TEFCE

Towards a European Framework for Community Engagement in Higher Education

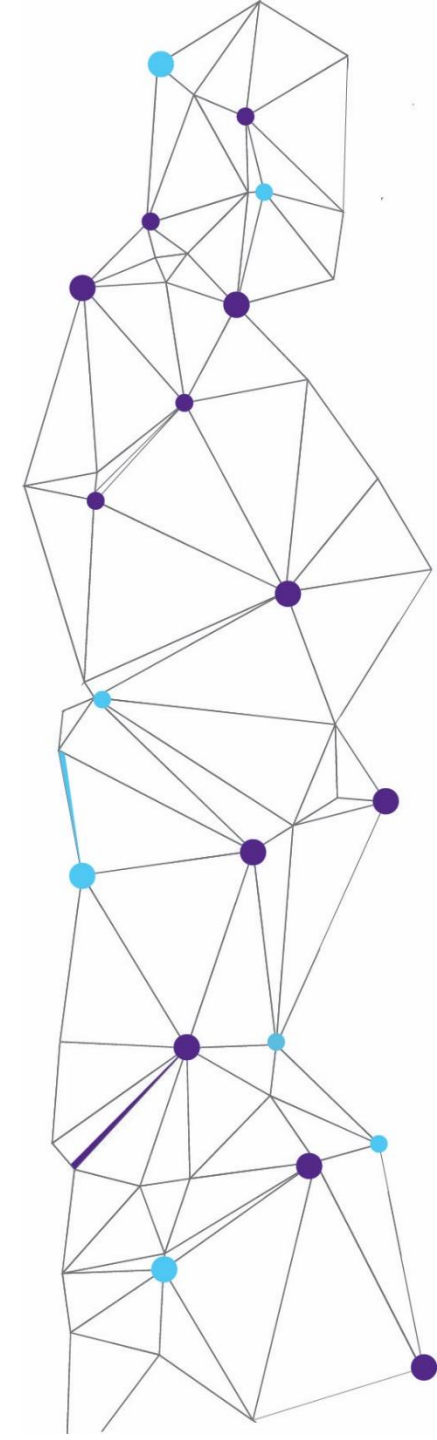# Towards a European Framework for Community Engagement in Higher Education
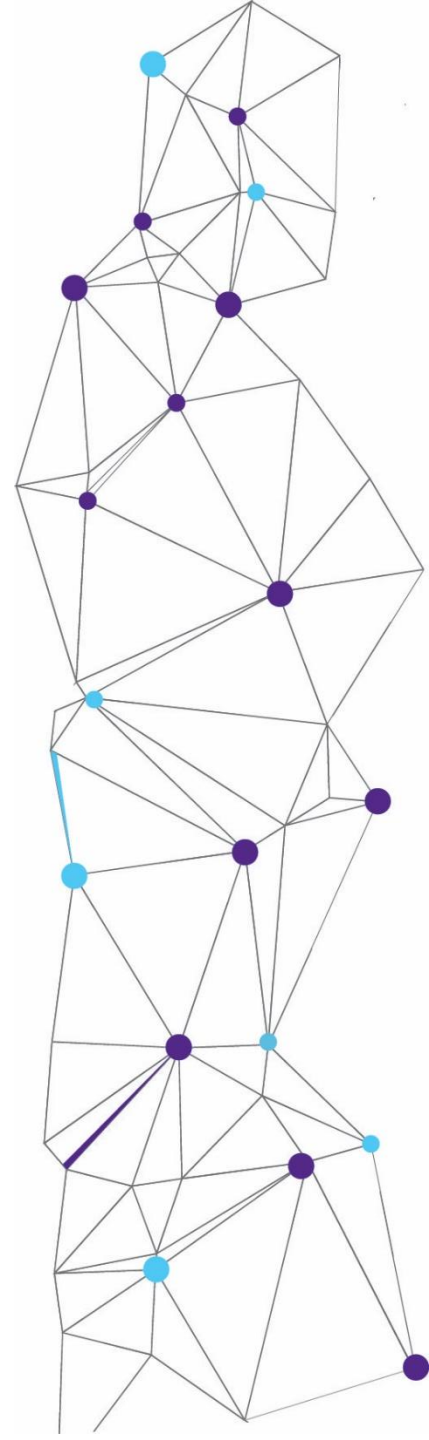
Snježana Prijić Samaržija, Rector
University of Rijeka, Croatia

Ninoslav S. Schmidt
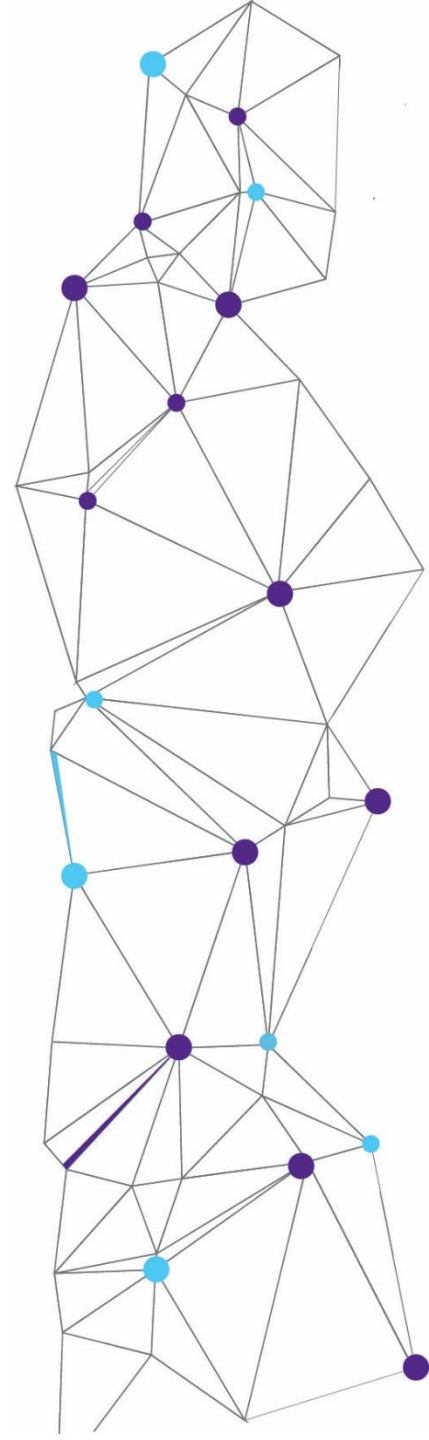Institute for the Development of Education, Croatia

#2020 EUA Annual Conference webinar series
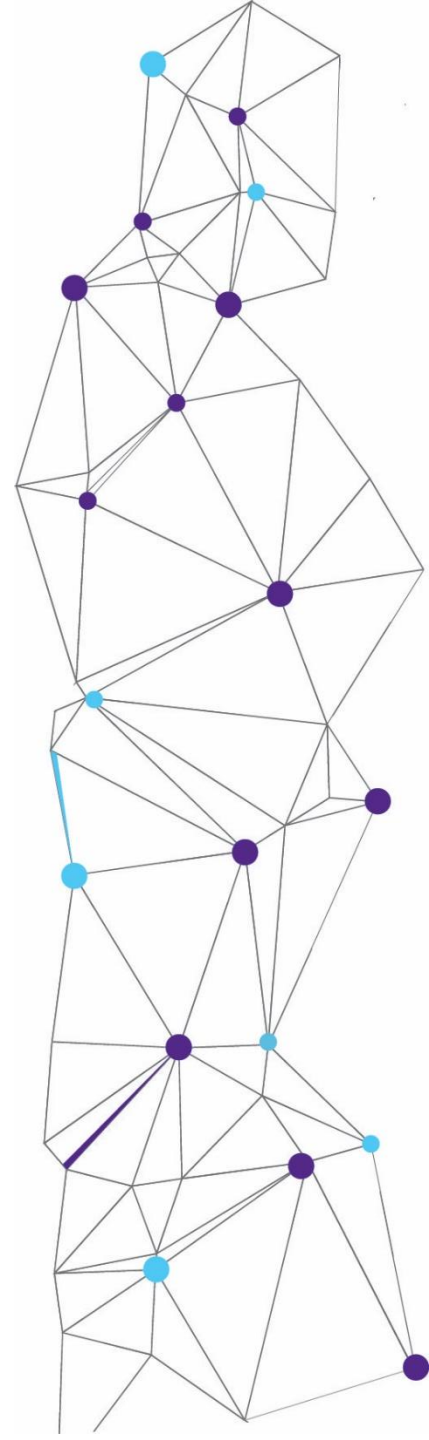22 April, 14.00-15.00 CET

OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION

1. Introduction
2. Background
3. **Definitions:** community engagement
4. Challenges
5. **Towards a European Framework** for community engagement
6. **Piloting the TEFCE Framework:** University of Rijeka
7. **Conclusions**

1. INTRODUCTION

- This presentation was developed as part of the project *Towards a European Framework for Community Engagement in Higher Education: TEFCE.*

- Funding: Erasmus+, Key Action 3, **Forward Looking** Cooperation **projects**

- Duration: 01.2018 - 12.2020

- www.tefce.eu

2. BACKGROUND
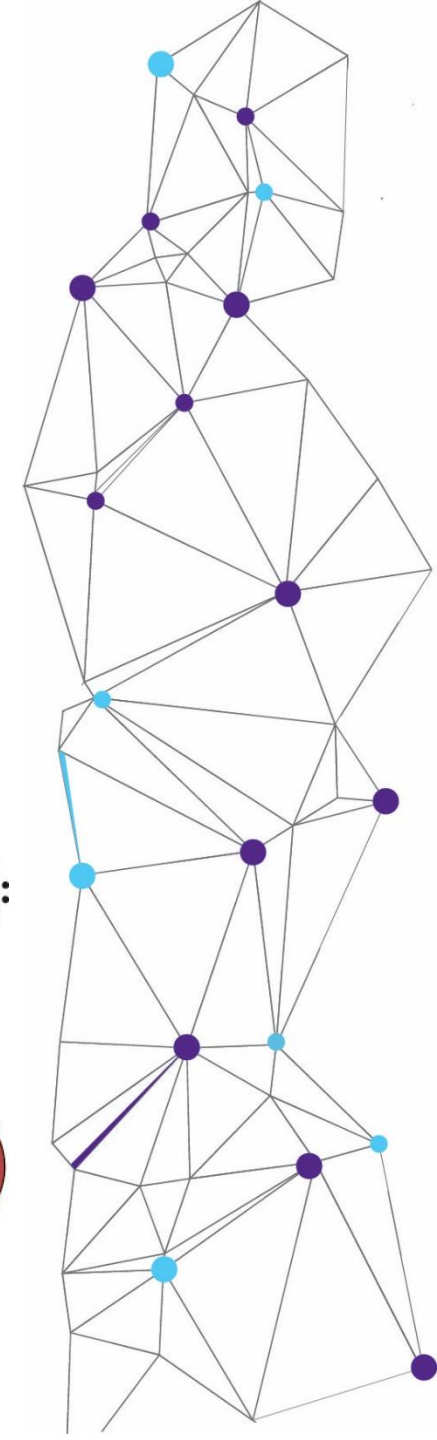
Community engagement is emerging as a policy priority in higher education:

- reflecting increasing pressure on universities to demonstrate how they deliver public benefits.

- priority in the **European Commission's Renewed Agenda** for Higher Education.

- Initiatives of the **United Nations**, particularly through the **Sustainable Development Goals**, have contributed to placing universities' role in responding to societal needs higher up on the policy agenda.

3. DEFINITIONS

'Community engagement'

- Process whereby universities engage with community stakeholders to undertake joint activities that are **mutually beneficial.**

- There should be **co-determination and interdependence** between the university and community through open dialogue.

3. DEFINITIONS

'Community'

- Community refers to a **broad range of external** university **stakeholders:**

  + government, business

  - NGOs, social enterprises, cultural organizations, schools, local governments, citizens.

- Emphasis on those communities **with fewer resources.**

3. DEFINITIONS

Community Engagement (with illustrative examples)

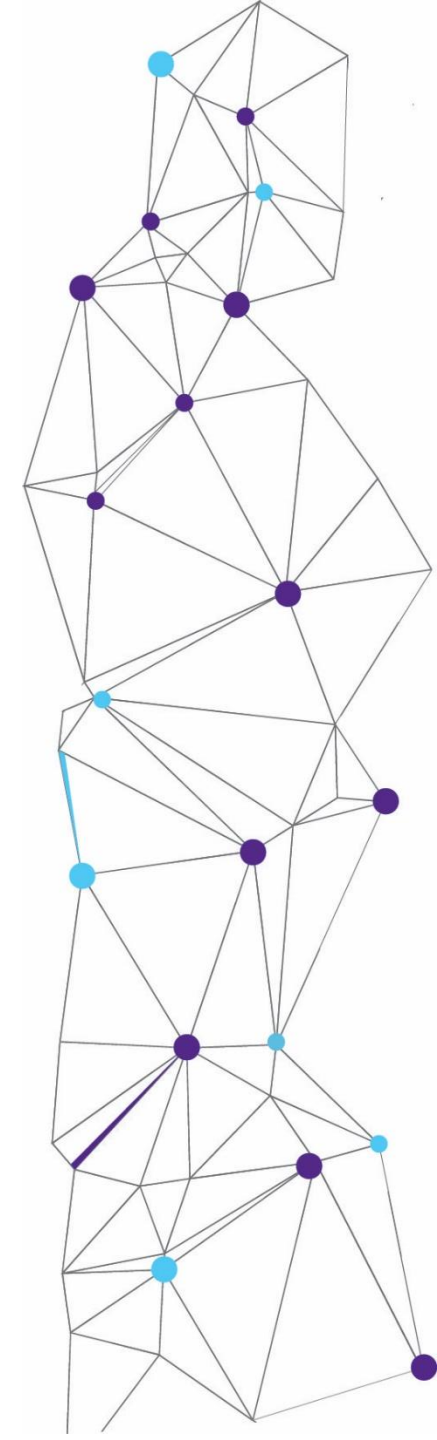| Teaching	Research	Service/knowledge exchange	Students	University management / governance
Community-based learning **Service-learning** Project-based learning etc.	Research *about* the community Research *with* the community: - participatory research - action research - participatory research - **citizen science**	**'Science shops'** Capacity-building for community groups Academic staff involvement in public (policy) debates etc.	**Student volunteering** Student activism etc.	Open access to university resources and facilities **Community represented in university committees** etc.

4. CHALLENGES

- Policy priorities in higher education focus on **excellence and global league tables** and do <u>not</u> encourage community engagement.

- Focus on forms of university engagement that have more **tangible economic benefits and are easier to measure** (technology transfer, commercialisation of research, entrepreneurship, etc).

- Community engagement is **resistant to being measured.**

5. TOWARDS A EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK

The TEFCE approach:

- **Dropping the search for** the perfect **quantitative indicators** of community engagement.

- **Rejecting** the logic of **ranking** and competitive benchmarking.

- **Avoiding** a bureaucratic **self-assessment** process.

- **Learning from previous** tools, but **proposing a new approach** with a new set of principles.

The **TEFCE Toolbox:** 4 principles

1. Authenticity of engagement	2. Empowerment of individuals
The Toolbox's interpretative framework differentiates **authentic** community engagement (that provides the community with a meaningful role and tangible benefits) from **instrumental** and 'pseudo-' engagement.	The Toolbox aims to recognise and award value for different kinds of individual efforts and results in community engagement, thus encouraging universities to **develop empowering environments** for individuals at the university.
3. Bottom-up rather than top-down steering	4. Learning journey rather than benchmarking
The Toolbox is based on mapping stories of practitioners (rather than on best practices selected by senior management) and providing both university staff and the community with a say in the process.	The Toolbox results in a qualitative discovery of good practices, a critical reflection on strengths and areas to improve, achieved through a collaborative learning process.

The **TEFCE Toolbox**: 6 stages

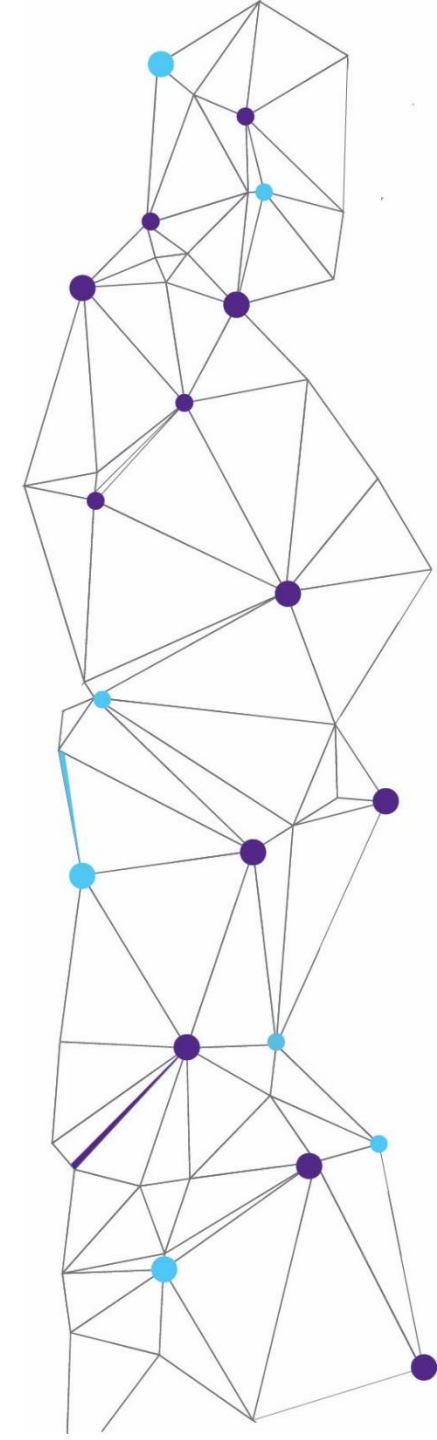| Steps	Description
1. Quick scan	**Initial discussion** by university/community team on the type and extent of community engagement at the university.
2. Evidence collection	Collecting stories of community-engaged practitioners throughout the university.
3. Mapping	Using a TEFCE Toolbox matrix to **map the level of community-engagement** of the university and to identify good practices.
4. Self-reflection	Open discussions among university management, staff, students and the community on **strengths and areas of improvement**
5. Institutional report	Promoting good practices and impact, and critical self-reflection for planning improvements to university-community engagement.
6. Into action	Using report to advocate and/or plan improvements to community engagement practices.

THE TEFCE TOOLBOX:
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	References
	Superficial	Ad hoc	Building block	Systematic	Hallmark	
1. Ethos	*Pseudo*	Tentative	Stable	Authentic	Sustainable	*Hoyt (2011)*
2. Relationships	*Transactional*	Bilateral	Network	Systemic	Structural/ transformational	*Bowen et al. (2010), Enos and Morton (2003), Clayton et al. (2010)*
3. Mutuality	*Exploitative*	Donating	Assisting	Accommodating	Including	*Benneworth (2013)*
4. Directionality	*Dissemination*	Hearing voices	Listening to the voices seriously	Creating structures to hear voices	Co-creation	*Hall et al. (2011)*
5. Endowment	*Betterment*	Co-planning	Shared community	Co-determining	Empowerment	*Himmelman (2001)*

THE TEFCE TOOLBOX: 7 DIMENSIONS

Engagement activities

Supportive environment

DIMENSION I. TEACHING AND LEARNING

DIMENSION II. RESEARCH

DIMENSION III. SERVICE / KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE
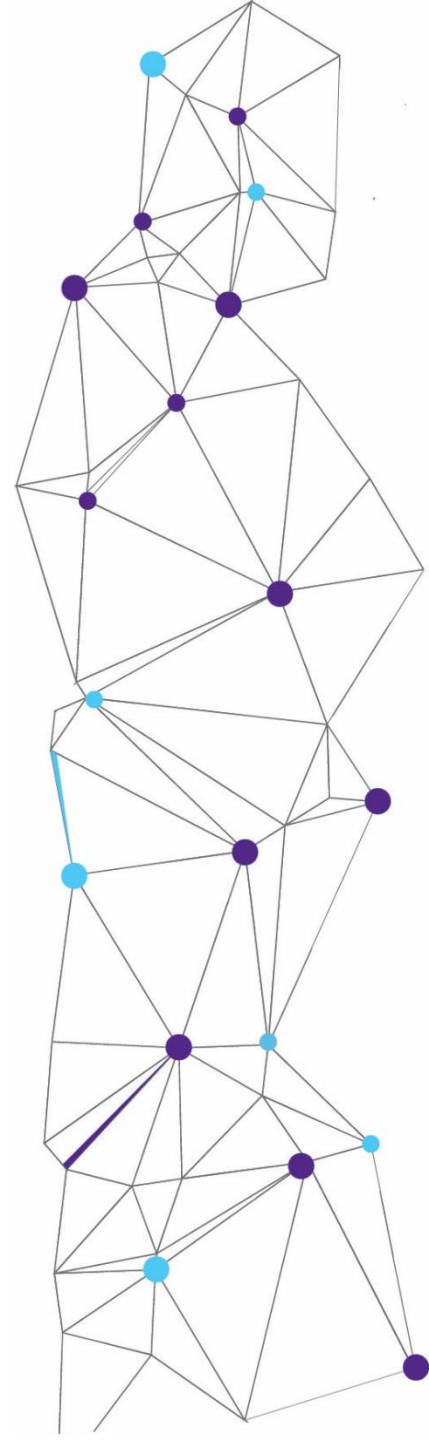
DIMENSION IV. STUDENTS

DIMENSION V. MANAGEMENT (communication and partnerships)

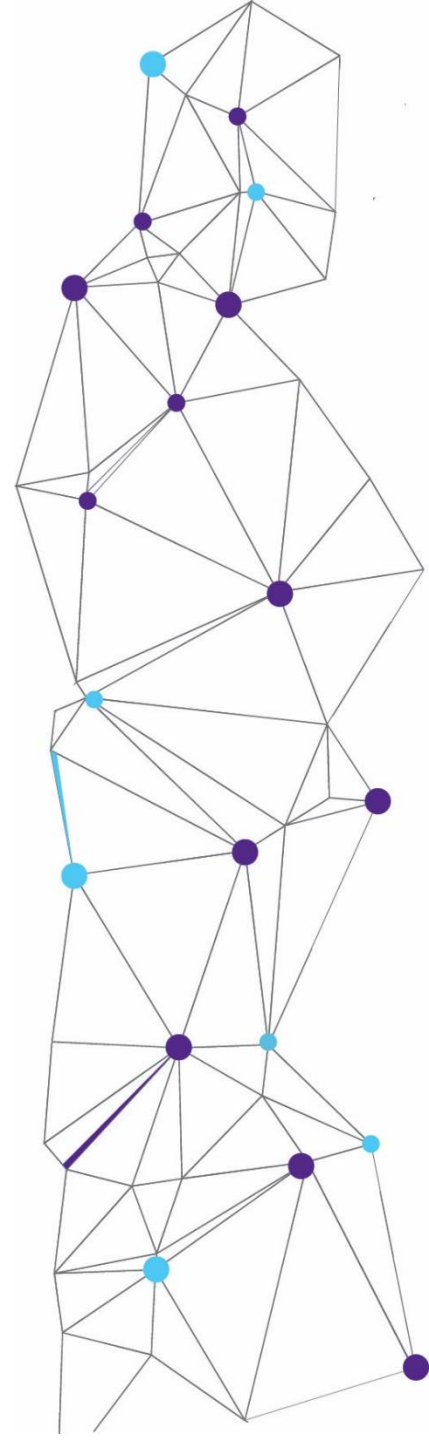DIMENSION VI. MANAGEMENT (policies and support structures)

DIMENSION VII. SUPPORTIVE PEERS

THE TEFCE TOOLBOX: MATRIX

Dimension 1: Teaching and learning

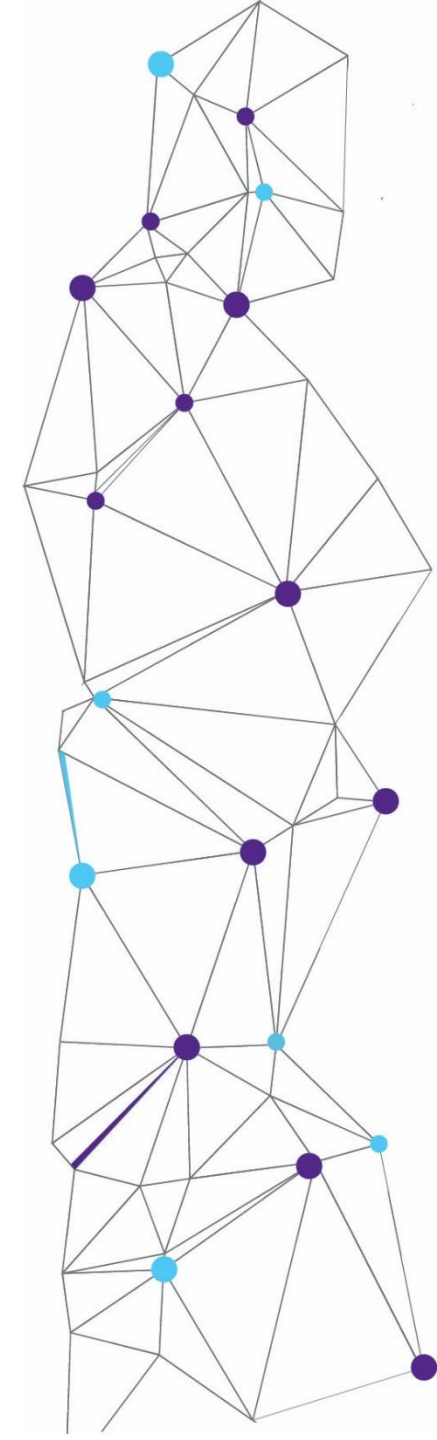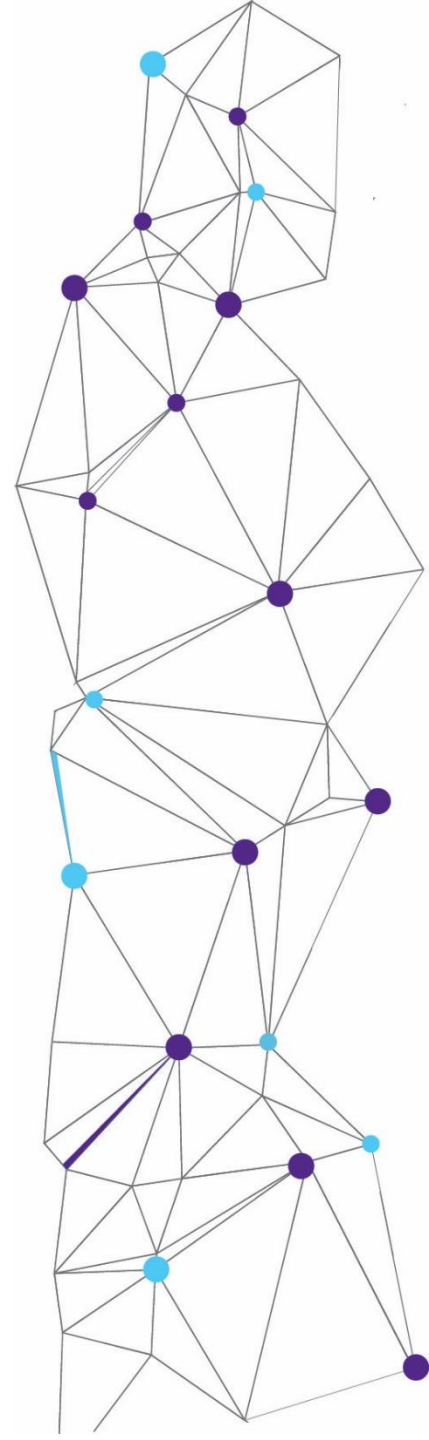| SUB-DIMENSIONS	CRITERIA FOR MAPPING PRACTICES				
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Sub-dimension I.1. The university has study programmes that include content about societal needs that are specific to the university's context and its external communities	There are study programmes at the university that ….				
	…make general references to their relevance to the societal needs of university's external communities.		… include specific content or make specific links with the societal needs of the university's external communities.		… are developed in cooperation with the university's external communities to address a societal need.
Sub-dimension I.2. The university has study programmes that include a community-based learning* component for students	Community-based learning is included in relevant study programmes at the university and…				
	.. benefits students to develop their knowledge and skills, although there is little evidence yet of their impact on the community.		… has demonstrated benefits for students and help community partners address a short-term problem or need.		… builds capacities of community partners and bring equal benefits to the students, teaching staff and university as a whole.
Sub-dimension I.3. The university has study programmes that are created, reviewed or evaluated in consultation/cooperation with external community representatives	External community representatives that cooperate on certain study programmes …				
	… are not formally consulted regarding the design of the programmes or courses with which they cooperate.		… are formally consulted regarding the design courses with which they cooperate, and their voices are taken into consideration.		… co-design and co-evaluate the programmes or courses with which they cooperate.
Sub-dimension I.4. The university facilitates the participation of community representatives in the teaching and learning process in some study programmes (in a curricular or extra-curricular context)	External community representatives …				
	… have a partnership role that does not involve delivery of teaching and learning.		… are included occasionally in teaching and learning processes (e.g. extra-curricular guest lecture).		… are included continually in teaching and learning processes (e.g. working with students on projects or research)

THE TEFCE TOOLBOX: HEATMAP

Synthesis: Community engagement heatmap for Dimension I

Type of engagement	Heatmap level					Heatmap criterion
	🟥	🟧	🟨	🟩	🟩	
Authenticity of engagement						*(See sub-dimensions levels above)*
Societal needs addressed						From business needs to needs of vulnerable groups
Communities engaged with						From businesses and highly-structured organisations to hard-to-reach groups
Institutional spread						From one department to university-wide
Institutional sustainability						From short-term projects to embedded/continual activities.

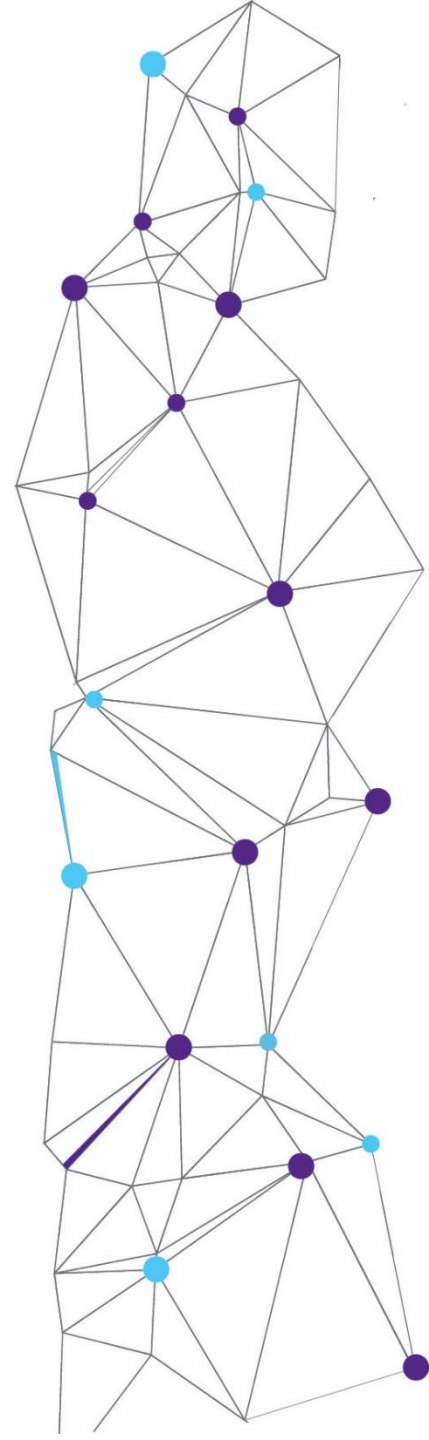*[Insert a narrative description of the heatmap findings and an assessment of the overall achieved level]*

6. PILOTING THE TEFCE TOOLBOX:
University of Rijeka experience

PILOTING THE TOOLBOX

- Piloted at universities in Dresden, Twente, Rijeka, and Dublin.

- Involved focus groups for university staff, students, and communities.

- **Quality of the Toolbox framework confirmed!**
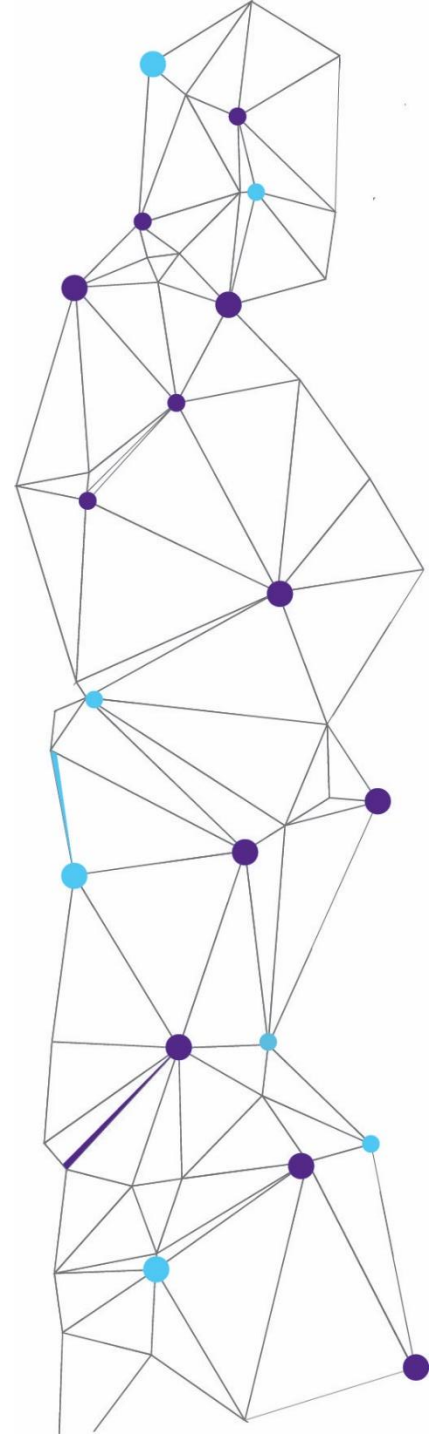
WHY COMMUNITY ENGAGED UNIVERSITIES?

Universities of the future:

- Collaborative and aware of **the role of higher education in securing a sustainable future (SDG)**

- "A clearly-defined 'European university' label could reward research and higher education institutions which actively and successfully promote **open science, open innovation, and openness to the world**"

- "The European Union has launched the concept (and funding) for conducting '**responsible research and innovation**', which includes the **concept of public engagement and regional innovation impact**"

LAB – FAB – APP
Investing in the European future we want

Report of the independent High Level Group on maximising the impact of EU Research & Innovation Programmes

JRC SCIENCE FOR POLICY REPORT

A Regional Innovation Impact Assessment Framework for universities

Koen Jonkers[1], Robert Tijssen[2], Athina Karvounaraki[1], Xabier Goenaga[1]

JRC Discussion Paper
Joint Research Centre, Brussels
January 2018

EUROPEAN COMMISSION: TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION TOWARDS UNIVERSITIES OF THE THIRD GENERATION
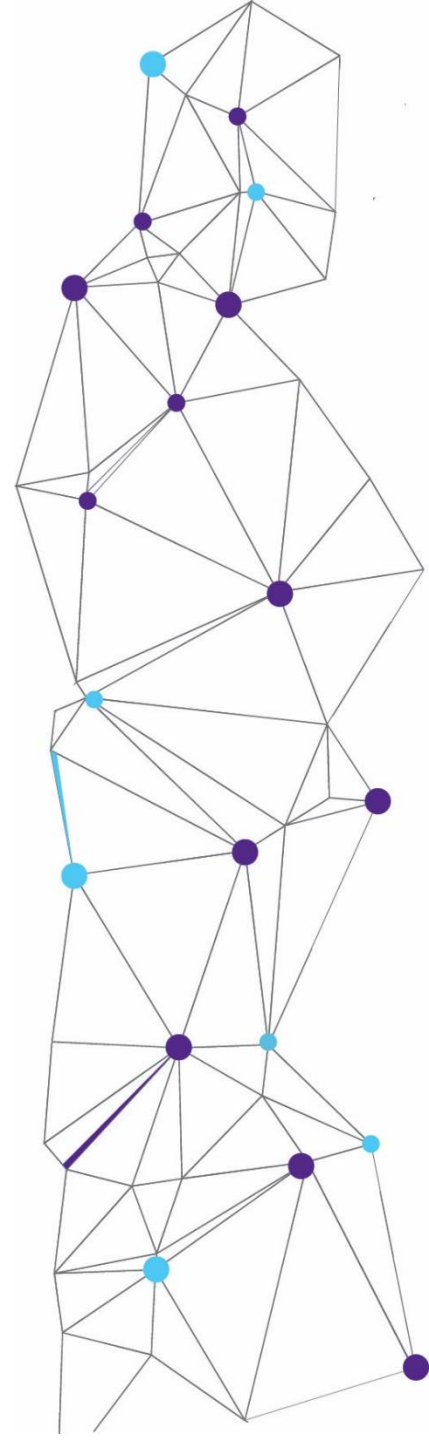
- Challenge-based approach: **working together with regions, cities, businesses, civil society, and citizens on societal challenges** linked to the Sustainable Development Goals

- **Students from all disciplines taught to act on sustainable development**

- Entrepreneurship and **civic engagement:** universities strongly connected to economy and society

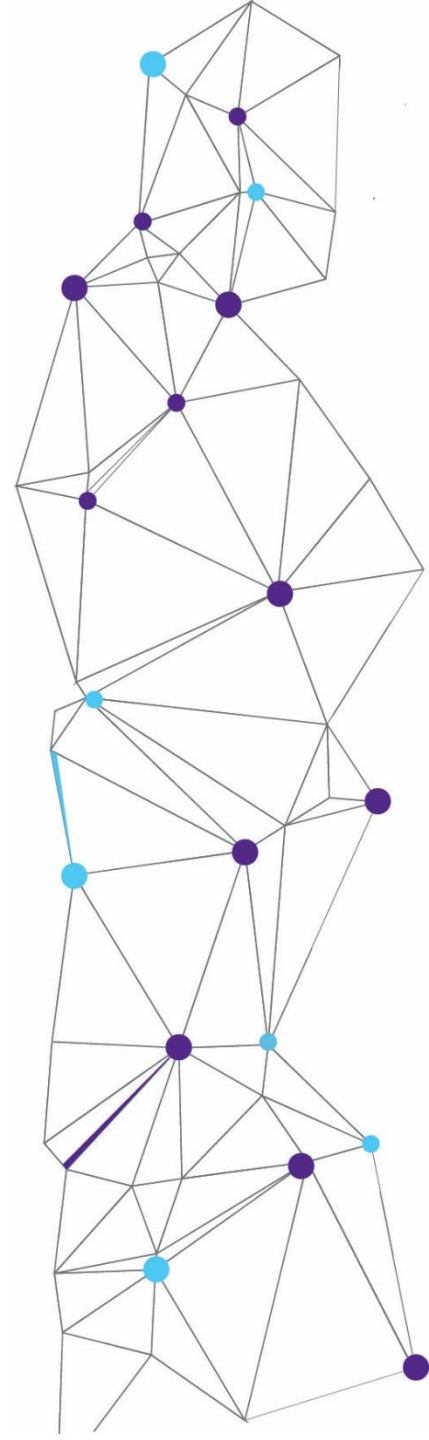# EUA VISION 'STRONG UNIVERSITIES FOR EUROPE'

EUA's Values

- "EUA protects and defends the values of universities: academic freedom, institutional autonomy, freedom of speech, integrity, inclusivity, diversity, sustainability, solidarity, promotion of creativity, and critical thinking."

TEFCE/UNIRI PRINCIPLE: IMPACT

- Achieving a new balance in recognizing and rewarding universities and academics:

  - Diversifying university outcomes and promoting flexible academic career paths

  - Quality and Balance in individual and team performance in teaching/research/innovation/serving the society
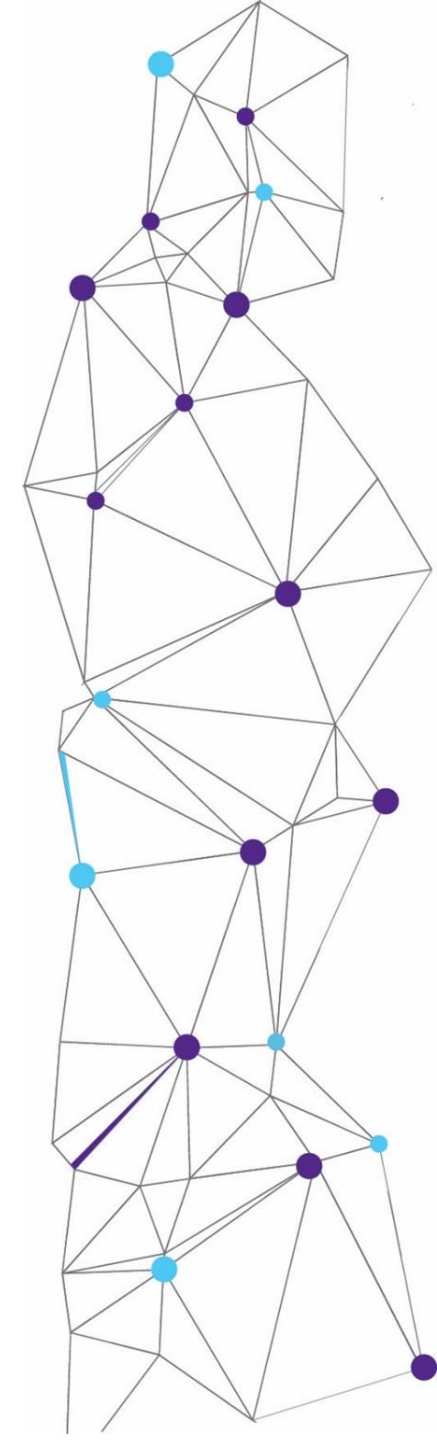
THE PILOTING PROCESS

- Piloting Report: 17/07/2019 – 12/9/2019: we analysed 45 practices within the framework of 7 dimensions and 21 sub-dimensions on 50+ pages

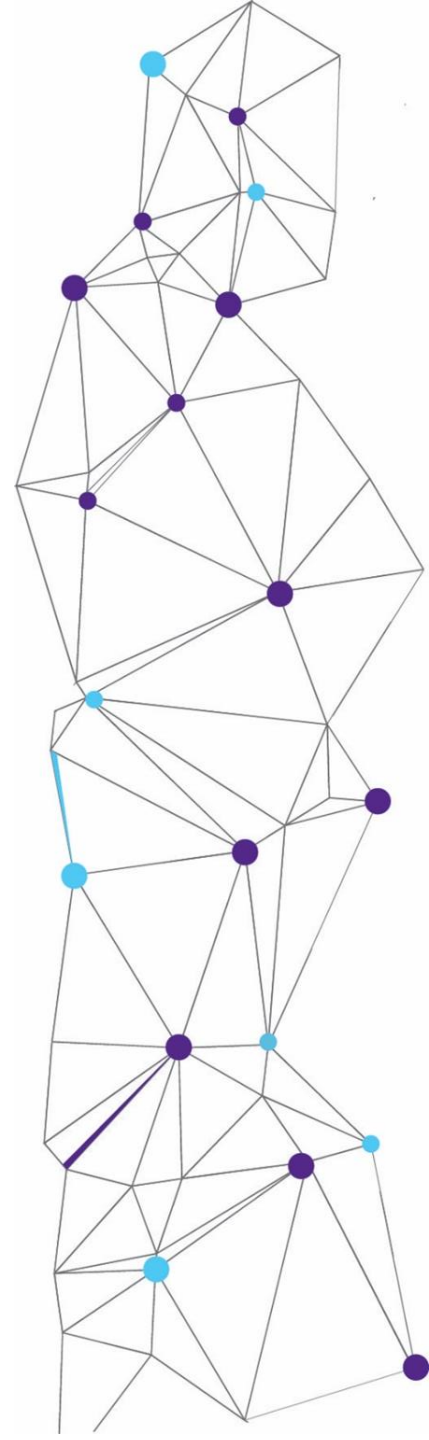- We created a heatmap for each sub-dimension

Type of engagement	Heatmap level					Heatmap criterion
	🟥	🟧	🟨	🟩	🟩	
Authenticity of engagement				x		(See sub-dimensions levels above)
Societal needs addressed				x		From business needs to needs of vulnerable groups
Communities engaged with			x			From businesses and highly-structured organisations to hard-to-reach groups
Institutional spread				x		From one department to university-wide
Institutional sustainability					x	From short-term projects to embedded/continual activities.

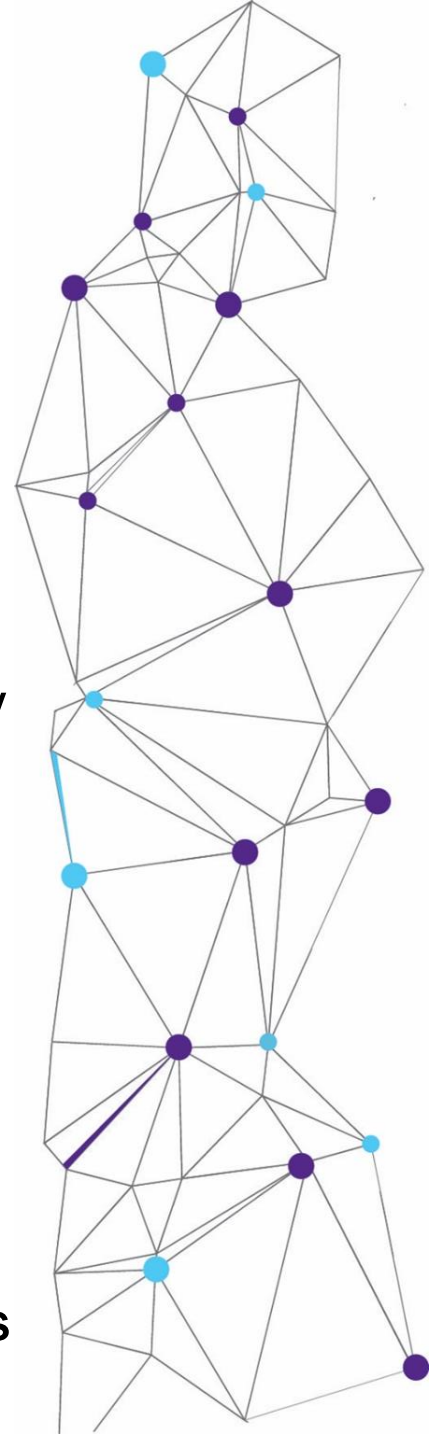- Piloting Visit: September 24-25, 2019 (Rijeka piloting team and peer reviewers - 4 external experts)

EXAMPLES OF UNIRI PRACTICES – R&D CENTRES

- Centre for Industrial Heritage

- Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies

- Centre for Advanced Studies – Southeast Europe

- Centre for Logic and Decision Theory

- Centre for Micro and Nano Sciences and Technologies

- Centre for Advanced Computing and Modelling

- Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity

- Centre for Urban Transition, Architecture and Urbanism

- Centre for Support to Smart and Sustainable Cities

EXAMPLES OF UNIRI PRACTICES

- **Work Placements in Culture**
  - In students' personalized curricula, UNIRI organizes and recognizes 86 hours of practice at a cultural institution in Rijeka (theatres, museums, NGO's, libraries, art galleries, internet news portals, etc.)

- **Citizen Portal (YUFE)**
  - Direct contact with citizens, through which citizens can provide higher education institutions with information **about what challenges the community is facing** (a **reality check for UNIRI**)

- **University for the Third Age**
  - Educational programs for the 'silver' generation, **aiming to cultivate social inclusion, improve general levels of motivation and mental health, and foster community wellbeing.**

- **Students & Community**
  - A community-based teaching and learning course that **functions as a platform for students engaged in various community-based projects**

- **StepRi Education Center**
  - Various educational activities directed towards **improving entrepreneurial and managerial competences in existing and wannabe entrepreneurs, targeted at various groups, such as students, scientists, the unemployed, managers, and employees already working in companies.**

Piloting Process - SLIPDOT Analysis

- The „SLIPDOT" analysis is a framework developed by the TEFCE project, that works as a SWOT analysis of community engagement at the university, but with a key difference:

SWOT

- **S**trengths
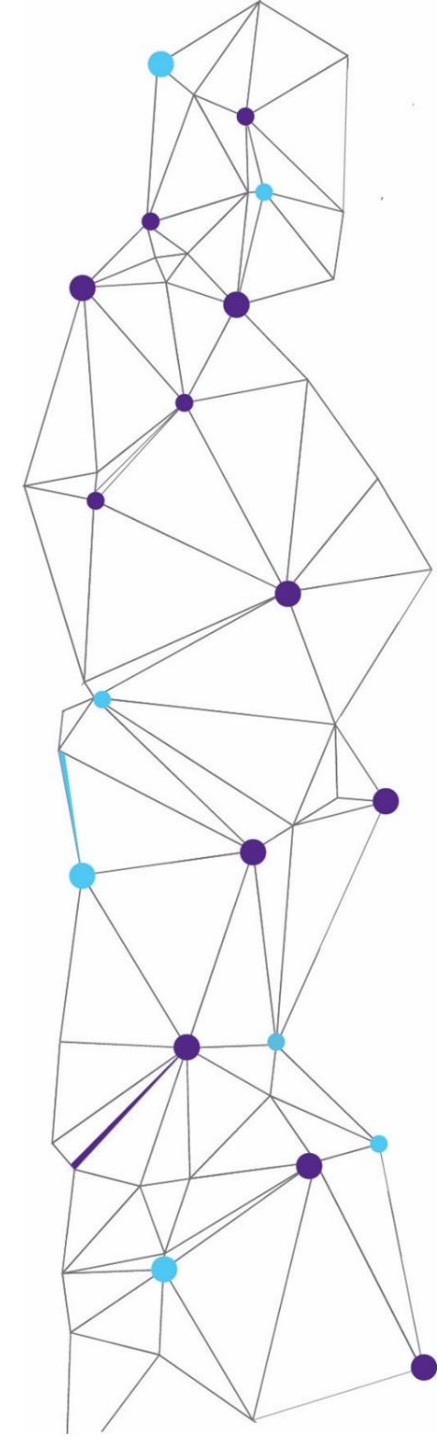- ~~**W**eaknesses~~
- **O**pportunities
- **T**hreats

SLIPDOT

Strengths

Low **I**ntensity

Potential for **D**evelopment

Opportunities

Threats

AREAS OF STRENGTH

UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

ENGAGEMENT CULTURE

UNIVERSITY CENTERS

STUDENTS

ACADEMICS

TEFCE
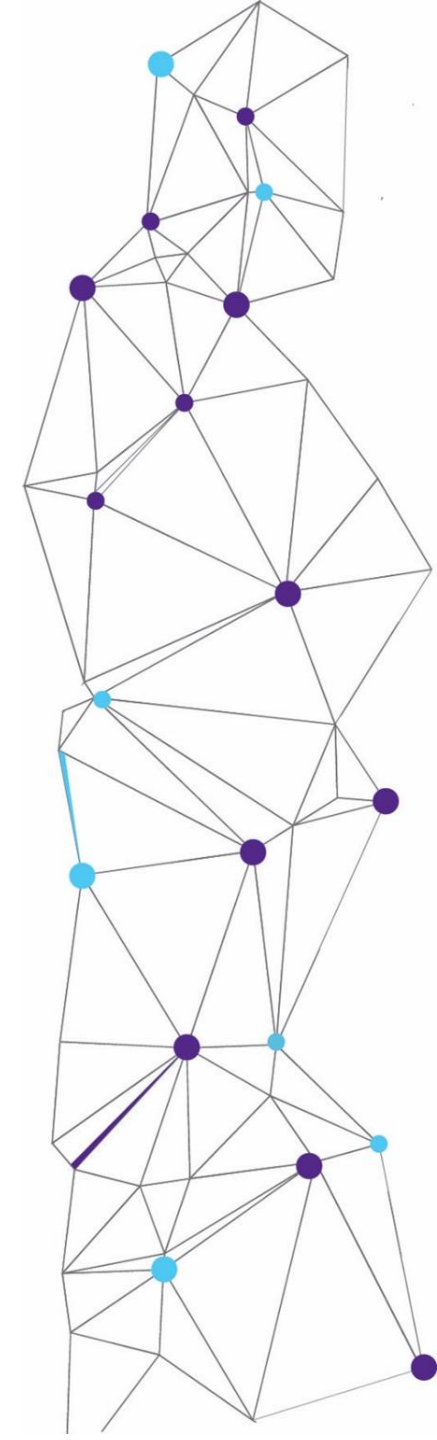Towards a European Framework for
Community Engagement in Higher Education

AREAS OF STRENGTH

UNIVERSITY LEADERSHIP

→ **strong leadership support** for the policy of community engagement (CE)

→ the university leadership has made a **strategic choice** to focus on CE - rare example

→ **student-centred university approach** as a value and strategic decision for university governing - *"you can feel it all across the university, it is real, it's not just lip talk"*
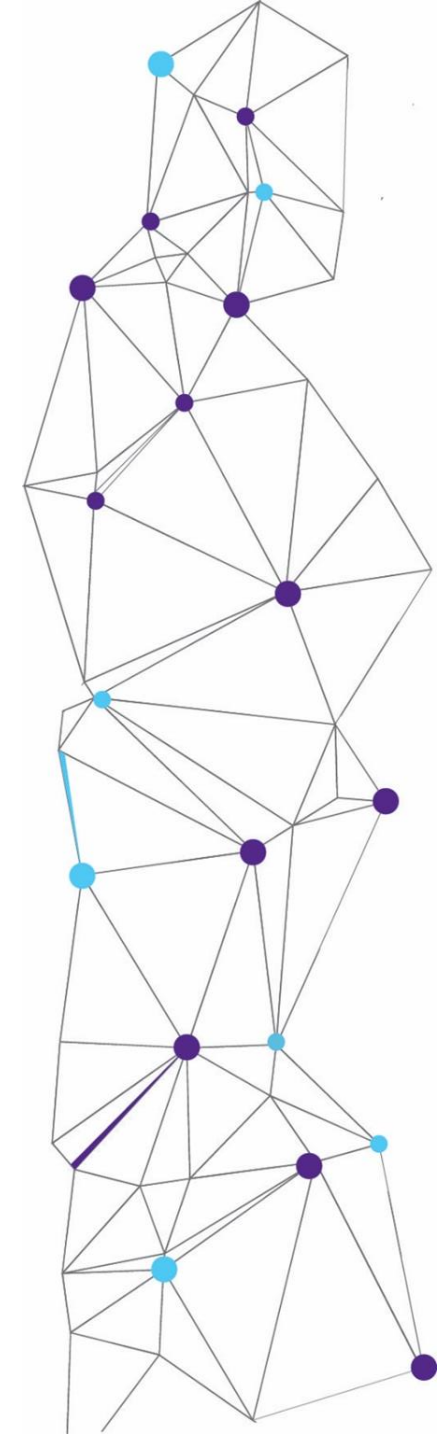
AREAS OF STRENGTH

ENGAGEMENT CULTURE

→ the culture of working together at the UNIRI: working with communities

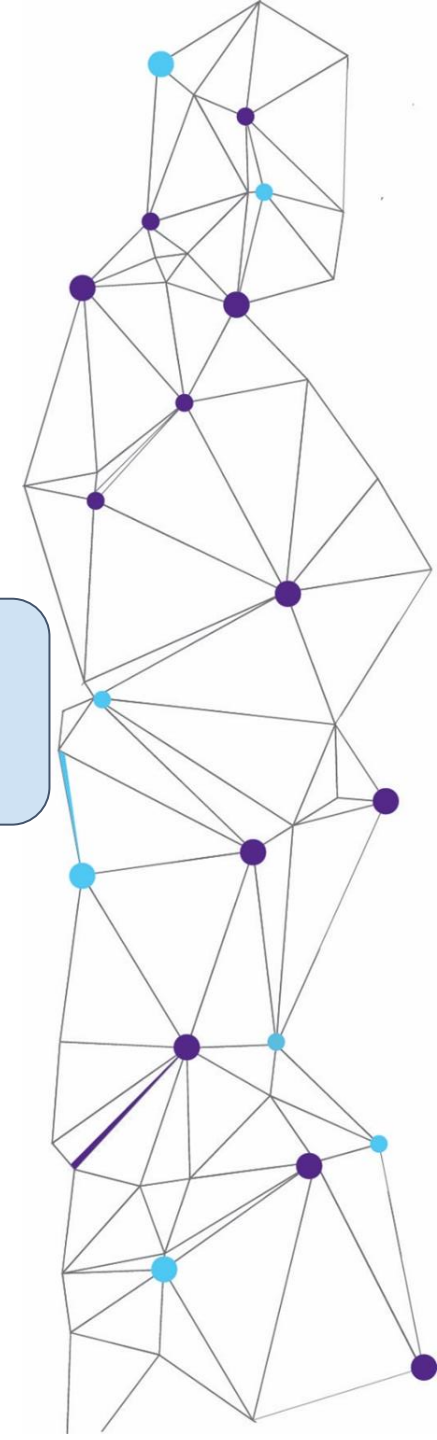→ the emergence of **a strong engagement culture** across the university

→ the authenticity of CE practices at the UNIRI -

→ positive and close ties with the local community and government

AREAS OF STRENGTH

➔ **UNIRI university centers** as units for fostering CE - **quite unique approach - impressive work** done

➔ **examples of real co-creation of study courses** (combining scientific and community perspective) - this could serve as an exemplary practice that could be multiplicated across the university
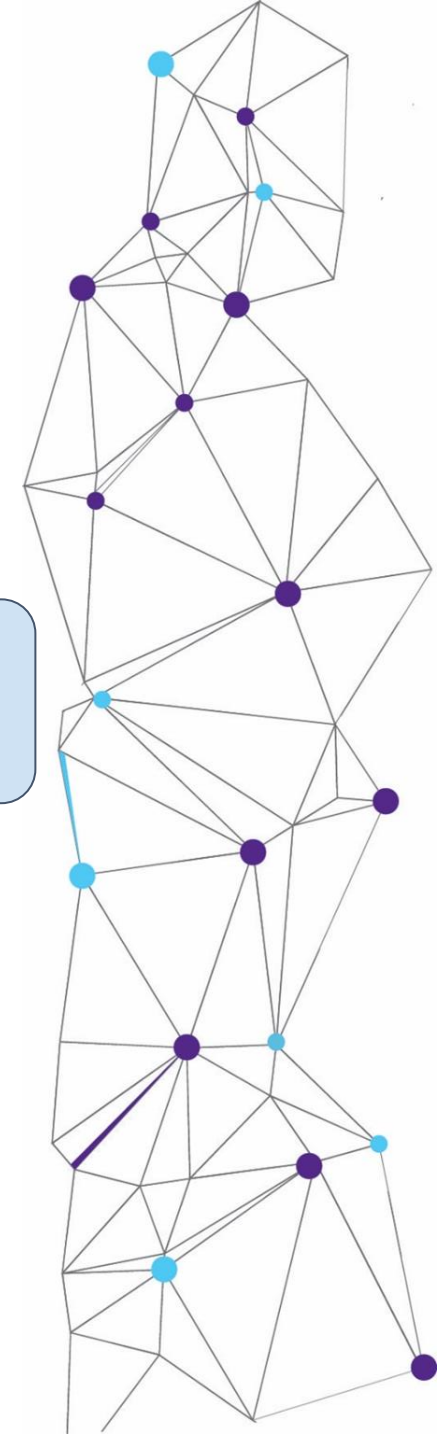
UNIVERSITY CENTERS

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AREAS OF STRENGTH

STUDENTS

ACADEMICS

→ **students as partners in a true sense**
(crucial for the decision-making process)

→ **students as strong & loud CE advocates**

→ **a lot of academics taking ownership of CE + lots of CE champions**

→ **academics as CE advocates** - loving what they do
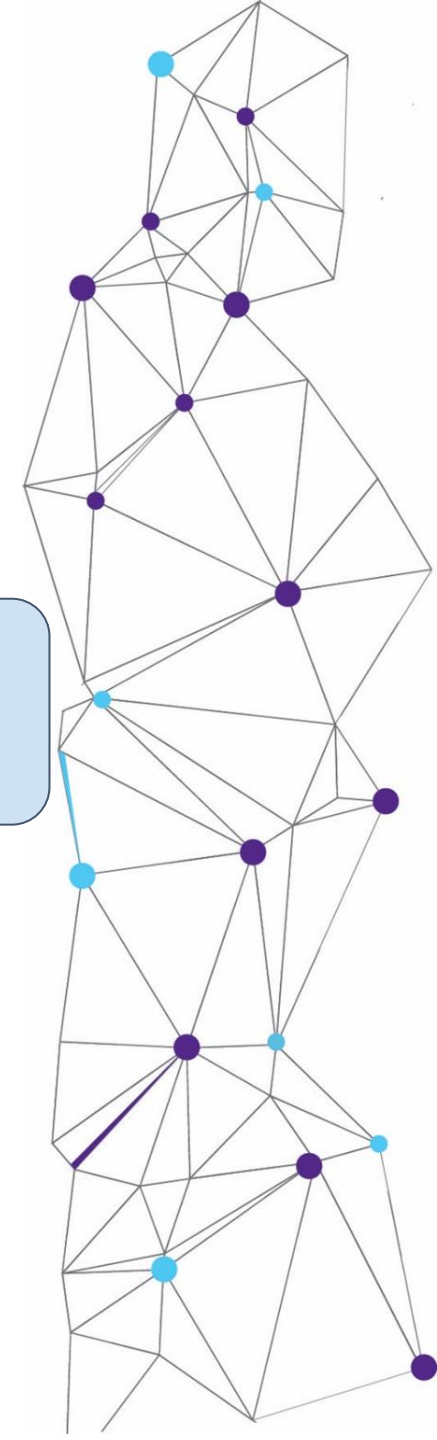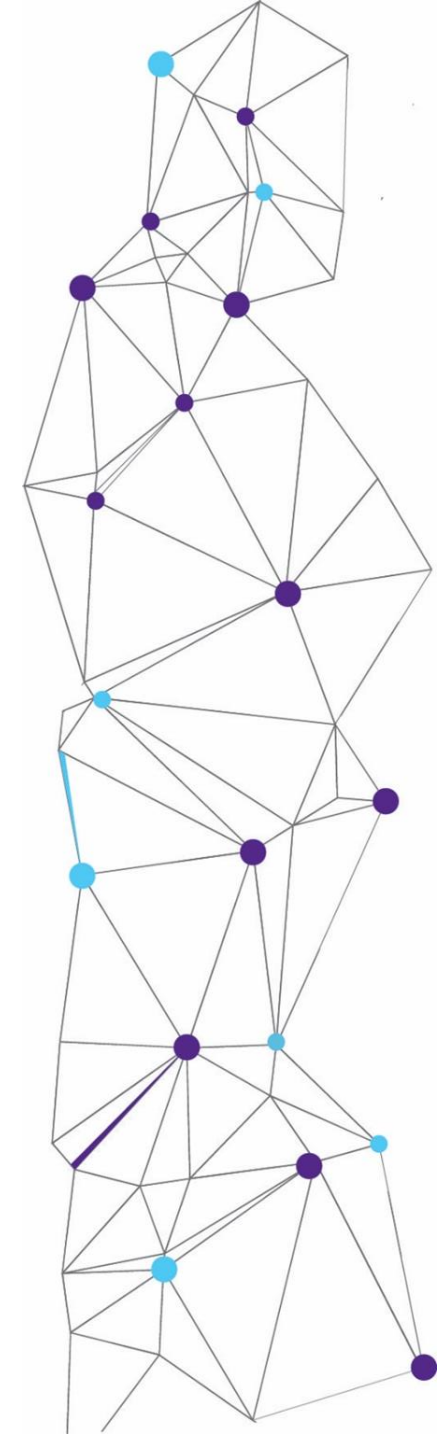
AREAS OF LOWER INTENSITY &POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT

LEADERSHIP & POLICY

→ The CE legacy of the current leadership might be threatened

– secure long-term sustainability of the CE activities

→ on the university and community level, display CE "stars" – create additional awards - **recognize CE champions**

→ **support academics in their CE activities** so that they do not feel as victims of their own CE success
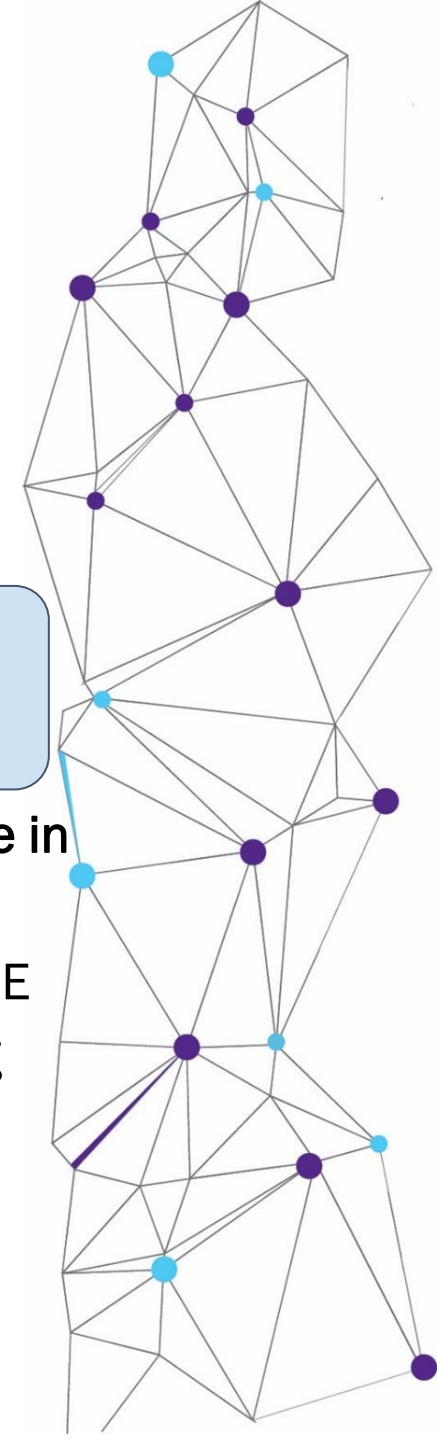
AREAS OF LOWER INTENSITY &POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT

CENTER & PERIPHERY

→ **move from the centre to the periphery -** policy should "go down" from central management to the periphery (faculties and departments)

MAINSTREAM UNI CE IMAGE

→ talk more about your university CE image in public

  → go out and teach others how to do CE

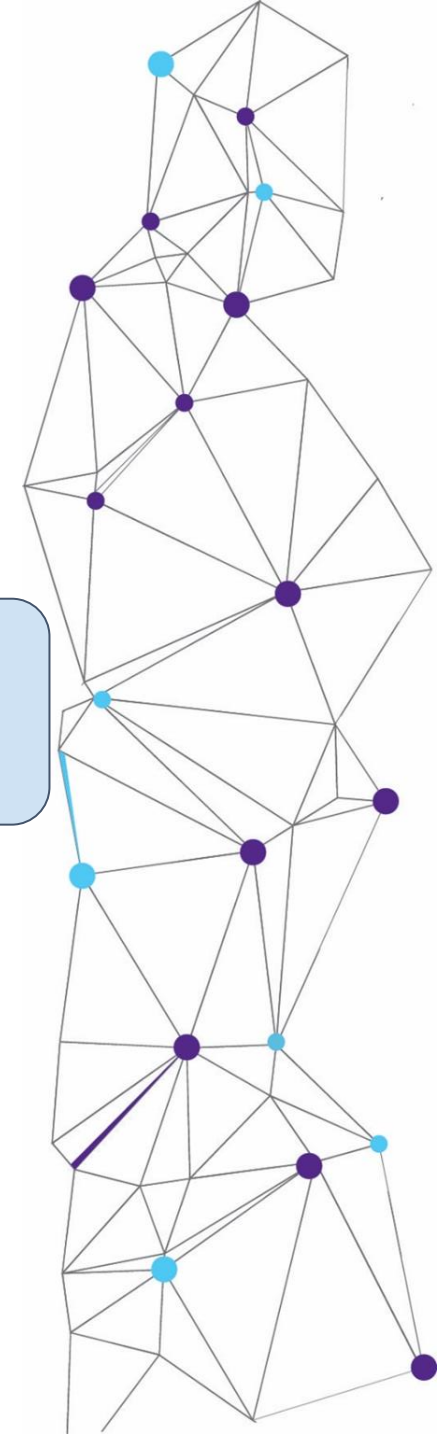 → make it your advantage in attracting students

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AREAS OF LOWER INTENSITY
&POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT

RESEARCH

→ raise the level of CE in research & development

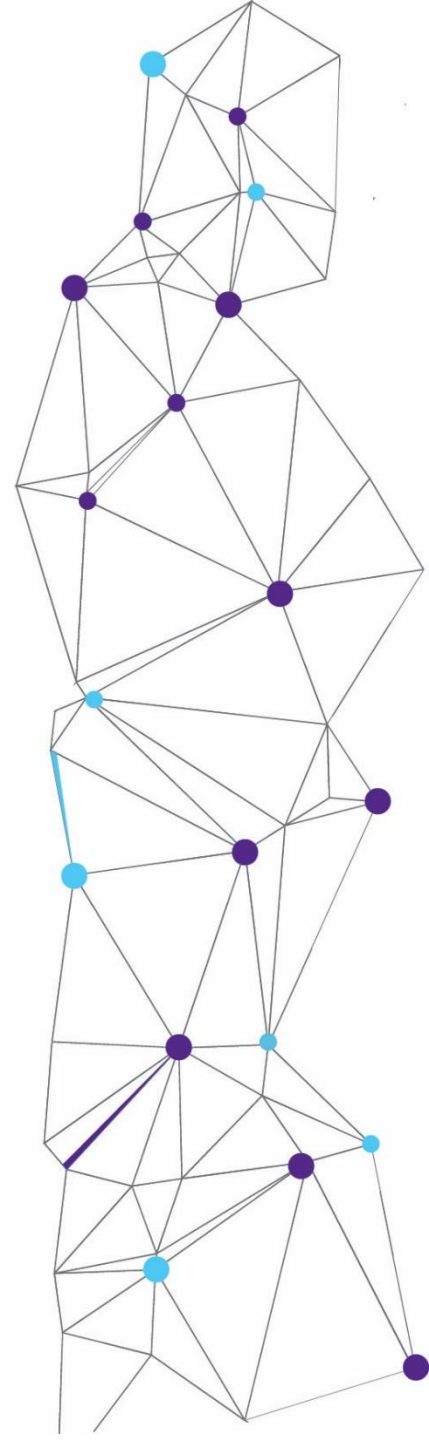→ greater involvement of scientists in CE is needed

UNIVERSITY CENTERS

→ unique model that works!

→ sustainability grants for centers

7. CONCLUSION: piloting the TEFCE Toolbox - key messages

- The Toolbox is **comprehensive** – institution learns a lot in the process about the **wealth of engagement activities** that takes place.

- The Toolbox **allows for context-specific application** – it is not framed as 'one size fits all'.

- The process is **participative** and allows for participants (including communities) to have a meaningful say in the process.
  - The **participants appreciate** the process and are **empowered.**

- The process is **holistic and developmental** - it does not result in a narrow scoring exercise.

- The institution learns a lot in the process about **potential for improvement.**

Thank you for your attention!
www.tefce.eu
Twitter: www.twitter.com/TEFCEProject

Contacts:

University of Rijeka, Croatia

• Snježana Prijić Samaržija, prijic@uniri.hr, Rector

Institute for the Development of Education, Zagreb, Croatia

• Ninoslav S. Schmidt, nscukanec@iro.hr, Executive Director