutions of their country with respect to the agreed procedures for that country. It is suggested that this is facilitated by involving e.g. the country's Bologna experts and other relevant actors such as the national agencies.</p>

	<p style="text-align: center;">3. Testing Phase I</p> <p>After the accomplishment of the first two stages, a testing phase will be launched on a small scale to diagnose the adequacy and appropriateness of the applied data collection tools. The phase will be accomplished with a thorough analysis of data by teams of experts.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4. Testing Phase II</p> <p>The same test as above will be carried out with the involvement of all project partners, thus increasing the complexity of the data input. As in the case of the previous phase, a profound analysis of data will be done to ensure the compatibility of the systems and the emergence of concrete algorithms</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5. Testing Phase III</p> <p>This phase will be open to a small number of universities (10-15) from other countries than those represented by the project consortium. At the end of the test, in addition to the collection of feedback from the partners and data reports, special recommendations will be formulated with regard to the most efficient practices in the ECTS implementation. In this phase it will also be determined to what extent the methodology can be implemented in practice outside Europe.</p>
<i>Outcomes</i>	<p>The following outcomes will be produced by the project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Country reports on grading systems • Uniform specifications for Grading Tables and Templates for data collection • Reports after Pilot Phase I • Reports after Pilot Phase II • Reports after Pilot Phase III • Recommendations for the effective use of grading tables across Europe • Manual on how to introduce the grading table in a HEI and collect the necessary statistical data. • Development of an electronic tool for the data collection and grade conversion • Dissemination events: two seminars and one conference • Dissemination of the project results at events organised by SG and UNICA University Networks • Promotion of good practices and transferring them to the most sensitive regions in Europe: the consortium partners will formulate recommendations and will produce good practices manuals which will be disseminated to all countries and regions in Europe in order to produce a multiplying effect • Maintenance of the network formed by this project for further update and promotion of the conversion tool