



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENTS, CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

Austrian Higher Education Research Network

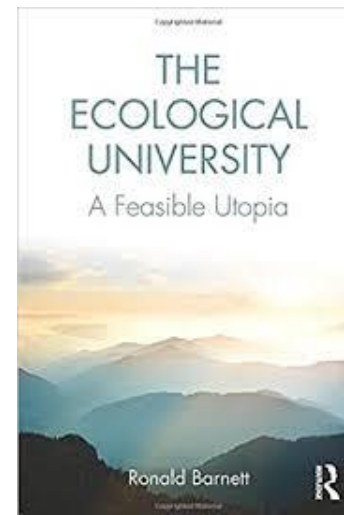
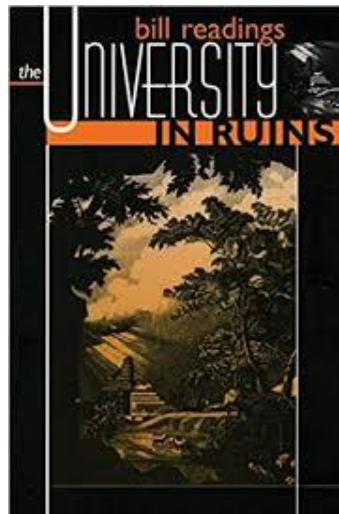
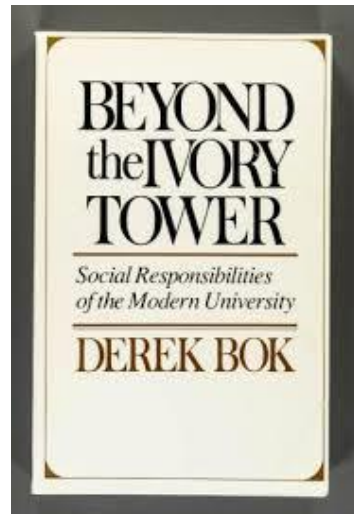
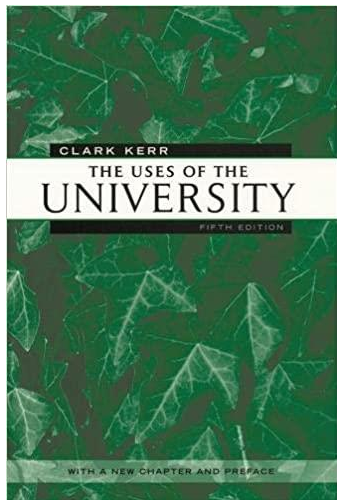
16 November 2022

*Thomas Farnell, Higher Education Policy Expert,
Institute for the Development of Education, Croatia*



The role of universities in society

What are universities for? The wider role universities should play in modern society (beyond just teaching and research) has been a matter of debate and competing visions since the 1960s





Impact of universities on society

- Impact on localities: Universities as
 - employers in their regions;
 - drivers of innovation and entrepreneurship
 - creators of and venues for cultural and social activity;
 - public services (Goddard and Puukka, 2008)
 - ‘dominant civic institutions’ in modern cities
 - student population as bringers of social and cultural change (Scott (2010, p. 372)
- Impact on individuals in society: higher education attainment => better life outcomes in terms of
 - active citizenship
 - civic engagement
 - health, well-being
 - lower probability of being involved in crime (Brennan et al., 2010; Brennan et al., 2013; Desjardins and Schuller, 2006).

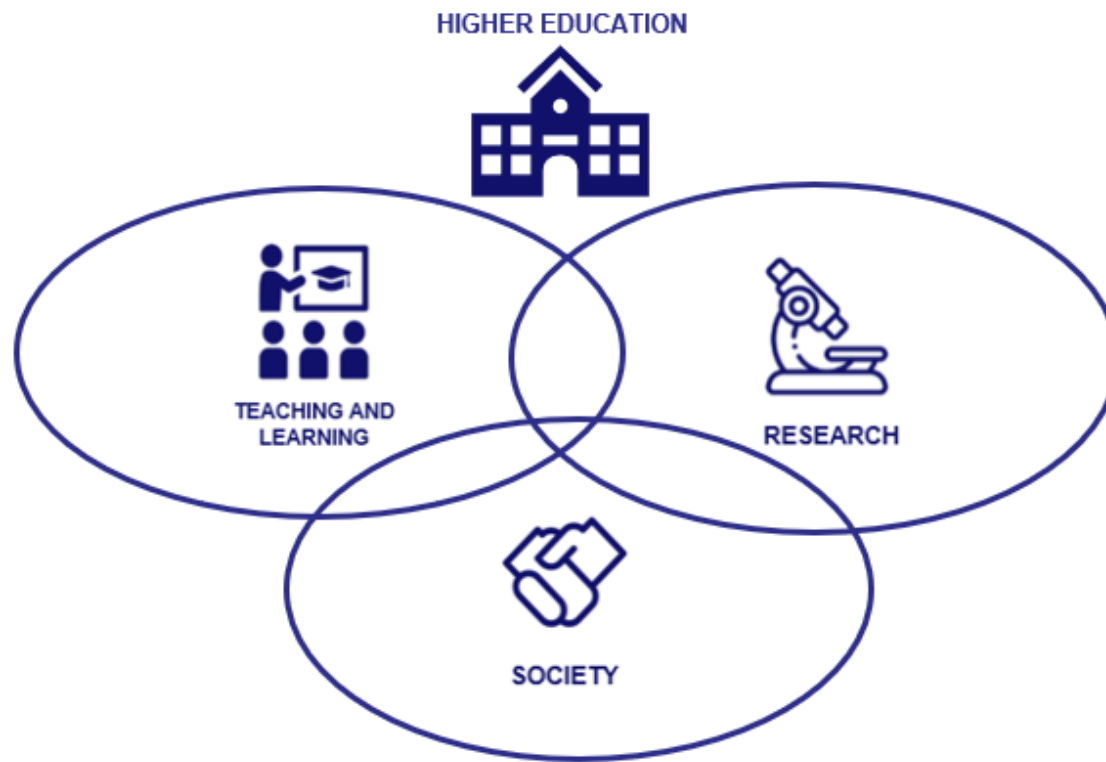


Impact on vs. engagement with society?

Important distinction between universities as having benefits for their sponsor society, and universities *engaging with* society to deliver those benefits' (Benneworth, 2018, p. 20; emphasis added).

Despite the range of societal benefits – universities often seen as ‘**ivory towers**’

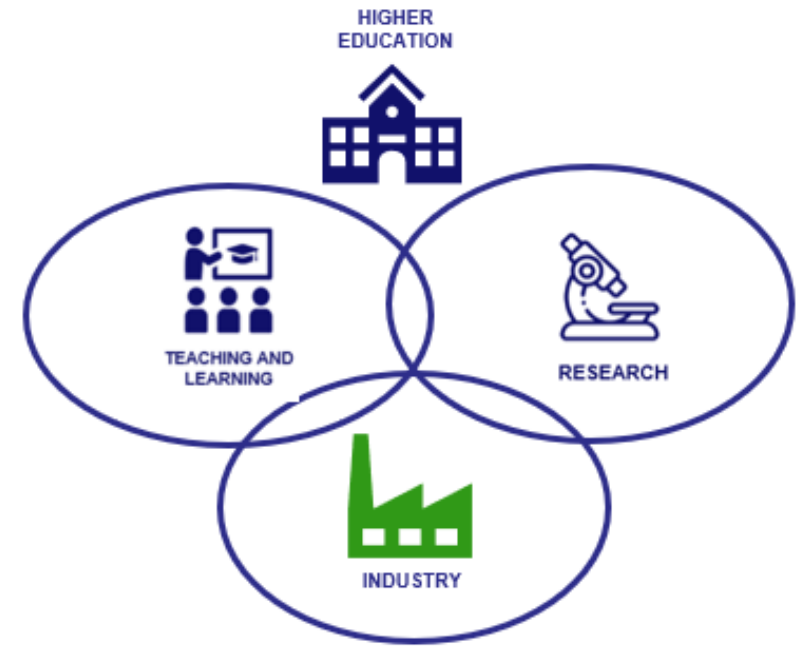
The 'third mission': of higher education



The third mission in practice

The term has mainly been linked to the economic sphere:

- Innovation
- Technology transfer
- Commercialisation of research
- Cooperation with industry
- ‘Triple Helix’
- Etc.





The third mission: re-balancing the debate

Other societal needs that universities can help address:

- Global challenges: COVID-19, climate change, migrations, ageing population
- Social cohesion
- Social justice
- Culture and the arts
- Civic and democratic values



Community engagement: A definition



Community engagement is about how universities address societal needs in partnership with their external communities.

- Community: incl. government, business, civil society, from local to global level.
- Engagement: mutually beneficial joint activities with external communities

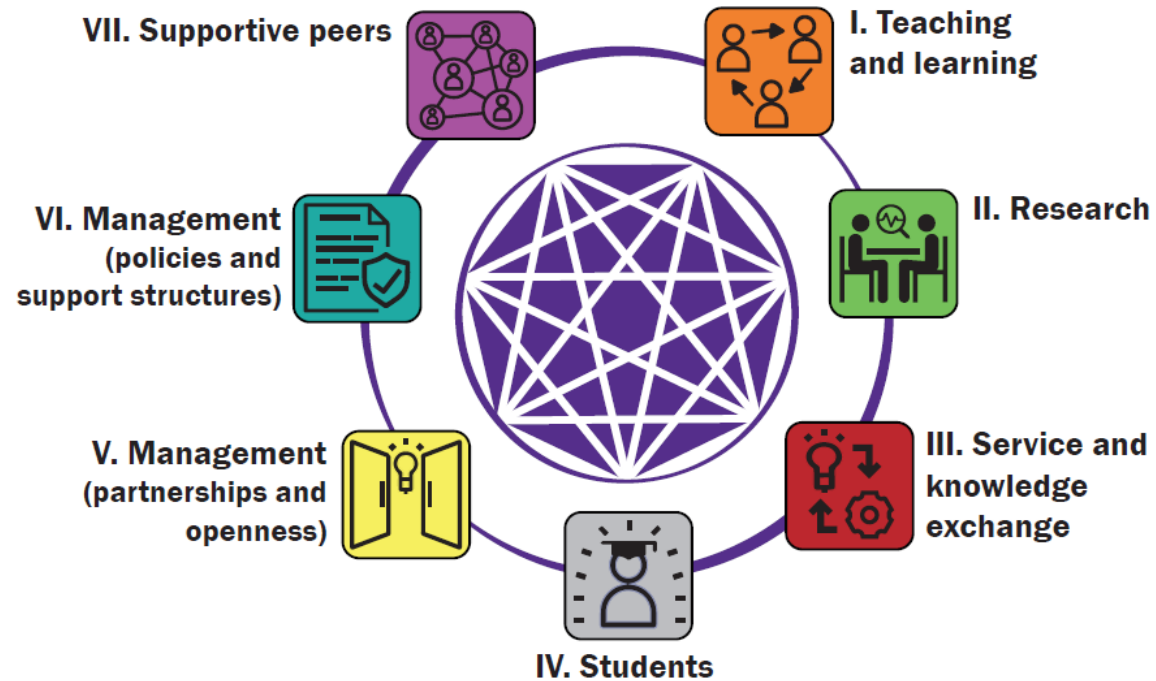


Other kinds of engagement?








Community and civic engagement
Regional engagement
Service
Knowledge exchange
Civic mission
Social responsibility
Local mission
Community engagement
Civic engagement
Engagement
Civic university
Public and community engagement
Outreach
Societal engagement
Public and community engagement

Dimensions of community engagement

Community engagement can be **embedded across virtually all university activities.**

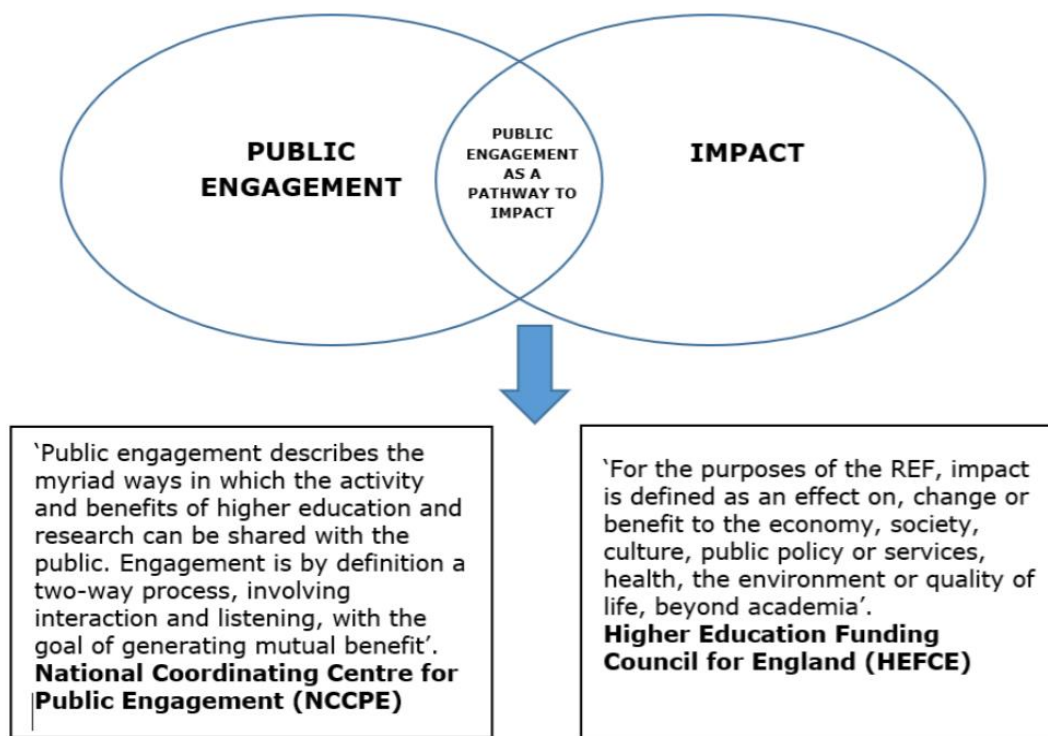


Dimensions of community engagement

	I. Teaching and learning	Credit-bearing courses in partnership with communities: <i>E.g. community-based learning / service-learning; project-based learning</i>
	II. Research	Research <u>with</u> external communities, e.g. <i>Community-based research; patient and public involvement; citizen science</i>
	III. Service and knowledge exchange	Academic staff involvement in public (policy) debates; Capacity-building for community groups
	IV. Students	Student volunteering; student activism
	V. Management (partnerships and openness)	Community access to facilities and resources.
	VI. Management (policies, support structures)	Policies and institutional support structures
	VII: Supportive peers	Supportive environment among academic and administrative staff

Impact vs engagement

Figure 1: Linking public engagement and research impact⁸





A re-emerging policy priority?

The role of higher education in responding to societal challenges is re-emerging as a policy priority in policy worldwide:

- Higher education policy: “societal challenges”, “civic universities”, “innovation” as the third mission and “service to society” as the “fourth mission” of universities
- Research policy: “societal challenges”, “science with and for society”, “citizen science”
- Cross-cutting: Universities’ role in contributing to SDGs;





National initiatives



UK

- The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE)
- Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research (Research Councils UK)
- The Research Excellence Framework (REF)
- The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)



National initiatives

Ireland

- *National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030* (Department of Education and Skills, 2011)
- *Higher Education System Performance Framework (2018-2020)*:
 - ‘not only seeks engagement with the goal of economic innovation, but also broader community engagement’ (HEA, 2018, p. 11).
 - The framework requires that higher education institutions define key performance indicators (KPIs) in relation to their specific engagement missions.
- *Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework*: role for universities in local and regional development



Other national initiatives/trends in Europe

- **Spain:** *University Strategy 2015* - ‘essential to strengthen the social responsibility of universities’ (p. 27) ‘developing a university model based on the third mission, which provides a balance between social development and economic development’ (p. 39).
- **Croatia and Lithuania:** no specific policies, but national priorities set in the European Social Funds have included funding for community-based learning / service learning
- **Germany:** third mission is often included in mission statements, but initiatives are predominantly focused on economic impact and knowledge/technology transfer (Berghaeuser and Hoelscher, 2019).

Other European initiatives



European Observatory
of Service-Learning
in Higher Education



Living Knowledge
The International Science Shop Network

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



TEFCE

Towards a European Framework for
Community Engagement in Higher Education



SHEFCE

Steering Higher Education for Community Engagement



Measurement in higher education

Typical measurement and assessment tools





Measurement in higher education

Typical measurement and assessment tools





How to measure community engagement?

- There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to community engagement – it is always context-specific.
- Community engagement is notoriously difficult to measure quantitatively.
- And this is all further complicated in a European transnational context.





And why measure community engagement?

- Allow universities to **identify community engagement activities**
- Help them **understand how they perform** (by demonstrating the value and mutual benefits generated by such activities)
- Assist them in **eventual improvement**.

It is difficult to see how a metrics-based approach could lead to such outcomes...



New European initiatives to support community engagement in HE

Two EU-funded projects are proposing European frameworks to support community engagement in higher education



2018-2021



2020-2023



TEFCE / SHEFCE partners



Institute for the
Development of Education



TECHNISCHE
UNIVERSITÄT
DRESDEN



Center for
Higher Education
Policy Studies



Sveučilište u Rijeci
University of Rijeka



GHENT
UNIVERSITY



ECIU



OÉ Gaillimh
NUI Galway



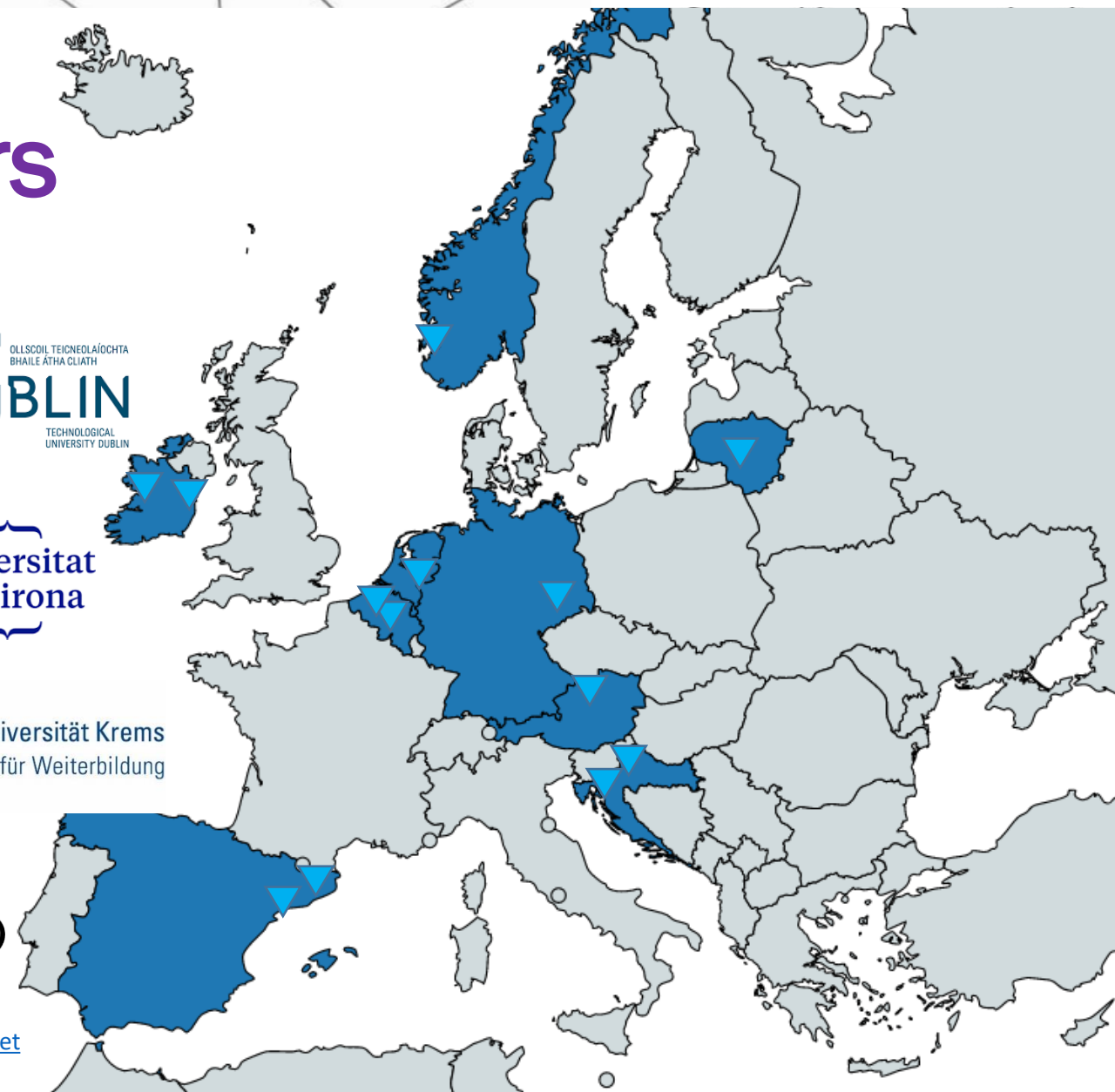
Donau-Universität Krems
Universität für Weiterbildung



ASSOCIACIÓ
CATALANA
D'UNIVERSITATS
PÚBLIQUES



Map source: www.mapchart.net



SHEFCE associate partners

ADVISORY TEAM



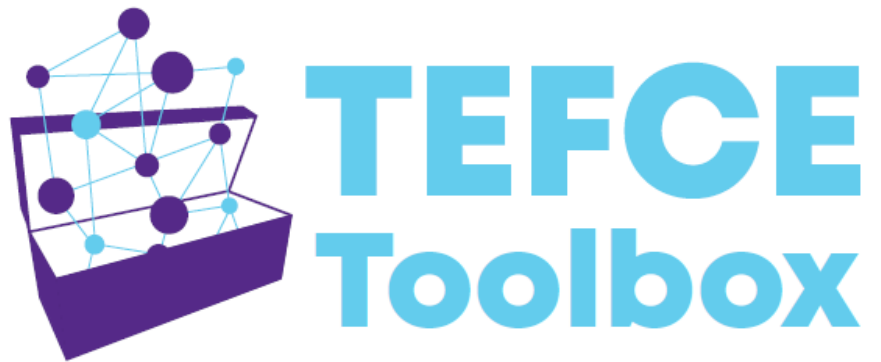
NATIONAL PARTNERS & NETWORKS



LOCAL PARTNERS



A new framework for community engagement

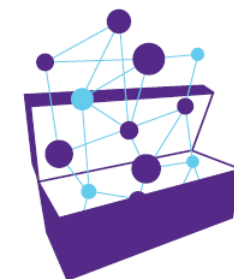
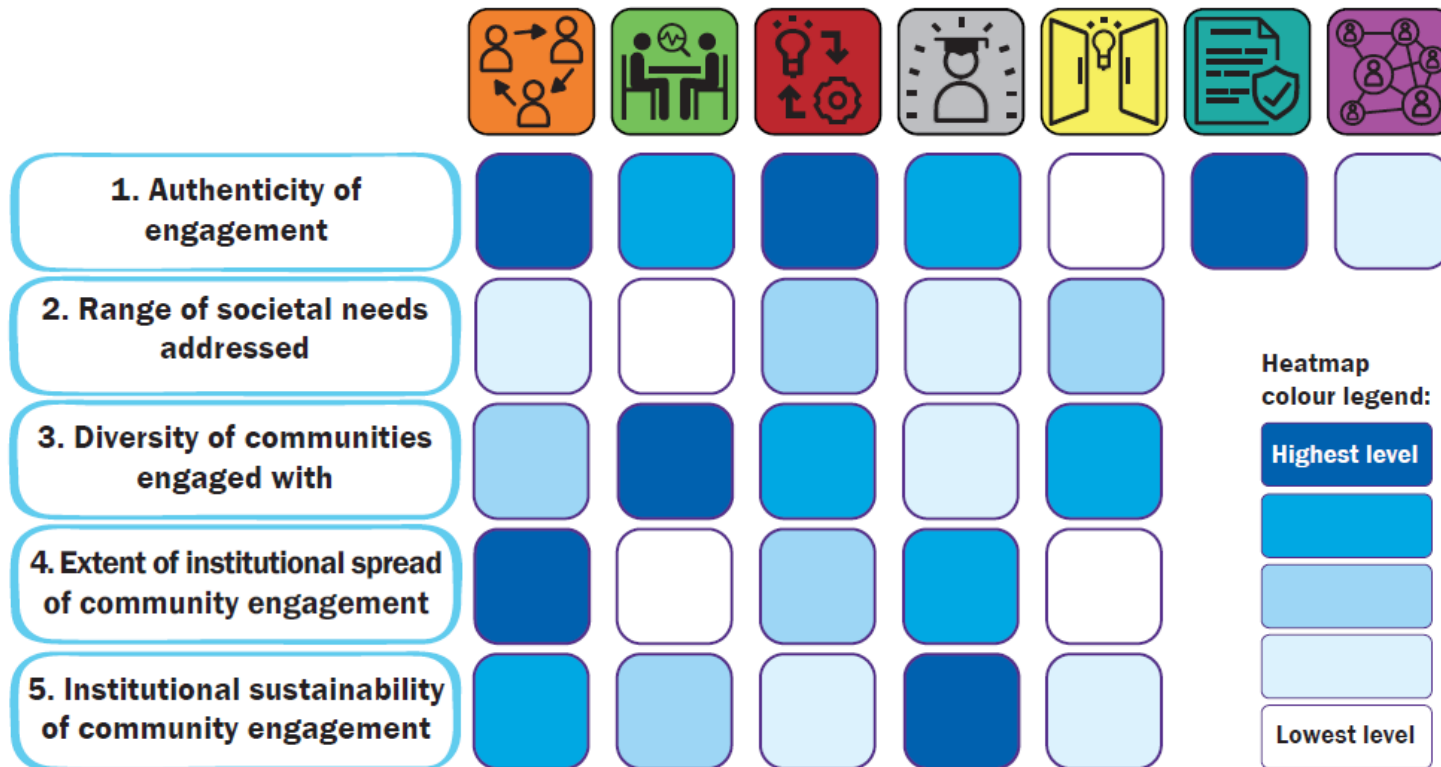


**An Institutional Self-Reflection Framework
for Community Engagement in Higher Education**

www.tefce.eu/toolbox

- **Qualitative:** no metrics
- **Multifaceted and context-specific:** no comparison or ranking
- **Participative:** no desk-based checklists
- **Innovative:** inspired by, but going beyond, existing tools

A new framework for community engagement



TEFCE
Toolbox

An Institutional Self-Reflection Framework
for Community Engagement in Higher Education



And yet ... external challenges

Universities are under external pressure to prioritise other areas:

- **The ‘knowledge economy’** – innovation, technology transfer, human capital
- **‘Massification’ of higher education** - funding pressures, requiring entrepreneurial, strategic and managerial approaches to planning activities
- **Globalisation** – competition between universities; global rankings; global vs local dilemma
- **Governance** – ‘New Public Management’ in higher education (performance-based funding, accreditation, audits; increasing complexity of HE stakeholders)
- **Academic culture** - ‘publish or perish’





And internal challenges

- Centralising community engagement can have perverse effects
- Community engagement takes different forms in different disciplines
- The diversity of community engagement makes its management difficult
- Changing academic practice is a long-term process:
„Building a culture of community engagement within a university is a long-term process akin to a generational shift; any attempt to introduce new approaches to teaching and research after doctoral training will require time, resources and space for individual experimentation and learning among academics.”

(Benneworth, 2018)



Final thoughts: what future for community engagement in Europe?



- Community engagement incorporated among EHEA priorities till 2030 (49 signatory countries)



- Achieving a European Education Area („service to society”)
- European Universities Initiative



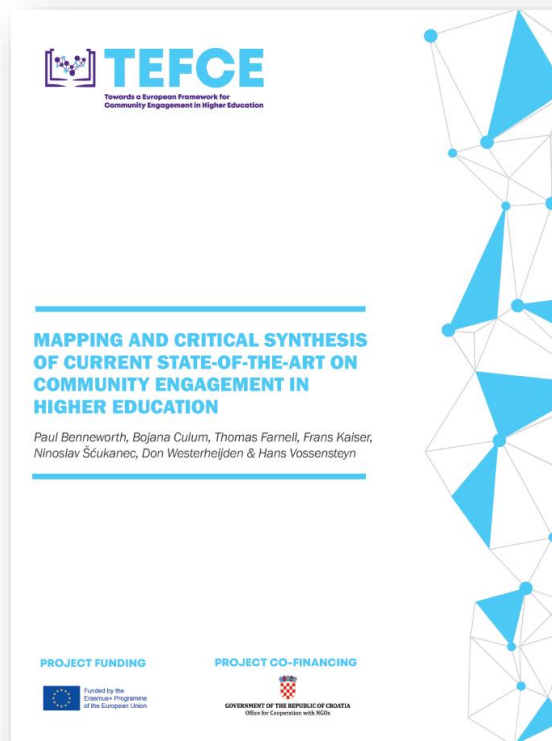
- New initiative: Local Mission of Higher Education



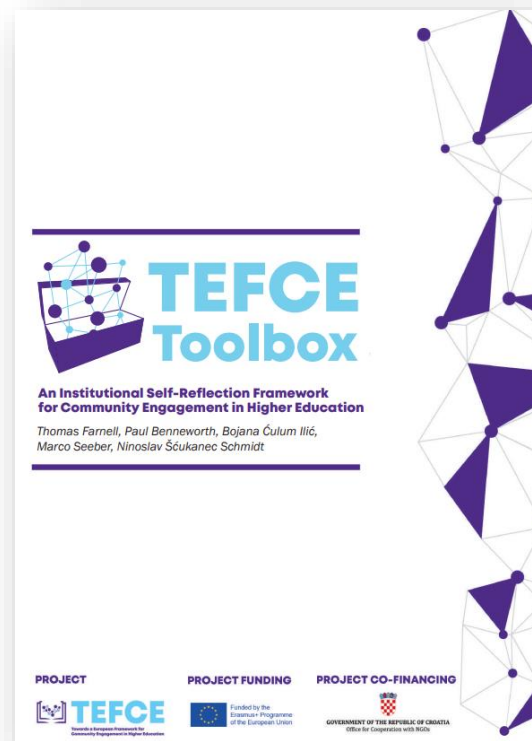
- Civic engagement among top 3 priorities till 2030



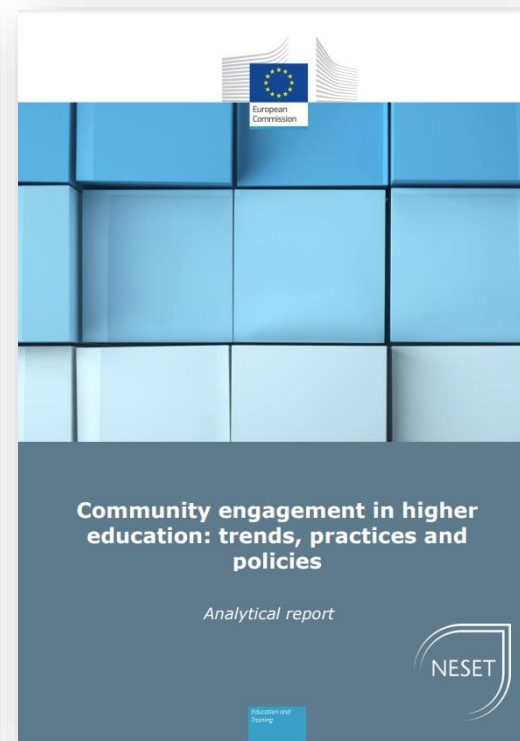
Further reading



[Download](#)



[Download](#)



[Download](#)
[German summary](#)



SHEFCE

Steering Higher Education for Community Engagement



Thank you for your attention!