Project details & partners

- Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership project (September 2019 – December 2022)

- Coordinated by the University of Bologna

- Academic partners: University of Antwerp, University College Cork, Complutense University of Madrid Leipzig University, University of Pretoria*

- Community partners: ASP Cesena, UCSIA, Cork City Council, Coslada Municipality, Forikolo

- Associated partner: Utrecht Network

UNICORNs two-fold objective

- **Boosting international mobility through Service-Learning**

  - Regular student mobility is complemented with SL in the hosting community

- **Boosting Service-Learning through international mobility**

  - Local SL projects are complemented with mobility and interculturality

Framed in a broader perspective

- the **global challenges of the 21st century:** a demand for universities to be more socially responsible, more aware of their potential impact on society and of the contribution they can make to tackling societal challenges.

- the Council of Europe **Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC):** equip young people with competences that are needed to participate effectively in a culture of democracy and to live peacefully together with others in culturally diverse societies

▸ UNICORN searched for ways to turn this policy into practice: students acquire **civic and global competences** through civic engagement and international mobility

5 project outputs

UNICORN
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Output 1: Living Catalogue

- including **16 teaching courses** activated at the partner HEIs that adopt the service-learning approach. These courses are available to enrolled students as well as exchange students

- 'Living' : courses subject to changes throughout the years

- in comparison with a standard course information guide it features additional information about the SL activities (detailed content, location, support for exchange students)

Output 2: Staff Training Handbook

- addressed to academics and to community organisations' staff to guide them in co-designing teaching courses with SL – either from scratch or from teaching courses (or existing forms of collaboration between HEIs and community partners)

Output 3: Administrative Toolkit

- digital handbook for international mobility experts and other administrators

- ready to use format for HEIs to replicate and institutionalize UNICORN mobility or a similar ISL mobility scheme

- 4 mobility information cards, focusing on 4 types of mobility

    - long-term mobility

    - short-term mobility

    - blended mobility

    - virtual mobility

Mobility information cards

- Main features of each mobility type

  - key facts (e.g. prerequisites, duration, possible funding)
  - pros & challenges
  - organisational issues/steps

- Referring to
  - both outgoing and incoming mobility
  - the 3 phases of the mobility - before, during and after

Short term mobility: pros

- more flexible to fit into the academic year than long-term mobility.

- promotes inclusion and participation. It can be an alternative for students who, for whatever reason, cannot take part in long-term mobility.

- an excellent way to enrich the core curriculum.

- offers students the possibility of gaining extra credits during the summer or winter breaks.

- International students provide intercultural learning opportunities to local students (internationalisation@home)

Short term mobility: challenges

- HEIs without experience in organising international summer or winter schools will encounter an extra workload in terms of recruitment, administration and support during the project.

- Since there is no standard funding available for short-term mobility, students need to bear the cost of the trip and/or the enrolment fee themselves, if no other funding is available.

- Recognition of the credits at the home HEI might not be automatic.

- Due to the limited duration of the mobility period, the learning experience and its outcomes might not be as relevant as in long-term mobility.

- Including short-term mobility will depend on the preferences and policy of your institution.

Output 4: Massive Open Online Course

- teaching students the fundamentals of service-learning & community engagement and interculturality before they go on mobility

Output 5: Recommendation Paper

- addressed to policy makers in higher education and in the community to foster the institutionalisation and the upscale / exploitation of the UNICORN model

- Examples
  - at institutional level: create an Academic Engagement Office composed of officers of the international programme office, Heads of Community Engagement, and academic administrators to support the inclusion of global democratic and civic competences into the academic curriculum
  - at national policy level: HEI's achieving strong commitment to ISL initiatives should receive preferential access to financial benefits sponsored by local and national governments
  - at European level: consolidate, strengthen and create synergies with existing thematic networks and initiatives to support community engagement and ISL in higher education. The European Universities Initiative should play a key capacity-building role in driving ISL

All project outputs are available
on the UNICORN website

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UNICORN service-learning taxonomy

What is the UNICORN service-learning taxonomy?

- Comprehensive **framework** for the design of service-learning classes:
    - Common understanding of what the **essential component parts** of a service-learning course/project
    - Allows consistency and uniformity --> 'common language'

- 6 core **dimensions** as core components of service-learning + 7th dimension (international/mobility exchange)
    1. Mobility and online exchange (**international** dimension)
    2. Reciprocal **partnerships** that meet actual community needs
    3. Academically **relevant**, real world student involvement in the community
    4. Explicit global **civic and cultural competence**s
    5. Critical **reflection** to facilitate learning
    6. Integrated **assessment** of student learning
    7. Attention to community **impact** of service

- Each dimension is described at 3 distinct **levels of development**
    - Emergent practice
    - Developing practice
    - Well-developed practice

UNICORN service-learning taxonomy

How to use the UNICORN service-learning taxonomy?

- Part of output 2 Staff Training Handbook:
  - To guide trainees in a step-by-step process organized around the 7 dimensions
  - Handbook has per training unit references and additional materials to consult (more detailed information)
  - Case-based materials (when available)
  - Interesting for starting and more experienced lecturers

- Translation of taxonomy into Dutch
  - No judging based on the taxonomy --> Helps to make choices
    - How intensely (or not) is this dimension already present in your current S-L project ? Why (not)? Do you want to develop it further (or not)?

Looking at the taxonomy

- 7 dimensions – 3 levels of development
  - *Can you relate with the different dimensions? Are they recognizable to you(r) (project)?*
  - *Can you relate with the different levels of development?*

UNICORN service-learning taxonomy

Taxonomy characteristic #1:

Mobility and Online Exchange: Service-learning projects are appropriate for international students, and have developed approaches to maximize the benefits of mobility and online exchange for deeper global civic and cultural learning and community engagement.

Emergent practice	Developing practice	Well-developed practice
Minimal provisions have been made to support student participation in the service-learning experience. There is some awareness of student's diverse **backgrounds, needs and perspectives**.	Curriculum design and service project design recognize **challenges and potential insights** offered by international student participation. **Transnational comparisons and perspectives** are encouraged.	Curriculum design and service project design build in opportunities for **comparative learning**, and for **facilitating input** from international students on **social and civic responsibilit**y in the home country and other regions of the world. **Critical reflection** on comparative civic and social responsibility is central to the class.

Discussion: Where are you **right now** with regard to this aspect of the taxonomy?

What are your current **assets**? What **challenges** need to be overcome (to further development of your project) along this dimension of the taxonomy?

Challenges and opportunities for International Service-Learning

International Service-Learning (ISL) can be defined as

"A *structured academic experience in another country* in which students

- *Participate* in an organized service activity that addresses identified community needs

- *Learn from direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others*

- *Reflect on the experience* in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a deeper understanding of *global and intercultural* issues, a broader appreciation of the *host country* and the discipline, and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as citizens, locally and *globally*." (Bringle, Hatcher & Jones, 2012)
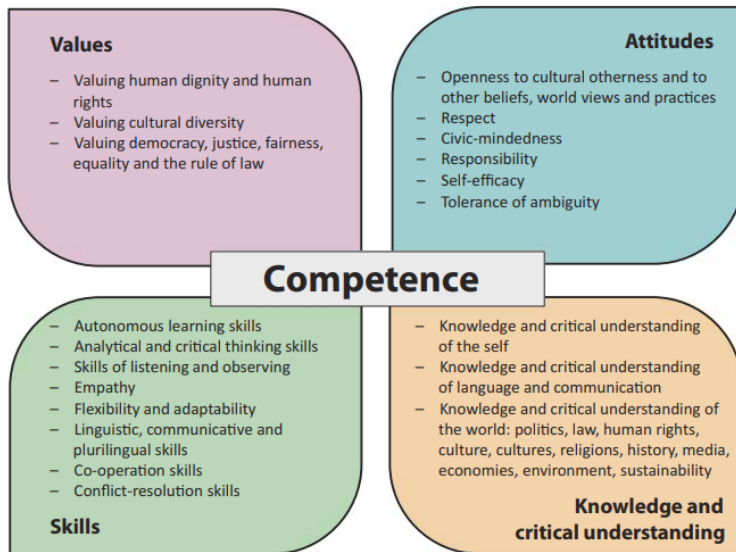
During an ISL experience, students engage in activities that:

- Complement and augment their classroom learning

- Contribute to the community in the host country

- Support face-to-face interaction with others

- Increase cross-cultural understanding of others

- Challenge students to clarify and reconsider their role as a citizen or community member

Challenges and opportunities for International Service-Learning

- How to design?
  - Ideas, tips for the building blocks for international S-L
  - Added value / difficulties with international students

Values
- Valuing human dignity and human rights
- Valuing cultural diversity
- Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law

Attitudes
- Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices
- Respect
- Civic-mindedness
- Responsibility
- Self-efficacy
- Tolerance of ambiguity

Competence

Skills
- Autonomous learning skills
- Analytical and critical thinking skills
- Skills of listening and observing
- Empathy
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Linguistic, communicative and plurilingual skills
- Co-operation skills
- Conflict-resolution skills

Knowledge and critical understanding
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the self
- Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication
- Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, cultures, religions, history, media, economies, environment, sustainability

1. **Reflection & sharing**:
   - Reflection via CDC-model (Competences for Democratic Culture, Council of Europe)
     - Interdependence between a culture of democracy and intercultural dialogue in culturally diverse societies
     - 20 competences: values, attitudes, skills and bodies of knowlegde and critical understanding
   - Importance of interactive **group reflections** and meetings (supervision, critical incidents-method, interactive seminars with peers …)
     - *Provide opportunities for international and local students to work collaboratively to facilitate communication and service*
   - Exploration of **own** attitudes and values (combination of reflective activities, individual and in group)
     - *e.g. video journals, logbook ...*
   - Continuous **supporting** of students' growth as agents of change
     - *Scaffolding, feedback (mandatory and optional)*

Challenges and opportunities for International Service-Learning

2. Evaluation (feedback), support & assessment

- Teacher as tutor/mentor

- *Scaffolding*

- Holistic and integrated approach to the assessment of student learning (involving community partner feedback in process)

3. Academic learning

- Deepening and broadening of academic discipline

    - Power of seeing the interdisciplinary nature of issues in the community

    - Learning that comes from applying concepts and theories in practice

    - Sense of accomplishment (project from conception to completion)

- Transversal competences

    - e.g. higher order thinking (critical thinking, problem solving, metacognition …)

- Comparative perspective

Challenges and opportunities for International Service-Learning

4. Real-world context

- The 'ideal' community partner
    - Starting point of ISL: actual and authentic need(s) of the community
    - Reciprocal: open for co-creation
    - Invest in a 'trajectory': make expectations explicit
    - Invest in communication
    - Can offer time and qualitative guidance/feedback
- The 'ideal' types of needs
    - Embrace the diverse and interdisciplinary nature of needs and answers/service
    - No one size fits all solution:
        - Working with real people
        - Local, context based

Challenges and opportunities for International Service-Learning

Challenges or opportunities?

- **Interaction and communication**
  - Active & constructive communication is key
    - *Provide continuous feedback*
    - *Offer space for reflection*
    - *Make commitments around communication* (how (tools), when (how often), where …)
  - On-site meetings with community partner (sense of community, trust)
    - *Get to know each other*
    - *Understand the problems/needs*
    - *Interact and connect with people*
  - Language issues
    - Native speakers vs non-native

Challenges and opportunities for International Service-Learning

Challenges or opportunities?

- **Importance of 'matching'**
    - Matching with community partner: get to know your external partner
    - Matching with peers: get to know your students
    - Matching with needs: make expectations explicit
        - *Invest in a preliminary trajectory with community partner*
        - *Provide a starting moment with all actors*
        - *Provide an individual intake (interview) with your students*
- **Make choices** depending on
    - Timing (semester, year)
    - Number of ECTS-credits for service-learning
    - Traditional, hybrid or e-service-learning

Challenges and opportunities for International Service-Learning

Example: Geert Marrin – AP Hogeschool Antwerpen

Challenges and opportunities for International Service-Learning

Interaction/discussion/inspiration ...

Questions or more information?

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