


FORUM

MEMBER
MAGAZINE

Discussing international education

UNIVERSITIES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

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Published by

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www.eaie.org

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Printed by Drukkerij Raddraaier, Amsterdam

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ISSN 1389-0808

Image: Shutterstock



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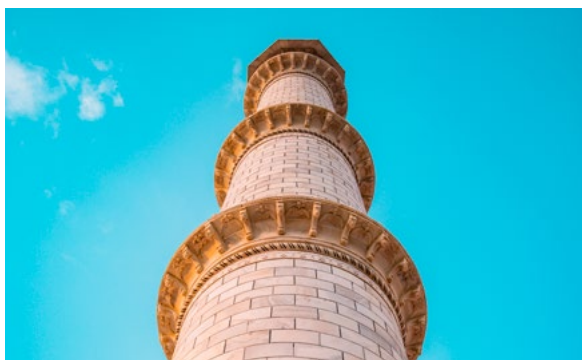
“It has been common during the crisis for individuals to host Ukrainian refugees at their homes and provide them with shelter, food, clothing and assistance”

**SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE:
THE VIEW FROM NEXT DOOR**

20

“The period from now to 2030 has the potential to become the decade of community engagement in higher education in Europe”

**IN CONVERSATION WITH
NINOSLAV ŠČUKANEC SCHMIDT**



30

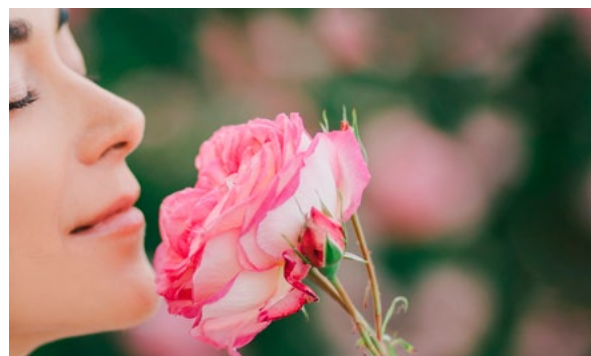
“Universities should get out of their ivory towers and put their resources and wisdom in the service of society”

**IHES CATALONIA LAB:
OPENING UP THE IVORY TOWER**

38

“In moving around, we gain a broader perspective of our surroundings – but only by immersing ourselves in our environment do we make this a meaningful endeavour”

MINDFUL MOBILITY



EDITORIAL

The connections between higher education institutions and their communities are frequently discussed – what place is there for civic engagement in institutional strategy? How connected to the local community is the research undertaken by academic staff? How does an institution connect with prospective students and their families in a meaningful way?

In the context of international education, these questions turn to definitions of community which extend beyond local geography and national belonging – how does a university engage meaningfully with its alumni who live abroad? What value is placed on the global networks of higher education institutions to which a university belongs? And, importantly, how do the international activities of an institution inform and enrich approaches to community engagement at home?

At a time when the global pandemic has forced us to live locally, re-engaging with our local communities in the face of strict lockdowns in certain countries and discouraged (or even prevented) from international travel through public health directives, is it perhaps the case that many in our society have turned their backs on the world beyond their immediate locality? Increasing concerns about climate change are also discouraging many from air travel post-pandemic. As such, how will our institutions continue to nurture their community ties abroad in the face of possible disengagement at home?

These questions are put under the microscope in the Winter 2022 issue of *Forum*, which presents perspectives from across Europe and further afield on the intersections between higher education institutions and their multiple communities.

Pressingly, in the face of ongoing military aggression by Russia against Ukraine, the international education community worldwide has sought to express solidarity with members of its community in Ukraine in meaningful and tangible ways, and I'm delighted that the two initial contributions to this issue address key perspectives on community engagement in this context. The EAIE's vision is for an equitable world in which international education connects diverse perspectives and fosters greater understanding. As such, there is no more contradictory act to the ethos of international educators than war between nations.

Other articles selected for this issue of *Forum* reflect on global citizenship and mobility, and their connections to community engagement locally. Further contributions reflect on the local democratic mission of higher education in Europe and the use of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in community engagement.

I am delighted that Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt, Executive Director and Founder of the Institute for the Development of Education in Croatia, agreed to be interviewed for this issue. Ninoslav has significant expertise in the social dimension of higher education, and his organisation has spearheaded two EU-funded projects designed to build the capacities of universities, policymakers and stakeholders in Europe for mainstreaming community engagement in higher education. Reflecting on seven dimensions of community engagement in higher education, Ninoslav recognises that internationalisation can be ingrained in each of these dimensions. Furthermore, he highlights the ways



in which community engagement is emerging as a policy priority in higher education in Europe.

It is certain that internationalisation has the potential to play a transformative role in society and in the various communities of higher education institutions. What is less clear still is how higher education itself conceives of the connections between community engagement and international education. Hopefully the development of new frameworks and policies at a European level will support clearer pathways to action worldwide.

In closing, I am reminded that the EAIE itself is a community and would like to thank the members of the 15 EAIE Expert Communities for their guidance and support to the work of the Publications Committee. A warm debt of gratitude also to Ragnhild Solvi Berg who joined me in reviewing submissions for this issue.

I hope that you enjoy reading this edition of *Forum*.

— DOUGLAS PROCTOR, EDITOR
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IN CONVERSATION WITH

**NINOSLAV
ŠČUKANEC
SCHMIDT**

JACOB GIBBONS
EAIE





For professionals working on community engagement in European higher education, the Institute for the Development of Education in Croatia is blazing important new trails. As Founder and Executive Director of the Institute, Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt has been intimately involved in important initiatives like the TEFCE Toolbox and the push for more qualitative and bottom-up approaches to community engagement. In our conversation, he espouses an optimistic view of the coming decade for universities and their positive engagement with society.

As Executive Director and Founder of the Institute for the Development of Education (IDE) in Croatia, you have written frequently on the connections between higher education institutions (HEIs) and their communities. What role does the IDE play in this space?

NS: Community engagement is a process whereby universities engage with community stakeholders to undertake joint activities that should be mutually beneficial. Rather than being motivated by a sense of moral or social responsibility, the engagement of universities with communities brings tangible benefits to the university's knowledge process, and university knowledge helps the community partners fulfill their needs.

In order to support the development of community engagement in higher education in Europe, IDE initiated two EU-funded projects entitled 'Towards a European Framework for Community Engagement in Higher Education' (TEFCE)¹ and 'Steering Higher Education for Community Engagement' (SHEFCE).² These projects aim to define

a common European approach to community engagement in higher education, as well as creating assessment tools and policy recommendations that could push this agenda forward by both assisting universities and supporting policymakers.

The TEFCE project developed a new framework to support community engagement, without using metrics, ranking or bureaucratic self-assessment questionnaires: the TEFCE Toolbox, which is an institutional self-reflection framework for community engagement in higher education. In practice, the TEFCE Toolbox serves as a reference tool for universities, communities and policymakers to better understand the dimensions of community engagement in higher education and serves as a practical tool for universities to determine how well they perform according to each dimension, as well as where they can improve.

The TEFCE Toolbox has received positive feedback from international stakeholders. For this reason, a follow-up project proposal was developed entitled 'Steering Higher Education

for Community Engagement’, and the proposal was awarded Erasmus+ funding in July 2020. The project, which began in 2020 and will last until 2023, will undertake the crucial next steps in the process of building the capacities of universities, policymakers and stakeholders in Europe for mainstreaming community engagement in higher education.

Sometimes referred to as the ‘social dimension’ of the work of HEIs, how do you view the connections between higher education institutions and their communities in the context of internationalisation? Do you see this reflected differently in relation to education, research and engagement?

NS: Community engagement in higher education works best when it is embedded in teaching and research and is engrained in universities’ institutional culture, rather than being considered a

encompassing the different areas of activities of the university: learning and teaching, research, service and knowledge exchange, students, partnerships and openness, policies and support structures, and supportive peers.

Internationalisation is engrained in all seven of these dimensions of community engagement in higher education. For instance, in learning and teaching, it could happen through service learning programmes. Such programmes can be designed relying on expertise and best practices that are available internationally, and you can cooperate with different international actors to implement them. This is one example of how you can solve a local problem by establishing an international partnership.

Another example, related to research, is citizen science projects with international partners. There are excellent examples of this in US universities working

institutional or European level? Are there particular countries, networks or institutions which model good practice?

NS: Policy priorities in higher education in Europe still focus on excellence and global rankings and do not explicitly encourage community engagement. The focus of universities’ activities has been increasingly on forms of engagement that have more tangible economic benefits and are easier to measure, like university technology transfer and associated activities focusing on the commercialisation of intellectual property. A 2022 Eurydice report³ shows that the majority of higher education systems in Europe (22 out of 37) provide no support or attention to the community engagement role of higher education institutions.

However, there are new initiatives on the European level which demonstrate that community engagement is emerging as a policy priority in higher education. For example, community engagement is appearing in the EHEA documents: in the 2020 Rome Ministerial Communiqué,⁴ 49 ministers of higher education committed to building an inclusive, innovative and interconnected European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2030. Under the goal of building a socially inclusive EHEA, the ministers adopted a new strategic document called ‘Principles and guidelines to strengthen the social dimension of higher education in the EHEA’.

University-community engagement could also be particularly fostered by the European Universities alliances whose mission is dedicated to fostering connectivity and co-creation opportunities with

Community engagement in higher education works best when it is embedded in teaching and research and is engrained in universities’ institutional culture

‘third mission’ that represents an additional and often peripheral activity on top of teaching and research. It can also happen through a range of other activities, including knowledge-exchange and service, student- and staff-led initiatives, as well as through support from university management. This is the reason why the TEFCE Toolbox defines seven dimensions of community engagement,

with different community stakeholders like hospitals, kindergartens, schools and museums, and I think different forms of internationalisation could play an important role here.

Does Europe have the right policy settings to encourage these connections? What policy tools exist to support and monitor community engagement at the

their external communities and citizens – as the alliance Young Universities for the Future of Europe (YUFE) and European University of Post-Industrial Cities (UNIC) already demonstrate.

What role do you see for ‘global citizenship’ education in support of the social responsibility agenda in HEIs and their connections with local society?

NS: Global initiatives, including ‘global citizenship’ education, could support development of the community engagement agenda in higher education, because these initiatives promote overcoming disciplinary silos and including multiple stakeholder partnerships, such as with governments, civil society, the media,

environmental degradation, and peace and justice, and set targets to be met by countries and territories by 2030. Higher education institutions have the potential to make significant contributions to all 17 SDGs based on their traditional functions of teaching, scientific research, innovation and their links with society.

What effect(s) do you see the growing commercialisation of international higher education having on third mission engagement by HEIs? What does this mean for the future trajectory of community engagement in higher education?

NS: The concept of community engagement covers a wide range of objectives,

‘Community’ refers to a broad range of external university stakeholders, but ideally with an emphasis on those with fewer resources. Universities engage regularly and systematically with businesses and policymakers, but have far more difficulties engaging with NGOs, social enterprises, or other civil society organisations that do not have the resources to easily engage with universities. Those less privileged stakeholders should therefore be considered the primary beneficiaries of community engagement.

Despite this trend, the period from now to 2030 has the potential to become the decade of community engagement in higher education in Europe. This vision could become a reality if all stakeholders succeed in creating a European movement for community engagement in higher education that combines the top-down and bottom-up approaches to policy making and policy advocacy.

The concept of community engagement covers a wide range of objectives, and as such it is resistant to being measured

industries, policy think tanks, and so on. The readiness to share substantial resources possessed by higher education institutions with the partnership may require a more flexible and responsive leadership of HEIs.

The United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a very good example of the global initiative that contributes to the development of community engagement in HE. It elaborates 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) addressing global challenges, including those related to quality education, inequality, innovation, sustainable cities and communities, climate change,

activities and outcomes, and as such it is resistant to being measured. The ‘new public management’ approach – which seeks to make the administration of public and non-profit organisations more efficient through the application of private sector management models – can only work on the basis of efficiency, by turning quantifiable data into simple indicators, which is often incompatible with the multifaceted and context-specific nature of community engagement. Instead, we need more qualitative, bottom-up approaches when we speak about community engagement, and this runs counter to the trend of commercialisation.

1. www.tefcec.eu

2. www.shefcec.eu

3. European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice [Eurydice]. (2022). *Towards equity and inclusion in higher education in Europe*. Eurydice report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

4. European Higher Education Area [EHEA]. (2020). Rome Ministerial Communiqué - Annex II to the Rome Ministerial Communiqué: Principles and guidelines to strengthen the social dimension of higher education in the EHEA. *EHEA Ministerial Conference*. Retrieved from: <https://ehea.info/page-ministerial-conference-rome-2020>



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