

# VALS Project - One year after

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## Abstract

This presentation entitled “VALS project - One year after” was made in the Thematic Cluster Meeting “Knowledge Alliances” in Brussels at November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

The aim of this was to present the status, advances, achieved outcomes and following steps in the development of the European project **Virtual Alliances for Learning Society** (VALS – Ref. 540054-LLP-L-2013-1-ES-ERASMUS-EKA).

For the discussion, the presentation tried to answer the following questions:

1. What exactly does VALS intend to achieve?

VALS pursues a knowledge alliance between HE institutions and Companies that allows students have placements related to real projects in business all around Europe using telework practices, that's mean without to expend money to travel and subsist.

The main targets group of this project are:

- Informatics students (university level)
- Open source related companies and foundations
- Universities

The main developed activities:

- Workflow definition for the placements management
- Setting up a platform for workflow support
- Contacting with companies to offer virtual placements
- Contacting with universities to be involved in VALS
- Disseminating VALS procedures to the students to engage them

## 2. Issues and challenges

- Administrative processes in the universities are very strict, especially regarding schedules, and are not shared by all the universities all over Europe
- Schedules and workload in companies are not always compatible with universities ones and students' planning
  - Ad hoc adapting and making more flexible the administrative processes in the universities (it depends on each university and the people involved in)
  - Defining a two-round piloting procedure (inside the VALS scope)
- University tutors engagement
- Students engagement
  - They need time to include VALS activities with their own plans (short term plans are not usually compliant with the most of the students' reality)
  - The VALS benefits must include academic rewards (credits recognition for the placements, reusing the work done for their final degree works, and so on)
  - The fear of English communication, workload, effort done in the proposal definition and other different excuses

## 3. Effective results

- A workflow definition for an open innovation process regarding virtual placement
- Two sites for project dissemination
  - <http://virtualalliances.eu/>
  - <http://semesterofcode.com/>
- A platform for virtual placement management
  - <http://vps.semesterofcode.com>

## 4. The partnership

- VALS partners represent more or less at 50% HE institutions and Companies
- Companies are in charge to involve OSS companies and foundations (and some of them propose placements)
- Universities are in charge to engage students and invite more universities
- The cooperation inside of the VALS partnership is fine, however balancing realities and rhythms of HE and companies is not easy, especially once others are involved in the Semester of Code process

## 5. The future

Universities like VALS proposal, also the companies rely on VALS ideas and, finally, students think VALS is an amazing opportunity for them. But, University is slow in reaction, companies want having results immediately and students need to internalize VALS new opportunities.

From VALS experience, we conclude:

- These kinds of innovative processes that involve both Academia and Business need time enough to settle
- The setting up procedures are especially hard
- However, the potential and the benefits of VALS will be easily a reality if we have the chance of going further of a couple of pilots and we establish a permanent flow of placements offering and application demand

### Link to the presentation

<http://es.slideshare.net/grialusal/vals-project-one-year-after>

### Keywords

Educational innovation; Virtual placements; Higher Education; Business; Open Source Software; Semester of Code

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