

Erasmus+ KA2 strategic partnership project: “Steering Higher Education for Community Engagement” (SHEFCE)

## SHEFCE Online Kick-Off Meeting: Minutes

Tuesday 13 - Wednesday 14 October 2020, 10:00-12:30 CET, via Microsoft Teams

### DAY 1: Tuesday 13 October 2020

#### SESSION 1.1: PROJECT PRESENTATION

SHEFCE project manager Thomas Farnell (IDE) opened the meeting and gave an introduction to the SHEFCE project by explaining the policy background and the previous project (TEFCE) to which SHEFCE is a follow-up project. For more information, see Power Point presentation Session 1.1.

#### SESSION 1.2: PARTNER PRESENTATIONS

All presentations are available in a separate document: Power Point presentation Session 1.2.

The members of the **SHEFCE Advisory team** presented their institutions and their current links and interest in the topic of community engagement in higher education.

- Henriette Stoeber, European University Association
- Vaidotas Viliunas (on behalf of Michal Karpíšek), European Association of Institutions in Higher Education
- Martina Darmanin and Maria Sierra, European Students' Union
- Andrea-Rosalinde Hofer, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
- Sjur Bergan, Council of Europe

All Advisory team members confirmed that they are involved in a range of initiatives and projects that have direct or indirect links with community engagement in higher education and that they are eager to make connections to the SHEFCE project to create potential synergies.

Members of the **Action-planning universities and local partners** presented their institutions and their experience so far in community engagement in their specific contexts:

- Snježana Prijić Samaržija, University of Rijeka; and Mirela Pašić, City of Rijeka (HR)
- Emma O'Brien, Technological University Dublin; and Bruce Phillips, Dublin City Council (IE)
- Magdalena Fellner, Danube University Krems (AU)
- Joachim Matthieu, Free University of Brussels (BE)
- Silvia Llach Carles, University of Girona (ES)

The local partners City Spark (BE) and the City of Girona (ES) were not able to attend the meeting, but City Spark were able to share a presentation of their organisation via a short video.

The **SHEFCE Policy experts** then presented their experience and expertise in the area of higher education policy in general and community engagement in particular:

- Davide Dusi, Ghent University (BE)
- Josep Maria Vilalta, Association of Catalan Public Universities (ES)
- Lorraine McIlrath, National University of Ireland Galway (IE)
- Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt, Institute for the Development of Education (HR)

Tajana Sisgoreo of Brodoto (HR) then presented their experience, spanning both communication and social media expertise and projects focusing on community engagement and social impact.

Finally, the last **SHEFCE partner networks and national stakeholders** were presented, with Kate Morris from Campus Engage (IE) presenting their work at the national level in Ireland. The European Higher Education Society – EAIR and the Austrian Ministry of Education and Science (AU) were not able to attend the meeting, but were briefly introduced by Thomas Farnell (IDE)

### SESSION 1.3: INITIAL PROJECT PLANNING AND DISCUSSIONS

In the last session, Thomas Farnell (IDE) briefly presented Partner roles and responsibilities; project timetable; next steps. See separate document Session 1.3. for more details.

## DAY 2: Wednesday 14 October 2020

### SESSION 2.1: PROJECT PLANNING

This session was dedicated to presenting each Intellectual output in detail and planning the first activities. A recording of this session was made available to all attendees, as was the Power Point presentation Session 2.1.

Presenting **IO1: University action plans**, Thomas Farnell (IDE) provided an overview of the role of partner universities in action-planning and an overview of the timetable. Bojana Čulum Ilić (UNIRI) then provided a testimonial based on their experience of piloting the TEFCE Toolbox for Community Engagement at the University of Rijeka

#### **Discussion:**

- Thomas Cooney (TUD) wished to clarify the role of the lead partner compared to other action-planning team members, considering they had already implemented the TEFCE Toolbox. He also asked whether the SHEFCE project had resources to make the Toolbox into a fully online tool and urged that we consider how to ensure the long term impact of the Toolbox and avoid it becoming overlooked like many other tools developed in EU project. Thomas Farnell answered that there are resources to develop web tools (Platform; Heatmap) and that in that process we could revisit and discuss the question of whether the Toolbox could benefit from an online version, rather than being a document.
- Attila Pausits (DUK) request to clarify whether community engagement is understood as going beyond the local - which Thomas Farnell confirmed. Additionally, the question was raised as to whether the application of the TEFCE Toolbox is useful if it

is more ‘bottom-up’ than top-down’, since it is crucial to ensure connections to university-level policies. Bojana Čulum Ilić (UNIRI) responded that in the case of the University of Rijeka this was a direct combination of bottom-up provision of community-engaged practices, but that were matched with supportive messages from the top management, the rector herself.

A presentation was then made on **IO2: Policy recommendations and IO3: European online platform**, defining expected results, partner roles and timetable activities in 2021.

**Discussion:**

- Attila Pausits (DUK) noted that it would be excellent to collect some of the action-planning activities as an opportunity for partner universities to identify what key policies or documents at the national level influence (in a positive or negative way) the extent to which a university can be community engaged. Thomas Farnell (IDE) responded that this was indeed one of the expected results: action-planning will also be reflecting on what external factors influence their community engagement, including national policies.
- Lorraine McIlrath (NUIG) asked whether the analyses in IO2 could lean on already existing papers and analyses, and whether the stakeholders should all be ‘national’ stakeholders, or whether these could include university-level stakeholders. Thomas Farnell responded that the analyses could certainly include and incorporate findings of existing papers, while also exploring new developments. Regarding stakeholders for IO2: university-level stakeholders will be essential for defining ‘the problem’, while national stakeholders (including associations/networks, not just ministries) would be essential for discussions possible solutions.
- Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt (IDE) proposed that, even though the activities for IO2 start early in 2022, we should certainly use 2020/2021 to start reaching out and networking with policymakers at the national and EU level and to start mapping out the area. Sjur Bergan (CoE) agreed that connections with relevant stakeholders could already be made now via the CoE working group for the local mission of higher education.

Finally, a presentation was made of the intellectual output **IO4: Piloting a European University-Community Engagement Heatmap**, with expected results, partner roles and timetable activities in 2021.

**Discussion:**

- Davide Dusi (GU) as IO4 team leader confirmed that he had already begun the process of identifying possible approaches to developing online tools and is ready to start the brainstorming process in November 2020.

## SESSION 2.2: MANAGEMENT, ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

The partners discussed the potential **impact of the budget cuts** made by the national agency (around 90.000 EUR) and potential solutions/alternative approaches – including whether to lower the work intensity or to try to reallocate funds from travel costs.

**Discussion:**

- Attila Pausits (DUK) noted that some universities were more affected by others in the budget cuts, and therefore proposed to open discussion with those universities most affected to see how to proceed – how to manage workload with number of available

staff days/budget. Thomas Farnell agreed, noting that the partners most affected by cuts (due to high number of staff days) were DUK, VUB and UDG.

- Begoña Serra (UDG) asked whether the cuts were due to the intellectual outputs being deemed as irrelevant, or whether the staff days was considered by the external evaluator as being too high. Thomas Farnell responded that it was the latter.
- Bojana Čulum Ilić (UNIRI) urged that we try and find a solution that does not involve lowering the actual number of days worked, since this would negatively affect the implementation of the Toolbox and action-planning process, which do require the initially planned number of days.
- Thomas Farnell agreed with all the proposal and proposed to follow up on these proposal by the end of December 2020.

The partners then discussed the **potential impact of COVID-19** on the project – in terms of the impossibility of travel and the potential difficulties for implementing project activities – and possible mitigating measures.

**Discussion:**

- Thomas Cooney (TUD) noted that COVID-19 obviously has had a huge impact on teaching. But one of these effects is that much more learning takes place outside the classroom in more creative ways, and more Partnerships with external organisations are taking shape. In this sense, COVID-19 could be seen as an opportunity, not a threat, to make lasting, positive to teaching and learning practices in higher education. The SHEFCE project could contribute to this by collecting examples of good practice connecting COVID-19 and community engagement.
- Attila Pausits (DUK): Not that the lack of international mobility will have a negative effect, since online meetings do not allow to feel or capture the key cultural specificities of different national/regional communities or the institutional culture of different universities. Nevertheless, peer-learning visits could be organised via online tools, and these could try and incorporate a cultural component.
- Lorraine McIlrath (NUIG) noted that while there is a real risk of community engagement dropping down the list of policy priorities – there may be an opportunity for the opposite to happen. The project could communicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has more than ever emphasised the importance of universities' role in addressing societal crises and challenges.
- Bojana Čulum Ilić (UNIRI) noted that there were lots of good examples of community engagement responses to COVID-19, featured through the Talloires Networks and the European Observatory of Service Learning in Higher Education.

In the final session, Thomas Farnell (IDE) presented the **project management infrastructure of the SHEFCE project, the project's** communication channels and resources, and the administrative and reporting framework. There were no questions in this session.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FOLLOW-UPS

- Kick-off follow-ups: Power Point presentations, video recording and minutes will be shared with all participants.
- Communication: a SHEFCE press release will be drafted by 23 October and shared with the consortium; the SHEFCE website will be developed by the end of November.
- Management: Partnership agreements, project handbook and the admin guidelines will be drafted and circulated by mid-November.
- Implementation: IDE will begin communication with the IO leaders of the Heatmap Team and the Action-Planning Team immediately after the kick-off meeting
- Next joint meeting: January 2020

## List of participants

	Institution	Name	Surname	Job title
1	<b>Association of Catalan Public Universities (ACUP)</b>	Victoria	Gomez	Project officer
2		Josep Maria	Vilalta	Executive secretary
3		Marta	Cayetano i Giralt	Comms officer
4	<b>Brodoto</b>	Branimir	Radaković	
5		Tajana	Sisgoreo	
6	<b>Council of Europe (CoE)</b>	Sjur	Bergan	Head of the Council of Europe's Education Department
7	<b>Danube University Krems (DUK)</b>	Pausits	Attila	Professor
8		Magdalena	Fellner	Research assistant
9	<b>Dublin City Council</b>	Bruce	Phillips	Area Manager
10	<b>European University Association (EUA)</b>	Henriette	Stoeber	Policy Analyst
11	<b>European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE)</b>	Michal	Karpišek	Secretary General
12		Vaidotas	Viliunas	Policy and Project Officer
13	<b>European Students' Union (ESU)</b>	Martina	Darmanin	Human Rights and Solidarity Coordinator
14		Maria	Sierra	Project Manager
15	<b>Ghent University (GU)</b>	Davide	Dusi	Postdoctoral Researcher
16	<b>Institute for the Development of Education (IDE)</b>	Thomas	Farnell	Higher Education Policy Expert
17		Nino	Šćukanec Schmidt	Executive Director
18		Ana	Skledar Matijević	Higher Education Project Manager
19		Dijana	Dolušić	Financial Manager
20	<b>Irish Universities Association, Campus Engage</b>	Kate	Morris	National Coordinator
21		Colm	O'Hehir	Campus Engage Officer
22	<b>National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG)</b>	Lorraine McIlrath	McIlrath	Coordinator
23		Fiona	Kennedy	
24	<b>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)</b>	Andrea-Rosalinde	Hofer	Policy Analyst and Project Lead
25	<b>The City of Rijeka,</b>	Mirela	Pašić	Advisor for Projects and Youth
26	<b>TU Dublin (TUD)</b>	Emma	O'Brien	Lecturer
27		Tom	Cooney	Professor of Entrepreneurship

28	<b>Universitat de Girona (UDG)</b>	Alícia	Betts	International Strategic Projects
29		Sílvia	Llach Carles	Vicerectora de Territori i Compromís Social
30		Begoña	Serra	Grant Manager
31		Jaume	Feliu	Delegate of the rector for Territory and Sustainability
32	<b>University of Rijeka (UNIRI)</b>	Ivana	Klarin	EU projects and programmes expert
33		Daria	Glavan Šćulac	Head of Legal Affairs
34		Ana	Tomasko Obradovic	Head of Rector's Office
35		Bojana	Culum Ilic	Associate Professor
36		Snježana	Prijic Samaržija	Rector
37	<b>Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)</b>	Joachim	Mathieu	Coordinator Science Outreach Office

## Photos

**The Higher Education Policy Team at the OECD**

Higher Education Policy Team: Country reviews and comparative policy analysis

Directorate for Education and Skills

HIGHER EDUCATION RESOURCES	REFORM SUPPORT AND POLICY REVIEWS	LABOUR MARKET RELEVANCE AND OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analytical framework</li> <li>Policy briefs</li> <li>Thematic reviews</li> <li>Policy survey</li> <li>Cost analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DG REFORM Structural Reform Support Programme</li> <li>National Educational Policy Reviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LMRO Partnership Initiative</li> <li>Alternative credentials</li> <li>Graduate skills sought by employers</li> <li>Labour market information in study choice</li> </ul>

ENHANCING HIGHER EDUCATION EVIDENCE

- Survey development and instrumentation
- Institutional data platform/ETER collaboration
- Innovative data sources and big data analysis

**I01: partner roles**

Notes

- IDE support:** TU Dublin as team leader will receive expert and operational support by the project coordinator IDE.
- Role of rest of consortium:** IDE, GU, ACUP, NUIG, BDT will be active participants in the entire process (peer learning meetings) and will provide a quality assurance role.

**SHEFCE PROJECT CONSORTIUM**  
Coordination, transnational project meetings, peer learning meetings (TLAs), project evaluation

**PROJECT MANAGEMENT; DISSEMINATION**  
IDE, with support of all partners

**ACTION-PLANNING TEAM**  
Leader: TU Dublin  
Core team: DU Krens, VU Brussel, UD Girona, U Rijeka

**POLICY TEAM**  
Leader: DU Krens  
Core team: ACUP, IDE, NU Gateway, VU Brussel

**PLATFORM TEAM**  
Leader: IDE, BDT  
Core team: Aill

**HEATMAP TEAM**  
Leader: U Gent  
Core team: IDE, DU Krens, U Rijeka, Brodoto

**Local partners**  
Dublin OC (IE), Girona OC (ES), Rijeka OC (HR), City Spark (BE)

**Partner networks & stakeholders**  
Campus Engage (IE), Ministry of HE/Research, EAR, (GUW)

**Advisory team**  
EUA, EURASHE, ESU, OECD, Council of Europe