SEA-EU Society Hub Action Plan

Content

Delivered by the following expert group:

University of Split	Ivana Bilić
	Gorana Duplančić Rogošić
	Ivana Jadrić
Nord University	Hege Christin Stenhammer
University of Western Brittany	Florence Bruneau
	Gwenaelle Goyat
University of Naples Parthenope	Marcello Risitano
	Aniello Ferraro
	Maria Cristina Pietronudo
	Claudia Maulini
University of Gdansk	Jarosław Jendza
	Joanna Morawska
	Piotr Zieliński
Kiel University	Frauke Godat
	Quentin Sohet
	Prabhpreet Chadha-Gebauer
University of Cadiz	Mayka Garcia
	Ana Zarzuela
	Manuel J. Cotrina Garcia
University of Malta	Therese Camilleri
	Carl J. Debono
	Suzanne Gatt
University of Algarve	António Fragoso de Almeida
	Sandra Teodósio Valadas

Introduction:

This **Action plan** aims to serve as an orientation point the Society Hub expert group, created within the framework of the European University of the Seas (SEA-EU) Alliance, in the actions of fostering societally – oriented activities of nine universities (the University of Cadiz, University of Gdansk, University of Western Brittany, Kiel University, University of Split, University of Malta, Nord University, University of Algarve and the University of Partnehope). All the activities created under the Society Hub will be organized around the integration of the Service-Learning (SL) into education and encouraging the development of social entrepreneurship, social innovations, civic engagement, volunteering, and other activities that can increase the level of societal empathy at the SEA-EU universities.

These activities are part of Task 5.3. Transforming SEA-EU Service Learning Centre into the SEA-EU Society Hub, under WP 5 - Bridging the gap with society.

Background and Objective

Universities need to empower students with the skills that are essential for effecting meaningful change and future career development in any type of organization. The SEA-EU alliance is oriented toward social, green and digital transitions in order to encourage the new generation to proactively participate in environmental change and social development. Universities need to be socially sensitive and proactive places where students will be socially sensitive and willing to become co-creators in their learning process.

This intention leads us to the university experts in social innovation and ongoing transitions of universities, service-learning and social entrepreneurship identified at each SEA-EU university. The role of the experts is to be the main – central point of summarizing and promoting the activities of the SEA-EU Society Hub.

What is a SEA-EU Society Hub?

It is a place that gathers SEA-EU experts willing to develop within the collaboration of the universities with local NGOs and with local and regional social entrepreneurs and all the other partners from the local environment that refers to two SDG goals (SDL No. 4 and SDG N. 12). This leads to new strategic measures, comprehensive programs, and models of cooperation with society through the links established with associated partners in the sense of addressing present social challenges. This central place exists as the online platform and where ever possible it will have a physical spot at the partner universities.

From the project proposal

As written in the project proposal, through the SEA-EU Society Hub, it is intended to develop transversal skills such as working with others, critical thinking, problem-solving, management, citizenship, digital literacy and entrepreneurial skills as well as developing different modes of cooperation with non-academic partners. The development of the sensitivity and empathy of the universities and collaboration with local NGOs are the focus of these activities.

In the proposal, the emphasis was put on the development of activities involving challenge-based teaching and learning models that lead students to work together and across disciplines through research and inventions in society, thus reinforcing excellence in cooperation with citizens (citizen science) through this Action plan. The aim of the planned activities was to empower European university students with communication skills, digital skills, critical thinking, entrepreneurial, creative and transversal skills, as well as an innovative spirit relevant to a rapidly changing labour market, including through the transfer of research results in education. The goal is that this Action Plan can be used as a tool to achieve that.

The Foundations of the Society Hub

The foundations of the Society Hub lay down in the Service-Learning Centre that was created within the European University of the Seas (SEA-EU) 1. O. implementation phase (in the period from 2019-2022).

MISSION of the created SL Centre defined in the 1st phase

The SEA–EU Service Learning Centre aims to translate academic subjects (staff and students) through real-world activities that positively impact all participants. Student teams operate within a SEA–EU host institution under the mentorship of SEA-EU professors or academic staff and the host institution.

The mission of the Centre is to create a connecting point for all SEA-EU teachers, administrative staff, students and external stakeholders willing to implement Service Learning as an active, innovative, inclusive and modern pedagogy method in the SEA-EU community.

VISION of the created SL Centre defined in the 1st phase

Host institutions, students, and teaching staff will recognize the SEA- EU Service-Learning Center as a valuable partner in higher education. Service-Learning is valued as a learning format where students learn and gain an international edge. The vision of the Centre is to support students' personal growth and to encourage them to be socially engaged academic citizens. Service-Learning represents the social dimension of higher education learning which aims to develop change-maker competencies through engaging in collaborative work and thereby promoting interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary hands-on approaches. Through a problem-based learning approach, the Centre strives to become a place where students are co-creating their learning experiences in which they are a subject rather than an object of their studies, thus improving their personalities and professional competencies.

The Centre should become a reference point where academics can receive all support when it comes to creating a new curriculum containing SL components. Moreover, it is envisaged as a place where experts can help academics connect with NGOs to ensure the sustainability of the Centre through new project applications and so become a matching creativity platform for different stakeholders.

In the second phase of the implementation, Service-Learning Centre will continue with its vision, be encouraged with additional socially–oriented activities, and grow into the Society Hub.

Mission and vision of the SEA-EU Society Hub

The MISSION of the Society Hub is to present a transnational support in the development of the co-creating platform for all SEA-EU teachers and researchers, administrative staff, students, and external stakeholders willing to develop society-oriented activities. Society Hub is a place that create education, share knowledge and know-how, provides support, detects all the university resources and encourages transdisciplinary and challenge-based models of teaching at the highest level of internationalization.

The VISION of the Society Hub is to become a recognized international learning spot for society-oriented activities that change universities from the inside. The vision is to create the Hub that will be self-sustainable for the future through project funding, resistant to challenges from the environment and open to all stakeholders, oriented to the sustainable development of the universities.

Main key points for the SEA-EU Society Hub

- Standing up to challenges
- Challenge-based learning
- Education, research and innovation at the highest level of the internationalization
- Transdisciplinary models of learning for students
- Transversal skills improvement
- Sustainable development of the society
- Addressing the societal challenges
- Students as Changemakers.

Proposals for actions

This Society Hub Action plan has four areas of focus:

Mapping   Education   Promotion   Co-creation and innovation   Institutionalisation

1. **Mapping: mapping of the previous, already existing examples of good practice among partner universities**

Awareness of the level and degree of development in terms of social activities of each of the participating universities is very important. Therefore, mapping is set as the first step that needs to be taken in order for the partners to get to know each other better, in order to present the already existing activities and see the room for improvement.

Mapping can refer to: courses, actions, projects, ideas, contacts - any form of social activities of the university that you are willing to share.

2. **Education:** Increasing the level of the competencies of all included stakeholders through education

Education is a key focus that can help increase the knowledge level about different society-oriented tools. For example, the concept of Service-Learning (SL) should be explained in detail, as the difference between volunteering and internships. All the other tools that could be used in terms of increasing the community-engaged universities have to be presented through workshops, education, tutorials, and promotional materials. Some of the concrete activities that will be undertaken are:

☐ An online course will be developed with all partner universities included and shared with all interested participants who want to learn about Service-Learning.

☐ SEA-EU Society Hub will organize periodically online education and meetups on social entrepreneurship and social innovations and promotion days when examples of good practices can be shared with other partner universities.

☐ Therefore, joint online courses in the area of challenge-based learning (e.g. Service-Learning - SL, Social Innovations - SI, Social Entrepreneurship - SocEnt, Education for sustainable development - ESD, Community-based research, etc.) will be co-created and tested in co-teaching teams and with students from SEA-EU partners.

➢ **The competence of the teachers** should be increased with the offer of specific short online courses. Teachers are the heart of Service-Learning, social entrepreneurship and other social tools that students can learn to use to extend their community commitment. Increasing their knowledge and skills brings new courses, new students, and new NGOs and other external stakeholders that join social actions.

➢ **The competence of students** could be increased as they are the main wheel in the circle of SL and other social activities. All the activities are done because of the students. Therefore, it is important to identify their positive experiences and share them with other students in order to motivate others to get involved. Also, it is important to emphasize how much participation in these activities enriches them as people and that they develop more and more skills through socially oriented activities. We need to find a way to include them in learning as co-creators because their

learning experience will be enriching. Students are change makers and they need to feel it in their own skin.

➢ **The competence of participating associations from the local environment** is very important in the process of development of social sensitivity of universities. Their role in this process should be completely clear and simplified. They should see the clear benefits they get from these activities. The way of co-operation should be made easier and closer to them. All external stakeholders should see the universities as their co-operators where the knowledge and enthusiasm of students are used in order to help them to solve their problems. If external stakeholders know whom to address in case, they want to start cooperation with the university (Social Hub) it is easy for them to initiate those activities.

➢ **The Inclusiveness of the universities** will be increasingly measured and developed in the future. The alignment of universities with the SDG goals is a reality today and a condition for progress tomorrow. Universities need to find a way to engage and learn through interaction with community partners and encourage their third mission. Third – mission orientation leads to the universities' contributions to economic and societal development in all local territories, so the benefits of using this approach go beyond the universities.

3. **Promotion:** promotion of existing examples of good practice, promotion and sharing of contacts, promotion of newly created opportunities - education and cooperation.

- Promotion of the examples of good practice (identification of the example of good practice at all partner universities and promotion across all nine universities, promotion using the website)
- Promotion of the possibilities (contacts, possible joint projects, research activities, students' collaborations Erasmus possibilities for students to attend socially oriented courses at another SEA-EU university…)
- Promotion of the concepts – SL, SE, SI, etc.

4. **Co-creation and innovation:** co-creation of the students, teachers, external stakeholders and the universities

With the aim of transnational exchange of knowledge and the creation of teams of various disciplines, knowledge, and backgrounds with the aim of solving social problems, there is a need to develop events that encourage the creation of goals.

The project foresees one event per year organized at one of the SEA-EU universities (the University of Split is planned in the project, but it is open to any other university that wants to be a host) on one of the key themes of the SEA-EU Society Hub.

A proposal of possible events can be:

- Proposal for 2023: participation of students at STup! international entrepreneurship competition yearly at the University of Split in June, where students are invited to gather in teams to propose

projects on the topic of social and green innovations and to participate in the customized training program. STup! takes place this year on 30th June and 01st July, 2023.

- Proposal for 2024: participation in the SEA-EU Makeathon event at the University of Split. An example of the previously organized event is available at the link. The main idea is to engage participating teams in this event that will have the support of the innovation experts. The end result Is supposed to be a tangible digital or physical prototype including a service prototype. Also, at the University of Cadiz, there will be s Service-Learning Staff Week organized in the period from 22nd to 26th April 2024. The objective would be to present and discuss different models that are developed in universities (curricular itinerary, cascade model, tutoring of teachers in SL, etc.).
- Proposal for 2025: SEA-EU Community-oriented conference. An example of the conference previously organized within the SEA-EU Alliance on the topic Community-Engaged Universities can be seen at https://sea-eu.org/service-learning/here. The conference gathered more than 80 participants from 13 countries with 39 presentations in total.
- Proposal for 2026: OPEN FOR DISCUSSION – According to the identified needs of the partner universities: Social Hackathon or joint workshops, or something else?
- Meetups – 2 times per year during the course of the project. Online or offline in SEA-EU Society Hub(s)

The participation cost for all events is predicted in the project budget (it covers the cost of 2 students per university for two days' event plus two days of traveling. The teachers are supposed to apply for Erasmus+ funds to cover the cost of their travelling).

5. **Support for the effective integration at all partner universities** - Developing and implementing the policy and other frameworks at the local universities

At the University of Split, SEA-EU Society Hub will be in a form of the physical office at the SPINIT Incubator (address is: *Ul. Antuna Gustava Matoša 56, 21000, Split*) and all the other universities are encouraged to develop the physical places for collaboration with the society representatives from the local environment. All those activities lead to the institutionalization and the promotion of the socially – oriented role of the universities as a complex process that integrates civic engagement values into higher education curriculum and actions. The Society Hub should serve as the main society–oriented contact point at each of the nine partner universities. For future development, it is expected to become self-sustainable in the future through different additional projects and actions - this is the basis of the idea of developing an Action Plan on how to ensure the sustainability of the Service to and with Society Platform (M24) that is expected to be another output by this expert group.

More about the implementation of the Action Plan

➤   Integration, cooperation, reflection, civil society, and social cohesion dimensions are key elements of the Society Hub's actions.

➤ The main focus is on the education, co-creation, promotion, and institutionalization of society-based activities.

➤ A website with promotional materials – will be created with all centralized information about key terms of the Society Hub (will be created within the framework of the main SEA-EU website.

It will consist of all activities of the SEA-EU partners that strive to contribute to society using the tools of education, research and innovation. The proposed structure of this sub-page is: What is Society-Hub, What are our society-oriented actions, Learning more about the social initiatives.

➤ Spreading the influence of the Alliance beyond the Alliance – whenever possible, SEA-EU Society Hub created within the framework of the SEA-EU Alliance will act as a specialized body with the main mission to spread social influence at the academic level. Therefore, experts will participate in the SL and other conferences whenever possible and support each – other's activities aimed to spread social dialogue

➤ Thinking about the future: "How to become self-sustainable as a Hub?" will be one of the main mission experts working on the SEA-EU Society Hub.