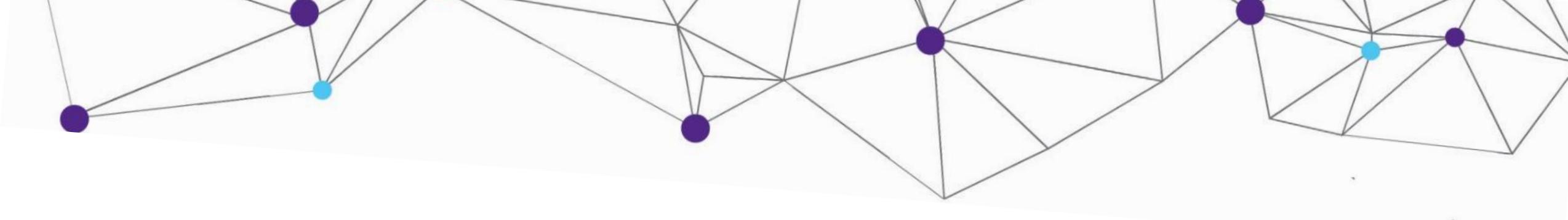


# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENTS, CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

*Austrian Higher Education Research Network*

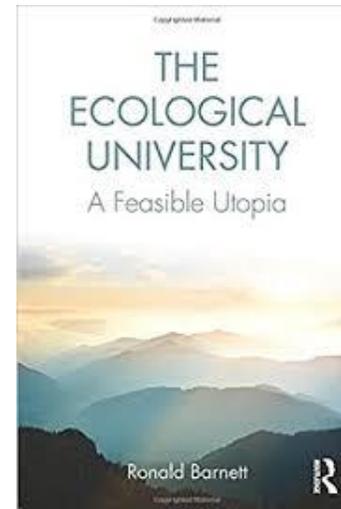
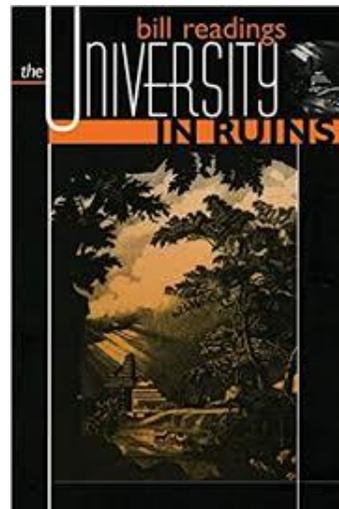
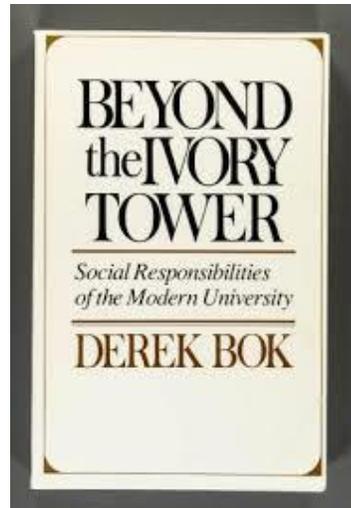
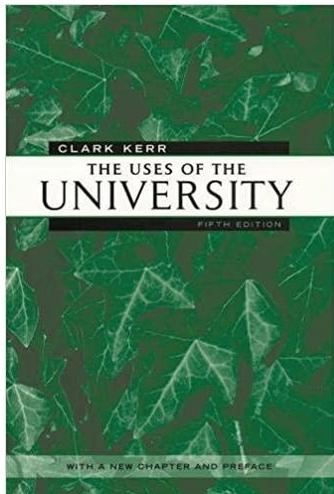
*16 November 2022*

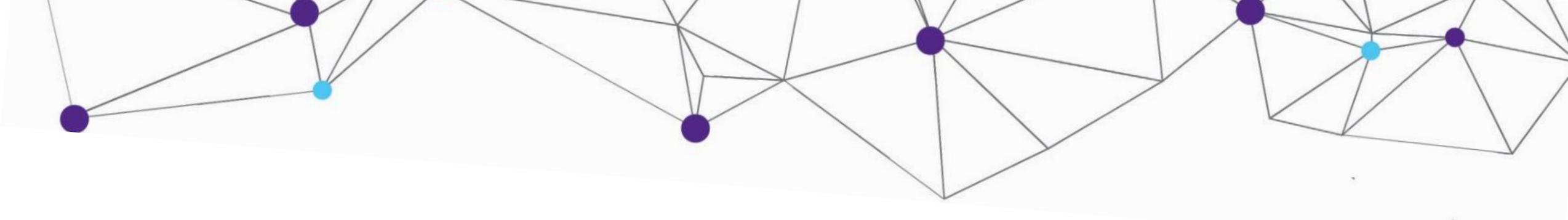
*Thomas Farnell, Higher Education Policy Expert,  
Institute for the Development of Education, Croatia*



# The role of universities in society

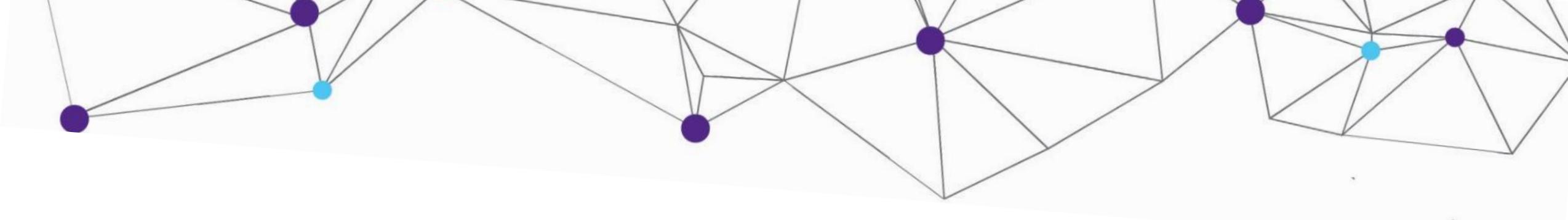
**What are universities for?** The wider role universities should play in modern society (beyond just teaching and research) has been a matter of debate and competing visions since the 1960s





# 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).

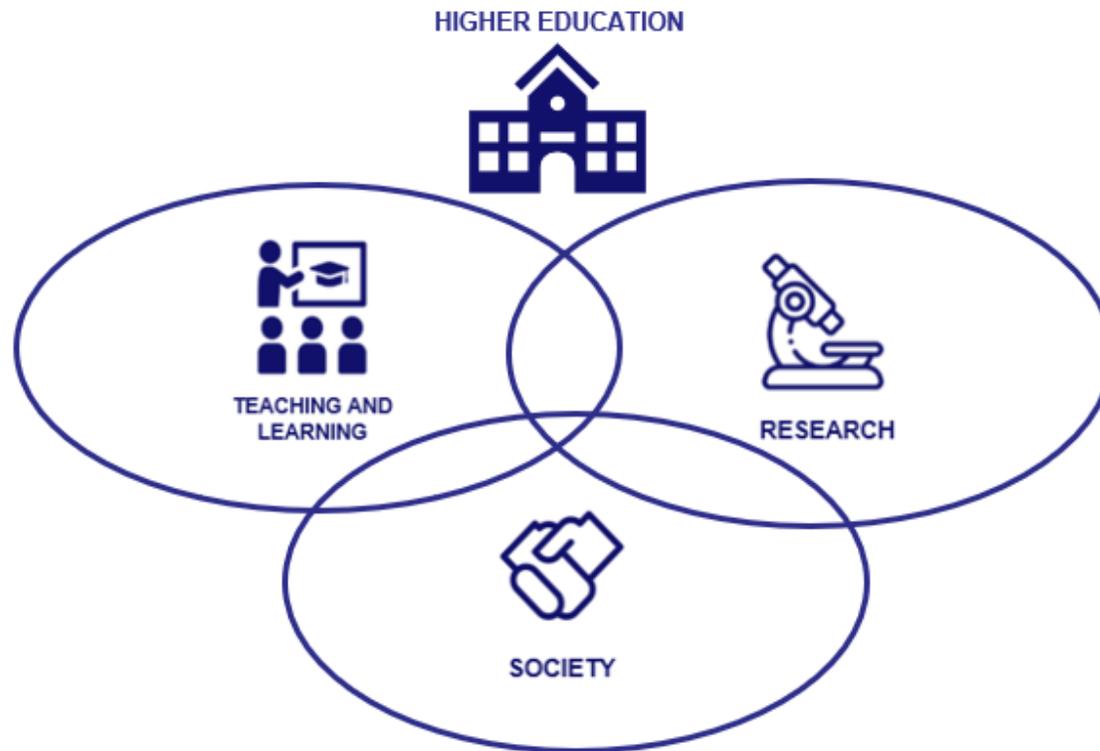


## Impact on vs. engagement with society?

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**’

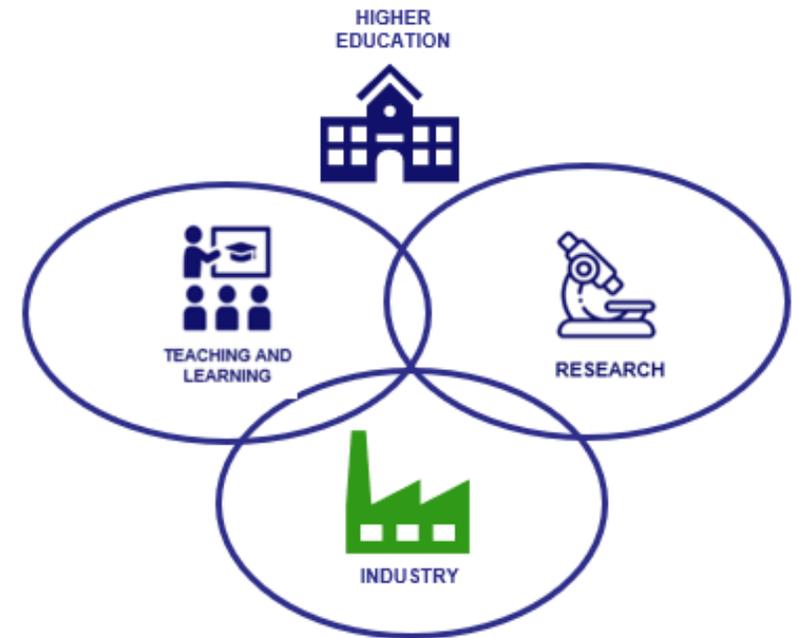
# The 'third mission': of higher education

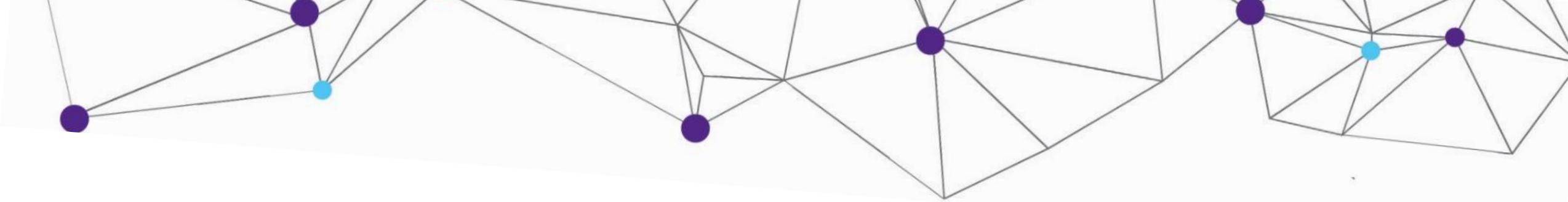


# The third mission in practice

The term has mainly been linked to the economic sphere:

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

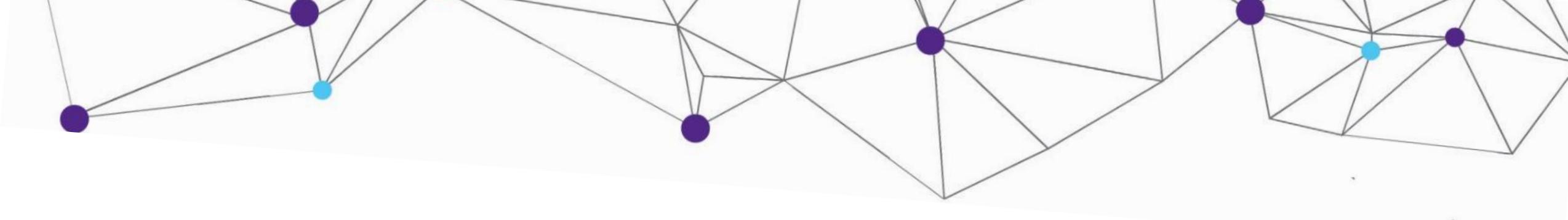




# The third mission: re-balancing the debate

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

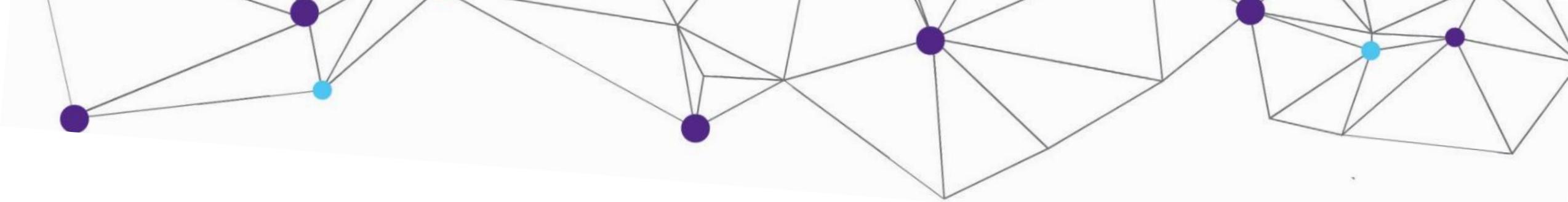


# Community engagement: A definition



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

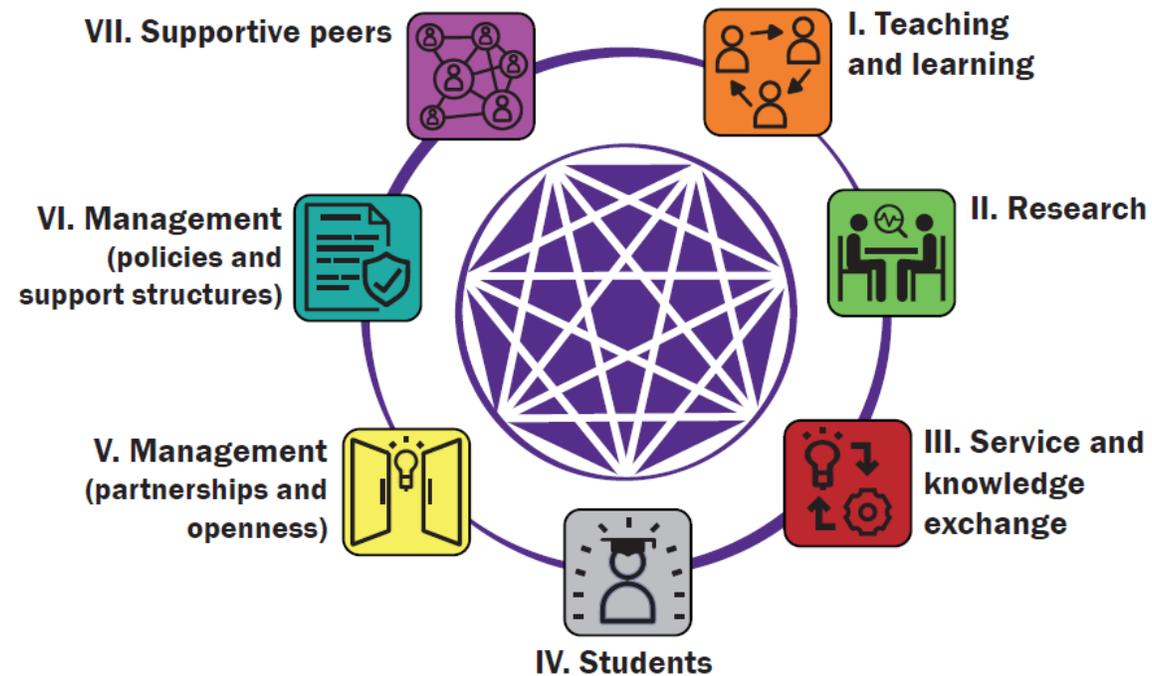


# Other kinds of engagement?

Community and civic engagement  
Regional engagement  
Service  
Knowledge exchange  
Civic mission  
Local mission  
Social responsibility  
Community engagement  
Engagement  
Civic 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.**

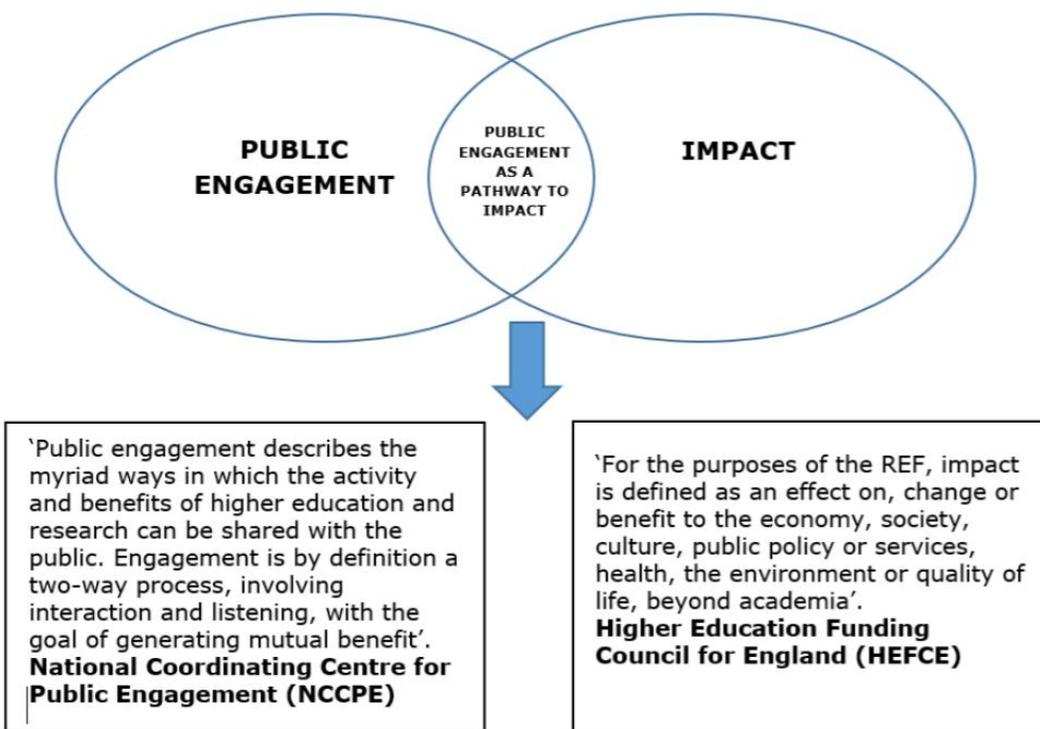


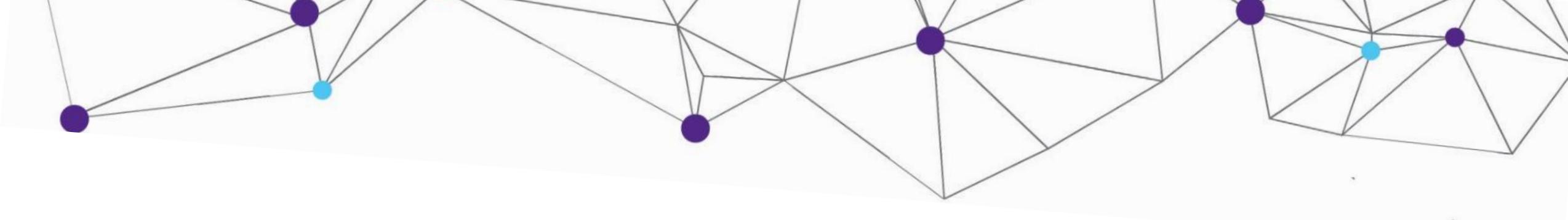
# Dimensions of community engagement

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

# Impact vs engagement

Figure 1: Linking public engagement and research impact<sup>8</sup>



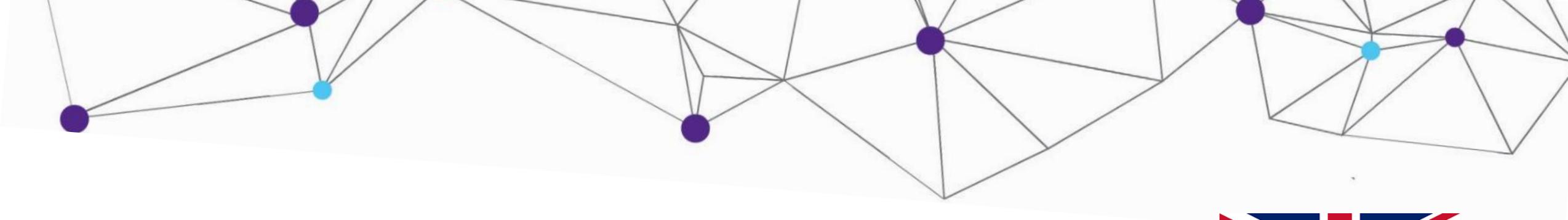


# A re-emerging policy priority?

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;



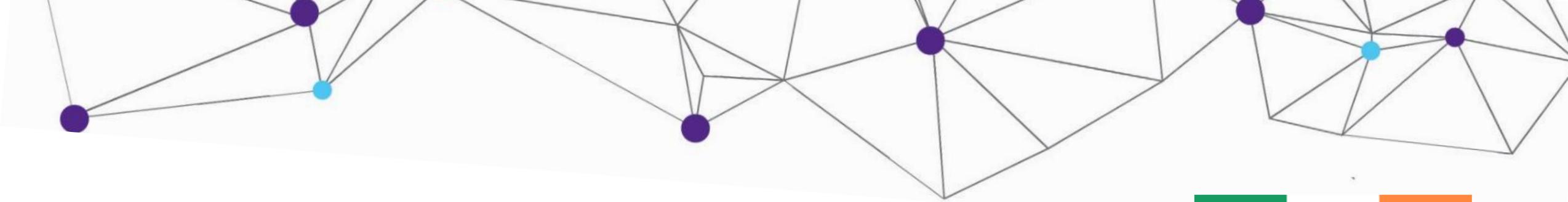


# National initiatives



## UK

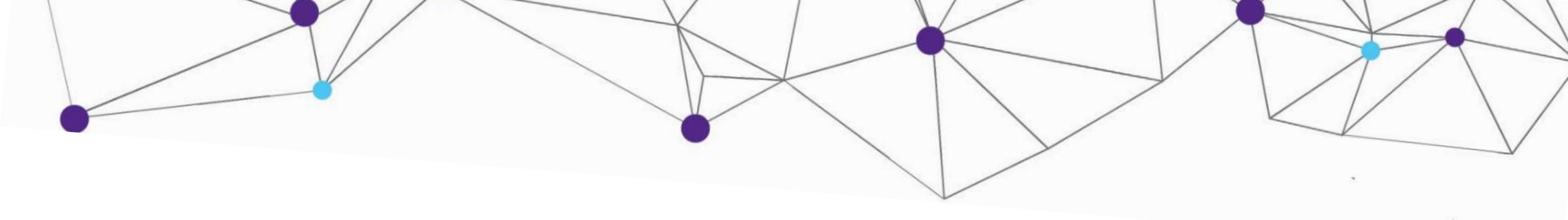
- The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE)
- Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research (Research Councils UK)
- The Research Excellence Framework (REF)
- The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)



# National initiatives

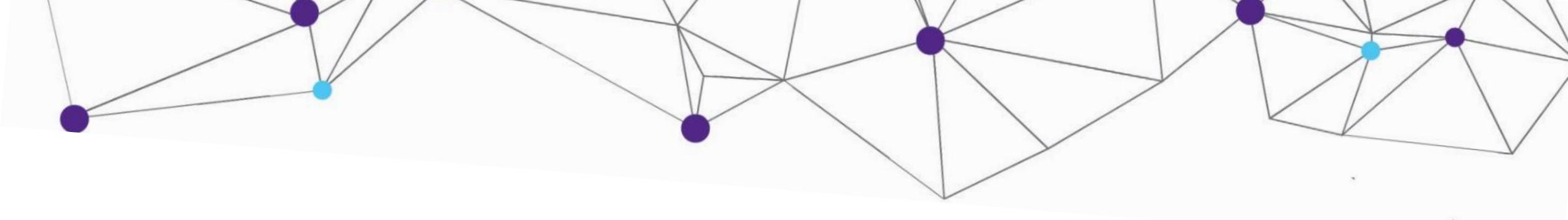
## Ireland

- *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



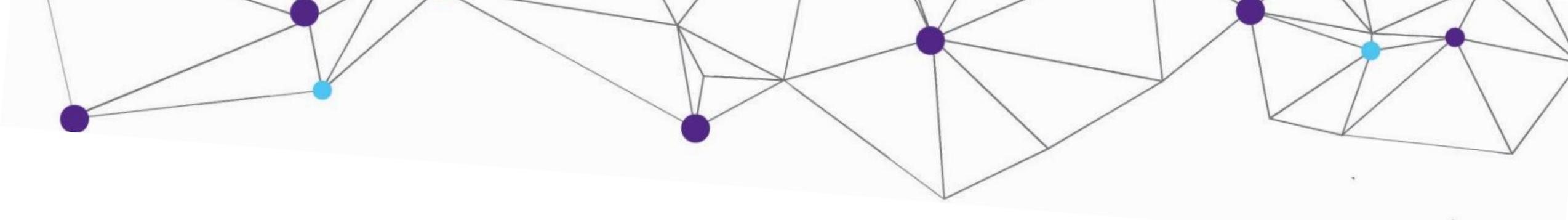
# TEFCE

Towards a European Framework for  
Community Engagement in Higher Education



# SHEFCE

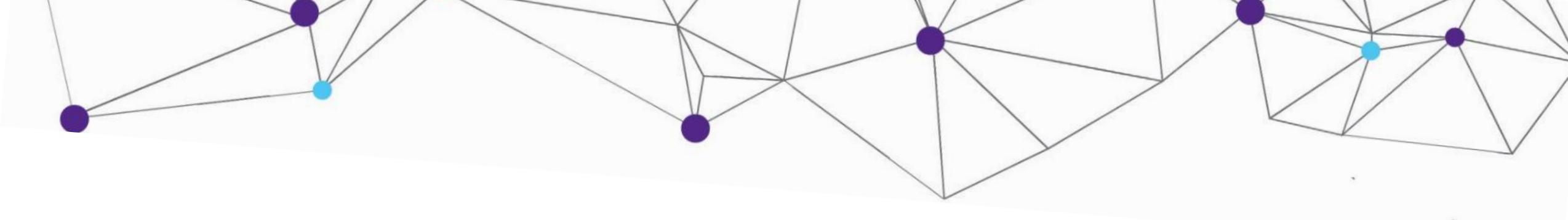
Steering Higher Education for Community Engagement



# Measurement in higher education

## Typical measurement and assessment tools

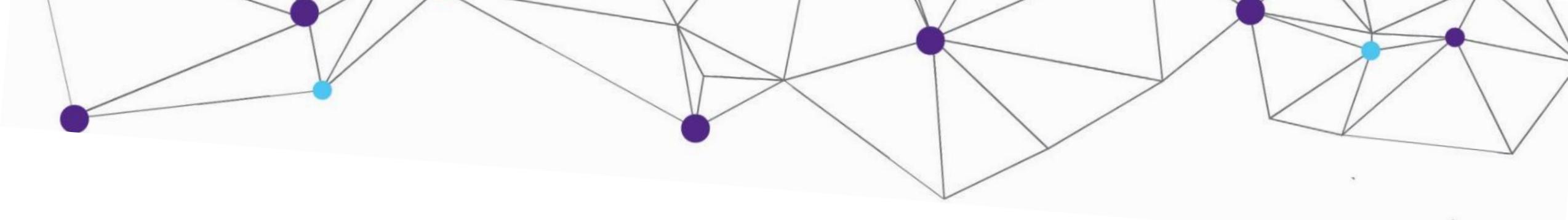




# Measurement in higher education

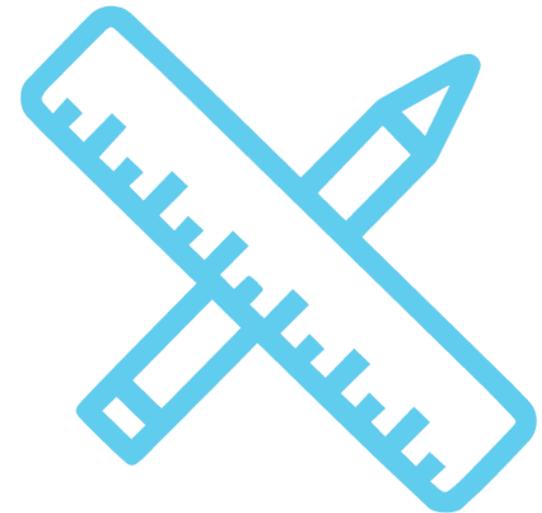
## Typical measurement and assessment tools

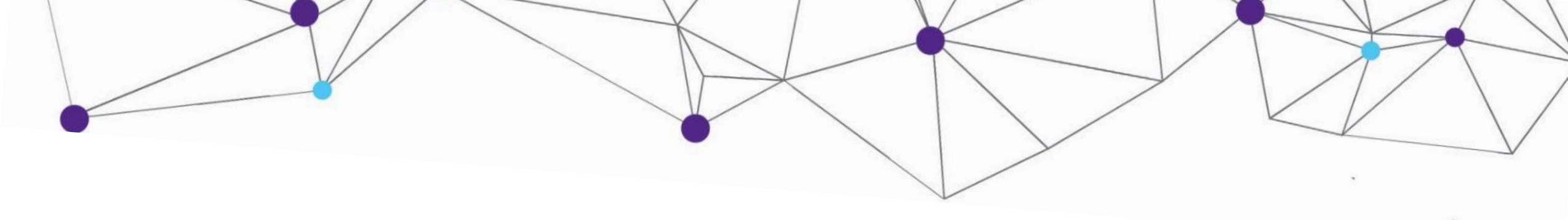




# How to measure community engagement?

- 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.

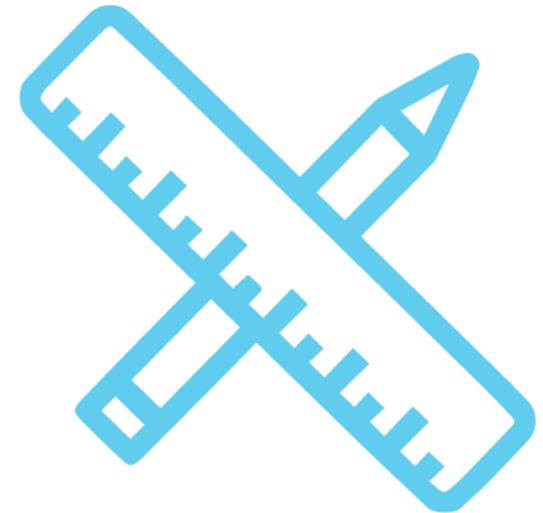


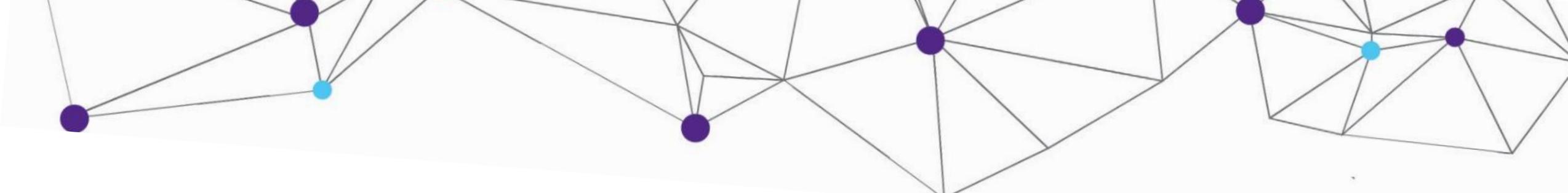


# And why measure community engagement?

- 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



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



2020-2023



# TEFCE / SHEFCE partners



Institute for the  
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TECHNISCHE  
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Center for  
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Policy Studies



OLLSCOIL TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA  
BHÁILE ÁTHA CLIATH  
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UNIVERSITY DUBLIN



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de Girona



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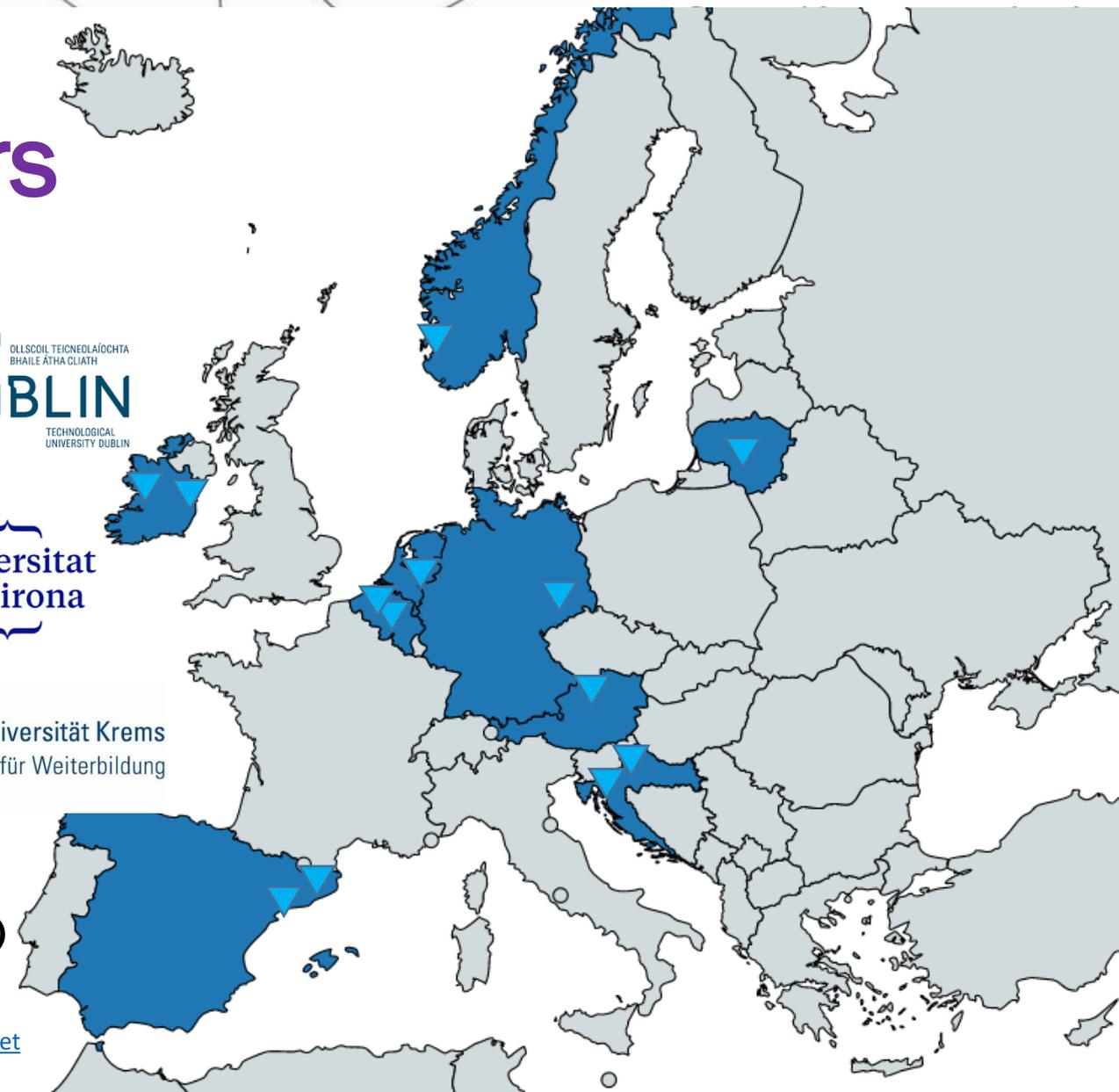


ASSOCIACIÓ  
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making good visible

Map source: [www.mapchart.net](http://www.mapchart.net)



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## LOCAL PARTNERS



# A new framework for community engagement

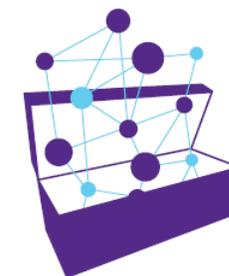
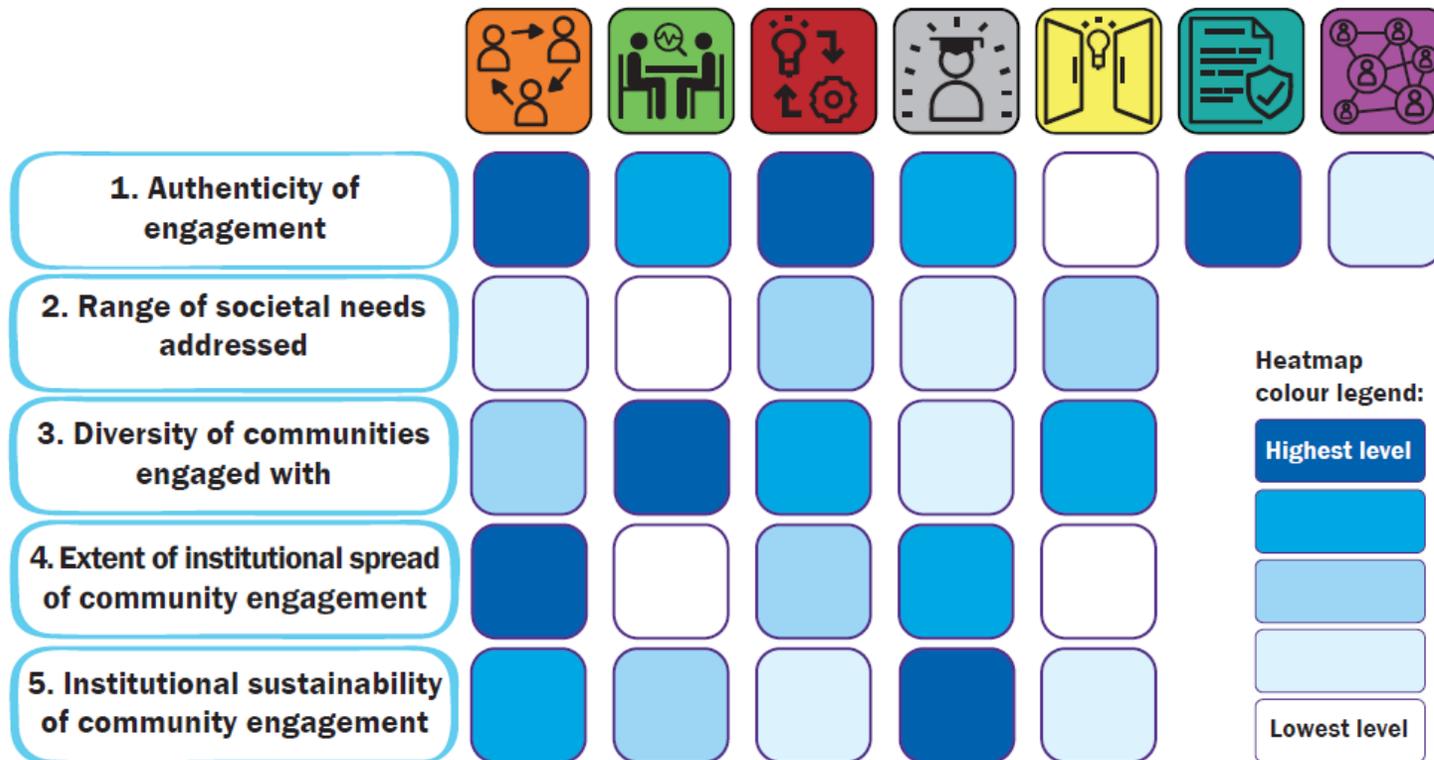


**An Institutional Self-Reflection Framework  
for Community Engagement in Higher Education**

[www.tefce.eu/toolbox](http://www.tefce.eu/toolbox)

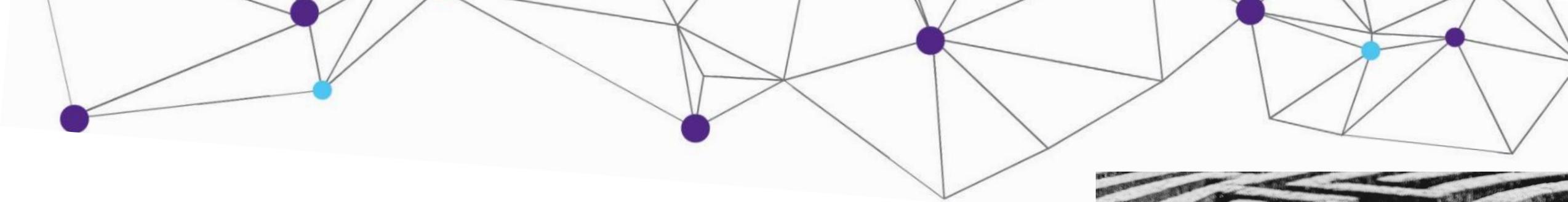
- **Qualitative:** no metrics
- **Multifaceted and context-specific:** no comparison or ranking
- **Participative:** no desk-based checklists
- **Innovative:** inspired by, but going beyond, existing tools

# A new framework for community engagement



**TEFCE**  
**Toolbox**

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

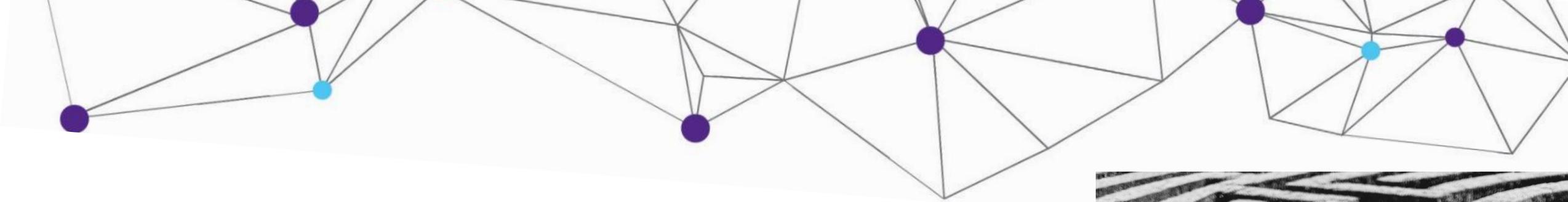


# And yet ... external challenges

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



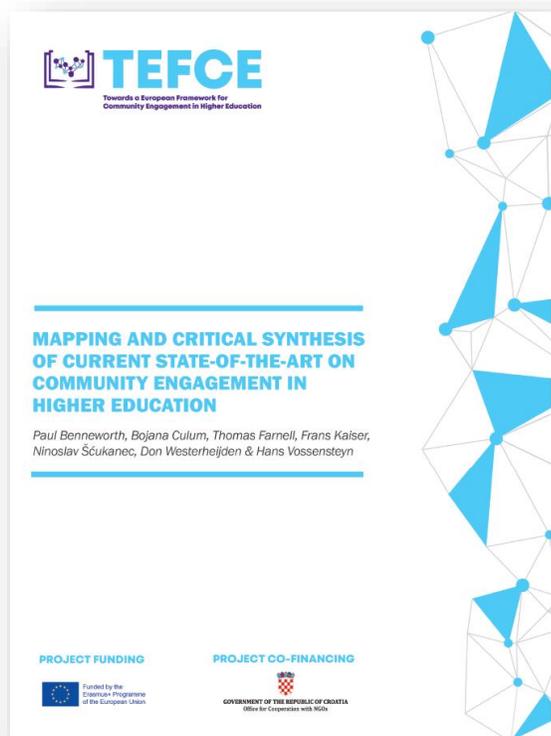
- New initiative: Local Mission of Higher Education



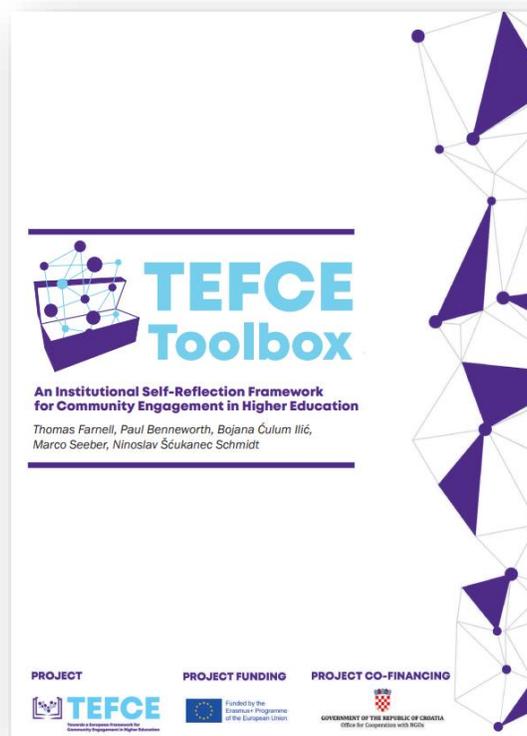
- Civic engagement among top 3 priorities till 2030



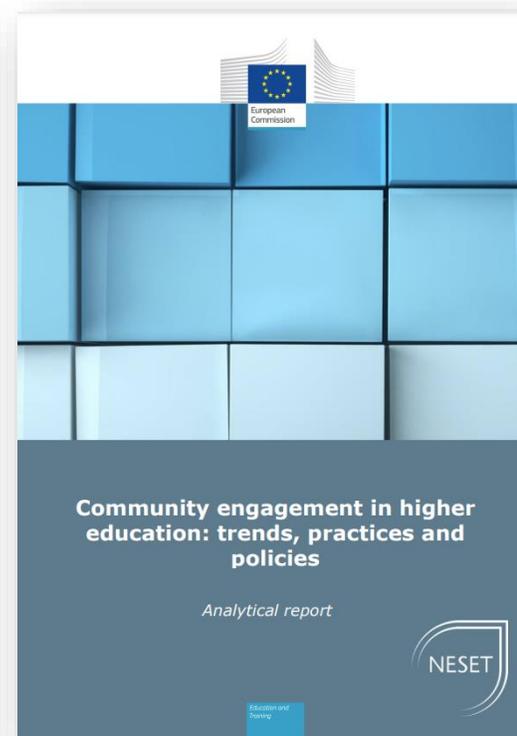
# Further reading



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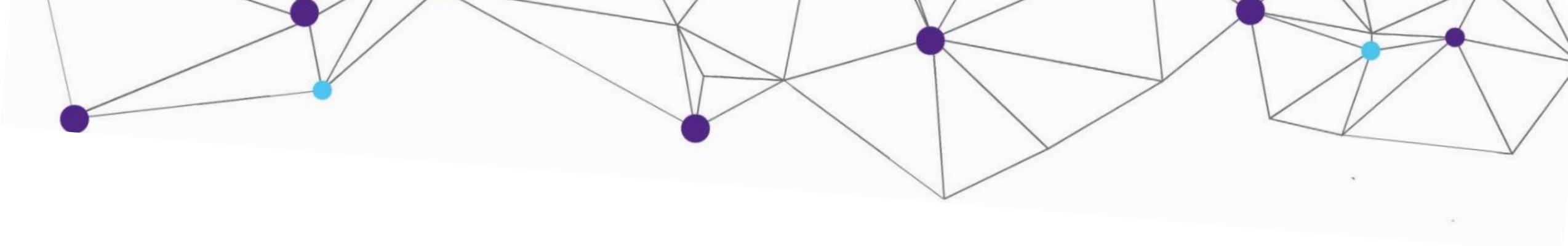


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**Thank you for your attention!**