



## Education

### Daily use

- Connecting over 200 classrooms
- Distant learning
- Team collaboration
- Academic conferences

### Solution

- Polycom® VSX® 8000
- Polycom VSX 7000
- Polycom HDX™ 8000
- Polycom RMX 2000®

### Results and Benefits

- Fulfilling the university's obligation to the European directive, raising standards of collaborative communication
- Increasing student/teacher satisfaction
- Facilitate communications between campus

# The Spanish Open University, UNED, enhances the distance learning experience with Polycom video conferencing solutions

The Spanish Open University, UNED for short, began its activities in October 1972 with the aim of making higher education accessible to anyone with the necessary aptitude and interest, regardless of formal qualifications. UNED is an independent government-financed institution with its own board, its own administration and academic staff and its own examinations. Associated with the University there are 59 study centres giving access to resources such as library or multimedia material, and providing advice and counselling as well as tuition and facilities for practical work. All UNED certificates and degrees are legally recognised and officially considered as being of the same value as similar diplomas from other institutions of higher education. UNED has proved an enormous success. With more than 180,000 students enrolled each year, and staffed with almost 10,000 educators, the National University for Distance Education, is today the largest Spanish University.

In 1999, a declaration was announced at a European convention in Bologna, Italy which bound the signatories of 29 European countries to create a European Space for Higher Education (EHES). EHES was a pledge to reform the structures of their higher education systems to achieve convergence at the European level. One of the goals of EHES was to ensure the international competitiveness and the attractiveness of European higher education in the world.

Since then, Spain has taken the lead with UNED through a programme of technological implementations that underpins a key directive of the EHES pledge: to improve the necessary communications between teachers and students for more effective learning.

As a distance learning centre of higher education based in Madrid, UNED has over 60 associate university centres throughout Spain and a further 120 isolated learning sites. To achieve improved communications between teachers and the scattered student body at these associate centres, UNED drew up a new strategic plan called 'Educational Technology Architecture in Associated Centres' (ATECA).

ATECA also highlighted the development of an audiovisual teaching tool that would bring together students and teachers over the largest possible geographic area.

Polycom video conferencing solutions are connecting students with teachers and enhancing the distance learning experience for UNED.

*"We had presented ourselves with a big challenge, we not only had to meet our obligations to the EHES pledge, but also raise the game at our university in terms of collaborative communication among our scattered student and teaching population."*

*Covadonga Rodrigo, Head of IT Area of UNED*

*"We had a clear brief with a timescale allowing Polycom to meet the ambitious EHES deadline of 2010. Given the success of the project, and the positive experience, the program will continue to expand."*

*Carlos Fernandez, Sales Manager, Polycom Spain*

### **Polycom meeting all requirements**

The students empowered with the task of implementing the ATECA plan recommended high end, high quality video conferencing solutions linking all the tutorial rooms located throughout the UNED network. ATECA investigated to find the solution to fill the requirements. Their suggestion was to equip each tutorial classroom with a video conference system. Each needed to have specific features of which, high image quality, great audio, speed, ease of use, and interactive functionality.

There was also a requirement for interoperability with other systems as the new network would have to communicate with existing hardware.

Covadonga Rodrigo explains, "We already had the basis of a communications network which included legacy teleconferencing and basic video conferencing systems at some of our sites, nevertheless, we had a clearly defined audit of requirements and a resolution to move forward in implementing our plan."

This is where Polycom could contribute its expertise and technology. As the worldwide leader in unified collaborative communications (UCC), Polycom has the largest range of High Definition video and teleconferencing solutions based on open standards in the world. After due collaboration, the ATECA planners and Polycom identified the VSX 8800 and the Polycom HDX 8000 as the most suitable systems to be deployed.

Consequently, 55 Polycom videoconferencing systems were to be installed at 15 associate centres of learning. The idea was that each classroom could collaborate with any of the others via multipoint connections with six classroom groups through the MCU incorporated in the VSX 8800 and the Polycom HDX 8000 systems.

More than 180 technical staff and 1,400 teachers were easily trained on the technology. The quick adoption of the video environment has been one of the success factors.

Phase one of the plan saw the Polycom systems installed in Leon in the north of Spain to create a pilot network called the 'Northwest Network'. The plan was for the pilot network to establish itself, stabilise, then roll out as a model throughout the rest of the UNED network.

Once the Northwest Network was established and operating, a satisfaction survey was conducted among teachers and students on all aspects of the new collaborative communication solution. This included regular attendance by interested

students, the promotion of student/tutor communication, improvements in understanding and study material plus many others.

The results were positive. 68% of those surveyed claimed they would recommend rolling out the Polycom solution to any other subject and tutorial area.

All agreed the Polycom solutions improved and optimised UNED's human resources in this phase one stage of the new strategic plan.

"There is still some way to go," explains Carlos Fernandez, Sales Manager, Polycom Spain, "With the completion of stage one in the Northwest Network, we have a further 41 associated centres of learning to be equipped with a further 176 HD video conference systems. This is a massive operation for UNED and for Polycom."

Everyone involved in the Polycom implementation believes that the video conferencing solution provided a correct response to the challenge of EHES and deliver the very best educational experience for students and teachers.

Thanks to the FEDER funds and with the commitment of UNED management board, specially vice-rector Jose Luis Prieto, and Tim Read from Cindetec, made the project a complete success.

Carlos Fernandez summed up the experience: "We had a clear brief with a timescale that would allow us to meet the ambitious EHES deadline of 2010. From everyone's point of view, it has been an encouraging process with positive outcomes. Given the success of the project, and the positive experience, the program will continue to expand".

### **For more information**

For more information on how Polycom solutions can help your organisation, visit our website at [www.polycom.eu](http://www.polycom.eu) or contact the Polycom sales department.

**Polycom Worldwide Headquarters**  
4750 Willow Road  
Pleasanton, CA 94588  
1.800.POLYCOM or +1.925.924.6000  
[www.polycom.com](http://www.polycom.com)

**Polycom EMEA**  
270 Bath Road  
Slough, Berkshire SL1 4DX, UK  
0800 015 2882 or +44 (0)1753 723000  
[www.polycom.eu](http://www.polycom.eu)

