HOW TO MEASURE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

TOWARDS A EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION
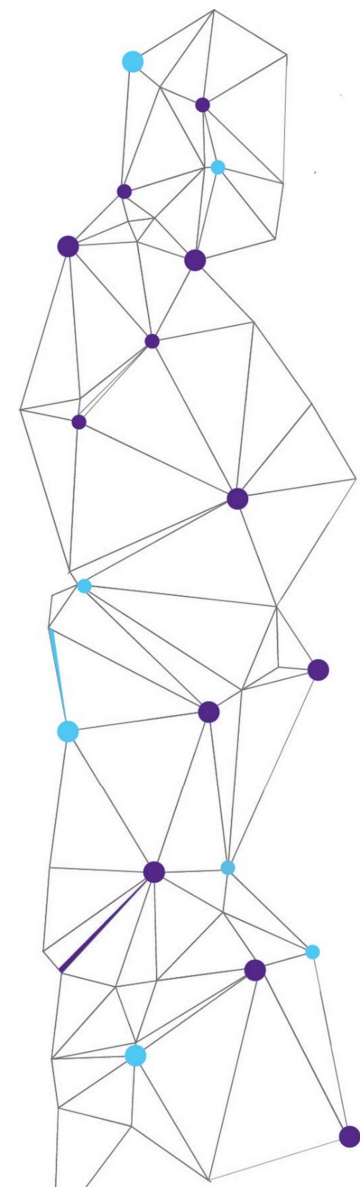
WORKING GROUP ON SOCIAL DIMENSION Fourth Meeting

17 February 2022

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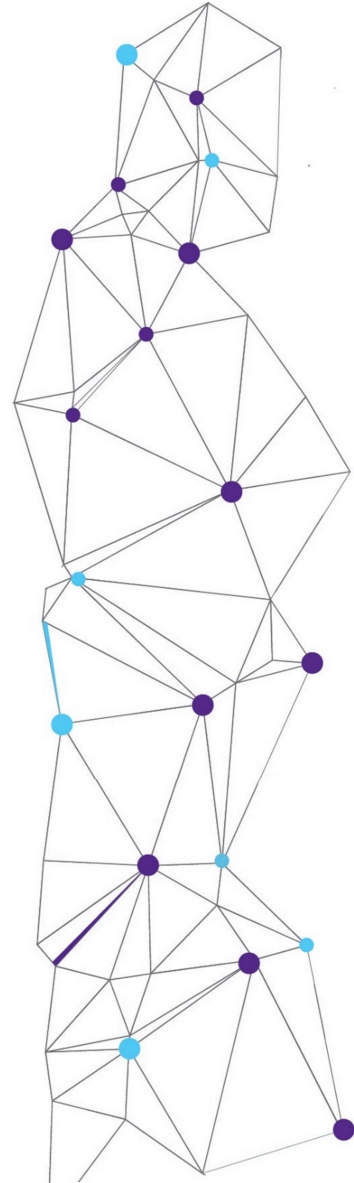Institute for the Development of Education,
Zagreb, Croatia

Institute for the Development of Education

# WHAT IS 'COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT' IN HIGHER EDUCATION?

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

- Community: incl. government, business, civil society, from local to global level.

- Engagement: mutually beneficial joint activities with external communities

- Societal needs: political, economic, cultural, social, technological, environmental…
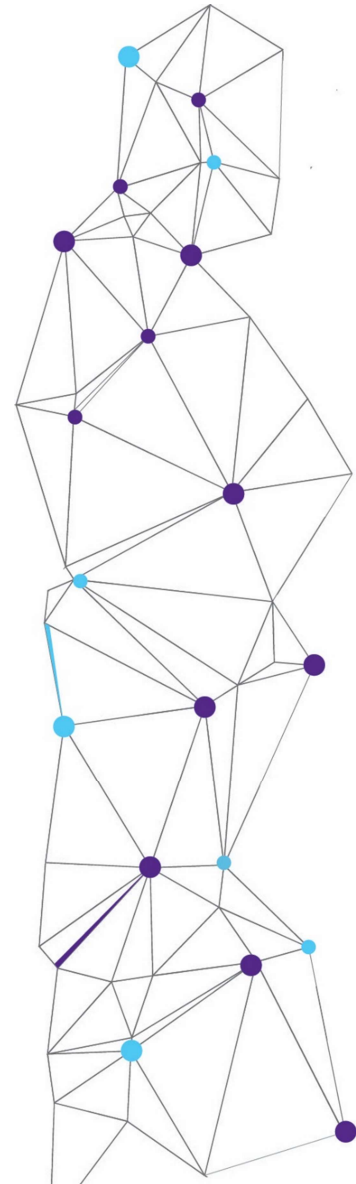
A WORD ABOUT TERMINOLOGY …
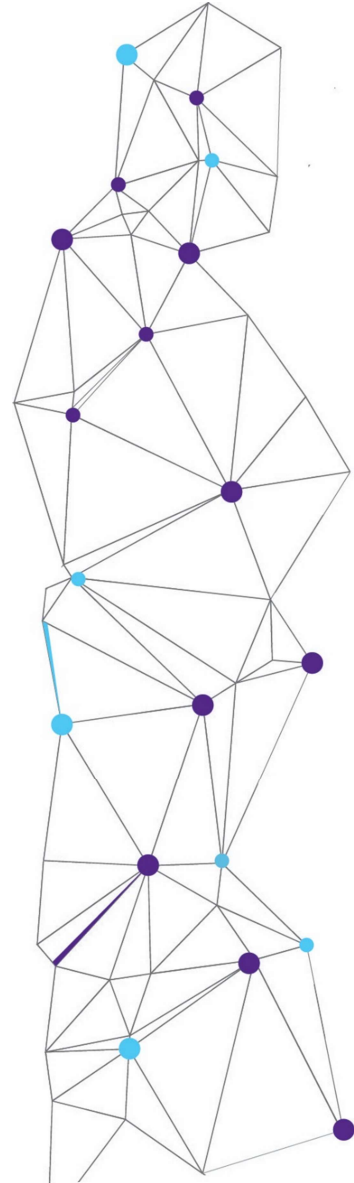
EU TODAY: A BROADER FRAMING OF THE THIRD MISSION

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

- Higher education policy: "societal challenges", "civic universities", *"innovation" as the "third mission" and "service to society" as the "fourth mission" of universities*

- Research policy: "societal challenges", "science with and for society", "citizen science"

- Cross-cutting: Universities' role in contributing to SDGs;

  COVID-19 increases the urgency of the societal role of universities

MEASUREMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION
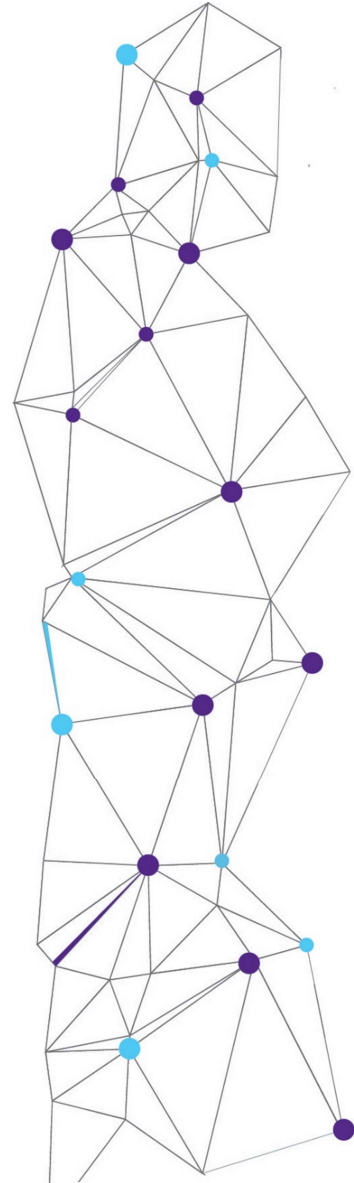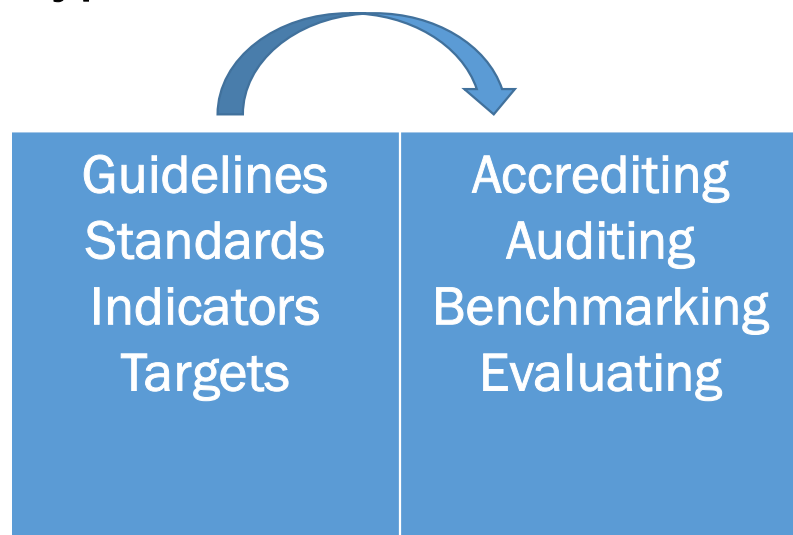
Typical measurement and assessment tools

| Guidelines Standards Indicators Targets | Accrediting Auditing Benchmarking Evaluating |

MEASUREMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Typical measurement and assessment tools

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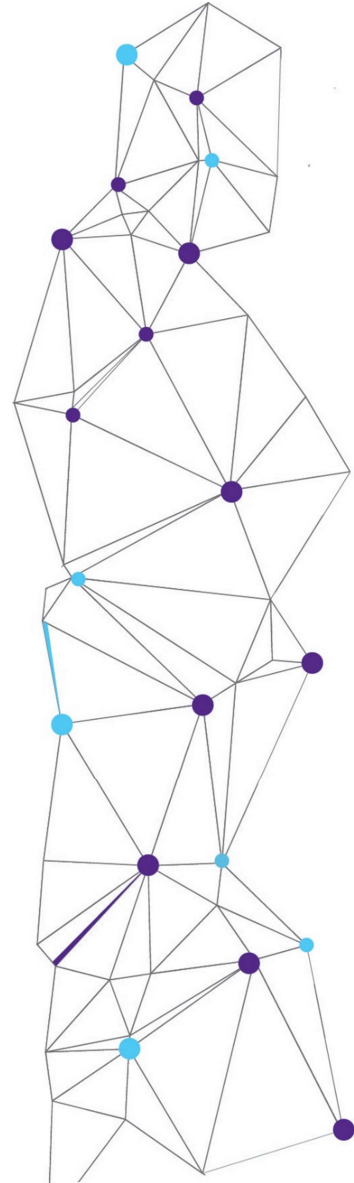
HOW TO MEASURE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

- There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach to community engagement – it is always context-specific.

- Community engagement is notoriously difficult to measure quantitatively.

- And this is all further complicated in a European transnational context.
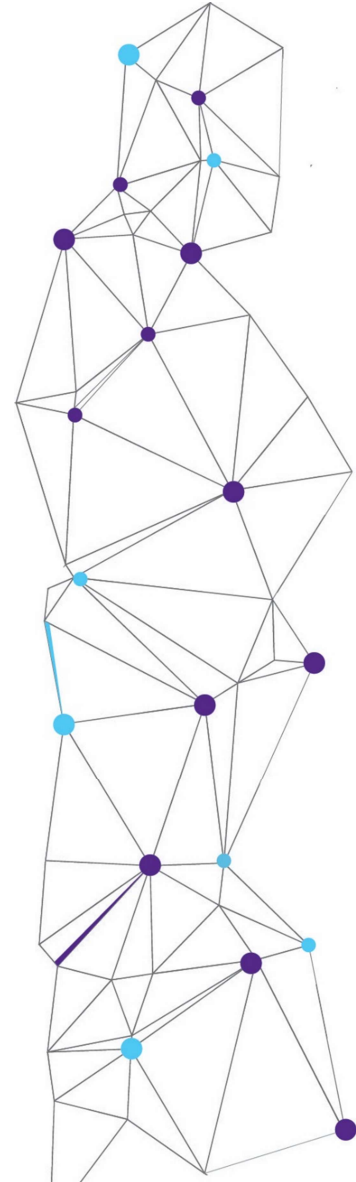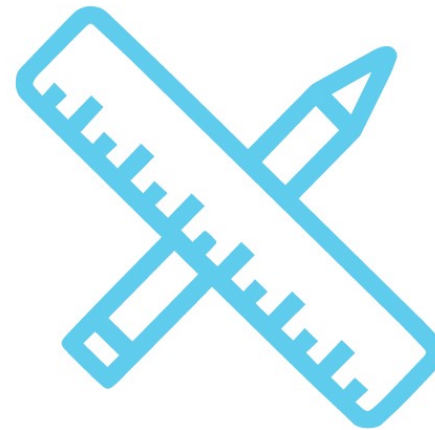
AND <u>WHY</u> MEASURE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

- Allow universities to **identify community engagement activities**

- Help them **understand how they perform** (by demonstrating the value and mutual benefits generated by such activities)

- Assist them in **eventual improvement.**

It is difficult to see how a metrics-based approach could lead to such outcomes…
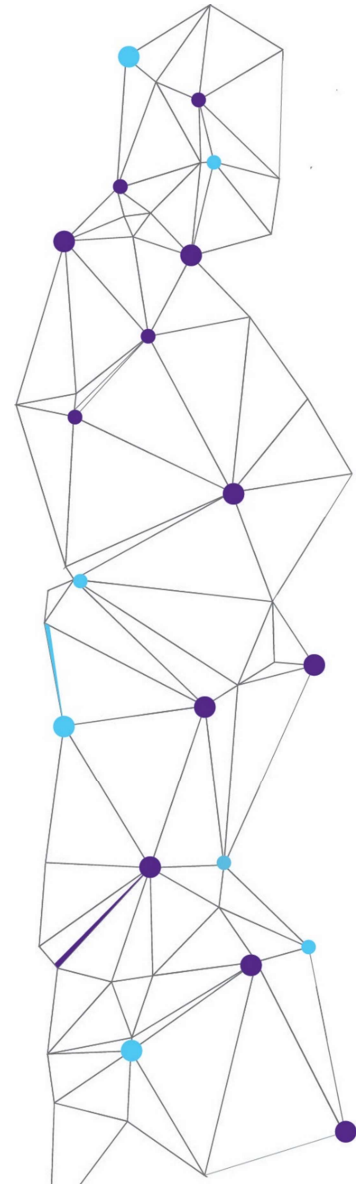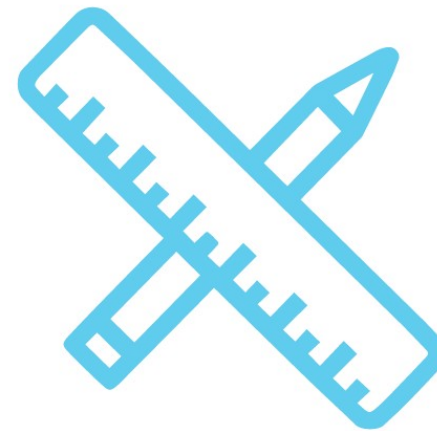
NEW EUROPEAN INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN HE

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

2018-2021

2020-2023
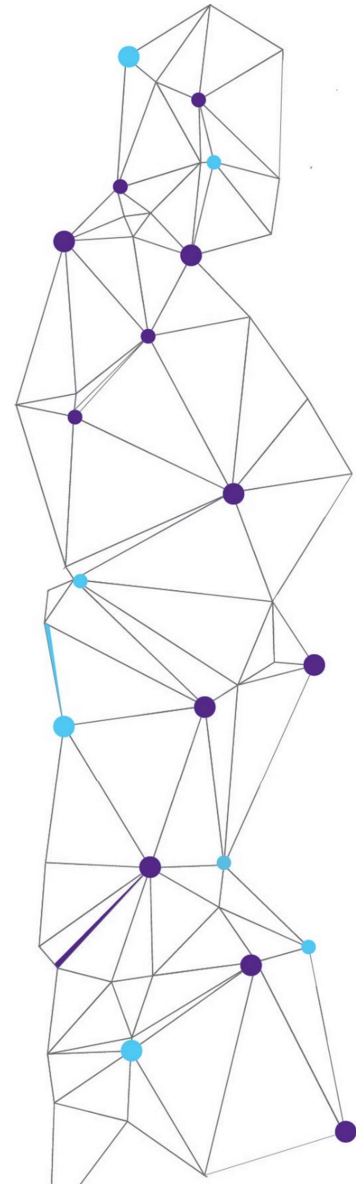
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cheps
Center for Higher Education Policy Studies

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TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY DUBLIN

Sveučilište u Rijeci
University of Rijeka

VUB

GHENT UNIVERSITY

Universitat de Girona

ECIU

OÉ Gaillimh
NUI Galway

DONAU UNIVERSITÄT KREMS
Donau-Universität Krems
Universität für Weiterbildung

ACUP
ASSOCIACIÓ CATALANA D'UNIVERSITATS PÚBLIQUES

PPMi

BRODOTO
making good visible

Map source: www.mapchart.net
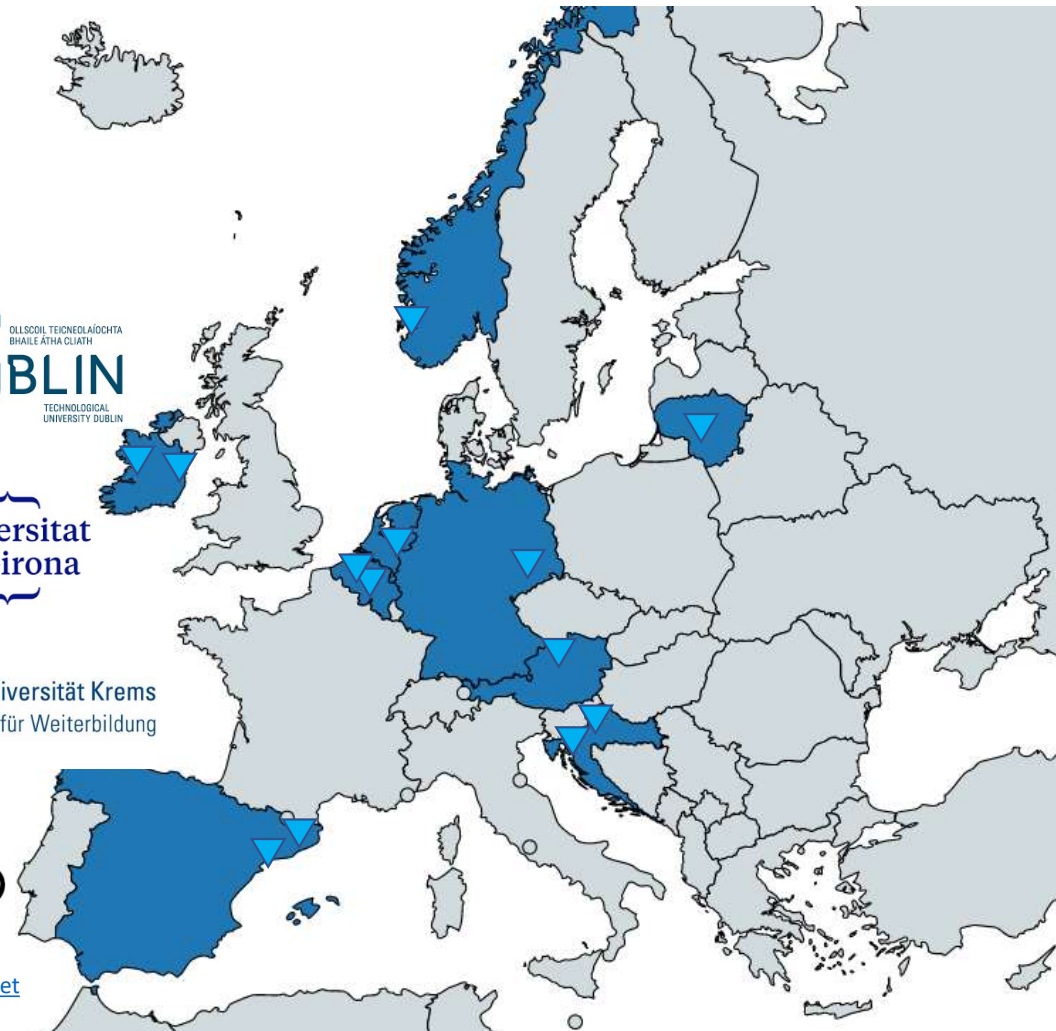
SHEFCE associate partners

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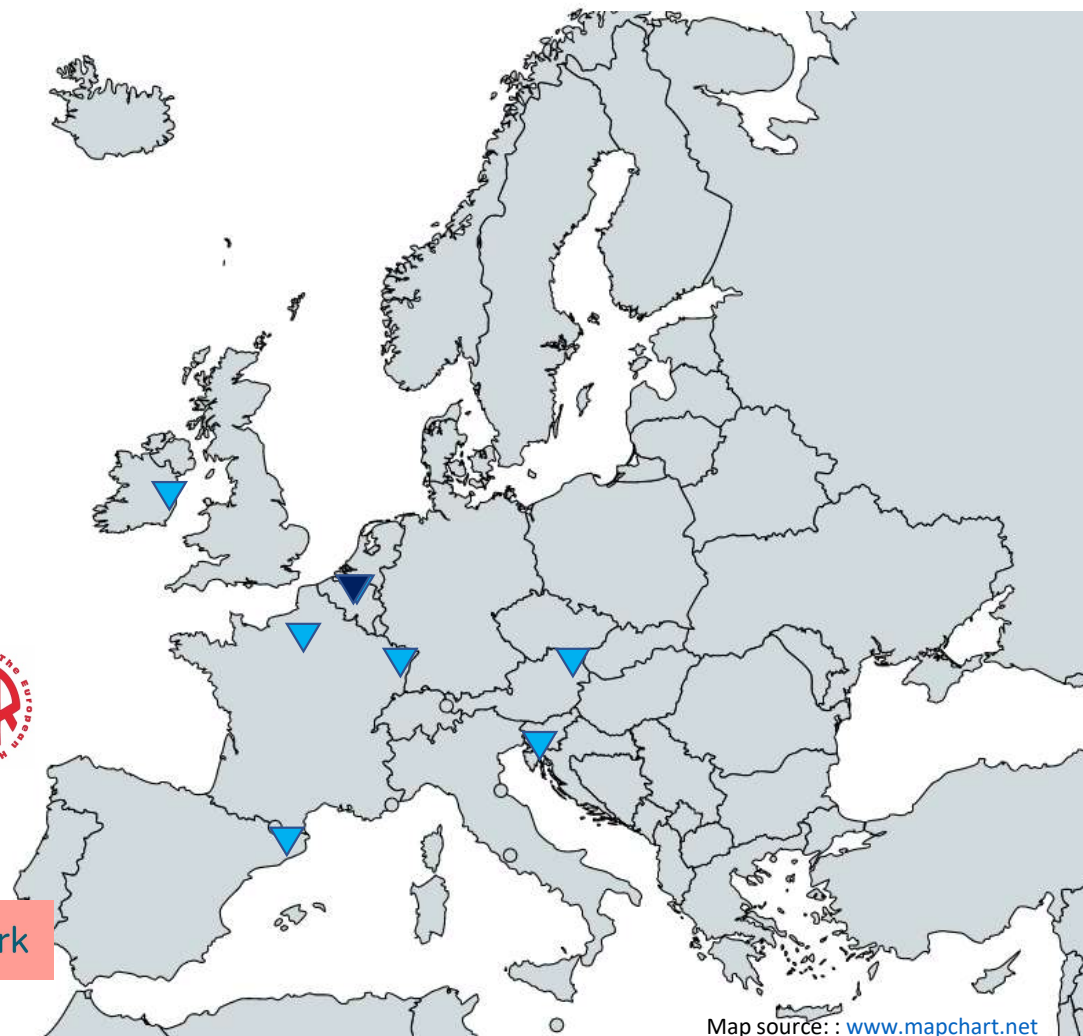
Map source: : www.mapchart.net

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO 'MEASURING' ENGAGEMENT

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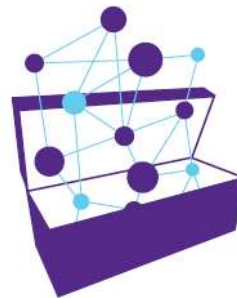- **Multifaceted and context-specific:** no comparison or ranking
- **Participative:** no desk-based checklists
- **Innovative:** inspired by, but going beyond, existing tools

TEFCE Toolbox

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

www.tefce.eu/toolbox
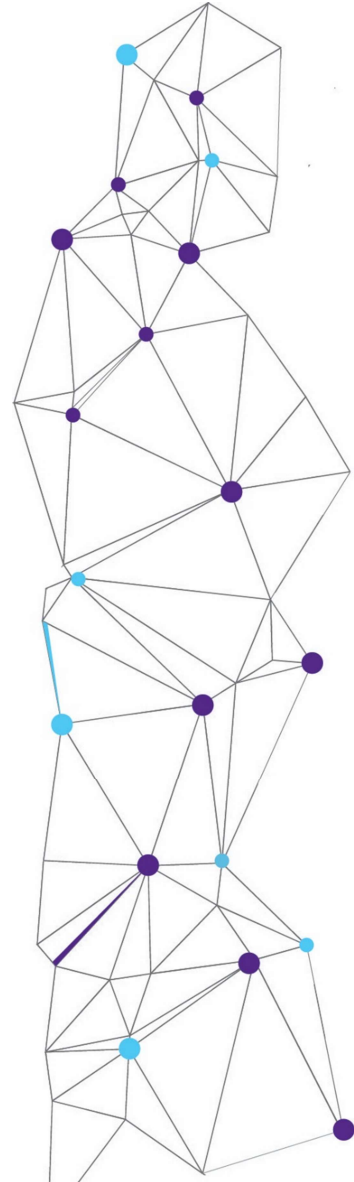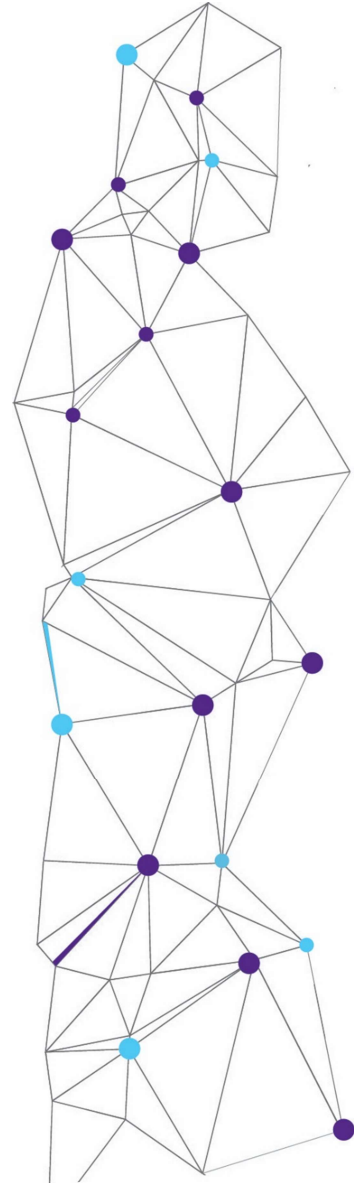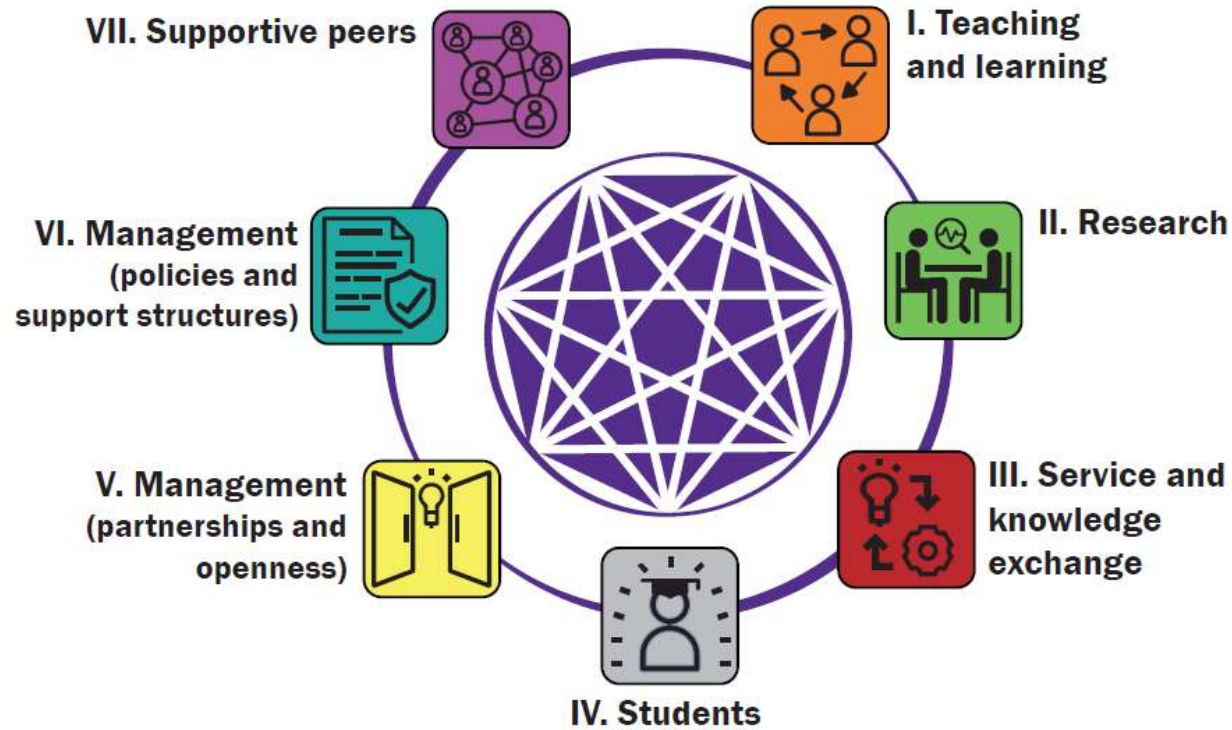
DIMENSIONS OF ENGAGEMENT

VII. Supportive peers

I. Teaching and learning

VI. Management (policies and support structures)

II. Research

V. Management (partnerships and openness)

III. Service and knowledge exchange

IV. Students

DIMENSIONS OF ENGAGEMENT

	I. Teaching and learning	Credit-bearing courses in partnership with communities: *E.g. community-based learning / service-learning; project-based learning*

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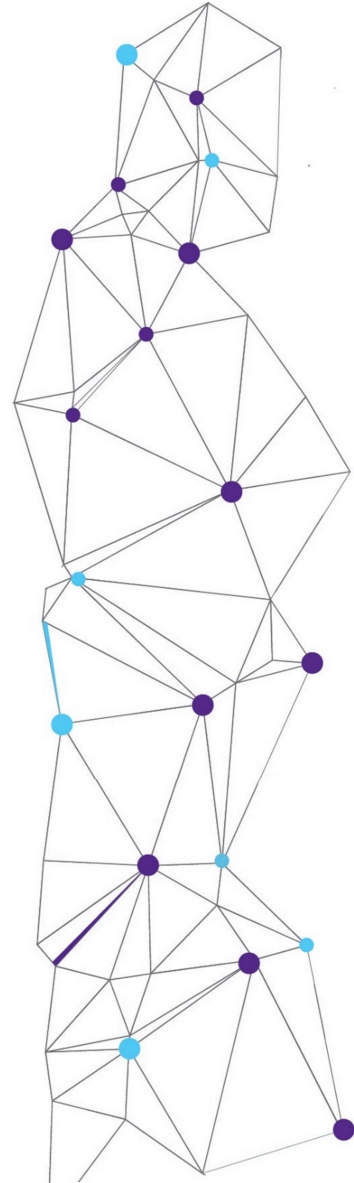|		
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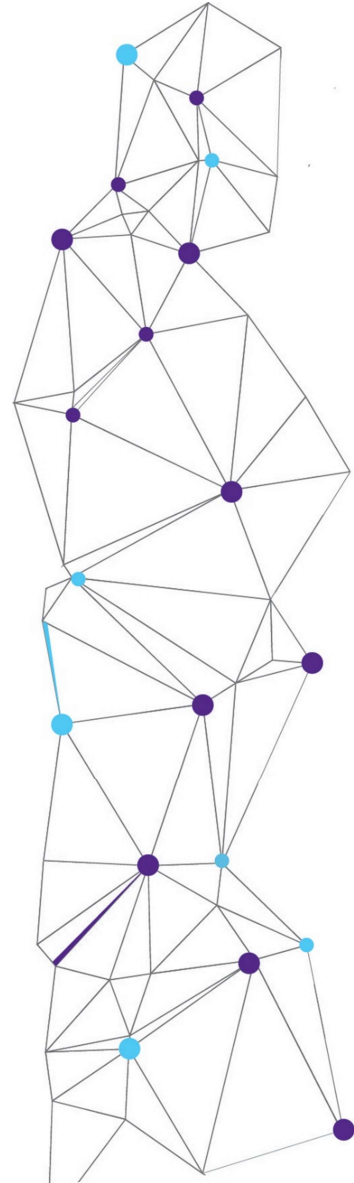# DIMENSIONS OF ENGAGEMENT

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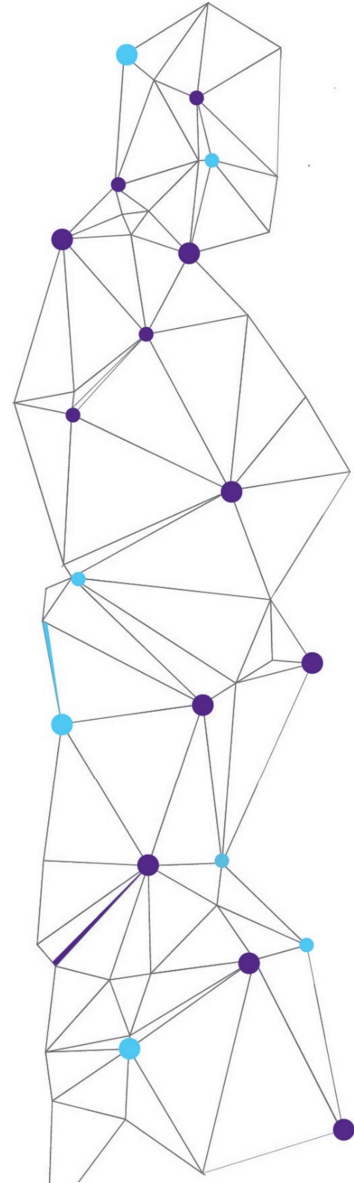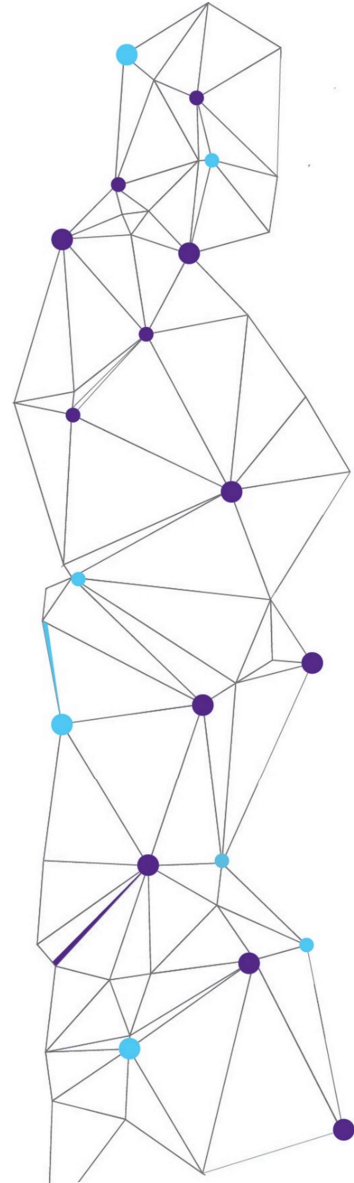|		
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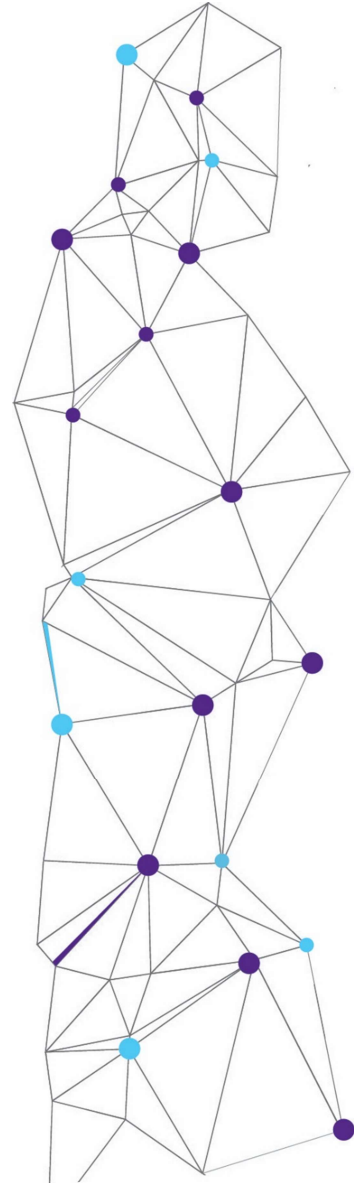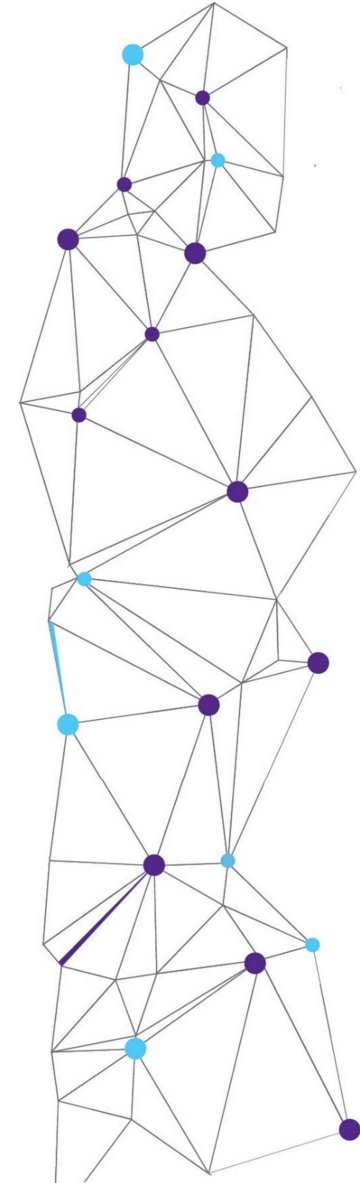|		
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	VI. Management (policies, support structures)	Policies and institutional support structures
	VII: Supportive peers	Supportive environment among academic and administrative staff
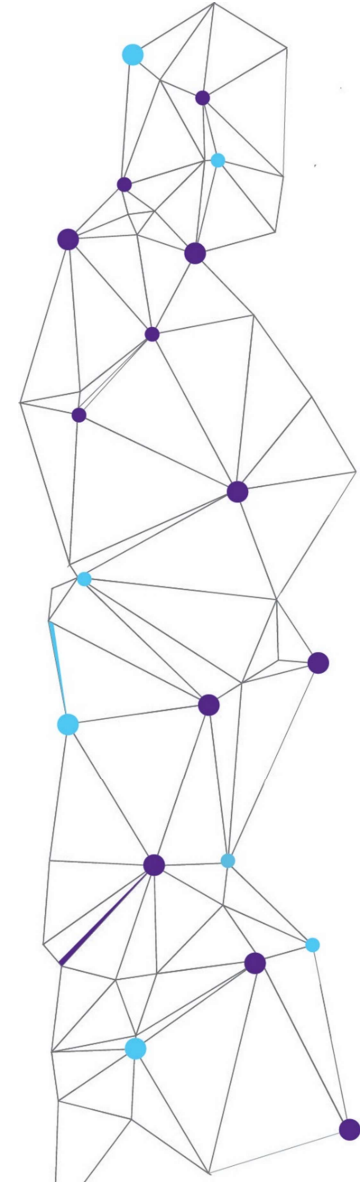
DIMENSIONS OF ENGAGEMENT

Each dimension has 2-4 sub-dimensions – with a total of **20 sub-dimensions** of community engagement
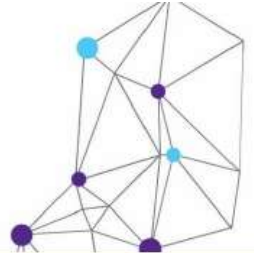
I. Teaching and learning

I.1. The university has study programmes or courses to respond to societal needs that are specific to the university's context and its external communities.

I.2. The university has study programmes or courses that include a community-based learning component for students.

I.3. The university facilitates the participation of community representatives in the teaching and learning process (in a curricular or extra-curricular context).

I.4. The university has study programmes or courses that are created, reviewed or evaluated in consultation/cooperation with the university's external communities.

II. Research

II.1. The university carries out research focusing on the societal needs of the university's external communities.

II.2. The university carries out collaborative/participatory research in cooperation with the university's external communities.

III. Service and knowledge exchange

III.1. University staff contribute to debates and initiatives that address societal needs of the university's external communities.

III.2. University staff provide their knowledge to support and/or build the capacity of the university's external communities.

III.3. University staff community-engagement activities have resulted in demonstrable benefits for the university's external communities.

IV. Students

IV.1. Students deliver community-engagement activities independently through student organisations or initiatives.

IV.2. The university facilitates and supports partnerships between students and external communities.

V. Management (partnerships and openness)

V.1. The university has a track record of mutually beneficial partnerships with its external communities.

V.2. The university makes learning and research resources accessible to its external communities.

V.3. The university has facilities and services that are jointly managed and/or accessible to its external communities.

VI. Management (policies and support structures)

VI.1. The university provides support and/or incentives for community-engagement achievements by its staff, students and external communities.

VI.2. The university has a support structure (e.g. committee, office or staff) for embedding and coordinating community-engagement activities at the university level.

VI.3. The university has staff-development policies (e.g. recruitment, tenure, promotion) that include community engagement as a criterion.

VI.4. The university has a mission, strategy, leadership and (funding) instruments that specifically promote community engagement.

VII. Supportive peers

VII.1. The university has prominent academic staff members that have a strong track-record of community engagement and that advocate for its further advancement.

VII.2. The university's academic staff are acceptive of the idea of university-community engagement and of the value and rigour of community-engaged teaching and research.
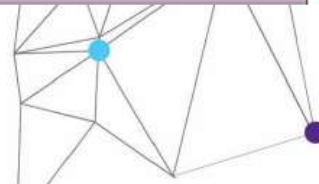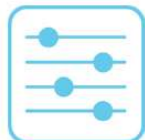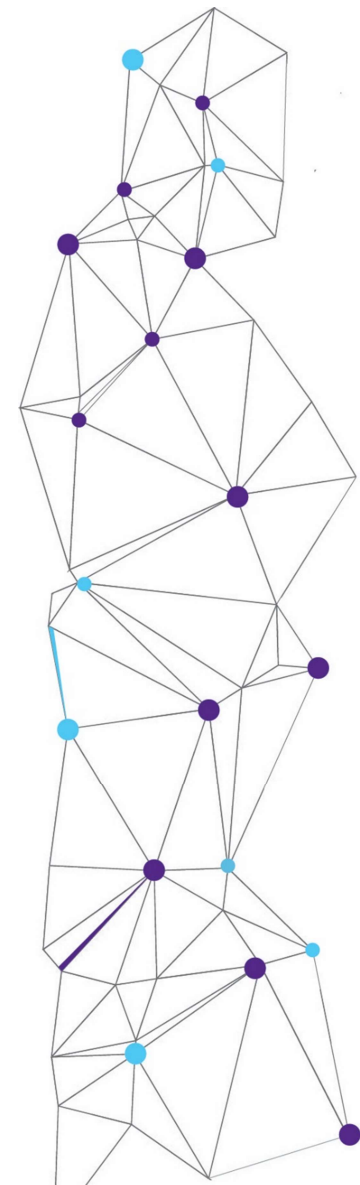
TOOL 2

LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

Each sub-dimension has different levels – indicating the level of authenticity of community engagement (from beginner to advanced)

Example:

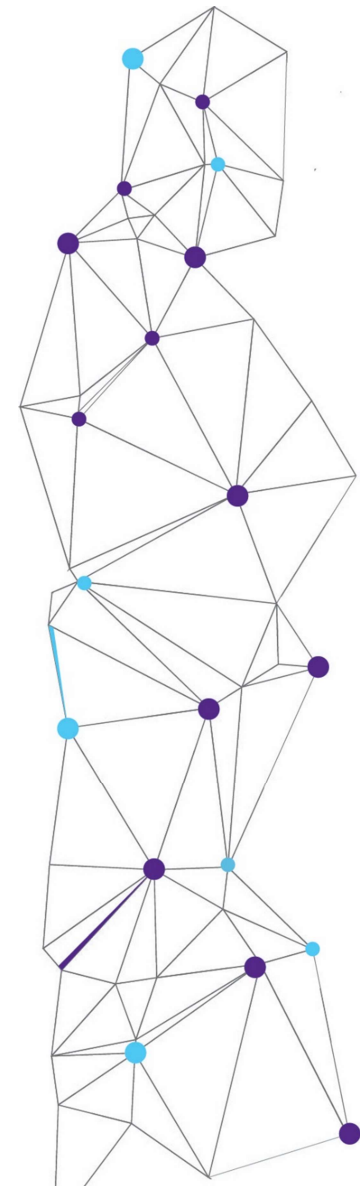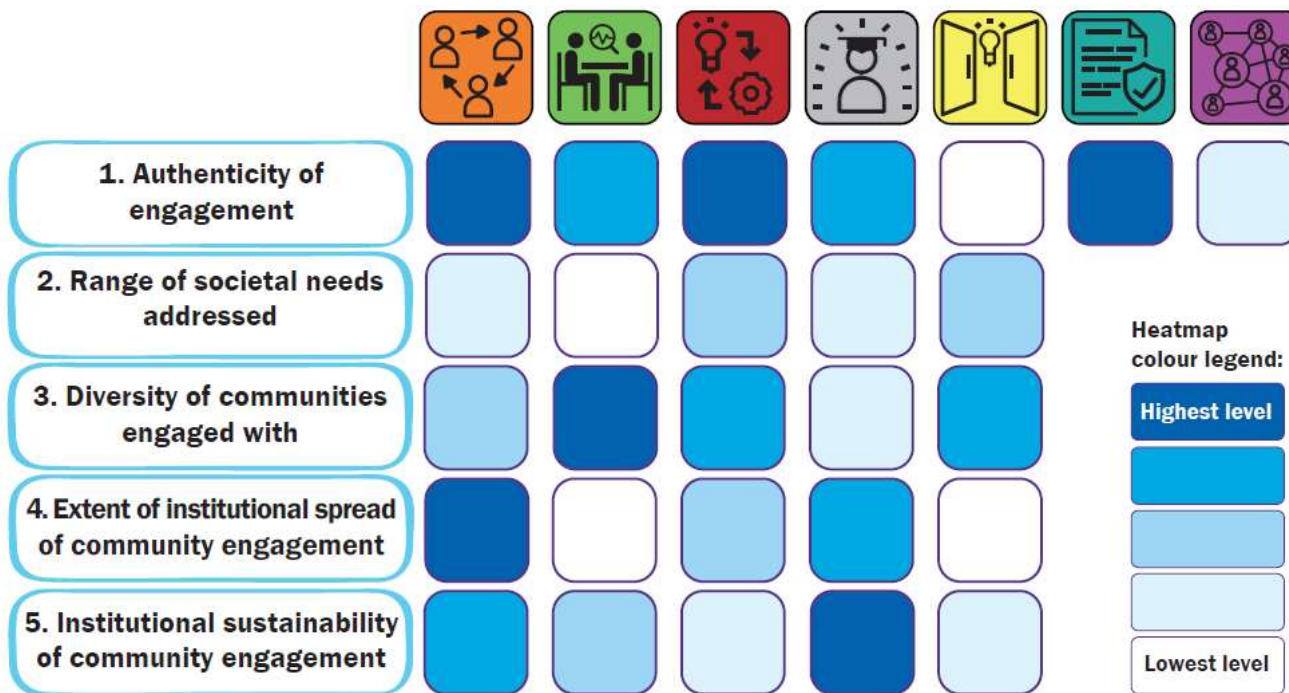| Community-based learning is included in relevant study programmes at the university and...	
Level 1	... benefits students to develop their knowledge and skills, although there is little evidence yet of their outcomes for the community.
Level 2	
Level 3	... has demonstrated benefits for students and supports community partners in addressing a short-term problem or need.
Level 4	
Level 5	... builds capacities of community partners and bring equal benefits to the students, teaching staff and university as a whole.

TOOL 3

INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNITY-ENGAGEMENT HEATMAP

1. Authenticity of engagement							
2. Range of societal needs addressed							
3. Diversity of communities engaged with							
4. Extent of institutional spread of community engagement							
5. Institutional sustainability of community engagement							

Heatmap colour legend:

Highest level

Lowest level

TOOL 4

SLIPDOT ANALYSIS

Customised SWOT analysis for
self-reflection discussions

| Areas of Strength	Areas of Lower Intensity	Areas with Potential for Development

| Opportunities	Threats
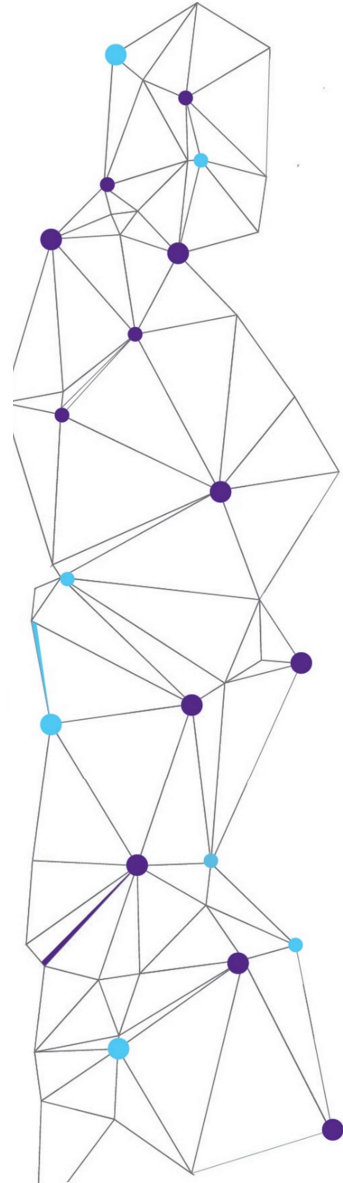
TEFCE TOOLBOX PILOTING RESULTS

- **Facilitates a learning journey**, rather compliance or competition.

- **Raises the visibility** of the value the university brings to communities (& vice-versa)

- **Supports intrinsic motivation** of community-engaged staff, students and partners.

- **Supports peer-learning** between institutions

- **Provides a basis for action-planning**
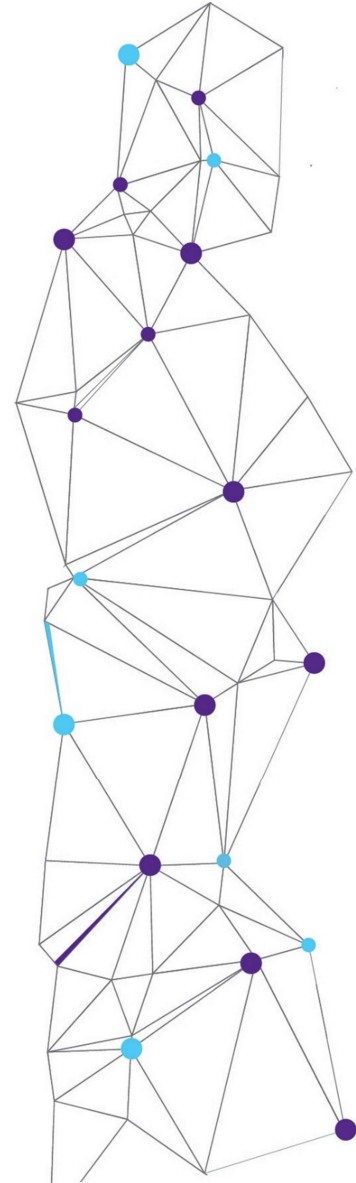
FINAL THOUGHTS: ENGAGEMENT vs. IMPACT?

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AS A PATHWAY TO IMPACT

IMPACT
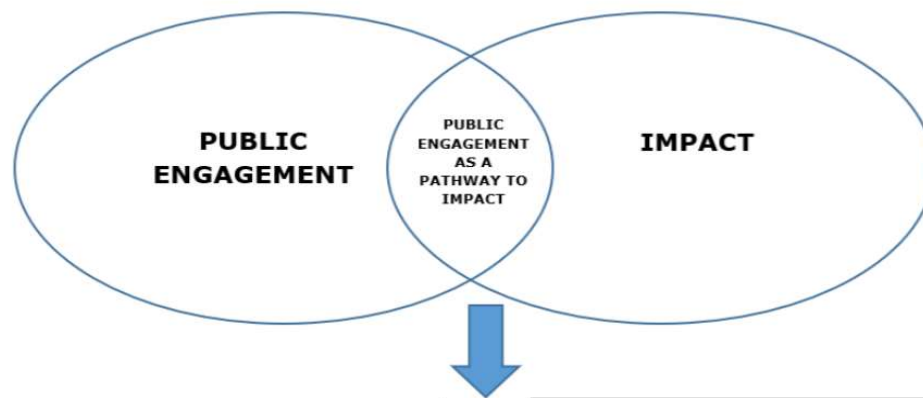
'Public engagement describes the myriad ways in which the activity and benefits of higher education and research can be shared with the public. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit'.
**National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE)**

'For the purposes of the REF, impact is defined as an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia'.
Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
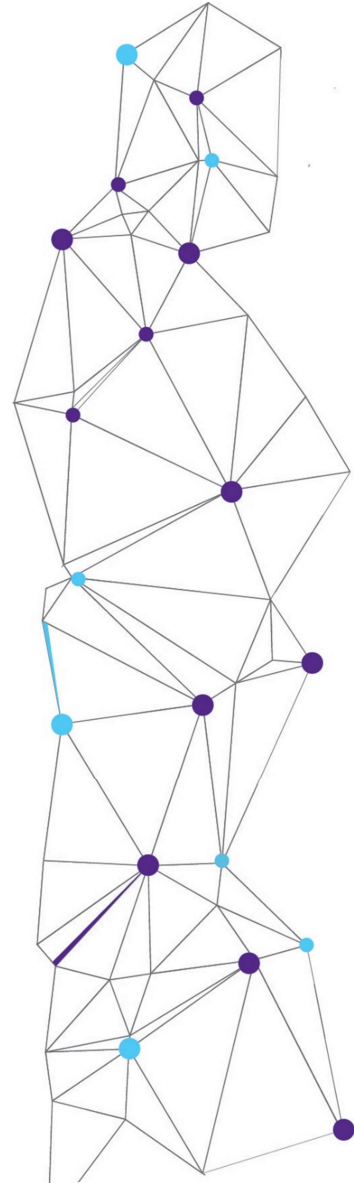
FINAL THOUGHTS: WHAT FUTURE FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN EUROPE?

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

- European Universities Initiative
- Achieiving a European Education Area („service to society")

- New initiative: Local Mission of Higher Education

- Civic engagement among top 3 priorities till 2030
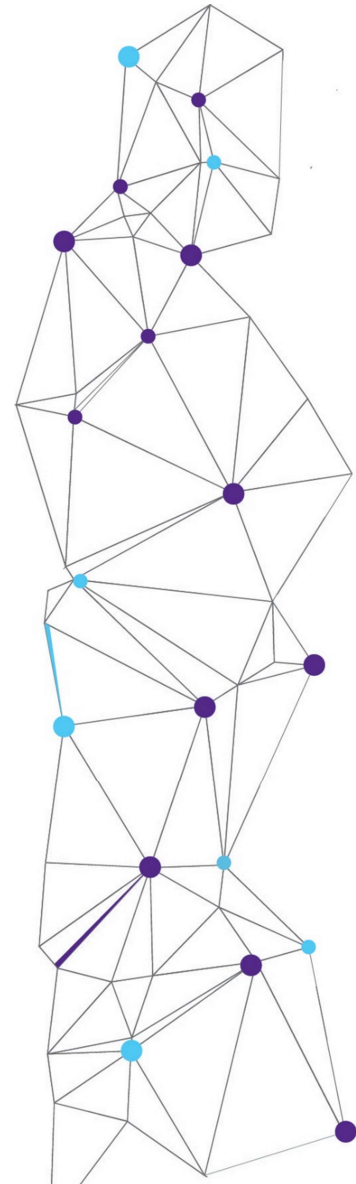
Thank you for your attention!

Thomas Farnell
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