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# EMREX Field Trial



Seminar Bologna 171130  
Pamela Engström



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# The Field Trial

- The field trial is the stage of the project where the results of the specification work and development is put to work
- The goal is to exchange data between three to five countries
- Quite elaborate since we will interact with critical production systems in several countries



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## Activities

- Survey all exchanges between selected countries during the period to get candidate institutions
- Write information material and manuals.
- Individual contacts with candidate institutions as well as students
- Monitor usage and give support during live period. Collect feedback from users



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# Objectives

- A period of running the trial system with live students interacting without interference from the project
- At least two semesters live trial
- At least 100 students testing
- Production of information material and manuals.



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# Results

- 361 users in 6 countries
- Users between all partners
- Trial for 3 semesters



# Workflow



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## 🔴 Field trial 03.2016-09.2017

EMREX in production:

Norway- NCP and SMP, February 2016

Sweden- NCP and SMP, March 2016

Finland- SMP May 2016, NCP August 2016

Italy- NCP September 2016 and SMP September

Denmark- NCP May 2017, no SMP

Poland- As evaluation partner. Along the way Poland also incorporated EMREX to their SIS systems and had users testing



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## Field trial

### ➤ Why these countries?

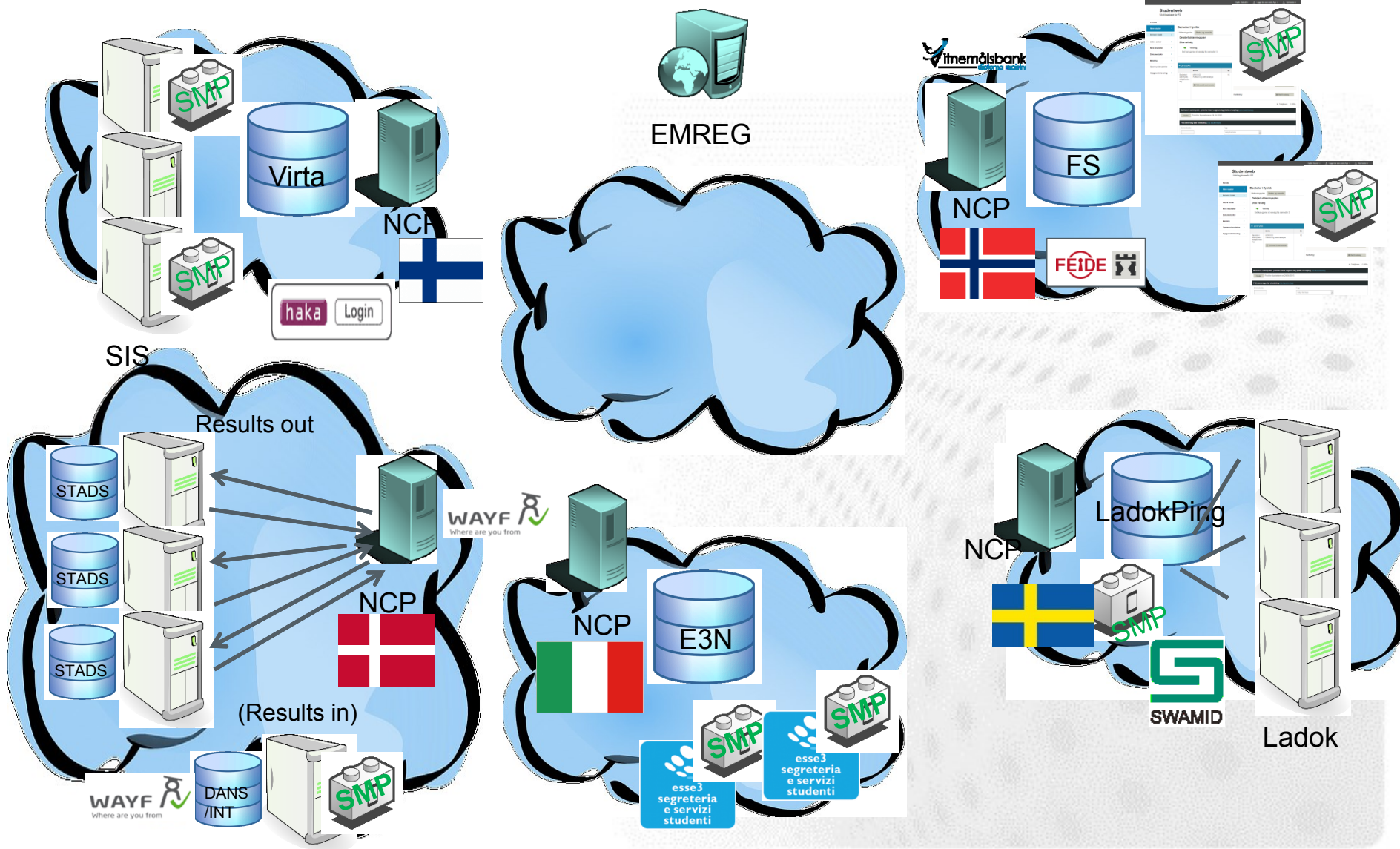
- Long standing cooperation between the Nordic countries
- Similar situations in the countries; more or less central Student Information Systems with the ability to affect many HEI:s
- Italy was added to test if this would also work in a big EU country with different systems
- All countries have large amounts of exchange students, both incoming and outgoing
- Assessed high likelihood of success



# EMREX Field Trial Network



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# Trans-national cooperation

- Close cooperation of partners involved
- All phases of the project: specification, development, implementation and testing
- Peer-learning of authorities in all respective countries
- Partners expanded their knowledge about student information systems and procedures for recognition in the participating countries
- Gained knowledge of the different governance models for national level authorities providing common information systems/services
- Sharing best practices



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# Student point of view

The feedback from the students given during the field trial in the surveys and during interviews with the students provides a clear message that the students were happy to use the solution, however the students expect the transfer of the achievement records to be digital.

The students are *digital natives* and do not see the solution as extraordinary innovative, as the most of the prior learning and procedures in the primary and secondary education are executed digitally



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## Access to achievement data

The EMREX solution presupposes students' access to their own achievement data.

There is a great variation when it comes to policy for giving access to the student accounts and student's own achievement information.

Some institutions close the accounts as early as one month after the last result is registered in the student information system.

Students' access to the accounts at the host institution was one of the most common challenges for the students participating in the field trial.



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## Access to achievement data

The new General Data Protection Regulation states that one of the main legal grounds for the exchange of data is the consent, i.e. when the student himself/herself initiates the data exchange.

In order to comply with the regulation the higher education institutions need to enable their students as well as the alumni to access their achievement data.



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# Student feed back

(from short survey )

"I do not see my grades, and the ""titles"" for my courses are not the same as in reality"

"If there is statistics in each course, e.g. distribution of grades, then it would be good to be able to import that as well"

"That was so easy and nice! Thank you very much! I thought it would be very difficult and take very long time. Thank you!"

"Very easy to use, the only thing that could be improved is that it claims my name/birthday don't match"

"The search function of a certain period and the change of languages worked very well. The system is easy to use"



# Digitalization of Administrative solutions

Higher education sector across Europe is in need of digital solutions.

However, higher education institutions focus on fulfilling their everyday duties within education, research, dissemination and reporting, and are not always given time to test innovative solutions like EMREX, which can spare both time and money for the universities and their students.

In some participating countries, finding administrators both willing and able to take part in the field trial proved to be a challenge.



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# Administrator feed back

(from qualitative study)

*"They [administration] have to be convinced that this is helping. But I think the fact that you don't have to retype something that someone else has already typed once ... they're sold" (Staff member responsible for student management system 1)*

Having an electronic system that enables direct transfer of data between universities' data systems would solve the problem.

*"It [EMREX] would provide authenticated transcript of record that we could trust at least."  
(Staff member responsible for IT systems)*

Especially data transferred directly to the system would be perceived as trustworthy.

*"If the information is in the (...) system, then it is automatically considered reliable, because it's there already." (Erasmus institutional coordinator)*



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# Approach to testing and communication strategy

The approach to testing strategy, communication strategy and success rate varied between countries, e.g.:

- Norway: the SMP was integrated into the SIS and thus all potential students were able to use EMREX and individual contacting was not necessary
- Sweden: the Swedish students were keen to fill in the long survey and a lot of students tested EMREX if only to see a summary of their Swedish study records. The Swedish institutions all have long access periods to their student accounts and could deliver data to students at least one year after the student's last registration of any result.
- Finland: the students were very helpful in testing and also in answering the short survey. The biggest challenge turned out to be finding IROs with time to spare to identify and contact students. In some cases the HEI did not have suitable students, who had been to another EMREX country.



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# Policy recommendations

- Connecting eID to the HE sector
- Sending electronic data is the first step, but automatic recognition is the end goal
- We found a reluctance to accept electronic signatures and data as equals to paper copies at some instances. There are EU directives on this issue and several ongoing initiatives, but a policy recommendation directly aimed at the HE sector with the most common issues opened up would help convince HEI:s
- A key standard for the data format on achievement results, i.e. the ELMO-standard, was developed and proved useful in the field trial. To avoid multiple EU standards for the same tasks, a policy recommendation to jointly continue working on such standard as ELMO would save time & money and improve interoperability between services.



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# Improvements and lessons learned

- Access times to student portals
- All systems must work all the time
- Support between institutions in different countries
- ID information may vary between countries
- It must be **VERY** easy for the students!
- The more countries involved the more interest from students and HEIs