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Erasmus+

Guidelines for universities engaging in social responsibility

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Approaches to Social Responsibility

- The need to transfer research results to the outside of universities has been acknowledged a long time ago (**transfer approach**)
- Universities are embedded within local communities in their regions, cities, local business companies, NGOs, associations, different population groups and stakeholders (**regional approach**)
- However, universities are still oftentimes perceived as inward-driven organisations, “ivory tower” (**organisational approach**)
- *“Universities are expected to establish knowledge transfer to society at large and industry in particular, to increase support to the development of their regions ... engage in policy-making to meet the challenges now facing the European Union...” (EUA)*

Embedding Social Responsibility

- Different discourses have dealt with this topic: **transfer and implementation research** (Gräsel 2010), **Third Mission** (Mahrl, Pausits 2011; Spiel et al. 2016), **civic engagement** (Munck, McQuillan, and Ozarowska 2012), **responsible research** (Stilgoe, Owen, Macnaghten 2013), **social responsibility of universities** (Dima 2015; Wallace, Resch, 2017), **community-based research**, etc.
- USR derived from CSR meaning **university's social responsibility**
- USR as a concept whereby universities integrate social responsibility into their research and academic activities (internal dimension) and in their interaction with their external stakeholders (external dimension) on a voluntary basis.

Dimensions of Social Responsibility

- Internal dimensions

- Research clusters of the university
- Responsible teaching and responsible science
- Internal processes contribute to environmental and humanitarian objectives and sustainable development
- Internal processes : fair practices (equality, diversity ...)

- External dimensions

- Civic engagement/ cooperation with public institutions & NGOs
- Cooperation with industry and business partners
- Cooperation with cultural, community and social projects
- Transfer of knowledge / Technology transfer
- Policy counselling and policy support
- Contributing to the public understanding of science



UNIBILITY project

- Within the UNIBILITY-project (“University Meets Social Responsibility”) **6 universities and eucen** have worked on strengthening the role and influence of universities towards their **stakeholders**
- [UNIBILITY, co-funded in Erasmus+ KA2 (2015-2017), coordinator: University of Vienna, Austria]



Key recommendations: general

- Strategic plan for USR needs to be set on management level
- → Action plans for staff / researchers / students can be derived from the strategic plan
- Documentation system for the whole university – complex and complete
- USR cannot be limited to one administrative unit, but concerns all
- Dialogue with stakeholders is key asset to perceiving needs of stakeholders
- Staff / researchers / students need the skills to implement USR activities
- → training key staff members

Key recommendations: staff

- Key staff members need to be trained to develop and implement action plans

Session 1:	Discussing the concept of USR
Session 2:	Studying existing USR processes and practices
Session 3:	USR Strategic Planning and Action Planning
Session 4:	Reporting and structuring USR activities

- Session 3: Action planning
 - Observing needs in the community / industry ...
 - Managing the dialogue with stakeholders
 - Meaningful action (format, duration ...)
- Session 4: Reporting USR
 - Complete picture of the university's USR activities
 - Comparison with other universities
 - Internal communication & data collection process / annual report



Key recommendations: students

- Service learning – a concept with many definitions – aims at strengthening students' relationships with the community
- Service learning as 1) curricular course, 2) extension project, 3) extracurricular activity – all three formats work
- In UNIBILITY 45 students engaged in service learning (Law Clinics, Neighbourhood projects etc.) – and 24 students took part in a logbook reflection and guidance counselling sessions
- Results on 3 levels: personal development, social learning, emotional learning
- Service learning projects provided strong evidence for the importance of formalizing and strengthening relationships between non-university partners and the higher education sector → starting point for novel relationships, however, they must be formally structured and led by transfer offices

Key recommendations: students

- *“On this Thursday, I was paired to work with an elderly woman named Lorraine who wore hairclips and a sly smile. We talked, cooked and laughed throughout the class, exchanging stories and thoughts. Afterwards, she told me that her granddaughter had been referred to a clinic that day for drug abuse. [...] She thanked me for spending my time with her and for the work we do (one of the few moments of stability in her week). Lost for words, I simply thanked her in return for this moment, how special it was to me I could not articulate. It was the greatest honour and not only one of the ‘best’ experiences here, but of mine in life.” (21-year-old female student from Ireland).*

Example for emotional learning

Products

- IO 1: **Reader** on CSR/USR (12 texts)
- IO 2: Interactive USR **Toolkit** with 21 collected USR examples
- IO 3: **Training material** for staff members (5-day training)
- IO 4: **Training material** for students (5-day summer school)
- IO 5: USR **Service learning projects** – 6 projects with students
- IO 6: **University Meets Business** – 6 lectures
- IO 7: **University Meets NGO** – 11 workshops
- IO 8: USR **Guidelines** for universities engaging in social responsibility



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