

The history of Nettuno

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Nettuno is a consortium of 20 university and some companies (RAI , the national broadcasting company; Telecom Italia, the former national telephone company; Confindustria, the federation of the national entrepreneur). The first goal of the Nettuno consortium was to establish a national coordinated initiative and to make together an effort to produce distance learning courses but leaving to the University the responsibility of the follow-up of the students and of the of the examinations.

The lessons were broadcasted through 2 satellite television channels and so the lessons were received all over the area of the Mediterranean Sea (from Italy to Egypt, from Morocco to Albania).

Some few courses were first planned (Computer Science Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Economical science,...) and the entire set of lesson were broadcasted, so the student were able to follow (or record) the lessons of the entire courses.

There are three aspects that were the key of the success of the initiative:

- The cost for the recording of the lessons was very limited (in the range of few thousand euro), an order of magnitude less than the cost for recording an hour of lesson for the British Open University and rapidly the consortium produced many thousands hour of lessons.
- The lessons were recorded by a large set of motivated professors in all the Italian University.
- A set of locations (Poli tecnologici) was established by the consortium with the cooperation of the university to allow a distributed follow-up of the students. For example tutors were available to answer the students questions by e-mail during the week, and some specific hours of tutorship were organized during the week-end (Friday afternoon and Saturday) .

The result was that several Universities established courses in the frame of the Nettuno Consortium, the number of different courses grow up and the number of lessons that needed to be broadcasted through the satellite network exploded.

Some university used these courses to graduate people with special agreement with specific organization (Guardia di Finanza, ...) partially recognizing the working experience of the students. The availability of the satellite lessons made this initiative quite popular outside of Italy and with the help of the EU some initiatives were established with countries in the north of Africa.

After 15 year of activities the rules changed:

- A set of Universities devoted to offer a distance learning service were established, so the interest of the Universities to offer pure distance learning effort declined.
- The availability of different media to support distance learning (fast and mobile Internet) changed the technological background.

Now there are different (eight) “Università Telematiche” that are essentially teaching University (they made no, or very limited, research activities) with ~15.000 students.

The Nettuno Consortium generated the “Università Internazionale Telematica UniNettuno” offering courses in many languages (French, English, Arab, ...).