



The Role of Social Entities in the Service-Learning Experiences

The Participation of Social Entities in Service Learning

Service learning offers students a different approach to learning and personal development. An important building block of the service learning approach is that students actually are confronted with whole and real life cases instead of cleaned up cases on paper, situations performed by actors or other imitations of real life. These real life cases often take the form of social organizations in the direct community of the organization (or hopefully more often in the future, also in other communities). **The involvement of these community social organizations can be an enrichment for service learning in many ways; for the students and of course for the community (organizations).**

Students will have increased understanding of the topic of the course and gain hands-on experience. It helps them explore potential professions, or at least the type of organizations they might want to work for (as the intervention is not always close to the job they want to do later). Furthermore, students will learn more about social issues and the different communities surrounding their university. University students do after all, most of the time, come from different, probably more affluent, communities than these organizations operate in. With the hands-on experience also come new skills and the building of a professional network.

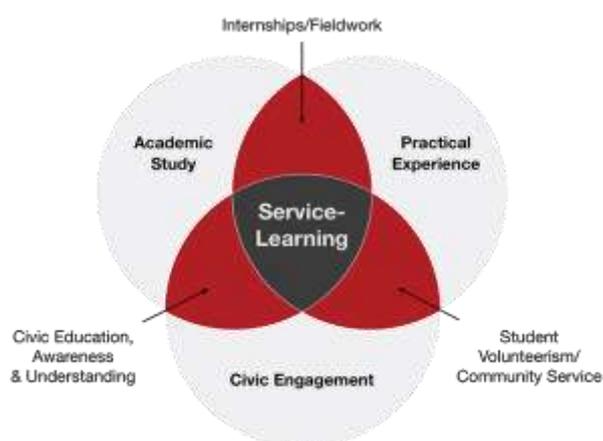


Image source: University of Nevada, Las Vegas

When done well, the value goes beyond the students' and will also reach the community (organizations). First, community partners gain 'hands'. Students in service learning courses can be seen as additional (professional) volunteers for the organization that help with either the daily operations (e.g. taking care of children, organizing events) or a specific task (e.g. answering a consultancy question, helping with a legal issue). These extra hands will hopefully also come with new energy and enthusiasm. Moreover, the students will probably have a different worldview and might bring different perspectives helpful to the work of the organization. Furthermore, this is a unique opportunity for community organization to increase awareness of important issues and to educate students (and faculty) about common misconceptions. Lastly, like the value for students, it helps organizations grow their network.

Social entities are the backbone of the tradition of service learning. Without real cases, there would be no 'service' and the 'learning' would be very different. It is important for all of us to understand that the value lies with both our students and the organizations. We should be aware, however, of negative value as well – especially when vulnerable people are involved. **When monitored well, service learning can add tremendous value to all partners involved and social entities play a big role in this.**

By Lucas Meijs and Philine van Overbeeke
Erasmus University

The history of the European Observatory of Service-Learning in Higher Education

Service-Learning (S-L) is an innovative and successful learning methodology barely extended across European universities and other higher education institutions.

Consequently, in 2014 several members from the academic world in European Higher Institutions put their efforts together on “Europe Engage”, an Erasmus+ project funded by the European Union. The aim of the project was to enhance the existing practice, share knowledge and identify best practices related to service-learning in Europe.

EASHLE and EOSLHE

European Association of Service-Learning in Higher Education and the European Observatory of Service-Learning in Higher Education.

Setting up the procedures and structure for the European Network.

Launching European Network

to promote S-L as an innovative pedagogical approach that has an impact on the development of engaged citizenship in Europe in a collaborative manner.



The European Observatory and the European Association of Service-Learning aims to be the foundations for setting up a permanent space for cooperation to enhance and disseminate the knowledge of **service-learning** in higher education in Europe.

For the time being we count with the involvement of members from 11 European countries. The objective is to engage more members along the way that wish to be part of this collective space.

Service-Learning in Bosnia & Herzegovina

"Home for children and youth without parental care" in Banja Luka, Bosnia & Herzegovina.



ЈУ Дом "Рада Врањешевић"
Бања Лука



As an assistant professor of developmental psychology, I contacted them to volunteer myself, in order to observe the development of the youngest group of children living in the Home, and I got a positive answer. A few months after I started my observations, I realized that their chronic staff shortage, which is the main source of problems for these children, could be compensated by my students' engagement. At the same time, I realized that every student engaged there could learn more about child development than I could offer from any of my lectures alone.

The service we are providing is a 1 on 1 relationship with an adult for each child, because that is the most important thing these children are deprived of. We structured our collaboration as a "1 student for each child" intervention whereby each child has someone who cares and comes only for that individual child at least 1 and up to 3 times per week, until the conditions are met for the child to leave the Home.



All the students in this project are psychology students, and our academic goals are in the realm of developmental psychology. However, there is only one psychologist employed at the entire institution, and although being of immense help,

she also works as an administrator, highly overburdened with daily administrative duties.

After 3 months of our work, we distributed a semi structured questionnaire to the staff member's in order to evaluate the students' engagement, the children's reactions and changes in behaviour and the overall quality of the interaction between the students and the children. They also had to write their own suggestions on how to change or improve our intervention. Finally, we organized a meeting where staff members were informed about the goals and the content of our intervention and where they could ask questions and give suggestions in a small group setting. The organization is very much involved to evaluate the service objectives.

The people taking active part are 5 staff members, 20 students, and 16 children, but this number is growing with new generations of students and, unfortunately, with new children being admitted to the Home.

Primarily, our final beneficiaries are children aged 0 to 8 living in the Children's Home. Each student has formed a significant relationship with one child, and visits this child at least 1 and up to 3 times per week. They spend 1 to 2 hours playing, reading, cuddling, talking to each other, drawing etc., and this has turned out to be the first significant relationship most of them have ever formed with a child. They are surprised by the strength of their emotions towards the children and it affects them in very positive ways as persons. The children, on the other hand, for the first time have someone who regularly comes to visit them, and just them, for who they are. This is an invaluable experience of self-worth and emotional connection with an adult which opens the space for development of communicational and cognitive skills previously locked in the absence of a one-to-one interaction with an adult.

Every staff member works with a minimum of 7 children at the same time. Every moment of help is valuable to them. When students come, the staff members can take a short break or finish accumulated administrative duties. They also report that watching the children looking forward to "their" own students have made their job more enjoyable.

Their perception has definitely changed, because we involved them in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the whole process, we ask their opinion for every change we introduce, we value their work and efforts. In addition, we offer them a structured program instead of just a “we’re here to help – you tell us what to do” attitude, which can make their job easier (a volunteer who knows what, when and how to do things) and not harder (taking care of yet another volunteer).

By Slavica Tutnjević,

Associate Professor of Developmental Psychology,
Faculty of Philosophy. University of Banja Luka.

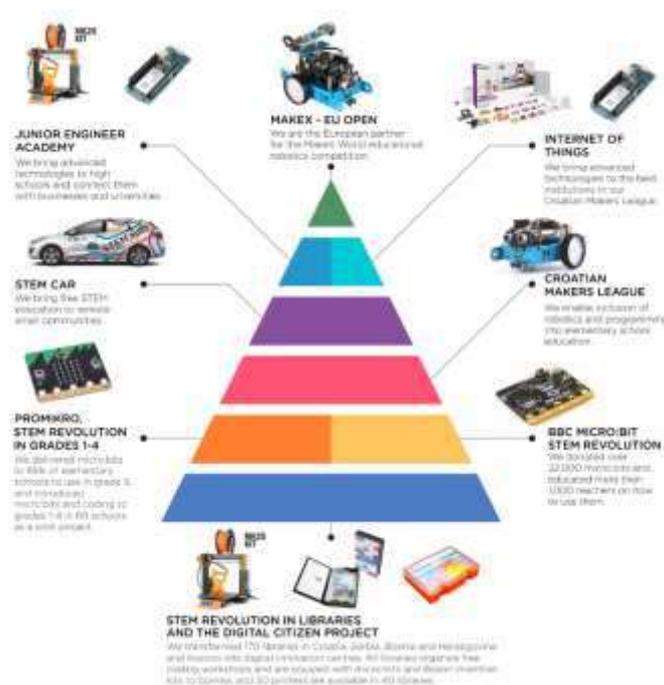


Fig.1. IRIM's projects / family of platforms. Source: <https://croatianmakers.hr/en/home/>

Service-Learning in Croatia

The social entity that Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (University of Zagreb) collaborates with in the academic year 2019/2020 is IRIM - Institute for Youth Development and Innovativity. IRIM is a Croatia-based NGO, which has developed and implements the largest extracurricular STEM program in EU – the Croatian Makers movement, encompassing now over 150,000 schoolchildren in Croatia. IRIM's core mission is to empower all children to develop STEM competencies necessary for them to be equal citizens of 21st century, by providing the equipment and education on a family of platforms (see Fig.1), ranging from the development of children's digital competencies to advanced coding competitions (WER Croatian Open) and STEM revolution in libraries (where the aim is to empower public libraries to become centers for developing digital competencies in local communities).

IRIM expressed the willingness to collaborate on a service-learning project with graduate students of Information Sciences at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (University of Zagreb) in 2019, since their career choice is to become school teachers or librarians and since IRIM recognized the need to boost cooperation between NGOs and universities by involving students in satisfying community needs.

Among the more demanded service areas in Croatian primary and secondary education system is digital competence, which, according to EU's *Digital Competence Framework 2.0* encompasses five areas: Information and data literacy, Communication and collaboration, Digital content creation, Safety and Problem solving.

In the winter semester of the academic year 2019/2020, university students will help IRIM develop educational resources for teachers, pupils and others interested in using micro: bit and mBot in schools and make their materials freely available at the web portal: <https://izradi.croatianmakers.hr/>

Apart from developing educational materials, students will also use BBC Micro: bit as a teaching tool in primary school to encourage pupils through a series of workshops to become actively involved in writing software and building new things, rather than being consumers of media.

Furthermore, they will use mBot educational robot set to provide children with hands-on experience in STEAM (science, technology, engineering and math).

By Nives Mikelic Preradovic
National Coordinator of Rural 3.0: Service-Learning for the
Rural Development, University of Zagreb

Service-Learning in Finland

We (Urban theology at the University of Helsinki) have collaborated mainly with Helsinki Deaconess Foundation (a non-profit foundation that works among people at the risk of social exclusion), and organizations that collaborate with the Deaconess Foundation.

I have worked with them for a long time, and view them as the key organization working among pressing urban challenges in Helsinki. Our faculty (Faculty of Theology) is a partner in a project headed by the Deaconess Foundation, which aims in improving opportunities for civic participation in Helsinki. Other partners include the City of Helsinki and several non-profit organizations. Students in urban theology participate in service learning in the work of the Deaconess Foundation and other organizations in their project. Students have also made their bachelor's and master's theses on issues related to the project (action research, literature reviews on themes relevant for the project etc.).

Employees of the Deaconess Foundation are involved in planning courses, the activities of the students, and also take part in evaluation. Academic objectives are developed by faculty, but partners contribute to planning on how they are understood and carried out in courses.

Around 100 students have participated in this collaboration in different ways. Ways of interacting with beneficiaries varies from hands on work in low threshold communities for people in risk of exclusion to observation, interviews, and development projects.

The impact of all collaboration with beneficiaries is extremely influential for students, as they not only learn from theoretical contents (inequality, urban problems, nonprofit work and sectors of society, welfare services, roles of religious organizations) but also learn work life skills and civic competencies (e. g. to help and understand others, societal motivation, ability to adapt to new situations, communication skills, and ability to apply theoretical knowledge to practical situations).

The main gain for the final beneficiaries comes through the organizations that gain students theoretical viewpoints and ideas for development. The employees of the organizations have evaluated these highly useful in developing their work. The beneficiaries also get their opinions heard, and can participate in developing the work of the organizations involved.

The cooperation between the university and the Deaconess Foundation has not been evaluated explicitly from the viewpoint of perception. However, in our discussions the employees of the Deaconess Foundation have stated that our collaboration has lowered the threshold for them to collaborate with other educational institutions too.

By Henrietta Grönlund,
Professor of Urban Theology. University of Helsinki

Service-Learning in Germany

I am writing this newsletter contribution from the point of view of a human geographer with more than 10 years' experience in academic teaching at various universities and higher education institutions.

In Germany the S-L approach is not quite as widespread as it is in the United States, Canada or some other European countries like Spain. Some universities and universities of applied sciences have established coordination offices to support the teaching staff in the initiation, execution and evaluation of S-L activities. An important role in this context also plays the centers for research on higher education and faculty development.

In the different bachelor and master study programs of geography at German universities service learning and community based research activities are often part of so called "field training and internship", "project seminars" or "study projects" in which students work empirically. Acquired knowledge and skills about methods of empirical social research are being carried out within small projects.

My experiences with S-L and community based research activities are also embedded in this context. Furthermore, S-L seminars are often offered in the elective area (soft skill and cross-disciplinary key competences oriented). Currently, I am working with students in the project "Social Inequality, Poverty and Housing" which deals with the lack of affordable housing, rising rents, poverty in urban space and the increasing number of homeless people.



Photo: Visit to Uniaktiv – Center for Community Learning and Social Responsibility at the project's beginning. Photographer: *Fatma Özay*

The project started in October 2019 and comprises a period of 10 months. At the beginning the students developed several research ideas regarding the thematic area "social inequality, poverty and housing", this results in four research groups. Two research groups are working on the topic "homelessness and poverty", one group concerns the question of "child poverty" and one group the question of "social inequality, housing and migrant background". This was followed by a compilation of potential community partners, who work in this field. The students address the potential community partners and make appointments. The first contact is made by phone and e-mail. In a joint conversation during the meeting the needs of the partners will be determined and will be brought together with the own research ideas of the students. The service is the collection of data and the compilation of a short research report in an easy-to-understand language. In this project all potential community partners are located in the cities of Bochum or Essen, the following potential partners should be mentioned: the association Bodo e.V. (support of homeless people and long-term unemployed people), the Inner Mission (Diakonisches Werk, assistance to the homeless), Caritas Bochum

(Christopherushaus, facility for homeless men with special social difficulties), agency for urban planning and housing Bochum, Bahnhofsmision, emergency shelter or overnight accommodation, Caritas Essen, the association children's aid association Essen, Tafel organization, association "Essen packt's an" (provides homeless people with hot soup), association ViA-Ruhr (support people in need of assistance in their occupational and social integration). Over the next few weeks we will see with which partners we will have the possibility to work together.

So far, there are no partnerships between the department of geography at the Ruhr-University Bochum (research group "mobility and demographic change") and the mentioned associations and institutions, this still needs to be developed step by step. There is already experience in developing partnerships from other projects. At the end of the S-L project, the conduction of structured interviews is planned to evaluate the additional value that is generated for the partners.

By Janine Bittner
Lecturer with Special Responsibilities
Ruhr-Universität Bochum

Service-Learning in Netherlands

Students as Consultants: Learning by Advising

In the Dutch service learning project of the Rotterdam School of Management, groups of three or four students transform themselves into consultancy firms giving management advice to local non-profit social organizations. The learning goals are focused on understanding non-profit management and practicing consultancy. The firms all create their own 'brand', and are part of a bigger structure. In this structure, the two teachers act as senior consultants who coach / supervise the students, or better, junior consultants, through their process. An essential addition to the learning process is the intervision between the junior consultants, in which the student-teams are mixed

and they help each other with challenges in the process (e.g. how do I get in better contact with my client, how do I convince my client of my ideas). This is especially interesting since students have very diverse backgrounds; different Dutch universities, different faculties within the Erasmus University, and exchange students from countries all over the world. Imagine what happens when a Dutch Nano-biology student, talks to a Chinese business student and a French psychology student about creative ways of involving the client. This year our junior consultants even got local recognition as some of them were interviewed by two local newspapers (see: [Dutch / Google Translate English](#) and [Dutch / Google Translate English](#))



This year eight different small social organizations participated in the course. [DOK 21](#) helps to prepare teenagers prepare for working life and wanted to know how to set up new partnerships. Stichting Schutsluis Alblasserdam asked how to engage more citizens in their mission to re-open an old waterlock. [Colaitie Erbij Rotterdam](#), an organization fighting loneliness, wanted our junior consultants to help them activate their partners more. [Stichting Rotterdammers met Talent](#) tries to focus on the working poor in Rotterdam and were

interested in learning how to reach this group better. [By the Ocean we Unite](#), an organization against plastic pollution, asked our junior consultants to help them with new financing models. [Excelsior4All](#), the foundation of a Rotterdam football club had two consultancy questions; how can we measure impact, and is it possible for us to function as an umbrella organization. [The Giovanni van Bronckhorst Foundation](#) wanted our junior consultants to focus on a setting up a new project helping high-potential kids in some of Rotterdam's poorer neighbourhoods.

The social organizations, or clients as they are addressed in the course, take a very active role as co-producers of the advice. In many cases the service learning starts with junior consultants taking a convenient and comfortable research perspective, but during the course they usually start to get deeper and more emotionally involved with the clients. As the junior consultants have to define and negotiate the whole project with their clients they are put in many unstructured situations that in many cases are out of their comfort zone, e.g. when they have to explain their clients that the organization problem solution is not due to external circumstances but to internal (miss)management.

With some of the organizations the Rotterdam School of Management has an ongoing contact to collaborate on employing staff and students to help the NPO to create more impact. But most organizations are 'walk ins' from the local community that know through the grapevine that the RSM service learning project might be a good way to address their organizational issues. As most organizations are rather small over the years it has become clear that an ongoing relation on the short term is not beneficial. On the other hand, with some organizations relations even extend into real research projects that get published in impact journals.

By Lucas Meijs and Philine van Overbeeke
Erasmus University

Service-Learning in Slovakia

Cooperation with community partners in service-learning projects at Matej Bel University



At Matej Bel University, we are collaborating with different social entities. Mainly with providers of different types of social services in the region and with non-profit organizations in different areas (for example, community foundations, cultural center, NGOs working with Roma children in separated areas ...).

We have several ways how we are contacting our partners. First is through the mapping of community needs organized as a part of the service-learning implementation done by students. The second is thanks to the cooperation in the fieldwork of students, mainly in social work and teaching professions. The third one is in cooperation with the Volunteer Centre, which has the office at the university. We are aiming at establishing long term cooperation with the partners. In some projects, we are continuing with other groups of students or students are working with the beneficiaries of the partner's organizations on different topics according to their actual needs.

The involvement of the social entities in the monitoring and evaluation of the project depends on the university subject. Each project is also evaluated by the partners, but in many cases, it is just informal evaluation. Currently, we are working on the evaluation form for the community partners which will be used in all service-learning projects (it will be recommended to use it). We are also in the process of collecting quantitative and qualitative

evaluation data from the partners. The community partners are mainly involved in the evaluation of the service objectives; Assessment of the learning objectives is done by teachers. There have been a lot of service-learning projects implemented at MBU since 2013, but we do not have any official evidence of the students and beneficiaries. We can estimate that more than 300 students and more than 1000 beneficiaries were included in SL projects.



Our research shows that service-learning experience has an impact on the development of key competences of students as well as on the development of personal and social responsibility.

They are many reasons for the cooperation with the university, mostly partners have some needs regarding organization or beneficiaries and they need help to fulfil these needs. After the experience community partners are many time more open for closer and more intensive cooperation with the university. From our experience service-learning shifts the relationship with the community partners. The university is many times contacting community partners with some requests, for example, the university is asking to help with research or to offer space for the fieldwork of students. Within the service-learning collaboration, the university is offering something to the community partner, not requesting from the community partner and it opens new spaces.

By Alžbeta Brozmanová Gregorová,
Matej Bel University

Service-Learning in Spain

Service-Learning is an identity element of the Universidad Pontificia Comillas, a Jesuit university in Madrid (Spain). The commitment to Service-Learning has to do with the university's own mission: which professionals we want to train and what for do we want to train them. It is an institutionalized model that starts from the Rectorate; a project that is developed within the strategic plan of the university. In this institutional model of Service-Learning, the role played by social entities play is critical, because pretends to emphasize the use of the service as a model of learning. It is often preferred to name it learning-IN-service.



It involves confronting the student to a social problem and being able to analyze it, get involved in it, and solve it by putting at work knowledge, personal abilities and academic skills. However, we must be cautious in talking about social commitment as defined by Aramburuzabala, McIlrath and Opazo (2016) in the Europe Engage project "An innovative pedagogical approach that integrates meaningful engagement or community service with the curriculum, and provides students with academic credits for learning that stems from active community engagement and the opportunity to work on real problems. Experiential reflection and learning strategies underpin the learning process and service is tied to academic discipline." Service is essential in the SL. However, commitment cannot be assured. The term "integrate" in the above definition should therefore

be deleted, as it is understood more as an aspirational element than purely conceptual.

A third component of S-L at the Pontifical University of Comillas is the relational component. S-L is the perfect tool to create university community. It is a way of relating (formatively) very different from what comes to be traditional models. In this sense it is worth highlighting the inclusion of other actors in the educational process that are not only the regular ones (students, teachers and social entities), such as the professional people who contribute their expertise and knowledge. For us, working with (for) the Third Sector is, therefore, not only an element for networking but also a multidirectional learning process where every stakeholder takes away some kind of educational outcome (curricular or social). Even more, a fourth component of our model is professional related public, which are those persons who mentorship the students with technical skills from a purely professional approach. Apart for guaranteeing the quality of the service, this brings a differentiated, although unpredicted, value in the experience of S-L: professionals also learn about the social realities to which they would not otherwise have access; the interaction between professionals and students implies a mutual enrichment of the experience. It is a way, in short, to build community with a common goal in which all actors learn and serve.



Turning to social entities, in the early years of the institutionalization of S-L program (2014 -2017) they were invited to participate as "customers": organizations that had a social need that could be resolved by our students who somehow, they acted in a "consultant" role. The students should understand the problem raised, agree with the entities on deliverables, work schedule and meetings.

They have to work to meet those requests in the most effective and appropriate taking into account the identified needs. The key issue was that the "customer" was satisfied at the end of the experience. Contact with the final beneficiaries was sometimes not even necessary, as the problems were sorted out with the social entities technical staff. "Thanks to this initiative we are going to achieve something that we couldn't do because of the level of resources we have."

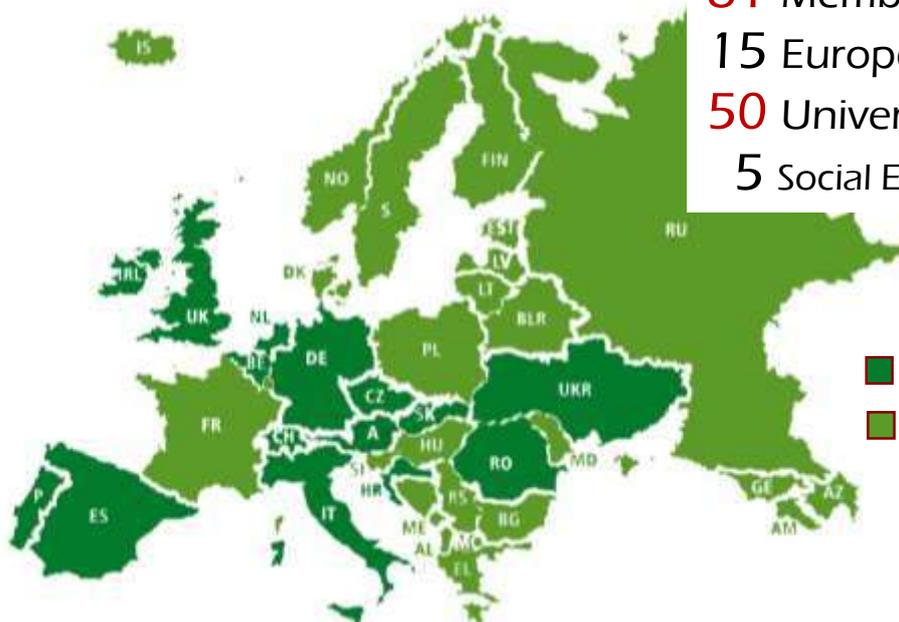
As from 2017, there has been a change in the relationship with entities. Now relationships are understood rather as companions of the educational process of the students, sharing with them the definition of the educational objectives of the service. They therefore intervene as partners, companions, participants, etc., rather than as customers who receive. They become more and better involved in the processes and make students more involved in the social problems in which they are immersed, using the learning-service as an element of raising awareness in a more determined and systematic way.

"We thought the SL was a very good idea when it came to us, you needed us and we needed you"; "We don't just care what students can give us, which is a lot because we could not do it because of a lack of human resources. It is not the same as what a consultant firm can offer you in a pro-bono basis, because it is true that they have more resources, but they have a standard working method, they are not flexible. We look forward to participating in this in a "I give you, you give me" scheme. Universities need to promote these initiatives so that people can become aware and start getting to know the real world." This idea was repeated by several of the entities that work with our University. Also, it was appointed the idea of having a joint experience of mentoring-social entities and students.

By Carlos Ballesteros,
Head of the ICADE Business and Social Guidance Service
Universidad Pontificia Comillas

European Association of Service-Learning in Higher Education (EASLHE)

The official establishment of the Association took place with the celebration of the General Assembly in Antwerp, on Saturday 21 September 2019 at the occasion of the 2nd European Conference on Service-Learning in Higher Education.



At the General Assembly was elected the first General Meeting, with representatives of Croatia, Belgium, Spain, Slovakia, United-Kingdom, Germany, Austria, Italy, The Netherlands, Rumania, and Portugal.



Pilar Aramburuzala (Spain) was elected President

"I believe that having a strong structure will facilitate the promotion of service-learning across Europe and the collaboration among its members....

A lot has been done, but there is much work ahead of us. We need to keep working on issues such as collaboration with public administrations and decision makers, policy at the European and national levels, support local and national networks, and fundraising to ensure the sustainability of the association, among others.

The association is the sum of combined efforts of many people and entities. And now it comes the time to celebrate it together!"

Membership

Every member of the association automatically becomes a member of the **General Assembly**. The General Assembly elects the President of the Association and the members of the General Meeting (in total max. 21 persons). They will serve for a period of four years.

The election for the first General Meeting and President for the Association had been held in Antwerp, on Saturday 21 September 2019 at the occasion of the 2nd European Conference of Service-Learning in Higher Education

To become a member of the association you can apply at <https://www.eoslhe.eu/easlhe/>

News and Events

X National Congress and IV International Congress for University Service-Learning will take place on the **3rd to 5th of June 2020** in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, **Canary Islands, Spain**. Organised by the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

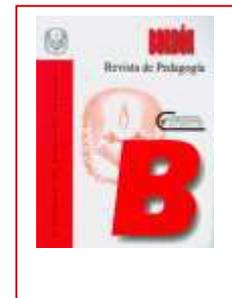


6th International Congress of Educational Research USAL-PALECH "CLIE 2020" to be held at the University of Salamanca Spain on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd of April, 2020. Organised by the Latin American Pact for Education with Human Quality PALECH and the University of Salamanca



Bordon. Journal of Education.

The last number of *Bordon. Journal of Pedagogy*, 71(3) 2019 is now available. This special issue on **SERVICE-LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION** has been edited by Pilar Aramburuzabala, Héctor Opazo and Lorraine McIlrath



The Iberoamerican Review of Digital Education (RIED)

Special Issue. Service-Learning and digital environment of learning: innovative challenges for higher education published by the *Iberoamerican Association for Higher Distance Education (AIESAD)*.



What does it mean to be (come) and Engaged University?



What does it mean to be(come) an engaged university?

3rd European Conference on Service- Learning in Higher Education, which will take place in **Bratislava, Slovakia, March 18-19, 2020**

- ✓ Promoting Service-Learning in Higher Education
- ✓ increasing awareness about the role of service-learning with respect to the third mission of universities
- ✓ Networking with different stakeholders

The European Observatory of Service-Learning in Higher Education presents the I Annual Report 2019 on the State of the Art of Service-Learning in European Higher Education

Message from the Director of EOSLHE



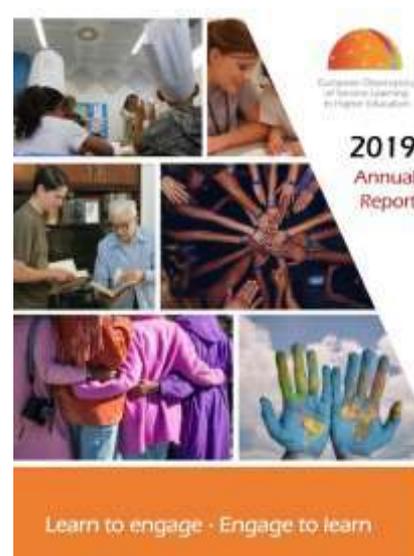
We are proud to present the first annual report of EOSLHE. It is a record of a year well spent, as we look ahead to securing a vibrant future to service-learning in European higher education in 2020 and beyond.

Service-Learning continues to spread in Europe. The strength of this methodology, based on experiential education and an interest in working with people and organizations with needs, lies in its potential for transformative social movement.

The European Observatory of Service-Learning in Higher Education (EOSLHE) shares a commitment with a civic University. This is the theme of this report, that combines the effort of the executive team of EOSLHE and the generous contribution of 28 experts from 16 countries.

The endless work pays off, as the facts prove: Since January 2019, when it was created, the Observatory has conducted multiple activities related to dissemination, research, promotion of networking, and mapping of service-learning. As an example, thirty-seven service-learning experiences from sixteen countries have been recorded in five months.

*Pilar Aramburuzabala Higuera
President of (EASLHE)
Director of (EOSLHE)*



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