ServiceLearning

SL-ICP University empowering society

KA2 Erasmus+ : Service-Learning

Intersectoral Collaboration Practices for the development of students´ soft skills and socially engaged universities

Service-Learning – Key facts

For a new academic ethos societally oriented,
for a collaborative education addressing real world challenges,
for students to be fully engaged.

1.   What is Service-Learning? – Complete definitions

Both suggested definitions are equally valid and useful.

Service-Learning (S-L) in higher education is an experiential educational method in which students engage in community service, reflect critically on this experience, and learn from it personally, socially and academically. The activities address human, social and environmental needs from the perspective of social justice and sustainable development, and are focused on enriching learning in higher education, fostering civic responsibility and strengthening community engagement. S-L is recognized with ECTS. (EASLHE, 2021).

or

Service-Learning (S-L) (sometimes referred to as community based or community engaged learning) is an innovative pedagogical approach that integrates meaningful community service or engagement into the curriculum and offers academic credit to students for the learning that derives from active engagement within community and work on a real world problem. Reflection and experiential learning strategies underpin the process and the service is linked to the academic discipline. (Europe Engage, 2015)

2.   What is Service-Learning in brief?

It is learning by providing a service to the community; it is a contribution to the education of competent citizens capable of transforming society.

3.   What Service-Learning is NOT? 🚫

A volunteering program or an internship

4. Which are the basic requirements for a Service-Learning activity?

Reflection **|** Learning **|** Participation **|** Service

5. How can Service-Learning be integrated in the curriculum?

SL projects must be linked to the content of the subjects and to social organizations. Its integration in the curriculum can take different formats…

⟹ in the teaching syllabus of any subject;

⟹ in internships;

⟹ in final bachelor or/and master thesis;

⟹ in specific S-L courses that recognize student participation in S-L projects with ECTS.
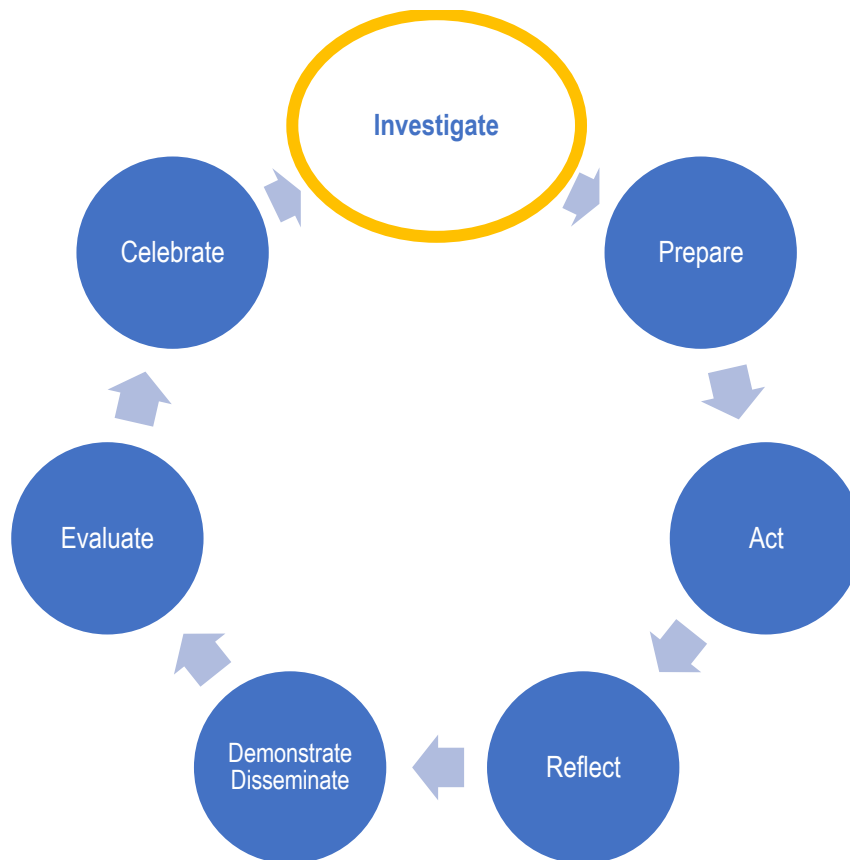
6. In what context is Service-Learning relevant?

☐ In response to the Renewed EU Agenda for Higher Education (2017; art. 2.2), that invites universities to "not be ivory towers, but civic-minded learning communities connected to their communities".[1]

☐ In the context of CIVIS 2.0 whereby there will be many opportunities for developing SL projects across Hubs, Streams and Work Packages. According to the CIVIS Board of Rectors "Service-Learning experiences, through community engagement, certifiable practical skills, and co-creation spaces for social innovation, are some of the shared instruments our Alliance will mobilise to assert its civic identity and help enrich its wider communities" (11-02-2022).[2]

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[1] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0247&rid=4

[2] In Stream 1 "Challenge-based Education & Civic Engagement" (WP 4 "Local and Global Civic Engagement projects") and in Stream 3 "Embedded Joint Educational Offer" (WP 9 "Accredited Joint Educational Offer" and WP 11 "Accrediting modular Educational Offer").

7. Which are the key steps to be carried out in a Service-Learning project?

8. What are the benefits of Service-Learning?

- o Conceive of innovative pedagogies and experiment with new teaching approaches;
- o Build bridges between the academic world and local social, economic, political & cultural stakeholders;
- o Foster more informed and engaged citizens;
- o Facilitate access to educational and citizen science resources to a broad public;
- o Offer learning opportunities for staff (academic and professional);
- o Establish knowledge co-creating teams involving the universities and local and global partners

…and much more.

9. Eleven (11) Minimum Quality Standards of Service-Learning

Service-Learning Activities must satisfy the following standards (according to Europe Engage, 2016):[3]

1. **are meaningful and relevant** to persons/institutions and offer opportunities to learn and deepen understanding for all participants (students, faculty and community partners);

2. **define goals** (reachable and measurable) for each specific S-L project;

3. **meet needs** and goals defined by community partners;

4. **are designed and planned by students/student groups** actively collaborating with community partners;

5. **ensure support and coaching** for students both from academic staff and from community partners;

6. **are linked to the curriculum/study programme** in an explicit way that learning outcomes can easily be linked to academic theory and methodology both for students and teachers;

7. **offer adequate time frames** to make experiences and learn in community settings/with community partners in an effective and sustainable way;

8. **enhance voice and active participation** of students and community partners in order promote an active learning process and deeper understanding;

9. **encourage systematic reflection** on learning processes and outcomes for all participants. For students it is important to link their experiences to the theoretical and methodological background of the subject;

10. **include evaluation and documentation** as integral parts of S-L Activities in order to prepare a final presentation of the results evaluated by community partners;

11. **assess the overall impact** of the S-L Activities both for the civic/ community partners, the university and the neighbourhood/setting.

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[3] EUROPE ENGAGE: developing a culture of civic engagement through Service-Learning within higher education in Europe, pp. 6-7, 2016, https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/4676aec5-7f74-4a0c-bdff-cda07beb4892/guidelines-euengage-2.pdf

10. Service-Learning Examples

THE SERVICE FRAMEWORK	THE LEARNING FRAMEWORK
Students teach computing to adults who are not familiar with technology in order to help them overcome the "digital divide"	Students practice computer skills; understand the implications of the "digital divide"; develop communication and social skills with the elderly; experiment with teaching methodologies.
Students design educational programmes in urban parks in order to support environmental awareness and social wellbeing among adults who study in second chance high schools	Students learn how to design an educational programme based on innovative pedagogies; implement the programme in real life situation; understand adult education and the needs of second chance school pupils; develop communication and social skills; experiment with teaching methodologies.
Medical and Nursing students act as clowns in oncological hospital units to sooth children with cancer during their hospitalisation	Students have a direct contact with patients, family and medical professionals; understand the living conditions in hospitals; develop empathy; build key professional skills, both academic and social.
Students and professors of Law give legal services to individuals and disadvantaged groups (i.e. refugees), collaborating with public, social and professional organizations.	Students gain knowledge of various legal subjects; learn about human rights, immigration law etc.; develop Empathy; practice communication skills.
Students can apply their knowledge of physics to solve problems in their communities.	Students study inclined planes to assess the effectiveness of wheelchair ramps in their school.

11. Useful websites on Service-Learning Examples

o   European Observatory of Service-Learning in Higher Education: https://www.eoslhe.eu/
o   Europe Engage Project: https://www.eoslhe.eu/europe-engage/ and https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/project-result-content/4676aec5-7f74-4a0c-bdff-cda07beb4892/guidelines-euengage-2.pdf
o   University of Tübingen Service-Learning Training Programme: https://uni-tuebingen.de/studium/studienangebot/ueberfachliche-kompetenzen/gesellschaftliches-engagement/service-learning-seminare/
o   A Service-Learning example in detail: https://www.edutopia.org/article/service-learning-high-school-physics
o   https://www.edutopia.org/blog/what-heck-service-learning-heather-wolpert-gawron
o   https://www.elmhurst.edu/blog/what-is-service-learning/
    and others.