The International Telematic University UNINETTUNO – UTIU, established with the decree of the 15th April 2005 of the Minister of Education, University and Research, was born from NETTUNO – Network per l’Università Ovunque, a consortium of 43 Italian and foreign universities, through which, since 1992, thousands of students took a distance university degree by means of television and the Internet, and from the international-level success of the European MedNet’U (Mediterranean Network of Universities) Project.

The 31 partners (universities, technological companies and ministries) of Med Net’U coming from 11 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean Area (Algeria, Egypt, France, Jordan, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey) jointly realised not only a technological network, but also a network of people, intelligences able to connect and mutually link their knowledge.

All teaching and learning processes take place on the Internet: www.uninettunouniversity.net, the first portal of the world where teaching and learning are carried on in 5 languages. UTIU’s students can attend the university with no limits of space and time.

Actually, with the UTIU, the places where teaching is carried on are no longer only lecture halls, but also open spaces, museums, cultural centres, workplaces, students’ homes, cybercafés, anywhere in the world you can choose whether to study in Italian, Arabic, English, French or Greek, on television and on the Internet, and take a study title acknowledged in Italy, in Europe and in some Mediterranean countries.

The success of the UTIU organisational and psycho-pedagogic and didactic model is recognised at international level and on its homepage it displays the QUALITY LABEL that has been conferred to it this year by the EADTU, the European Association of Distance Teaching Universities, for its e-learning model. The guidelines that led and are still leading the UTIU development and that represent the strong points of the International Telematic University are:

- Relations with traditional universities
- Its psycho-pedagogic model
- Innovation (research and development)
- Internationalisation.

The UTIU was born from Consorzio NETTUNO. The Consorzio enhanced cooperation relations with traditional universities and enabled the UTIU to rely, still from its very beginning, on highly scientifically qualified staff that is selected according to international academic qualifications.

All UTIU professors, those who realised the video lectures and the educational contents, as well as those who support the students’ learning processes, the Deans, the Members of the Board of Directors, are full professors; in particular, the UTIU Board of Directors includes also some Rectors of traditional universities. These relations enabled the UTIU to deliver high-quality educational services and to develop research project jointly with traditional universities that make available physical structures such as laboratories, technological poles to make students take face-to-face exams. Many of the agreements that were concluded with traditional universities establish cooperation modes that imply also the issuing of joint or double academic titles.
The problem we faced when we designed the UTIU didactic model was that of creating a distance education structure that, while meeting the educational needs of the cognitive society, would take account both of the evolution and development of information technology and the results of psycho-pedagogic research. The cognitive and connectionist theories are the theoretical basis for implementing the whole process of distance teaching and learning within the Didactic Cyberspace of the Internet-based portal which has been wholly developed starting from the results of the research projects, carried on in cooperation with international experts and with the UTIU internal staff who developed the learning environments’ states, the Rector, Maria Amata Garito.

In the UTIU educational model the student is at the centre of the educational process and is not left alone to develop his own self-learning process, but he is supported by the new profile of the teacher-telematic tutor who continuously gives him the tools that facilitate his learning process. The learning environment does not limit itself to offering rigidly pre-established courses, but it offers dynamic contents that can be enriched by other contents available on the Web.

Strong points of the UTIU distance teaching model:
- Student’s central role;
- Co-construction of knowledge;
- Integration between theory and practice;
- Active and collaborative learning.

The whole teaching and learning process takes place on the Internet. In the portal www.uninettunouniversity.net, the dedicated area “Didactic Cyberspace” represents the learning environment. The videolesson, realised by important university professors coming from several countries of the world, are the starting point of the learning process. Each digitised videolesson is indexed, structured into different issues that are linked in an hypertextual and multimedia way to essays, books, exercise texts, virtual laboratories, selected bibliographical references and lists of websites. These videolessons are supplemented by virtual laboratories and exercises enabling the student, through a “learning by doing” process, to integrate practice and theory. Among technological innovations on which the didactics can rely the UTIU has realised a true Island of Knowledge on Second Life, where the students’ avatars and the professors/tutors’ avatars can interact by their own voice in a three-dimensional virtual world. On Second Life practical exercises, evaluation tests, video-conferences and live practical activities take place. Finally, by means of chats, forums, wikis and social networks used by the UTIU, virtual learning communities are set up. As the Rector, M. A. Garito, says: “In these virtual spaces intelligences get connected to each other, expertise is exchanged, knowledge is developed. The cultures and ideas of professors, tutors and students of different countries of the world confront each other in continuous stream of interrelations”.

www.uninettunouniversity.net
UTIU strength: innovation, research and experimentation

Innovation, research and experimentation are at the basis of the International Telematic University UNINETTUNO model. The present activity anticipates the future.

The UTIU research activity is at the same time theoretical-experimental, pure and applied and involves international-level experts in different disciplines (technologists, computer scientists, pedagogues, learning psychologists, experts in various languages and in communication).

Actually, the interdisciplinary results obtained can be tracked back to different areas: technical-engineering, psycho-cognitive, pedagogic, socio-cultural, methodological-organisation ones and enabled to identify new modes for realising both face to face and distance teaching-learning processes that already have a significant impact on the theories related to learning processes, teaching methodologies, distance interaction relationships. In addition, they represented the starting point of the evolution of the psycho-pedagogic and didactic model that led to the realisation of the new distance teaching and learning model and of the e-learning model applied by the UTIU and recognised by the international scientific community. Moreover, the UTIU, thanks to the results of its research activities, has already concretised some significant innovations linked to the:

- Organisational model of the university structures;
- Organisation models of course organisation and delivery (flexibility, accessibility, continuous support to the learning processes);
- Teaching and learning models;
- Role of professors and students;
- Evaluation procedures.

To have a detailed overview of the dozens of research projects implemented and being implemented at the UTIU see the website www.uninettunouniversity.net/research area.

The International Telematic University UNINETTUNO is today a reference model in terms international standards for e-learning quality in Europe

In Europe the International Telematic University UNINETTUNO was taken as an example for the quality of its e-learning model. The results of the E-xcellence+ Project, funded by the European Commission, enabled to establish the evaluation criteria and quality standards of the distance education and e-learning systems to be adopted at European level.

The project, which involved the best European distance teaching Universities and among these the UTIU (the only Italian telematic university member of the European Distance Teaching Universities – EADTU) as well as of the world organisation ICDE, International Council for Open and Distance Education) enabled to track a path for integrating e-learning quality assessment parameters at European level.

The International Telematic University UNINETTUNO – UTIU obtained the prestigious prize for quality «Excellence Associates Quality Label» of the EADTU.

The growth in enrolments results from the overall quality of the services that the UTIU offers to the students and that have given rise to a favourable grapevine that can be found in the blogs and forums directly managed by the students.

DEMOCRATISING THE ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE IS AT BASIS OF EVERY ACTIVITY OF THE UTIU

For the UTIU democratising the access to knowledge is not an abstract concept, but a consolidated practice; since 1992, thanks to its two television channels, RAI NETTUNO SAT 1 and RAI NETTUNO SAT 2, the outcomes of the research activities conducted by the Rector, M. A. Garito and by his staff enabled to create a new television language, a new model of television: “The Television of Knowledge”, of public concern.

In the last years research work on television languages enabled to identify new languages and new methodologies for teaching Arabic on television to illiterate adult people of Morocco.

The outcomes of this research work enabled to realise a televised course that is broadcast on the Moroccan national television, including 150 videolesson, usable also on DVD format linked to new models of books to teach how to read and write in the adult illiterate population of Morocco.

“The method that we proposed for the first time – says the Rector, M. A. Garito – enables to teach the Arab language as communication functional languages, teaching is put into a context: letters, words and grammar structure are constantly linked to object and behaviours of everyday life of typical Moroccan family.

On Second Life, on the UTIU’s Island of Knowledge, the Moroccan house becomes a three-dimensional scenario: the theatre in which for the first time avatars become actors, create the tale, represent in a concrete way an event, an experience, a link between sound and image, supplying the tools to enhance the audio and visual memory of the letters” and thanks to the realisation of the project “I Learn Arabic – The Treasure of the Letters.”
The internationalisation, the value of a University without boundaries

The strong point of the UTIU development is undoubtedly represented by the fact of having succeeded in rapidly getting and developing to an international level concluding significant agreements with Mediterranean countries, as well as with Universities of the United States, Ecuador, Europe, Slovenia, Russia, Poland, China and other countries of the world.

The students currently enrolled come from 42 different countries of the world. On the 16th December 2009, in premises of the Conference of the Rectors, in Rome, was held the first ceremony of awarding of the diplomas of the Master’s Course in Euro-Mediterranean Cultures and Policies which united along a shared path of training and interaction students coming from the universities of countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey and professors of high prestige coming from different European universities.

The students, for the first time, without leaving their homes and thanks to the distance teaching model of the International Telematic University UNINETTUNO and to its didactic portal www.uninetunouniversity.net, get a study title acknowledged in Italy and in Europe and in their respective countries. “The internationalisation of our University” states the Rector of the UTIU, Maria Amata Garito - “developed a lot thanks to the model of our Internet-based portal in different languages; the young people coming from different places of the world exchange information on forums, blogs and on Facebook where several communities of NEPTUNIANS were born. In a short time a veritable network of shared knowledge – of continuous interactions among the international community of students and professors, open to the understanding of cultural differences and to the development of new forms of cooperation”.

RAI NETTUNO SAT, the television of knowledge to spread learning

RAI NETTUNO SAT is the “Television of Knowledge”, a television of public concern that brings culture and academic knowledge from prestigious universities around the world into everyone’s home, even of those that do not have the possibility to attend university.

Everyday, 24 hours a day, on RAI NETTUNO SAT the best professors from prestigious universities in Europe and the Arab World deliver their courses in many languages: Italian, Arabic, English, French, Greek and shortly also in Russian and Polish dealing with Engineering, Economics, Law, Psychology, Philosophy, History, Literature, and Art and Communication, including lessons aimed at teaching how to read and write Arabic and therefore fighting illiteracy for the benefit of thousands of people.

RAI NETTUNO SAT helps watchers to develop personal knowledge and skills. Everyday, on RAI NETTUNO SAT, there are even special lessons delivered by the protagonists of contemporary culture: artists, poets, writers, musicians, painters, actors, philosophers, etc... who present their works, speak about their creativity, invite the audience to go into the depths of their soul and bring them to understand the various forms of expression of modern thinking.

Lessons by the great teachers that talk about human emotions: love, goodness, generosity, respect of differences, dialogue among religions and lessons on peace around the world and that had as lecturers Nobel Prize Laureates such as Gorbatchev, the Dalai Lama, Pérez Esquivel and Rigoberta Menchú who attracted a great deal interest among the audience.

RAI NETTUNO SAT presents to the world the cultural heritage of European and Arab countries, enabling viewers to better know and to re-read history and to identify the common paths between the East and the West; it helps to rise awareness about differences and to internationalize culture and knowledge and to facilitate dialogue between peoples having different cultures and religions.

With RAI NETTUNO SAT a new television language was created as well as a new model of television of thinking and reflection, a Television of Knowledge where the star is Knowledge indeed.