



Civil Society Organizations and  
Higher Education

Western Balkans  
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## COOPERATION TOOLKIT

on Increasing Access and Supporting Achievement of the  
**Underrepresented**  
**Students** in Higher Education



**STATUS**  
Steering Transition and Advancement of Tertiary Underrepresented Students



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## List of abbreviations used

CESIE	Centro Studi E Iniziative Europeo
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EDI	Equity, diversity and inclusion
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ESL	Early School Leaving
EU	European Union
EUA	European Universities Association
EWS	Early Warning System
GCE	Global Citizenship Education
HEI	Higher Educational Institution
IE	Inclusive Education
MA	Master in Arts
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UAB	University of Alba Iulia
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SWOT	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats diagram
UMa	Universidade da Madeira
WEBIN	Western Balkans Institute

## STATUS FACTSHEET

### Objectives

Focusing the attention on the social dimension of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the STATUS project opens up possibilities for introduction of innovative approaches in education practices needed to level up governance and curriculum delivery, open further access to programmes and resources and equal opportunities for the enrolment and retention of vulnerable students, enhancing their learning relationships and perspectives, and empowering students in general to direct their own learning.

The overall objective is to create a supportive educational environment enhancing the participation of underrepresented students in tertiary education.

#### Specific objectives

- To increase the access of Roma and other underrepresented students in European HEIs;
- To increase academic achievement success rate and prevent Early School Leaving (ESL) in HEIs of Roma and other underrepresented students;
- To contribute to HEIs' more effective and efficient cooperation practices with other relevant local community stakeholders, in particular Civil Society (CS) organisations, leading to increased interest and better targeting of underrepresented students to pursue tertiary education;
- To create and test inclusive education support measures and programmes, exchange of current best approaches and tackling urgent needs.

### Activities

- Mapping of good practices on inclusive learning culture in the higher education as well as of early warning systems (EWS) on dropping out risks in the different partner countries' contexts;
- Training activities for HEIs' teaching and non-teaching staff on increasing access and supporting the academic achievements of underrepresented students;
- Workshops for students on intercultural peer support skills and active inclusion of underrepresented students;
- Developmental workshops in Serbia, Italy, Portugal and Romania for the finalisation and fine-tuning of the project results.

### Resources

- European HEI e-repository of good practices related to socially inclusive learning culture and early warning systems (EWS)
- HEI teaching and non-teaching staff training manual and programme on intercultural competences and development of more inclusive education environments
- CS-HE cooperation toolkit on increasing access and supporting achievement of underrepresented students
- Toolkit on peer support and active inclusion of underrepresented students

- European policy brief/recommendations for improving social dimension of teaching and learning in European HEIs

## Impact

- Innovative education approaches to foster the enrolment and participation of students from underrepresented groups in HE;
- Improved capacity of HEIs in providing both academic and non-academic support to underrepresented students;
- Strengthened CS-HE cooperation in supporting underrepresented students in other socio-economic areas beyond the sector of education, such as for instance the labour market;
- Empowered students, in particular underrepresented ones, in becoming main actors of their learning paths;
- Improved awareness among policy makers on issues related to social inclusion of underrepresented students in HE.

## Partners

- [Visoka strukovna vaspitačka i medicinska škola u Vršcu](#) (Serbia, coordinator)
- [Universitatea 1 Decembrie 1918](#) (Romania)
- [Universidade da Madeira](#) (Portugal)
- [Western Balkans Institute](#) (Serbia)
- [Università degli Studi di Palermo](#) (Italy)
- [CESIE](#) (Italy)

## WHY THIS TOOLKIT?

HEIs across Europe are implementing more and more activities meant to support underrepresented students in their participation in HE programmes. At the same time, numerous CSOs are providing inclusive educational services and programmes for vulnerable groups, assisting better social inclusion of these groups and increasing their employability. Despite the efforts, the cooperation examples are scarce or one encounters very limited examples of cooperation between the CSOs and HEIs in the provision of more inclusive educational contents and culture with wide attainment of the vulnerable groups in different contexts.

If we leave aside student organisations and their activities towards students and universities, and focus on CSOs/NGOs with no statutory connections with universities and students, most of their collaboration activities with HEIs are project-based and donor-driven (in scope, budget and timeline) with challenging sustainability of developed partnership. Key collaboration areas include applied research (field testing of results), exchange of new ideas, concepts, and technologies that increase efficiency and impact of implemented activities/programmes/services; access to data; joint training delivery; capacity building activities. There is limited practical guidance that either NGOs or HEIs can use to develop a model/type of a more long-term partnership.

This Toolkit thus mainly targets CSOs working with vulnerable groups (programmes and provision of services), that could benefit from matching their programmes/services and activities of HEIs towards the underrepresented students. On other hand, the toolkit is meant for HEIs that wish to improve cooperation with the relevant CSOs representing or working on behalf of vulnerable groups with limited access to higher education.

Through exploring the given sets of contexts, the Toolkit marks desired improvements and ways of achieving them. Thus, the Toolkit is planned to encompass a set of materials for both civil society organisations and higher education institutions, recognising the need and opportunity to join efforts in increasing access and supporting achievement of underrepresented students in HE. It is designed to guide and practically assist cooperation development and synergies between HEIs and CSOs with the focus on inclusive educational culture.

Hence, the Toolkit could be used to direct the CSOs to match their services and programmes for vulnerable groups with support activities carried by HEIs towards underrepresented students. From such matching, the CSOs should improve the relevance and impact of their services on the social inclusion of vulnerable groups, while the activities of HEIs should result in increased access of underrepresented students to their programmes and their completion, while also improving competences of teaching and non-teaching staff to work with this population in an inclusive manner. The toolkit is expected also to suggest the instruments for the analysis of needs, potential utilisation of cooperation and synergies, development of cooperation programmes/services, and other relevant sections of interest for CS-HE cooperation.

It is designed in a form of e-publication in English, while selected units are made available in partner languages – Serbian, Italian, Romanian, and Portuguese. The result is a product of team work co-led by WEBIN & CESIE. Each partner carried out a national level and/or topic level research with data sets required for preparation of the Toolkit and as per agreed partners' contributions/roles.

The main aims of the Toolkit are as follows:

- To explore focal CS-HE collaboration areas, including enrolment & assistance during studies and transition from education to employment of underrepresented students;
- To support adult education of HE teaching, non-teaching staff and managing staff, as well as managing and other relevant CSOs staff in provision of programmes and services and increasing their impact on underrepresented students' population;
- To sustain inclusive HE practices and learning cultures;
- To offer meaningful tools supporting a more long-term collaboration among HEIs and NGOs.

The toolkit may further contribute to strengthening CSO-HEI cooperation in supporting underrepresented students in other socio-economic areas beyond the sector of education, such as social protection or at the labour market.

# **PART 1: CSO-HEI COOPERATION VENUES IN ITALY, PORTUGAL, ROMANIA, SERBIA AND EU**

## **1.1 Background – What do we know?**



Diverse modes of mostly short-lived and project-based collaboration activities take place between university faculties and CSOs/NGOs across Europe. In this chapter we discuss most common approaches to collaboration efforts, its principal actors, focal themes and topics covered, core benefits and challenges encountered, universities and CSOs/NGOs views and positions within the collaborative relationship, as well as frequently used terminology associated to these initiatives.

In the context of this Toolkit, CSOs refer mostly to NGO – non-governmental, not for profit, private organisations that may include student organisations, (company) foundations, charitable organisations, and watchdog organisations’, those representing or working on behalf of students and having statutory mission related to HE, or those having no statutory affiliation to students and HE. NGOs are predominantly perceived as organisations whose role is nested in the care for the vulnerable and underrepresented groups in a society, as well as human rights watchdogs. As they represent institutionalised entities of civil society, NGOs are in the position to relatively swiftly and easily form short and/or long-term cooperation initiatives, including of formal type (contractual relationships), with HEIs. Hence, the points of connections between the entities could be seen as infinitive, but precluded by the lack of understanding of the institutional roles and arguably also underrated socio-economic work performed by the NGOs even where the so-called third sector is more developed, i.e. civil society is considered vibrant (Roth, C. & Hohn, B., 2016).

In the US and some European countries (e.g. Germany) the nature around the relations formed between NGOs and Universities is based on the so-called *service-learning* methodology. Wikipedia explains service learning as:

*"An educational approach that combines learning objectives with community service in order to provide a pragmatic, progressive learning experience while meeting societal needs."*

Supporting development of *service learning* holds societal wide value in these partnerships particularly as it:

- connects student theoretic learning with real-world challenges encountered in the specific community (for instance, through placements opportunities);
- enables (future) educators and practitioners to be involved and aware of their communities so they can assist each other and be more conscientious individuals (for instance, through voluntary work performed with particular target group – community beneficiaries).

These two, in fact, could be understood as HEIs - NGOs collaboration main purpose, while they interact in various fields and formats.

Even though from both ends there exist repetitive biases on the possibilities for collaboration and principles of joint work – often based on different approaches and work dynamics and goals, the relevance

of collaboration gains pace in both relevant literature and practice. Tryma, K. (2019)<sup>1</sup> refers to the so-called *non-governmental higher education organisations* reflecting on NGOs whose activities are related to the following:

- provision of access to higher education,
- the organisation of educational services (non-formal and informal education), and
- the quality assurance of higher education.

Even though literature acknowledges the interaction between NGOs and HEIs as an important practical mechanism for research dissemination and impact and overall development of universities and their closeness to the community, reflecting on the needs of citizens and thus forming a genuine *knowledge society*, the roles in partnerships remain puzzling mostly due to the somewhat limited understanding of NGOs evolution in performance over the years.

NGOs core characteristics chart is presented below (Table 1) with some of the most common features associated to their work regardless of countries they come from/operate in.

Normally, some NGOs are larger in size and known for certain field of engagement and/or target groups they work with. They often form collaboration activities with partners including HEIs from outside of their local community and even country. Others are smaller in size and normally form collaborative efforts with local actors which may or may not include universities. Most common partnerships that NGOs form are those with local self-governments for the purpose of ensuring their own sustainability through long-term funding coming from the public sector. On the other side, collaboration actions with universities/faculties tend to come from a place of common interest in the implementation of certain project ideas and are by default of shorter life span that ultimately brings about a temporary change in the targeted sector and/or with the targeted groups of participants and stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> Tryma, K. (2019). Cooperation between Higher Education Institutions and Non-governmental Organizations in Higher Education: International Discourse. *International Scientific Journal of Universities and Leadership*, (8), 102-107. <https://doi.org/10.31874/2520-6702-2019-8-2-102-107>

Key features	Key sectors involved in	Common activities and topics	Funding	Common target groups	Forms of legal establishment
Formally established legal entity	Education, youth and training	Non-formal learning opportunities provision	Membership fees	Children and youth	Associations
Private, non-governmental	Culture and media	Media literacy and freedom; intercultural competences development	Revenues from economic activity	Elderly, senior citizens	Foundations
Self-governing – controlling their own activities	Sports	Promotion of sports and active living; Dissemination and exploitation	Public/state funding	Marginalized citizens – Roma, some children, women...	
Not for profit (amounts generated are not returned to directors/owners)	Social and Health services	Provision of social services to persons in need	Private funding-sponsorships, donations	Policy makers	
Voluntary participation	Environment and nature protection	Policy making, policy control and advocacy	Project-based funding from private and/or public sources	Teachers and non-teaching staff	
	Science and research	Research (particularly participatory); use of findings in project development			
	Religion - churches and faith-based organisations	Charitable activities; humanitarian assistance			
	Economics - Trade associations and professional bodies	Entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial learning			
	Student organisations				

*Table 1: NGOs typical characteristics chart*

One should acknowledge the trend in a number of countries where university teachers join together in establishing their own NGO (association) in the common field/s of interest. This movement normally results in a project partnership creation of transnational character with a number of universities and business entities.

Regardless of the activities they cover and contexts they operate in, NGOs roles in society only got wider since their first appearance in 1960s, going far beyond the initial activities performed in provision of humanitarian assistance as imminent response to human crises. Nowadays, vibrant European civil society and NGOs activities are associated with the foundation of democracy and societal values to be cherished and spread. Naturally, with their growth connected to social roles, their economic significance also widened offering ever more job opportunities connected with different economic sectors. It is widely unknown that, for instance, the gross value added of the non-profit sector measured in Germany back in 2012 (4.1% of total gross value added) was found to be equal to that of the German automobile industry employing 1 in 10 employees in Germany (Roth, C. & Hohn, B., 2016).

In the countries of project partnership, the situation is described by the Universities of Palermo (Italy), University of Madeira (Portugal), University of Alba Iulia (Romania) and Teacher Training College in Vršac (Serbia) as well as by WEBIN and CESIE, Serbian and Italian NGOs (respectively) with a long-standing history of collaboration with HEIs. The geographic context of the involved countries in Southern and South-Eastern Europe implies their exposure to migratory patterns towards Europe whereby migrants from outside Europe and Roma travellers are perceived as groups demanding specific attention including with respect to further and tertiary education.

### 1.1.1 Common collaboration access points – the *triggers*

Most commonly reported access points for the initiation of collaboration takes place on the basis of:

- valid legal acts,
- available databases (of NGOs or Universities),
- memberships in common networks, or
- Intermediary institutions.

Legal base Europe wide access points are provided through:

1. Commission Communication on a European Strategy for Universities<sup>2</sup>
2. Proposal for a Council Recommendation on Building Bridges for Effective European Higher Education Cooperation<sup>3</sup>
3. Rome Ministerial Communique<sup>4</sup>

In accordance with the European Strategy for Universities, important future triggers for collaboration between HEIs and NGOs could be the goals set to assist universities across Europe to:

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<sup>2</sup> <https://education.ec.europa.eu/document/commission-communication-on-a-european-strategy-for-universities>

<sup>3</sup> <https://education.ec.europa.eu/document/proposal-for-a-council-recommendation-on-building-bridges-for-effective-european-higher-education-cooperation>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ehea.info/Upload/Rome\\_Ministerial\\_Communique.pdf](https://www.ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique.pdf)

- **Foster diversity, inclusiveness and gender equality** through identifying challenges and solutions for universities, and the needed support in obtaining more students and teachers of various backgrounds and from diverse communities; address the underrepresentation of women, particularly in STEM fields; and obtaining support for researchers at risk (researchers, scholars, scientists at all stages of their research careers, who are experiencing threats to their life, liberty, or safety) to facilitate their inclusion at universities; ensuring access to higher education of refugees and individuals seeking asylum, and
- **Promote and protect European democratic values** through integrating academic freedom and integrity; creating new opportunities to foster academic debates and exchange of best practices on values and democracy; protecting fundamental academic values, based on the Rome Communiqué; provide support for implementing the guidelines on foreign interference in research and innovation.

Further, the Rome Ministerial Communiqué (2020) stipulates inclusive EHEA as a precondition for building the future of tertiary education in Europe whereby specific 10 Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA are developed under Annex II to the Rome Ministerial Communiqué as presented in the table below:<sup>5</sup>

<b>Principles</b>	<b>Guidelines</b>
<p>1. <i>The social dimension should be central to higher education strategies at system and institutional level, as well as at the EHEA and the EU level</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic commitment to the social dimension of higher education should be aligned with concrete targets that can either be integrated within existing higher education policies or developed in parallel. These targets should aim at widening access, supporting participation in and completion of studies for all current and future students</li> <li>• In the process of creating strategies there should be a broad-based dialogue between public authorities, higher education institutions, student and staff representatives and other key stakeholders, including social partners, non-governmental organisations and people from vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups. This broad-based dialogue is to ensure the creation of inclusive higher education strategies that foster equity and diversity, and are responsive to the needs of the wider community</li> </ul>
<p>2. <i>Legal regulations or policy documents should allow and enable higher education institutions to develop their own strategies to fulfil their public responsibility towards widening access to, participation in and completion of higher education studies</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal regulations and administrative rules should allow sufficient flexibility in the design, organisation and delivery of study programmes to reflect the diversity of students' needs. Higher education institutions should be enabled to organise full-time and part-time studies, flexible study modes, blended and distance learning as well as to recognise prior learning (RPL), in order to accommodate the needs of the diverse student population</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> [https://ehea.info/Upload/Rome\\_Ministerial\\_Communique\\_Annex\\_II.pdf](https://ehea.info/Upload/Rome_Ministerial_Communique_Annex_II.pdf)

3. *The inclusiveness of the entire education system should be improved by developing coherent policies from early childhood education, through schooling to higher education and throughout lifelong learning*

- Public authorities should promote recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning (RPL) in higher education, because it has a positive impact on widening access, transition and completion, equity and inclusion, mobility and employability. RPL enables flexible modes of lifelong learning in the entire education sector, including higher education. Implementing RPL will require effective cooperation amongst the higher education system, employers and the wider community to enable these national qualifications frameworks to facilitate transparent recognition of learning outcomes and reliable quality assurance procedures.

4. *Reliable data is a necessary precondition for an evidence-based improvement of the social dimension of higher education. Higher education systems should define the purpose and goals of collecting certain types of data, taking into account the particularities of the national legal frameworks. Adequate capacities to collect, process and use such data to inform and support the social dimension of higher education should be developed.*

- It is important to create synergies with all education levels and related policy areas (such as finance, employment, health and social welfare, housing, migration etc.) in order to develop policy measures that create an inclusive environment throughout the entire education sector that fosters equity, diversity, and inclusion, and is responsive to the needs of the wider community
- The social dimension policies should not only support current students, but also potential students in their preparation and transition into higher education. Participation in higher education has to be a lifelong option, including for adults who decide to return to or enter higher education at later stages in their lives. An inclusive approach needs to involve wider communities, higher education institutions and other stakeholder groups to co-create pathways to higher education.
- Equity, diversity and inclusion should play a key role in the training of pre-higher education teachers.
- In order to develop effective policies, continuous national data collection is necessary. Within the limits of national legal frameworks, such data collection should provide information on the composition of the student body, access and participation, drop-out and completion of higher education, including the transition to the labour market after completion of studies, and allow for the identification of vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups
- In order to make such data collection comparable internationally, work on categories for administrative data collection that are relevant for the social dimension should be developed at the EHEA level through Euro-student or similar surveys. With the aim to rationalise the process and avoid administrative burden on public administration and higher education institutions, this development should take account of existing national practices and relevant data collection processes
- Such national data collection exercises could, where relevant and necessary, be complemented by higher education institutions undertaking additional surveys, research and analysis to better understand vulnerability,

5. *Public authorities should have policies that enable higher education institutions to ensure effective counselling and guidance for potential and enrolled students in order to widen their access to, participation in and completion of higher education studies. These services should be coherent across the entire education system, with special regard to transitions between different educational levels, educational institutions and into the labour market*

6. *Public authorities should provide sufficient and sustainable funding and financial autonomy to higher education institutions enabling them to build adequate capacity to embrace diversity and contribute to equity and inclusion in higher education*

7. *Public authorities should help higher education institutions to strengthen their capacity to respond to the needs of a more diverse student and staff body*

disadvantages, and underrepresentation in education, as well as transitions of students across the education system

- Public authorities should create conditions that enable collaboration between different public institutions that provide counselling and guidance services together with higher education institutions in order to create synergies and omit duplication of similar services. These services should uphold the principles of clarity and user-friendliness, because end users must be capable of understanding them easily
- Within a diverse student body, special attention should be directed towards students with physical and psychological health challenges. These students should have access to professional support to secure their success in accessing and completing higher education studies. Special focus should be placed on prevention of psychological challenges caused by the organisation of study and students' living conditions
- Public authorities should also consider setting up ombudsperson-type institutions that will have the capacity and knowledge to mediate any conflicts, particularly related to equity issues that may arise during accessing or participating in higher education, or conflicts that hinder the completion of studies

- Higher education funding systems should facilitate the attainment of strategic objectives related to the social dimension of higher education. Higher education institutions should be supported and rewarded for meeting agreed targets in widening access, increasing participation in and completion of higher education studies, in particular in relation to vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups. Mechanisms for achieving these targets should not have negative financial consequences for higher education institutions' core funding.
- Financial support systems should aim to be universally applicable to all students, however, when this is not possible, the public student financial support systems should be primarily needs-based and should make higher education affordable for all students, foster access to and provide opportunities for success in higher education. They should mainly contribute to cover both the direct costs of study (fees and study materials) and the indirect costs (e.g. accommodation, which is becoming increasingly problematic for students across the EHEA due to the increased housing, living, and transportation costs, etc.)

- Public authorities should support and provide adequate means to higher education institutions to improve initial and continuing professional training for academic and administrative staff to enable them to work professionally and equitably with a diverse student body and staff.

*and create inclusive learning environments and inclusive institutional cultures*

8. *International mobility programmes in higher education should be structured and implemented in a way that foster diversity, equity and inclusion and should particularly foster participation of students and staff from vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented backgrounds*

9. *Higher education institutions should ensure that community engagement in higher education promotes diversity, equity and inclusion*

10. *Public authorities should engage in a policy dialogue with higher education institutions and other relevant stakeholders about*

- Whenever possible, external quality assurance systems should address how the social dimension, diversity, accessibility, equity and inclusion are reflected within the institutional missions of higher education institutions, whilst respecting the principle of autonomy of higher education institutions.

- International experiences through learning mobility improve the quality of learning outcomes in higher education. Public authorities and higher education institutions should ensure equal access for all to the learning opportunities offered by national and international learning and training mobility programmes and actively address obstacles to mobility for vulnerable, disadvantaged or underrepresented groups of students and staff.
- Besides further support to physical mobility, including full portability of grants and loans across the EHEA, public authorities and higher education institutions should facilitate the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to support blended mobility and to foster internationalisation at home by embedding international online cooperation into courses. Blended mobility is the combination of a period of physical mobility and a period of online learning. Such online cooperation can be used to extend the learning outcomes and enhance the impact of physical mobility, for example by bringing together a more diverse group of participants, or to offer a broader range of mobility options

- Community engagement should be considered as a process whereby higher education institutions engage with external community stakeholders to undertake joint activities that can be mutually beneficial. Like social dimension policies, community engagement should be embedded in core missions of higher education. It should engage with teaching and learning, research, service and knowledge exchange, students and staff and management of higher education institutions. Such engagement provides a holistic basis on which universities can address a broad range of societal needs, including those of vulnerable, disadvantaged and underrepresented groups, while enriching their teaching, research and other core functions.
- Community stakeholders (e.g. local authorities, cultural organisations, non-governmental organisations, businesses, citizens) should be able to meaningfully engage with higher education actors through open dialogue. This will enable genuine university-community partnerships, which can effectively address social and democratic challenges.

- Such policy dialogue should allow to develop fit for purpose policy measures, which should respect institutional autonomy, avoid any unnecessary administrative burden, and thus enable concrete progress

*how the above principles and guidelines can be translated and implemented both at national system and institutional level*

towards diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education.

- Within the scope of the above principles and guidelines, peer support and exchange of good practices are crucial among EHEA countries in order to facilitate progress towards the inclusiveness of higher education systems.

*Table 2: Annex II to the Rome Ministerial Communiqué Principles and Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the EHEA*

Another access point for initiating collaboration with relevant NGOs are seen through databases tracking their work on a national level. In Romania, a number of NGOs are identified by the *1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia* as those working to support the underrepresented groups.

Membership in common networks offers possibilities for frequent exchange of opinions, practices, data and ideas among persons and representatives holding similar interests, and often leading to innovative joint projects including in both research and development.

Intermediary institutions – normally schools or other universities and NGOs may initiate partnership between CSOs and HEIs with more strategic goals upholding to: local sustainable development, testing of new approaches in teaching and learning, advocacy initiatives towards local/national/transnational government, etc.

On the national/local level, **in Romania**, one of the dominant access points for collaboration between HEIs and CSOs is the existing national legal framework that promotes the cooperation between civil society and higher education institutions, mainly aligned with international and European legislation. This topic is particularly of interest in Romania, since according to Eurostat data all targets assumed through Europe Strategy 2020 have not been attained<sup>6</sup>. On the institutional level, 2 documents draw particular attention to inclusive education of underrepresented groups: Strategy on social equity development in 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia for 2021-2024<sup>7</sup>, and Measurement Plan in the Field of Social Equity for 2022.<sup>8</sup> At UAB, in accordance with the Law of National Education 1/2011 and the provisions of the UAB Charter, there is a specific body - *Honorary Senate* that carries out the objective of integrating the university within the local and regional socio-economic, cultural and sports environment. It comprises prestigious personalities of the local, national and international economic, social and cultural life, company and NGO's managers, public administration leaders. These persons have an active role in promoting the identity and image of the university, in supporting the university morally, administratively and economically. They are those who mainly come up with proposals for various cooperation initiatives. Likewise, at the faculty level, there is an active interest in

<sup>6</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/9751510/3-26042019-AP-EN.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> [https://www.uab.ro/media/documente/09\\_Strategie\\_echitate\\_2021-2024\\_30.03.2021.pdf](https://www.uab.ro/media/documente/09_Strategie_echitate_2021-2024_30.03.2021.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.uab.ro/media/documente/07\\_Plan\\_Masuri\\_Echitate\\_2022\\_hp86D8D.pdf](https://www.uab.ro/media/documente/07_Plan_Masuri_Echitate_2022_hp86D8D.pdf)

establishing partnerships with various companies, NGOs and public institutions for educational, research, cultural and professional undertakings.

**In Italy**, over a decade ago, the university system adopted a structural strategy, named Third Mission, to plan and implement cooperation activities with civil society and the local community as a whole. As the Italian National University Evaluation Agency (ANVUR) puts it, the Third Mission consists of a "set of activities with which universities enter into direct interaction with society, flanking the traditional missions of higher education and research. With the Third Mission, universities come into direct contact with subjects and social groups other than the established ones and thus make themselves available to modes of interaction whose content and form vary greatly and depend on the context." (ANVUR, 2014, p. 559)

Among the areas of intervention included in the Third Mission some are particularly relevant for the STATUS project. These are usually defined as Public Engagement activities like:

- Organisation of cultural activities for public benefit;
- Dissemination of scientific findings;
- Initiatives to involve citizens in research;
- Activities to involve schools;
- Production of public goods for social & educational needs and policies for active social inclusion;
- Activities related to the UN 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Third Mission has been developed within two other larger initiatives, one at the European level and the other at a national one.

The first initiative supporting the cooperation between civil society organisations and higher education institutions is the EU Action Plan on the Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027. This Plan outlines the pivotal importance of creating strong synergies with the local, national, and European key actors to promote the inclusion of migrant people and active participation of Roma communities, in all the stages of the integration process.

The second initiative is the National Strategy on Global Citizenship Education (GCE), approved in 2018. The GCE Strategy stresses out the need for a structured dialogue between institutions, the civil society, schools, universities, media, the world of labour and business, which are all the protagonists in the educational process of exchange, reflection, socialisation, and planning. According to the GCE Strategy, the involvement of civil society organisations would be functional to training and upskilling the educational staff, encouraging the effective transformation of schools into places of the community, engaging with families, strengthening peer education between students of local and migrant backgrounds, and valuing the identity of people in multicultural environments. In such context, the GCE Strategy has inspired the following actions:

- The foundation of an operational committee representative of the Ministry of Education (MIR), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAECI), and Ministry of Environment and Energy Security (MATTEM), and of the actors that have contributed to the drafting of the National

Strategy, such as the National Youth Agency (ANG) and Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI).

- The establishment of a GCE Working Committee so as to develop a national action plan for the implementation of the Strategy, to encourage a coordination of the actors involved in the Strategy and to promote opportunities of dialogue and operational collaborations.
- The development of a National Action Plan, aimed to tailor the specificities of each local community, the opportunities that can be seized, and the local actions plans to be developed accordingly. The National Action Plan comprises a reference repository, an annual monitoring and reporting plan, active participation in international network about this topic (the Global Education Network Europe, and Sustainable Development Goals), and a dialogue with the research sectors (i.e., the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction and the European Energy Research Alliance) for appropriate evaluation strategies.
- The local plans for the implementation of the national strategy include mapping and integration of training activities for training, teachers, and educators. It is also relevant to highlight that regions, autonomous provinces, and cities can develop multi-year planning documents in line with their own regional laws (international solidarity, peace, development cooperation, education, public procurement). Furthermore, through a trans-sectorial approach the regions and the local authorities are given the opportunity to coordinate the local actors involved in the process.

However, despite this quite articulated series of actions, schools are the main focus. Little and in most cases quite general attention has been dedicated to the cooperation between civil society and higher education institutions. In addition, the National Integration Plan focuses more on the integration of migrant and refugee people in primary and secondary schools and the perspectives of labour-market choices and needs, rather than HEs, and those students who wish to continue their studies.

As for the Third Mission, given the autonomous nature of the university governance, activities are usually quite diversified from one university to the other. While this can be seen as a richness as it implies that specific, context-bound needs are taken into account, activities run the risk of being too diversified, temporary, fragmentary, overlapping, if not contradictory. A more centralized and unitary approach might help removing these threats.

### **1.1.2 Common modes of collaboration**

Even though the collaboration triggers exist and are ever more relevant to the future of the European university level education, in practice the collaboration modes remain limited to several traditional and some new collaboration venues between NGOs and HEIs supporting inter-alia social inclusion and underrepresented students in HE. These include:

- Formation of specific university level bodies/structures

Forming and equipping of specific university bodies/units/structures such as centre of innovation and cooperation (including the socio-economic environment) that organises various events and

projects of cooperation with various local, national and international partners. These bodies normally offer specialized internships for students at BA, MA, PhD level, along with research projects, for – but mostly with profit based entities; conducts development of professional and transversal competences needed on the job market and formally supports this process by organising training programmes through innovative company-based internships, coupled with a professional and vocational counselling programme for BA and MA students in order to enhance their job insertion chances, in the process of transition from university to active employment.

- University students' unions – associations

University students' unions, i.e. usually alliances of current and alumni students form a traditional collaboration point for increasing social dimension of HE through their community related work including in advocacy for better position and standards of (groups) students, supporting gender equality, students' health and environmental conditions and other social aspects of inclusive educational practices.

- Citizens science

Citizens' science gains pace in the last few years as a new format for bringing scientific knowledge closer to citizens through their direct involvement in data collection processes – popularly known as science for the people and by the people. The citizens are often associated in NGOs which partake actively in this movement across the European countries as evidence through knowledge promotion platforms such as EU-Citizen Science<sup>9</sup>. Lead researchers/scientists this way get more and not easy to obtain data (e.g. Roma settlements figures through engagement of local NGOs mediators holding trustful relations with settlement chiefs). In addition, extreme citizen science gives a voice to the marginalised in remote communities.

- University – third sector networks

Even though networking was until recent times traditionally reserved for the NGOs, being considered as a common collaboration mechanism, with Horizon Europe supported actions for research, innovation and cooperation, networking among EU universities has been gaining pace across the continent and beyond since 2020. This flagship initiative called European University Alliances stems from the newly approved European Strategy for Universities and aims at forging 60 alliances with participation of 500 European HEIs by mid-2024. The initiative goes beyond structured collaboration point among HEIs connected (including research universities, university colleges, universities of applied sciences, universities of technology, universities of arts) to also include non-academic partners from the private sector - SMEs and start-ups but additionally also from the local, regional and national public authorities and civil society (NGOs). Through inclusion of NGOs, the social dimension and role of HE becomes increasingly transformed, addressing real societal challenges including enabling quality education for all, while at the same time promoting European values in different regions of the world.

The map of current European universities alliances indicates that different European countries take part in the alliances with a number of HEIs and their partners but with high discrepancies in

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<sup>9</sup> <https://eu-citizen.science/>

the number of involved institutions. For instance, in Portugal 20 HEIs are partaking in the initiative (the UM is currently not participating).

In Italy 36 HEIs take part in the alliances, among which the University of Palermo participates in the alliance called *Fostering Outreach within European Regions, Transnational Higher Education and Mobility* – FORTHEM. One of the Alliance defined missions is called *Service to Society* under which students get in touch with NGOs, schools, companies, start-ups, social and cultural associations, and citizens of all ages, widening their local experiences in relevant areas. Through Diversity and Migration Lab participatory and pluralistic approach, students and staff get involved in NGOs work on the ground, analysing newly arrived populations concerns. In Romania, currently 17 HEIs partake in the European alliances (UAB does not form part of any of these). In Serbia only 3 HEIs are partaking in the alliances (VSVR is not yet involved).

As the process of forging alliances is ongoing, no evaluation of impact is available in so far. Impact and sustainability in collaboration would be interesting to measure, given that it seems that partnerships forged are result of important shift in donor (EU Commission) priorities to uphold to current twin transition concept (assisting environmental and digital transitions across the globe through further strengthening EU HEIs research and innovation capacities).

- Erasmus traineeships and partnerships (KA2 – Cooperation Partnerships, CBHE, Forward looking projects etc.)

Students' access to Erasmus+-funded internships and other internships, and signing of inter-institutional agreements with other HEI's and non-academic sector institutions from various EU and non-EU countries is an important part of underrepresented and general students' population and intercultural competences building. Most universities have at an institutional level a procedure for establishing national and international partnerships which aim at setting the ways in which to properly identify relevant public/private partners as well as formalising partnership/cooperation agreements for traineeships can be efficiently organised in order to ensure a functional internship system.

Placements and virtual internships with NGOs offer important stepping stones in career for young undergraduates of all background. They are offered a chance to work on a variety of issues and causes – from bioethics to complex international security issues.

- Joint (international) degrees development and implementation

In rapidly changing global environments, European universities (especially the applied ones) seek to amplify the relevance of educational services provision also through actively working with NGOs in development and implementation of joint degree programmes on both Bachelor and Master levels.

Dual (practice-integrated) Bachelor's degree interdisciplinary programmes are raising attention and some may include NGO management activities conducted through preparatory training in NGO (4 weeks) and internship phase in NGO (16 weeks).

### 1.1.3 Duration and funding of collaboration partnerships

Most dominant source of funding of collaborative partnerships existing between NGOs and HEIs is Erasmus+ Programme for education, training, youth and sport, particularly through KA2 action and several sub-actions offering short term, 2-3 years intensive joint work of common areas of interest for universities and NGOs in Europe and worldwide.

Recently (2020) introduced funding under Horizon Europe programme and European University Alliances flagship initiative supports a more structured and possibly long-term, common mission-based partnerships among HEIs, civic organisations, businesses and policy institutions.

### 1.1.4 Benefits of working together

One of the often-stated benefits of joint work is defined as promotion of lifelong learning opportunities and citizenship education (WANGO, 2008) which are often found in mission statements of both entities. Nevertheless, social inclusion and diversity are given different attention within citizenship education among European countries. Moreover, (social) inclusion in education is a somewhat better led process in schools (lower educational levels) compared to HEIs. As a result, and especially in the aftermath of COVID19, inclusion in HE has been even more difficult to obtain leaving students from disadvantaged and marginalised backgrounds to struggle to participate and succeed in higher education (EUA, 2021).

Optimization of the learning outcomes of students is of primary relevance to HEIs. The UAB identifies mutual benefits of this collaboration for both students and the institution that enrolled them, as well as for the companies/NGOs that provide the internships. As far as students are concerned, the benefit from hands-on experience, as well as real-life application of their theoretical knowledge, which is much appreciated when looking for a job later on. Their newly acquired competences ensure better employability in the future. Moreover, the social skills gained contribute to the development of a social and professional network that will boost their success on the job market. The internships partners will create an active branding for young graduates, who will be interested in finding a job with an entity that is proactive and values young talent. It is also a great opportunity to actually discover future reliable employees who can be trained from scratch.

WEBIN particularly acknowledges the work with HE students through NGOs introduced learning formats such as hackathons in increasing students' motivation on one hand, while getting fresh solutions to community issues and pressing needs being tackled.

The case for HEIs and NGOs collaboration partnerships could be seen as very strong. Yet, strategic, long-term and thematically focused partnerships between HEIs and NGOs remain rare in the observed European south contexts despite increased venues for collaboration emerged in recent years, especially in terms of digital opportunities and virtual learning settings. Most of these efforts defined as one off project-based collaborations having made only limited strategic investment into achieving transformational goals. A vast space for ideas exchange and realization across local communities, national and international development thus remain untapped, while academics and activists' relations remain confusing and often frustrating. Often the relationship is forged between the parties around evidence production and its use. However, a recent report

(Shucksmith, 2016)<sup>10</sup> indicates that in fact evidence from university research even though the most trusted (always or usually trusted by 68% of respondents), is one of the least-used sources of evidence (frequently used by only 35% of respondents). Instead, evidence is collected from the internet and the media, even though these sources were much less trusted. Third-sector organisations' research (especially that of think tanks) was less trusted than university research, but their outputs were more likely to be read than those from academia.

### **1.1.5 Challenges and/or enablers of collaboration?**

Approaches of HE to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) seem limited and inefficient in spite of its relevance for moral, ethical, legal and performative aspects and increased demand for HE. In addition, even though EUA steps up the relevance of social dimension of HE through the guidance and principles echoed in the Bologna process, it merely relies on the whole-campus based approach in tackling exclusion. However, a more integrated, whole community approach to ensuring social inclusion in HE is overlooked and worth exploring with HEIs-NGOs nexus at its core with the goal of building a *culture* of equality, diversity and inclusion.

Some universities report the main limitations related to transportation to the partner headquarters, especially if it is located in a remote area, especially in the mountainous region close to Alba Iulia. Solving this might impose some extra financial burden on the university budget.

Other limitations/drawbacks may refer to the fact that sometimes there are time limitations, as the timespan of the internship is limited to the number of hours included in the curriculum. Moreover, the learning outcomes included in the curriculum may vary to some extent from the real work conditions in the host institution. This is the reason why there is always a tutor from the university, who is a curriculum specialist who can ensure the interface between the parties involved.

The lack of understanding of the work of NGOs and benefits from collaborative activities among HEIs could be considered as one of the issues often limiting the collaboration opportunities between these entities.

Given the lack of promotion of the HEIs role in democratisation and social aspects of development, modern societies across Europe do have the tendency to preoccupy the students with getting into high paid jobs and swift movement in the labour market. This way the common goal of NGOs and HEIs to work towards quality service to society is neglected, while lifelong learning opportunities that both entities normally promote are diminished.

In addition, time consuming investment in relations (even though all relations assume this element) at the begging of collaboration seem to affect both parties' commitment and often cause withdrawal of either one or both parties.

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<sup>10</sup> How can academics and the third sector work together to influence policy and practice, Carnegie UK Trust

Different motivation and organisational cultures and high complementarity with little to zero overlap in work are further mentioned as core limitation to successful partnership building, whereby NGOs immediately provide response and reactions to current events vs. HEIs/academics, which normally have research-based focus to response that may be overdue. Allegedly, NGOs and HEIs different approach and understanding of research concept diminishes the possibilities for a lasting collaboration, given activists' evidence-based narrative (applicable for *changing the world*) vs. academics' primary research focus. In addition, modest overall (policy) research staff in NGOs compared to a number of engaged university researchers seems unbalanced in terms of human capacities engagement which may reflect on collaboration modes.

Certainly, using best from both worlds:

- NGOs networks, advocacy and dissemination skills with HEIs robust evidence-based datasets, and
- PhD thesis ideas from real NGOs experiences and needs connected to current under-researched issues on different levels of consideration may only increase the interest in the covered topics and institutional positions where partners would seek for further joint founding perspectives.

Given the above-stated, collaboration between CSOs and HEI's can be improved by:

- a. aligning the curricula to the requirements of the representatives of the socio-economic environment,
- b. involving the students in internship programmes, especially relevant for local, national or even global community development
- c. organizing webinars and workshops in which dissemination of good practice models of joint work takes place
- d. NGOs must offer individualized learning opportunities to students during internships.
- e. Universities should initiate the exchange of staff, invite members of the socio-economic representatives to hold lectures in the academia within well-established programmes
- f. The university will need to adequately incorporate the concepts pertaining to sustainable development into the academic research and curricula

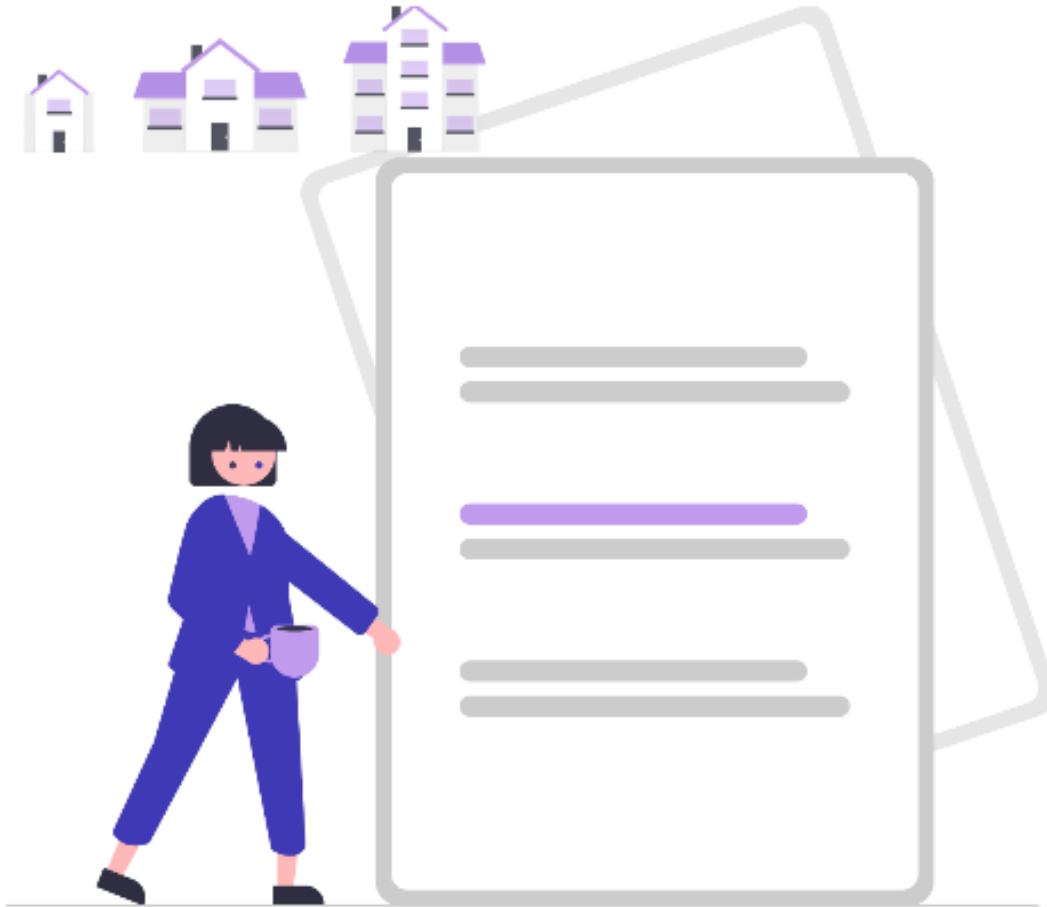
CSOs/NGOs collaboration should be understood as normally dependent on:

- A number of NGOs operating on different levels offer non-formal education courses needed for increased employability of students enrolled in HE
- Work of professional associations and thematic networks of NGOs should be followed by students in relevant fields of studies
- Particular interests
- In a number of cases where good collaboration is established between NGOs and universities, NGOs are in fact established by the university staff having common interest in working on particular projects

- Promotion of citizenship education is normally seen by the NGOs as the dominant venue of collaboration with HEIs
- NGOs often work more closely with elementary and secondary schools, offering volunteering services, including tutoring to the youth in need and could have a more prominent role in promotion of higher education with the vulnerable groups
- Clear, thematically and target group focused work of NGOs may assist development of strategic collaboration with HEIs
- Community fundraising and advocacy activities are at the core of NGOs work and could be gaining pace if supported publicly by HEIs staff and/or use of research data.



## 1.2 SWOT – What do we need?



The SWOT below is a representation of strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities relevant for the collaboration between CSOs and HEIs in Europe given as joint statements from the project partners and presented as the result of the current operational environments within institutions and surrounding them.

## Strengths

- The existence of a national legal framework that allows for establishing cooperation between HEI's and CSOs;
- The national initiatives (The Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding) for the financing of joint research projects that will benefit the society at large and the industry through technological innovations;
- Governmental support for the enrolment of students residing in rural areas, students belonging to the Roma community;
- Government support for the retention of underrepresented students through the provision of social assistance scholarships;
- Institution-based support (won funding) for the retention of underrepresented students through the provision of social equity scholarships;
- Annual governmental financing such as the increase of social equity for better social inclusion and enhancing access to higher education;
- National accreditation regulations provide for the obligation of introducing in the curricula training internships for all specialisations;
- Multiple areas involved in the collaboration between the CSOs and HEIs;
- Research oriented initiatives;
- Wide sort of underrepresented groups involved in the collaboration;
- Underrepresented students' closer cooperation;
- Initiatives such as the GCE Strategy, come from an inter-ministerial approach;
- Aim to address the specificities of each local community and develop actions plans accordingly.

## Weaknesses

- Students from underrepresented groups are actually rather reticent in assuming their underrepresented status; Roma students especially prefer to enrol using a regular student status rather than publicly expose their Roma identity;
- Students from rural areas prefer not to use the specially allocated places for them because they do not want to commit themselves to finding a job in the rural area upon graduation, as most of them want to find a job in an urban area, possibly in a multinational company;
- The administrative procedures are burdensome and tiring, often off-putting for students, and sometimes the fact that an affidavit is sufficient proof may lead to cheating situations.

- For some specialisations it is difficult to find partners for internships, for example for Translation and Interpreting students or for Students in Philology, apart from the teaching practicum, which is actually optional (only for those who have enrolled on the Teacher education module)
- In the field of humanities in general, it is difficult to have access to funding in order to ensure cooperation with the civil society, especially because there is now an increased interest in intelligent specialisations.
- Poor dissemination of the initiatives which could be replicated in other national contexts
- The collaboration between CSOs and HEIs still perceived as too eclectic
- HEIs perceived as the ivory tower – traditional perspectives among the faculty
- Poor resources & funding
- Poor implementation of supranational regulations
- Services and programmes are small in scale, ad hoc with little strategic or leadership support which can be challenging from the point of capacity and long-term sustainability.

### Opportunities

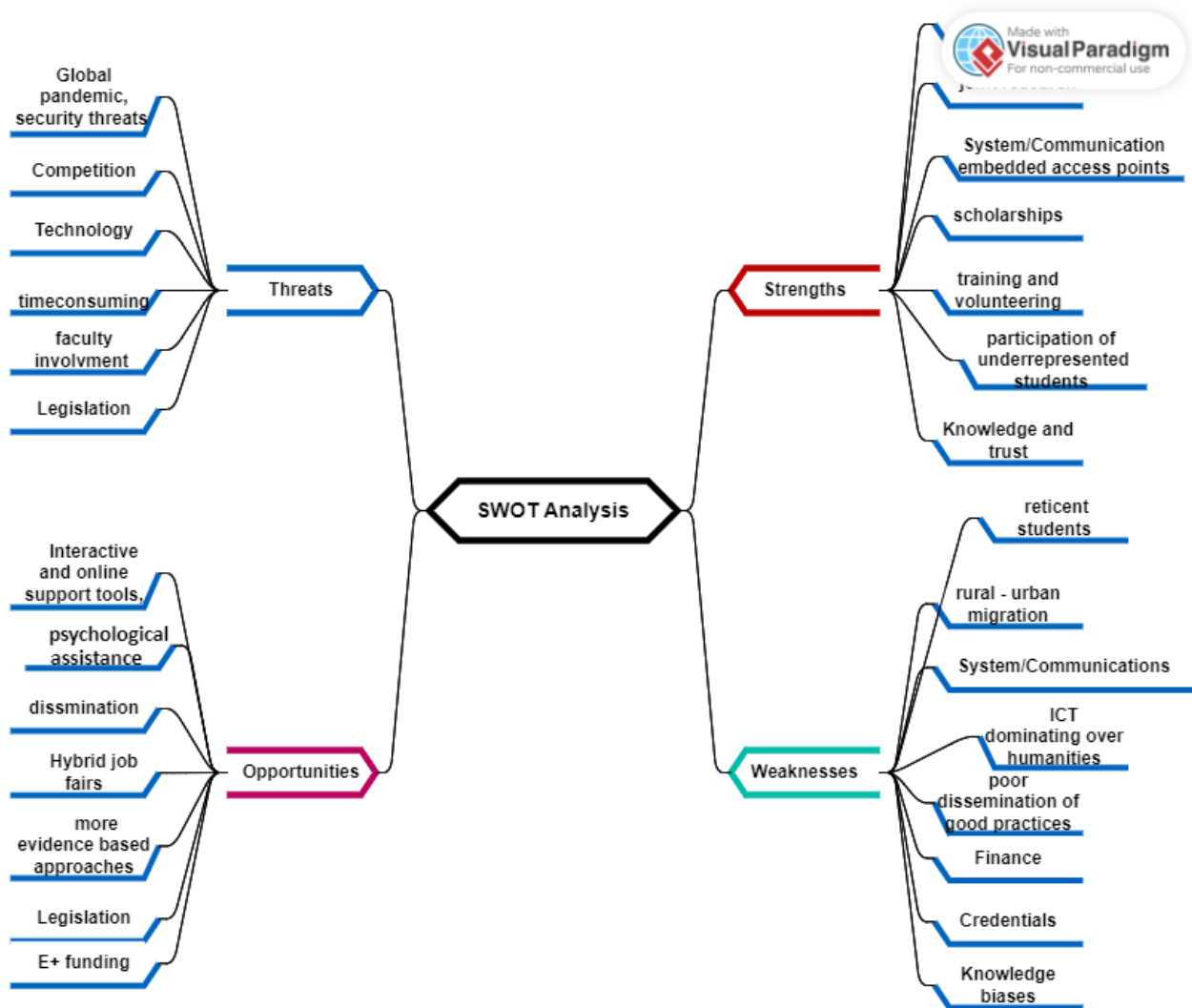
- Interactive and online support tools, such as those created during the pandemic period through government funding that are still functional;
- The existence of vocational orientation centres in all universities that provide psychological assistance to vulnerable students, students-at-risk, etc.;
- The organisation of job fairs (in hybrid mode) in which various partner from the socio-economic environment take part;
- The high specialisation of jobs on the market require well prepared graduates, which creates a vested interest of companies and public institutions to contribute to the training of highly skilled students.
- The development of ICT's instruments at a national level that can contribute to a better integration of underrepresented students and technological tools developed considering underrepresented populations' needs analysis
- The existence of Erasmus+ funds that can ensure underrepresented students' access to study or traineeship programmes abroad
- Civil society representatives' interest in increasing people's quality of life and in combating poverty, xenophobia and prejudice will lead to an interest in training students to fight social injustice and promote citizens' empowerment.
- (Online) dissemination of initiatives (replication potential)
- Sustainable development popularisation momentum
- Value-added criteria in the assessment of CV (CS, HEIs), HEIs entrance tests
- Civil society awareness of the impact of initiatives in the improvement of underrepresented students' lives

- Promote a more solid collaboration, training, and exchange of information among the staff working at reception centres, NGOs, government bodies and institutions, which happen to be the first contact points for refugee people;
- Provide the unique chance to use a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach of the needs and interests of the target groups, through the involvement of relevant governmental entities, civil society actors and target groups themselves in the drafting of the policy, and the assessing of its impact.

### Threats

- Various circumstances such as the pandemic may hamper the cooperation between CSOs and HEI's (restrictions on travel, etc.);
- The economic crisis which may force companies/NGOs to downsize their personnel and therefore there will be no immediate need for organising internships;
- The threat of the Russian-Ukrainian war is looming on all Romanian citizens and institutions; Increased poverty may impact negatively on high school graduates from underrepresented groups, resulting in lack of desire to pursue education in HEIs
- Increased competition from European and American HEI's which are becoming more attractive for a large part of well-off Romanian students, which may result in lower student intake.
- Duplication of good practices, projects, and interventions, instead of strengthening synergies of the existing ones.
- Little to no funding is available at the national level. Programmes and services are mostly funded by the institution's core budget.
- CSOs and HEIs collaboration underestimated by parties involved – competition rather than cooperation
- Faculty involvement undervalued in HEIs
- Time consuming given the panoply of activities required in HEIs
- Global crises

*SWOT mind map*



## 1.3 Key areas and formats of university – CSO cooperation

### 1.1.1. Strengthening social dimension and social inclusion (aspect: student support organizations for international students)

Covered aspects: supporting minority and vulnerable groups (ethnic minorities, LGBTQ, migrants), gender mainstreaming, student welfare and support to socio-economically disadvantaged students), support to mental wellbeing of students, support to international students, + support to socioeconomically disadvantaged groups outside academia (humanitarian aid for poor, tutoring support to children in risk from dropping out from school - TUTORING, etc.)

### 1.1.2. Enhancing student employability perspectives and supporting youth and student entrepreneurship and innovation initiatives

Covered aspects: organization of student hackathons and pitching competitions in front of business angels, venture funds, investors, businessman and corporate executives, joint ventures and collaborative projects (hubs, incubators and EXPOs and other foundations), skills-based training (specify areas), small-grants fund for innovative projects & mentoring (incubation & acceleration)

### 1.1.3. Promotion of culture, sports and voluntarism (aspect: student support organizations for international students)

Covered aspects: strengthening cultural diversity and learning, incl. culture and language competences of international students, support to development of university sport and diversification of sport opportunities for students, support to volunteering programme and activity development and diversification of volunteering opportunities for students and youth (sending and receiving).

### 1.1.4. *Popularization of science*

Covered aspects: joint development of science participation and popularization programmes, science activities for students, etc.

### 1.1.5. Capacity building and sharing of complementary capacities

Covered aspects: support to applied research activities of NGOs (expert support from professors and researchers, joint publishing, etc.), support to capacity building in project management, process management (from CSOs to HEIs), bringing innovative approach to initiating and managing processes, especially those related to the society at large, + lobbying and advocacy approach and strategies.

## 1.4 Practices identification and analysis



### 1.4.1 Italy

CESIE and UNPA programmes (and other Italian organisations) with reference to social inclusion of the underrepresented students	
Programme/initiative title	Contents and intervention areas
<b><i>Manifesto on an Inclusive University to Italian universities</i></b>	<p>In the case of refugees, in 2019, the UNHCR proposed the <i>Manifesto on an Inclusive University to Italian universities</i> (<a href="https://www.unhcr.org/it/manifesto-on-an-inclusive-university/">https://www.unhcr.org/it/manifesto-on-an-inclusive-university/</a>) so as to facilitate refugees' access to higher education and research, to promote social inclusion, and active participation in academic life. In particular, the manifesto addresses the conditions of young people with international and temporary protection who are willing to continue their studies and research in their countries of asylum. Sapienza University in Rome formally subscribed to the Manifesto and committed to expand the offer of activities and programmes for refugee students, such as information and tutoring services, recognition of degrees obtained abroad, scholarships and incentives, as well as university corridors for the legal entry of refugee students in third countries. A Joint Working Group has been established to collect initiatives concerning refugees and those seeking academic protection, to mediate with international partners with a focus on the CIVIS project partners. Also, the Joint Working Group commits to promote strategic actions to increase integration at the European level.</p> <p>To date, several initiatives inspired by the principles of Manifesto have been implemented</p>
<b>TandEm (Towards Empowered Migrant Youth in Southern Europe)</b>	<p>TandEm is a regional project co-funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). It is led by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in partnership with the European University Association (EUA) and the Italian Islamic Religious Community (COREIS). COREIS is an NGO with expertise in interreligious dialogue, education, counter radicalisation and youth integration. The EUA and COREIS Italiana aim to improve higher education integration of third country nationals (TCNs), and to contribute to making societies in Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta and Spain more socially inclusive. The main activities offered are peer-to-peer student mentorship schemes and youth campaigns.<sup>11</sup></p>
<b>The UNI.CO.RE. Project</b>	<p>The Italian Programme of UNiversity COrridors for REFugees (UNI.CO.RE.) aims at promoting legal entry routes complementary</p>

<sup>11</sup> <https://iomintandem.com/>

	<p>to resettlement managed by governments and encouraging access to tertiary education (Student Corridors) for refugees in the first asylum countries.</p> <p>It was established in 2019 by an initiative of the University of Bologna. The intent was to ensure the legal entry of 5 refugee students in Ethiopia, where UNIBO entertained different academic relations, particularly with the University of Mekelle. Today the partnership has enlarged including not only 33 Italian universities but also a strong collaboration with civil society organisations such as UNHCR, the Caritas Italiana, the Diaconia Valdese, the Centro Astalli and other partners. It aims to increase opportunities for refugees currently residing in Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe to continue their higher education in Italy.<sup>12</sup></p>
<b>Uni(Di)versity</b>	<p>Uni(di)versity is a three-year project co-funded with the support of the Erasmus+ programme. It started in 2019 under the coordination of the University of Rome La Sapienza. It builds upon the results of the INHERE project<sup>13</sup> and is focused on supporting the EU HEIs 'efforts to welcome refugee students and staff. The project's partners are universities and NGOs which provide higher education institutions with a forum for cooperation and exchange of information on higher education and research policies. It aims to empower HEIs in the development of 360-degree institutional strategies that cover the full range of universities' activities (research, teaching, administration, "third mission"). Within the project several important outputs have been created, namely: <b>an analytical atlas</b> containing a comparative analysis of 13 European Higher Education Institutions' strategies for migrant and refugee inclusion as part of their social responsibility and diversity approach. The Atlas showcases examples of support offered for migrants in a refugee(-like) situation;</p>

<b>Program/initiative title</b>	<b>Contents and intervention areas</b>
<b>The Roshanak Project</b>	<p>The Roshanak Project, organised by the NGO Association, in collaboration with the Afghan NGO partner "Karawan Welfare Foundation" and the University of Teramo is an international project that envisages the creation of a humanitarian channel to rescue, welcome in Italy and enrol Afghan students at the</p>

<sup>12</sup> <https://universitycorridors.unhcr.it/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.inhereproject.eu/it/>

	<p>University of Teramo, who can thus have an opportunity to study, live and have a better future. Through a framework agreement between the University of Teramo and the NGO Salam, and through intense work and fruitful relations with other institutions and partners in the project, 42 young Afghans have been able so far to enter Italy with study visas and enrol for various courses at the University of Teramo. They will be assisted by a specific tutoring and support services for integration into the social fabric of the academic community and the local territory<sup>14</sup>.</p>
<p><b>Good practice of cooperation between CS and HE institutions regarding Roma/Sinti</b></p>	<p><i>Associazione nazionale Them Romanò onlus.</i> It was established in 1990 by a group of Roma and Sinti people with the aim of valuing and spreading the Gypsy culture, empowering them, and promoting their inclusion in the society. The president of the association, Santino Spinelli, is a Gypsy himself who graduated in English literature and Musicology. He is known all over the world with his group "Alexian Group". He is a poet, a writer, a journalist, and he is the first Roma in Europe who teaches Romani culture at the University of Trieste. In addition, he represents Italy at the Parliament of IRU, International Romani Union. An initiative worth mentioning is the <i>International "Gipsy friend" Arts competition</i>, a competition which is at its 29<sup>th</sup> edition and that is recognised by the President of the Italian Republic and the Italian Ministry of Public Education. The event is supported by international organizations such as <i>Centre de Recherches Tsiganes of the University La Sorbonne in Paris, Commission of the European communities, Region of Abruzzo, Province of Chieti, and Municipality of Lanciano</i>. All type of schools, public and private can participate in the event, including pupils.</p>

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.associazionesalam.org/avada\\_portfolio/progetto-roshanak-afghanistan/](https://www.associazionesalam.org/avada_portfolio/progetto-roshanak-afghanistan/)

### 1.4.2 Portugal (UM)

There are a couple of successful projects, namely around community intervention in Educational Sciences courses at the UMa. Third-year undergraduates can get in touch with potential job locations, as the (annual) Curricular Unit “Community Intervention” allows them to carry out a curricular internship in diverse formal and non-formal education institutions along with regional and local authorities, such as regional directorates, regional and local educational services and municipalities.

In the case of advanced training, the master's degree in Education and Community Development allows for the qualification of Education specialists with the capacity to intervene in:

1. Education, Health and Wellness
2. Education and Environmental Sustainability
3. Education and Gender Equity
4. Civil Protection and Risk Management
5. Education, Development and Migrations
6. Development of a Community Intervention Project

One of the criteria for admission to the master’s degree requires “Publications and scientific communications in the field of Education, Training or Community Development, and/or Internships or work carried out in humanitarian organisations and institutions”.

Associação Académica da Madeira programmes (UMa) with reference to social inclusion of the underrepresented students	
Programme/initiative title	Contents and intervention areas
<b>Omni</b>	<i>Académica da Madeira</i> (Academic Association at the UM representing 4 million students and alumni) is a programme which organises and supports actions to raise awareness, educate and promote issues involving the <b>LGBT+</b> . It aims to promote a university environment which respects diversity in a culture of inclusion, granting the civic rights of LGBT+ citizens. Through reflection and awareness on equality and social justice raised among students and former students of the University of Madeira, this programme was created taking into account the inequalities and asymmetries which still exist not only in the university context but in society in general.
<b>ALLUMa</b>	ALLUMa is group of UMa students who intend to create an environment that fosters the integration of the <b>LGBT+</b> community in an informal and independent way from <i>Associação Académica</i> by promoting initiatives with students.

<b>Food Initiative</b>	The support consists of offering vouchers for lunch, throughout the academic semester, thus representing savings of hundreds of euros for students and their families (targeting those <b>living in poor material conditions</b> )
<b>Scholarship</b>	Through the revenue generated by the diverse initiatives promoted by <i>Associação Académica</i> , it aims at providing aid to students in need with various school items, thus reducing one of the main costs associated with attending university (targeting those <b>living in poor material conditions</b> )
<b>LER - Académica Book Scholarship</b>	Considering students' difficulty in acquiring costly specialised bibliography related to their areas of study, this initiative intends to grant students' access to books that complement their qualification (targeting those <b>living in poor material conditions</b> )
<b>UMajuda</b>	The main objective of this social programme, which runs on an annual basis, is to improve the library assets and toy libraries at primary schools in the Autonomous Region of Madeira. It is indebted to a synergy of social concern and solidarity among a number of students and employees of <i>Associação Académica da Madeira</i> , who are a part of the programme as organisers, UMA students on the whole, and the <b>whole academic community</b> , who are invited to contribute to the continuous improvement of the quality of education, by lending books, manuals, didactic games and other learning tools.
<b>Liga portuguesa contra o cancro (Portuguese league against cancer) &amp; CQM (Chemistry Research Centre)</b>	Volunteers for fundraising
<b>Banco Alimentar (Madeira) Papel Por Alimentos</b>	Foodbank fundraising at the UMA <sup>15</sup>
<b>UMa &amp; AMIF (falar com Serviço de Psicologia</b>	Psychology Support <sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.papelporalimentos.pt/entities/ba-madeira>

<sup>16</sup> [http://scp.uma.pt/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=299&Itemid=125&lang=en](http://scp.uma.pt/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=299&Itemid=125&lang=en)

### 1.4.3. Romania (UAB)

<i>UAB programmes (UMa) with reference to social inclusion of the underrepresented students</i>	
Programme/initiative title	Contents and intervention areas
<b>Social assistance programme</b>	UAB students, enrolled at all levels (BA, MA, PhD) may benefit, occasionally, upon demand (based on supporting documents), from the following types of social assistance support: occasional support for clothing and footwear, occasional <b>support for maternity</b> , occasional support in case of a deceased family member.
<b>UAB study scholarships</b>	The programme for students domiciled in rural areas (in accordance with Government Ordinance 769/2005), to all applicants fulfilling the required criteria. 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, in accordance with Law 441/2001, through Senate decision, may grant social equity scholarships, using its own funding (not specially allocated government funds). Such scholarships may be awarded to <b>orphaned students</b> (one or both parents) whose income is lower than the ceiling of social assistance scholarship; <b>students with TB disease, with diabetes, malign illnesses, etc.</b>
<b>UAB, ROGEPA Srl and Business Saga project Internship - the first step towards the first job (Stagiul de practică - primul pas spre primul job) - <a href="http://primuljob.uab.ro/">http://primuljob.uab.ro/</a></b>	Project based funding aimed at students in intelligent specialisations and ensured internships for 330 students, out of which 40 from <b>rural areas</b> and 30 underrepresented students.
<b>Inclusive-UAB project</b>	University and High School Students supported in their studies for equitable access to higher education and social inclusion (STUDENȚI ȘI LICEENI SUSȚINUȚI ÎN PARCURSUL DE STUDII, PENTRU ACCES ECHITABIL LA STUDII SUPERIOARE ȘI INCLUZIUNE SOCIALĂ), carried out in 2022, which aimed at <b>increasing equity in terms of access to higher education and social inclusion, supporting education for pupils and students from disadvantaged backgrounds</b> through the development of measures, partnerships and information programmes, specific advice and support, including actions adapted to the pandemic context, to ensure <b>fair access to higher education</b>

#### 1.4.4 Serbia (VSVR & WEBIN)

VSVR and WEBIN programmes with reference to social inclusion of the underrepresented students	
Program/initiative title	Contents and intervention areas
<p><b>Preschool and primary education of Roma: expanding opportunities for greater inclusion and reduction of early school leaving (RECI)</b></p>	<p><b>Short-term, project-based CSO/NGO – HEI collaboration 2015-2017.</b></p> <p>The project was implemented by a consortium of partners: World Vision, Austria; Agroinvest Foundation, Serbia; Western Balkan Institute, Belgrade; The College of Vocational Studies for Teachers "Mihalo Palov" from Vršac and the Cultural and Information Center "Pralipe" from Pirot, and was financed by the Delegation of the European Union in Serbia (EuropeAid/135483/DD/ACT/RS). The idea for initiating this project was based on the positive mutual experiences of previous successful cooperation between these partners, which crystallised the need to solve the most prominent problems related to the education of the <b>Roma population</b> in Serbia.</p> <p>Among other activities, within the scope of this project, university students completed a one-week student internship in preschool institutions in the cities of South-eastern Serbia: Prokuplje, Bela Palanka and Knjaževac, where they tried to improve the intercultural atmosphere in the kindergarten and bring the Roma language and culture closer to each other through their workshops both to kindergarten children and their teachers. Quality cooperation was achieved with the management and staff of the kindergartens that participated in the implementation of these activities.</p> <p>On that occasion, the students, with the continuous mentoring support of their professors, Dr. Marija Aleksandrović and Dr. Slavica Komatina, visited many Roma settlements in those cities and learned about the lifestyle and educational needs of the local Roma population.</p> <p>During those visits, good relations were established with members of the local Roma communities, who were introduced to the students and professors of the University of Vršac with the benefits of studying at this higher education institution - first of all, there are encouraging unconditional scholarships for students of Roma nationality and guaranteed home accommodation.</p> <p>One of the good results of this project is the handbook for educators entitled "Inclusive and intercultural dimension of preschool education", authored by Dr. Marija Aleksandrović, Dr. Slavica Komatin and Dr. Aleksandar Stojanović, which was published by the Vršac College in 2017. This publication, in addition to being informative, also has a practical character, as it offers concrete methods and content for connecting Roma with the majority population, which can be used by all educators in preschool institutions.</p>

	<p>All students who participated in the project activities provided very positive evaluation of their experiences on this project. Today, they are employed both in the state sector and in the civil sector.</p>
<p><b>Roma Education Foundation programme</b></p>	<p><b>Long term collaboration initiative HEI – Foundation</b></p> <p>The Roma Education Foundation is part of an international foundation, established in 2005, which is dedicated to reducing the gap in education between <b>the Roma and non-Roma populations</b>. With an active and growing network of representative offices throughout Central, Eastern, South-eastern Europe and Turkey, the Foundation provides support in the creation and implementation of education strategies that contribute to the inclusion of Roma men and women in education systems. One of the components that the foundation deals with is the high school scholarship and mentoring programme intended for students of Roma nationality who attend high schools in Serbia.</p> <p>The programme in the Romani language was initiated in the school year 2008/09. at the Vocational Educational and Medical School in Vršac. From then until today, the Foundation has participated in the support of students at various levels. The scholarship programme for Roma high school students directly influenced the initiation of programmes in the Romani language, because through the scholarship programme a critical mass of high school students was created for whom the path to higher education institutions was open. The promotion of the programme in the Romani language was made possible through a scholarship programme for high school students by allowing interested graduates to visit a higher education institution and get to know the study conditions through examples of good practice. In addition to the mentioned example of promotion, REF promoted enrolment at a higher education institution through his e-mail lists of mentors as well as through trainings for mentors, whereby professor Marija Aleksandrović informed mentors about the possibilities for studying in the Roma language programme.</p> <p>In addition to the scholarship programme for high school students, REF also provided scholarships to students. Within the scholarship programme for students, in addition to financial support they receive from the Office for Roma Inclusion, students in Vršac were able to also receive a scholarship from the REF, which made it easier for students to study. The condition for receiving the scholarship, among other things, was that the students were involved in extracurricular activities in which they worked to strengthen the Roma community, as well as the professor's recommendation about the student's success. Thanks to this programme, today we have 40 students who have obtained the title of vocational educator. Some of them found the job in the field, while 6 students decided to continue their studies in the master's programme with the financial support of the Office for Roma Inclusion.</p> <p>Realising that the REF and the Vocational Education and Medical School (HEI) in Vršac have a common mission in the promotion of Roma education, a Cooperation Agreement was concluded in 2023, which aims to support Roma education at the level of higher education,</p>

	<p>organise and participate in joint events significant for Roma education, mutual promotion of work and goals, dissemination of results in the field of education, etc. The first activity after the signed Agreement will be a promotional campaign - Open Door Days in which university professors, high school students and REF will participate.</p>
<p>WEBIN – HSWT  Strategic partnership  in global  development</p>	<p>Complementarity of skills in life and social sciences and track records of several joint project planning and proposals drafting, can lead to a more strategic, transnational relationship of an NGO and a (technical) university obtained through university initiated strategic partnership agreement. The Agreement is based on collaboration beyond projects creation and implementation which includes the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- creation of a transnational network for knowledge exchange, innovation and capacity building in agricultural and rural development, urban-rural partnerships and peri-urban development</li> <li>- advocating potential towards large scale donors amplifying impact potential of all implemented actions</li> <li>- creation of joint transnational master programme in farm management where placements and soft skills are offered by NGO partner (practical part of master programme)</li> <li>- guest lecturing</li> <li>- creation of joint Moodle based crash courses</li> <li>- partaking in education policies for global development</li> <li>- research collaboration between NGOs and academics in international development.</li> <li>- creation of sub-thematic</li> <li>- contributing to the EU twin transition through a multi-stakeholder approach.</li> </ul> <p>The Agreement is revised every 2 years.</p>

## PART 2: CSOs-HEIs COOPERATION TOOLS

*In Part 2 the authors suggest some of the (most common) structures and processes that promote success and sustainability in CSOs-HEIs partnerships across disciplines and countries. The suggested tools resulted from literature review and analysis of project partners' good practices, as well as good practices of project partners' collaborators from other HEIs and NGOs. Still, it is recognised that partnerships vary and depend on multiple factors including motivation and organisational cultures as well as areas of work.*

### 2.1 Overall partnership building reflection points

In order to initiate and build a lasting and meaningful collaboration between CSOs & HEIs ensuring mutually beneficial partnership for inclusive higher education, several reflection points should be looked at by the collaborators to be.

It is possible to identify 3 common stages of CSOs & HEIs partnership co-creation/development: inception, terms negotiation and implementation, and scaling up. Under each stage several learning points are identified in support of durable partnership.

#### Stage 1: Inception

The inception phase should be understood as an initial period of partnership development whereby structured collaboration efforts are identified and institutionally supported from both ends. This demands commitment in human (including administrative) and material resources as well as institutional policies change in certain cases which by the rule take time and urges for patience. The inception period thus takes time and should include at minimum consideration of the following learning points (lessons):

- **Learning point 1: Identify area/s of (strategic) collaboration** and main priorities/causes/themes for joint action; areas of cooperation are jointly decided between parties. Some commonly present areas of cooperation include:
  - a) Joint research in core societal problems;
  - b) Service learning opportunities - teaching civic responsibility for lifelong civic engagement;
  - c) Core or elective courses where relevant NGO staff are invited as guest speakers on a number of defined themes;
  - d) Fund-raising activities to address issues at local, national or international levels;
  - e) Student representation on university & NGO boards;
  - f) Practice (traineeships and internships) as part of the education and jobs for students at NGOs (intercultural competence building);
  - g) Joint conferences and the sharing of experiences;
  - h) Implementation of accredited joint co-created courses;

- i) Achieving inclusion in higher education through informing and advocating for particular policy actions;
- j) Teacher training (e.g. on inclusion in HE, social dimension of HE, etc.).

- **Learning point 2: Build mutual understanding on different organisational cultures;** HEIs and NGOs operate in different manners and these should be acknowledged and respected from the very beginning of partnership development. HEIs often have administratively demanding processes that take time to be realised. The level of flexibility could vary from low to zero. On the other hand, NGOs may rush into innovative scopes of action more freely but often without the necessary credentials. A balanced approach thus helps in sustaining the collaboration efforts that may target local community, national or international audiences.

- **Learning point 3: Create partnership proposition based on common values and missions and identification of sensitive zones;** In order to last, as any other, partnership between HEIs and NGOs should be based on mutually relevant and supported values and similarities in the institutional missions. Sensitive zones and cultural shock triggers are important to be thought through early on, especially where international partnership is considered in order to avoid misunderstanding, tension and/or conflict often based on speculative images of *us* and *them*.

- **Learning point 4: Involve senior management** (founders, University Council representatives, CEOs...) but enable professional staff leadership in the process; in doing so relationship based on trust is formed from the onset. Trust does not imply thinking in the same way but rather understanding the comparative advantages/core competences brought by each of the parties. Building trust may come naturally in a free-speaking atmosphere, and debates that end in conclusions which are based on everyone inputs.

- **Learning point 5: Empower focal collaboration points from both ends and build a joint knowledge management system.** Choice of focal points (individuals) of partnership could be a crucial aspect of success. These should be personnel genuinely motivated to work, as well as those having some practical and/or policy and/or academic work. Capacity building training and/or orientation of focal points is mandatory for development of lasting partnerships as well, keeping the knowledge management system up to date. The result is a 'culture of joint working' where 'different expertise is recognised, accountability is reciprocal and learning is mutual'.

## Stage 2: Terms negotiation and implementation

Once the partnership proposition is adopted by representatives of both parties, negotiation of terms of partnership and its implementation is discussed. Setting up a mutual capacity-building strategy, where practitioners strengthen academics and vice versa through reflection on all

possible aspects of joint ideas/programmes/services creation, coupled with exchange of personnel – practitioners could greatly assist in guiding academics thinking in return of early access to their work results. Also, testing hypothesis of academics through engagement of relevant experts in the third sector as well as citizens is a common place of collaboration interest that is being negotiated.

- **Building up contractual relations between HEIs and NGOs through strategic partnership/collaboration/cooperation agreement.** Thinking of the future implies to align the newly formed strategy or memo or agreement based on the institutional long-term goals set up in the existing legal frameworks. Should the partnership demand for changes of initial institutional legal documents this should be recognised early on in the process. Precise definition of roles and responsibilities in the partnership must be stipulated on the side of each party. In addition, guide/s for joint programme/s may be developed and included as Annexes to the initial agreement to support smooth implementation later on.
- **Setting up joint management and monitoring and evaluation body** and processes to follow, including the code of conduct.
- **Promotion of enough flexibility in implementation** venues, schedules, etc. can create a significant difference to programme/service success.

### Stage 3: Scaling up

The initial partnership could be scaled by introducing additional partners holding specific references, i.e. expertise either for broadening the initial work area/programme being implemented, or having an independent monitoring and assessment of the work done. Major motivation behind a successful scale-up is the growing social impact of joint actions.

Self-check lists could serve as a starting tool towards partnership building, especially to support the shift to a broader model for collaboration.

### A self-check list for universities towards partnership building with NGOs

Even though HEIs represent natural spaces for inducing collaboration efforts inside a community at the very least, commonly in fact, NGOs are the initiators of collaboration (project-based or long-term). Hence, to set up a lasting partnership, some relevant preconditions should be applied on the HEIs end:

- ✓ Breaking academic comfort zone of teaching and research and being aware of the social dimension of higher education and its larger role in the society (the could be introduced as part of CPD, incoming teachers' orientation programmes, etc.);
- ✓ Academics acknowledgment that they could work together with third sector activists to influence policy and practice. This demand is gaining pace in research funds available from the governments. Making science closer to policy realms may require university staff to

- engage with *knowledge brokers (intermediaries)* familiar with actions of both policy makers and academics – which NGOs often are;
- ✓ Increase of academics' trust in collaborative rather than competitive work with non-academic (researchers and practitioners) yet relevant counterparts whose interaction may at any point incite the social change/s both parties should be inclined to;
  - ✓ Adjusted, user-friendly university websites/communication platforms with direction towards a single relevant point of contact in a university to discuss the query on developmental issues and social dimension of HE coming from the institutions outside university. This could imply shifting from present *supply-side logic* (presenting faculties, departments, and degree programmes) towards a more *demand-side driven logic* in contents presentation that would be based on users' needs.
  - ✓ Inclination of teaching staff towards interdisciplinary teaching and learning could greatly assist partnership development as it opens HEIs towards the society and brings complex and multi-layered societal needs closer to faculty members.
  - ✓ Even though motivation for partnership building with NGOs should be based on a genuine need, its sustainability could be significantly underpinned by some faculty rewarding system for those actively involved in these efforts.
  - ✓ Creating inclusive (online) learning environments and culture is one of the core preconditions for entering the partnership with NGOs. Several aspects should be considered: students survey on access and experience of (online) learning; (online) course orientation module – introducing students on how learning and interaction takes place; offering support in negotiating identity and building social presence (online) - allowing students choices in how they present their identity online – as an avatar, with a photo, etc.; flexible paths to learning and knowledge demonstrations – students choose the access points for learning materials and its use, etc.; connecting students with support network in the community and on campus even in online course delivery; inclusive online micro culture - creating space for students to share their cultural identities and knowledge; promotion and utilisation of open educational resources (OER) can maximise the power of the Internet to make education more affordable, accessible and effective.

### **A self-check list for NGOs towards partnership building with HEIs**

- ✓ Both partners are involved in the identification of the partnership priorities and activities – even if longer period of time is required for the completion of this task
- ✓ Joint approach to donor community is required and negotiated at stage 2 of partnership development process

- ✓ A person should be identified within the NGO setting whose academic and practical knowledge and skills could best serve to the purpose of partnership building with HEIs (possibly a PhD or candidate or someone with vast experience in working with HEIs on different projects)
- ✓ Creating inclusive (online) learning environments and culture

In a nutshell, to achieve a lasting and meaningful partnership, strategic planning is pivotal. Hence, partners are advised to use the Pyramid of Strategy in Partnership Building as per the graph below to guide their thoughts and execution. The Pyramid represents a visual tool helping organisations to draw out the direction of a partnership from top to bottom.

### **The Pyramid upper part – the *WHY (aspiration)?***

**Values** are on top of the Pyramid of Strategy indicating guiding principles that shape the culture and behaviour of parties, and drive the partnership forward. These include grounding principles and beliefs which govern organisational and partnership decisions and actions.

In the Pyramid of Strategy, **Vision** represents a description of a long-term, future state (*the change*) the partnership aims to achieve.

**Mission** refers to the present statement defining the partnership purpose, what it works on and for whom (target groups, beneficiaries).

### **The Pyramid mid part - the *HOW (achievable)?***

**Objectives** of the partnership should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound. These should be defined ambitiously, yet reasonably. Objectives are always in line with broader parties' strategies, overall organisational direction and purpose.

### **The Pyramid bottom part - the *WHAT (specific and tangible)?***

Partnership **Action plan** is used for achieving the set partnership objectives. It contains a set of actions and tactics – methods that partners take to implement the objectives. It should be as flexible as possible, adaptable to external and internal factors of influence. At minimum Action plan includes a detailed implementation process with timelines, resources, responsibilities and performance metrics - KPIs. Metrics are to properly track partnership strategies and goals. It includes monitoring and measuring the performance of the organisation.

## ***Graph: A Pyramid of Strategy for Partnership Building***



Even though most teachers and NGO directors may aspire to partnerships of short breath which bring funding to the institutions, in order to create a transformative and lasting partnerships, shifting mindsets would be necessary to take place on both sides including:

- Challenging direction from profit to purpose
- Challenging organisational hierarchy to networks
- Challenging aspirations from controlling to empowering
- Challenging operations from planning to experimentation
- Challenging privacy to transparency

## 2.2 Tool #1 – Featuring inclusive HE educational programmes/services supporting underrepresented students<sup>17</sup>’ enrolment and achievement in HE settings

To guarantee a sustainable inclusion of underrepresented students in HEIs, it is recommendable to ensure long-term and structured educational services and programmes, based on students’ specific needs, interests, and challenges. It is also relevant for HEIs to keep in mind that underrepresented students should be provided with support and orientation along the entire educational journey, and therefore the tools deployed should be adequate to the evolution of the educational path of the underrepresented students, whose learning and integration process will be monitored, evaluated, and if possible, strengthened, based on the specific skills, and desires.

Collaboration between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working with underrepresented groups can be mutually beneficial, enhancing the impact of programmes and services for underrepresented students. Various ways can be suggested for CSOs and HEIs to align their efforts to create a more effective and supportive environment for underrepresented students:

☞ **Resources:** HEIs frequently have access to research facilities, instructional materials, and academic resources. CSOs can use these resources to improve/match the services and programmes they offer to vulnerable populations, giving them more opportunities and assistance for education. On the other hand, CSOs and NGOs often have networks and resources that can be mobilised for such initiatives.

☞ **Joint (Outreach) Programmes:** HEIs and CSOs can work together to create cooperative initiatives that specifically target the needs of students from underrepresented backgrounds. These programmes can include informational sessions, workshops, and mentoring programmes to encourage students to pursue higher education. Some such examples can be found among the partner organisations. Namely, the UAB organised one such workshop in April 2023 termed ***Reducing inequalities regarding access and retention of vulnerable students in the state-based higher education system***. The workshop involved teaching and administrative staff, on the one hand, and representatives of public institutions (City Halls management representatives, City Hall Social Service Unit) and CSO representatives (NGOs such as Pakiv, Alaturi de Tineri). They were a mode of delivering presentations and facilitating a fruitful dialogue on pressing issues with the UAB students in the fields of Social Work, Sociology,

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<sup>17</sup> The term underrepresented students includes: ethnic, religious and racial minorities, first generation college students, low-income or socioeconomically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, migrant/refugee students, LGBTQ+ students, women in STEM, etc.

Pedagogy and Philology. The organisers also carried out a survey on needs related to students from underprivileged backgrounds, depressed areas and underrepresented students in general;

☞ **Bridge Programmes:** in collaboration with CSOs/NGOs, HEIs can create bridge programmes to help underrepresented students transition smoothly into higher education. These programmes can offer preparatory courses, skill-building workshops, and orientation sessions. In addition to this, the collaboration can extend to different types of training programmes, such as Summer Training Programme in Alba Iulia, which would encourage students to acquire transversal skills on social, academic and professional levels in a real labour context in their training field. This particular programme also aims to contribute to the emancipation and affirmation of young people in terms of professional qualification, to provide a training experience capable of promoting curriculum enrichment, as well as to promote the integration of young people in the labour market. Young trainees can achieve significant knowledge, thereby building several skills: initiative, autonomy, self-confidence, communicative, intercultural and intrapersonal skills, while communicating with several interlocutors (peers, CSO representatives, HEI's representatives) with responsibility, equity and ethics.

☞ **Exchange of Knowledge and Expertise:** CSOs and HEIs could share their expertise with one another. In order to improve programme design and implementation, HEIs can offer academic knowledge and research findings, while CSOs can offer insightful observations derived from their practical experience;

☞ **Opportunities for Training and Internships:** Underrepresented students (such as minority students) could be provided with training and internship opportunities through CSO initiatives. By promoting these possibilities, offering academic credit, and incorporating real-world experience into their courses, HEIs can assist in these initiatives;

☞ **Community Engagement Initiatives:** HEIs and CSOs can cooperate in community engagement initiatives to meet the needs of marginalised communities. This practical approach can help students develop a feeling of societal responsibility while offering useful solutions. Namely, CSOs/NGOs can help HEIs engage in ongoing dialogues with the community to understand unique challenges and needs of underrepresented groups. This can help tailor support programmes for underrepresented students to address specific barriers. One such example of good practice is Intercultural Youth Festivals organised every year by the Centre of International Relations of the UAB. Namely, the festivals comprise a series of events dedicated to the community of international students at the UAB or ethnic minority students. As part of the activities, different presentations, social activities, demonstrations, workshops are organised in order to familiarise the UAB community (students and teachers alike) with customs, traditions, culinary specificities of various national and ethnic groups that are enrolled on different university programmes in order to contribute to their better integration. Furthermore, students could organise volunteer activities led by underrepresented students for their own communities in order for all the students to get better insights into the life and background of their peers, and better understand their needs. Students coming from depressed areas could draw up a plan for volunteer activities starting from the real needs of his native community. A workgroup of maximum 10

students would then be set up and an action plan established for maximum 5 days of field work, divided as agreed upon by the students;

☞ **Collaboration in research and data sharing:** HEIs and CSOs can engage in group studies to collect information about the difficulties and possibilities encountered by students from underrepresented backgrounds. The knowledge acquired can help shape HEI policies and CSO programmes, resulting in a more thorough and empirically based strategy;

☞ **Scholarships and other forms of financial assistance:** In addition to CSOs' efforts, HEIs can create scholarship programmes or offer financial assistance to underrepresented students. This may lessen obstacles to education and broaden access to tertiary education;

☞ **Professional Development Initiatives:** HEIs and CSOs could work together on professional development programmes, like training courses and workshops, to improve the employability and skill sets of students from underrepresented backgrounds. While HEIs can provide scholarly viewpoints, CSOs can offer practical knowledge;

☞ **Mentorship Programmes:** HEIs and CSOs could establish networking and mentorship initiatives that link professionals and/or peers from HEIs and CSOs with underrepresented students. This could provide students with access to a wider selection of role models and sources of support;

☞ **Cultural Competence:** HEIs and CSOs can work together on initiatives that support diversity and cultural competency in both HEIs and CSOs. For instance, they can promote the foundation of student-led societies in universities. Such societies would comprise groups of students who share a common interest and provide opportunities for every student to meet new people, pick up skills for later life in interactive ways. The different societies that universities can offer could focus on music, photography, kitchen, film, foreign cultures and languages, books, etc. The most relevant aspect is that each student would have the opportunity to launch their own ideas of a society they wish to found. In this case, unofficial bodies in NGOs and/or HEIs could be the connecting point of cooperation between HEIs and civil society organisations. This can improve an organisation's capacity to collaborate with a variety of people, especially underrepresented groups;

☞ **Joint Awareness Campaigns:** HEIs and CSOs can plan joint activities, conferences, and awareness campaigns to draw attention to the difficulties encountered by underrepresented students and to encourage teamwork in finding solutions. This may draw attention, gather support, and promote continued collaboration;

☞ **Advocacy Initiatives:** HEIs and CSOs/NGOs should work together on advocacy initiatives to raise awareness about the importance of diversity and inclusion in higher education. They could collaborate on campaigns that promote equal opportunities and challenge stereotypes;

☞ **Networking Opportunities:** HEIs could facilitate networking opportunities for underrepresented students by connecting them with professionals from CSOs and NGOs. This could help broaden their perspectives and create potential career pathways;

☞ **Monitoring and Collaboration:** In the process of collaboration, HEIs and CSOs and NGOs should establish joint monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the impact of

collaborative initiatives. By means of regular review and adjusted programmes based on feedback and data, joint endeavours and collaboration remain effective;

- **Policy Advocacy:** HEIs and CSOs/NGOs should collaborate on advocacy efforts to influence policies that support diversity and inclusion in higher education. CSOs and NGOs often have expertise in policy analysis and can contribute with valuable insights;
- **Joint projects:** a) donor-funded projects are somewhat limiting when it comes to cooperation, bearing in mind that the donor is the one who defines the scope and duration of the project, but they can prove to be a springboard for further networking and establishment of permanent partnerships beyond the project cooperation; b) joint projects based on the genuine needs of both the organisations implementing them and the target groups they are intended for.

By engaging in collaboration with HEIs, CSOs can significantly benefit from the academic expertise of their strategic partners and improve their existing training programmes and approaches to working with underrepresented groups. On the other hand, HEIs can also benefit immensely from their collaboration with CSOs. Namely, collaboration with CSOs focused on underrepresented groups can contribute to a more diverse and inclusive higher education environment. This would enrich the student body and promote a culture of respect and understanding. Furthermore, CSOs often have direct connections with individuals from underrepresented communities. By collaborating, HEIs can gain access to a pool of talented students who might otherwise face barriers to accessing higher education. Likewise, CSOs have insights into the unique challenges faced by underrepresented groups. HEIs can benefit by working with CSOs to design and implement support programmes that address specific needs, such as mentorship, counselling, and academic assistance. Also, CSOs can contribute to the development of programmes that address the retention challenges faced by underrepresented groups. By providing targeted support, HEIs can improve retention rates and ensure that students from these groups have a positive academic experience.

Collaborating with CSOs on initiatives that support underrepresented groups can enhance the public image of HEIs. It would demonstrate a commitment to social responsibility and community engagement. However, for a successful partnership, it's essential for HEIs to approach such collaboration with a genuine commitment to inclusivity, active listening, and a willingness to adapt their programmes and policies based on the insights gained from working with CSOs.

## 2.3 Tool #2 – Needs Analysis & Monitoring and Evaluation

### Needs Analysis

While Tool #1 provides one with extensive (but not exhaustive) examples regarding the manners and forms of cooperation between HEIs and CSOs for the purpose of improving the practices and approaches of both HEIs and CSOs to working with and educating underrepresented students, Tool #2 deals with a more practical aspect of potential collaborations between higher education and civil sector. Namely, prior to deciding what kind of joint endeavour HEIs and CSOs will engage in, it is necessary to understand the needs that drive and motivate such collaboration. Therefore, a needs analysis is inevitable to understand the specific requirements and challenges of both HEIs/CSOs and their target audience (underrepresented students, in this instance).

As it has been previously mentioned, the collaboration between HEIs and CSOs can be inspired or motivated by donor-driven needs, or by genuine needs. When a need is referred to as "donor-driven," it indicates that the particular specifications or project emphasis areas are determined by the funding source's goals, preferences, or requirements. Donors may have specific objectives, desired results, or areas of interest that they would like to address with their contributions. Because of this, the organisations that get the funding modify their programmes/initiatives/ideas to fit the goals of the donor. This can occasionally result in a situation where the donor's expectations drive the emphasis on particular requirements rather than the needs that the community or beneficiaries actually express. On the other hand, when the collaboration of HEIs and CSOs is motivated by genuine needs, it implies that both types of organisations, i.e. their staff had been engaged in a thorough needs analysis to establish the basis of their mutual collaboration, which implies identifying the gaps between the current situation and desired goals.

In order to be able to establish genuine needs, both HEIs and CSOs should consider following some of the steps suggested below:

#### Defining the goals

This segment implies both goals of the collaboration at a more general level, as well as concrete goals of the chosen joint endeavour. Once the goals have been defined, the definition of desired outcomes should follow;

#### Identifying target groups/stakeholders

Determining the key stakeholders involved, such as representatives from HEIs and NGOs, administrators, students, community members is a precondition for recognising their needs and understanding their perspectives and expectations;

#### Conducting desk and field research (surveys/interviews/focus groups)

In order to conduct the necessary needs analysis by resorting to various research forms, it is necessary to develop tools such as questionnaires, and/or interview/focus groups protocols to

gather information directly from potential participants, whether they be members of HEIs and CSOs in question, or end beneficiaries of the HEIs and CSOs collaboration. Potential tools can go along the lines of inquiring into the respondents' current understanding of collaboration opportunities, challenges they face and specific needs related to supporting underrepresented students. When it comes to data review within the scope of a desk research, one can suggest examining any existing data, reports, or studies related to the collaboration between HEIs and NGOs for the purposes of looking for insights into successful models, common challenges, and areas that require improvement. On the other hand, when it comes to the topic of joint collaboration, one could suggest researching best practices in collaborative efforts between HEIs and NGOs in supporting underrepresented students for the purposes of identifying successful models and strategies that can inform the design of the joint endeavour, be it a training programme, a project endeavour, workshops, etc.

#### Analysis of Organisational Structure

When engaging in collaboration for both a CSO or an HEI it is necessary to understand the organisational culture of both organisations. It is recommended to consider how cultural differences or similarities may impact collaboration and the types of support needed for underrepresented students;

#### Assessing Available Resources

It is recommended to engage in an analysis of an HEIs' and an NGOs' current capacities, infrastructure, and resources for the purposes of determining any gaps or areas that could require more resources in order for the partnership to be successful;

#### Considering Technological Abilities/Capacities

Examining the collaborating organisations' technological capacities would be necessary for the purposes of evaluating their level of comfort with utilising digital resources, internet platforms, teamwork tools, etc;

#### SWOT Analysis

Conducting a SWOT analysis would be beneficial for the purpose of identifying opportunities, threats, weaknesses, and strengths for HEIs and NGOs working together to benefit underrepresented students;

#### Legal and Regulatory Compliance

Considering any legal or regulatory requirements that may impact the collaboration efforts is recommended;

#### Compiling and analysing the data

Organising and analysing the data collected from surveys, interviews, focus groups, and other sources is crucial for obtaining the required answers in the process of needs analysis. The idea behind this process is looking for common themes, patterns, and areas that require attention.

The analysis should be followed by a comprehensive report outlining the findings of the needs' analysis. The report should be used to inform both the collaboration between respective HEIs and CSOs, as well as the nature of their joint efforts as well as the common direction that they wish to pursue.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

Once the collaboration between HEIs and CSOs has been defined based on the previously suggested steps, and before launching the actual cooperation, it is necessary to define mechanisms that will control the quality of established cooperation and/or joint ventures. This aspect is solved by using well-established monitoring and evaluation procedures which can ensure the effectiveness of collaboration and create space for necessary adjustments. One can suggest some key steps in the process of monitoring and evaluation, without exhausting the list of potential actions:

- Developing a Monitoring & Evaluation Plan (hereinafter: M&E)
- Defining key performance indicators
- Setting up communication channels between respective HEIs and CSOs
- Specifying collaborative tools and project management platforms
- Establishing feedback mechanisms
- Assessing the collaboration success against the originally defined goals/objectives
- Gathering quantitative and qualitative data through surveys, interviews, and performance metrics
- Collecting feedback from representatives of HEIs, NGOs, (underrepresented) students, community members, etc.
- Revisiting the SWOT analysis to identify any changes in strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, or threats that may have emerged during the collaboration
- Reflecting on lessons learned throughout the collaboration
- Assessing the sustainability of the collaboration by considering whether the initiatives implemented can be maintained over the long term and whether they have a lasting impact
- Using the evaluation findings to make informed decisions about adapting and improving the collaboration, which implies adjusting strategies, redefining objectives, and addressing any other identified shortcomings
- Preparing a comprehensive evaluation report that summarises the findings, lessons learned, and recommendations
- Sharing the report with all stakeholders to foster transparency and continuous improvement.

Well-devised monitoring and evaluation processes can ensure that the collaboration remains dynamic, responsive, and aligned with the overarching goal of supporting underrepresented students. However, the monitoring and evaluation approaches should be regularly revisited and updated as the collaboration evolves in order to secure quality long-term partnership.

## 2.4 Tool #3 – Partnership *Master Plan*

In order to multiply the positive effect of the cooperation between HEIs and CSOs, it would be beneficial to promote non-formal events of promotion, such as art or music exhibitions, open societies in open spaces at a local level which can be an opportunity to gather as much people as possible in order to raise awareness and share good practices for multicultural and multilingual societies and communities, and to promote the idea of learning cities, where potentially every citizen, regardless of the nationality can teach and learn from others. During these types of events, the partnership will make sure that potential strategic partners will participate and be engaged based on accurate research of the specificities and interests of a partner, and at the same time one should be aware of the benefits that the involvement of that specific partner can offer to one's interventions.

In regards with the results obtained, the communication and the inspiration of good practices at a local level are key aspects. For instance, the partners involved in the project, as well as the beneficiaries of the project, and other students might share personal experiences in order to ensure credibility in the audience, and to catch its attention.

The CSOs – HEIs cooperation is meant to strengthen the capacity of higher education institutions to facilitate underrepresented students' access, and support their achievement throughout their studies. According to activities decided upon by the university, each cooperation partner will play a specific role, each being involved to a certain extent in order to ensure success. In particular, higher education institutions would design, coordinate and implement the activities in agreement with the students' academic interests (e.g. for organising summer programme). On the other hand, civil society representatives would develop their activities so as to integrate them within a larger effort to carry out awareness campaigns meant to educate the community and the public at large as to the importance of going to university and not leaving it before completion.

Several mechanisms need to be established in order to make the cooperation functional. Most importantly, the institutional mechanisms are extremely important, as they are based on a national legislation and they can ensure the smooth operation of various activities (for example, at the UAB, the volunteer activities methodology approved by the university Senate - [https://www.uab.ro/media/documente/05\\_Metodologie\\_voluntariat.pdf](https://www.uab.ro/media/documente/05_Metodologie_voluntariat.pdf) )

In order to develop a CSOs-HEIs partnership, it is necessary to draft a master plan that considers the following aspects:

1. The **context and purpose of the cooperation**, namely to provide underrepresented students with more sustainable, structured, and higher quality educational path, which will be the result of field research, in which both the direct beneficiaries of the interventions, and all the HEIs institutions and civil society associations gave their inputs, feedbacks, and suggestions on the main challenges and needs of underrepresented students.
2. **Stakeholder Analysis**, i.e. - identifying key stakeholders from both HEIs and CSOs/NGOs. Namely, it would be recommendable to engage with civil society organisations with extensive

experience in formal and non-formal activities with persons from underrepresented groups. Also, relying on international networks with longer experience in higher education programmes and services targeting underrepresented students could orient the following actions, and steps to take.

In order to create a functional collaboration, it is important to **highlight the benefits** coming from all key actors involved in the partnership. For instance, in the case of higher education institutions it could be a unique opportunity to gain some experience on the ground on the future cross-cultural education, and the benefits coming from sharing experiences and perspectives and to transform higher education institutions into learning places, constantly evolving, and improving in quality. In regards to NGOs, they could offer their extensive knowledge with underrepresented groups and implement capacity-building activities in higher education institutions, as well as strengthening their capacities in providing targeted educational paths, and having a wider and solid relationship with institutional bodies at a local level, which they can rely on in future projects, and initiatives.

An innovative element for more inclusive programmes and services could be the active participation of students – the potential peer support. These students could be asked about their expectations when it comes to investing their time and energy in the inclusive process of underrepresented people, and the motivations behind the choice to support the actions, what they can offer, and what they can learn. Also, it could be ideal to communicate to them how they are valuable assets for the project/collaboration, in terms of giving ideas, providing feedbacks, monitoring, and evaluating the educational path of their peers, considering their privileged roles close to the beneficiaries of the actions.

3. **Roles and responsibilities** – In terms of partnership, the roles and responsibilities of all parties should be clearly outlined and specified, including the decision-making structure. Lead contacts from all partner organisations should be specified. Among the preferred key skills that people involved in the partnership should have, it is possible to mention flexibility, open-mindedness, motivational leadership, solution-oriented-approach, empathy, diversity sensitivity, reliability, cross-cultural communication, and commitment.
4. Each partner should specify the **resources and contributions** (financial, human, material, infrastructural, etc.) in order to define the resource-sharing and collaboration mechanisms.
5. The **core content** of joint collaboration should be outlined, which implies potential programmes, projects, services, initiatives, etc.
6. Potential **risks and challenges** should be identified in order to develop strategies to mitigate and address the foreseen risks.
7. A master plan should doubtless pay attention to **legal and ethical considerations**, as well as to a potential **exit strategy** which would enable a graceful conclusion of the established collaboration.

Developing a comprehensive master plan ensures that both HEIs and CSOs/NGOs have a clear understanding of the collaboration's objectives, roles, and responsibilities, fostering a successful and sustainable partnership. Regular reviews and adjustments to the plan/agreement can help adapt to changing circumstances and improve the effectiveness of the collaboration over time.

## **PART 3: VIDEO SCRIPT OUTLINE**

Video materials can be found on the following links:

1. <http://www.wb-institute.org/>
2. <https://cesie.org/en/>

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## ANNEXE I

### Partners data collection and contribution instructions

#### PART I DESK RESEARCH – C. 1500 WORDS OF CONCISE AND TO THE POINT TEXT

1. Background research<sup>18</sup>:

- Is there a legal framework supporting and encouraging the cooperation between CS and HE in your countries (e.g. national, local, institutional framework)?
- Which NGOs and CS organisations in your country support different vulnerable groups?
- Is there cooperation between those NGOs and higher education institutions?
- What is the nature of such cooperation?

*Side notes and examples: Partnerships for cooperation projects; intersectoral cooperation including line ministries and other relevant factors; bilateral/multilateral cooperation; joint event organization (promotion of HE institutions or some such activities, etc.)*

- What is the main purpose of such collaboration and if/how it is being realized, promoted?

*Increasing the number of students from vulnerable groups in HE; informing potential students of opportunities offered by HE; providing help and support for potential HE students who are the first in their families to venture into HE; providing information about potential financial help available for students from vulnerable groups and/or affirmative enrolment measures (if any); boosting self-confidence of potential students from vulnerable groups, etc.*

- Who initiates this collaboration?
- What are the main limitations of the identified or potential collaboration?
- What are the main benefits of the identified or potential collaboration?
- In what way can the identified or potential collaboration be improved?
- Is there a model of a standing/long term cooperation between NGOs and HEIs that you know of? If yes, please state its main features. If not, please share your views/ideas on how this collaboration could become more sustainable.

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<sup>18</sup> Please refer as much as possible to the focal point of collaboration between NGOs and HEIs, i.e. increasing access and supporting achievement of underrepresented students in HE. If this is not applicable please refer to collaboration between NGOs and HEIs in a more general sense.

2. SWOT analysis (based on the performed background research)
  - 10 most relevant strengths
  - 10 weaknesses
  - 10 threats
  - 10 opportunities
3. Examples of good practice when it comes to cooperation between CS and HE (it would be good to have at least two examples from different domains – short-term project-based, and long-term systemic institutional cooperation if applicable; also where applicable, one should preferably be tackling access issues and another would be related to the achievement of underrepresented students).

## PART II (CREATIVE CONTRIBUTION, TO BE TRANSLATED IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES)

Tool 1 = inclusive educational program/service supporting underrepresented students' enrolment and achievement in different HE settings

*Side notes: Maybe **a training programme** on cultural and/or social margin – a hidden curriculum which does the bidding of underrepresented students?  
Maybe **forming clubs** or some other unofficial bodies in NGOs and/or HEs which would be the connecting points of cooperation between institutions, helping students from vulnerable groups with potential placements, investigate sociocultural needs, etc?  
Maybe **define and establish conferences/forums** which would gather students from vulnerable groups  
Maybe **appoint an HE faculty member** onto the board of management of an NGO?*

Tool 2 = needs analysis and monitoring and evaluation tool

*Side notes: Questionnaires created through joint efforts: questions helping CS and HEIs when they encounter issues when it comes to certain vulnerable groups?*

Tool 3 = master plan on development of CS-HE partnership (general roadmaps for both parties)

*Side notes:*

- 1: *What do we want to achieve with this cooperation?*
- 2: *What is the best partner (HE institution/CS organization) for the chosen endeavor?*
- 3: *What mechanisms (legal, systemic, institutional, ad hoc, etc.) do we have to establish the cooperation?*
- 4: *What steps do we need to make to create a functional collaboration?*
- 5: *What key people/ key skills do we need to engage?*
- 6: *How do we multiply the positive effect of the cooperation and expand the network?*
- 7: *How do we communicate the results and inspire others to continue down the same path?*

## PART III: VIDEO SCRIPT OUTLINE

### **How to approach the task (some tips to be reviewed):**

- marketing the cooperation value with clear messages
- Do not use buzz words – keep it concise and simple
- Short texts raising questions or common statements addressed by the person talking: (written on screen details that you must include for the viewer to understand the content)
- Include NGO and UNI personnel and underrepresented students where possible
- Include teaching and non-teaching staff, staff from different departments, as would best fit the purpose
- Include background music, voiceover, scenery change, whatever is doable and adequate to the storyline; ending with a CTA (Call2Action – where do viewers go next or what they do next – reference to STATUS or...?); please, if possible, start the video with an image/frame of your HE or NGO institutions
- Narration + main talkers + story line (written on the side for easy following)
- A singly video? 4 country-based videos? Single title/topics or 4 independent topics as they best fit the purpose/needs of the institutions? The video interviews should be done in native languages, and later if need be they can be subtitles into English.
- Video length – total per country 15 min?

### **General structure - content:**

- ✓ Hook line/s:  
Grab the reader's attention, and clearly identify what they will be learning in the video. Instead of long narrative sentences and monologues, resort to a dialogue form and quick, short, witty question-answer form with positive facial expression, colorful background and preferably well-lit rooms, or a sunny day, among the trees, flowers, and some such.
- ✓ Intro  
Quickly introduce the topic. Be sure to include why it's important so viewers know why they should watch the whole thing until the end.
- ✓ Talk/s with some takeaways

Cover the main topics and provide 3-5 tips, facts, or other kinds of takeaways. Give a short bit of context or background and the takeaway. You want to keep these rather short, so only provide the necessary details.

Main topics *may* include the following:

- What is/could be most valuable aspect of cooperation between NGOs and HEIs in your local community?
- How can the collaboration be ignited/sustained? What needs to be done/change/maintained?
- How did your institution get into collaboration with an NGO/HEI? If you have some examples of great collaboration, an anecdote or a short funny situation would be great! We wish to

inspire others to do the same and the best way to do it is to inspire them with positive atmosphere and laughter!

- What are/could be the best modes of collaboration between HEIs and NGOs?

Nonetheless, topics could be different and in line with previous R3 toolkit findings and availability of personnel willing to partake in the filming activity.

- ✓ Call to Action (CTA)

Where should the viewer go next? Do you have an additional resource they can view? Do you want them to join project email list, etc.?

NB: *MAKE IT COUNT FOR PROMOTION OF YOUR INSTITUTION*

### **Interview for videos with teachers**

#### **Commitment to DEI – mindset, attitudes, philosophy**

- What are your perceptions of the inclusive teaching and learning environment/culture for students and adults in Serbia/at your institution? What can be done better?
- What resources or support do teachers/educators need to help sustain inclusive higher education? Is inclusive higher education attainable in Serbia? Why and how?
- Why is social dimension of higher education important for you?

#### **Working experience – knowledge & skills**

- Who are the underrepresented students (by profile) at your HEI? What are some of the most effective strategies you use to support students coming from underrepresented groups (in enrollment and/or during the course of study)? What are the core remaining issues in their pursuing of higher education diploma?
- Comment on the importance and practices on working together with NGOs (local, national or international) on these quests? What kind of partnerships are these (describe them)? Can and how this collaboration between HEI and NGOs be improved?

#### **Commitment to DEI – mindset, attitudes, philosophy**

- If you were in a position to offer a new orientation program for incoming teachers on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), what would it include?

## **ANNEXE II**

### **Assessment Tools**

#### **Needs Analysis Tool**

(for Higher Education Institutions)

1. What are the current strategic goals and priorities of the higher education institution?
2. How does the institution view the role of community engagement and collaboration with civil society organisations in achieving its objectives?
3. What resources (financial, human, infrastructure) does the institution currently allocate to community engagement or collaboration initiatives?
4. Are there specific departments or units within the institution dedicated to fostering partnerships with external organisations?
5. Has the institution collaborated with civil society organisations in the past? If yes, what were the outcomes and lessons learned?
6. Are there any existing partnerships or initiatives that involve students, faculty, or staff working with civil society organisations?
7. What specific needs, challenges, or opportunities does the institution aim to address through collaboration with civil society organisations?
8. Are there particular areas of expertise or support that the institution is seeking from potential partners?
9. How does the institution involve various stakeholders (students, faculty, administrators) in decision-making processes related to collaboration with civil society organisations?
10. What mechanisms are in place for community input and feedback in the partnership development process?
11. What potential benefits does the institution envision from collaborating with civil society organizations?
12. What perceived risks or challenges might the institution anticipate in such collaborations, and how does it plan to address them?
13. Does the institution identify any areas where it may need capacity building to enhance its ability to engage effectively with civil society organizations?
14. How does the institution plan to ensure that students, faculty, and staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute meaningfully to partnerships?
15. How does the institution plan to measure the success and impact of collaborations with civil society organizations?

16. What key performance indicators or metrics does the institution consider important in assessing the outcomes of such partnerships?

## Needs Analysis Tool

(for Civil Society Organisations)

1. What is the mission and focus areas of your civil society organisation?
2. Can you provide an overview of the current projects and activities your organisation is involved in?
3. What specific goals or objectives do you hope to achieve through collaboration with a higher education institution?
4. How do you envision the collaboration contributing to the success of your organisation's mission?
5. What specific needs or challenges is your organisation currently facing that you believe collaboration with a higher education institution could address?
6. Are there any gaps in expertise, resources, or capacity that you see as potential areas for collaboration?
7. Are there specific areas or topics where you see potential collaboration with a higher education institution being most beneficial?
8. How do you envision the sharing of knowledge, resources, or expertise between your organisation and a higher education institution?
9. What types of resources (financial, human, technological) would be most valuable to your organisation in the context of collaboration with a higher education institution?
10. How can a higher education institution best support your organisation in achieving its objectives?
11. Are there areas where your organisation sees opportunities for capacity building or professional development through collaboration with academic partners?
12. How do you envision the transfer of knowledge and skills between your organisation and a higher education institution?
13. Are there any potential barriers or concerns that your organisation foresees in establishing a collaboration with a higher education institution?
14. How would you propose addressing these challenges to ensure a successful partnership?
15. How would you measure the success or impact of a collaboration with a higher education institution?
16. Are there specific indicators or outcomes that your organisation would prioritise in assessing the effectiveness of the partnership?
17. How do you prefer communication and coordination to occur between your organisation and a higher education institution?
18. Are there specific expectations regarding regular updates, meetings, or joint planning sessions?

## M&E instrument

(intended for the collaboration of HEIs and CSOs in relation to the inclusion of underrepresented students – instrument for assessing underrepresented students' opinions and levels of satisfaction)

KPI - (Key Performance Indicators):

- a) *demographic*
- b) *enrolment rates*
- c) *retention rates*
- d) *dropout rates*
- e) *graduation rates*
- f) *academic performance metrics (e.g., GPA, completion rates)*
- g) *utilisation of support services (mentoring, tutoring, counselling)*
- h) *satisfaction with support services*
- i) *distribution of scholarship and financial aid*
- j) *reduction of financial barriers*
- k) *inclusive policies*
- l) *representation of underrepresented groups in leadership structures*
- m) *success of joint initiatives of HEIs and CSOs*
- n) *number of collaborative activities*
- o) *post-graduation outcomes (employment rates, further education pursuits, and career advancements)*

### Possible questions:

Demographic segment (gender, age, ethnicity, etc.)

1. How satisfied are you with the choice of studies?
2. How satisfied are you with your academic achievement?
3. In your opinion, what are the main factors that have a negative impact on your academic achievement?
4. Do you resort to available support services at your HE?
  - 4a. If the answer is YES, how satisfied are you with their assistance?
  - 4b. If the answer is NO, what can be done in your opinion to improve their impact?
5. Are you a recipient of a scholarship or a financial aid?
6. Does the scholarship/financial aid have a significant impact on your overall studies? In what way?
7. Are you satisfied with the inclusive practices in your HE?

8. Are you satisfied with the representation of your particular group in leadership structures?
  - 8a) If the answer is YES, what is the positive impact of representatives of your group in leadership structures?
  - 8b) If the answer is NO, what in your opinion can be done to improve the current status and performance?
9. Do you participate in initiatives undertaken by your HE?
10. Are you aware of the collaboration of your institution with the representatives of the civil sector?
11. In your opinion, does such collaboration have a positive impact on the quality of your studies?  
(the list is not exhaustive)

## M&E instrument

(intended for the CSOs in relation to the success of their collaboration with an HEI relating to the inclusion of underrepresented students)

KPI - (Key Performance Indicators):

- a) *enrolment rates*
- b) *retention rates*
- c) *dropout rates*
- d) *graduation rates*
- e) *academic achievement*
- f) *access to support services*
- g) *participation in extracurricular activities*
- h) *diversity in leadership and faculty*
- i) *students' satisfaction*
- j) *community outreach and engagement*
- k) *career placement and success*
- l) *reduction in disparities*
- m) *alumni success stories*
- n) *institutional policies and practices*
- o) *funding and resource allocation*
- p) *long-term impact*

### ***Possible questions:***

1. How has the collaboration influenced the enrolment rates of underrepresented students in higher education programmes?
2. What specific initiatives or support services have been implemented to facilitate the enrolment of underrepresented students?
3. In what ways has the collaboration contributed to creating a more inclusive and accessible environment for underrepresented students during the enrolment process?
4. Have there been improvements in facilities, resources, or policies to enhance accessibility for underrepresented students?
5. How effective have the support services provided through the collaboration been in addressing the needs of underrepresented students during their academic journey?
6. What feedback have underrepresented students provided about the effectiveness of mentorship, counselling, and tutoring services?

7. How has the collaboration impacted the academic achievement of underrepresented students?
8. Are there specific academic performance metrics or trends that demonstrate the success of the collaboration in supporting underrepresented students?
9. What barriers or challenges have underrepresented students identified during the enrolment process, and how has the collaboration addressed or mitigated these challenges?
10. Have there been any unexpected obstacles that require additional attention?
11. To what extent have underrepresented students actively engaged in academic and extracurricular activities facilitated by the collaboration?
12. What strategies have been most successful in encouraging underrepresented students to participate in campus life?
13. How has the collaboration contributed to enhancing cultural competency among faculty, staff, and students within the higher education institution?
14. Are there specific training programmes or initiatives that have positively impacted cultural awareness?
15. Have institutional policies been influenced or changed as a result of the collaboration to better support underrepresented students during enrolment and their academic journey?
16. How has the collaboration influenced the development of diversity and inclusion policies within the HEI?
17. What efforts have been made to engage the broader community in supporting underrepresented students through the collaboration?
18. Have there been community partnerships that have positively impacted enrolment and academic success?
19. How satisfied are underrepresented students with the overall support they receive from the collaboration?
20. Are there areas where improvements are needed based on student feedback?
21. What indicators suggest a lasting impact of the collaboration on the enrolment and academic achievement of underrepresented students?
22. How is the collaboration contributing to the long-term success and well-being of underrepresented students after their graduation/career pursuit?
23. How has our organisation overall benefited from the established collaboration?

## M&E instrument

(intended for the HEIs in relation to the success of their collaboration with an CSOs relating to the inclusion of underrepresented students)

KPI - (Key Performance Indicators):

- a) *enrolment diversity*
- b) *retention rates*
- c) *graduation rates*
- d) *institutional policies and practices*
- e) *representation in leadership and faculty*
- f) *access to support services*
- g) *inclusive curriculum*
- h) *student satisfaction*
- i) *participation in extracurricular activities*
- j) *community engagement*
- k) *career placement and success*
- l) *collaborative programme impact*
- m) *resource allocation*
- n) *long-term impact*

### **Possible questions:**

1. How has the collaboration with CSOs impacted the overall enrolment rates of underrepresented students?
2. What efforts have been made to increase awareness of educational opportunities among underrepresented communities, and what has been the response?
3. In what ways have CSOs supported underrepresented students during the enrolment process, and how has this contributed to increased enrolment?
4. How effective have support services provided by the collaboration been in assisting underrepresented students in their academic pursuits?
5. What strategies are in place to ensure the retention of underrepresented students, and have they been successful in reducing dropout rates?
6. How has the collaboration influenced the academic performance of underrepresented students, as measured by GPA and completion rates?
7. To what extent are underrepresented students actively engaged in extracurricular activities and academic programmes facilitated by the collaboration?
8. How have mentorship programmes supported underrepresented students in navigating their academic journey, and what measurable impact have they had?

9. In what ways has the collaboration influenced the development and implementation of an inclusive curriculum that reflects diverse perspectives?
  10. How accessible are resources such as scholarships, financial aid, and educational materials to underrepresented students, and what improvements can be made?
  11. To what extent have faculty and staff received training in cultural competency to better support the diverse needs of underrepresented students?
  12. How satisfied are underrepresented students with the support services, academic environment, and overall inclusivity efforts at the institution?
  13. What barriers or challenges do underrepresented students still face in the enrolment and academic achievement process, and how can these be further addressed?
  14. What impact has the collaboration had on the broader community in terms of education, awareness, and the inclusion of underrepresented students?
  15. How is feedback from underrepresented students incorporated into the ongoing improvement of collaboration initiatives and support services?
- How has our institution overall benefited from the ongoing collaboration?

## ANNEXE III

### Academic-Business-Civic Strategic Partnership Agreement

*(hereafter referred to as the Agreement)*

Made by and between:

**FULL NAME OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION** *(hereafter referred to as ACRONYM OF THE HE INSTITUTION)*, represented by ....., with its registered address at (FULL ADDRESS AND COUNTRY), appearing in this cooperation as academic society actor,

And

**FULL NAME OF NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION** *(hereafter referred to as ACRONYM OF THE NGO)*, represented by ....., with its registered address at (FULL ADDRESS AND COUNTRY) in this cooperation as business society actor,

And

**FULL NAME OF NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION** *(hereafter referred to as ACRONYM OF THE NGO)*, represented by ....., with its registered address at (FULL ADDRESS AND COUNTRY), appearing in this cooperation as civic society actor,

Hereinafter jointly referred to as "the Parties",

*REAFFIRMING their commitment to the common values and principles in international development guided by the Sustainable Development Goals which constitute the basis for their long-lasting cooperation as strategic partners and academic-business-civic collaboration,*

*WISHING to build on and to enhance the valuable contribution to their relations made by the existing agreements between them in project acquisition and management, course development and training provision;*

*DETERMINED to enhance their cooperation and to maintain the overall coherence of the cooperation, including by strengthening consultations at all levels and by taking joint actions on all issues of common interest;*

*Have agreed as follows:*

#### ARTICLE 1

## **PURPOSE AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

- 1.1 The purpose of this Agreement is for the Parties to strengthen the overall partnership between the Parties by furthering multi-sectoral cooperation and joint actions on issues of common interest, including in the context of regional and global challenges;
- 1.2 In pursuance of the purpose set out in paragraph 1, the Parties shall implement this Agreement based on the principles of good intentions, mutual respect, equal partnership and respect for international and national laws.
- 1.3 The Parties shall strengthen their partnership through dialogue and cooperation on matters of mutual interest in the areas of education, research, science, technology and innovation for sustainable development, poverty eradication and relevant sectoral interventions. To this end, the Parties shall hold meetings at all levels, including those of leaders, policy and senior officials, donors' community members, etc. and promote wider exchanges between their staff as well as between organizations. The Parties shall cooperate and coordinate, where appropriate, in promoting and realising shared values and principles, including with or in third countries.
- 1.4 The Parties shall endeavour, in support of their commitment to effective exchange of views and enhance cooperation and, where appropriate, to coordinate their positions in the frameworks of the international and regional organisations and fora of mutual interest.
- 1.5 The Parties shall enhance the exchange of views and endeavour to act jointly on issues of common concern in the area of crisis management and peace-building, including by promoting common positions, cooperating with regard to resolutions and decisions in provision of international education and research, supporting national efforts of countries emerging from conflict including through relevant programmes and projects.

## **ARTICLE 2**

### **COLLABORATION FOCUS AND MECHANISMS**

- 2.1 The Parties shall support and enhance academic-business-civic interface collaboration whereby core academic domains of interventions (theory building, teaching and publishing) and core business and civic domains of intervention (project acquisition, action, implementation and training) are appropriately merged to support policy, dissemination, training, stakeholders' engagement, research collaboration, fieldwork facilitation, expert advising and advocacy in the areas of mutual interest.
- 2.2 The Parties shall focus their collaboration on programmes and projects in the field of agriculture and rural development, including sustainable agriculture, food security, value chain, integration of environmental requirements into agricultural policies, development policies for rural areas, promotion and quality policies and practices for agricultural food products, including geographical indications, organic production, international agricultural outlook, sustainable forest management
- 2.3 and links between policies on sustainable agriculture, rural development and forestry, and policies on environment and climate change.

- 2.4 The Parties shall strengthen cooperation on transversal skills training development and provision in the areas of mutual interest, e.g. project planning and writing, project implementation, and creation of a change through project intervention. The target groups for training shall be university teaching and administrative staff, researchers, students, staff from partner institutions, and other groups of mutual interest.
- 2.5 The Parties cooperation mechanisms shall include academic and non-academic aspects of collaboration in international development:
- a) Development and implementation of projects in the fields of mutual interest,
  - b) First come consultation on programmes and projects of mutual interest,
  - c) Development of training programs on transversal skills of mutual interest,
  - d) (Joint) capacity building provision to third parties based on competence areas,
  - e) Guest lecturing/workshops provision on transversal skills topics,
  - f) Assistance in projects/programmes implementation in various developing countries,
  - g) Provision of joint development assistance in crisis areas, e.g. Ukraine and strategic developmental regions South East Asia including Indonesia and SSA through acquisition of projects and programmes in the areas of mutual interest,
  - h) Where/when applicable jointly acts towards global donors in strategic intervention/work areas,
  - i) Increasing EU visibility and representation in VET and adults' education Including through support in creation of centres of excellence and accredited teachers training;

### **ARTICLE 3**

#### **IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD**

- 3.1 This Agreement enters into force on the day the last signatory Party signature is obtained.
- 3.2 The Agreement shall stay in force for 2 years from the day of entering into force.
- 3.3 If not formally terminated, the Agreement shall be automatically extended beyond the period of initial implementation for additional 1-year period (12 months).

### **ARTICLE 4**

#### **INFORMATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONFLICT AVOIDING**

- 4.1 Increased knowledge and awareness of Parties in the areas of interest, cross cutting priorities, stakeholders including donors and policy makers shall be obtained through the provision of online information and face to face dialogue when possible and to the best of their knowledge in the respective area of concern/interest. Regular communication shall be maintained with this respect.
- 4.2 During the period covered by the Agreement and after it has expired, the Parties, including their project staff, shall treat as strictly confidential any information, data and documents to which they

- 4.3 have or have had access to in connection with the performance of this Agreement (including implementation documents).
- 4.4 The Parties shall avoid any action or statements that may jeopardise co-operation between them, and with third countries partners. Any actual or foreseeable difficulty in this regard should be discussed jointly by all parties.

## **ARTICLE 5**

### **TERMINATION**

- 5.1. This Agreement shall remain in force for 2 years unless terminated.
- 5.2. Either Party may notify, in writing, the other Party of its intention to terminate this Agreement. The termination shall take effect 1 month after the date of receipt of that notification by the resigning Party.

## **ARTICLE 6**

### **AGREEMENT TEXT AND MODIFICATIONS**

- 6.1. This Agreement is written in English. It is executed in three (3) originals, one for each Party.
- 6.2. All changes to this Agreement shall require the form of a written Addendum signed by all the parties.

In (PLACE), --date--

In (PLACE), --date--

\_\_\_\_\_  
For HEI

\_\_\_\_\_  
For NGO

\_\_\_\_\_  
For NGO